Pearl-Fishing

Choice Stories from Dickens' Household Words; First Series

By

Charles Dickens

I.

LOADED DICE.

Several years ago, I made a tour through some of the Southern Counties of England with a friend. We travelled in an open carriage, stopping for a few hours a day, or a week, as it might be, wherever there was anything to be seen; and we generally got through one stage before breakfast, because it gave our horses rest, and ourselves the chance of enjoying the brown bread, new milk, and fresh eggs of those country road-side inns, which are fast becoming subjects for archæological investigation.

One evening my friend said, “To-morrow we will breakfast at T——. I want to inquire about a family named Lovell, who used to live there. I met the husband and wife, and two lovely children, one summer at Exmouth. We became very intimate, and I thought them particularly interesting people, but I have never seen them since.”

The next morning’s sun shone as brightly as heart could desire, and after a delightful drive, we reached the outskirts of the town about nine o’clock.

“Oh, what a pretty inn!” said I, as we approached a small white house, with a sign swinging in front of it, and a flower-garden on one side.

“Stop, John,” cried my friend, “we shall get a much cleaner breakfast here than in the town, I dare say; and if there is anything to be seen there, we can walk to it;” so we alighted, and were shown into a neat little parlor, with white curtains, where an unexceptionable rural breakfast was soon placed before us.

“Pray do you happen to know anything of a family called Lovell?” inquired my friend, whose name, by the way, was Markham. “Mr. Lovell was a clergyman.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” answered the girl who attended us, apparently the landlord’s daughter, “Mr. Lovell is the vicar of our parish.”

“Indeed! and does he live near here?”

“Yes, Ma’am, he lives at the vicarage. It’s just down that lane opposite, about a quarter of a mile from here; or you can go across the fields, if you please, to where you see that tower; it’s close by there.”

“And which is the pleasantest road?” inquired Mrs. Markham.

“Well, Ma’am, I think by the fields is the pleasantest, if you don’t mind a stile or two; and, besides, you get the best view of the Abbey by going that way.”

“Is that tower we see part of the Abbey?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” answered the girl, “and the vicarage is just the other side of it.”

Armed with these instructions, as soon as we had finished our breakfast we started across the fields, and after a pleasant walk of twenty minutes we found ourselves in an old churchyard, amongst a cluster of the most picturesque ruins we had ever seen. With the exception of the gray tower, we had espied from the inn, and which had doubtless been the belfry, the remains were not considerable. There was the outer wall of the chancel, and the broken step that had led to the high altar, and there were sections of aisles, and part of a cloister, all gracefully festooned with mosses and ivy; whilst mingled with the grass-grown graves of the prosaic dead, there were the massive tombs of the Dame Margerys and the Sir Hildebrands of more romantic periods. All was ruin and decay, but such poetic ruin! such picturesque decay! And just beyond the tall gray tower, there was the loveliest, smiling, little garden, and the prettiest cottage, that imagination could picture. The day was so bright, the grass so green, the flowers so gay, the air so balmy with their sweet perfumes, the birds sang so cheerily in the apple and cherry trees, that all nature seemed rejoicing.

“Well,” said my friend, as she seated herself on the fragment of a pillar, and looked around her, “now that I see this place, I understand what sort of people the Lovells were.”

“What sort of people were they?” said I.

“Why, as I said before, interesting people. In the first place, they were both extremely handsome.”

“But the locality had nothing to do with their good looks, I presume,” said I.

“I am not sure of that,” she answered; “when there is the least foundation of taste or intellect to set out with, the beauty of external nature, and the picturesque accidents that harmonize with it, do, I am persuaded, by their gentle and elevating influence on the mind, make the handsome handsomer, and the ugly less ugly. But it was not alone the good looks of the Lovells that struck me, but their air of refinement and high breeding, and I should say high birth—though I know nothing about their extraction—combined with their undisguised poverty and as evident contentment. Now, I can understand such people finding here an appropriate home, and being satisfied with their small share of this world’s goods; because here the dreams of romance writers about Love in a Cottage might be somewhat realized; poverty might be graceful and poetical here; and then, you know, they have no rent to pay.”

“Very true,” said I; “but suppose they had sixteen daughters, like a half-pay officer I once met on board a steam-packet?”

“That would spoil it certainly,” said Mrs. Markham; “but let us hope they have not. When I knew them they had only two children, a boy and a girl called Charles and Emily; two of the prettiest creatures I ever beheld!”

As my friend thought it yet rather early for a visit, we had remained chattering in this way for more than an hour, sometimes seated on a tomb-stone, or a fallen column; sometimes peering amongst the carved fragments that were scattered about the ground, and sometimes looking over the hedge into the little garden, the wicket of which was immediately behind the tower. The weather being warm, most of the windows of the vicarage were open and the blinds were all down; we had not yet seen a soul stirring, and were wondering whether we might venture to present ourselves at the door, when a strain of distant music struck upon our ears. “Hark!” I said, “how exquisite! It was the only thing wanting to complete the charm.”

“It’s a military band, I think,” said Mrs. Markham, “you know we passed some barracks before we reached the Inn.”

Nearer and nearer drew the sound, solemn and slow; the band was evidently approaching by the green lane that skirted the fields we had come by. “Hush,” said I, laying my hand on my friend’s arm, with a strange sinking of the heart; “they are playing the Dead March in Saul! Don’t you hear the muffled drums? It’s a funeral, but where’s the grave?”

“There,” said she, pointing to a spot close under the hedge where some earth had been thrown up; but the aperture was covered with a plank, probably to prevent accidents.

There are few ceremonies in life at once so touching, so impressive, so sad, and yet so beautiful, as a soldier’s funeral! Ordinary funerals with their unwieldy hearses and feathers, and the absurd looking mutes, and the “inky cloaks” and weepers of hired mourners, always seem to me like a mockery of the dead; the appointments border so closely on the grotesque; they are so little in keeping with the true, the only view of death that can render life endurable! There is such a tone of exaggerated, forced, heavy, over-acted gravity about the whole thing, that one had need to have a deep personal interest involved in the scene, to be able to shut one’s eyes to the burlesque side of it. But a military funeral, how different! There you see death in life and life in death! There is nothing over-strained, nothing overdone. At once simple and silent, decent and decorous, consoling, yet sad. The chief mourners, at best, are generally true mourners, for they have lost a brother with whom “they sat but yesterday at meat;” and whilst they are comparing memories, recalling how merry they had many a day been together, and the solemn tones

of that sublime music float upon the air, we can imagine the freed and satisfied soul wafted on those harmonious breathings to its Heavenly home; and our hearts are melted, our imaginations exalted, our faith invigorated, and we come away the better for what we have seen.

I believe some such reflections as these were passing through our minds, for we both remained silent and listening, till the swinging-to of the little wicket, which communicated with the garden, aroused us; but nobody appeared, and the tower being at the moment betwixt us and it, we could not see who had entered. Almost at the same moment, a man came from a gate on the opposite side, and advancing to where the earth was thrown up, lifted the plank, and discovered the newly-made grave. He was soon followed by some boys, and several respectable-looking persons came into the enclosure, whilst nearer and nearer drew the sound of the muffled drums, and now we descried the firing party and their officer, who led the procession with their arms reversed, each man wearing above the elbow a piece of black crape and a small bow of white satin ribbon; the band still playing that solemn strain. Then came the coffin, borne by six soldiers. Six officers bore up the pall, all quite young men; and on the coffin lay the shako, sword, side-belt, and white gloves of the deceased. A long train of mourners marched two and two, in open file, the privates first, the officers last. Sorrow was imprinted on every face; there was no unseemly chattering, no wandering eyes; if a word was exchanged, it was in a whisper, and the sad shake of the head showed of whom they were discoursing. All this we observed as they marched through the lane that skirted one side of the churchyard. As they neared the gate the band ceased to play.

“See there,” said Mrs. Markham, directing my attention to the cottage, “there comes Mr. Lovell. Oh, how he is changed!” and whilst she spoke, the clergyman entering by the wicket, advanced to meet the procession at the gate, where he commenced reading the funeral service as he moved backwards towards the grave, round which the firing party, leaning on their firelocks, now formed. Then came those awful words, “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” the hollow sound of the earth upon the coffin, and three volleys fired over the grave, finished the solemn ceremony.

When the procession entered the churchyard, we had retired behind the broken wall of the chancel, whence, without being observed, we had watched the whole scene with intense interest. Just as the words, “Ashes to ashes! dust to dust!” were pronounced, I happened to raise my eyes towards the gray tower, and then, peering through one of the narrow slits, I saw the face of a man—such a face! Never to my latest day can I forget the expression of those features! If ever there was despair and anguish written on a human countenance, it was there! And yet so young! so beautiful! A cold chill ran through my veins as I pressed Mrs. Markham’s arm. “Look up at the tower!” I

whispered.

“My God! What can it be?” she answered, turning quite pale! “And Mr. Lovell, did you observe how his voice shook? at first, I thought it was illness; but he seems bowed down with grief. Every face looks awe-struck! There must be some tragedy here—something more than the death of an individual!” and fearing, under this impression, that our visit might prove untimely, we resolved to return to the inn, and endeavor to discover if anything unusual had really occurred. Before we moved, I looked up at the narrow slit—the face was no longer there; but as we passed round to the other side of the tower, we saw a tall, slender figure, attired in a loose coat, pass slowly through the wicket, cross the garden, and enter the house. We only caught a glimpse of the profile; the head hung down upon the breast; the eyes were bent upon the ground; but we knew it was the same face we had seen above.

We went back to the inn, where our inquiries elicited some information, which made us wish to know more; but it was not till we went into the town that we obtained the following details of this mournful drama, of which we had thus accidentally witnessed one impressive scene.

Mr. Lovell, as Mrs. Markham had conjectured, was a man of good family, but no fortune; he might have had a large one, could he have made up his mind to marry Lady Elizabeth Wentworth, the bride selected for him by a wealthy uncle who proposed to make him his heir; but preferring poverty with Emily Dering, he was disinherited. He never repented his choice, although he remained vicar of a small parish, and a poor man all his life. The two children whom Mrs. Markham had seen, were the only ones they had, and through the excellent management of Mrs. Lovell, and the moderation of her husband’s desires, they had enjoyed an unusual degree of happiness in this sort of graceful poverty, till the young Charles and Emily were grown up, and it was time to think what was to be done with them. The son had been prepared for Oxford by the father, and the daughter, under the tuition of her mother, was remarkably well educated and accomplished; but it became necessary to consider the future: Charles must be sent to college, since the only chance of finding a provision for him was in the Church, although the expense of maintaining him there could be ill afforded; so, in order in some degree to balance the outlay, it was, after much deliberation, agreed that Emily should accept a situation as governess in London. The proposal was made by herself, and the rather consented to, that, in case of the death of her parents, she would almost inevitably have had to seek some such means of subsistence. These partings were the first sorrows that had reached the Lovells.

At first, all went well; Charles was not wanting in ability nor in a moderate degree of application; and Emily wrote cheerfully of her new life. She was kindly received, well treated, and associated with the family on the footing of

a friend. Neither did further experience seem to diminish her satisfaction. She saw a great many gay people—some of whom she named; and, amongst the rest, there not unfrequently appeared the name of Herbert. Mr. Herbert was in the army, and being a distant connexion of the family with whom she resided, was a frequent visitor at their house. “She was sure papa and mamma would like him.” Once the mother smiled, and said she hoped Emily was not falling in love; but no more was thought of it. In the meantime Charles had found out that there was time for many things at Oxford, besides study. He was naturally fond of society, and had a remarkable capacity for excelling in all kinds of games. He was agreeable, lively, exceedingly handsome, and sang charmingly, having been trained in part-singing by his mother. No young man at Oxford was more fêté; but alas! he was very poor, and poverty poisoned all his enjoyments. For some time he resisted temptation; but after a terrible struggle —for he adored his family—he gave way, and ran in debt, and although the imprudence only augmented his misery, he had not resolution to retrace his steps, but advanced further and further on this broad road to ruin, so that he had come home for the vacation shortly before our visit to T——, threatened with all manner of annoyances if he did not carry back a sufficient sum to satisfy his most clamorous creditors. He had assured them he would do so, but where was he to get the money? Certainly not from his parents; he well knew they had it not; nor had he a friend in the world from whom he could hope assistance in such an emergency. In his despair he often thought of running away—going to Australia, America, New Zealand, anywhere; but he had not even the means to do this. He suffered indescribable tortures, and saw no hope of relief.

It was just at this period that Herbert’s regiment happened to be quartered at T——. Charles had occasionally seen his name in his sister’s letters, and heard that there was a Herbert now in the barracks, but he was ignorant whether or not it was the same person; and when he accidentally fell into the society of some of the junior officers, and was invited by Herbert himself to dine at the mess, pride prevented his ascertaining the fact. He did not wish to betray that his sister was a governess. Herbert, however, knew full well that their visitor was the brother of Emily Lovell, but partly for reasons of his own, and partly because he penetrated the weakness of the other, he abstained from mentioning her name.

Now, this town of T—— was, and probably is, about the dullest quarter in all England! The officers hated it, there was no flirting, no dancing, no hunting, no anything. Not a man of them knew what to do with himself. The old ones wandered about and played at whist, the young ones took to hazard and three-card-loo, playing at first for moderate stakes, but soon getting on to high ones. Two or three civilians of the neighborhood joined the party, Charles Lovell among the rest. Had they begun with playing high, he would have been

excluded for want of funds; but whilst they played low, he won, so that when they increased the stakes, trusting to a continuance of his good fortune, he was eager to go on with them. Neither did his luck altogether desert him; on the whole, he rather won than lost; but he foresaw that one bad night would break him, and he should be obliged to retire, forfeiting his amusement and mortifying his pride. It was just at this crisis, that, one night, an accident, which caused him to win a considerable sum, set him upon the notion of turning chance into certainty. Whilst shuffling the cards, he dropped the ace of spades into his lap, caught it up, replaced it in the pack, and dealt it to himself. No one else had seen the card, no observation was made, and a terrible thought came into his head!

Whether loo or hazard was played, Charles Lovell had, night after night, a most extraordinary run of luck. He won large sums, and saw before him the early prospect of paying his debts and clearing all his difficulties.

Amongst the young men who played at the table, some had plenty of money and cared little for their losses; but others were not so well off, and one of these was Edward Herbert. He, too, was the son of poor parents who had straitened themselves to put him in the army, and it was with infinite difficulty and privation that his widowed mother had amassed the needful sum to purchase for him a company, which was now becoming vacant. The retiring officer’s papers were already sent in, and Herbert’s money was lodged at Cox and Greenwood’s; but before the answer from the Horse-Guards arrived, he had lost every sixpence. Nearly the whole sum had become the property of Charles Lovell.

Herbert was a fine young man, honorable, generous, impetuous, and endowed with an acute sense of shame. He determined instantly to pay the debts, but he knew that his own prospects were ruined for life; he wrote to the agents to send him the money and withdraw his name from the list of purchasers. But how was he to support his mother’s grief? How meet the eye of the girl he loved? She, who he knew adored him, and whose hand it was agreed between them he should ask of her parents as soon as he was gazetted a captain! The anguish of mind he suffered then threw him into a fever, and he lay for several days betwixt life and death, and happily unconscious of his misery.

Meantime, another scene was being enacted elsewhere. The officers, who night after night found themselves losers, had not for some time entertained the least idea of foul play, but at length, one of them observing something suspicious, began to watch, and satisfied himself, by a peculiar method adopted by Lovell in “throwing his mains,” that he was the culprit. His suspicions were whispered from one to another, till they nearly all entertained them, with the exception of Herbert, who, being looked upon as Lovell’s most

especial friend, was not told. So unwilling were these young men to blast, forever, the character of the visitor whom they had so much liked, and to strike a fatal blow at the happiness and respectability of his family, that they were hesitating how to proceed, whether to openly accuse him or privately reprove and expel him, when Herbert's heavy loss decided the question.

Herbert himself, overwhelmed with despair, had quitted the room, the rest were still seated around the table, when having given each other a signal, one of them, called Frank Houston, arose and said: "Gentlemen, it gives me great pain to have to call your attention to a very strange—a very distressing circumstance. For some time past there has been an extraordinary run of luck in one direction—we have all observed it—all remarked on it. Mr. Herbert has at this moment retired a heavy loser. There is, indeed, as far as I know, but one winner amongst us—but one, and he a winner to a very considerable amount; the rest all losers. God forbid that I should rashly accuse any man! Lightly blast any man's character! But I am bound to say, that I fear the money we have lost has not been fairly won. There has been foul play! I forbear to name the party—the facts sufficiently indicate him."

Who would not have pitied Lovell, when, livid with horror and conscious guilt, he vainly tried to say something? "Indeed—I assure you—I never"—but words would not come; he faltered and rushed out of the room in a transport of agony. They did pity him; and when he was gone, agreed amongst themselves to hush up the affair; but unfortunately, the civilians of the party, who had not been let into the secret, took up his defence. They not only believed the accusation unfounded, but felt it as an affront offered to their townsman; they blustered about it a good deal, and there was nothing left for it but to appoint a committee of investigation. Alas! the evidence was overwhelming! It turned out that the dice and cards had been supplied by Lovell. The former, still on the table, were found on examination to be loaded. In fact, he had had a pair as a curiosity long in his possession, and had obtained others from a disreputable character at Oxford. No doubt remained of his guilt.

All this while Herbert had been too ill to be addressed on the subject; but symptoms of recovery were now beginning to appear; and as nobody was aware that he had any particular interest in the Lovell family, the affair was communicated to him. At first he refused to believe in his friend's guilt, and became violently irritated. His informants assured him they would be too happy to find they were mistaken, but that since the inquiry no hope of such an issue remained, and he sank into a gloomy silence.

On the following morning, when his servant came to his room door, he found it locked. When, at the desire of the surgeon, it was broken open, Herbert was found a corpse, and a discharged pistol lying beside him. An inquest sat upon the body, and the verdict brought in was Temporary Insanity.

There never was one more just.

Preparations were now made for the funeral—that funeral which we had witnessed; but before the day appointed for it arrived, another chapter of this sad story was unfolded.

When Charles left the barracks on that fatal night, instead of going home, he passed the dark hours in wandering wildly about the country; but when morning dawned, fearing the eye of man, he returned to the vicarage, and slunk unobserved to his chamber. When he did not appear at breakfast, his mother sought him in his room, where she found him in bed. He said he was very ill—and so indeed he was—and begged to be left alone; but as he was no better on the following day, she insisted on sending for medical advice. The doctor found him with all those physical symptoms that are apt to supervene from great anxiety of mind; and saying he could get no sleep, Charles requested to have some laudanum; but the physician was on his guard, for although the parties concerned wished to keep the thing private, some rumors had got abroad that awakened his caution.

The parents, meanwhile, had not the slightest anticipation of the thunderbolt that was about to fall upon them. They lived a very retired life, were acquainted with none of the officers—and they were even ignorant of the amount of their son's intimacy with the regiment. Thus, when news of Herbert's lamentable death reached them, the mother said to her son: "Charles, did you know a young man in the barracks called Herbert; a lieutenant, I believe? By-the-bye, I hope it's not Emily's Mr. Herbert."

"Did I know him," said Charles, turning suddenly towards her, for, under pretence that the light annoyed him, he always lay with his face to the wall. "Why do you ask, mother?"

"Because he's dead! He had a fever, and—"

"Herbert dead!" cried Charles, suddenly sitting up in the bed.

"Yes, he had a fever, and it is supposed he was delirious, for he blew out his brains; there is a report that he had been playing high, and lost a great deal of money. What's the matter, dear? Oh, Charles, I shouldn't have told you! I was not aware that you knew him!"

"Fetch my father here, and, mother, you come back with him!" said Charles, speaking with a strange sternness of tone, and wildly motioning her out of the room.

When the parents came, he bade them sit down beside him; and then, with a degree of remorse and anguish that no words could portray, he told them all; whilst they, with blanched cheeks and fainting hearts, listened to the dire

confession.

“And here I am,” he exclaimed, as he ended, “a cowardly scoundrel that has not dared to die! Oh, Herbert! happy, happy, Herbert! Would I were with you!”

At that moment the door opened, and a beautiful, bright, smiling, joyous face peeped in. It was Emily Lovell, the beloved daughter, the adored sister, arrived from London in compliance with a letter received a few days previously from Herbert, wherein he had told her that by the time she received it, he would be a captain. She had come to introduce him to her parents as her affianced husband. She feared no refusal; well she knew how rejoiced they would be to see her the wife of so kind and honorable a man. But they were ignorant of all this, and in the fulness of their agony, the cup of woe ran over, and she drank of the draught! They told her all before she had been five minutes in the room. How else could they account for their tears, their confusion, their bewilderment, their despair!

Before Herbert’s funeral took place, Emily Lovell was lying betwixt life and death in a brain fever. Under the influence of a feeling easily to be comprehended, thirsting for a self-imposed torture, that by its very poignancy should relieve the dead weight of wretchedness that lay upon his breast, Charles crept from his bed, and slipping on a loose coat that hung in his room, he stole across the garden to the tower, whence, through the arrow-slit, he witnessed the burial of his sister’s lover, whom he had hastened to the grave.

Here terminates our sad story. We left T—— on the following morning, and it was two or three years before any further intelligence of the Lovell family reached us. All we then heard was, that Charles had gone, a self-condemned exile, to Australia; and that Emily had insisted on accompanying him thither.

II.

THE SERF OF POBEREZE.

The materials for the following tale were furnished to the writer while travelling last year near the spot on which the events it narrates took place. It is intended to convey a notion of some of the phases of Polish, or rather Russian serfdom (for, as truly explained by one of the characters in a succeeding page, it is Russian), and of the catastrophes it has occasioned, not only in Catherine’s time, but occasionally at the present. The Polish nobles—themselves in slavery—earnestly desire the emancipation of their serfs, which

Russian domination forbids.

The small town of Pobereze stands at the foot of a stony mountain, watered by numerous springs in the district of Podolia, in Poland. It consists of a mass of miserable cabins, with a Catholic chapel and two Greek churches in the midst, the latter distinguished by their gilded towers. On one side of the market-place stands the only inn, and on the opposite side are several shops, from whose doors and windows look out several dirtily-dressed Jews. At a little distance, on a hill covered with vines and fruit-trees, stands the Palace, which does not, perhaps, exactly merit such an appellation, but who would dare to call otherwise the dwelling of the lord of the domain?

On the morning when our tale opens, there had issued from this palace the common enough command to the superintendent of the estate, to furnish the master with a couple of strong boys, for service in the stables, and a young girl, to be employed in the wardrobe. Accordingly, a number of the best-looking young peasants of Olgogrod assembled in the broad avenue leading to the palace. Some were accompanied by their sorrowful and weeping parents, in all of whose hearts, however, rose the faint and whispered hope, “Perhaps it will not be my child they will choose!”

Being brought into the court-yard of the palace, the Count Roszynski, with the several members of his family, had come out to pass in review his growing subjects. He was a small and insignificant-looking man, about fifty years of age, with deep-set eyes and overhanging brows. His wife, who was nearly of the same age, was immensely stout, with a vulgar face and a loud disagreeable voice. She made herself ridiculous in endeavoring to imitate the manners and bearing of the aristocracy, into whose sphere she and her husband were determined to force themselves, in spite of the humbleness of their origin. The father of the “Right Honorable” Count Roszynski was a valet, who, having been a great favorite with his master, amassed sufficient money to enable his son, who inherited it, to purchase the extensive estate of Olgogrod, and with it the sole proprietorship of 1,600 human beings. Over them he had complete control; and, when maddened by oppression, if they dared resent, woe unto them! They could be thrust into a noisome dungeon, and chained by one hand from the light of day for years, until their very existence was forgotten by all except the jailer who brought daily their pitcher of water and morsel of dry bread.

Some of the old peasants say that Sava, father of the young peasant girl, who stands by the side of an old woman, at the head of her companions in the court-yard, is immured in one of these subterranean jails. Sava was always about the Count, who, it was said, had brought him from some distant land, with his little motherless child. Sava placed her under the care of an old man and woman, who had the charge of the bees in a forest near the palace, where

he came occasionally to visit her. But once, six long months passed, and he did not come! In vain Anielka wept, in vain she cried, “Where is my father?”—No father appeared. At last it was said that Sava had been sent to a long distance with a large sum of money, and had been killed by robbers. In the ninth year of one’s life the most poignant grief is quickly effaced, and after six months Anielka ceased to grieve. The old people were very kind to her, and loved her as if she were their own child. That Anielka might be chosen to serve in the palace never entered their head, for who would be so barbarous as to take the child away from an old woman of seventy and her aged husband?

To-day was the first time in her life that she had been so far from home. She looked curiously on all she saw,—particularly on a young lady about her own age, beautifully dressed, and a youth of eighteen, who had apparently just returned from a ride on horseback, as he held a whip in his hand, whilst walking up and down and examining the boys who were placed in a row before him. He chose two amongst them, and the boys were led away to the stables.

“And I choose this young girl,” said Constantia Roszynski, indicating Anielka; “she is the prettiest of them all. I do not like ugly faces about me.”

When Constantia returned to the drawing-room, she gave orders for Anielka to be taken to her apartments, and placed under the tutelage of Mademoiselle Dufour, a French maid, recently arrived from the first milliner’s shop in Odessa. Poor girl! when they separated her from her adopted mother, and began leading her towards the palace, she rushed, with a shriek of agony, from them, and grasped her old protectress tightly in her arms! They were torn violently asunder, and the Count Roszynski quietly asked, “Is it her daughter, or her grand-daughter?”

“Neither, my lord,—only an adopted child.”

“But who will lead the old woman home, as she is blind?”

“I will, my lord,” replied one of his servants, bowing to the ground; “I will let her walk by the side of my horse, and when she is in her cabin she will have her old husband,—they must take care of each other.”

So saying, he moved away with the rest of the peasants and domestics. But the poor old woman had to be dragged along by two men; for in the midst of her shrieks and tears she had fallen to the ground, almost without life.

And Anielka? They did not allow her to weep long. She had now to sit all day in the corner of a room to sew. She was expected to do everything well from the first; and if she did not, she was kept without food or cruelly punished. Morning and evening she had to help Mdlle. Dufour to dress and undress her mistress. But Constantia, although she looked with hauteur on

everybody beneath her, and expected to be slavishly obeyed, was tolerably kind to her poor orphan. Her true torment began, when, on leaving her young lady's room, she had to assist Mdlle. Dufour. Notwithstanding that she tried sincerely to do her best, she was never able to satisfy her, or draw from her aught but harsh reproaches.

Thus two months passed.

One day Mdlle. Dufour went very early to confession, and Anielka was seized with an eager longing to gaze once more in peace and freedom on the beautiful blue sky and green trees, as she used to do when the first rays of the rising sun streamed in at the window of the little forest cabin. She ran into the garden. Enchanted by the sight of so many beautiful flowers, she went farther and farther along the smooth and winding walks, till she entered the forest. She who had been so long away from her beloved trees, roamed where they were thickest. Here she gazes boldly around. She sees no one! She is alone! A little further on she meets with a rivulet which flows through the forest. Here she remembers that she has not yet prayed. She kneels down, and with hands clasped and eyes upturned she begins to sing, in a sweet voice, the Hymn to the Virgin.

As she went on, she sang louder and with increased fervor. Her breast heaved with emotion, her eyes shone with unusual brilliancy; but when the hymn was finished she lowered her head, tears began to fall over her cheeks, until at last she sobbed aloud. She might have remained long in this condition, had not some one come behind her, saying, "Do not cry, my poor girl; it is better to sing than to weep." The intruder raised her head, wiped her eyes with her handkerchief, and kissed her on the forehead.

It was the Count's son, Leon!

"You must not cry," he continued; "be calm, and when the filipony (pedlars) come, buy yourself a pretty handkerchief." He then gave her a rouble and walked away. Anielka, after concealing the coin in her corset, ran quickly back to the palace.

Fortunately, Mdlle. Dufour had not yet returned, and Anielka seated herself in her accustomed corner. She often took out the rouble to gaze fondly upon it, and set to work to make a little purse, which, having fastened to a ribbon, she hung round her neck. She did not dream of spending it, for it would have deeply grieved her to part with the gift of the only person in the whole house who had looked kindly on her.

From that time Anielka remained always in her young mistress's room; she was better dressed, and Mdlle. Dufour ceased to persecute her. To what did she owe this sudden change? Perhaps to a remonstrance from Leon. Constantine

ordered Anielka to sit beside her while taking her lessons from her music-masters, and on her going to the drawing-room, she was left in her apartments alone. Being thus more kindly treated, Anielka lost by degrees her timidity; and when her young mistress, whilst occupied over some embroidery, would tell her to sing, she did so boldly and with a steady voice. A greater favor awaited her. Constantia, when unoccupied, began teaching Anielka to read in Polish; and Mdlle. Dufour thought it politic to follow the example of her mistress, and began to teach her French.

Meanwhile, a new kind of torment commenced. Having easily learnt the two languages, Anielka acquired an irresistible passion for reading. Books had for her the charm of the forbidden fruit, for she could only read by stealth at night, or when her mistress went visiting in the neighborhood. The kindness hitherto shown her, for a time, began to relax. Leon had set off on a tour, accompanied by his old tutor, and a bosom friend as young, as gay, and as thoughtless as himself.

So passed the two years of Leon’s absence. When he returned, Anielka was seventeen, and had become tall and handsome. No one who had not seen her during the time, would have recognized her. Of this number was Leon. In the midst of perpetual gaiety and change it was not possible he could have remembered a poor peasant girl; but in Anielka’s memory he had remained as a superior being, as her benefactor, as the only one who had spoken kindly to her, when poor, neglected, forlorn! When in some French romance she met with a young man of twenty, of a noble character and handsome appearance, she bestowed on him the name of Leon. The recollection of the kiss he had given her, ever brought a burning blush to her cheek, and made her sigh deeply.

One day Leon came to his sister’s room. Anielka was there, seated in a corner at work. Leon himself had considerably changed; from a boy he had grown into a man. “I suppose Constantia,” he said, “you have been told what a good boy I am, and with what docility I shall submit myself to the matrimonial yoke, which the Count and Countess have provided for me?” and he began whistling, and danced some steps of the Mazurka.

“Perhaps you will be refused,” said Constantia, coldly.

“Refused! Oh, no. The old Prince has already given his consent, and as for his daughter she is desperately in love with me. Look at these moustachios, could anything be more irresistible?” and he glanced in the glass and twirled them round his fingers; then continuing in a graver tone, he said, “To tell the sober truth, I cannot say that I reciprocate. My intended is not at all to my taste. She is nearly thirty, and so thin that whenever I look at her, I am reminded of my old tutor’s anatomical sketches. But thanks to her Parisian

dress-maker, she makes up a tolerably good figure, and looks well in a Cachemere. Of all things, you know, I wished for a wife of an imposing appearance, and I don't care about love. I find it's not fashionable, and only exists in the exalted imagination of poets."

"Surely people are in love with one another sometimes," said the sister.

"Sometimes," repeated Anielka, inaudibly. The dialogue had painfully affected her, and she knew not why. Her heart beat quickly, and her face was flushed, and made her look more lovely than ever.

"Perhaps. Of course we profess to adore every pretty woman," Leon added abruptly. "But, my dear sister, what a charming ladies' maid you have!" He approached the corner where Anielka sat, and bent on her a coarse familiar smile. Anielka, although a serf, was displeased, and returned it with a glance full of dignity. But when her eyes rested on the youth's handsome face, a feeling, which had been gradually and silently growing in her young and inexperienced heart, predominated over her pride and displeasure. She wished ardently to recall herself to Leon's memory, and half unconsciously raised her hand to the little purse which always hung round her neck. She took from it the rouble he had given her.

"See!" shouted Leon, "what a droll girl; how proud she is of her riches! Why, girl, you are a woman of fortune, mistress of a whole rouble!"

"I hope she came by it honestly," said the old Countess, who at this moment entered.

At this insinuation, shame and indignation kept Anielka, for a time, silent. She replaced the money quickly in its purse, with the bitter thought that the few happy moments which had been so indelibly stamped upon her memory, had been utterly forgotten by Leon. To clear herself, she at last stammered out, seeing they all looked at her inquiringly, "Do you not remember, M. Leon, that you gave me this coin two years ago in the garden?"

"How odd?" exclaimed Leon, laughing, "do you expect me to remember all the pretty girls to whom I have given money? But I suppose you are right, or you would not have treasured up this unfortunate rouble as if it were a holy relic. You should not be a miser, child; money is made to be spent."

"Pray, put an end to these jokes," said Constantia impatiently; "I like this girl, and I will not have her teased. She understands my ways better than any one, and often puts me in good humor with her beautiful voice."

"Sing something for me, pretty damsel," said Leon, "and I will give you another rouble, a new and shining one."

"Sing instantly," said Constantia imperiously.

At this command Anielka could no longer stifle her grief; she covered her face with her hands, and wept violently.

“Why do you cry?” asked her mistress impatiently; “I cannot bear it; I desire you to do as you are bid.”

It might have been from the constant habit of slavish obedience, or a strong feeling of pride, but Anielka instantly ceased weeping. There was a moment’s pause, during which the old Countess went grumbling out of the room. Anielka chose the Hymn to the Virgin she had warbled in the garden, and as she sung, she prayed fervently;—she prayed for peace, for deliverance from the acute emotions which had been aroused within her. Her earnestness gave an intensity of expression to the melody, which affected her listeners. They were silent for some moments after its conclusion. Leon walked up and down with his arms folded on his breast. Was it agitated with pity for the accomplished young slave? or by any other tender emotion? What followed will show.

“My dear Constantia,” he said, suddenly stopping before his sister and kissing her hand, “will you do me a favor?”

Constantia looked inquiringly in her brother’s face without speaking.

“Give me this girl.”

“Impossible!”

