

VIOLET HAMILTON; OR, THE TALENTED FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

GREAT and brilliant events were impending in the populous and thriving town of W——, upon a certain dull, cold morning towards the close of 1830. A brisk canvass had, for two days, been going on, previous to an election, which was expected to be hotly contested, and very "near run." The clank of the hammers employed in knocking up the hustings had already awakened the sleepers in the vicinity of the Town Hall; the chimneys of the Royal Oak were already smoking with the hospitable preparations for the late dinner of the *Blues*; and the orators of the *Yellows*, having concluded the public breakfast, at which the Independent clergyman said grace, and the Baptist minister returned thanks, were just visible through the fog, haranguing a motley assembly of men, women, and small boys and girls, from the windows of the White Hart. Carriages and horsemen were pouring into the town by all its avenues. Music and banners, and jubilant crowds, followers of the *Yellows*, were encountered in every direction, by the opposing squadrons and met with cheers and counter-cheers. Young ladies, smartly dressed, were, thus early, seen scudding across the Market Square—interest in the contest, and curiosity, overcoming the real, with the affected, terror of the mob.

"Three cheers for Polly Cripps! Huzza!" was shouted aloud, as a brisk, black-eyed damsel, with the Yellow colours on her breast, passed on, dragging along a delicate, slight girl, in deep mourning, who hung down her head, and wrapped shawl and veil closely around her. "Her colour—her colour—Blue or Yellow, Miss?" was shouted; and the young women might have suffered some annoyance, if not absolute insult, from the crowd, when one of the orators of the "White Hart" gallantly rushed to their protection. This was Mr Charles Herbert, the young friend of the popular candidate, and the very darling of the mob. One word from Herbert was enough for his vociferous admirers.—"Pass her! pass her! She's a pretty girl, Mr Herbert's friend. Huzza for the Yellows!" Mr Herbert would have attended the ladies into the inn, with which proposal Miss Polly Cripps would willingly have complied, but her pale and agitated companion, in a voice, the earnest tones of which could not be mistaken, implored—

"Let us go home!—home, I entreat!"

"You are not able to support yourself, Gabrielle," returned the other.

"Do me the honour to lean on me. Suffer me to see you through the crowd," said Herbert.

"No, no, thank you. I am quite well—quite able. O Miss Cripps, let us go home. Do, sir—O do, for mercy, leave us!"

Mr Herbert was at a loss what to make of this passionate remonstrance, until his arm was twitched by a grim-featured person among the *Yellows*.

"It wont do here, sir, to shew London tricks—hurt our canvass among the godly. Sir George stands or falls by the Dissenters. If you, his friend, are seen in the streets, in open day, with a sporting lady"——

"Sir?" demanded Herbert.

"Ay, with the Primma Donney"——

"I will see the ladies safe through the crowd, whatever be the consequence," returned Herbert, haughtily; and his adorers again cheered him, as he led off the ladies.

At the suggestion of Miss Cripps—for her companion seemed now deprived of speech—he conducted them to a milliner's shop, where he left them, till the poor young girl should really be able to go home. He had gathered that she must be a singer or comedian. "Poor little thing!—not over and above adapted these feelings of hers to her way of life," was his compassionate thought; but, in another ten minutes, he was again haranguing the crowd from a window.

There was a double feud in W——. It was not merely Blue against Yellow in this election, but Kersey against Silk, Town against County, Aristocracy against Democracy, Church against Dissent. Every element of wrath was abroad.