“I am quite in earnest,” continued Leon, “I wish to offer her to my future wife. In the Prince her father’s private chapel they are much in want of a solo soprano.”

“I shall not give her to you,” said Constantia.

“Not as a free gift, but in exchange. I will give you instead a charming young negro—so black. The women in St. Petersburg and in Paris raved about him: but I was inexorable; I half-refused him to my princess.”

“No, no,” replied Constantia; “I shall be lonely without this girl, I am so used to her.”

“Nonsense! you can get peasant girls by the dozen; but a black page, with teeth whiter than ivory, and purer than pearls; a perfect original in his way; you surely cannot withstand. You will kill half the province with envy. A negro servant is the most fashionable thing going, and yours will be the first imported into the province.”

This argument was irresistible. “Well,” replied Constantia, “when do you think of taking her?”

“Immediately; to-day at five o’clock,” said Leon; and he went merrily out

of the room. This then was the result of his cogitation—of Anielka's Hymn to the Virgin. Constantia ordered Anielka to prepare herself for the journey, with as little emotion as if she had exchanged away a lap-dog, or parted with a parrot.

She obeyed in silence. Her heart was full. She went into the garden that she might relieve herself by weeping unseen. With one hand supporting her burning head, and the other pressed tightly against her heart, to stifle her sobs, she wandered on mechanically till she found herself by the side of the river. She felt quickly for her purse, intending to throw the rouble into the water, but as quickly thrust it back again, for she could not bear to part with the treasure. She felt as if without it she would be still more an orphan. Weeping bitterly, she leaned against the tree which had once before witnessed her tears.

By degrees the stormy passion within her gave place to calm reflection. This day she was to go away; she was to dwell beneath another roof, to serve another mistress. Humiliation! always humiliation! But at least it would be some change in her life. As she thought of this, she returned hastily to the palace that she might not, on the last day of her servitude, incur the anger of her young mistress.

Scarcely was Anielka attired in her prettiest dress, when Constantia came to her with a little box, from which she took several gay-colored ribbons, and decked her in them herself, that the serf might do her credit in the new family. And when Anielka, bending down to her feet thanked her, Constantia, with marvellous condescension, kissed her on her forehead. Even Leon cast an admiring glance upon her. His servant soon after came to conduct her to the carriage, and showing her where to seat herself, they rolled off quickly towards Radapol.

For the first time in her life Anielka rode in a carriage. Her head turned quite giddy, she could not look at the trees and fields as they flew past her; but by degrees she became more accustomed to it, and the fresh air enlivening her spirits, she performed the rest of the journey in a tolerably happy state of mind. At last they arrived in the spacious court-yard before the Palace of Radapol, the dwelling of a once rich and powerful Polish family, now partly in ruin. It was evident, even to Anielka, that the marriage was one for money on the one side, and for rank on the other.

Among other renovations at the castle, occasioned by the approaching marriage, the owner of it, Prince Pelazia, had obtained singers for the chapel, and had engaged Signor Justiniani, an Italian, as chapel-master. Immediately on Leon's arrival, Anielka was presented to him. He made her sing a scale, and pronounced her voice to be excellent.

Anielka found that, in Radapol, she was treated with a little more

consideration than at Olgogrod, although she had often to submit to the caprices of her new mistress, and she found less time to read. But to console herself, she gave all her attention to singing, which she practiced several hours a day. Her naturally great capacity, under the guidance of the Italian, began to develop itself steadily. Besides sacred, he taught her operatic music. On one occasion Anielka sung an aria in so impassioned and masterly a style, that the enraptured Justiniani clapped his hands for joy, skipped about the room, and not finding words enough to praise her, exclaimed several times, “Prima Donna! Prima Donna!”

But the lessons were interrupted. The Princess’s wedding-day was fixed upon, after which event she and Leon were to go to Florence, and Anielka was to accompany them. Alas! feelings which gave her poignant misery still clung to her. She despised herself for her weakness; but she loved Leon. The sentiment was too deeply implanted in her bosom to be eradicated; too strong to be resisted. It was the first love of a young and guileless heart, and had grown in silence and despair.

Anielka was most anxious to know something of her adopted parents. Once, after the old prince had heard her singing, he asked her with great kindness about her home. She replied, that she was an orphan, and had been taken by force from those who had so kindly supplied the place of parents. Her apparent attachment to the old bee-keeper and his wife so pleased the prince, that he said, “You are a good child, Anielka, and to-morrow I will send you to visit them. You shall take them some presents.”

Anielka, overpowered with gratitude, threw herself at the feet of the prince. She dreamed all night of the happiness that was in store for her, and the joy of the poor, forsaken, old people; and when the next morning she set off, she could scarcely restrain her impatience. At last they approached the cabin; she saw the forest, with its tall trees, and the meadows covered with flowers. She leaped from the carriage, that she might be nearer these trees and flowers, every one of which she seemed to recognize. The weather was beautiful. She breathed with avidity the pure air which, in imagination, brought to her the kisses and caresses of her poor father! Her foster-father was, doubtless, occupied with his bees; but his wife?

Anielka opened the door of the cabin; all was silent and deserted. The arm-chair on which the poor old woman used to sit, was overturned in a corner. Anielka was chilled by a fearful presentiment. She went with a slow step towards the bee-hives; there she saw a little boy tending the bees, whilst the old man was stretched on the ground beside him. The rays of the sun, falling on his pale and sickly face, showed that he was very ill. Anielka stooped down over him, and said, “It is I, it is Anielka, your own Anielka, who always loves you.”

The old man raised his head, gazed upon her with a ghastly smile, and took off his cap.

“And my good old mother, where is she?” Anielka asked.

“She is dead!” answered the old man, and falling back he began laughing idiotically. Anielka wept. She gazed earnestly on the worn frame, the pale and wrinkled cheeks, in which scarcely a sign of life could be perceived; it seemed to her that he had suddenly fallen asleep, and not wishing to disturb him, she went to the carriage for the presents. When she returned, she took his hand. It was cold. The poor old bee-keeper had breathed his last!

Anielka was carried almost senseless back to the carriage, which quickly returned with her to the castle. There she revived a little; but the recollection that she was now quite alone in the world, almost drove her to despair.

Her master’s wedding and the journey to Florence were a dream to her. Though the strange sights of a strange city slowly restored her perceptions, they did not her cheerfulness. She felt as if she could no longer endure the misery of her life; she prayed to die.

“Why are you so unhappy?” said the Count Leon kindly to her, one day.

To have explained the cause of her wretchedness would have been death indeed.

“I am going to give you a treat,” continued Leon. “A celebrated singer is to appear to-night in the theatre. I will send you to hear her, and afterwards you shall sing to me what you remember of her performances.”

Anielka went. It was a new era in her existence. Herself, by this time, an artist, she could forget her griefs, and enter with her whole soul into the beauties of the art she now heard practised in perfection for the first time. To music a chord responded in her breast which vibrated powerfully. During the performances she was at one moment pale and trembling, tears rushing into her eyes, at another, she was ready to throw herself at the feet of the cantatrice, in an ecstasy of admiration. “Prima donna,”—by that name the public called on her to receive their applause, and it was the same, thought Anielka, that Justiniani had bestowed upon her. Could she also be a prima donna? What a glorious destiny! To be able to communicate one’s own emotions to masses of entranced listeners; to awaken in them, by the power of the voice, grief, love, terror.

Strange thoughts continued to haunt her on her return home. She was unable to sleep. She formed desperate plans. At last she resolved to throw off the yoke of servitude, and the still more painful slavery of feelings which her pride disdained. Having learnt the address of the prima donna, she went early

one morning to her house.

On entering she said, in French, almost incoherently, so great was her agitation—“Madam, I am a poor serf belonging to a Polish family who have lately arrived in Florence. I have escaped from them; protect, shelter me. They say I can sing.”

The Signora Teresina, a warm-hearted, passionate Italian, was interested by her artless earnestness. She said, “Poor child! you must have suffered much,”—she took Anielka’s hand in hers. “You say you can sing; let me hear you.” Anielka seated herself on an ottoman. She clasped her hands over knees, and tears fell into her lap. With plaintive pathos, and perfect truth of intonation, she prayed in song. The Hymn to the Virgin seemed to Teresina to be offered up by inspiration.

The Signora was astonished. “Where,” she asked, in wonder, “were you taught?”

Anielka narrated her history, and when she had finished, the prima donna spoke so kindly to her that she felt as if she had known her for years. Anielka was Teresina’s guest that day and the next. After the opera, on the third day, the prima donna made her sit beside her, and said:—

“I think you are a very good girl, and you shall stay with me always.”

The girl was almost beside herself with joy.

“We will never part. Do you consent, Anielka?”

“Do not call me Anielka. Give me instead some Italian name.”

“Well, then, be Giovanna. The dearest friend I ever had—but whom I have lost—was named Giovanna,” said the prima donna.

“Then, I will be another Giovanna to you.”

Teresina then said, “I hesitated to receive you at first, for your sake as well as mine; but you are safe now. I learn that your master and mistress, after searching vainly for you, have returned to Poland.”

From this time Anielka commenced an entirely new life. She took lessons in singing every day from the Signora, and got an engagement to appear in inferior characters at the theatre. She had now her own income, and her own servant—she, who had till then been obliged to serve herself. She acquired the Italian language rapidly, and soon passed for a native of the country.

So passed three years. New and varied impressions failed, however, to blot out the old ones. Anielka arrived at great perfection in her singing, and even began to surpass the prima donna, who was losing her voice from weakness of the chest. This sad discovery changed the cheerful temper of Teresina. She

ceased to sing in public; for she could not endure to excite pity where she had formerly commanded admiration.

She determined to retire. “You,” she said to Anielka, “shall now assert your claim to the first rank in the vocal art. You will maintain it. You surpass me. Often, on hearing you sing, I have scarcely been able to stifle a feeling of jealousy.”

Anielka placed her hand on Teresina’s shoulder, and kissed her.

“Yes,” continued Teresina, regardless of everything but the bright future she was shaping for her friend. “We will go to Vienna—there you will be understood and appreciated. You shall sing at the Italian Opera, and I will be by your side—unknown, no longer sought, worshipped—but will glory in your triumphs. They will be a repetition of my own; for have I not taught you? Will they not be the result of my work?”

Though Anielka’s ambition was fired, her heart was softened, and she wept violently.

Five months had scarcely elapsed when a furore was created in Vienna by the first appearance, at the Italian Opera, of the Signora Giovanna. Her enormous salary at once afforded her the means of even extravagant expenditure. Her haughty treatment of male admirers only attracted new ones; but in the midst of her triumphs, she thought often of the time when the poor orphan of Pobereze was cared for by nobody. This remembrance made her receive the flatteries of the crowd with an ironical smile; their fine speeches fell coldly on her ear, their eloquent looks made no impression on her heart: that, no change could alter, no temptation win.

In the flood of unexpected success a new misfortune overwhelmed her. Since their arrival at Vienna, Teresina’s health rapidly declined, and in the sixth month of Anielka’s operatic reign she expired, leaving all her wealth, which was considerable, to her friend.

Once more Anielka was alone in the world. Despite all the honors and blandishments of her position, the old feeling of desolateness came upon her. The new shock destroyed her health. She was unable to appear on the stage. To sing was a painful effort; she grew indifferent to what passed around her. Her greatest consolation was in succoring the poor and friendless, and her generosity was most conspicuous to all young orphan girls without fortune. She had never ceased to love her native land, and seldom appeared in society, unless it was to meet her countrymen. If ever she sang, it was in Polish.

A year had elapsed since the death of the Signora Teresina when the Count Selka, a rich noble of Volkynia, at that time in Vienna, solicited her presence at a party. It was impossible to refuse the Count and his lady, from whom she had

received great kindness. She went. When in their saloons, filled with all the fashion and aristocracy in Vienna, the name of Giovanna was announced, a general murmur was heard. She entered, pale and languid, and proceeded between the two rows made for her by the admiring assembly, to the seat of honor, beside the mistress of the house.

Shortly after, the Count Selka led her to the piano. She sat down before it, and thinking what she should sing, glanced round upon the assembly. She could not help feeling that the admiration which beamed from the faces around her was the work of her own merit, for had she neglected the great gift of nature, her voice, she could not have excited it. With a blushing cheek, and eyes sparkling with honest pride, she struck the piano with a firm hand, and from her seemingly weak and delicate chest poured forth a touching Polish melody, with a voice pure, sonorous, and plaintive. Tears were in many eyes, and the beating of every heart was quickened.

The song was finished, but the wondering silence was unbroken. Giovanna leaned exhausted on the arm of the chair, and cast down her eyes. On again raising them, she perceived a gentleman who gazed fixedly at her, as if he still listened to echoes which had not yet died within him. The master of the house, to dissipate his thoughtlessness, led him towards Giovanna. “Let me present to you, Signora,” he said, “a countryman, the Count Leon Roszynski.”

The lady trembled; she silently bowed, fixed her eyes on the ground, and dared not raise them. Pleading indisposition, which was fully justified by her pallid features, she soon after withdrew.

When, on the following day, Giovanna’s servant announced the Counts Selka and Roszynski, a peculiar smile played on her lips; and when they entered, she received the latter with the cold and formal politeness of a stranger. Controlling the feelings of her heart, she schooled her features to an expression of indifference. It was manifest from Leon’s manner, that without the remotest recognition, an indefinable presentiment regarding her possessed him. The Counts had called to know if Giovanna had recovered from her indisposition. Leon begged to be permitted to call again.

Where was his wife? why did he never mention her? Giovanna continually asked herself these questions when they had departed.

A few nights after, the Count Leon arrived, sad and thoughtful. He prevailed on Giovanna to sing one of her Polish melodies, which she told him she had been taught, when a child, by her nurse. Roszynski, unable to restrain the expression of an intense admiration he had long felt, frantically seized her hand, and exclaimed, “I love you!”

She withdrew it from his grasp, remained silent for a few minutes, and then

said slowly, distinctly, and ironically, “But I do not love you, Count Roszynski.”

Leon rose from his seat. He pressed his hands to his brow, and was silent. Giovanna remained calm and tranquil. “It is a penalty from Heaven,” continued Leon, as if speaking to himself, “for not having fulfilled my duty as a husband towards one whom I chose voluntarily, but without reflection. I wronged her, and am punished.”

Giovanna turned her eyes upon him. Leon continued, “Young, and with a heart untouched, I married a princess about ten years older than myself, of eccentric habits and bad temper. She treated me as an inferior. She dissipated the fortune hoarded up with so much care by my parents, and yet was ashamed, on account of my origin, to be called by my name. Happily for me, she was fond of visiting and amusements. Otherwise, to escape from her, I might have become a gambler, or worse; but to avoid meeting her, I remained at home—for there she seldom was. At first from ennui, but afterwards from real delight in the occupation, I gave myself up to study. Reading formed my mind and heart. I became a changed being. Some months ago my father died, my sister went to Lithuania, whilst my mother, in her old age, and with her ideas, was quite incapable of understanding my sorrow. So when my wife went to the baths for the benefit of her ruined health, I came here in the hope of meeting with some of my former friends—I saw you—”

Giovanna blushed like one detected; but speedily recovering herself, asked, with calm pleasantry, “Surely you do not number me among your former friends?”

“I know not. I have been bewildered. It is strange; but from the moment I saw you at Count Selka’s, a powerful instinct of love overcame me; not a new feeling; but as if some latent, long-hid, undeveloped sentiment had suddenly burst forth into an uncontrollable passion. I love, I adore you. I——”

The Prima Donna interrupted him—not with speech, but with a look which awed, which chilled him. Pride, scorn, irony sat in her smile. Satire darted from her eyes. After a pause she repeated slowly and pointedly, “Love me, Count Roszynski?”

“Such is my destiny,” he replied. “Nor, despite your scorn, will I struggle against it. I feel it is my fate ever to love you; I fear it is my fate never to be loved by you. It is dreadful.”

Giovanna witnessed the Count’s emotion with sadness. “To have,” she said mournfully, “one’s first, pure, ardent, passionate affection unrequited, scorned, made a jest of, is indeed a bitterness, almost equal to that of death.”

She made a strong effort to conceal her emotion. Indeed she controlled it

so well as to speak the rest with a sort of gaiety.

“You have at least been candid, Count Roszynski; I will imitate you by telling a little history that occurred in your country. There was a poor girl born and bred a serf to her wealthy lord and master. When scarcely fifteen years old, she was torn from a state of happy rustic freedom—the freedom of humility and content—to be one of the courtly slaves of the Palace. Those who did not laugh at her, scolded her. One kind word was vouchsafed to her, and that came from the lord’s son. She nursed it and treasured it; till, from long concealing and restraining her feelings, she at last found that gratitude had changed into a sincere affection. But what does a man of the world care for the love of a serf? It does not even flatter his vanity. The young nobleman did not understand the source of her tears and her grief, and he made a present of her, as he would have done of some animal, to his betrothed.”

Leon, agitated and somewhat enlightened, would have interrupted her; but Giovanna said, “Allow me to finish my tale. Providence did not abandon this poor orphan, but permitted her to rise to distinction by the talent with which she was endowed by nature. The wretched serf of Pobereze became a celebrated Italian cantatrice. Then her former lord meeting her in society, and seeing her admired and courted by all the world, without knowing who she really was, was afflicted, as if by the dictates of Heaven, with a love for this same girl,—with a guilty love”—

And Giovanna rose, as she said this, to remove herself further from her admirer.

“No, no!” he replied earnestly; “with a pure and holy passion.”

“Impossible!” returned Giovanna. “Are you not married?”

Roszynski vehemently tore a letter from his vest, and handed it to Giovanna. It was sealed with black, for it announced the death of his wife at the baths. It had only arrived that morning.

“You have lost no time,” said the cantatrice, endeavoring to conceal her feelings under an iron mask of reproach.

There was a pause. Each dared not speak. The Count knew—but without actually and practically believing what seemed incredible—that Anielka and Giovanna were the same person—his slave. That terrible relationship checked him. Anielka, too, had played her part to the end of endurance. The long-cherished tenderness—the faithful love of her life, could not longer be wholly mastered. Hitherto they had spoken in Italian. She now said in Polish,

“You have a right, my Lord Roszynski, to that poor Anielka who escaped from the service of your wife in Florence; you can force her back to your

palace, to its meanest work, but”—

“Have mercy on me!” cried Leon.

“But,” continued the serf of Pobereze, firmly, “you cannot force me to love you.”

“Do not mock—do not torture me more; you are sufficiently revenged. I will not offend you by importunity. You must indeed hate me! But remember that we Poles wished to give freedom to our serfs; and for that very reason our country was invaded and dismembered by despotic powers. We must therefore continue to suffer slavery as it exists in Russia; but, soul and body, we are averse to it; and when our country once more becomes free, be assured no shadow of slavery will remain in the land. Curse then our enemies, and pity us that we stand in such a desperate position between Russian bayonets and Siberia, and the hatred of our serfs.”

So saying, and without waiting for a reply, Leon rushed from the room. The door was closed. Giovanna listened to the sounds of his rapid footsteps till they died in the street. She would have followed, but dared not. She ran to the window. Roszynski’s carriage was rolling rapidly away, and she exclaimed vainly, “I love you, Leon; I loved you always!”

Her tortures were unendurable. To relieve them she hastened to her desk, and wrote these words:—

“Dearest Leon, forgive me; let the past be forever forgotten. Return to your Anielka. She always has been, ever will be yours.”

She despatched the missive. Was it too late? or would it bring him back? In the latter hope she retired to her chamber, to execute a little project.

Leon was in despair. He saw he had been premature in so soon declaring his passion after the news of his wife’s death, and vowed he would not see Anielka again for several months. To calm his agitation, he had ridden some miles into the country. When he returned to his hotel after some hours, he found her note. With the wild delight it had darted into his soul, he flew back to her.

On regaining her saloon a new and terrible vicissitude seemed to sport with his passion:—she was nowhere to be seen. Had the Italian cantatrice fled? Again he was in despair; stupefied with disappointment. As he stood uncertain how to act in the midst of the floor, he heard, as from a distance, an Ave Maria poured forth in tones he half-recognized. The sounds brought back to him a host of recollections; a weeping serf, the garden of his own palace. In a state of new rapture he followed the voice. He traced it to an inner chamber, and he there beheld the lovely singer kneeling in the costume of a Polish serf. She

rose, greeted Leon with a touching smile, and stepped forward with serious bashfulness. Leon extended his arms; she sank into them; and in that fond embrace all past wrongs and sorrows were forgotten! Anielka drew from her bosom a little purse, and took from it a piece of silver. It was the rouble. Now, Leon did not smile at it. He comprehended the sacredness of this little gift; and some tears of repentance fell upon Anielka's hand.

A few months after, Leon wrote to the steward of Olgogrod to prepare everything splendidly for the reception of his second wife. He concluded his letter with these words:—"I understand that in the dungeon beneath my palace there are some unfortunate men, who were imprisoned during my father's lifetime. Let them be instantly liberated. This is my first act of gratitude to God, who has so infinitely blessed me!"

Anielka longed ardently to behold her native land. They left Vienna immediately after the wedding, although it was in the middle of January.

It was already quite dark when the carriage, with its four horses, stopped in front of the portico of the palace of Olgogrod. Whilst the footman was opening the door on one side, a beggar soliciting alms appeared at the other, where Anielka was seated. Happy to perform a good action, as she crossed the threshold of her new home, she gave him some money; but the man, instead of thanking her, returned her bounty with a savage laugh, at the same time scowling at her in the fiercest manner from beneath his thick and shaggy brows. The strangeness of this circumstance sensibly affected Anielka, and clouded her happiness. Leon soothed and re-assured her. In the arms of her beloved husband, she forgot all but the happiness of being the idol of his affections.

Fatigue and excitement made the night most welcome. All was dark and silent around the palace, and some hours of the night had passed, when suddenly flames burst forth from several parts of the building at once. The palace was enveloped in fire; it raged furiously. The flames mounted higher and higher; the windows cracked with a fearful sound, and the smoke penetrated into the most remote apartments.

A single figure of a man was seen stealing over the snow, which lay like a winding-sheet on the solitary waste; his cautious steps were heard on the frozen snow as it crisped beneath his tread. It was the beggar who had accosted Anielka. On a rising ground, he turned to gaze on the terrible scene. "No more unfortunate wretches will now be doomed to pass their lives in your dungeons," he exclaimed. "What was my crime? Reminding my master of the lowness of his birth. For this they tore me from my only child—my darling little Anielka; they had no pity even for her orphan state; let them perish all!"

Suddenly a young and beautiful creature rushes wildly to one of the

principal windows: she makes a violent effort to escape. For a moment her lovely form, clothed in white, shines in terrible relief against the background of blazing curtains and walls of fire, and as instantly sinks back into the blazing element. Behind her is another figure, vainly endeavoring to aid her,—he perishes also; neither are ever seen again!

This appalling tragedy horrified even the perpetrator of the crime. He rushed from the place; and as he heard the crash of the falling walls, he closed his ears with his hands, and darted on faster and faster.

The next day some peasants discovered the body of a man frozen to death, lying on a heap of snow,—it was that of the wretched incendiary. Providence, mindful of his long, of his cruel imprisonment and sufferings, spared him the anguish of knowing that the mistress of the palace he had destroyed, and who perished in the flames, was his own beloved daughter—the Serf of Pobereze!

III.

MY WONDERFUL ADVENTURES IN SKITZLAND.

I am fond of Gardening. I like to dig. If among the operations of the garden any need for such a work can be at any time discovered or invented, I like to dig a hole.

On the 3d of March, 1849, I began a hole behind the kitchen wall, whereinto it was originally intended to transplant a plum tree. The exercise was so much to my taste, that a strange humor impelled me to dig on. A fascination held me to the task. I neglected my business. I disappeared from the earth’s surface. A boy who worked a basket by means of a rope and pulley, aided me; so aided, I confined my whole attention to spade labor. The centripetal force seemed to have made me its especial victim. I dug on until Autumn. In the beginning of November I observed that, upon percussion, the sound given by the floor of my pit was resonant. I did not intermit my labor, urged as I was by a mysterious instinct downwards. On applying my ear, I occasionally heard a subdued sort of rattle, which caused me to form a theory that the centre of the earth might be composed of mucus. In November, the ground broke beneath me into a hollow, and I fell a considerable distance. I alighted on the box-seat of a four-horse coach, which happened to be running at that time immediately underneath. The coachman took no notice whatever of my sudden arrival by his side. He was so completely muffled up, that I could observe only the skilful way in which he manipulated reins and whip. The horses were yellow. I had seen no more than this, when the guard’s horn

blew, and presently we pulled up at an inn. A waiter came out, and appeared to collect four bags from the passengers inside the coach. He then came round to me.

“Dine here, Sir?”

“Yes, certainly,” said I. I like to dine—not the sole point of resemblance between myself and the great Johnson.

“Trouble you for your stomach, Sir.”

While the waiter was looking up with a polite stare into my puzzled face, my neighbor, the coachman, put one hand within his outer coat, as if to feel for money in his waistcoat pocket. Directly afterwards his fingers came again to light, and pulled forth an enormous sack. Notwithstanding that it was abnormally enlarged, I knew by observation of its form and texture that this was a stomach, with the œsophagus attached. This, then, the waiter caught as it was thrown down to him, and hung it carelessly over his arm, together with the four smaller bags (which I now knew to be also stomachs) collected from the passengers within the coach. I started up, and as I happened to look round, observed a skeleton face upon the shoulders of a gentleman who sat immediately behind my back. My own features were noticed at the same time by the guard, who now came forward touching his hat.

“Beg your pardon, Sir, but you’ve been and done it.”

“Done what?”

“Why, Sir, you should have booked your place, and not come up in this clandestine way. However, you’ve been and done it!”

“My good man, what have I done?”

“Why, Sir, the Baron Terroro’s eyes had the box seat, and I strongly suspect you’ve been and sat upon them.”

I looked involuntarily to see whether I had been sitting upon anything except the simple cushion. Truly enough, there was an eye, which I had crushed and flattened.

“Only one,” I said.

“Worse for you, and better for him. The other eye had time to escape, and it will know you again, that’s certain. Well, it’s no business of mine. Of course you’ve no appetite now for dinner? Better pay your fare, Sir. To the Green Hippopotamus and Spectacles, where we put up, it’s ten-and-six.”

“Is there room inside?” I inquired. It was advisable to shrink from observation.

“Yes, Sir. The inside passengers are mostly skeleton. There’s room for three, Sir. Inside, one-pound-one.”

I paid the money, and became an inside passenger.

Professor Essig’s Lectures on Anatomy had so fortified me, that I did not shrink from entering the Skitzton coach. It contained living limbs, loose or attached to skeletons in other respects bare, except that they were clothed with broadcloth garments, cut after the English fashion. One passenger only had a complete face of flesh, he had also one living hand; the other hand I guessed was bony, because it was concealed in a glove obviously padded. By observing the fit of his clothes, I came to a conclusion that this gentleman was stuffed throughout; that all his limbs, except the head and hand, were artificial. Two pair of Legs, in woollen stockings, and a pair of Ears, were in a corner of the coach, and in another corner there were nineteen or twenty Scalps.

I thought it well to look astonished at nothing, and, having pointed in a careless manner to the scalps, asked what might be their destination? The person with the Face and Hand replied to me; and although evidently himself a gentleman, he addressed me with a tone of unconcealed respect.

“They are going to Skitzton, Sir, to the hairdresser’s.”

“Yes, to be sure,” I said. “They are to make Natural Skin Wigs. I might have known.”

“I beg your pardon, Sir. There is a ball to-morrow night at Culmsey. But the gentry do not like to employ village barbers, and therefore many of the better class of people send their hair to Skitzton, and receive it back by the return coach properly cut and curled.”

“Oh,” said I. “Ah! Oh, indeed!”

“Dinners, gentlemen!” said a voice at the window, and the waiter handed in four stomachs, now tolerably well filled. Each passenger received his property, and pulling open his chest with as much composure as if he were unbuttoning his waistcoat, restored his stomach, with a dinner in it, to the right position. Then the reckonings were paid, and the coach started.

I thought of my garden, and much wished that somebody could throw Professor Essig down the hole that I had dug. A few things were to be met with in Skitzland which would rather puzzle him. They puzzled me; but I took refuge in silence, and so fortified, protected my ignorance from an exposure.

“You are going to court, Sir, I presume?” said my Face and Hand friend, after a short pause. His was the only mouth in the coach, excepting mine, so that he was the only passenger able to enter into conversation.

“My dear Sir,” I replied, “let me be frank with you. I have arrived here

unexpectedly out of another world. Of the manners and customs, nay, of the very nature of the people who inhabit this country, I know nothing. For any information you can give me, I shall be very grateful."

My friend smiled incredulity, and said,

"Whatever you are pleased to profess, I will believe. What you are pleased to feign a wish for, I am proud to furnish. In Skitzland, the inhabitants, until they come of age, retain that illustrious appearance which you have been so fortunate as never to have lost. During the night of his twenty-first birthday, each Skitzlander loses the limbs which up to that period have received from him no care, no education. Of those neglected parts the skeletons alone remain, but all those organs which he has employed sufficiently continue unimpaired. I, for example, devoted to the study of the law, forgot all occupation but to think, to use my senses, and to write. I rarely used my legs, and therefore Nature has deprived me of them."

"But," I observed, "it seems that in Skitzland you are able to take yourselves to pieces."

"No one has that power more largely than yourself. What organs we have we can detach on any service. When dispersed, a simple force of Nature directs all corresponding members whither to fly that they may re-assemble."

"If they can fly," I asked, "why are they sent in coaches? There were a pair of eyes on the box-seat."

"Simply for safety against accidents. Eyes flying alone are likely to be seized by birds, and incur many dangers. They are sent, therefore, usually under protection, like any other valuable parcel."

"Do many accidents occur?"

"Very few. For mutual protection, and also because a single member is often all that has been left existing of a fellow Skitzlander, our laws, as you, Sir, know much better than myself, estimate the destruction of any part absent on duty from its skeleton as a crime equivalent to murder——"

After this I held my tongue. Presently my friend again inquired whether I was going up to Court?

"Why should I go to Court?"

"Oh, Sir, it pleases you to be facetious. You must be aware that any Skitzlander who has been left by Nature in possession of every limb, sits in the Assembly of the Perfect, or the Upper House, and receives many State emoluments and dignities."

"Are there many members of that Upper Assembly?"

“Sir, there were forty-two. But if you are now travelling to claim your seat, the number will be raised to forty-three.”

“The Baron Terroro—” I hinted.

“My brother, Sir. His eyes are on the box-seat under my care. Undoubtedly he is a Member of the Upper House.”

I was now anxious to get out of the coach as soon as possible. My wish was fulfilled after the next pause. One Eye, followed by six Pairs of Arms, with strong hard Hands belonging to them, flew in at the window. I was collared; the door was opened, and all hands were at work to drag me out and away. The twelve Hands whisked me through the air, while the one Eye sailed before us, like an old bird, leader of the flight.

What sort of sky have they in Skitzland? Our earth overarches them, and, as the sun-light filters through, it causes a subdued illumination with very pure rays. Skitzland is situated nearly in the centre of our globe, it hangs there like a shrunken kernel in the middle of a nutshell. The height from Skitzland to the over-arching canopy is great; so great, that if I had not fallen personally from above the firmament, I should have considered it to be a blue sky similar to ours. At night it is quite dark; but during the day there is an appearance in the Heaven of white spots; their glistening reminded me of stars. I noticed them as I was being conveyed to prison by the strong arms of justice, for it was by a detachment of members from the Skitzton Police that I was now hurried along. The air was very warm, and corroborated the common observation of an increase of heat as you get into the pith of our planet. The theory of Central Fire, however, is, you perceive, quite overturned by my experience.

We alighted near the outskirts of a large and busy town. Through its streets I was dragged publicly, much stared at, and much staring. The street life was one busy nightmare of disjointed limbs. Professor Essig, could he have been dragged through Skitzton, would have delivered his farewell lecture upon his return. “Gentlemen, Fuit Ilium—Fuit Ischium—Fuit Sacrum—Anatomy has lost her seat among the sciences. My occupation’s gone.” Professor Owen’s Book “On the Nature of Limbs,” must contain, in the next edition, an Appendix “Upon Limbs in Skitzland.” I was dragged through the streets, and all that I saw there, in the present age of little faith, I dare not tell you. I was dragged through the streets to prison and there duly chained, after having been subjected to the scrutiny of about fifty couples of eyes drawn up in a line within the prison door. I was chained in a dark cell, a cell so dark that I could very faintly perceive the figure of some being who was my companion. Whether this individual had ears wherewith to hear, and mouth wherewith to answer me, I could not see, but at a venture I addressed him. My thirst for information was unconquerable; I began, therefore, immediately with a

question:

“Friend, what are those stars which we see shining in the sky at mid-day?”

An awful groan being an unsatisfactory reply, I asked again.

“Man, do not mock at misery. You will yourself be one of them.”

‘The Teachers shall shine like Stars in the Firmament.’ I have a propensity for teaching, but was puzzled to discover how I could give so practical an illustration of the text of Fichte.

“Believe me,” I said, “I am strangely ignorant. Explain yourself.”

He answered with a hollow voice:

“Murderers are shot up out of mortars into the sky, and stick there. Those white, glistening specks, they are their skeletons.”

Justice is prompt in Skitzland. I was tried incredibly fast by a jury of twelve men who had absolutely heads. The judges had nothing but brain, mouth, and ear. Three powerful tongues defended me, but as they were not suffered to talk nonsense, they had little to say. The whole case was too clear to be talked into cloudiness. Baron Terroro, in person, deposed, that he had sent his eyes to see a friend in Culmsey, and that they were returning on the Skitzton coach, when I, illegally, came with my whole bulk upon the box-seat, which he occupied. That one of his eyes was, in that manner, totally destroyed, but that the other eye, having escaped, identified me, and brought to his brain intelligence of the calamity which had befallen. He deposed further, that having received this information, he despatched his uncrushed eye with arms from the police-office, and accompanied with several members of the detective force, to capture the offender, and to procure the full proofs of my crime. A sub-inspector of Skitzton Police then deposed that he sent three of his faculties, with his mouth, eye, and ear, to meet the coach. That the driver, consisting only of a stomach and hands, had been unable to observe what passed. That the guard, on the contrary, had taxed me with my deed, that he had seen me rise from my seat upon the murdered eye, and that he had heard me make confession of my guilt. The guard was brought next into court, and told his tale. Then I was called upon for my defence. If a man wearing a cloth coat and trousers, and talking excellent English, were to plead at the Old Bailey that he had broken into some citizen’s premises accidentally by falling from the moon, his tale would be received in London as mine was in Skitzton. I was severely reprimanded for my levity, and ordered to be silent. The Judge summed up and the Jury found me Guilty. The Judge who had put on the black cap before the verdict was pronounced, held out no hope of mercy, and straightway sentenced me to Death, according to the laws and usage of the Realm.

The period which intervenes between the sentence and execution of a criminal in Skitzland, is not longer than three hours. In order to increase the terror of death by contrast, the condemned man is suffered to taste at the table of life from which he is banished, the most luscious viands. All the attainable enjoyment that his wit can ask for, he is allowed to have, during the three hours before he is shot, like rubbish, off the fields of Skitzland.

Under guard, of course, I was now to be led whithersoever I desired.

Several churches were open. They never are all shut in Skitzton. I was taken into one. A man with heart and life was preaching. People with hearts were in some pews; people with brains, in others; people with ears only, in some. In a neighboring church there was a popular preacher, a skeleton with life. His congregation was a crowd of ears, and nothing more.

There was a day-performance at the Opera. I went to that. Fine lungs and mouths possessed the stage, and afterwards there was a great bewilderment with legs. I was surprised to notice that many of the most beautiful ladies were carried in and out, and lifted about like dolls. My guides sneered at my pretence of ignorance, when I asked why this was. But they were bound to please me in all practicable ways, so they informed me, although somewhat pettishly. It seems that in Skitzland, ladies who possess and have cultivated only their good looks, lose at the age of twenty-one, all other endowments. So they become literally dolls, but dolls of a superior kind; for they can not only open and shut their eyes, but also sigh; wag slowly with their heads, and sometimes take a pocket-handkerchief out of a bag, and drop it. But as their limbs are powerless, they have to be lifted and dragged about after the fashion that excited my astonishment.

I said then, “Let me see the Poor.” They took me to a Workhouse. The men, there, were all yellow; and they wore a dress which looked as though it were composed of asphalte; it had also a smell like that of pitch. I asked for explanation of these things.

A Superintendent of Police remarked that I was losing opportunities of real enjoyment for the idle purpose of persisting in my fable of having dropped down from the sky. However, I compelled him to explain to me what was the reason of these things. The information I obtained was chiefly this:—that Nature, in Skitzland, never removes the stomach. Every man has to feed himself; and the necessity for finding food, joined to the necessity for buying clothes, is a mainspring whereby the whole clockwork of civilized life is kept in motion. Now, if a man positively cannot feed and clothe himself, he becomes a pauper. He then goes to the Workhouse, where he has his stomach filled with a cement. That stopping lasts a life-time, and he thereafter needs no food. His body, however, becomes yellow by the superfluity of bile. The

yellow-boy, which is the Skitzland epithet for pauper, is at the same time provided with a suit of clothes. The clothes are of a material so tough that they can be worn unimpaired for more than eighty years. The pauper is now freed from care, but were he in this state cast loose upon society, since he has not that stimulus to labor which excites industry in other men, he would become an element of danger in the state. Nature no longer compelling him to work, the law compels him. The remainder of his life is forfeit to the uses of his country. He labors at the workhouse, costing nothing more than the expense of lodging, after the first inconsiderable outlay for cement wherewith to plug his stomach, and for the one suit of apparel.

When we came out of the workhouse, all the bells in the town were tolling. The Superintendent told me that I had sadly frittered away time, for I had now no more than half an hour to live. Upon that I leaned my back against a post, and asked him to prepare me for my part in the impending ceremony by giving me a little information on the subject of executions.

I found that it was usual for a man to be executed with great ceremony upon the spot whereon his crime had been committed. That in case of rebellions or tumults in the provinces, when large numbers were not unfrequently condemned to death, the sentence of the law was carried out in the chief towns of the disturbed districts. That large numbers of people were thus sometimes discharged from a single market-place, and that the repeated strokes appeared to shake, or crack, or pierce in some degree that portion of the sky towards which the artillery had been directed. I here at once saw that I had discovered the true cause of earthquakes and volcanoes; and this shows how great light may be thrown upon theories concerning the hidden constitution of this earth, by going more deeply into the matter of it than had been done by any one before I dug my hole. Our volcanoes, it is now proved, are situated over the market-places of various provincial towns in Skitzland. When a revolution happens, the rebels are shot up,—discharged from mortars by means of an explosive material evidently far more powerful than our gunpowder, or gun-cotton; and they are pulverized by the friction in grinding their way through the earth. How simple and easy truth appears, when we have once arrived at it.

The sound of muffled drums approached us, and a long procession turned the corner of a street. I was placed in the middle of it,—Baron Terroro by my side. All then began to float so rapidly away, that I was nearly left alone, when forty arms came back and collared me. It was considered to be a proof of my refractory disposition, that I would make no use of my innate power of flight. I was therefore dragged in this procession swiftly through the air, drums playing, fifes lamenting.

We alighted on the spot where I had fallen, and the hole through which I

had come I saw above me. It was very small, but the light from above shining more vividly through it made it look, with its rough edges, like a crumpled moon. A quantity of some explosive liquid was poured into a large mortar, which had been erected (under the eye of Baron Terroro) exactly where my misfortune happened. I was then thrust in, the Baron ramming me down, and pounding with a long stock or pestle upon my head in a noticeably vicious manner. The Baron then cried “Fire!” and as I shot out, in the midst of a blaze, I saw him looking upward.

By great good fortune, they had planted their artillery so well, that I was fired up through my hole again, and alighted in my own garden, just a little singed. My first thought was to run to an adjoining bed of vegetable marrows. Thirty vegetable marrows and two pumpkins I rained down to astonish the Skitzlanders, and I fervently hope that one of them may have knocked out the remaining eye of my vindictive enemy, the Baron. I then went into the pantry, and obtained a basket full of eggs, and having rained these down upon the Skitzlanders, I left them.

It was after breakfast when I went down to Skitzland, and I came back while the dinner bell was ringing.

IV.

LIZZIE LEIGH.

When Death is present in a household on a Christmas Day, the very contrast between the time as it now is, and the day as it has often been, gives a poignancy to sorrow,—a more utter blankness to the desolation. James Leigh died just as the far-away bells of Rochdale Church were ringing for morning service on Christmas Day, 1836. A few minutes before his death he opened his already glazing eyes, and made a faint motion of his lips, that he had yet something to say. She stooped close down, and caught the broken whisper, “I forgive her, Anne! May God forgive me.”

“Oh my love, my dear! only get well, and I will never cease showing my thanks for those words. May God in heaven bless thee for saying them. Thou’rt not so restless, my lad! may be—Oh God!”

For even while she spoke, he died.

They had been two-and-twenty years man and wife; for nineteen of those years their life had been as calm and happy, as the most perfect uprightness on the one side, and the most complete confidence and loving submission on the other, could make it. Milton’s famous line might have been framed and hung

up as the rule of their married life, for he was truly the interpreter, who stood between God and her; she would have considered herself wicked if she had ever dared even to think him austere, though as certainly as he was an upright man, so surely was he hard, stern, and inflexible. But for three years the moan and the murmur had never been out of her heart; she had rebelled against her husband as against a tyrant, with a hidden sullen rebellion, which tore up the old land-marks of wifely duty and affection, and poisoned the fountains whence gentlest love and reverence had been forever springing.

But those last blessed words replaced him on his throne in her heart, and called out penitent anguish for all the bitter estrangement of later years. It was this which made her refuse all the entreaties of her sons, that she would see the kind-hearted neighbors, who called on their way from church, to sympathize and condole. No! she would stay with the dead husband that had spoken tenderly at last, if for three years he had kept silence; who knew but what, if she had only been more gentle and less angrily reserved he might have relented earlier—and in time.

She sat rocking herself to and fro by the side of the bed, while the footsteps below went in and out; she had been in sorrow too long to have any violent burst of deep grief now; the furrows were well worn in her cheeks, and the tears flowed quietly, if incessantly, all the day long. But when the winter's night drew on, and the neighbors had gone away to their homes, she stole to the window, and gazed out, long and wistfully, over the dark gray moors. She did not hear her son's voice, as he spoke to her from the door, nor his footstep as he drew nearer. She started when he touched her.

"Mother! come down to us. There's no one but Will and me. Dearest mother, we do so want you." The poor lad's voice trembled, and he began to cry. It appeared to require an effort on Mrs. Leigh's part to tear herself away from the window, but with a sigh she complied with his request.

The two boys (for though Will was nearly twenty-one, she still thought of him as a lad) had done everything in their power to make the house-place comfortable for her. She herself, in the old days before her sorrow, had never made a brighter fire or a cleaner hearth, ready for her husband's return home, than now awaited her. The tea-things were all put out, and the kettle was boiling; and the boys had calmed their grief down into a kind of sober cheerfulness. They paid her every attention they could think of, but received little notice on her part; she did not resist—she rather submitted to all their arrangements; but they did not seem to touch her heart.

When the tea was ended,—it was merely the form of tea that had been gone through,—Will moved the things away to the dresser. His mother leant back languidly in her chair.

“Mother, shall Tom read you a chapter? He’s a better scholar than I.”

“Aye, lad!” said she, almost eagerly. “That’s it. Read me the Prodigal Son. Aye, aye, lad. Thank thee.”

Tom found the chapter, and read it in the high-pitched voice which is customary in village-schools. His mother bent forward, her lips parted, her eyes dilated; her whole body instinct with eager attention. Will sat with his head depressed, and hung down. He knew why that chapter had been chosen; and to him it recalled the family’s disgrace. When the reading was ended, he still hung down his head in gloomy silence. But her face was brighter than it had been before for the day. Her eyes looked dreamy, as if she saw a vision; and by-and-bye she pulled the Bible towards her, and putting her finger underneath each word, began to read them aloud in a low voice to herself; she read again the words of bitter sorrow and deep humiliation; but most of all she paused and brightened over the father’s tender reception of the repentant prodigal.

So passed the Christmas evening in the Upclose Farm.

The snow had fallen heavily over the dark waving moorland, before the day of the funeral. The black, storm-laden dome of heaven lay very still and close upon the white earth, as they carried the body forth out of the house which had known his presence so long as its ruling power. Two and two the mourners followed, making a black procession, in their winding march over the unbeaten snow, to Milne-Row Church—now lost in some hollow of the bleak moors, now slowly climbing the heavy ascents. There was no long tarrying after the funeral, for many of the neighbors who accompanied the body to the grave had far to go, and the great white flakes which came slowly down, were the boding fore-runners of a heavy storm. One old friend alone accompanied the widow and her sons to their home.

The Upclose Farm had belonged for generations to the Leighs; and yet its possession hardly raised them above the rank of laborers. There was the house and outbuildings, all of an old-fashioned kind, and about seven acres of barren, unproductive land, which they had never possessed capital enough to improve; indeed they could hardly rely upon it for subsistence; and it had been customary to bring up the sons to some trade—such as a wheelwright’s, or blacksmith’s.

James Leigh had left a will, in the possession of the old man who accompanied them home. He read it aloud. James had bequeathed the farm to his faithful wife, Anne Leigh, for her life-time, and afterwards to his son William. The hundred and odd-pounds in the savings-bank was to accumulate for Thomas.

After the reading was ended, Anne Leigh sat silent for a time; and then she asked to speak to Samuel Orme alone. The sons went into the back-kitchen, and thence strolled out into the fields regardless of the driving snow. The brothers were dearly fond of each other, although they were very different in character. Will, the elder, was like his father, stern, reserved, scrupulously upright. Tom (who was ten years younger) was gentle and delicate as a girl, both in appearance and character. He had always clung to his mother, and dreaded his father. They did not speak as they walked, for they were only in the habit of talking about facts, and hardly knew the more sophisticated language applied to the description of feelings.

Meanwhile their mother had taken hold of Samuel Orme's arm with her trembling hand.

"Samuel, I must let the farm—I must."

"Let the farm! What's come o'er the woman?"

"Oh, Samuel!" said she, her eyes swimming in tears, "I'm just fain to go and live in Manchester. I mun let the farm."

Samuel looked, and pondered, but did not speak for some time. At last he said—

"If thou hast made up thy mind, there's no speaking again it; and thou must e'en go. Thou'lt be sadly pottered wi' Manchester ways, but that's not my look out. Why, thou'lt have to buy potatoes, a thing thou hast never done afore in all thy born life. Well! it's not my look out. It's rather for me than again me. Our Jenny is going to be married to Tom Higginbotham, and he was speaking of wanting a bit of land to begin upon. His father will be dying sometime, I reckon, and then he'll step into the Croft Farm. But meanwhile"—

"Then, thou'lt let the farm," said she, still as eagerly as ever.

"Aye, aye, he'll take it fast enough, I've a notion. But I'll not drive a bargain with thee just now; it would not be right; we'll wait a bit."

"No; I cannot wait, settle it out at once."

"Well, well; I'll speak to Will about it. I see him out yonder. I'll step to him, and talk it over."

Accordingly he went and joined the two lads, and without more ado, began the subject to them.

"Will, thy mother is fain to go live in Manchester, and covets to let the farm. Now, I'm willing to take it for Tom Higginbotham; but I like to drive a keen bargain, and there would be no fun chaffering with thy mother just now. Let thee and me buckle to, my lad! and try and cheat each other; it will warm

us this cold day."

"Let the farm!" said both the lads at once, with infinite surprise. "Go live in Manchester!"

When Samuel Orme found that the plan had never before been named to either Will or Tom, he would have nothing to do with it, he said, until they had spoken to their mother; likely she was "dazed" by her husband's death; he would wait a day or two, and not name it to any one; not to Tom Higginbotham himself, or may be he would set his heart upon it. The lads had better go in and talk it over with their mother. He bade them good day, and left them.

Will looked very gloomy, but he did not speak till they got near the house. Then he said,—

"Tom, go to th' shippon, and supper the cows. I want to speak to mother alone."

When he entered the house-place, she was sitting before the fire, looking into its embers. She did not hear him come in; for some time she had lost her quick perception of outward things.

"Mother! what's this about going to Manchester?" asked he.

"Oh, lad!" said she, turning round and speaking in a beseeching tone, "I must go and seek our Lizzie. I cannot rest here for thinking on her. Many's the time I've left thy father sleeping in bed, and stole to th' window, and looked and looked my heart out towards Manchester, till I thought I must just set out and tramp over moor and moss straight away till I got there, and then lift up every downcast face till I came to our Lizzie. And often, when the south wind was blowing soft among the hollows, I've fancied (it could but be fancy, thou knowest) I heard her crying upon me; and I've thought the voice came closer and closer, till at last it was sobbing out 'Mother' close to the door; and I've stolen down, and undone the latch before now, and looked out into the still black night, thinking to see her,—and turned sick and sorrowful when I heard no living sound but the sough of the wind dying away. Oh! speak not to me of stopping here, when she may be perishing for hunger, like the poor lad in the parable." And now she lifted up her voice and wept aloud.

Will was deeply grieved. He had been old enough to be told the family shame when, more than two years before, his father had had his letter to his daughter returned by her mistress in Manchester, telling him that Lizzie had left her service some time—and why. He had sympathized with his father's stern anger; though he had thought him something hard, it is true, when he had forbidden his weeping, heart-broken wife to go and try to find her poor sinning child, and declared that henceforth they would have no daughter that she

should be as one dead, and her name never more be named at market or at meal time, in blessing or in prayer. He had held his peace, with compressed lips and contracted brow, when the neighbors had noticed to him how poor Lizzie's death had aged both his father and his mother; and how they thought the bereaved couple would never hold up their heads again. He himself had felt as if that one event had made him old before his time; and had envied Tom the tears he had shed over poor, pretty, innocent, dead Lizzie. He thought about her sometimes, till he ground his teeth, and could have struck her down in her shame. His mother had never named her to him until now.

"Mother!" said he at last. "She may be dead. Most likely she is."

"No, Will; she is not dead," said Mrs. Leigh. "God will not let her die till I've seen her once again. Thou dost not know how I've prayed and prayed just once again to see her sweet face, and tell her I've forgiven her, though she's broken my heart—she has, Will." She could not go on for a minute or two for the choking sobs. "Thou dost not know that, or thou wouldst not say she could be dead,—for God is very merciful, Will; He is,—He is much more pitiful than man,—I could never ha' spoken to thy father as I did to Him,—and yet thy father forgave her at last. The last words he said were that he forgave her. Thou'lt not be harder than thy father, Will? Do not try and hinder me going to seek her, for it's no use."

Will sat very still for a long time before he spoke. At last he said, "I'll not hinder you. I think she's dead, but that's no matter."

"She is not dead," said her mother, with low earnestness. Will took no notice of the interruption.

"We will all go to Manchester for a twelve-month, and let the farm to Tom Higginbotham. I'll get blacksmith's work; and Tom can have good schooling for awhile, which he's always craving for. At the end of the year you'll come back, mother, and give over fretting for Lizzie, and think with me that she is dead,—and, to my mind, that would be more comfort than to think of her living;" he dropped his voice as he spoke these last words. She shook her head, but made no answer. He asked again,—

"Will you, mother, agree to this?"

"I'll agree to it a-this-ns," said she. "If I hear and see nought of her for a twelve-month, me being in Manchester looking out, I'll just ha' broken my heart fairly before the year's ended, and then I shall know neither love nor sorrow for her any more, when I'm at rest in the grave—I'll agree to that, Will."

"Well, I suppose it must be so. I shall not tell Tom, mother, why we're flitting to Manchester. Best spare him."

“As thou wilt,” said she, sadly, “so that we go, that’s all.”

Before the wild daffodils were in flower in the sheltered copses round Upclose Farm, the Leighs were settled in their Manchester home; if they could ever grow to consider that place as a home where there was no garden, or outbuilding, no fresh breezy outlet, no far-stretching view, over moor and hollow,—no dumb animals to be tended, and, what more than all they missed, no old haunting memories, even though those remembrances told of sorrow, and the dead and gone.

Mrs. Leigh heeded the loss of all these things less than her sons. She had more spirit in her countenance than she had had for months, because now she had hope; of a sad enough kind, to be sure, but still it was hope. She performed all her household duties, strange and complicated as they were, and bewildered as she was with all the town-necessities of her new manner of life; but when her house was “sided,” and the boys come home from their work, in the evening, she would put on her things and steal out, unnoticed, as she thought, but not without many a heavy sigh from Will, after she had closed the house-door and departed. It was often past midnight before she came back, pale and weary, with almost a guilty look upon her face; but that face so full of disappointment and hope deferred, that Will had never the heart to say what he thought of the folly and hopelessness of the search. Night after night it was renewed, till days grew to weeks and weeks to months. All this time Will did his duty towards her as well as he could, without having sympathy with her. He staid at home in the evenings for Tom’s sake, and often wished he had Tom’s pleasure in reading, for the time hung heavy on his hands, as he sat up for his mother.

I need not tell you how the mother spent the weary hours. And yet I will tell you something. She used to wander out, at first as if without a purpose, till she rallied her thoughts, and brought all her energies to bear on the one point; then she went with earnest patience along the least known ways to some new part of the town, looking wistfully with dumb entreaty into people’s faces; sometimes catching a glimpse of a figure which had a kind of momentary likeness to her child’s, and following that figure with never-wearying perseverance, till some light from shop or lamp showed the cold strange face which was not her daughter’s. Once or twice a kind-hearted passer-by, struck by her look of yearning woe, turned back and offered help, or asked her what she wanted. When so spoken to, she answered only, “You don’t know a poor girl they call Lizzie Leigh, do you?” and when they denied all knowledge, she shook her head, and went on again. I think they believed her to be crazy. But she never spoke first to any one. She sometimes took a few minutes’ rest on the door-steps, and sometimes (very seldom) covered her face and cried; but she could not afford to lose time and chances in this way; while her eyes were

blinded with tears, the lost one might pass by unseen.

One evening, in the rich time of shortening autumn-days, Will saw an old man, who, without being absolutely drunk, could not guide himself rightly along the foot-path, and was mocked for his unsteadiness of gait by the idle boys of the neighborhood. For his father's sake Will regarded old age with tenderness, even when most degraded and removed from the stern virtues which dignified that father; so he took the old man home, and seemed to believe his often-repeated assertions that he drank nothing but water. The stranger tried to stiffen himself up into steadiness as he drew nearer home, as if there were some one there, for whose respect he cared even in his half-intoxicated state, or whose feelings he feared to grieve. His home was exquisitely clean and neat even in outside appearance; threshold, window, and windowsill, were outward signs of some spirit of purity within. Will was regarded for his attention by a bright glance of thanks, succeeded by a blush of shame, from a young woman of twenty or thereabouts. She did not speak, or second her father's hospitable invitations to him to be seated. She seemed unwilling that a stranger should witness her father's attempts at stately sobriety, and Will could not bear to stay and see her distress. But when the old man, with many a flabby shake of the hand, kept asking him to come again some other evening and see them, Will sought her down-cast eyes, and, though he could not read their veiled meaning, he answered timidly, "If it's agreeable to everybody, I'll come—and thank ye." But there was no answer from the girl, to whom this speech was in reality addressed; and Will left the house liking her all the better for never speaking.

He thought about her a great deal for the next day or two; he scolded himself for being so foolish as to think of her, and then fell to with fresh vigor, and thought of her more than ever. He tried to depreciate her; and told himself she was not pretty, and then made indignant answer that he liked her looks much better than any beauty of them all. He wished he was not so country looking, so red-faced, so broad-shouldered; while she was like a lady, with her smooth colorless complexion, her bright dark hair and her spotless dress. Pretty, or not pretty, she drew his footsteps towards her; he could not resist the impulse that made him wish to see her once more, and find out some fault which should unloose his heart from her unconscious keeping. But there she was, pure and maidenly as before. He sat and looked, answering her father at cross-purposes, while she drew more and more into the shadow of the chimney-corner out of sight. Then the spirit that possessed him (it was not he himself, sure, that did so impudent a thing!) made him get up and carry the candle to a different place, under the pretence of giving her more light at her sewing, but, in reality, to be able to see her better; she could not stand this much longer, but jumped up, and said she must put her little niece to bed; and surely, there never was, before or since, so troublesome a child of two years

old; for, though Will staid an hour and a half longer, she never came down again. He won the father's heart, though, by his capacity as a listener, for some people are not at all particular, and, so that they may talk on undisturbed, are not so unreasonable as to expect attention to what they say.

Will did gather this much, however, from the old man's talk. He had once been quite in a genteel line of business, but had failed for more money than any greengrocer he had heard of; at least, any who did not mix up fish and game with greengrocery proper. This grand failure seemed to have been the event of his life, and one on which he dwelt with a strange kind of pride. It appeared as if at present he rested from his past exertions (in the bankrupt line), and depended on his daughter, who kept a small school for very young children. But all these particulars Will only remembered and understood, when he had left the house; at the time he heard them, he was thinking of Susan. After he had made good his footing at Mr. Palmer's, he was not long, you may be sure, without finding some reason for returning again and again. He listened to her father, he talked to the little niece, but he looked at Susan, both while he listened and while he talked. Her father kept on insisting upon his former gentility, the details of which would have appeared very questionable to Will's mind, if the sweet, delicate, modest Susan had not thrown an inexplicable air of refinement over all she came near. She never spoke much; she was generally diligently at work; but when she moved it was so noiselessly, and when she did speak, it was in so low and soft a voice, that silence, speech, motion and stillness, alike seemed to remove her high above Will's reach into some saintly and inaccessible air of glory—high above his reach; even as she knew him! And, if she were made acquainted with the dark secret behind, of his sister's shame, which was kept ever present to his mind by his mother's nightly search among the outcast and forsaken, would not Susan shrink away from him with loathing as if he were tainted by the involuntary relationship? This was his dread; and thereupon followed a resolution that he would withdraw from her sweet company before it was too late. So he resisted internal temptation, and staid at home, and suffered and sighed. He became angry with his mother for her untiring patience in seeking for one who, he could not help hoping, was dead rather than alive. He spoke sharply to her, and received only such sad deprecatory answers as made him reproach himself, and still more lose sight of peace of mind. This struggle could not last long without affecting his health; and Tom, his sole companion through the long evenings, noticed his increasing languor, his restless irritability, with perplexed anxiety, and at last resolved to call his mother's attention to his brother's haggard, care-worn looks. She listened with a startled recollection of Will's claims upon her love. She noticed his decreasing appetite, and half-checked sighs.

"Will, lad! what's come o'er thee?" said she to him, as he sat listlessly

gazing into the fire.

“There’s nought the matter with me,” said he, as if annoyed at her remark.

“Nay, lad, but there is.” He did not speak again to contradict her; indeed she did not know if he had heard her, so unmoved did he look.

“Would’st like to go back to Upclose Farm?” asked she, sorrowfully.

“It’s just blackberrying time,” said Tom.

Will shook his head. She looked at him awhile, as if trying to read that expression of despondency and trace it back to its source.

“Will and Tom could go,” said she; “I must stay here till I’ve found her, thou know’st,” continued she, dropping her voice.

He turned quickly round, and with the authority he had at all times exercised over Tom, bade him begone to bed.

When Tom had left the room he prepared to speak.

“Mother,” then said Will, “why will you keep on thinking she’s alive? If she were but dead, we need never name her name again. We’ve never heard nought on her since father wrote her that letter; we never knew whether she got it or not. She’d left her place before then. Many a one dies is——”

“Oh my lad! dunnot speak so to me, or my heart will break outright,” said his mother, with a sort of cry. Then she calmed herself, for she yearned to persuade him to her own belief. “Thou never asked, and thou’rt too like thy father for me to tell without asking—but it were all to be near Lizzie’s old place that I settled down on this side o’ Manchester; and the very day after we came, I went to her old misses, and asked to speak a word wi’ her. I had a strong mind to cast it up to her, that she should ha’ sent my poor lass away without telling on it to us first; but she were in black, and looked so sad I could na’ find in my heart to threep it up. But I did ask her a bit about our Lizzie. The master would have turned her away at a day’s warning, (he’s gone to t’other place; I hope he’ll meet wi’ more mercy there than he showed our Lizzie,—I do,—) and when the missus asked her should she write to us, she says Lizzie shook her head; and when she speered at her again, the poor lass went down on her knees, and begged her not, for she said it would break my heart, (as it has done, Will—God knows it has),” said the poor mother, choking with her struggle to keep down her hard overmastering grief, “and her father would curse her—Oh God, teach me to be patient.” She could not speak for a few minutes,—“and the lass threatened, and said she’d go drown herself in the canal, if the missus wrote home,—and so—

“Well! I’d got a trace of my child,—the missus thought she’d gone to th’ workhouse to be nursed; and there I went,—and there, sure enough, she had

been,—and they'd turned her out as soon as she were strong, and told her she were young enough to work,—but whatten kind o' work would be open to her, lad, and her baby to keep?"

Will listened to his mother's tale with deep sympathy, not unmixed with the old bitter shame. But the opening of her heart had unlocked his, and after awhile he spoke.

"Mother! I think I'd e'en better go home. Tom can stay wi' thee. I know I should stay too, but I cannot stay in peace so near—her—without craving to see her—Susan Palmer I mean."

"Has the old Mr. Palmer thou telled me on a daughter?" asked Mrs. Leigh.

"Aye, he has. And I love her above a bit. And it's because I love her I want to leave Manchester. That's all."

Mrs. Leigh tried to understand this speech for some time, but found it difficult of interpretation.

"Why should'st thou not tell her thou lov'st her? Thou'rt a likely lad, and sure o' work. Thou'lt have Upclose at my death; and as for that I could let thee have it now, and keep mysel' by doing a bit of charring. It seems to me a very backwards sort o' way of winning her to think of leaving Manchester."

"Oh mother, she's so gentle and so good,—she's downright holy. She's never known a touch of sin; and can I ask her to marry me knowing what we do about Lizzie, and fearing worse! I doubt if one like her could ever care for me; but if she knew about my sister, it would put a gulf between us, and she'd shudder at the thought of crossing it. You don't know how good she is, mother!"

"Will, Will! if she's as good as thou say'st, she'll have pity on such as my Lizzie. If she has no pity for such, she's a cruel Pharisee, and thou'rt best without her."

But he only shook his head, and sighed; and for the time the conversation dropped.

But a new idea sprang up in Mrs. Leigh's head. She thought that she would go and see Susan Palmer, and speak up for Will, and tell her the truth about Lizzie; and according to her pity for the poor sinner, would she be worthy or unworthy of him. She resolved to go the very next afternoon, but without telling any one of her plan. Accordingly she looked out the Sunday clothes she had never before had the heart to unpack since she came to Manchester, but which she now desired to appear in, in order to do credit to Will. She put on her old-fashioned black mode bonnet, trimmed with real lace; her scarlet cloth cloak, which she had had ever since she was married, and always spotlessly

clean, she set forth on her unauthorized embassy. She knew the Palmers lived in Crown Street, though where she had heard it she could not tell; and modestly asking her way, she arrived in the street about a quarter to four o'clock. She stopped to inquire the exact number, and the woman whom she addressed told her that Susan Palmer's school would not be loose till four, and asked her to step in and wait until then at her house.

"For," said she, smiling, "them that wants Susan Palmer wants a kind friend of ours; so we, in a manner, call cousins. Sit down, missus, sit down. I'll wipe the chair, so that it shanna dirty your cloak. My mother used to wear them bright cloaks, and they're right gradely things agin a green field."

"Han ye known Susan Palmer long?" asked Mrs. Leigh, pleased with the admiration of her cloak.

"Ever since they comed to live in our street. Our Sally goes to her school."

"Whatten sort of a lass is she, for I ha' never seen her?"

"Well,—as for looks, I cannot say. It's so long since I first knowed her, that I've clean forgotten what I thought of her then. My master says he never saw such a smile for gladdening the heart. But maybe it's not looks you're asking about. The best thing I can say of her looks is, that she's just one a stranger would stop in the street to ask help from if you needed it. All the little childer creeps as close as they can to her; she'll have as many as three or four hanging to her apron all at once."

"Is she cocket at all?"

"Cocket, bless you! you never saw a creature less set up in all your life. Her father's cocket enough. No! she 's not cocket any way. You've not heard much of Susan Palmer, I reckon, if you think she's cocket. She's just one to come quietly in, and do the very thing most wanted; little things, maybe, that any one could do, but that few would think on, for another. She'll bring her thimble wi' her, and mend up after the childer o' nights,—and she writes all Betty Barker's letters to her grandchild out at service,—and she's in nobody's way, and that's a great matter, I take it. Here's the childer running past! School is loosed. You'll find her now, missus, ready to hear and to help. But we none on us frab her by going near her in school-time."

Poor Mrs. Leigh's heart began to beat, and she could almost have turned round and gone home again. Her country breeding had made her shy of strangers, and this Susan Palmer appeared to her like a real born lady by all accounts. So she knocked with a timid feeling at the indicated door, and when it was opened, dropped a simple curtsey without speaking. Susan had her little niece in her arms, curled up with fond endearment against her breast, but she put her gently down to the ground, and instantly placed a chair in the best

corner of the room for Mrs. Leigh, when she told her who she was. “It’s not Will as has asked me to come,” said the mother, apologetically, “I’d a wish just to speak to you myself!”

Susan colored up to her temples, and stooped to pick up the little toddling girl. In a minute or two Mrs. Leigh began again.

“Will thinks you would na respect us if you knew all; but I think you could na help feeling for us in the sorrow God has put upon us; so I just put on my bonnet, and came off unknownst to the lads. Every one says you’re very good, and that the Lord has keeped you from falling from his ways; but maybe you’ve never yet been tried and tempted as some is. I’m perhaps speaking too plain, but my heart’s welly broken, and I can’t be choice in my words as them who are happy can. Well now! I’ll tell you the truth. Will dreads you to hear it, but I’ll just tell it you. You mun know,”—but here the poor woman’s words failed her, and she could do nothing but sit rocking herself backwards and forwards, with sad eyes, straight-gazing into Susan’s face, as if they tried to tell the tale of agony which the quivering lips refused to utter. Those wretched stony eyes forced the tears down Susan’s cheeks, and, as if this sympathy gave the mother strength, she went on in a low voice, “I had a daughter once, my heart’s darling. Her father thought I made too much on her, and that she’d grow marred staying at home; so he said she mun go among strangers, and learn to rough it. She were young, and liked the thought of seeing a bit of the world; and her father heard on a place in Manchester. Well! I’ll not weary you. That poor girl were led astray; and first thing we heard on it, was when a letter of her father’s was sent back by her missus, saying she’d left her place, or, to speak right, the master had turned her into the street soon as he had heard of her condition—and she not seventeen!”

She now cried aloud; and Susan wept too. The little child looked up into their faces, and, catching their sorrow, began to whimper and wail. Susan took it softly up, and hiding her face in its little neck, tried to restrain her tears, and think of comfort for the mother. At last she said:

“Where is she now?”

“Lass! I dunnot know,” said Mrs. Leigh, checking her sobs to communicate this addition to her distress. “Mrs. Lomax telled me she went”—

“Mrs. Lomax—what Mrs. Lomax?”