The election was not the only great event impending in W——. Among the Blue and Yellow placards which tapestried the walls, appeared the rose-coloured announcement of

MR CRIPPS'

GRAND FAREWELL CONCERT;

First Appearance of Mademoiselle Gabrielle;—

An affair much more interesting to the younger part of the inhabitants than even the election. Mr Cripps had been, for ten years, the organist and music and singing master of the town, which, previously very wealthy from the rapid increase of its staple manufacture, had, during his residence, made an equally sudden stride in the fine arts, in fashion, and refinement of manners. This happy revolution might, in part, be attributed to the influence and example of Mr Cripps and his talented family, who, if not *standards* either in morals or manners to their wealthy if less refined neighbours, had been patterns in good breeding. From the head of the house to the smallest child, the Cripps were a singularly *talented family*. Sir George Lees, the candidate of the *Yellows*, when attempting to seduce or withdraw Mr Cripps from his long allegiance to the Blues, privately assured him that he was lost in this stupid place; that the metropolis was the field for his splendid talents, and those of his promising family. Mr Cripps was disposed to believe the flattering tale. He had often fancied the same thing himself, and had even discussed the subject with Mrs Cripps. This lady had halted, for some years, between ambitious enterprise and prudence. She had known the pains and penalties, the whips and scorns of bitter

poverty, too intimately, during the first twelve years of her wedded life, to be rash, now that those early difficulties were surmounted, and she was blessed with a modest competence, which promised to be permanent. Though not without maternal ambition, her prudence had hitherto combated the adventurous desires of her husband, until the flattering assurances of Sir George turned the scale against prudence ; while maternal affection lent its weight, and fairly kicked the beam. Mrs Cripps remembered—when could she forget?—that her eldest born—her “beautiful, her brave—” Mr John Quintin Crippes, was already settled in the metropolis,—if the word could be legitimately applied to Mr Quintin’s desultory connexion of six months’ standing with the newspaper press, as a picker up of paragraphs. And now Sir George, on his third call, when the loyalty of Mr Cripps to the *Blues* had melted before the favouring sun of the *Yellows*, assured Mrs Cripps, in emphatic whispers, as he tenderly pressed her hands in her own hall—

“Your husband’s genius is totally lost here, ma’am. London, my dear Mrs Cripps—London, believe me, is the mart for talents. The magnificent voice of your charming daughter, properly improved, is a fortune in itself.”

“My husband’s pupil, Mademoiselle Gabrielle, Sir George, not our daughter:—our eldest daughter, Polly,—Maria,” corrected Mrs Cripps, “is thought a brilliant pianist for her years, by partial friends. Her father does not permit her yet, to use her voice much. All our children have great musical talent, and great general talent—forgive a mother’s partiality, Sir George. My eldest son, Quintin, now settled in London,”—But Sir George, smilingly, squeezed the hand of Mrs Cripps, in a style so politely, yet imperatively gagging, that she at once gave in.

“I am sure I have your interest in this struggle, Mrs Cripps: Mr Quintin Cripps.” The candidate pulled out a card—“Have the goodness to give me your son’s address, ma’am. It shall be one of my first pleasures, on my return to town, after this awful affair is over, to seek out Mr Quintin Cripps—Cripps, my good fellow, do set about trying what you can do for us this afternoon. Half the ladies of the town have been your pupils, at one time or another ; and you are, I find, so popular among them ;—the Orpheus of W——, making the brutes dance to your magic flute. Ha ! another young gentleman, and, I am sure, by his face and figure, a Cripps,” exclaimed the candidate, as a whey-faced lanky lad appeared.

“My second son, Edwin, Sir George.” The introduction took place.

“I must, to-night, after the canvass, inquire about your views for Mr Edwin.” This said, Sir George actually took Mr Cripps’ arm, to convey him to his committee-room for instructions. Mrs Cripps had not thought so highly of her husband for ten years before. No, not even on those proud days, when the delicious tones of his violin had enraptured the noble and gentle amateurs collected at his ANNUAL CONCERTS, in the time of

the Assizes or the Races ; and brought down thunders of applause, and showers of gold tickets. The London project now appeared not merely feasible to her, but alluring.