“Her as lives in Brabazon-street. She telled me my poor wench went to the workhouse fra there. I’ll not speak again the dead; but if her father would but ha’ letten me,—but he were one who had no notion—no, I’ll not say that; best say nought. He forgave her on his death-bed. I dare say I did na go th’ right way to work.”

“Will you hold the child for me one instant?” said Susan.

“Ay, if it will come to me. Childer used to be fond on me till I got the sad look on my face that scares them, I think.”

But the little girl clung to Susan; so she carried it upstairs with her. Mrs. Leigh sat by herself—how long she did not know.

Susan came down with a bundle of far-worn baby-clothes.

“You must listen to me a bit, and not think too much about what I’m going to tell you. Nanny is not my niece, nor any kin to me that I know of. I used to go out working by the day. One night, as I came home, I thought some woman was following me; I turned to look. The woman, before I could see her face (for she turned it to one side), offered me something. I held out my arms by instinct: she dropped a bundle into them with a bursting sob that went straight to my heart. It was a baby. I looked round again; but the woman was gone. She had run away as quick as lightning. There was a little packet of clothes—very few—and as if they were made out of its mother’s gowns, for they were large patterns to buy for a baby. I was always fond of babies; and I had not my wits about me, father says; for it was very cold, and when I’d seen as well as I could (for it was past ten) that there was no one in the street, I brought it in and warmed it. Father was very angry when he came, and said he’d take it to the workhouse the next morning, and flyted me sadly about it. But when morning came I could not bear to part with it; it had slept in my arms all night; and I’ve heard what workhouse bringing up is. So I told father I’d give up going out working, and stay at home and keep school, if I might only keep the baby; and after awhile, he said if I earned enough for him to have his comforts, he’d let me; but he’s never taken to her. Now, don’t tremble so,—I’ve but a little more to tell,—and maybe I’m wrong in telling it; but I used to work next door to Mrs. Lomax’s, in Brabazon-street, and the servants were all thick together; and I heard about Bessy (they called her) being sent away. I don’t know that ever I saw her; but the time would be about fitting to this child’s age, and I’ve sometimes fancied it was her’s. And now, will you look at the little clothes that came with her—bless her!”

But Mrs. Leigh had fainted. The strange joy and shame, and gushing love for the little child had overpowered her; it was some time before Susan could bring her round. There she was all trembling, sick impatience to look at the little frocks. Among them was a slip of paper which Susan had forgotten to name, that had been pinned to the bundle. On it was scrawled in a round stiff hand.

“Call her Anne. She does not cry much, and takes a deal of notice. God bless you and forgive me.”

The writing was no clue at all; the name “Anne,” common though it was, seemed something to build upon. But Mrs. Leigh recognized one of the frocks instantly, as being made out of part of a gown that she and her daughter had bought together in Rochdale.

She stood up, and stretched out her hands in the attitude of blessing over Susan’s bent head.

“God bless you, and show you His mercy in your need, as you have shown it to this little child.”

She took the little creature in her arms, and smoothed away her sad looks to a smile, and kissed it fondly, saying over and over again, “Nanny, Nanny, my little Nanny.” At last the child was soothed, and looked in her face and smiled back again.

“It has her eyes,” said she to Susan.

“I never saw her to the best of my knowledge. I think it must be her’s by the frock. But where can she be?”

“God knows,” said Mrs. Leigh; “I dare not think she’s dead. I’m sure she isn’t.”

“No! she’s not dead. Every now and then a little packet is thrust under our door, with maybe two half-crowns in it; once it was a half-sovereign. Altogether I’ve got seven-and-thirty shillings wrapped up for Nanny. I never touch it, but I’ve often thought the poor mother feels near to God when she brings this money. Father wanted to set the policeman to watch, but I said No, for I was afraid if she was watched she might not come, and it seemed such a holy thing to be checking her in, I could not find in my heart to do it.”

“Oh, if we could but find her! I’d take her in my arms, and we’d just lie down and die together.”

“Nay, don’t speak so!” said Susan gently, “for all that’s come and gone, she may turn right at last. Mary Magdalen did, you know.”

“Eh! but I were nearer right about thee than Will. He thought you would never look on him again if you knew about Lizzie. But thou’rt not a Pharisee.”

“I’m sorry he thought I could be so hard,” said Susan in a low voice, and coloring up. Then Mrs. Leigh was alarmed, and in her motherly anxiety, she began to fear lest she had injured Will in Susan’s estimation.

“You see Will thinks so much of you—gold would not be good enough for you to walk on, in his eye. He said you’d never look at him as he was, let alone his being brother to my poor wench. He loves you so, it makes him think meanly on everything belonging to himself, as not fit to come near ye,—but

he’s a good lad, and a good son—thou’lt be a happy woman if thou’lt have him—so don’t let my words go against him; don’t!”

But Susan hung her head and made no answer. She had not known until now, that Will thought so earnestly and seriously about her; and even now she felt afraid that Mrs. Leigh’s words promised her too much happiness, and that they could not be true. At any rate the instinct of modesty made her shrink from saying anything which might seem like a confession of her own feelings to a third person. Accordingly she turned the conversation on the child.

“I’m sure he could not help loving Nanny,” said she. “There never was such a good little darling; don’t you think she’d win his heart if he knew she was his niece, and perhaps bring him to think kindly on his sister?”

“I dunnot know,” said Mrs. Leigh, shaking her head. “He has a turn in his eye like his father, that makes me——. He’s right down good though. But you see I’ve never been a good one at managing folk; one severe look turns me sick, and then I say just the wrong thing, I’m so fluttered. Now I should like nothing better than to take Nancy home with me, but Tom knows nothing but that his sister is dead, and I’ve not the knack of speaking rightly to Will. I dare not do it, and that’s the truth. But you mun not think badly of Will. He’s so good hissel’, that he can’t understand how any one can do wrong; and, above all, I’m sure he loves you dearly.”

“I don’t think I could part with Nancy,” said Susan, anxious to stop this revelation of Will’s attachment to herself. “He’ll come round to her soon; he can’t fail; and I’ll keep a sharp lookout after the poor mother, and try and catch her the next time she comes with her little parcels of money.”

“Aye, lass! we mun get hold of her; my Lizzie. I love thee dearly for thy kindness to her child; but, if thou can’st catch her for me, I’ll pray for thee when I’m too near my death to speak words; and while I live, I’ll serve thee next to her,—she mun come first, thou know’st. God bless thee, lass. My heart is lighter by a deal than it was when I comed in. Them lads will be looking for me home, and I mun go, and leave this little sweet one,” kissing it. “If I can take courage, I’ll tell Will all that has come and gone between us two. He may come and see thee, mayn’t he?”

“Father will be very glad to see him, I’m sure,” replied Susan. The way in which this was spoken satisfied Mrs. Leigh’s anxious heart that she had done Will no harm by what she had said; and with many a kiss to the little one, and one more fervent tearful blessing on Susan, she went homewards.

That night Mrs. Leigh stopped at home; that only night for many months. Even Tom, the scholar, looked up from his books in amazement; but then he remembered that Will had not been well, and that his mother’s attention

having been called to the circumstance, it was only natural she should stay to watch him. And no watching could be more tender, or more complete. Her loving eyes seemed never averted from his face; his grave, sad, care-worn face. When Tom went to bed the mother left her seat, and going up to Will where he sat looking at the fire, but not seeing it, she kissed his forehead, and said,

"Will! lad, I've been to see Susan Palmer!"

She felt the start under the hand which was placed on his shoulder, but he was silent for a minute or two. Then he said,

"What took you there, mother?"

"Why, my lad, it was likely I should wish to see one you cared for; I did not put myself forward. I put on my Sunday clothes, and tried to behave as yo'd ha liked me. At least I remember trying at first; but after, I forgot all."

She rather wished that he would question her as to what made her forget all. But he only said,

"How was she looking, mother?"

"Will, thou seest I never set eyes on her before; but she's a good gentle looking creature; and I love her dearly, as I've reason to."

Will looked up with momentary surprise; for his mother was too shy to be usually taken with strangers. But after all it was natural in this case, for who could look at Susan without loving her? So still he did not ask any questions, and his poor mother had to take courage, and try again to introduce the subject near to her heart. But how?

"Will!" said she (jerking it out, in sudden despair of her own powers to lead to what she wanted to say), "I telled her all."

"Mother! you've ruined me," said he, standing up, and standing opposite to her with a stern white look of affright on his face.

"No! my own dear lad; dunnot look so scared, I have not ruined you!" she exclaimed, placing her two hands on his shoulders, and looking fondly into his face. "She's not one to harden her heart against a mother's sorrow. My own lad she's too good for that. She's not one to judge and scorn the sinner. She's too deep read in her New Testament for that. Take courage, Will; and thou may'st, for I watched her well, though it is not for one woman to let out another's secret. Sit thee down, lad, for thou look'st very white."

He sat down. His mother drew a stool towards him, and sat at his feet.

"Did you tell her about Lizzie, then?" asked he, hoarse and low.

“I did, I telled her all; and she fell a crying over my deep sorrow, and the poor wench’s sin. And then a light comed into her face, trembling and quivering with some new glad thought; and what dost thou think it was, Will, lad? Nay, I’ll not misdoubt but that thy heart will give thanks as mine did, afore God and His angels, for her great goodness. That little Nanny is not her niece, she’s our Lizzie’s own child, my little grandchild.” She could no longer restrain her tears, and they fell hot and fast, but still she looked into his face.

“Did she know it was Lizzie’s child? I do not comprehend,” said he, flushing red.

“She knows now: she did not at first, but took the little helpless creature in, out of her own pitiful loving heart, guessing only that it was the child of shame, and she’s worked for it, and kept it, and tended it ever sin’ it were a mere baby, and loves it fondly. Will! won’t you love it?” asked she, beseechingly.

He was silent for an instant; then he said, “Mother, I’ll try. Give me time, for all these things startle me. To think of Susan having to do with such a child!”

“Aye, Will! and to think (as may be yet) of Susan having to do with the child’s mother! For she is tender and pitiful, and speaks hopefully of my lost one, and will try and find her for me, when she comes, as she does sometimes, to thrust money under the door, for her baby. Think of that, Will. Here’s Susan, good and pure as the angels in heaven, yet, like them, full of hope and mercy, and one who, like them, will rejoice over her as repents. Will, my lad, I’m not afeared of you now, and I must speak, and you must listen. I am your mother, and I dare to command you, because I know I am in the right and that God is on my side. If He should lead the poor wandering lassie to Susan’s door, and she comes back crying and sorrowful, led by that good angel to us once more, thou shalt never say a casting-up word to her about her sin, but be tender and helpful towards one “who was lost and is found,” so may God’s blessing rest on thee, and so mayst thou lead Susan home as thy wife.”

She stood, no longer as the meek, imploring, gentle mother, but firm and dignified, as if the interpreter of God’s will. Her manner was so unusual and solemn, that it overcame all Will’s pride and stubbornness. He rose softly while she was speaking, and bent his head as if in reverence at her words, and the solemn injunction which they conveyed. When she had spoken, he said in so subdued a voice that she was almost surprised at the sound, “Mother, I will.”

“I may be dead and gone,—but all the same,—thou wilt take home the wandering sinner, and heal up her sorrows, and lead her to her Father’s house. My lad! I can speak no more; I’m turned very faint.”

He placed her in a chair; he ran for water. She opened her eyes and smiled.

“God bless you, Will. Oh, I am so happy. It seems as if she were found; my heart is so filled with gladness.”

That night Mr. Palmer stayed out late and long. Susan was afraid that he was at his old haunts and habits,—getting tipsy at some public-house; and this thought oppressed her, even though she had so much to make her happy, in the consciousness that Will loved her. She sat up long, and then she went to bed, leaving all arranged as well as she could for her father’s return. She looked at the little rosy sleeping girl who was her bed-fellow, with redoubled tenderness, and with many a prayerful thought. The little arms entwined her neck as she lay down, for Nanny was a light sleeper, and was conscious that she, who was loved with all the power of that sweet childish heart, was near her, and by her, although she was too sleepy to utter any of her half-formed words.

And by-and-bye she heard her father come home, stumbling uncertain, trying first the windows, and next the door-fastenings, with many a loud incoherent murmur. The little Innocent twined around her seemed all the sweeter and more lovely, when she thought sadly of her erring father. And presently he called aloud for a light; she had left matches and all arranged as usual on the dresser, but fearful of some accident from fire, in his unusually intoxicated state, she now got up softly, and putting on a cloak, went down to his assistance.

Alas! the little arms that were unclosed from her soft neck belonged to a light, easily-awakened sleeper. Nanny missed her darling Susy, and terrified at being left alone in the vast mysterious darkness, which had no bounds, and seemed infinite, she slipped out of bed, and tottered in her little night-gown towards the door. There was a light below and there was Susy and safety! So she went onwards two steps towards the steep abrupt stairs; and then dazzled with sleepiness, she stood, she wavered, she fell! Down on her head on the stone floor she fell! Susan flew to her, and spoke all soft, entreating, loving words; but her white lids covered up the blue violets of eyes, and there was no murmur came out of the pale lips. The warm tears that rained down did not awaken her; she lay stiff, and weary with her short life, on Susan’s knee. Susan went sick with terror. She carried her upstairs, and laid her tenderly in bed; she dressed herself most hastily, with her trembling fingers. Her father was asleep on the settle down stairs; and useless, and worse than useless if awake. But Susan flew out of the door, and down the quiet resounding street, towards the nearest doctor’s house. Quickly she went; but as quickly a shadow followed, as if impelled by some sudden terror. Susan rung wildly at the night-bell,—the shadow crouched near. The doctor looked out from an upstairs window.

“A little child has fallen down stairs at No. 9 Crown-street, and is very ill,—dying, I’m afraid. Please, for God’s sake, sir, come directly. No. 9 Crown-street.”

“I’ll be there directly,” said he, and shut the window.

“For that God you have just spoken about,—for His sake,—tell me are you Susan Palmer? Is it my child that lies a-dying?” said the shadow, springing forwards, and clutching poor Susan’s arm.

“It is a little child of two years old,—I do not know whose it is; I love it as my own. Come with me, whoever you are; come with me.”

The two sped along the silent streets,—as silent as the night were they. They entered the house; Susan snatched up the light, and carried it upstairs. The other followed.

She stood with wild glaring eyes by the bedside, never looking at Susan, but hungrily gazing at the little white still child. She stooped down, and put her hand tight on her own heart, as if to still its beating, and bent her ear to the pale lips. Whatever the result was, she did not speak; but threw off the bed-clothes wherewith Susan had tenderly covered the little creature, and felt its left side.

Then she threw up her arms with a cry of wild despair.

“She is dead! she is dead!”

She looked so fierce, so mad, so haggard, that for an instant Susan was terrified—the next, the holy God had put courage into her heart, and her pure arms were round that guilty wretched creature, and her tears were falling fast and warm upon her breast. But she was thrown off with violence.

“You killed her—you slighted her—you let her fall down those stairs! you killed her!”

Susan cleared off the thick mist before her, and gazing at the mother with her clear, sweet, angel-eyes, said mournfully—

“I would have laid down my own life for her.”

“Oh, the murder is on my soul!” exclaimed the wild bereaved mother, with the fierce impetuosity of one who has none to love her and to be beloved, regard to whom might teach self-restraint.

“Hush!” said Susan, her finger on her lips. “Here is the doctor. God may suffer her to live.”

The poor mother turned sharp round. The doctor mounted the stair. Ah! that mother was right; the little child was really dead and gone.

And when he confirmed her judgment, the mother fell down in a fit. Susan, with her deep grief, had to forget herself, and forgot her darling (her charge for years), and question the doctor what she must do with the poor wretch, who lay on the floor in such extreme of misery.

“She is the mother!” said she.

“Why did not she take better care of her child?” asked he, almost angrily.

But Susan only said, “The little child slept with me; and it was I that left her.”

“I will go back and make up a composing draught; and while I am away you must get her to bed.”

Susan took out some of her own clothes, and softly undressed the stiff, powerless, form. There was no other bed in the house but the one in which her father slept. So she tenderly lifted the body of her darling; and was going to take it down stairs, but the mother opened her eyes, and seeing what she was about, she said,

“I am not worthy to touch her, I am so wicked; I have spoken to you as I never should have spoken; but I think you are very good; may I have my own child to lie in my arms for a little while?”

Her voice was so strange a contrast to what it had been before she had gone into the fit that Susan hardly recognized it; it was now so unspeakably soft, so irresistibly pleading, the features too had lost their fierce expression, and were almost as placid as death. Susan could not speak, but she carried the little child, and laid it in its mother’s arms; then as she looked at them, something overpowered her, and she knelt down, crying aloud,

“Oh, my God, my God, have mercy on her, and forgive, and comfort her.”

But the mother kept smiling, and stroking the little face, murmuring soft tender words, as if it were alive; she was going mad, Susan thought; but she prayed on, and on, and ever still she prayed with streaming eyes.

The doctor came with the draught. The mother took it, with docile unconsciousness of its nature as medicine. The doctor sat by her; and soon she fell asleep. Then he rose softly, and beckoning Susan to the door, he spoke to her there.

“You must take the corpse out of her arms. She will not awake. The draught will make her sleep for many hours. I will call before noon again. It is now daylight. Good-bye.”

Susan shut him out; and then gently extricating the dead child from its mother’s arms, she could not resist making her own quiet moan over her

darling. She tried to learn off its little placid face, dumb and pale before her.

“Not all the scalding tears of care,

Shall wash away that vision fair;

Not all the thousand thoughts that rise,

Not all the sights that dim her eyes,

Shall e’er usurp the place

Of that little angel face.”

And then she remembered what remained to be done. She saw that all was right in the house; her father was still dead asleep on the settle, in spite of all the noise of the night. She went out through the quiet streets, deserted still although it was broad daylight, and to where the Leighs lived. Mrs. Leigh, who kept her country hours, was opening her window shutters. Susan took her by the arm, and without speaking went into the house-place. There she knelt down before the astonished Mrs. Leigh, and cried as she had never done before; but the miserable night had overpowered her, and she who had gone through so much calmly, now that the pressure seemed removed could not find the power to speak.

“My poor dear! What has made thy heart so sore as to come and cry a-this-ons. Speak and tell me. Nay, cry on, poor wench, if thou canst not speak yet. It will ease the heart, and then thou canst tell me.”

“Nanny is dead!” said Susan. “I left her to go to father, and she fell down stairs, and never breathed again. Oh, that’s my sorrow! but I’ve more to tell. Her mother is come—is in our house! Come and see if it’s your Lizzie.” Mrs. Leigh could not speak, but, trembling, put on her things, and went with Susan in dizzy haste back to Crown-street.

As they entered the house in Crown-street, they perceived that the door would not open freely on its hinges, and Susan instinctively looked behind to see the cause of the obstruction. She immediately recognized the appearance of a little parcel, wrapped in a scrap of newspaper, and evidently containing money. She stooped and picked it up. “Look!” said she, sorrowfully, “the mother was bringing this for her child last night.”

But Mrs. Leigh did not answer. So near to the ascertaining if it were her lost child or no, she could not be arrested, but pressed onwards with trembling steps and a beating, fluttering heart. She entered the bed-room, dark and still. She took no heed of the little corpse, over which Susan paused, but she went straight to the bed, and withdrawing the curtain, saw Lizzie,—but not the former Lizzie, bright, gay, buoyant, and undimmed. This Lizzie was old before her time; her beauty was gone; deep lines of care, and alas! of want (or thus

the mother imagined) were printed on the cheek, so round, and fair, and smooth, when last she gladdened her mother's eyes. Even in her sleep she bore the look of woe and despair which was the prevalent expression of her face by day; even in her sleep she had forgotten how to smile. But all these marks of the sin and sorrow she had passed through only made her mother love her the more. She stood looking at her with greedy eyes, which seemed as though no gazing could satisfy their longing; and at last she stooped down and kissed the pale, worn hand that lay outside the bed-clothes. No touch disturbed the sleeper; the mother need not have laid the hand so gently down upon the counterpane. There was no sign of life, save only now and then a deep sob-like sigh. Mrs. Leigh sat down beside the bed, and, still holding back the curtain, looked on and on, as if she could never be satisfied.

Susan would fain have stayed by her darling one; but she had many calls upon her time and thoughts, and her will had now, as ever, to be given up to that of others. All seemed to devolve the burden of their cares on her. Her father, ill-humored from his last night's intemperance, did not scruple to reproach her with being the cause of little Nanny's death; and when, after bearing his upbraiding meekly for some time, she could no longer restrain herself, but began to cry, he wounded her even more by his injudicious attempts at comfort: for he said it was as well the child was dead; it was none of theirs, and why should they be troubled with it? Susan wrung her hands at this, and came and stood before her father, and implored him to forbear. Then she had to take all requisite steps for the coroner's inquest; she had to arrange for the dismissal of her school; she had to summon a little neighbor, and send his willing feet on a message to William Leigh, who, she felt, ought to be informed of his mother's whereabouts, and of the whole state of affairs. She asked her messenger to tell him to come and speak to her,—that his mother was at her house. She was thankful that her father sauntered out to have a gossip at the nearest coach-stand, and to relate as many of the night's adventures as he knew; for as yet he was in ignorance of the watcher and the watched, who silently passed away the hours up stairs.

At dinner-time Will came. He looked real glad, impatient, excited. Susan stood calm and white before him, her soft, loving eyes gazing straight into his.

"Will," said she, in a low, quiet voice, "your sister is up stairs."

"My sister!" said he, as if affrighted at the idea, and losing his glad look in one of gloom. Susan saw it, and her heart sank a little, but she went on, as calm to all appearance as ever.

"She was little Nanny's mother, as perhaps you know. Poor little Nanny was killed last night by a fall down stairs." All the calmness was gone; all the suppressed feeling was displayed in spite of every effort. She sat down and hid

her face from him, and cried bitterly. He forgot everything but the wish, the longing to comfort her. He put his arm round her waist, and bent over her. But all he could say, was, “Oh, Susan, how can I comfort you! Don’t take on so,—pray don’t!” He never changed the words, but the tone varied every time he spoke. At last she seemed to regain her power over herself; and she wiped her eyes, and once more looked upon him with her own quiet, earnest, unfearing gaze.

“Your sister was near the house. She came in on hearing my words to the doctor. She is asleep now, and your mother is watching her. I wanted to tell you all myself. Would you like to see your mother?”

“No!” said he. “I would rather see none but thee. Mother told me thou knowest all.” His eyes were downcast in their shame.

But the holy and pure did not lower or vail her eyes.

She said, “Yes, I know all—all but her sufferings. Think what they must have been!”

He made answer low and stern, “She deserved them all; every jot.”

“In the eye of God perhaps she does. He is the judge: we are not.”

“Oh!” she said with a sudden burst, “Will Leigh! I have thought so well of you; don’t go and make me think you cruel and hard. Goodness is not goodness unless there is mercy and tenderness with it. There is your mother who has been nearly heart-broken, now full of rejoicing over her child—think of your mother.”

“I do think of her,” said he. “I remember the promise I gave her last night. Thou shouldst give me time. I would do right in time. I never think it o’er in quiet. But I will do what is right and fitting, never fear. Thou hast spoken out very plain to me; and misdoubted me, Susan; I love thee so, that thy words cut me. If I did hang back a bit from making sudden promises, it was because not even for love of thee, would I say what I was not feeling; and at first I could not feel all at once as thou wouldst have me. But I’m not cruel and hard; for if I had been, I should na’ have grieved as I have done.”

He made as if he were going away; and indeed he did feel he would rather think it over in quiet. But Susan, grieved at her incautious words, which had all the appearance of harshness, went a step or two nearer—paused—and then, all over blushes, said in a low soft whisper—

“Oh Will! I beg your pardon. I am very sorry—won’t you forgive me?”

She who had always drawn back, and been so reserved, said this in the very softest manner; with eyes now uplifted beseechingly, now dropped to the ground. Her sweet confusion told more than words could do; and Will turned

back, all joyous in his certainty of being beloved, and took her in his arms and kissed her.

“My own Susan!” he said.

Meanwhile the mother watched her child in the room above.

It was late in the afternoon before she awoke; for the sleeping draught had been very powerful. The instant she awoke, her eyes were fixed on her mother’s face with a gaze as unflinching as if she were fascinated. Mrs. Leigh did not turn away, nor move. For it seemed as if motion would unlock the stony command over herself which, while so perfectly still, she was enabled to preserve. But by-and-bye Lizzie cried out in a piercing voice of agony—

“Mother, don’t look at me! I have been so wicked?” and instantly she hid her face, and grovelled among the bedclothes, and lay like one dead—so motionless was she.

Mrs. Leigh knelt down by the bed, and spoke in the most soothing tones.

“Lizzie, dear, don’t speak so. I’m thy mother, darling; don’t be afeard of me. I never left off loving thee, Lizzie. I was always a-thinking of thee. Thy father forgave thee afore he died.” (There was a little start here, but no sound was heard). “Lizzie, lass, I’ll do aught for thee; I’ll live for thee; only don’t be afeard of me. Whate’er thou art or hast been, we’ll ne’er speak on’t. We’ll leave th’ oud times behind us, and go back to the Upclose Farm. I but left it to find thee, my lass; and God has led me to thee. Blessed be His name. And God is good too, Lizzie. Thou hast not forgot thy Bible, I’ll be bound, for thou wert always a scholar. I’m no reader, but I learnt off them texts to comfort me a bit, and I’ve said them many a time a day to myself. Lizzie, lass, don’t hide thy head so, it’s thy mother as is speaking to thee. Thy little child clung to me only yesterday; and if it’s gone to be an angel, it will speak to God for thee. Nay, don’t sob a that ’as; thou shalt have it again in Heaven; I know thou’lt strive to get there for thy little Nancy’s sake—and listen! I’ll tell thee God’s promises to them that are penitent—only don’t be afeard.”

Mrs. Leigh folded her hands, and strove to speak very clearly, while she repeated every tender and merciful text she could remember. She could tell from the breathing that her daughter was listening; but she was so dizzy and sick herself when she had ended, that she could not go on speaking. It was all she could do to keep from crying aloud.

At last she heard her daughter’s voice.

“Where have they taken her to?” she asked.

“She is down stairs. So quiet, and peaceful, and happy she looks.”

“Could she speak? Oh, if God—if I might but have heard her little voice!

Mother, I used to dream of it. May I see her once again—Oh mother, if I strive very hard, and God is very merciful, and I go to heaven, I shall not know my own again—she will shun me as a stranger and cling to Susan Palmer and to you. Oh woe! Oh woe!" She shook with exceeding sorrow.

In her earnestness of speech she had uncovered her face, and tried to read Mrs. Leigh's thoughts through her looks. And when she saw those aged eyes brimming full of tears, and marked the quivering lips, she threw her arms round the faithful mother's neck, and wept there as she had done in many a childish sorrow; but with a deeper, a more wretched grief.

Her mother hushed her on her breast; and lulled her as if she were a baby; and she grew still and quiet.

They sat thus for a long, long time. At last Susan Palmer came up with some tea and bread and butter for Mrs. Leigh. She watched the mother feed her sick, unwilling child, with every fond inducement to eat which she could devise; they neither of them took notice of Susan's presence. That night they lay in each other's arms; but Susan slept on the ground beside them.

They took the little corpse (the little unconscious sacrifice, whose early calling-home had reclaimed her poor wandering mother,) to the hills, which in her life-time she had never seen. They dared not lay her by the stern grand-father in Milne-Row churchyard, but they bore her to a lone moorland graveyard, where long ago the quakers used to bury their dead. They laid her there on the sunny slope, where the earliest spring-flowers blow.

Will and Susan live at the Upclose Farm. Mrs. Leigh and Lizzie dwell in a cottage so secluded that, until you drop into the very hollow where it is placed, you do not see it. Tom is a school-master in Rochdale, and he and Will help to support their mother. I only know that, if the cottage be hidden in a green hollow of the hills, every sound of sorrow in the whole upland is heard there—every call of suffering or of sickness for help is listened to, by a sad, gentle-looking woman, who rarely smiles (and when she does, her smile is more sad than other people's tears), but who comes out of her seclusion whenever there's a shadow in any household. Many hearts bless Lizzie Leigh, but she—she prays always and ever for forgiveness—such forgiveness as may enable her to see her child once more. Mrs. Leigh is quiet and happy. Lizzie is to her eyes something precious,—as the lost piece of silver—found once more. Susan is the bright one who brings sunshine to all. Children grow around her and call her blessed. One is called Nanny. Her, Lizzy often takes to the sunny graveyard in the uplands, while the little creature gathers the daisies, and makes chains, Lizzie sits by a little grave, and weeps bitterly.

V.

THE OLD CHURCHYARD TREE.

A PROSE POEM.

There is an old yew tree which stands by the wall in a dark quiet corner of the church-yard.

And a child was at play beneath its wide-spreading branches, one fine day in the early spring. He had his lap full of flowers, which the fields and lanes had supplied him with, and he was humming a tune to himself as he wove them into garlands.

And a little girl at play among the tombstones crept near to listen; but the boy was so intent upon his garland, that he did not hear the gentle footsteps, as they trod softly over the fresh green grass. When his work was finished, and all the flowers that were in his lap were woven together in one long wreath, he started up to measure its length upon the ground, and then he saw the little girl, as she stood with her eyes fixed upon him. He did not move or speak, but thought to himself that she looked very beautiful as she stood there with her flaxen ringlets, hanging down upon her neck. The little girl was so startled by his sudden movement, that she let fall all the flowers she had collected in her apron, and ran away as fast as she could. But the boy was older and taller than she, and soon caught her, and coaxed her to come back and play with him, and help him to make more garlands; and from that time they saw each other nearly every day, and became great friends.

Twenty years passed away. Again he was seated beneath the old yew tree in the church-yard.

It was summer now; bright, beautiful summer, with the birds singing, and the flowers covering the ground, and scenting the air with their perfume.

But he was not alone now, nor did the little girl steal near on tiptoe, fearful of being heard. She was seated by his side, and his arm was round her, and she looked up into his face, and smiled as she whispered: “The first evening of our lives we were ever together was passed here: we will spend the first evening of our wedded life in the same quiet, happy place.” And he drew her closer to him as she spoke.

The summer is gone; and the autumn; and twenty more summers and autumns have passed away since that evening, in the old church-yard.

A young man, on a bright moonlight night, comes reeling through the little white gate, and stumbling over the graves. He shouts and he sings, and is presently followed by others like unto himself or worse. So, they all laugh at

the dark solemn head of the yew tree, and throw stones up at the place where the moon has silvered the boughs.

Those same boughs are again silvered by the moon, and they droop over his mother's grave. There is a little stone which bears this inscription:—

"HER HEART BRAKE IN SILENCE."

But the silence of the churchyard is now broken by a voice—not of the youth—nor a voice of laughter and ribaldry.

"My son!—dost thou see this grave? and dost thou read the record in anguish, whereof may come repentance?"

"Of what should I repent?" answers the son; "and why should my young ambition for fame relax in its strength because my mother was old and weak?"

"Is this indeed our son?" says the father, bending in agony over the grave of his beloved.

"I can well believe I am not;" exclaimeth the youth. "It is well that you have brought me here to say so. Our natures are unlike; our courses must be opposite. Your way lieth here—mine yonder!"

So the son left the father kneeling by the grave.

Again a few years are passed. It is winter, with a roaring wind and a thick gray fog. The graves in the Church-yard are covered with snow, and there are great icicles in the Church-porch. The wind now carries a swathe of snow along the tops of the graves, as though the "sheeted dead" were at some melancholy play; and hark! the icicles fall with a crash and jingle, like a solemn mockery of the echo of the unseemly mirth of one who is now coming to his final rest.

There are two graves near the old yew tree; and the grass has overgrown them. A third is close by; and the dark earth at each side has just been thrown up. The bearers come; with a heavy pace they move along; the coffin heaveth up and down, as they step over the intervening graves.

Grief and old age had seized upon the father, and worn out his life; and premature decay soon seized upon the son, and gnawed away his vain ambition, and his useless strength, till he prayed to be borne, not the way yonder that was most opposite to his father and his mother, but even the same way they had gone—the way which leads to the Old Churchyard Tree.

VI.

THE MODERN "OFFICER'S" PROGRESS.

I.—JOINING THE REGIMENT.

"I have got some very sad news to tell you," wrote Lady Pelican to her friend, Mrs. Vermeil, a faded lady of fashion, who discontentedly occupied a suite of apartments at Hampton Court; "our Irish estates are in such a miserable condition—absolutely making us out to be in debt to them, instead of adding to our income, that poor George—you will be shocked to hear it—is actually obliged to go into the Infantry!"

The communication of this distressing fact may stand instead of the regular Gazette, announcing the appointment of the Hon. George Spoonbill to an Ensigncy, by purchase, in the 100th regiment of foot. His military aspirations had been "Cavalry," and he had endeavored to qualify himself for that branch of the service by getting up an invisible moustache, when the Irish agent wrote to say that no money was to be had in that quarter, and all thoughts of the Household Brigade were, of necessity, abandoned. But, though the more expensive career was shut out, Lord Pelican's interest at the Horse Guards remained as influential as before, and for the consideration of four hundred and fifty pounds which—embarrassed as he was—he contrived to muster, he had no difficulty in procuring a commission for his son George, in the distinguished regiment already named. There were, it is true, a few hundred prior claimants on the Duke's list; "but," as Lord Pelican justly observed, "if the Spoonbill family were not fit for the army, he should like to know who were!" An argument perfectly irresistible. Gazetted, therefore, the young gentleman was, as soon as the Queen's sign-manual could be obtained, and the usual interval for preparation over, the Hon. George Spoonbill set out to join. But before he does so, we must say a word of what that "preparation" consisted in.

Some persons may imagine that he forthwith addressed himself to the study of Polybius, dabbled a little in Cormontaigne, got up Napier's History of the Peninsular War, or read the Duke's Despatches; others, that he went down to Birdcage-Walk, and placed himself under the tuition of Color-Sergeant Pike, of the Grenadier Guards, a warrior celebrated for his skill in training military aspirants, or that he endeavored by some other means to acquire a practical knowledge, however slight, of the profession for which he had always been intended. The Hon. George Spoonbill knew better. The preparation he made, was a visit, at least three times a day, to Messrs. Gorget and Plume, the military tailors in Jermyn Street, whose souls he sorely vexed by the persistance with which he adhered to the most accurate fit of his shell-jacket and coatee, the set of his epaulettes, the cut of his trowsers, and the shape of his chako. He passed his days in "trying on his things," and his

evenings—when not engaged in the Casino, the Cider Cellar, or the Adelphi—in dining with his military friends at St. James's Palace, or at Knightsbridge Barracks. In their society he greatly improved himself, acquiring an accurate knowledge of lansquenet and ecarté, cultivating his taste for tobacco, and familiarizing his mind with that reverence for authority which is engendered by the anecdotes of great military commanders that freely circulate at the mess-table. His education and his uniform being finished at about the same time, George Spoonbill took a not uncheerful farewell of the agonized Lady Pelican, whose maternal bosom streamed with the sacrifice she made in thus consigning her offspring to the vulgar hardships of a marching regiment.

An express train conveyed the honorable Ensign in safety to the country town where the "Hundredth" were then quartered, and in conformity with the instructions which he received from the Assistant Military Secretary at the Horse Guards—the only instructions, by-the-bye, which were given him by that functionary—he "reported" himself at the Orderly-room on his arrival, was presented by the Adjutant to the senior Major, by the senior Major to the Lieutenant-Colonel, and by the Lieutenant-Colonel to the officers generally when they assembled for mess.

The "Hundredth," being "Light Infantry," called itself "a crack regiment:" the military adjective signifying, in this instance, not so much a higher reputation for discipline and warlike achievements, as an indefinite sort of superiority arising from the fact that no man was allowed to enter the corps who depended on his pay only for the figure he cut in it. Lieutenant-Colonel Tulip, who commanded, was very strict in this particular, and, having the good of the service greatly at heart, set his face entirely against the admission of any young man who did not enjoy a handsome paternal allowance, or was not the possessor of a good income. He was himself the son of a celebrated army clothier, and in the course of ten years, had purchased the rank he now held, so that he had a right, as he thought, to see that his regiment was not contaminated by contact with poor men. His military creed was, that no man had any business in the army who could not afford to keep his horses or tilbury, and drink wine every day; that he called respectable, anything short of it the reverse. If he ever relaxed from the severity of this rule, it was only in favor of those who had high connections; "a handle to a name" being as reverently worshipped by him as money itself; indeed, in secret, he preferred a lord's son, though poor, to a commoner, however rich; the poverty of a sprig of nobility not being taken exactly in a literal sense. Colonel Tulip had another theory also: during the aforesaid ten years, he had acquired some knowledge of drill, and possessing an hereditary taste for dress, considered himself, thus endowed, a first-rate officer, though what he would have done with his regiment in the field is quite another matter. In the meantime he was gratified by thinking that he did his best to make it a crack corps, according to his

notion of the thing, and such minor points as the moral training of the officers, and their proficiency in something more than the forms of the parade ground, were not allowed to enter into his consideration. The “Hundredth” were acknowledged to be “a devilish well-dressed, gentlemanly set of fellows,” and were looked after with great interest at country-balls, races, and regattas; and if this were not what a regiment ought to be, Colonel Tulip was, he flattered himself, very much out in his calculations.

The advent of the Hon. George Spoonbill was a very welcome one, as the vacancy to which he succeeded had been caused by the promotion of a young baronet into “Dragoons,” and the new comer being the second son of Lord Pelican, with a possibility of being graced one day by wearing that glittering title himself, the hiatus caused by Sir Henry Muff’s removal was happily filled up without any derogation to the corps. Having also ascertained, in the course of five minutes’ conversation, that Mr. Spoonbill’s “man” and two horses were to follow in a few days with the remainder of his baggage; and the young gentlemen having talked rather largely of what the Governor allowed him (two hundred a-year is no great sum, but he kept the actual amount in the back ground, speaking “promiscuously” of “a few hundreds”), and of his intimacy with “the fellows in the Life Guards;” Colonel Tulip at once set him down as a decided acquisition to the “Hundredth,” and intimated that he was to be made much of accordingly.

When we described the regiment as being composed of wealthy men, the statement must be received with a certain reservation. It was Colonel Tulip’s hope and intention to make it so in time, when he had sufficiently “weeded” it, but en attendant there were three or four officers who did not quite belong to his favorite category. There were the senior Major, and an old Captain, both of whom had seen a good deal of service, the Surgeon, who was a necessary evil, and the Quarter-master, who was never allowed to show with the rest of the officers except at “inspection,” or some other unusual demonstration. But the rank and “allowance” of the first, and something in the character of the second, which caused him to be looked upon as a military oracle, made Colonel Tulip tolerate their presence in the corps, if he did not enjoy it. Neither had the Adjutant quite as much money as the commanding officer could have desired, but as his position kept him close to his duties, doing that for which Colonel Tulip took credit, he also was suffered to pass muster; he was a brisk, precise, middle-aged personage, who hoped in the course of time to get his company, and whose military qualifications consisted chiefly in knowing “Torrens,” the “Articles of War,” the “Military Regulations,” and the “Army List,” by heart. The last-named work was, indeed, very generally studied in the regiment, and may be said to have exhausted almost all the literary resources of its readers, exceptions being made in favor of the weekly military newspaper, the monthly military magazine, and an occasional novel

from the circulating library. The rest of the officers must speak for themselves, as they incidentally make their appearance. Of their character, generally, this may be said; none were wholly bad, but all of them might easily have been a great deal better.

Brief ceremony attends a young officer's introduction to his regiment, and the honorable prefix to Ensign Spoonbill's name was anything but a bar to his speedy initiation. Lieutenant-Colonel Tulip took wine with him the first thing, and his example was so quickly followed by all present, that by the time the cloth was off the table, Lord Pelican's second son had swallowed quite as much of Duff Gordon's sherry as was good for him. Though drinking is no longer a prevalent military vice, there are occasions when the wine circulates rather more freely than is altogether safe for young heads, and this was one of them. Claret was not the habitual "tipple," even of the crack "Hundredth;" but as Colonel Tulip had no objection to make a little display now and then, he had ordered a dozen in honor of the new arrival, and all felt disposed to do justice to it. The young Ensign had flattered himself that, amongst other accomplishments, he possessed "a hard head;" but, hard as it was, the free circulation of the bottle was not without its effect, and he soon began to speak rather thick, carefully avoiding such words as began with a difficult letter, which made his discourse somewhat periphrastic, or roundabout. But though his observations reached his hearers circuitously, their purpose was direct enough, and conveyed the assurance that he was one of those admirable Crichtons who are "wide awake" in every particular, and available for anything that may chance to turn up.

The conversation which reached his ears from the jovial companions who surrounded him, was of a similarly instructive and exhilarating kind, and tended greatly to his improvement. Captain Hackett, who came from "Dragoon Guards," and had seen a great deal of hard service in Ireland, elaborately set forth every particular of "I'll give you my honor, the most remarkable steeple-chase that ever took place in the three kingdoms," of which he was, of course, the hero. Lieutenant Wadding, who prided himself on his small waist, broad shoulders, and bushy whiskers, and was esteemed "a lady-killer," talked of every woman he knew, and damaged every reputation he talked about. Lieutenant Bray, who was addicted to sporting and played on the French horn, came out strong on the subject of hackles, May-flies, gray palmers, badgers, terriers, dew-claws, snap-shots and Eley's cartridges. Captain Cushion, a great billiard-player, and famous—in every sense—for "the one-pocket game," was eloquent on the superiority of his own cues, which were tipped with gutta percha instead of leather, and offered, as a treat, to indulge "any man in garrison with the best of twenty, one 'up,' for a hundred a-side." Captain Huff, who had a crimson face, a stiff arm, and the voice of a Stentor, and whose soul, like his visage, was steeped in port and

brandy, boasted of achievements in the drinking line, which, fortunately, are now only traditional, though he did his best to make them positive. From the upper end of the table, where sat the two veterans and the doctor, came, mellowed by distance, grim recollections of the Peninsula, with stories of Picton and Crawford, “the fighting brigade” and “the light division,” interspersed with endless Indian narratives, equally grim, of “how our fellows were carried off by the cholera at Cawnpore,” and how many tigers were shot, “when we lay in Cantonments at Dum-dum;” the running accompaniment to the whole being a constant reference to so-and-so “of ours” without allusion to which possessive pronoun, few military men are able to make much progress in conversation.

Nor was Colonel Tulip silent, but his conversation was of a very lofty and, as it were, ethereal order,—quite transparent, in fact, if any one had been there to analyze it. It related chiefly to the magnates at the Horse Guards,—to what “the Duke” said to him on certain occasions specified,—to Prince Albert’s appearance at the last levee,—to a favorite bay charger of his own, to the probability that Lord Dawdle would get into the corps on the first exchange,—and to a partly-formed intention of applying to the Commander-in-Chief to change the regimental facings from buff to green.

The mess-table, after four hours’ enjoyment of it in this intellectual manner, was finally abandoned for Captain Cushion’s “quarters,” that gallant officer having taken “quite a fancy to the youngster,” not so much, perhaps, on account of the youngster being a Lord’s youngster, as because, in all probability, there was something squeezeable in him, which was slightly indicated in his countenance. But whatever of the kind there might indeed have been, did not come out that evening, the amiable Captain preferring rather to initiate by example and the show of good fellowship, than by directly urging the neophyte to play. The rubber, therefore, was made up without him, and the new Ensign, with two or three more of his rank, confined themselves to cigars and brandy and water, a liberal indulgence in which completed what the wine had begun, and before midnight chimed the Hon. George Spoonbill was—to use the mildest expression,—as unequivocally tipsy as the fondest parent or guardian could possibly have desired a young gentleman to be on the first night of his entering “the Service.”

Not yet established in barracks, Mr. Spoonbill slept at an hotel, and thither he was assisted by two of his boon companions, whom he insisted on regaling on devilled biscuits and more brandy and water, out of sheer gratitude for their kindness. Nor was this reward thrown away, for it raised the spirits of these youths to so genial a pitch that, on their way back—with a view, no doubt, to give encouragement to trade—they twisted off, as they phrased it, “no end to knockers and bell-handles,” broke half a dozen lamps, and narrowly escaping

the police (with whom, however, they would gloriously have fought rather than have surrendered) succeeded at length in reaching their quarters,—a little excited it is true, but by no means under the impression that they had done anything—as the articles of war say—"unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman."

In the meantime, the jaded waiter at the hotel had conveyed their fellow-Ensign to bed, to dream—if he were capable of dreaming—of the brilliant future which his first day's experience of actual military life held out.

II.—A SUBALTERN'S DAY.

However interesting it might prove to the noble relatives of Ensign Spoonbill to learn his progress, step by step, we must—for reasons of our own—pass over the first few weeks of his new career, with only a brief mention of the leading facts.

His brother-officers had instructed him in the art of tying on his sash, wearing his forage cap on one side, the secret of distinguishing his right hand from his left, and the mysteries of marching and counter-marching. The art of holding up his head and throwing out his chest, had been carefully imparted by the drill-serjeant of his company, and he had, accordingly, been pronounced "fit for duty."

What this was may best be shown, by giving an outline of "a subaltern's day," as he and the majority of his military friends were in the habit of passing it. It may serve to explain how it happens that British officers are so far in advance of their continental brethren in arms in the science of their profession, and by what process they have arrived at that intellectual superiority, which renders it a matter of regret that more serious interests than the mere discipline and well-being of only a hundred and twenty thousand men have not been confided to their charge.

The scene opens in a square room of tolerable size which, if simply adorned with "barrack furniture," (to wit, a deal table, two windsor-chairs, a coal scuttle, and a set of fire-irons,) would give an idea of a British subaltern's "interior," of rather more Spartan-like simplicity than is altogether true. But to these were added certain elegant "extras," obtained not out of the surplus of five and three-pence a day—after mess and band subscriptions, cost of uniform, servant's wages, &c., had been deducted—but on credit, which it was easier to get than to avoid incurring expense. A noble youth, like Ensign Spoonbill, had only to give the word of command to be obeyed by Messrs. Rosewood and Mildew, with the alacrity shown by the slaves of the lamp, and in an incredibly short space of time, the bare walls and floor of his apartment were covered with the gayest articles their establishment afforded. They included those indispensable adjuncts to a young officer's toilette, a full length

cheval, and a particularly lofty pier-glass. A green-baize screen converted the apartment into as many separate rooms as its occupant desired, cutting it up, perhaps, a little here and there, but adding, on the whole, a great deal to its comfort and privacy. What was out of the line of Messrs. Rosewood and Mildew—and that, as Othello says, was “not much”—the taste of Ensign Spoonbill himself supplied. To his high artistic taste were due the presence of a couple of dozen gilt-framed and highly-colored prints, representing the reigning favorites of the ballet, the winners of the Derby and Leger, and the costumes of the “dressiest,” and consequently the most distinguished corps in the service; the nice arrangement of cherry-stick tubes, amber mouth-pieces, meerschaum bowls, and embroidered bags of Latakia tobacco; pleasing devices of the well-crossed foils, riding whips, and single sticks evenly balanced by fencing masks and boxing gloves; and, on the chimney-piece, the brilliant array of nick-nacks, from the glittering shop of Messrs. Moses, Lazarus and Son, who called themselves “jewellers and dealers in curiosities,” and who dealt in a few trifles which were not alluded to above their door-posts.

The maxim of “Early to bed” was not known in the Hundredth; but the exigencies of the service required that Ensign Spoonbill should rise with the reveillée. He complained of it in more forcible language than Dr. Watts’ celebrated sluggard; but discipline is inexorable, and he was not permitted to “slumber again.” This early rising is a real military hardship. We once heard a lady of fashion counselling her friend never to marry a Guardsman. “You have no idea, love, what you’ll have to go through; every morning of his life—in the season—he has to be out with the horrid regiment at half-past six o’clock!”

The Hon. Ensign Spoonbill then rose with the lark, though much against his will, his connection with that fowl having by preference a midnight tendency. Erect at last, but with a strong taste of cigars in his mouth, and a slight touch of whiskey-headache, the Ensign arrayed himself in his blue frock coat and Oxford gray trowsers; wound himself into his sash; adjusted his sword and cap; and, with faltering step, made the best of his way into the barrack-square, where the squads were forming, which, with his eyes only half-open, he was called upon to inspect, prior to their being re-inspected by both lieutenant and captain. He then drew his sword, and “falling in” in the rear of his company, occupied that disposition till the regiment was formed and set in motion.

His duties on the parade-ground were—as a supernumerary—of a very arduous nature, and consisted chiefly in getting in the way of his captain as he continually “changed his flank,” in making the men “lock up,” and in avoiding the personal observation of the adjutant as much as possible; storing his mind, all the time, with a few of the epithets, more vigorous than courtly, which the

commanding officer habitually made use of to quicken the movements of the battalion. He enjoyed this recreation for about a couple of hours, sometimes utterly bewildered by a “change of front,” which developed him in the most inopportune manner; sometimes inextricably entangled in the formation of “a hollow square,” when he became lost altogether; sometimes confounding himself with “the points,” and being confounded by the senior-major for his awkwardness; and sometimes following a “charge” at such a pace as to take away his voice for every purpose of utility, supposing he had desired to exercise it in the way of admonitory adjuration to the rear-rank. In this manner he learnt the noble science of strategy, and by this means acquired so much proficiency that, had he been suddenly called upon to manœuvre the battalion, it is possible he might have gone on for five minutes without “clubbing” it.

The regiment was then marched home; and Ensign Spoonbill re-entered the garrison with all the honors of war, impressed with the conviction that he had already seen an immense deal of service; enough, certainly, to justify the ample breakfast which two or three other famished subs—his particular friends—assisted him in discussing, the more substantial part of which, involved a private account with the messman, who had a good many more of the younger officers of the regiment on his books. At these morning feasts—with the exception, perhaps, of a few remarks on drill as “a cussed bore”—no allusion was made to the military exercises of the morning, or to the prospective duties of the day. The conversation turned, on the contrary, on lighter and more agreeable topics;—the relative merits of bull and Scotch terriers; who made the best boots; whether “that gaerl at the pastrycook’s” was “as fine a woman” as “the barmaid of the Rose and Crown;” if Hudson’s cigars didn’t beat Pontet’s all to nothing; who married the sixth daughter of Jones of the Highlanders; interspersed with a few bets, a few oaths, and a few statements not strikingly remarkable for their veracity, the last having reference, principally, to the exploits for which Captain Smith made himself famous, to the detriment of Miss Bailey.

Breakfast over, and cigars lighted, Ensign Spoonbill and his friends, attired in shooting jackets of every pattern, and wearing felt hats of every color and form, made their appearance in front of the officers’ wing of the barracks; some semi-recumbent on the door-steps, others lounging with their hands in their coat pockets, others gracefully balancing themselves on the iron railings,—all smoking and talking on subjects of the most edifying kind. These pleasant occupations were, however, interrupted by the approach of an “orderly,” who, from a certain clasped book which he carried, read out the unwelcome intelligence that, at twelve o’clock that day, a regimental court-martial, under the presidency of Captain Huff, would assemble in the officers’ mess-room “for the trial of all such prisoners as might be brought before it,” and that two lieutenants and two ensigns—of whom the honorable Mr.

Spoonbill was one—were to constitute the members. This was a most distressing and unexpected blow, for it had previously been arranged that a badger should be drawn by Lieutenant Wadding's bull bitch Juno, at which interesting ceremony all the junior members of the court were to have "assisted." It was the more provoking, because the proprietor of the animal to be baited,—a gentleman in a fustian suit, brown legging, high-lows, a white hat with a black crape round it, and a very red nose, indicative of a most decided love for "cordials and compounds"—had just "stepped up" to say that "the badger must be dror'd that mornin'," as he was under a particular engagement to repeat the amusement in the evening for some gents at a distant town, and "couldn't no how, not for no money, forfeit his sacred word." The majority of the young gentlemen present understood perfectly what this corollary meant, but, with Ensign Spoonbill amongst them, were by no means in a hurry to "fork out" for so immoral a purpose as that of inducing a fellow-man to break a solemn pledge. That gallant officer, however, labored under so acute a feeling of disappointment, that regardless of the insult offered to the worthy man's conscience, he at once volunteered to give him "a couple of sovs" if he would just "throw those snobs over," and defer his departure till the following day; and it was settled that the badger should be "drawn" as soon as the patrons of Joe Baggs could get away from the court-martial,—for which in no very equable frame of mind they now got ready,—retiring to their several barrack-rooms, divesting themselves of their sporting costume and once more assuming military attire.

At the appointed hour, the court assembled. Captain Huff prepared for his judicial labors by calling for a glass of his favorite "swizzle," which he dispatched at one draught, and then, having sworn in the members, and being sworn himself, the business began by the appointment of Lieutenant Hackett as secretary. There were two prisoners to be tried: one had "sold his necessaries" in order to get drunk; the second had made use of "mutinous language" when drunk; both of them high military crimes, to be severely visited by those who had no temptation to dispose of their wardrobes, and could not understand why a soldier's beer money was not sufficient for his daily potations; but who omitted the consideration that they themselves, when in want of cash, occasionally sent a pair of epaulettes to "my uncle," and had a champagne supper out of the proceeds, at which neither sobriety nor decorous language were rigidly observed.

The case against him who had sold his necessaries,—to wit, "a new pair of boots, a shirt, and a pair of stockings," for which a Jew in the town had given him two shillings—was sufficiently clear. The captain and the pay-serjeant of the man's company swore to the articles, and the Jew who bought them (an acquaintance of Lieutenant Hackett, to whom he nodded with pleasing familiarity), stimulated by the fear of a civil prosecution, gave them up, and

appeared as evidence against the prisoner. He was found “guilty,” and sentenced to three months’ solitary confinement, and “to be put under stoppages,” according to the prescribed formulæ.

But the trial of the man accused of drunkenness and mutinous language was not so readily disposed of; though the delay occasioned by his calling witnesses to character served only to add to the irritation of his virtuous and impartial judges. He was a fine-looking fellow, six feet high, and had as soldier-like a bearing as any man in the Grenadier company to which he belonged. The specific acts which constituted his crime consisted in having refused to leave the canteen when somewhat vexatiously ordered to do so by the orderly serjeant, who forthwith sent for a file of the guard to compel him; thus urging him, when in an excited state, to an act of insubordination, the gist of which was a threat to knock the serjeant down, a show of resistance, and certain maledictions on the head of that functionary. In this, as in the former instance, there could be no doubt that the breach of discipline complained of had been committed, though several circumstances were pleaded in extenuation of the offence. The man’s previous character, too, was very good; he was ordinarily a steady, well-conducted soldier, never shirked his hour of duty, was not given to drink, and, therefore, as the principal witness in his favor said, “the more aisily overcome when he tuck a dhrop, but as harrumless as a lamb, unless put upon.”

These things averred and shown, the Court was cleared, and the members proceeded to deliberate. It was a question only of the nature and extent of the punishment to be awarded. The general instructions, no less than the favorable condition of the case, suggested leniency. But Captain Huff was a severe disciplinarian of the old school, an advocate for red-handed practice—the drum head and the halberds—and his opinion, if it might be called one, had only too much weight with the other members of the Court, all of whom were prejudiced against the prisoner, whom they internally—if not openly—condemned for interfering with their day’s amusements. “Corporal punishment, of course,” said Captain Huff, angrily; and his words were echoed by the Court, though the majority of them little knew the fearful import of the sentence, or they might have paused before they delivered over a fine resolute young man, whose chief crime was an ebullition of temper, to the castigation of the lash, which destroys the soldier’s self-respect; degrades him in the eyes of his fellows; mutilates his body, and leaves an indelible scar upon his mind. But the fiat went forth, and was recorded in “hundreds” against the unfortunate fellow; and Captain Huff having managed to sign the proceedings, carried them off to the commanding officer’s quarters, to be “approved and confirmed;” a ratification which the Colonel was not slow to give; for he was one of that class who are in the habit of reconciling themselves to an act of cruelty, by always asserting in their defence that “an example is necessary.”

He forgot in doing so, that this was not the way to preserve for the “Hundredth” the name of a crack corps, and that the best example for those in authority is Mercy.

With minds buoyant and refreshed by the discharge of the judicial functions, for which they were in every respect so admirably qualified, Ensign Spoonbill and his companions, giving themselves leave of absence from the afternoon parade, and having resumed their favorite “mufty,” repaired to an obscure den in a stable-yard at the back of the Blue Boar—a low public house in the filthiest quarter of the town—which Mr. Joseph Baggs made his head-quarters, and there, for a couple of hours, solaced themselves with the agreeable exhibition of the contest between the badger and the dog Juno, which terminated by the latter being bitten through both her fore-paws, and nearly losing one of her eyes; though, as Lieutenant Wadding exultingly observed, “she was a deuced deal too game to give over for such trifles as those.” The unhappy badger, that only fought in self-defence, was accordingly “dror’d,” as Mr. Baggs reluctantly admitted, adding, however, that she was “nuffin much the wuss,” which was more than could be said of the officers of the “Hundredth” who had enjoyed the spectacle.

This amusement ended, which had so far a military character that it familiarized the spectator with violence and bloodshed, though in an unworthy and contemptible degree, badgers and dogs, not men, being their subject, the young gentlemen adjourned to the High Street, to loiter away half an hour at the shop of Messrs. Moses, Lazarus and Son, whose religious observances and daily occupations were made their jest, while they ran in debt to the people from whom they afterwards expected consideration and forbearance. But not wholly did they kill their time there. The pretty pastry-cook, an innocent, retiring girl, but compelled to serve in the shop, came in for her share of their half-admiring and all insolent persecutions, and when their slang and sentiment were alike exhausted, they dawdled back again to the barracks, to dress for the fifth time for mess.

The events of the day, that is, the events on which their thoughts had been centered, again furnished the theme of the general conversation. Enough wine was drunk, as Captain Huff said, with the wit peculiar to him, “to restore the equilibrium;” the most abstinent person being Captain Cushion, who that evening gave convincing proof of the advantages of abstinence, by engaging Ensign Spoonbill in a match at billiards, the result of which was, that Lord Pelican’s son found himself, at midnight, minus a full half of the allowance for which his noble father had given him liberty to draw. But that he had fairly lost the money there could be no doubt, for the officer on the main-guard, who had preferred watching the game to going his rounds, declared to the party, when they afterwards adjourned to take a glass of grog with him before he

turned in, that, “except Jonathan, he had never seen any man make so good a bridge as his friend Spoonbill,” and this fact Captain Cushion himself confirmed, adding, that he thought, perhaps, he could afford next time to give points. With the reputation of making a good bridge—a Pons asinorum over which his money had travelled—Ensign Spoonbill was fain to be content, and in this satisfactory manner he closed one Subaltern’s day, there being many like it in reserve.

III.—THE CATASTROPHE.

What the Psalmist said in sorrow, those who witnessed the career of the Honorable Ensign Spoonbill and his companions might have said, not in sorrow only but in anger: “One day told another, and one night certified another.”

When duty was to be performed—(for even under the command of such an officer as Colonel Tulip the routine of duty existed)—it was slurred over as hastily as possible, or got through as it best might be. When, on the other hand, pleasure was the order of the day,—and this was sought hourly,—no resource was left untried, no expedient unattempted; and strange things, in the shape of pleasure, were often the result.

The nominal duties were multifarious, and, had they been properly observed, would have left but a comparatively narrow margin for recreation,—for there was much in the old forms which took up time, without conveying any great amount of military instruction.

The orderly officer for the day—we speak of the subaltern—was supposed to go through a great deal. His duty it was to assist at inspections, superintend drills, examine the soldiers’ provisions, see their breakfasts and dinners served, and attend to any complaints, visit the regimental guards by day and night, be present at all parades and musters, and, finally, deliver in a written report of the proceedings of the four-and-twenty hours.

To go through this routine, required—as it received in some regiments—a few days’ training; but in the Hundredth there was none at all. Every officer in that distinguished corps was supposed to be “a Heaven-born genius,” and acquired his military education as pigeons pick up peas. The Hon. Ensign Spoonbill looked at his men after a fashion; could swear at them if they were excessively dirty, and perhaps awe them into silence by a portentous scowl, or an exaggerated loudness of voice; but with regard to the real purpose of inspection, he knew as little, and cared as much, as the valet who aired his noble father’s morning newspaper. His eye wandered over the men’s kits as they were exposed to his view; but to his mind they only conveyed the idea of a kaleidoscopic rag-fair, not that of an assortment of necessaries for the comfort and well-being of the soldier. He saw large masses of beef, exhibited

in a raw state by the quartermaster, as the daily allowance for the men; but if any one had asked him if the meat was good, and of proper weight, how could he have answered, whose head was turned away in disgust, with his face buried in a scented cambric handkerchief, and his delicate nature loathing the whole scene? In the same spirit he saw the men's breakfasts and dinners served; fortifying his opinion, at the first, that coffee could only be made in France, and wondering, at the second, what sort of potage it could be that contrived to smell so disagreeably. These things might be special affectations in the Hon. Ensign, and depended, probably, on his own peculiar organization; but if the rest of the officers of the Hundredth did not manifest as intense a dislike to this part of their duties, they were members of much too "crack" a regiment to give themselves any trouble about the matter. The drums beat, the messes were served, there was a hasty gallop through the barrack-rooms, scarcely looking right or left, and the orderly officer was only too happy to make his escape without being stopped by any impertinent complaint.

The "turning out" of the barrack guard was a thing to make an impression on a bystander. A loud shout, a sharp clatter of arms, a scurry of figures, a hasty formation, a brief inquiry if all was right, and a terse rejoinder that all was remarkably so, constituted the details of a visit to the body of men on whom devolved the task of extreme watchfulness, and the preservation of order. If the serjeant had replied "All wrong," it would have equally enlightened Ensign Spoonbill, who went towards the guardhouse because his instructions told him to do so; but why he went there, and for what purpose he turned out the guard, never entered into his comprehension. Not even did a sense of responsibility awaken in him when, with much difficulty, he penned the report which gave, in a narrative form, the summary of the duties he had performed in so exemplary a manner. Performed, do we say? Yes, once or twice wholly, but for the most part with many gaps in the schedule. Sometimes the dinners were forgotten, now and then the tattoo, generally the afternoon parade, and not unfrequently the whole affair. For the latter omission, there was occasionally a nominal "wigging" administered, not by the commanding officer himself, but through the adjutant; and as that functionary was only looked upon by the youngsters in the light of a bore, without the slightest reverence for his office, his words—like those of Cassius—passed like the idle wind which none regarded. When Ensign Spoonbill "mounted guard" himself, his vigilance on his new post equalled the assiduity we have seen him exhibit in barracks. After the formality of trooping, marching down, and relieving, was over, the Honorable Ensign generally amused himself by a lounge in the vicinity of the guardhouse, until the field-officer's "rounds" had been made; and that visitation at an end for the day, a neighboring billiard-room, with Captain Cushion for his antagonist or "a jolly pool" occupied him until dinner-time. It was the custom in the garrison where the Hundredth were quartered, as

it was, indeed, in many others, for the officers on guard to dine with their mess, a couple of hours or so being granted for this indulgence. This relaxation was made up for, by their keeping close for the rest of the evening; but as there were generally two or three off duty sufficiently at leisure to find cigars and brandy-and-water attractive, even when consumed in a guard-room, the hardship of Ensign Spoonbill's official imprisonment was not very great. With these friends, and these creature-comforts to solace, the time wore easily away till night fell, when the field-officer, if he was "a good-fellow," came early, and Ensign Spoonbill, having given his friends their congé, was at liberty to "turn in" for the night, the onerous duty of visiting sentries and inspecting the reliefs every two hours, devolving upon the serjeant.

It may be inferred from these two examples of Ensign Spoonbill's ideas of discipline and the service, what was the course he generally adopted on duty, without our being under the necessity of going into further details. What he did when off duty helped him on still more effectually.

Lord Pelican's outfit having "mounted" the young gentleman, and the credit he obtained on the strength of being Lord Pelican's son, keeping his stud in order, he was enabled to vie with the crackest of the crack Hundredth; subject, however, to all the accidents which horseflesh is heir to—especially when allied to a judgment of which green was the prevailing color. A "swap" to a disadvantage; an indiscreet purchase; a mistake as to the soundness of an animal; and such other errors of opinion, entailed certain losses, which might, after all, have been borne, without rendering the applications for money at home more frequent than agreeable; but when under the influence of a natural obstinacy, or the advice of some very "knowing ones," Ensign Spoonbill proceeded to back his opinion in private matches, handicaps, and steeple-chases, the privy purse of Lady Pelican collapsed in a most unmistakable manner. Nor was this description of amusement the only rock-a-head in the course of the Honorable Ensign. The art or science of betting embraces the widest field, and the odds, given or taken, are equally fatal, whether the subject that elicits them be a match at billiards or a horse-race. Nor are the stakes at blind-hookey or unlimited loo less harmless, when you hav'n't got luck and have such opponents as Captain Cushion.

In spite of the belief in his own powers, which Ensign Spoonbill encouraged, he could not shut his eyes to the fact that he was every day a loser; but wiser gamblers than he—if any there be—place reliance on a "turn of luck," and all he wanted to enable him to take advantage of it, was a command of cash; for even one's best friends prefer the coin of the realm to the most unimpeachable I. O. U.

The want of money is a common dilemma,—not the less disagreeable, however, because it is common—but in certain situations this want is more

apparent than real. The Hon. Ensign Spoonbill was in the predicament of impecuniosity; but there were—as a celebrated statesman is in the habit of saying—three courses open to him. He might leave off play, and do without the money; he might "throw himself" on Lord Pelican's paternal feelings; or he might somehow contrive to raise a supply on his own account. To leave off just at the moment when he was sure to win back all he had lost, would have been ridiculous; besides, every man of spirit in the regiment would have cut him. To throw himself upon the generosity of his sire was a good poetical idea; but, practically, it would have been of no value: for, in the first place, Lord Pelican had no money to give—in the next, there was an elder brother, whose wants were more imperative than his own; and lastly, he had already tried the experiment, and failed in the most signal manner. There remained, therefore, only the last expedient; and being advised, moreover, to have recourse to it, he went into the project tête baissée. The "advice" was tendered in this form.

"Well, Spooney, my boy, how are you, this morning?" kindly inquired Captain Cushion, one day on his return from parade, from which the Honorable Ensign had been absent on the plea of indisposition.

"Deuced queer," was the reply; "that Roman punch always gives me the splittingest headaches!"

"Ah! you're not used to it. I'm as fresh as a four-year-old. Well, what did you do last night, Spooney?"

"Do! why, I lost, of course; you ought to know that."

"I—my dear fellow! Give you my honor I got up a loser!"

"Not to me, though," grumbled the Ensign.

"Can't say as to that," replied the Captain; "all I know is, that I'm devilishly minus."

"Who won, then?" inquired Spoonbill.

"Oh!" returned the Captain, after a slight pause, "I suspect—Chowser—he has somebody's luck and his own too!"

"I think he must have mine," said the Ensign, with a faint smile, as the alternations of the last night's Blind Hookey came more vividly to his remembrance. "What did I lose to you, Cushion?" he continued, in the hope that his memory had deceived him.

The Captain's pocket-book was out in an instant.

"Sixty-five, my dear fellow; that was all. By-the-bye, Spooney, I'm regularly hard up; can you let me have the tin? I wouldn't trouble you, upon

my soul, if I could possibly do without it, but I've got a heavy bill coming due to-morrow, and I can't renew."