The velocity with which millions on millions of ideas, the most dissimilar and incongruous, glanced, darted, whirled, danced, and rushed through the excited brain of Mrs Cripps, for the rest of the morning, might have furnished metaphysicians with an apt illustration of the mighty difference between the material and the spiritual in man’s organization and essence. It was, however, the process only that was remarkable for the spiritual. The ideas themselves were of the earth earthly, of the world worldly, and embraced no large range, even there. The very extremes were bounded by a coach for Polly, when she married, and a certain old puce-coloured satin gown, new dyed, looking very well in London as a second-best ; the tea-china conveyed without cracking, and the doubt if Sir George would keep his promise implied, to Edwin. How cheaply a common dress might be purchased for Mademoiselle Gabrielle ; and, how the cask of elder-berry wine, the annual present of the rector’s maiden sister to the organist, could be sent, were other thoughts. It was not so much the quality as the quantity and velocity of Mrs Cripps’ magnificent or simple ideas, when speculating on the advance of her husband and talented family, which were miraculous. With vulgar details of finance, and ways and means, were mingled dazzling generalities of what *might be* ; and natural and kindly affections interlaced and adorned the airy fabric of speculation. The pride of her heart, her handsome, gay, careless, and volatile, though affectionate, Quintin would be again before her eyes, and under her wing, reunited to his family ; she thought of the joy of Polly, who had so long sighed after the metropolis ; and of the delight of Susan, who was turning out almost as poetical and clever as Quintin, and who sadly wanted a medium through which to display her literary talents to a paying and an admiring public.

If through the interest of the kind, generous Sir George, a place was found in London for poor Edwin, the felicity of the family would be complete—too great. Mr Cripps might also have an opportunity of bringing out his pupil to the best advantage at one of the great theatres, and perhaps make another fortune through the genius of Mademoiselle Gabrielle ; but on this his wife did not reckon much : she knew that Cripps was always a sanguine schemer.

Mrs Cripps had present duties to discharge as well as ambitious speculations to indulge, and to these we leave her, to look in upon another household of the excited and distracted town of W——.

No scheme of sanguine and ambitious vanity had ever appeared more rash and ridiculous in the eyes of Mrs Somers Stocks, the lady of one of the principal bankers of W——, than that which had been hatching in the head of Mr Cripps for a long period, and which, for the mo-

ment, had turned the brains of his wife. The project had occupied Mrs Stocks much more closely than the election, though Mr Stocks was one of Sir George's committee. She had been the first patroness of Cripps; his unfailing friend at his annual benefit concerts; his employer, his counsellor. Mrs Stocks, in short, possessed titles manifold, to the gratitude of the organist, and now he was going off to London in spite of her advice, leaving her Juliana without a teacher for either piano, guitar, harp, or voice! Mrs Stocks was vexed as well as angry; and no sooner was the state of the canvass, the great topic of the hour, discussed after dinner, than helping her husband, unasked, to a few more hot chestnuts, she broke forth:—

"You must have heard, my dear—for the town is ringing with it—of the madness of Little Cripps?"

"I have not heard a word—Is Cripps mad?"

"Going off to London, bag and baggage, with his whole family and his pupil! Does not that look like madness? To make all their fortunes by their wonderful talents! So talented a family!"

Mr Stocks did not encourage his lady; but, as he quietly ate his chestnuts, and seemed to listen, she continued:—

"So much as we have done for him: and Juliana just at that critical period, when the mechanical drudgery of music is over, and genius in the science beginning to be developed. Cripps—and I must say that for the silly creature—is a first-rate instructor, or he never should have had my patronage; and now to go to London!"

"It seems a bold step in Cripps; but I suppose he has his reasons," replied the banker, who looked as if he felt perfectly indifferent to the weal or woe of "the talented family," Mademoiselle Gabrielle included.

Mrs Stocks was somewhat provoked; but to the want of sympathy in her husband, to having her feelings and motives "unappreciated," she was case-hardened by fifteen years' endurance; not indeed altogether without complaint. Knowing her husband's commercial and civic importance, she had some vague expectation, that, if her feelings had been appreciated, he might have interfered to prevent the suspension of Juliana's musical education, by stopping the Cripps in their meditated transit, as he would have stopped the circulation of a forged note.