The Honorable Ensign sank back on his pillow, and groaned impotently. Rallying, however, from this momentary weakness, he raised his head, and, after apostrophising the spirit of darkness as his best friend, exclaimed, "I'll tell you what it is, Cushion, I'm thoroughly cleaned out. I haven't got a dump!"

"Then you must fly a kite," observed the Captain, coolly. "No difficulty about that."

This was merely the repetition of counsel of the same friendly nature previously urged. The shock was not greater, therefore, than the young man's nerves could bear.

"How is it to be done?" asked the neophyte.

"Oh, I think I can manage that for you. Yes," pursued the Captain, musing, "Lazarus would let you have as much as you want, I dare say. His terms are rather high, to be sure; but then the cash is the thing. He'll take your acceptance at once. Who will you get to draw the bill?"

"Draw!" said the Ensign, in a state of some bewilderment. "I don't understand these things—couldn't you do it?"

"Why," replied the Captain, with an air of intense sincerity, "I'd do it for you with pleasure—nothing would delight me more; but I promised my grandmother when first I entered the service, that I never would draw a bill as long as I lived; and as a man of honor, you know, and a soldier, I can't break my word."

"But I thought you said you had a bill of your own coming due to-morrow," observed the astute Spoonbill.

"So I did," said the Captain, taken rather aback in the midst of his protestations, "but then it isn't—exactly—a thing of this sort; it's a kind of a bond—as it were—old family matters—the estate down in Lincolnshire—that I'm clearing off. Besides," he added hurriedly, "there are plenty of fellows who'll do it for you. There's young Brittles—the Manchester man, who joined just after you. I never saw anybody screw into baulk better than he does, except yourself—he's the one. Lazarus, I know, always prefers a young customer to an old one; knowing chaps, these Jews, arn't they?"

Captain Cushion's last remark was, no doubt, a just one—but he might have applied the term to himself with little dread of disparagement; and the end of the conversation was, that it was agreed a bill should be drawn as proposed, "say for three hundred pounds," the Captain undertaking to get the

affair arranged, and relieving Spoonbill of all trouble, save that of “merely” writing his name across a bit of stamped paper. These points being settled, the Captain left him, and the unprotected subaltern called for brandy and soda-water, by the aid of which stimulus he was enabled to rise and perform his toilette.

Messrs. Lazarus and Sons were merchants who perfectly understood their business, and, though they started difficulties, were only too happy to get fresh birds into their net. They knew to a certainty that the sum they were asked to advance would not be repaid at the end of the prescribed three months: it would scarcely have been worth their while to enter into the matter if it had; the profit on the hundred pounds’ worth of jewelry, which Ensign Spoonbill was required to take as part of the amount, would not have remunerated them sufficiently. Guessing pretty accurately which way the money would go, they foresaw renewed applications, and a long perspective of accumulating acceptances. Lord Pelican might be a needy nobleman; but he was Lord Pelican, and the Honorable George Spoonbill was his son; and if the latter did not succeed to the title and family estates, which was by no means improbable, there was Lady Pelican’s settlement for division amongst the younger children. So they advanced the money; that is to say, they produced a hundred and eighty pounds in cash, twenty they took for the accommodation (half of which found its way into the pocket of—never mind, we won’t say anything about Captain Cushion’s private affairs), and the value of the remaining hundred was made up with a series of pins and rings of the most stunning magnificence.

This was the Honorable Ensign Spoonbill’s first bill-transaction, but, the ice once broken, the second and third soon followed. He found it the pleasantest way in the world of raising money, and in a short time his affairs took a turn so decidedly commercial, that he applied the system to all his mercantile transactions. He paid his tailors after this fashion, satisfied Messrs. Mildew and his upholsterers with negotiable paper, and did “bits of stiff” with Galloper, the horse-dealer, to a very considerable figure. He even became facetious, not to say inspired, by this great discovery; for, amongst his papers, when they were afterwards overhauled by the official assignee—or some such fiscal dignitary,—a bacchanalian song in manuscript was found, supposed to have been written about this period, the refrain of which ran as follows:—

“When creditors clamor, and cash fails the till,

There is nothing so easy as giving a bill.”

It needs no ghost to rise from the grave to prophesy the sequel to this mode of “raising the wind.” It is recorded twenty times a month in the daily papers —now in the Bankruptcy Court, now in that for the Relief of Insolvent

Debtors. Ensign Spoonbill's career lasted about eighteen months, at the end of which period—not having prospered by the means of gaming to the extent he anticipated—he found himself under the necessity of selling out and retiring to a continental residence, leaving behind him debts, which were eventually paid, to the tune of seven thousand, two hundred and fourteen pounds, seventeen shillings, and tenpence three farthings, the vulgar fractions having their origin in the hair-splitting occasioned by reduplication of interest. He chose for his abode the pleasant town of Boulogne-sur-Mer, where he cultivated his moustaches, acquired a smattering of French, and an insight into the mystery of pigeon-shooting. For one or other of these qualifications—we cannot exactly say which—he was subsequently appointed attaché to a foreign embassy, and at the present moment, we believe, is considered one of those promising young men whose diplomatic skill will probably declare itself one of these days, by some stroke of finesse, which shall set all Europe by the ears.

With respect to Colonel Tulip's "crack" regiment, it went, as the saying is, "to the Devil." The exposure caused by the affair of Ensign Spoonbill—the smash of Ensign Brittles, which shortly followed—the duel between Lieutenant Wadding and Captain Cushion, the result of which was a ball (neither "spot" nor "plain," but a bullet) through the head of the last-named gentleman, and a few other trifles of a similar description, at length attracted the "serious notice" of his Grace the Commander-in-Chief. It was significantly hinted to Colonel Tulip that it would be for the benefit of the service in general, and that of the Hundredth in particular, if he exchanged to half-pay, as the regiment required re-modelling. A smart Lieutenant-Colonel who had learnt something, not only of drill, but of discipline, under the hero of "Young Egypt," in which country he had shared that general's laurels, was sent down from the Horse Guards. "Weeding" to a considerable extent took place; the Majors and the Adjutant were replaced by more efficient men, and, to sum up all, the Duke's "Circular" came out, laying down a principle of practical military education, while on service, which, if acted up to,—and there seems every reason to hope it will now be,—bids fair to make good officers of those who heretofore were merely idlers. It will also diminish the opportunities for gambling, drinking, and bill discounting, and substitute, for the written words on the Queen's Commission, the real character of a soldier and a gentleman.

VII.

FATHER AND SON.

One evening in the month of March, 1798,—that dark time in Ireland's

annals whose memory (overlooking all minor subsequent emeutes) is still preserved among us, as “the year of the rebellion”—a lady and gentleman were seated near a blazing fire in the old-fashioned dining-room of a large lonely mansion. They had just dined; wine and fruit were on the table, both untouched, while Mr. Hewson and his wife sat silently gazing at the fire, watching its flickering light becoming gradually more vivid as the short Spring twilight faded into darkness.

At length the husband poured out a glass of wine, drank it off, and then broke silence, by saying—

“Well, well, Charlotte, these are awful times; there were ten men taken up to-day for burning Cotter’s house at Knockane; and Tom Dycer says that every magistrate in the country is a marked man.”

Mrs. Hewson cast a frightened glance towards the windows, which opened nearly to the ground, and gave a view of the wide tree-besprinkled lawn, through whose centre a long straight avenue led to the high-road. There was also a footpath at either side of the house, branching off through close thickets of trees, and reaching the road by a circuitous route.

“Listen, James!” she said, after a pause; “what noise is that?”

“Nothing but the sighing of the wind among the trees. Come, wife, you must not give way to imaginary fears.”

“But really I heard something like footsteps on the gravel, round the gable-end—I wish”—

A knock at the parlor door interrupted her.

“Come in.”

The door opened, and Tim Gahan, Mr. Hewson’s confidential steward and right-hand man, entered, followed by a fair-haired delicate-looking boy of six years’ old, dressed in deep mourning.

“Well, Gahan, what do you want?”

“I ask your Honor’s pardon for disturbing you and the mistress; but I thought it right to come tell you the bad news I heard.”

“Something about the rebels, I suppose?”

“Yes, Sir; I got a whisper just now that there’s going to be a great rising intirely, to-morrow; thousands are to gather before daybreak at Kilcrean bog, where I’m told they have a power of pikes hiding; and then they’re to march on and sack every house in the country. I’ll engage, when I heard it, I didn’t let the grass grow under my feet, but came off straight to your Honor, thinking maybe you’d like to walk over this fine evening to Mr. Warren’s, and settle

with him what's best to be done."

"Oh, James! I beseech you, don't think of going."

"Make your mind easy, Charlotte; I don't intend it: not that I suppose there would be much risk; but, all things considered, I think I'm just as comfortable at home."

The steward's brow darkened, as he glanced nervously towards the end window, which, jutting out in the gable, formed a deep angle in the outer wall.

"Of course 'tis just as your honor plases, but I'll warrant you there would be no harm in going. Come, Billy," he added, addressing the child, who by this time was standing close to Mrs. Hewson, "make your bow, and bid good night to master and mistress."

The boy did not stir, and Mrs. Hewson, taking his little hand in hers, said—

"You need not go home for half-an-hour, Gahan; stay and have a chat with the servants in the kitchen, and leave little Billy with me—and with the apples and nuts"—she added, smiling as she filled the child's hands with fruit.

"Thank you, Ma'am," said the steward hastily. "I can't stop—I'm in a hurry home, where I wanted to leave this brat to-night; but he would follow me. Come, Billy; come this minute, you young rogue."

Still the child looked reluctant, and Mr. Hewson said peremptorily.

"Don't go yet, Gahan; I want to speak to you by-and-bye; and you know the mistress always likes to pet little Billy."

Without replying, the steward left the room; and the next moment his hasty footsteps resounded through the long flagged passage that led to the offices.

"There's something strange about Gahan, since his wife died," remarked Mrs. Hewson. "I suppose 'tis grief for her that makes him look so darkly, and seem almost jealous when any one speaks to his child. Poor little Billy! your mother was a sore loss to you."

The child's blue eyes filled with tears, and pressing closer to the lady's side, he said:—

"Old Peggy doesn't wash and dress me as nicely as mammy used."

"But your father is good to you?"

"Oh, yes, Ma'am, but he's out all day busy, and I've no one to talk to me as mammy used; for Peggy is quite deaf, and besides she's always busy with the pigs and chickens."

"I wish I had you, Billy, to take care of, and to teach, for your poor

mother’s sake.”

“And so you may, Charlotte,” said her husband. “I’m sure Gahan, with all his odd ways, is too sensible a fellow not to know how much it would be for his child’s benefit to be brought up and educated by us, and the boy would be an amusement to us in this lonely house. I’ll speak to him about it before he goes home. Billy, my fine fellow, come here,” he continued, “jump up on my knee, and tell me if you’d like to live here always, and learn to read and write.”

“I would, Sir, if I could be with father too.”

“So you shall;—and what about old Peggy?”

The child paused—

“I’d like to give her a pen’north of snuff and a piece of tobacco every week, for she said the other day that that would make her quite happy.”

Mr. Hewson laughed, and Billy prattled on, still seated on his knee; when a noise of footsteps on the ground, mingled with low suppressed talking, was heard outside.

“James, listen! there’s the noise again.”

It was now nearly dark, but Mr. Hewson, still holding the boy in his arms, walked towards the window and looked out.

“I can see nothing,” he said—“stay—there are figures moving off among the trees, and a man running round to the back of the house—very like Gahan he is too!”

Seizing the bell-rope he rang it loudly, and said to the servant who answered his summons:—

“Fasten the shutters and put up the bars, Connell; and then tell Gahan I want to see him.”

The man obeyed; candles were brought, and Gahan entered the room.

Mr. Hewson remarked that, though his cheeks were flushed, his lips were very white, and his bold dark eyes were cast on the ground.

“What took you round the house just now, Tim?” asked his master, in a careless manner.

“What took me round the house is it? Why, then, nothing in life, Sir, but that just as I went outside the kitchen door to take a smoke, I saw the pigs that Shaneen forgot to put up in their stye, making right for the mistress’ flower-garden; so I just put my dudheen, lighting as it was, into my pocket, and ran after them. I caught them on the grand walk under the end window, and

indeed, Ma’am, I had my own share of work turning them back to their proper spear.”

Gahan spoke with unusual volubility, but without raising his eyes from the ground.

“Who were the people,” asked his master, “whom I saw moving through the western grove?”

“People! your Honor—not a sign of any people moving there, I’ll be bound, barring the pigs.”

“Then,” said Mr. Hewson, smiling, to his wife, “the miracle of Circe must have been reversed and swine turned into men; for, undoubtedly, the dark figures I saw were human beings.”

“Come, Billy,” said Gahan, anxious to turn the conversation, “will you come home with me now? I am sure ’twas very good of the mistress to give you all them fine apples.”

Mrs. Hewson was going to propose Billy’s remaining, but her husband whispered:—“Wait till to-morrow.” So Gahan and his child were allowed to depart.

Next morning the magistrates of the district were on the alert, and several suspicious-looking men found lurking about, were taken up. A hat which fitted one of them was picked up in Mr. Hewson’s grove; the gravel under the end window bore many signs of trampling feet; and there were marks on the wall as if guns had rested against it. Gahan’s information touching the intended meeting at Kilcrean bog proved to be totally without foundation; and after a careful search not a single pike or weapon of any description could be found there. All these circumstances combined certainly looked suspicious; but, after a long investigation, as no guilt could be actually brought home to Gahan, he was dismissed. One of his examiners, however, said privately, “I advise you take care of that fellow, Hewson. If I were in your place, I’d just trust him as far as I could throw him, and not an inch beyond.”

An indolent hospitable Irish country gentleman, such as Mr. Hewson, is never without an always shrewd and often roguish prime minister, who saves his master the trouble of looking after his own affairs, and manages everything that is to be done in both the home and foreign departments,—from putting a new door to the pig-stye, to letting a farm of an hundred acres on lease. Now in this, or rather these capacities, Gahan had long served Mr. Hewson; and some seven years previous to the evening on which our story commences, he had strengthened the tie and increased his influence considerably by marrying Mrs. Hewson’s favorite and faithful maid. One child was the result of this union; and Mrs. Hewson, who had no family of her own, took much interest in

little Billy,—more especially after the death of his mother, who, poor thing! the neighbors said, was not very happy, and would gladly, if she dared, have exchanged her lonely cottage for the easy service of her former mistress.

Thus, though for a time Mr. and Mrs. Hewson regarded Gahan with some doubt, the feeling gradually wore away, and the steward regained his former influence.

After the lapse of a few stormy months the rebellion was quelled: all the prisoners taken up were severally disposed of by hanging, transportation or acquittal, according to the nature and amount of the evidence brought against them; and the country became as peaceful as it is in the volcanic nature of our Irish soil ever to be.

The Hewsons' kindness towards Gahan's child was steady and unchanged. They took him into their house, and gave him a plain but solid education; so that William, while yet a boy, was enabled to be of some use to his patron, and daily enjoyed more and more of his confidence.

Another Evening, the twentieth anniversary of that with which this narrative commenced, came round. Mr. and Mrs. Hewson were still hale and active, dwelling in their hospitable home. About eight o'clock at night, Tim Gahan, now a stooping, gray-haired man, entered Mr. Hewson's kitchen, and took his seat on the corner of the settle, near the fire.

The cook directing a silent significant glance of compassion towards her fellow-servants, said:

"Would you like a drink of cider, Tim, or will you wait and take a cup of tay with myself and Kitty?"

The old man's eyes were fixed on the fire, and a wrinkled hand was planted firmly on each knee, as if to check their involuntary trembling. "I'll not drink anything this night, thank you kindly, Nelly," he said, in a slow musing manner, dwelling long on each word.

"Where's Billy?" he asked, after a pause, in a quick hurried tone, looking up suddenly at the cook, with an expression in his eyes, which, as she afterwards said, "took away her breath."

"Oh, never heed Billy! I suppose he's busy with the master."

"Where's the use, Nelly," said the coachman, "in hiding it from him? Sure, sooner or later he must know it. Tim," he continued, "God knows 'tis sorrow to my heart this blessed night to make yours sore,—but the truth is, that William has done what he oughtn't to do to the man that was all one as a father to him."

"What has he done? what will you dar say again my boy?"

“Taken money, then,” replied the coachman, “that the master had marked and put by in his desk; for he suspected this some time past that gold was missing. This morning ’twas gone; a search was made, and the marked guineas were found with your son William.”

The old man covered his face with his hands, and rocked himself to and fro.

“Where is he now?” at length he asked, in a hoarse voice.

“Locked up safe in the inner store-room; the master intends sending him to gaol early to-morrow morning.”

“He will not,” said Gahan slowly, “kill the boy that saved his life!—no, no.”

“Poor fellow! the grief is setting his mind astray—and sure no wonder!” said the cook, compassionately.

“I’m not astray!” cried the old man, fiercely.

“Where’s the master?—take me to him.”

“Come with me,” said the butler, “and I’ll ask him will he see you?”

With faltering steps the father complied; and when they reached the parlor, he trembled exceedingly, and leant against the wall for support, while the butler opened the door, and said:

“Gahan is here, Sir, and wants to know will you let him speak to you for a minute?”

“Tell him to come in,” said Mr. Hewson, in a solemn tone of sorrow, very different from his ordinary cheerful voice.

“Sir,” said the steward, advancing, “they tell me you are going to send my boy to prison,—is it true?”

“Too true, indeed, Gahan. The lad who was reared in my house, whom my wife watched over in health, and nursed in sickness—whom we loved almost as if he were our own, has robbed us, and that not once or twice, but many times. He is silent, and sullen, too, and refuses to tell why he stole the money, which was never withheld from him when he wanted it. I can make nothing of him, and must only give him up to justice in the morning.”

“No, Sir, no. The boy saved your life; you can’t take his.”

“You’re raving, Gahan.”

“Listen to me, Sir, and you won’t say so. You remember this night twenty years? I came here with my motherless child, and yourself and the mistress

pitied us, and spoke loving words to him. Well for us all you did so! That night —little you thought it!—I was banded with them that were sworn to take your life. They were watching you outside the window, and I was sent to inveigle you out, that they might shoot you. A faint heart I had for the bloody business, for you were ever and always a good master to me; but I was under an oath to them that I darn't break, supposing they ordered me to shoot my own mother. Well! the hand of God was over you, and you wouldn't come with me. I ran out to them, and I said—"Boys, if you want to shoot him, you must do it through the window," thinking they'd be afeard of that; but they weren't—they were daring fellows, and one of them, sheltered by the angle of the window, took deadly aim at you. That very moment you took Billy on your knee, and I saw his fair head on a line with the musket. I don't know exactly then what I said or did, but I remember I caught the man's hand, threw it up, and pointed to the child. Knowing I was a determined man, I believe they didn't wish to provoke me; so they watched you for awhile, and when you didn't put him down they got daunted, hearing the sound of soldiers riding by the road, and they stole away through the grove. Most of that gang swung on the gallows, but the last of them died this morning quietly in his bed. Up to yesterday he used to make me give him money,—sums of money to buy his silence—and it was for that I made my boy a thief. It was wearing out his very life. Often he went down on his knees to me, and said: 'Father, I'd die myself sooner than rob my master, but I can't see you disgraced. Oh, let us fly the country!' Now, Sir, I have told you all—do what you like with me—send me to gaol, I deserve it—but spare my poor, deluded, innocent boy!"

It would be difficult to describe Mr. Hewson's feelings, but his wife's first impulse was to hasten to liberate the prisoner. With a few incoherent words of explanation she led him into the presence of his master, who, looking at him sorrowfully but kindly, said:

"William, you have erred deeply, but not so deeply as I supposed. Your father has told me everything. I forgive him freely and you also."

The young man covered his face with his hands, and wept tears more bitter and abundant than he had ever shed since the day when he followed his mother to the grave. He could say but little, but he knelt on the ground, and clasping the kind hand of her who had supplied to him that mother's place, he murmured:

"Will you tell him I would rather die than sin again."

Old Gahan died two years afterwards, truly penitent, invoking blessings on his son and on his benefactors; and the young man's conduct, now no longer under evil influence, was so steady and so upright, that his adopted parents felt that their pious work was rewarded, and that, in William Gahan, they had

indeed a son.

VIII.

THE MINER’S DAUGHTER.—A TALE OF THE PEAK.

I.—THE CHILD’S TRAGEDY.

There is no really beautiful part of this kingdom so little known as the Peak of Derbyshire. Matlock, with its tea-garden trumpery, and mock-heroic wonders; Buxton, with its bleak hills and fashionable bathers; the truly noble Chatsworth and the venerable Haddon, engross almost all that the public generally have seen of the Peak. It is talked of as a land of mountains, which in reality are only hills; but its true beauty lies in valleys that have been created by the rending of the earth in some primeval convulsion, and which present a thousand charms to the eyes of the lover of nature. How deliciously do the crystal waters of the Wye and the Dove rush along such valleys, or dales, as they are called. With what a wild variety do the gray rocks soar up amid their woods and copses. How airily stand in the clear heavens the lofty limestone precipices, and the gray edges of rock gleam out from the bare green downs—there never called downs. What a genuine Saxon air is there cast over the population, what a Saxon bluntness salutes you in their speech!

It is into the heart of this region that we propose now to carry the reader. Let him suppose himself with us now on the road from Ashford-in-the-water to Tideswell. We are at the Bulls-Head, a little inn on that road. There is nothing to create wonder, or a suspicion of a hidden Arcadia in anything you see, but another step forward, and—there! There sinks a world of valleys at your feet. To your left lies the delicious Monsol Dale. Old Finn Hill lifts his gray head grandly over it. Hobthrush’s Castle stands bravely forth in the hollow of his side—gray, and desolate, and mysterious. The sweet Wye goes winding and sounding at his feet, amid its narrow green meadows, green as the emerald, and its dark glossy alders. Before us stretches on, equally beautiful, Cressbrook Dale; Little Edale shows its cottages from amidst its trees; and as we advance, the Mousselin-de-laine Mills stretch across the mouth of Miller’s Dale, and startle with the aspect of so much life amid so much solitude.

But our way is still onward. We resist the attraction of Cressbrook village on its lofty eminence, and plunge to the right, into Wardlow Dale. Here we are buried deep in woods, and yet behold still deeper the valley descend below us. There is an Alpine feeling upon us. We are carried once more, as in a dream, into the Saxon Switzerland. Above us stretch the boldest ranges of lofty

precipices, and deep amid the woods are heard the voices of children. These come from a few workman's houses couched at the foot of a cliff that rises high and bright amid the sun. That is Wardlow Cop; and there we mean to halt for a moment. Forwards lies a wild region of hills, and valleys, and lead mines, but forward goes no road, except such as you can make yourself through the tangled woods.

At the foot of Wardlow Cop, before this little hamlet of Bellamy Wick was built, or the glen was dignified with the name of Raven Dale, there lived a miner who had no term for his place of abode. He lived, he said, under Wardlow Cop, and that contented him.

His house was one of those little, solid, gray limestone cottages, with gray flagstone roofs which abound in the Peak. It had stood under that lofty precipice when the woods which now so densely fill the valley were but newly planted. There had been a mine near it, which had no doubt been the occasion of its erection in so solitary a place; but that mine was now worked out, and David Dunster, the miner, now worked at a mine right over the hills in Miller's Dale. He was seldom at home, except at night, and on Sundays. His wife, besides keeping her little house, and digging and weeding in the strip of garden that lay on the steep slope above the house, hemmed in with a stone wall, also seamed stockings for a framework-knitter in Ashford, whither she went once or twice in the week.

They had three children, a boy and two girls. The boy was about eight years of age; the girls were about five and six. These children were taught their lessons of spelling and reading by the mother, amongst her other multifarious tasks; for she was one of those who are called regular plodders. She was quiet, patient, and always doing, though never in a bustle. She was not one of those who acquire a character for vast industry by doing everything in a mighty flurry, though they contrive to find time for a tolerable deal of gossip under the plea of resting a bit, and "which resting a bit" they always terminate by an exclamation that "they must be off, though, for they have a world of work to do." Betty Dunster, on the contrary, was looked on as rather "a slow coach." If you remarked that she was a hard-working woman, the reply was, "Well, she's always doing—Betty's work's never done; but then she does na hurry hersen." The fact was, Betty was a thin, spare woman, of no very strong constitution, but of an untiring spirit. Her pleasure and rest were, when David came home at night, to have his supper ready, and to sit down opposite to him at the little round table, and help him, giving a bit now and then to the children, that came and stood round, though they had had their suppers, and were ready for bed as soon as they had seen something of their "dad."

David Dunster was one of those remarkably tall fellows that you see about

these hills, who seem of all things the very worst made men to creep into the little mole holes on the hill sides that they call lead-mines. But David did manage to burrow under and through the hard limestone rocks as well as any of them. He was a hard-working man, though he liked a sup of beer, as most Derbyshire men do, and sometimes came home none of the soberest. He was naturally of a very hasty temper, and would fly into great rages; and if he were put out by anything in the working of the mines, or the conduct of his fellow-workmen, he would stay away from home for days, drinking at Tideswell, or the Bull's Head at the top of Monsal Dale, or down at the Miners' Arms at Ashford-in-the-water.

Betty Dunster bore all this patiently. She looked on these things somewhat as matters of course. At that time, and even now, how few miners do not drink and "roll a bit," as they call it. She was, therefore, tolerant, and let the storms blow over, ready always to persuade her husband to go home and sleep off his drink and anger, but if he were too violent, leaving him till another attempt might succeed better. She was very fond of her children, and not only taught them on week days their lessons, and to help her to seam, but also took them to the Methodist Chapel in "Tidser," as they called Tideswell, whither, whenever she could, she enticed David. David, too, in his way, was fond of the children, especially of the boy, who was called David after him. He was quite wrapped up in the lad, to use the phrase of the people in that part; in fact, he was foolishly and mischievously fond of him. He would give him beer to drink, "to make a true Briton on him," as he said, spite of Betty's earnest endeavor to prevent it,—telling him that he was laying the foundation in the lad of the same faults that he had himself. But David Dunster did not look on drinking as a fault at all. It was what he had been used to all his life. It was what all the miners had been used to for generations. A man was looked on as a milk-sop and a Molly Coddle, that would not take his mug of ale, and be merry with his comrades. It required the light of education, and the efforts that have been made by the Temperance Societies, to break in on this ancient custom of drinking, which, no doubt, has flourished in these hills since the Danes and other Scandinavians, bored and perforated them of old for the ores of lead and copper. To Betty Dunster's remonstrances, and commendations of tea, David would reply,—"Botheration Betty, wench! Dunna tell me about thy tea and such-like pig's-wesh. It's all very well for women; but a man, Betty, a man mun ha' a sup of real stingo, lass. He mun ha' summut to prop his ribs out, lass, as he delves through th' chert and tood-stone. When tha weylds th' maundrel (the pick), and I wesh th' dishes, tha shall ha' th' drink, my wench, and I'll ha' th' tea. Till then, prithee let me aloon, and dunna bother me, for it's no use. It only kicks my monkey up."

And Betty found that it was of no use; that it did only kick his monkey up, and so she let him alone, except when she could drop in a persuasive word or

two. The mill-owners at Cressbrook and Miller's Dale had forbidden any public-house nearer than Edale, and they had more than once called the people together to point out to them the mischiefs of drinking, and the advantages to be derived from the very savings of temperance. But all these measures, though they had some effect on the mill people, had very little on the miners. They either sent to Tideswell or Edale for kegs of beer to peddle at the mines, or they went thither themselves on receiving their wages.

And let no one suppose that David Dunster was worse than his fellows; or that Betty Dunster thought her case a particularly hard one. David "was pretty much of a muchness," according to the country phrase, with the rest of his hard-working tribe, which was, and always had been, a hard-drinking tribe; and Betty, though she wished it different, did not complain, just because it was of no use, and because she was no worse off than her neighbors.

Often when she went to "carry in her hose" to Ashford, she left the children at home by themselves. She had no alternative. They were there in that solitary valley for many hours playing alone. And to them it was not solitary. It was all that they knew of life, and that all was very pleasant to them. In spring, they hunted for bird's-nests in the copses, and amongst the rocks and gray stones that had fallen from them. In the copses built the blackbirds and thrushes: in the rocks the firetails; and the gray wagtails in the stones, which were so exactly of their own color, as to make it difficult to see them. In summer, they gathered flowers and berries, and in the winter they played at horses, kings, and shops, and sundry other things in the house.

On one of these occasions, a bright afternoon in autumn, the three children had rambled down the glen, and found a world of amusement in being teams of horses, in making a little mine at the foot of a tall cliff, and in marching for soldiers, for they had one day—the only time in their lives—seen some soldiers go through the village of Ashford, when they had gone there with their mother, for she now and then took them with her when she had something from the shop to carry besides her bundle of hose. At length they came to the foot of an open hill which swelled to a considerable height, with a round and climbable side, on which grew a wilderness of bushes, amid which lay scattered masses of gray crag. A small winding path went up this, and they followed it. It was not long, however, before they saw something which excited their eager attention. Little David, who was the guide, and assumed to himself much importance as the protector of his sisters, exclaimed, "See here!" and springing forward, plucked a fine crimson cluster of the mountain bramble. His sisters, on seeing this, rushed on with like eagerness. They soon forsook the little winding and craggy footpath, and hurried through sinking masses of moss and dry grass, from bush to bush and place to place. They were soon far up above the valley, and almost every step revealed to them

some delightful prize. The clusters of the mountain-bramble, resembling mulberries, and known only to the inhabitants of the hills, were abundant, and were rapidly devoured. The dewberry was as eagerly gathered,—its large, purple fruit passing with them for blackberries. In their hands were soon seen posies of the lovely grass of Parnassus, the mountain cistus, and the bright blue geranium.

Higher and higher the little group ascended in this quest, till the sight of the wide, naked hills, and the hawks circling round the lofty, tower-like crags over their heads, made them feel serious and somewhat afraid.

“Where are we?” asked Jane, the elder sister. “Arn’t we a long way from hom?”

“Let us go hom,” said little Nancy. “I’m afreed here;” clutching hold of Jane’s frock.

“Pho, nonsense!” said David, “what are you afreed on? I’ll tak care on you, niver fear.”

And with this he assumed a bold and defying aspect, and said, “Come along; there are nests in th’ hazzels up yonder.”

He began to mount again, but the two girls hung back and said, “Nay, David, dunna go higher; we are both afreed;” and Jane added, “It’s a long wee from hom, I’m sure.”

“And those birds screechin’ so up there; I darna go up,” added little Nancy. They were the hawks that she meant, which hovered, whimpering and screaming, about the highest cliffs. David called them little cowards, but began to descend; and, presently, seeking for berries and flowers as they descended, they regained the little winding, craggy road, and, while they were calling to each other, discovered a remarkable echo on the opposite hill side. On this they shouted to it, and laughed, and were half-frightened when it laughed and shouted again. Little Nancy said it must be an old man in the inside of the mountain; at which they were all really afraid, though David put on a big look, and said, “Nonsense! it was nothing at all.” But Jane asked how nothing at all could shout and laugh as it did? and on this little Nancy plucked her again by the frock, and said in turn, “Oh, dear, let’s go hom!”

But at this David gave a wild whoop to frighten them, and when the hill whooped again, and the sisters began to run, he burst into laughter, and the strange spectral Ha! ha! ha! that ran along the inside of the hill as it were, completed their fear, and they stopped their ears with their hands, and scuttled away down the hill. But now David seized them, and pulling their hands down from their heads, he said, “See here! what a nice place, with the stones sticking out like seats. Why it’s like a little house; let us stay and play a bit

here.” It was a little hollow in the hill side surrounded by projecting stones like an amphitheatre. The sisters were still afraid, but the sight of this little hollow with its seats of crag had such a charm for them that they promised David they would stop awhile, if he would promise not to shout and awake the echo. David readily promised this, and so they sat down; David proposed to keep a school, and cut a hazel wand from a bush and began to lord it over his two scholars in a very pompous manner. The two sisters pretended to be much afraid, and to read very diligently on pieces of flat stone which they had picked up. And then David became a serjeant and was drilling them for soldiers, and stuck pieces of fern into their hair for cockades. And then, soon after, they were sheep, and he was the shepherd; and he was catching his flock and going to shear them, and made so much noise that Jane cried, “Hold! there’s the echo mocking us.”

At this they all were still. But David said, “Pho! never mind the echo; I must shear my sheep;” but just as he was seizing little Nancy to pretend to shear her with a piece of stick, Jane cried out, “Look! look! how black it’s coming down the valley there! There’s going to be a dreadful starm; let us hurry hom!”

David and Nancy both looked up, and agreed to run as fast down the hill as they could. But the next moment the driving storm swept over the hill, and the whole valley was hid in it. The three children still hurried on, but it became quite dark, and they soon lost the track, and were tossed about by the wind, so that they had difficulty to keep on their legs. Little Nancy began to cry, and the three taking hold of each other endeavored in silence to make their way homewards. But presently they all stumbled over a large stone, and fell some distance down the hill. They were not hurt, but much frightened, for they now remembered the precipices, and were afraid every minute of going over them. They now strove to find the track by going up again, but they could not find it anywhere. Sometimes they went upwards till they thought they were quite too far, and then they went downwards till they were completely bewildered; and then, like the Babes in the Wood, “They sate them down and cried.”

But ere they had sate long, they heard footsteps, and listened. They certainly heard them and shouted, but there was no answer. David shouted, “Help! fayther! mother! help!” but there was no answer. The wind swept fiercely by; the hawks whimpered from the high crags, lost in the darkness of the storm; and the rain fell, driving along icy cold. Presently, there was a gleam of light through the clouds; the hill-side became visible, and through the haze they saw a tall figure as of an old man ascending the hill. He appeared to carry two loads slung from his shoulders by a strap; a box hanging before, and a bag hanging at his back. He wound up the hill slowly and wearily, and presently he stopped, and relieving himself of his load, seated himself on a

piece of crag to rest. Again David shouted, but there still was no answer. The old man sate as if no shout had been heard—immovable.

“It is a man,” said David, “and I will mak him hear;” and with that he shouted once more with all his might. But the old man made no sign of recognition. He did not even turn his head, but he took off his hat and began to wipe his brow as if warm with the ascent.

“What can it be?” said David in astonishment. “It is a man, that’s sartain. I’ll run and see.”

“Nay, nay!” shrieked the sisters. “Don’t, David! don’t! It’s perhaps the old man out of the mountain that’s been mocking us. Perhaps,” added Jane, “he only comes out in starms and darkness.”

“Stuff!” said David, “an echo isn’t a man; it’s only our own voices. I’ll see who it is;” and away he darted, spite of the poor girls’ crying in terror, “Don’t; don’t, David! Oh, don’t.”

But David was gone. He was not long in reaching the old man, who sate on his stone breathing hard, as if out of breath with his ascent, but not appearing to perceive David’s approach. The rain and the wind drove fiercely upon him, but he did not seem to mind it. David was half afraid to approach close to him, but he called out, “Help; help, mester!” The old man remained as unconscious of his presence. “Hillo!” cried David again. “Can you tell us the way down, mester?” There was no answer, and David was beginning to feel a shudder of terror run through every limb, when the clouds cleared considerably, and he suddenly exclaimed, “Why it’s old Tobias Turton of top of Edale, and he’s as deaf as a door-nail!”

In an instant, David was at his side; seized his coat to make him aware of his presence, and, on the old man perceiving him, shouted in his ear, “Which is the way down here, Mester Turton? Where’s the track?”

“Down? Weighs o’ the back?” said the old man; “ay, my lad, I was fain to sit down; it does weigh o’ th’ back, sure enough.”

“Where’s the foot-track?” shouted David again.

“Th’ foot-track? Why, what art ta doing here, my lad, in such a starm? Is’nt it David Dunster’s lad?”

David nodded. “Why, the track’s here! see;” and the old man stamped his foot. “Get down hom, my lad, as fast as thou can. What dun they do letting thee be upon th’ hills in such a dee as this?”

David nodded his thanks, and turned to descend the track, while the old man adjusting his burden again, silently and wearily recommenced his way upwards.

David shouted to his sisters as he descended, and they quickly replied. He called to them to come towards him, as he was on the track, and was afraid to quit it again. They endeavored to do this; but the darkness was now redoubled, and the wind and rain became more furious than ever. The two sisters were soon bewildered amongst the bushes, and David, who kept calling to them at intervals to direct their course towards him, soon heard them crying bitterly. At this, he forgot the necessity of keeping the track, and darting towards them, soon found them by continuing to call to them, and took their hands to lead them to the track. But they were now drenched through with the rain, and shivered with cold and fear. David with a stout heart endeavored to cheer them. He told them the track was close by, and that they would soon be at home. But though the track was not ten yards off, somehow they did not find it. Bushes and projecting rocks turned them out of their course; and owing to the confusion caused by the wind, the darkness, and their terror, they searched in vain for the track. Sometimes they thought they had found it, and went on a few paces, only to stumble over loose stones, or get entangled in the bushes.

It was now absolutely becoming night. Their terrors increased greatly. They shouted and cried aloud, in the hope of making their parents hear them. They felt sure that both father and mother must be come home; and as sure that they would be hunting for them. But they did not reflect that their parents could not tell in what direction they had gone. Both father and mother were come home, and the mother had instantly rushed out to try to find them, on perceiving that they were not in the house. She had hurried to and fro, and called—not at first supposing they would be far. But when she heard nothing of them, she ran in, and begged of her husband to join in the search. But at first David Dunster would do nothing. He was angry at them for going away from the house, and said he was too tired to go on a wild-goose chase through the plantations after them. “They are i’ th’ plantations,” said he; “they are sheltering there somewhere. Let them alone, and they’ll come home, with a good long tail behind them.”

With this piece of a child’s song of sheep, David sat down to his supper, and Betty Dunster hurried up the valley, shouting—“Children, where are you? David! Jane! Nancy! where are you?”

When she heard nothing of them, she hurried still more wildly up the hill towards the village. When she arrived there—the distance of a mile—she inquired from house to house, but no one had seen anything of them. It was clear they had not been in that direction. An alarm was thus created in the village; and several young men set out to join Mrs. Dunster in the quest. They again descended the valley towards Dunster’s house, shouting every now and then, and listening. The night was pitch dark, and the rain fell heavily; but the wind had considerably abated, and once they thought they heard a faint cry in

answer to their call, far down the valley. They were right; the children had heard the shouting, and had replied to it. But they were far off. The young men shouted again, but there was no answer; and after shouting once more without success, they hastened on. When they reached David Dunster's house, they found the door open, and no one within. They knew that David had set off in quest of the children himself, and they determined to descend the valley. The distracted mother went with them, crying silently to herself, and praying inwardly, and every now and then trying to shout. But the young men raised their strong voices above hers, and made the cliffs echo with their appeals.

Anon a voice answered them down the valley. They ran on as well as the darkness would let them, and soon found that it was David Dunster, who had been in the plantations on the other side of the valley; but hearing nothing of the lost children, now joined them. He said he had heard the cry from the hill-side farther down, that answered to their shouts, and he was sure that it was his boy David's voice. But he had shouted again, and there had been no answer but a wild scream as of terror, that made his blood run cold.

"O God!" exclaimed the distracted mother, "what can it be? David! David! Jane! Nancy!"

There was no answer. The young man bade Betty Dunster to contain herself, and they would find the children before they went home again. All held on down the valley, and in the direction whence the voice came. Many times did the young men and the now strongly agitated father shout and listen. At length they seemed to hear voices of weeping and moaning. They listened —they were sure they heard a lamenting—it could only be the children. But why then did they not answer? On struggled the men, and Mrs. Dunster followed wildly after. Now, again, they stood and shouted, and a kind of terrified scream followed the shout.

"God in heaven!" exclaimed the mother; "what is it? There is something dreadful. My children! my children! where are you?"

"Be silent, pray do, Mrs. Dunster," said one of the young men, "or we cannot catch the sounds so as to follow them." They again listened, and the wailings of the children were plainly heard. The whole party pushed forward over stock and stone up the hill. They called again, and there was a cry of "Here! here! faythe r! mother! where are you?"

In a few moments more the whole party had reached the children, who stood drenched with rain, and trembling violently, under a cliff that gave no shelter, but was exposed especially to the wind and rain.

"O Christ! My children!" cried the mother, wildly, struggling forwards and clasping one in her arms. "Nancy! Jane! But where is David? David! David!

Oh, where is David? Where is your brother?”

The whole party was startled at not seeing the boy, and joined in a simultaneous “Where is he? Where is your brother?”

The two children only wept and trembled more violently, and burst into loud crying.

“Silence!” shouted the father. “Where is David, I tell ye? Is he lost? David, lad, where ar ta?”

All listened, but there was no answer but the renewed crying of the two girls.

“Where is the lad, then?” thundered forth the father with a terrible oath.

The two terrified children cried, “Oh, down there! down there!”

“Down where? Oh, God!” exclaimed one of the young men; “why it’s a precipice! Down there?”

At this dreadful intelligence the mother gave a wild shriek, and fell senseless on the ground. The young men caught her, and dragged her back from the edge of the precipice. The father in the same moment, furious at what he heard, seized the younger child that happened to be near him, and shaking it violently, swore he would fling it down after the lad.

He was angry with the poor children, as if they had caused the destruction of his boy. The young men seized him, and bade him think what he was about; but the man believing his boy had fallen down the precipice, was like a madman. He kicked at his wife as she lay on the ground, as if she were guilty of this calamity by leaving the children at home. He was furious against the poor girls, as if they had led their brother into danger. In his violent rage he was a perfect maniac, and the young men, pushing him away, cried shame on him. In a while, the desperate man, torn by a hurricane of passion, sate himself down on a crag, and burst into a tempest of tears, and struck his head violently with his clenched fists, and cursed himself and everybody. It was a dreadful scene.

Meantime, some of the young men had gone down below the precipice on which the children had stood, and, feeling amongst the loose stones, had found the body of poor little David. He was truly dead!

When he had heard the shout of his father, or of the young men, he had given one loud shout in answer, and saying “Come on! never fear now!” sprang forward, and was over the precipice in the dark, and flew down and was dashed to pieces. His sisters heard a rush, a faint shriek, and suddenly stopping, escaped the destruction that poor David had found.

II.—MILL LIFE.

We must pass over the painful and dreadful particulars of that night, and of a long time to come; the maniacal rage of the father, the shattered heart and feelings of the mother, the dreadful state of the two remaining children, to whom their brother was one of the most precious objects in a world which, like theirs, contained so few. One moment to have seen him full of life, and fun, and bravado, and almost the next a lifeless and battered corpse, was something too strange and terrible to be soon surmounted. But this was wofully aggravated by the cruel anger of their father, who continued to regard them as guilty of the death of his favorite boy. He seemed to take no pleasure in them. He never spoke to them but to scold them. He drank more deeply than ever, and came home later; and when there was sullen and morose. When their mother, who suffered severely, but still plodded on with all her duties, said, “David, they are thy children too;” he would reply savagely, “Hod thy tongue! What’s a pack o’ wenches to my lad?”

What tended to render the miner more hard towards the two girls was a circumstance which would have awakened a better feeling in a softer father’s heart. Nancy, the younger girl, since the dreadful catastrophe, had seemed to grow gradually dull and defective in her intellect, she had a slow and somewhat idiotic air and manner. Her mother perceived it, and was struck with consternation by it. She tried to rouse her, but in vain. She could not perform her ordinary reading and spelling lessons. She seemed to have forgotten what was already learned. She appeared to have a difficulty in moving her legs, and carried her hands as if she had suffered a partial paralysis. Jane, her sister, was dreadfully distressed at it, and she and her mother wept many bitter tears over her. One day, in the following spring, they took her with them to Ashford, and consulted the doctor there. On examining her, and hearing fully what had taken place at the time of the brother’s death—the fact of which he well knew, for it, of course, was known to the whole country round—he shook his head, and said he was afraid they must make up their minds to a sad case; that the terrors of that night had affected her brain, and that, through it, the whole nervous system had suffered, and was continuing to suffer the most melancholy effects. The only thing, he thought, in her favor, was her youth; and added, that it might have a good effect if they could leave the place where she had undergone such a terrible shock. But whether they did or not, kindness and soothing attentions to her would do more than anything else.

Mrs. Dunster and little Jane returned home with heavy hearts. The doctor’s opinion had only confirmed their fears; for Jane, though but a child, had quickness and affection for her sister enough to make her comprehend the awful nature of poor Nancy’s condition. Mrs. Dunster had told her husband the doctor’s words, for she thought they would awaken some tenderness in him

towards the unfortunate child. But he said, “That’s just what I expected. Hou’ll grow soft, and then who’s to maintain her? Hou mun goo to th’ workhouse.”

With that he took his maundrel and went off to his work. Instead of softening his nature, this intelligence seemed only to harden and brutalize it. He drank now more and more. But all that summer the mother and Jane did all they could think of to restore the health and mind of poor Nancy. Every morning, when the father was gone to work, Jane went to a spring up in the opposite wood, famed for the coolness and sweetness of its waters. On this account the proprietors of the mills at Cressbrook had put down a large trough there under the spreading trees, and the people fetched the water even from the village. Hence Jane brought, at many journeys, this cold, delicious water to bathe her sister in; they then rubbed her warm with cloths, and gave her new milk for her breakfast. Her lessons were not left off, lest the mind should sink into fatuity, but were made as easy as possible. Jane continued to talk to her, and laugh with her, as if nothing was amiss, though she did it with a heavy heart, and she engaged her to weed and hoe with her in their little garden. She did not dare to lead her far out into the valley, lest it might excite her memory of the past fearful time, but she gathered her flowers, and continued to play with her at all their accustomed sports, of building houses with pieces of pots and stones, and imagining gardens and parks. The anxious mother, when some weeks were gone by, fancied that there was really some improvement. The cold-bathing seemed to have strengthened the system: the poor child walked, and bore herself with more freedom and firmness. She became ardently fond of being with her sister, and attentive to her directions. But there was a dull cloud over her intellect, and a vacancy in her eyes and features. She was quiet, easily pleased, but seemed to have little volition of her own. Mrs. Dunster thought if they could but get her away from that spot, it might rouse her mind from its sleep. But perhaps the sleep was better than the awakening might be; however, the removal came, though in a more awful way than was looked for. The miner, who had continued to drink more and more, and seemed to have almost estranged himself from his home, staying away in his drinking bouts for a week or more together, was one day blasting a rock in the mine, and being half-stupefied with beer, did not take care to get out of the way of the explosion, was struck with a piece of the flying stone, and killed on the spot.

The poor widow and her children were now obliged to remove from under Wardlow-Cop. The place had been a sad one to her; the death of her husband, though he had been latterly far from a good one, and had left her with the children in deep poverty, was a fresh source of severe grief to her. Her religious mind was struck down with a weight of melancholy by the reflection of the life he had led, and the sudden way in which he had been summoned into eternity. When she looked forward, what a prospect was there for her children! it was impossible for her to maintain them from her small earnings,

and as to Nancy, would she ever be able to earn her own bread, and protect herself in the world?

It was amid such reflections that Mrs. Dunster quitted this deep, solitary, and, to her, fatal valley, and took up her abode in the village of Cressbrook. Here she had one small room, and by her own labors, and some aid from the parish, she managed to support herself and the children. For seven years she continued her laborious life, assisted by the labor of the two daughters, who also seamed stockings, and in the evenings were instructed by her. Her girls were now thirteen and fifteen years of age; Jane was a tall and very pretty girl of her years; she was active, industrious, and sweet-tempered: her constant affection for poor Nancy was something as admirable as it was singular. Nancy had now confirmed good health, but it had affected her mother to perceive that, since the catastrophe of her brother's death, and the cruel treatment of her father at that time, she had never grown in any degree as she ought; she was short, stout, and of a pale and very plain countenance. It could not be now said that she was deficient in mind, but she was slow in its operations. She displayed, indeed, a more than ordinary depth of reflection, and a shrewdness of observation, but the evidences of this came forth in a very quiet way, and were observable only to her mother and sister. To all besides she was extremely reserved: she was timid to excess, and shrunk from public notice into the society of her mother and sister. There was a feeling abroad in the neighborhood that she was "not quite right," but the few who were more discerning, shook their heads, and observed, "Right she was not, poor thing, but it was not want of sense; she had more of that than most."

And such was the opinion of her mother and sister. They perceived that Nancy had received a shock of which she must bear the effects through life. Circumstances might bring her feeble but sensitive nerves much misery. She required to be guarded and sheltered from the rudeness of the world, and the mother trembled to think how much she might be exposed to them. But in everything that related to sound judgment, they knew that she surpassed not only them, but any of their acquaintance. If any difficulty had to be decided, it was Nancy who pondered on it, and perhaps at some moment when least expected, pronounced an opinion that might be taken as confidently as an oracle.

The affection of the two sisters was something beyond the ties of this world. Jane had watched and attended to her from the time of her constitutional injury with a love that never seemed to know a moment's weariness or change; and the affection which Nancy evinced for her was equally intense and affecting. She seemed to hang on her society for her very life. Jane felt this, and vowed that they would never quit one another. The mother sighed. How many things, she thought, might tear asunder that

beautiful resolve.

But now they were of an age to obtain work in the mill. Indeed, Jane could have had employment there long before, but she would not quit her sister till she could go with her,—and now there they went. The proprietor, who knew the case familiarly, so ordered it that the two sisters should work near each other; and that poor Nancy should be as little exposed to the rudeness of the work-people as possible. But at first so slow and awkward were Nancy's endeavors, and such an effect had it on her frame, that it was feared she must give it up. This would have been a terrible calamity; and the tears of the two sisters, and the benevolence of the employer, enabled Nancy to pass through this severe ordeal. In a while she acquired sufficient dexterity, and thenceforward went through her work with great accuracy and perseverance. As far as any intercourse with the work-people was concerned, she might be said to be dumb. Scarcely ever did she exchange a word with any one, but she returned kind nods and smiles; and every morning and evening, and at dinner-time, the two sisters might be seen going to and fro, side by side,—Jane often talking with some of them; the little, odd-looking sister walking silent and listening.

Five more years and Jane was a young woman. Amid her companions, who were few of them above the middle size, she had a tall and striking appearance. Her father had been a remarkably tall and strong man, and she possessed something of his stature, though none of his irritable disposition. She was extremely pretty, of a blooming fresh complexion, and graceful form. She was remarkable for the sweetness of her expression, which was the index of her disposition. By her side still went that odd, broad-built, but still pale and little sister. Jane was extremely admired by the young men of the neighborhood, and had already many offers, but she listened to none. "Where I go must Nancy go," she said to herself, "and of whom can I be sure?"

Of Nancy no one took notice. Her pale, somewhat large features, her thoughtful silent look, and her short, stout figure, gave you an idea of a dwarf, though she could not strictly be called one. No one would think of Nancy as a wife,—where Jane went she must go; the two clung together with one heart and soul. The blow which deprived them of their brother seemed to bind them inseparably together.

Mrs. Dunster, besides her seaming, at which, in truth, she earned a miserable sum, had now for some years been the post-woman from the village to the Bull's Head, where the mail, going on to Tideswell, left the letter-bag. Thither and back, wet or dry, summer or winter, she went every day, the year round. With her earnings and those of the girls', she kept a neat, small cottage; and the world went as well with them as the world goes on the average with the poor. Cramps and rheumatisms she began to feel sensibly from so much

exposure to rain and cold; but the never-varying and firm affection of her two children was a balm in her cup, which made her contented with everything else.

When Jane was about two-and-twenty, poor Mrs. Dunster, seized with rheumatic fever, died. On her death-bed she said to Jane, “Thou wilt never desert poor Nancy; and that’s my comfort. God has been good to me. After all my trouble, he has given me this faith, that come weal come woe, so long as thou has a home, Nancy will never want one. God bless thee for it! God bless you both; and he will bless you!” So saying, Betty Dunster breathed her last.

The events immediately following her death did not seem to bear out her dying faith; for the two poor girls were obliged to give up their cottage. There was a want of cottages. Not half of the working people could be entertained in this village; they went to and fro for many miles. Jane and Nancy were now obliged to do the same. Their cottage was wanted for an overlooker,—and they removed to Tideswell, three miles off. They had thus six miles a day to walk, besides standing at their work; but they were young, and had companions. In Tideswell they were more cheerful. They had a snug little cottage; were near a Meeting; and found friends. They did not complain. Here, again, Jane Dunster attracted great attention, and a young, thriving grocer paid his addresses to her. It was an offer that made Jane take time to reflect. Every one said it was an opportunity not to be neglected; but Jane weighed in her mind, “Will he keep faith in my compact with Nancy?” Though her admirer made every vow on the subject, Jane paused and determined to take the opinion of Nancy. Nancy thought for a day, and then said, “Dearest sister, I don’t feel easy; I fear that from some cause it would not do in the end.”

Jane from that moment gave up the idea of the connection. There might be those who would suspect Nancy of a selfish bias in the advice she gave; but Jane knew that no such feeling influenced her pure soul. For one long year the two sisters traversed the hills between Cressbrook and Tideswell. But they had companions, and it was pleasant in the summer months. But winter came, and then it was a severe trial. To rise in the dark, and traverse those wild and bleak hills; to go through snow and drizzle, and face the sharpest winds in winter, was no trifling matter. Before winter was over, the two young women began seriously to revolve the chances of a nearer residence, or a change of employ. There were no few who blamed Jane excessively for the folly of refusing the last good offer. There were even more than one who, in the hearing of Nancy, blamed her. Nancy was thoughtful, agitated, and wept. “If I can, dear sister,” she said, “have advised you to your injury, how shall I forgive myself? What shall become of me?”

But Jane clasped her sister to her heart, and said, “No! no! dearest sister, you are not to blame. I feel you are right; let us wait, and we shall see!”

III.—THE COURTSHIP AND ANOTHER SHIP.

One evening, as the two sisters were hastening along the road through the woods on their way homewards, a young farmer drove up in his spring-cart, cast a look at them, stopped, and said: “Young women, if you are going my way, I shall be glad of your company. You are quite welcome to ride.”

The sisters looked at each other. “Dunna be afreed,” said the young farmer; “my name’s James Cheshire. I’m well known in these parts; you may trust yersens wi’ me, if it’s agreeable.”

To James’ surprise, Nancy said, “No, sir, we are not afraid; we are much obliged to you.”

The young farmer helped them up into the cart, and away they drove.

“I’m afraid we shall crowd you,” said Jane.

“Not a bit of it,” replied the young farmer. “There’s room for three bigger nor us in this seat, and I’m no ways tedious.”

The sisters saw nothing odd in his use of the word “tedious,” as strangers would have done; they knew it merely meant “not at all particular.” They were soon in active talk. As he had told them who he was, he asked them in their turn if they worked at the mills there. They replied in the affirmative, and the young man said:—

“I thought so. I’ve seen you sometimes going along together. I noticed you because you seemed so sisterly like, and you are sisters, I reckon.”

They said “Yes.”

“I’ve a good spanking horse, you see,” said James Cheshire. “I shall get over th’ ground rayther faster than you done a-foot, eh? My word, though, it must be nation cold on these bleak hills i’ winter.”

The sisters assented, and thanked the young farmer for taking them up.

“We are rather late,” said they, “for we looked in on a friend, and the rest of the mill-hands were gone on.”

“Well,” said the young farmer, “never mind that. I fancy Bess, my mare here, can go a little faster nor they can. We shall very likely be at Tidser as soon as they are.”

“But you are not going to Tidser,” said Jane, “your farm is just before us there.”

“Yay, I’m going to Tidser though. I’ve a bit of business to do there before I go hom.”

On drove the farmer at what he called a spanking rate; presently they saw the young mill-people on the road before them.

“There are your companions,” said James Cheshire, “we shall cut past them like a flash of lightning.

“Oh,” exclaimed Jane Dunster, “what will they say at seeing us riding here?” and she blushed brightly.

“Say!” said the young farmer, smiling, “never mind what they’ll say; depend upon it, they’d like to be here theirsens.”

James Cheshire cracked his whip. The horse flew along. The party of the young mill-hands turned round, and on seeing Jane and Nancy in the cart, uttered exclamations of surprise.

“My word, though!” said Mary Smedley, a fresh buxom lass, somewhat inclined to stoutness.

“Well, if ever!” cried smart little Hannah Bowyer.

“Nay, then, what next!” said Tetty Wilson, a tall, thin girl, of very good looks.

The two sisters nodded and smiled to their companions; Jane still blushing rosily, but Nancy sitting as pale and as gravely as if they were going on some solemn business.

The only notice the farmer took was to turn with a broad smiling face, and shout to them, “Wouldn’t you like to be here too?”

“Ay, take us up,” shouted a number of voices together; but the farmer cracked his whip, and giving them a nod and a dozen smiles in one, said, “I can’t stay. Ask the next farmer that comes up.”

With this they drove on; the young farmer very merry and full of talk. They were soon by the side of his farm. “There’s a flock of sheep on the turnips there,” he said, proudly; “they’re not to be beaten on this side Ashbourne. And there are some black oxen going for the night to the straw-yard. Jolly fellows, those—eh? But I reckon you don’t understand much of farming stock?”

“No,” said Jane, and was again surprised at Nancy adding, “I wish we did. I think a farmer’s life must be the very happiest of any.”

“You think so?” said the farmer, turning and looking at her earnestly, and evidently with some wonder. “You are right,” said he. “You little ones are knowing ones. You are right; it’s the life for a king.”

They were at the village. “Pray stop,” said Jane, “and let us go down. I

would not for the world go up the village thus. It would make such a talk!”

“Talk, who cares for talk?” said the farmer; “won’t the youngsters we left on the road talk?”

“Quite enough,” said Jane.

“And are you afraid of talk?” said the farmer to Nancy.

“I’m not afraid of it when I don’t provoke it wilfully,” said Nancy; “but we are poor girls, and can’t afford to lose even the good word of our acquaintance. You’ve been very kind in taking us up on the road, but to drive us to our door would cause such wonder as would perhaps make us wish we had not been obliged to you.”

“Blame me, if you arn’t right again!” said the young farmer, thoughtfully. “These are scandal-loving times, and th’ neebors might plague you. That’s a deep head of yourn, though,—Nancy, I think your sister caw’d you. Well, here I stop then.”

He jumped down and helped them out.

“If you will drive on first,” said Jane, “we will walk on after, and we’re greatly obliged to you.”

“Nay,” said the young man, “I shall turn again here.”

“But you’ve business.”

“Oh! my business was to drive you here—that’s all.”

James Cheshere was mounting his cart, when Nancy stepped up, and said: “Excuse me, Sir, but you’ll meet the mill-people on your return, and it will make them talk all the more as you have driven us past your farm. Have you no business that you can do in Tidser, Sir?”

“Gad! but thou’rt right again! Ay, I’ll go on!” and with a crack of his whip, and a “Good night!” he whirled into the village before them.

No sooner was he gone than Nancy, pressing her sister’s arm to her side, said: “There’s the right man at last, dear Jane.”

“What!” said Jane, yet blushing deeply at the same time, and her heart beating quicker against her side. “Whatever are you talking of, Nancy? That young farmer fall in love with a mill-girl?”

“He’s done it,” said Nancy; “I see it in him. I feel it in him. And I feel, too, that he is true and staunch as steel.”

Jane was silent. They walked on in silence. Jane’s own heart responded to what Nancy had said; she thought again and again on what he said. “I have

seen you sometimes;" "I noticed you because you seemed so sisterly." "He must have a good heart," thought Jane; "but then he can never think of a poor mill-girl like me."

The next morning they had to undergo plenty of raillery from their companions. We will pass that over. For several days, as they passed to and fro, they saw nothing of the young farmer. But one evening, as they were again alone, having staid at the same acquaintance's as before, the young farmer popped his head over a stone wall, and said, "Good evening to you, young women," He was soon over the wall, and walked on with them to the end of the town. On the Sunday at the chapel Jane saw Nancy's grave face fixed on some object steadily, and, looking in the same direction, was startled to see James Cheshire. Again her heart beat pit-a-pat, and she thought "Can he really be thinking of me?"

The moment chapel was over, James Cheshire was gone, stopping to speak to no one. Nancy again pressed the arm of Jane to her side as they walked home, and said—"I was not wrong." Jane only replied by returning her affectionate pressure.

Some days after, as Nancy Dunster was coming out of a shop in the evening after their return home from the mill, James Cheshire suddenly put his hand on her shoulder, and, on her turning, shook her hand cordially, and said, "Come along with me a bit. I must have a little talk with you."

Nancy consented without remark or hesitation. James Cheshire walked on quickly till they came near the fine old church which strikes travellers as so superior to the place in which it is located; when he slackened his pace, and taking Nancy's hand, began in a most friendly manner to tell her how much he liked her and her sister. That, to make a short matter of it, as was his way, he had made up his mind that the woman of all others in the world that would suit him for a wife was her sister. "But, before I said so to her, I thought I would say so to you, Nancy, for you are so sensible, I'm sure you will say what is best for us all."

Nancy manifested no surprise, but said, calmly: "You are a well-to-do farmer, Mr. Cheshire. You have friends of property; my sister, and—"

"Ay, and a mill-girl; I know all that. I've thought it all over, and so far you are right again, my little one. But just hear what I've got to say. I'm no fool, though I say it. I've an eye in my head and a head on my shoulders, eh?"

Nancy smiled.

"Well now, it's not any mill-girl; mind you, it's not any mill-girl; no, nor perhaps another in the kingdom, that would do for me. I don't think mill-girls are in the main cut out for farmers' wives, any more than farmers' wives are fit

for mill-girls; but you see, I've got a notion that your sister is not only a very farrantly lass, but that she's one that has particular good sense, though not so deep as you, Nancy, neither. Well, I've a notion she can turn her hand to anything, and that she's a heart to do it, when it's a duty. Isn't that so, eh? And if it is so, then Jane Dunster's the lass for me; that is, if it's quite agreeable."

Nancy pressed James Cheshire's hand, and said, "You are very kind."

"Not a bit of it," said James.

"Well," continued Nancy; "but I would have you to consider what your friends will say; and whether you will not be made unhappy by them."

"Why, as to that," said James Cheshire, interrupting her, "mark me, Miss Dunster. I don't ask my friends for anything. I can farm my own farm; buy my own cattle; drive my spring-cart, without any advice or assistance of theirs; and therefore I don't think I shall ask their advice in the matter of a wife, eh? No, no, on that score I'm made up. My name's Independent, and, at a word, the only living thing I mean to ask advice of is yourself. If you, Miss Dunster, approve of the match, it's settled, as far I'm concerned."

"Then so far," said Nancy, "as you and my sister are concerned, without reference to worldly circumstances—I approve it with all my heart. I believe you to be as good and honest as I know my sister to be. Oh! Mr. Cheshire! she is one of ten thousand."

"Well, I was sure of it;" said the young farmer; "and so now you must tell your sister all about it; and if all's right, chalk me a white chalk inside of my gate as you go past i' th' morning, and to-morrow evening I'll come up and see you."

Here the two parted with a cordial shake of the hand. The novel signal of an accepted love was duly discovered by James Cheshire on his gate-post, when he issued forth at daybreak, and that evening he was sitting at tea with Jane and Nancy in the little cottage, having brought in his cart a basket of eggs, apples, fresh butter, and a pile of the richest pikelets (crumpets), country pikelets, very different to town-made ones, for tea.

We need not follow out the courtship of James Cheshire and Jane Dunster. It was cordial and happy. James insisted that both the sisters should give immediate notice to quit the mill-work, to spare themselves the cold and severe walks which the winter now occasioned them. The sisters had improved their education in their evenings. They were far better read and informed than most farmers' daughters. They had been, since they came to Tideswell, teachers in the Sunday-school. There was comparatively little to be learned in a farm-house for the wife in winter, and James Cheshire therefore proposed to the sisters to go for three months to Manchester into a wholesale house, to

learn as much as they could of the plain sewing and cutting out of household linen. The person in question made up all sorts of household linen, sheets, pillow-cases, shirts, and other things; in fact, a great variety of articles. Through an old acquaintance he got them introduced there, avowedly to prepare them for house-keeping. It was a sensible step, and answered well. At spring, to cut short opposition from his own relatives, which began to show itself, for these things did not fail to be talked of, James Cheshire got a license, and proceeding to Manchester, was then and there married, and came home with his wife and sister.

The talk and gossip which this wedding made all round the country, was no little; but the parties themselves were well satisfied with their mutual choice, and were happy. As the spring advanced, the duties of the household grew upon Mrs. Cheshire. She had to learn the art of cheese-making, butter-making, of all that relates to poultry, calves, and household management. But in these matters she had the aid of an old servant who had done all this for Mr. Cheshire, since he began farming. She took a great liking to her mistress, and showed her with hearty good-will how everything was done; and as Jane took a deep interest in it, she rapidly made herself mistress of the management of the house, as well as of the house itself. She did not disdain, herself, to take a hand at the churn, that she might be familiar with the whole process of butter-making, and all the signs by which the process is conducted to a successful issue. It was soon seen that no farmer’s wife could produce a firmer, fresher, sweeter pound of butter. It was neither swelted by too hasty churning, nor spoiled, as is too often the case, by the buttermilk or by water being left in it, for want of well kneading and pressing. It was deliciously sweet, because the cream was carefully put up in the cleanest vessels and well attended to. Mrs. Cheshire, too, might daily be seen kneeling by the side of the cheese-pan, separating the curd, taking off the whey, filling the cheese-vat with the curd, and putting the cheese herself into press. Her cheese-chamber displayed as fine a set of well-salted, well-colored, well-turned and regular cheeses as ever issued from that or any other farm-house.

James Cheshire was proud of his wife; and Jane herself found a most excellent helper in Nancy. Nancy took particularly to housekeeping; saw that all the rooms were exquisitely clean; that everything was in nice repair; that not only the master and mistress, but the servants had their food prepared in a wholesome and attractive manner. The eggs she stored up; and as fruit came into season, had it collected for market, and for a judicious household use. She made the tea and coffee morning and evening, and did everything but preside at the table. There was not a farm-house for twenty miles round, that wore an air of so much brightness and evident good management as that of James Cheshire. For Nancy, from the first moment of their acquaintance, he had conceived a most profound respect. In all cases that required counsel, though

he consulted freely with his wife, he would never decide till they had had Nancy's opinion and sanction.

And James Cheshire prospered. But, spite of this, he did not escape the persecution from his relations that Nancy had foreseen. On all hands he found coldness. None of them called on him. They felt scandalized at his evening himself, as they called it, to a mill-girl. He was taunted when they met at market, with having been caught with a pretty face; and told that they thought he had had more sense than to marry a dressed doll with a witch by her side.

At first James Cheshire replied with a careless waggery, "The pretty face makes capital butter, though, eh? The dressed doll turns out a tolerable dairy, eh? Better," added James, "than a good many can, that I know, who have neither pretty faces, nor have much taste in dressing to crack of."

The allusion to Nancy's dwarfish plainness was what peculiarly provoked James Cheshire. He might have laughed at the criticisms on his wife, though the envious neighbors' wives did say that it was the old servant and not Mrs. Cheshire who produced such fine butter and cheese; for where-ever she appeared, spite of envy and detraction, her lovely person and quiet good sense, and the growing rumor of her good management, did not fail to produce a due impression. And James had prepared to laugh it off; but it would not do. He found himself getting every now and then angry and unsettled by it. A coarse jest on Nancy at any time threw him into a desperate fit of indignation. The more the superior merit of his wife was known, the more seemed to increase the envy and venom of some of his relatives. He saw, too, that it had an effect on his wife. She was often sad, and sometimes in tears.