"The infatuated creature has got more pupils, and all of good fashion, than he can overtake. Polly Cripps finds young scholars among the middle ranks. And you were willing, Mr Stocks, with your usual goodness, to receive Edwin into the bank at a salary of twenty-five pounds; such certainties and prospects to be thrown away! Cripps has the two Miss Wordleys at the Hall, the rector's grand-niece, the three young ladies at Oakwood, and my Juliana,—County families; and, to my certain knowledge, he was promised dear little Lady Anne when the family came to the Castle."

"County families, all save your own, Jane,"

replied Mr Stocks, who was, by birth and feeling, of the town faction;—Do the county gentry pay Cripps higher than we do?"

"That don't signify, Mr Stocks. There is, to a professional man like Cripps, an immense difference in the rank of his pupils: he had not above three hours in genteel families till engaged to attend our Juliana; but after his first month at the Castle, employment quite flowed upon him."

"With the help of your patronage, my dear," returned the banker; whose humour found vent in such small jets as remarking to his lady—
"And when Cripps becomes famous as a composer in London, fancy how the honour will be enhanced of having those six Sonatas dedicated to Mrs Somers Stocks."

The tone of her husband's voice, his carelessly crossed ankles, his drumming on the table, the easy indifferent air with which he sipped his wine, were altogether too much for the nerves of his lady.

"You are pleased to jest, Mr Stocks; but my feelings will not permit me to see a thoughtless wretch, with a large family—lively, clever, pleasant creatures, all of them—throw away his prospects in this manner. You will see him back to W— ere a twelvemonth be out, with a begging subscription."

"Set your heart at rest, Jane. If he do come, I am sure you will subscribe handsomely. But I've a notion that the Cripps, like the cats, will fall on their feet, light where they may. Drop them penniless on London Bridge, and they are the sort of folks that will scramble their way,—and either make a spoon or spoil the horn."

The use of vulgar and idiomatic phrases, was a practice from which Mrs Stocks had never been able to wean her husband; nor could she banish from her recollection, that, though Mr Stocks went properly to church with her, his father had been a *wet*; and that his grandfather, and all his remoter ancestors—if clothiers could be supposed to have had ancestors—had been strict Quakers. It is rare that the entire motives of any human being come wholly to the surface, in an affair which deeply affects their passions or interests. The ingratitude of Cripps, and the injury to Juliana, were strongly resented; but there was another motive: the gay, handsome, young and fashionable wife of the senior partner in the bank, the rich uncle of Mr Stocks, had taken a kind-hearted, if inconsiderate, caprice, rather than a serious liking to the Cripps, and had suddenly usurped the place of her matronly niece-in-law, as their patroness. And Cripps, though he denied the fact, had as completely transferred his allegiance from Mrs Somers, to Mrs Richard Stocks, as he had transferred "his vote and interest" from the *Blues* to the *Yellows*. He had whispered in the safe ear of Mrs Cripps, that his original patroness was an ostentatious, vulgar, under-bred, exacting pretender—with no more true appreciation of musical genius, and no more music in her than in a cart-wheel. Mrs Richard, on the contrary, was a lady-like creature, who did know something, and feel a great deal, of

music. Mrs Richard possessed other advantages. She had a chariot and phaeton at her command, and lived at the *Grove*. The dwelling, handsome, commodious, and well-furnished, of Mrs Somers Stocks, was only over to *New Bank* in the Market Square of W——, and was her unvaried residence throughout the year, save a few weeks at *Buxton* or *Matlock*, and latterly at *Leamington*. But the most enviable distinction of Mrs Richard was, being connected, by inextricable cousinships with "the county people." They visited her at the *Grove*, and she visited them in all their Halls and Places; and if Mr Somers Stocks occasionally grumbled at the uses to which the local aristocracy, Mrs Richard's high-blooded connexions, sometimes sought to turn their intimacy at the *Bank*, he durst not yet complain to his uxorious old uncle. Mrs Richard laboured under one disadvantage. She had no child, no *Juliana*, to scold and dote upon by turns—to spoil by fond, weak, indulgence, and torment and chafe by capricious checks.

"You wont carry your displeasure so far, Jane, as not to attend Cripps' Farewell Concert on Friday, I suppose? I must see for tickets to you and Ju.," resumed Mr Stocks.

"It must altogether depend on family arrangements whether I shall be present," replied Mrs Stocks, with an air of matronly dignity. "I have not quite made up my mind. Of course my daughter must go to her master's benefit concert. So pointed a slight from our family to Cripps, fool as he is, I could not shew at this time; and *Juliana* cannot well go without me. I understand the family from the *Grove*, with all their fashionable guests, are to be there. Mrs Richard has sent twelve sovereigns for twelve tickets—gold tickets;—a fortunate woman is your uncle's wife—rolling in wealth, and with nothing to do but amuse herself."

"No wonder so unfortunate a woman as yourself envies the lot of my *old* uncle's very young and pretty wife, Jane."

"Indeed, then, I do not. Heaven forbid: Have I, Mr Stocks, ever repined at my severer domestic duties, or our more limited means. The pains I bestow; the trouble I take with our daughter's education, maternal affection renders a pleasure, not a task."

"What a pattern of a wife the ungrateful man has got!" was perhaps the shadowy reflection of Mrs Stocks; while Mr Stocks, as if in sympathy with her conscious virtue, checked the humour which prompted him to commiserate the sad fate of his lady, under the necessity of giving her orders direct to her cook, instead of communicating with that functionary through the dignified medium of a housekeeper; of doing her marketing, and paying her bills herself; and teasing her daughter with incessant care, of which nine-tenths might have been, with great advantage to *Juliana's* mind and temper, spared. Mr Stocks hemmed away his sarcastic propensity, sipped his wine, and remarked—

"You will forget and forgive, Jane. Little Cripps needs a lift at present; and though I

don't deal in *gold tickets*, I trust you will be generous to *Juliana's* old teacher and her play-mates, his children."

"Generous!" exclaimed the aggrieved lady. "I was his first and fastest friend. Did I not, twice a year, send Emily Cripps *Juliana's* left-off things—did I not—"

"You have been kind to the fiddler's family, I believe, Jane," interrupted Mr Stocks, cutting short the muster-roll of his wife's benevolences; "and you will still be kind—only *no London introductions*—my purse is at your discretion, but not my name."

"Cripps will not want for introductions, I assure you; he will, as Mr Charles Herbert says—what a very gentleman-like, elegant, and prepossessing young man is Sir George's friend Mr Herbert?—'Cripps will find a way or make one.' He was yesterday, with his daughter Polly, at a *dejeuner* at the *Grove*, to meet Sir George, who is quite a *fanatico*. Cripps, no doubt, has splendid talents, the creature."

"Were they actually fiddling in the forenoon, while we were sweating, canvassing for him?" exclaimed Mr Stocks, setting down his glass, with an emphasis, and raising himself bolt upright in his chair; half repenting that he had allowed himself to be placed on the committee of so degenerate a Whig, "He'll gain much of the sort of knowledge, which I fancy he requires as the representative of a commercial community, by fiddling away his mornings with fiddlers and fine ladies. Were the *Blues* to hear of this—in the very heat of his canvass!—and the fellow seems much in earnest too."