One day when this occurred, James Cheshire said, as they sat at tea, "I've made up my mind. Peace in this life is a jewel. Better is a dinner of herbs with peace, than a stalled ox with strife. Well, now, I'm determined to have peace. Peace and luv," said he, looking affectionately at his wife and Nancy, "peace and luv, by God's blessing, have settled down on this house; but there are stings here and stings there, when we go out of doors. We must not only have peace and luv in the house, but peace all round it. So I've made up my mind. I'm for America!"

"For America!" exclaimed Jane. "Surely you cannot be in earnest."

"I never was more in earnest in my life," said James Cheshire. "It is true I do very well on this farm here, though it's a cowdish situation; but from all I can learn, I can do much better in America. I can there farm a much better farm of my own. We can have a much finer climate than this Peak country, and our countrymen still about us. Now, I want to know what makes a man's native land pleasant to him?—the kindness of his relations and friends. But then, if a man's relations are not kind?—if they get a conceit into them, that

because they are relations they are to choose a man's wife for him, and sting him and snort at him because he has a will of his own?—why, then I say, God send a good big herring-pool between me and such relations! My relations, by way of showing their natural affection, spit spite and bitterness. You, dear wife and sister, have none of yourn to spite you. In the house we have peace and luv. Let us take the peace and luv, and leave the bitterness behind."

There was a deep silence.

"It is a serious proposal," at length said Jane, with tears in her eyes.

"What says Nancy?" asked James.

"It is a serious proposal," said Nancy, "but it is good. I feel it so."

There was another deep silence; and James Cheshire said, "Then it is decided."

"Think of it," said Jane earnestly,—"think well of it."

"I have thought of it long and well, my dear. There are some of these chaps that call me relation that I shall not keep my hands off, if I stay amongst them,—and I fain would. But for the present I will say no more; but," added he, rising and bringing a book from his desk, "here is a book by one Morris Birkbeck,—read it, both of you, and then let me know your minds."

The sisters read. On the following Lady-day, James Cheshire had turned over his farm advantageously to another, and he, his wife, Nancy, and the old servant, Mary Spendlove, all embarked at Liverpool, and transferred themselves to the United States, and then to the State of Illinois. Five-and-twenty years have rolled over since that day. We could tell a long and curious story of the fortunes of James Cheshire and his family: from the days when, half-repenting of his emigration and his purchase, he found himself in a rough country, amid rough and spiteful squatters, and lay for months with a brace of pistols under his pillow, and a great sword by his bedside for fear of robbery and murder. But enough, that at this moment, James Cheshire, in a fine cultivated country, sees his ample estate cultivated by his sons, while as Colonel and magistrate he dispenses the law and receives the respectful homage of the neighborhood. Nancy Dunster, now styled Mrs. Dunster, the Mother in Israel—the promoter of schools and the councillor of old and young—still lives. Years have improved rather than deteriorated her short and stout exterior. The long exercise of wise thoughts and the play of benevolent feelings, have given even a sacred beauty to her homely features. The dwarf has disappeared, and there remains instead, a grave but venerable matron,—honored like a queen.

IX.

THE GHOST OF THE LATE MR. JAMES BARBER.

A YARN ASHORE.

"'Luck!' nonsense. There is no such thing. Life is not a game of chance any more than chess is. If you lose, you have no one but yourself to blame."

This was said by a young lieutenant in the Royal Navy, to a middle-aged midshipman, his elder brother.

"Do you mean to say that luck had nothing to do with Fine Gentleman Bobbin passing for lieutenant, and my being turned back?" was the rejoinder.

"Bobbin, though a dandy, is a good seaman, and—and——." The speaker looked another way, and hesitated.

"I am not, you would add—if you had courage. But I say I am, and a better seaman than Bobbin."

"Practically, perhaps, for you are ten years older in the service. But it was in the theoretical part of seamanship—which is equally important—that you broke down before the examiners," continued the younger officer, in tones of earnest but sorrowful reproach, "You never would study."

"I'll tell you what it is, master Ferdinand," said the elder middy, not without a show of displeasure. "I don't think this is the correct sort of conversation to be going on between two brothers after a five years' separation."

The young lieutenant laid his hand soothingly on his brother's arm, and entreated him to take what he said in good part.

"Well, well!" rejoined the middy, with a laugh half-forced. "Take care what you are about, or, by Jove, I'll inform against you."

"What for?"

"Why, for preaching without a license. Besides, you were once as bad as you pretend I am."

"I own it with sorrow; but I was warned in time by the wretched end of poor James Barber——"

"Of whom?" asked the elder brother, starting back as he pushed his glass along the table. "You don't mean Jovial Jemmy, as we used to call him; once my messmate in the brig 'Rollock.' "

"Yes, I do."

“What! dead?”

“Yes.”

“Why, it was one of our great delights, when in harbor and on shore, to ‘go the rounds’—as he called it—with Jovial Jemmy. He understood life from stem to stern—from truck to keel. He knew everybody, from the First Lord downwards. I have seen him recognized by the Duke one minute, and the next pick up with a strolling player, and familiarly treat him at a tavern. He once took me to a quadrille party at the Duchess of Durrington’s, where he seemed to know and be known to everybody present, and then adjourned to the Cider Cellars, where he was equally intimate with all sorts of queer characters. Though a favorite among the aristocracy, he was equally welcome in less exclusive societies. He was ‘Brother,’ ‘Past Master,’ ‘Warden,’ ‘Noble Grand,’ or ‘President’ of all sorts of Lodges and Fraternities. Uncommonly knowing was Jemmy in all sorts of club and fashionable gossip. He knew who gave the best dinners, and was always invited to the best balls. He was a capital judge of champagne, and when he betted upon a horse-race everybody backed him. He could hum all the fashionable songs, and was the fourth man who could dance the polka when it was first imported. Then he was as profound in bottled stout, Welsh rabbits, Burton ale, devilled kidneys, and bowls of Bishop, as he was in Roman punch, French cookery, and Italian singers. Afloat, he was the soul of fun:—he got up all our private theatricals, told all the best stories, and sung comic songs that made even the Purser laugh.”

“An extent and variety of knowledge and accomplishments,” said Lieutenant Fid, “which had the precise effect of blasting his prospects in life. He was, as you remember, at last dismissed the service for intemperance and incompetence.”

“When did you see him last?”

“What, alive?” inquired Ferdinand Fid, changing countenance.

“Of course! Surely you do not mean to insinuate that you have seen his ghost!”

The lieutenant was silent; and the midshipman took a deep draught of his favorite mixture—equal portions of rum and water—and hinted to his younger brother, the lieutenant, the expediency of immediately confiding the story to the Marines; for he declined to credit it. He then ventured another recommendation, which was that Ferdinand should throw the impotent temperance tipple he was then imbibing “over the side of the Ship”—which meant the tavern of that name in Greenwich, at the open bow-window of which they were then sitting—and clear his intellects by something stronger.

“I can afford to be laughed at,” said the younger Fid, “because I have

gained immeasurably by the delusion, if it be one; but if ever there was a ghost, I have seen the ghost of James Barber. I, like yourself and he, was nearly ruined by love of amusement and intemperance, when he—or whatever else it might have been—came to my aid."

"Let us hear. I see I am 'in' for a ghost story."

"Well; it was eighteen forty-one when I came home in the 'Arrow' with despatches from the coast of Africa: you were lying in the Tagus in the 'Bobstay.' Ours, you know, was rather a thirsty station; a man inclined for it comes home from the Slaving Coasts with a determination to make up his lee way. I did mine with a vengeance. As usual, I looked up 'Jovial Jemmy.' "

"'Twas easy to find him if you knew where to go."

"I did know, and went. He had by that time got tired of his more aristocratic friends. Respectability was too 'slow' for him, so I found him presiding over the 'Philanthropic Raspers,' at the 'Union Jack.' He received me with open arms, and took me, as you say, the 'rounds.' I can't recall that week's dissipation without a shudder. We rushed about from ball to tavern, from theatre to supper-room, from club to gin-palace, as if our lives depended on losing not a moment. We had not time to walk, so we galloped about in cabs. On the fourth night, when I was beginning to feel knocked up, and tired of the same songs, the same quadrilles, the bad whiskey, the suffocating tobacco smoke, and the morning's certain and desperate penalties, I remarked to Jemmy that it was a miracle how he had managed to weather it for so many years. 'What a hardship you would deem it,' I added, 'if you were obliged to go the same weary round from one year's end to another.' "

"What did he say to that?" asked Philip.

"Why, I never saw him so taken aback. He looked quite fiercely at me, and replied, 'I am obliged!' "

"How did he make that out?"

"Why, he had tippled and dissipated his constitution into such a state that use had become second nature. Excitement was his natural condition, and he dared not become quite sober for fear of a total collapse—or dropping down like a shot in the water."

The midshipman had his glass in his hand, but forebore to taste it.—"Well, what then?"

"The 'rounds' lasted two nights longer. I was fairly beaten. Cast-iron could not have stood it. I was prostrated in bed with fever—and worse." Ferdinand was agitated, and took a large draught of his lemonade.

"Well, well, you need not enlarge upon that," replied Phil Phid, raising his

glass towards his lips, but again thinking better of it; “I heard how bad you were from Seton, who shaved your head.”

“I had scarcely recovered when the ‘Arrow’ was ordered back, and I made a vow.”

“Took the pledge, perhaps!” interjected the mid, with a slight curl of his lip.

“No! I determined to work more and play less. We had a capital naval instructor aboard, and our commander was as good an officer as ever trod the deck. I studied—a little too hard perhaps, for I was laid up again. The ‘Arrow’ was, as usual, as good as her name, and we shot across to Jamaica in five weeks. One evening as we were lying in Kingston harbor, Seton, who had come over to join the Commodore as full surgeon, told me what he had never ventured to divulge before.”

“What was that?”

“Why, that, on the very day I left London, James Barber died of a frightful attack of delirium tremens!”

“Poor Jemmy!” said the elder Fid, sorrowfully, taking a long pull of consolation from his rummer. “Little did I think, while singing some of your best songs off Belem Castle, that I had seen you for the last time!”

“I hadn’t seen him for the last time,” returned the lieutenant, with awful significance.

Philip assumed a careless air, and said, “Go on.”

“We were ordered home in eighteen forty-five, and paid off in January. I went to Portsmouth; was examined, and passed as lieutenant.”

This allusion to his brother’s better condition made poor Philip look rather blank.

“On being confirmed at the Admiralty,” continued Ferdinand, “I had to give a dinner to the ‘Arrows;’ which I did at the Salopian, Charing Cross. In the excess of my joy at promotion, my determination of temperance and avoidance of what is called ‘society’ was swamped. I kept it up once more; I went the ‘rounds,’ and accepted all the dinner, supper, and ball invitations I could get, invariably ending each morning in one of the old haunts of dissipation. Old associations with James Barber returned, and like causes produced similar effects. One morning while maundering home, I began to feel the same wild confusion as had previously commenced my dreadful malady.”

“Ah! a little touched in the top-hamper.”

“It was just day-light. Thinking to cool my self, I jumped into a wherry to get pulled down here to Greenwich.”

“Of course you were not quite sober.”

“Don’t ask! I do not like even to allude to my sensations, for fear of recalling them. My brain seemed in a flame. The boat appeared to be going at the rate of twenty miles an hour. Fast as we were cleaving the current, I heard my name distinctly called out. I reconnoitred, but could see nobody. I looked over on one side of the gun-wale, and, while doing so, felt something touch me from the other; I felt a chill; I turned round and saw——”

“Whom?” asked the midshipman, holding his breath.

“What seemed to be James Barber.”

“Was he wet?”

“As dry as you are.”

“I summoned courage to speak. ‘Hillo! some mistake!’ I exclaimed.

“‘Not at all,’ was the reply. ‘I’m James Barber. Don’t be frightened, I’m harmless.’

“‘But——’

“‘I know what you are going to say,’ interrupted the intruder. ‘Seton did not deceive you—I am only an occasional visitor up here.’

“This brought me up with a round turn, and I had sense enough to wish my friend would vanish as he came. ‘Where shall we land you?’ I asked.

“‘Oh, any where—it don’t matter. I have got to be out every night and all night; and the nights are plaguy long just now.’

“I could not muster a word.

“‘Ferd Fid,’ continued the voice, which now seemed about fifty fathoms deep; and fast as we were dropping down the stream, the boat gave a heel to starboard, as if she had been broadsided by a tremendous wave—‘Ferd Fid, you recollect how I used to kill time; how I sang, drank, danced, and supped all night long, and then slept and soda-watered it all day. You remember what a happy fellow I seemed. Fools like yourself thought I was so; but I say again, I wasn’t,’ growled the voice, letting itself down a few fathoms deeper. ‘Often and often I would have given the world to have been a market-gardener or a dealer in chick-weed while roaring “He is a jolly good fellow,” and “We won’t go home till morning!” as I emerged with a group from some tavern into Covent Garden market. But I’m punished fearfully for my sins now. What do you think I have got to do every night of my—never mind—what do you think

is now marked out as my dreadful punishment?’

“‘Well, to walk the earth, I suppose,’ said I.

“‘No.’

“‘To paddle about in the Thames from sunset to sun-rise?’

“‘Worse. Ha, ha!’ (his laugh sounded like the booming of a gong). ‘I only wish my doom was merely to be a mud-lark. No, no, I’m condemned to rush about from one evening party and public house to another. At the former I am bound for a certain term on each night to dance all the quadrilles, and a few of the polkas and waltzes with clumsy partners; and then I have to eat stale pastry and tough poultry before I am let off from that place. After, I am bound to go to some cellar or singing place to listen to “Hail smiling morn,” “Mynheer Van Dunk,” “The monks of old,” “Happy land,” imitations of the London actors, and to hear a whole canto of dreary extempore verses. I must also smoke a dozen of cigars, knowing—as in my present condition I must know,—what they are made of. The whole to end on each night with unlimited brandy (British) and water, and eternal intoxication. Oh, F. F., be warned! Take my advice; keep up your resolution, and don’t do it again. When afloat, drink nothing stronger than purser’s tea. When on shore be temperate in your pleasures; don’t turn night into day; don’t exchange wholesome amusements for rabid debauchery, robust health for disease and—well, I won’t mention it. When afloat, study your profession and don’t get cashiered and cold-shouldered as I was. Promise me—nay, you must swear!’

“At this word I thought I heard a gurgling sound in the water.

“‘If I can get six solemn pledges before the season’s over, I’m only to go these horrid rounds during the meeting of Parliament.’

“‘Will you swear?’ again urged the voice, with persuasive agony.

“I was just able to comply.

“‘Ten thousand thanks!’ were the next words I heard; ‘I’m off, for there is an awful pint of pale ale, a chop, and a glass of brandy and water overdue yet, and I must devour them at the Shades.’ (We were then close to London Bridge.) ‘Don’t let the waterman pull to shore; I can get there without troubling him.’

“I remember no more. When sensation returned, I was in bed, in this very house, a shade worse than I had been from the previous attack.”

“That,” said Philip, who had left his tumbler untasted, “must have been when you had your head shaved for the second time.”

“Exactly so.”

“And you really believe it was Jovial James’ ghost,” inquired Fid, earnestly.

“Would it be rational to doubt it?”

Philip rose and paced the room in deep thought for several minutes. He cast two or three earnest looks at his brother, and a few longing ones at his glass. In the course of his cogitation, he groaned out more than once an apostrophe to poor “James Barber.” At length he declared his mind was made up.

“Ferd!” he said, “I told you awhile ago to throw your lemonade over the side of the Ship. Don’t. Souse out my grog instead.”

The lieutenant did as he was bid.

“And now,” said Fid the elder, “ring for soda water; for one must drink something.”

Last year it was my own good fortune to sail with Mr. Philip Fid in the “Bombottle”. He is not exactly a tee-totaller; but he never drinks spirits, and will not touch wine unmixed with water, for fear of its interfering with his studies, at which he is, with the assistance of the naval instructor (who is also the chaplain), assiduous. He is our first mate, and the smartest officer in the ship. Seton is our surgeon.

One day, after a cheerful ward-room dinner (of which Fid was a guest), while we were at anchor in the Bay of Cadiz, the conversation happened to turn upon Jovial Jemmy’s apparition, which had become the best-authenticated ghost story in Her Majesty’s Naval service. On that occasion Seton undertook to explain the mystery upon medical principles.

“The fact is,” he said, “what the commander of the ‘Arrow’ saw (Ferdinand had by this time got commissioned in his old ship) was a spectrum, produced by that morbid condition of the brain, which is brought on by the immoderate use of stimulants, and by dissipation; we call it Transient Monomania. I could show you dozens of such ghosts in the books, if you only had patience while I turned them up.”

Everybody declared that was unnecessary. We would take the doctor’s word for it; though I feel convinced not a soul besides the chaplain and myself had one iota of his faith shaken in the real presence of Jovial Jemmy’s post-mortem appearance to Fid the younger.

Ghost or no ghost, however, the story had had the effect of converting Philip Fid from one of the most intemperate and inattentive to one of the soberest and best of Her Majesty’s officers. May his promotion be steady!

X.

A TALE OF THE GOOD OLD TIMES.

An alderman of the ancient borough of Beetlebury, and churchwarden of the parish of St. Wulfstan's in the said borough, Mr. Blenkinsop might have been called, in the language of the sixteenth century, a man of worship. This title would probably have pleased him very much, it being an obsolete one, and he entertaining an extraordinary regard for all things obsolete, or thoroughly deserving to be so. He looked up with profound veneration to the griffins which formed the water-spouts of St. Wulfstan's Church, and he almost worshipped an old boot under the name of a black jack, which on the affidavit of a forsworn broker, he had bought for a drinking vessel of the sixteenth century. Mr. Blenkinsop even more admired the wisdom of our ancestors than he did their furniture and fashions. He believed that none of their statutes and ordinances could possibly be improved on, and in this persuasion had petitioned Parliament against every just or merciful change, which, since he had arrived at man's estate, had been made in the laws. He had successively opposed all the Beetlebury improvements, gas, waterworks, infant schools, mechanics' institute, and library. He had been active in an agitation against any measure for the improvement of the public health, and being a strong advocate of intramural interment, was instrumental in defeating an attempt to establish a pretty cemetery outside Beetlebury. He had successfully resisted a project for removing the pig-market from the middle of the High Street. Through his influence the shambles, which were corporation property, had been allowed to remain where they were; namely, close to the Town-Hall, and immediately under his own and his brethren's noses. In short, he had regularly, consistently, and nobly done his best to frustrate every scheme that was proposed for the comfort and advantage of his fellow creatures. For this conduct he was highly esteemed and respected; and, indeed, his hostility with any interference of disease, had procured him the honor of a public testimonial;—shortly after the presentation of which, with several neat speeches, the cholera broke out in Beetlebury.

The truth is, that Mr. Blenkinsop's views on the subject of public health and popular institutions were supposed to be economical (though they were, in truth, desperately costly), and so pleased some of the rate-payers. Besides, he withstood ameliorations, and defended nuisances and abuses with all the heartiness of an actual philanthropist. Moreover, he was a jovial fellow,—a boon companion; and his love of antiquity leant particularly towards old ale and old port wine. Of both of these beverages he had been partaking rather largely at a visitation-dinner, where, after the retirement of the bishop and his

clergy, festivities were kept up till late, under the presidency of the deputy-registrar. One of the last to quit the Crown and Mitre was Mr. Blenkinsop.

He lived in a remote part of the town, whither, as he did not walk exactly in a right line, it may be allowable, perhaps, to say that he bent his course. Many of the dwellers in Beetlebury High-street, awakened at half-past twelve on that night, by somebody passing below, singing, not very distinctly,

"With a jolly full bottle let each man be armed,"

were indebted, little as they may have suspected it, to Alderman Blenkinsop, for their serenade.

In his homeward way stood the Market Cross; a fine mediæval structure, supported on a series of circular steps by a groined arch, which served as a canopy to the stone figure of an ancient burgess. This was the effigies of Wynkyn de Vokes, once Mayor of Beetlebury, and a great benefactor to the town; in which he had founded alms-houses and a grammar-school, A. D. 1440. The post was formerly occupied by St. Wulfstan; but De Vokes had been removed from the Town Hall in Cromwell's time, and promoted to the vacant pedestal, vice Wulfstan, demolished. Mr. Blenkinsop highly revered this work of art, and he now stopped to take a view of it by moonlight. In that doubtful glimmer, it seemed almost life-like. Mr. Blenkinsop had not much imagination, yet he could well nigh fancy he was looking upon the veritable Wynkyn, with his bonnet, beard, furred gown, and staff, and his great book under his arm. So vivid was this impression, that it impelled him to apostrophize the Statue.

"Fine old fellow!" said Mr. Blenkinsop. "Rare old buck! We shall never look upon your like again. Ah! the good old times—the jolly good old times! 'No times like the good old times—my ancient worthy. No such times as the good old times!"

"And pray, Sir, what times do you call the good old times?" in distinct and deliberate accents, answered—according to the positive affirmation of Mr. Blenkinsop, subsequently made before divers witnesses—the Statue.

Mr. Blenkinsop is sure that he was in the perfect possession of his senses. He is certain that he was not the dupe of ventriloquism, or any other illusion. The value of these convictions must be a question between him and the world, to whose perusal the facts of his tale, simply as stated by himself, are here submitted.

When first he heard the Statue speak, Mr. Blenkinsop says, he certainly experienced a kind of sudden shock, a momentary feeling of consternation. But this soon abated in a wonderful manner. The Statue's voice was quite mild and gentle—not in the least grim—had no funeral twang in it, and was quite

different from the tone a statue might be expected to take by anybody who had derived his notions on that subject from having heard the representative of the class in “Don Giovanni.”

“Well; what times do you mean by the good old times?” repeated the Statue, quite familiarly. The churchwarden was able to reply with some composure, that such a question coming from such a quarter had taken him a little by surprise.

“Come, come, Mr. Blenkinsop,” said the Statue, “don’t be astonished. ’Tis half-past twelve, and a moonlight night, as your favorite police, the sleepy and infirm old watchman, says. Don’t you know that we statues are apt to speak when spoken to, at these hours? Collect yourself. I will help you to answer my own questions. Let us go back step by step; and allow me to lead you. To begin. By the good old times, do you mean the reign of George the Third?”

“The last of them, Sir,” replied Mr. Blenkinsop, very respectfully, “I am inclined to think, were seen by the people who lived in those days.”

“I should hope so,” the Statue replied. “Those the good old times? What! Mr. Blenkinsop, when men were hanged by dozens, almost weekly, for paltry thefts. When a nursing woman was dragged to the gallows with a child at her breast, for shop-lifting, to the value of a shilling. When you lost your American colonies, and plunged into war with France, which, to say nothing of the useless bloodshed it cost, has left you saddled with the national debt. Surely you will not call these the good old times, will you, Mr. Blenkinsop?”

“Not exactly, Sir: no; on reflection I don’t know that I can,” answered Mr. Blenkinsop. He had now, it was such a civil, well-spoken statue—lost all sense of the preternatural horror of his situation, and scratched his head just as if he had been posed in argument by an ordinary mortal.

“Well, then,” resumed the Statue, “my dear Sir, shall we take the two or three reigns preceding. What think you of the then existing state of prisons and prison discipline? Unfortunate debtors confined indiscriminately with felons, in the midst of filth, vice, and misery unspeakable. Criminals under sentence of death tippling in the condemned cell with the Ordinary for their pot companion. Flogging, a common punishment of women convicted of larceny. What say you of the times when London streets were absolutely dangerous, and the passenger ran the risk of being hustled and robbed even in the day-time? When not only Hounslow and Bagshot Heath, but the public road swarmed with robbers, and a stagecoach was as frequently plundered as a hen-roost. When, indeed, ‘the road’ was esteemed the legitimate resource of a gentleman in difficulties, and a highwayman was commonly called ‘Captain’ if not respected accordingly. When cock-fighting, bear-baiting, and bull-baiting were popular, nay, fashionable amusements. When the bulk of the landed

gentry could barely read and write, and divided their time between fox-hunting and guzzling. When a duellist was a hero, and it was an honor to have ‘killed your man.’ When a gentleman could hardly open his mouth without uttering a profane or filthy oath. When the country was continually in peril of civil war through a disputed succession; and two murderous insurrections, followed by more murderous executions, actually took place. This era of inhumanity, shamelessness, brigandage, brutality, and personal and political insecurity, what say you of it, Mr. Blenkinsop? Do you regard this wig and pigtail period as constituting the good old times, respected friend?”

“There was Queen Anne’s golden reign, Sir,” deferentially suggested Mr. Blenkinsop.

“A golden reign!” exclaimed the Statue. “A reign of favoritism and court trickery at home, and profitless war abroad. The time of Bolingbroke’s, and Harley’s, and Churchill’s intrigues. The reign of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, and Mrs. Masham. A golden fiddlestick! I imagine you must go farther back yet for your good old times, Mr. Blenkinsop.”

“Well,” answered the churchwarden, “I suppose I must, Sir, after what you say.”

“Take William the Third’s rule,” pursued the Statue. “War, war again; nothing but war. I don’t think you’ll particularly call these the good old times. Then what will you say to those of James the Second? Were they the good old times when Judge Jeffries sat on the bench? When Monmouth’s rebellion was followed by the Bloody Assize. When the King tried to set himself above the law, and lost his crown in consequence. Does your worship fancy that these were the good old times?”

Mr. Blenkinsop admitted that he could not very well imagine that they were.

“Were Charles the Second’s the good old times?” demanded the Statue. “With a court full of riot and debauchery—a palace much less decent than any modern casino—whilst Scotch Covenanters were having their legs crushed in the “Boots,” under the auspices and personal superintendence of His Royal Highness the Duke of York. The time of Titus Oates, Bedloe, and Dangerfield, and their sham-plots, with the hangings, drawings, and quarterings, on perjured evidence, that followed them. When Russell and Sidney were judicially murdered. The time of the Great Plague and Fire of London. The public money wasted by roguery and embezzlement, while sailors lay starving in the streets for want of their just pay; the Dutch about the same time burning our ships in the Medway. My friend, I think you will hardly call the scandalous monarchy of the ‘Merry Monarch’ the good old times.”

“I feel the difficulty which you suggest, Sir,” owned Mr. Blenkinsop.

“Now, that a man of your loyalty,” pursued the Statue, “should identify the good old times with Cromwell’s Protectorate, is of course out of the question.”

“Decidedly, Sir!” exclaimed Mr. Blenkinsop. “He shall not have a statue, though you enjoy that honor,” bowing.

“And yet,” said the Statue, “with all its faults, this era was perhaps no worse than any we have discussed yet. Never mind! It was a dreary, cant-ridden one, and if you don’t think those England’s palmy days, neither do I. There’s the previous reign then. During the first part of it, there was the king endeavoring to assert arbitrary power. During the latter, the Parliament were fighting against him in the open field. What ultimately became of him I need not say. At what stage of King Charles the First’s career did the good old times exist, Mr. Alderman? I need barely mention the Star Chamber and poor and Prynne; I merely allude to the fate of Strafford and of Laud. On consideration, should you fix the good old times anywhere thereabouts?”

“I am afraid not, indeed, Sir?” Mr. Blenkinsop responded, tapping his forehead.

“What is your opinion of James the First’s reign? Are you enamored of the good old times of the Gunpowder Plot? or when Sir Walter Raleigh was beheaded? or when hundreds of poor miserable old women were burnt alive for witchcraft, and the royal wiseacre on the throne wrote as wise a book, in defence of the execrable superstition through which they suffered?”

Mr. Blenkinsop confessed himself obliged to give up the times of James the First.

“Now, then,” continued the Statue, “we come to Elizabeth.”

“There I’ve got you!” interrupted Mr. Blenkinsop, exultingly. “I beg your pardon, Sir,” he added, with a sense of the freedom he had taken; “but everybody talks of the times of good Queen Bess, you know!”

“Ha, ha!” laughed the Statue, not at all like Zamiel, or Don Guzman, or a pavior’s rammer, but really with unaffected gaiety. “Everybody sometimes says very foolish things. Suppose Everybody’s lot had been cast under Elizabeth! How would Everybody have relished being subject to the jurisdiction of the Ecclesiastical Commission, with its power of imprisonment, rack, and torture? How would Everybody have liked to see his Roman Catholic and dissenting fellow-subjects, butchered, fined, and imprisoned for their opinions; and charitable ladies butchered, too, for giving them shelter in the sweet compassion of their hearts? What would Everybody have thought of the murder of Mary Queen of Scots? Would Everybody, would Anybody,

would you, wish to have lived in these days, whose emblems are cropped ears, pillory, stocks, thumb-screws, gibbet, axe, chopping-block, and Scavenger's daughter? Will you take your stand upon this stage of History for the good old times, Mr. Blenkinsop?"

"I should rather prefer firmer and safer ground, to be sure, upon the whole," answered the worshipper of antiquity, dubiously.

"Well, now," said the Statue, " 'tis getting late, and, unaccustomed as I am to conversational speaking, I must be brief. Were those the good old times when Sanguinary Mary roasted bishops, and lighted the fires of Smithfield? When Henry the Eighth, the British Bluebeard, cut his wives' heads off, and burnt Catholic and Protestant at the same stake? When Richard the Third smothered his nephews in the Tower? When the Wars of the Roses deluged the land with blood? When Jack Cade marched upon London? When we were, disgracefully driven out of France under Henry the Sixth, or, as disgracefully, went marauding there, under Henry the Fifth? Were the good old times those of Northumberland's rebellion? Of Richard the Second's assassination? Of the battles, burnings, massacres, cruel tormentings, and atrocities, which form the sum of the Plantagenet reigns? Of John's declaring himself the Pope's vassal, and performing dental operations on the Jews? Of the Forest Laws and Curfew under the Norman kings? At what point of this series of bloody and cruel annals will you place the times which you praise? Or do your good old times extend over all that period when somebody or other was constantly committing high treason, and there was a perpetual exhibition of heads on London Bridge and Temple Bar?"

It was allowed by Mr. Blenkinsop that either alternative presented considerable difficulty.

"Was it in the good old times that Harold fell at Hastings, and William the Conqueror enslaved England? Were those blissful years the ages of monkery; of Odo and Dunstan, bearding monarchs and branding queens? Of Danish ravage and slaughter? Or were they those of the Saxon Heptarchy, and the worship of Thor and Odin? Of the advent of Hengist and Horsa? Of British subjugation by the Romans? Or, lastly, must we go back to the Ancient Britons, Druidism, and human sacrifices; and say that those were the real, unadulterated, genuine, good old times when the true-blue natives of this island went naked, painted with woad?"

"Upon my word, Sir," replied Mr. Blenkinsop, "after the observations that I have heard from you this night, I acknowledge that I do feel myself rather at a loss to assign a precise period to the times in question."

"Shall I do it for you?" asked the Statue.

“If you please, Sir. I should be very much obliged if you would,” replied the bewildered Blenkinsop, greatly relieved.

“The best times, Mr. Blenkinsop,” said the Statue, “are the oldest. They are wisest; for the older the world grows the more experience it acquires. It is older now than ever it was. The oldest and best times the world has yet seen are the present. These, so far as we have yet gone, are the genuine good old times, Sir.”

“Indeed, Sir?” ejaculated the astonished Alderman.

“Yes, my good friend. These are the best times that we know of—bad as the best may be. But in proportion to their defects they afford room for amendment. Mind that, Sir, in the future exercise of your municipal and political wisdom. Don’t continue to stand in the light which is gradually illuminating human darkness. The Future is the date of that happy period which your imagination has fixed in the Past. It will arrive when all shall do what is right; hence none shall suffer what is wrong. The true good old times are yet to come.”

“Have you any idea when, Sir?” Mr. Blenkinsop inquired, modestly.

“That is a little beyond me,” the Statue answered. “I cannot say how long it will take to convert the Blenkinsops. I devoutly wish you may live to see them. And with that, I wish you good night, Mr. Blenkinsop.”

“Sir,” returned Mr. Blenkinsop with a profound bow, “I have the honor to wish you the same.”

Mr. Blenkinsop returned home an altered man. This was soon manifest. In a few days he astonished the Corporation by proposing the appointment of an Officer of Health to preside over sanitary affairs of Beetlebury. It had already transpired that he had consented to the introduction of lucifer-matches into his domestic establishment, in which, previously, he had insisted on sticking to the old tinder-box. Next, to the wonder of all Beetlebury, he was the first to propose a great new school, and to sign a requisition that a county penitentiary might be established for the reformation of juvenile offenders. The last account of him is that he has not only become a subscriber to the mechanics’ institute, but that he actually presided thereat, lately, on the occasion of a lecture on Geology.

The remarkable change which has occurred in Mr. Blenkinsop’s views and principles, he himself refers to his conversation with the Statue as above related. The narrative, however, his fellow townsmen receive with incredulous expressions, accompanied by gestures and grimaces of like import. They hint, that Mr. Blenkinsop had been thinking for himself a little, and only wanted a plausible excuse for recanting his errors. Most of his fellow-aldermen believe

him mad; not less on account of his new moral and political sentiments, so very different from their own, than of his Statue story. When it has been suggested to them that he has only had his spectacles cleaned, and has been looking about him, they shake their heads, and say that he had better have left his spectacles alone, and that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and a good deal of dirt quite the contrary. Their spectacles have never been cleaned, they say, and any one may see they don’t want cleaning.

The truth seems to be, that Mr. Blenkinsop has found an altogether new pair of spectacles, which enable him to see in the right direction. Formerly, he could only look backwards; he now looks forwards to the grand object that all human eyes should have in view—progressive improvement.

THE END.