"Mrs Richard had a few musical friends to meet Sir George; and it is really so good of her, when one considers that all her early connexions and secret prepossessions must be for the *Blues*, and against the *Low party*. But she is a well-bred young woman, and the usages of good society, my dear—." Now, if there was one topic under the moon more than another which Mr Stocks detested, in a matrimonial *tete-a-tete*, it was this same "usages of good society," with which his lady had been indoctrinating him for fifteen years, and, as she feared, to very little good purpose. He abruptly left the room for his office and London correspondence, at the same hour that Mr Cripps was going the rounds of the best society of W——; disposing of, or rather taking orders for tickets for his Farewell Concert, and soliciting votes for "his particular friend Sir George, as a personal favour."

It was not without some grounds that the grateful Baronet afterwards whispered him, as he did twenty more—"Your zeal, Cripps, has turned the election. It is impossible that I can ever forget it: this is not merely political service—it is disinterested personal attachment. Upon my soul I feel it."

It was not improbable that more than one young man, already secretly favourable to the *Liberal Yellows*, was moved to confer the parting kindness of a pledge on his old violin master; and quite certain that twenty young wives and

favourite daughters, Cripps' former pupils, solicited and coaxed the suffrages of their relatives for Sir George, "who could be so useful to Mr Cripps and his family in the metropolis, and who had already promised Edwin a place in the Ordnance Office. Cripps was such a good creature—so polite, and kind to us at school; but we were always favourite pupils."

All Mr Cripps' pupils, it was remarkable, had been favourite ones; and every member of Sir George Lee's committee, had simply, and singly, carried his election. If Mr Cripps was polite and urbane, his high breeding was not unaccounted for. He had been bred in the atmosphere of a Court. He had originally been one of the singing boys of the choir in the King's chapel at Windsor. The Princes there were of a royal, and he was of a musical, race: yet there was an impenetrable mystery about his origin; and even Mrs Cripps could not tell whether the blood in the veins of her children was that of kings or fiddlers. Mr Cripps, in his early years, never seemed to have settled the question entirely to his own liking; and as personal vanity, or pride of art predominated, he was either the offspring of a certain Royal Duke, by a Maid of Honour, whose reputation required that his father should never acknowledge him, or the descendant of "the divine old man," his maternal grandfather, an eminent German violinist, "who had first put a bow into his hand!" and of whom, in moods of enthusiasm, Cripps spoke to his children with tears in his eyes. Those eyes:—there was a prominence, an unsteadiness about them, with a fulness of the muscles of the cheeks, in an otherwise slender and meagre man, which gave some countenance to the romantic or mysterious part of Mr Cripps' story. The remarkable musical gifts which his whole family possessed—those children to whom flutes, violins, clarionets, pianos, and guitars were in place of the coral and bells, bats and balls of other children, augured a divine and hereditary right. And from the period of Cripps' settling in W——, where plebeian morality valued legitimate birth far above high blood, the wife of a peasant above the mistress of a prince, Mr Cripps shewed tact enough to conceal his pretensions. To his art he was ever enthusiastically true. He had been born a musician—his soul was in music; and he must have been touched by its poetry; for, however it might be with his aspiring younglings, or his clever wife, if music was the means of his ambition, it was not less beloved for its own sake.

If Cripps had repined at his hard fate, in being, with his taster, feelings, and skill, cast among the rich, boorish, timber-toned, and timber-souled population of W——, such as on his arrival he had found it, among persons who could no more appreciate his music than could Mr Somers Stocks the refined feelings of his lady, his pity was as much given to them as to himself. They were as the dumb or the blind. They wanted a fine sense which he possessed in an exquisite degree: they deserved his pity. Seasons of refreshing came, with a stray amateur, like Sir George Lees, or

his friend Herbert, who could understand and feel the real superiority of Little Cripps; and gales of paradise floated on the praises of his talent, by a beautiful woman like Mrs Richard Stocks, praises which, he said, "had awakened his sleeping soul within him!"

"But, ah! I fear my charming patroness is as far out of her place in this ungenial clime, as I have been in W——," was his somewhat familiar whisper, on the morning of the concert at the Grove, in the ear of Mr Charles Herbert, whose admiration of the lovely hostess was quite apparent to so critical an observer as Mr Cripps.

The young gentleman was disposed to resent the impertinence of the remark; but "it was only Cripps," who, successful thus far, ventured the small request of the favour and honour of the company of Mr Herbert at the rehearsal of his Farewell Concert that evening.

"My talented pupil, Mademoiselle Gabrielle—whose only drawback is excessive timidity—and every member of my family, take a part. You shall judge of us, Mr Herbert, as a musical family. To-morrow every Cripps of them shall come forward to say adieu to the kind boors of W——. . . . In Mrs Cripps' private society I am sternly select."

Mr Charles Herbert did not smile. Whatever might be the faults of this young man, he was not of the sneering school. He had some remorseful idea that his friend, Sir George, was misleading this poor little Cripps and his family; but he wished to see how Mademoiselle had recovered her spirits; and he felt that the family of Cripps was a great resource to idle young men of fashion, in a stupid town, where there was not even a billiard-table.

When Mrs Somers Stocks expressed her astonishment at the audacity of Mr Cripps to the rector, who dropt in to take tea with her, he smiled, and rather thought Sir George and his friend would go, just like themselves.

"Conceive a party of good fashion at his house!—with its dirt, confinement, squalling babies, pupils, and what not; and the expense! I always knew Cripps was naturally a thoughtless, extravagant creature!"

"But his wife—pardon the interruption, Madam—so active, managing, and notable a person as Mrs Cripps!"

"Well, she is so, considering; though as vain and ambitious as himself. And this party!—they have sent to borrow a hundred and fifty things of me. It would have been utter folly, you are aware, to risk my best cut glass. Borrowing my best *epergne*! Such total ignorance of the usages of good society! I *can-not* believe, Mr Mortimer, that Sir George will go."

"Don't be certain, my dear madam. Music, like gaming, love, and, I must add, *canvassing*, in these new times, levels all distinctions. And gay London bachelors, accustomed to Club life, are far from being so stiff as we provincials. Mr Herbert, who, I understand, flirts, sings, and dances quite as well as he harangues, will be sure to countenance the defalcation of Mr Cripps from the *Blues*.

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"Is he an honourable, this Mr Herbert?"

"Cannot tell, Ma'am. I have not even seen the paragon who has turned the heads of half our ladies, and changed their hearts from *blue* to *yellow*. He is given out as a man of large moneyed fortune, with a fine estate in Somersetshire. The only child of one of the great, great nabobs."

"But, tied up by his father's will from enjoying his property, or marrying under the age of twenty-five, unless with the consent of his step-mother."

"Ah, ma'am, why ask me for news, when you are always so much better informed yourself?" said the sly rector.

"Mrs Richard Stocks was very intimate with Mrs Herbert at Cheltenham. She is a most accomplished, beautiful, and still young-looking woman; and quite devoted to her son, who repays all her affection. She was expected at the Grove, on a visit during the election, but has not been able to make it out."

"Aunt expects to meet Mrs Herbert in London next season," put in Miss Juliana, who took deep interest in the conversation.

"Is this clever Mr Herbert—they say he is fresh from Oxford, though so sad a rebel—so very handsome as the *blue* ladies maintain, Miss Julia?"

"Oh, very handsome indeed! such an orator!—with an air so *distingué*, Polly Cripps says;—and a seat on horseback like an angel," exclaimed Miss Stocks.

"Softly, Juliana—no occasion for the display of so much natural emotion, my love. The quiet, subdued, lady-like manners sanctioned by the usages of polite society, my love, forbid!"

"Mr Cripps has sold 250 tickets," interrupted the lively and tractable Miss. "Mr Herbert has taken ten at a sovereign a-piece."

"Well done Mr Cripps! he will go off at last with the eclat he so dearly loves," said the rector. "Mr Herbert possesses the true secret of changing *blue* to *yellow* I find."

"It was not *blue* or *yellow* at all, sir," continued the well-informed young lady. "Polly Cripps wrote him a pretty twisted note on *pink* glazed paper, soliciting his patronage and support for her charming friend Mademoiselle Gabrielle, who is to make her *debut* at the concert, after the polling."

"She is a brisk damsel enough, Polly Cripps," returned the Doctor. "Did the other girl know of this pretty plan, Juliana? Why, the Cripps' family are far riper for the metropolis than I had fancied; the mysterious pupil seemed to me a retiring, modest young creature—poor thing!"

"Violette know? Oh, no—that she does not; Susan Cripps was vexed at it—and begged Polly not to send the note; it would so hurt poor Violette if she ever heard of it. She is very nervous about the concert of to-morrow. While she was giving me my lesson, when Mr Cripps had gone out canvassing, the tears fell drop-dropping on the keys. I pretended not to notice, as she did not, I am sure, wish me to see. I

don't know if she knew herself. I dare say, mamma, Mrs Cripps scolds and worries her—as she does her own daughters sometimes—and makes her cry."

"Happy, Juliana! to have no idea of other cause of suffering than a mamma's worrying," said the benevolent and smiling rector. "I am afraid, Mrs Stocks, this poor girl is not very happy where she is. . . . And what has put it into Cripps' scheming head to Frenchify her English name? Can a *Prima Donna* not be received by English people under the simple, English appellation of *Violet Hamilton*?"

"That is the girl's name, then!" cried Mrs Stocks—"Mademoiselle Gabrielle, indeed!—so like Cripps!"

"Violet Gabrielle, so baptized; and a Protestant, madam," rejoined the rector. "I received a long and earnest letter about her today, from an unknown brother clergyman in Guernsey. She is the orphan child of an officer who was in the Indian army, and who, when he died, three months back, bequeathed her, with his little savings, to the Organist of my correspondent's church; a small respectable farmer, with whom Violet and her father had lodged for seven years; and who, with his wife, are as much attached to her as if she were their own grandchild. I wish it may be a wise arrangement which has led these generous, disinterested, but simple people to give up her little property, and something additional from their own little savings, to have her articulated to our friend Mr Cripps, that her musical education may be thoroughly completed."

"Cripps makes such a mystery of it," put in Mrs Stocks. "Why, the bills came through our bank, soon after he had brought the girl over from the Channel Islands. Mr Stocks, always prudent, is mute as a fish on all such matters;—so best in affairs of business; but I have authority for saying, that Cripps changed one bill for £100 at Smith the draper's, when he paid the dresses for the concert, and his old account; and I have reason to know that £200 are now lying at his order in London."

"He is a good-natured little man on the whole, and a thorough musician," rejoined the rector. "His wife is a shrewd woman, and a capital disciplinarian; so I hope this poor young lady will be tolerably happy among them. My sister and I mean to visit her as soon as the distraction of this Concert business is over—poor young friendless thing!"

"I mean to call on her myself," said Mrs Stocks; "but really I begin to be cautious on the side of the Cripps' family, and especially of Miss Polly. There is an audacity in the bold black eyes and sergeant-major stride of that girl, a freedom of manners with her superiors, and so obvious a want of proper tact, and knowledge of those usages which characterise—But here comes Mr Stocks! My dear, make your apologies to the rector. His good old-fashioned politeness would not permit us to begin tea without you."

The election, the concert, the sudden conversion of Blues to Yellows, and Yellows to Blues, and the great London enterprise of the Cripps' family, furnished abundant topics for tea-table talk.

CHAPTER II.

Mrs Cripps' Musical Soirée.

"The web of life is of mingled yarn," says one who, to his other titles, may add that of being the greatest of human life's philosophers. The saying held of what, nevertheless, was by a hundred degrees the most brilliant party which Mrs Cripps had ever given in the course of her twenty-five years of married experience. A critical English eye, such as that of Mrs Somers Stocks, must have seen many defects, flaws, and positive wants in the machinery—the *materiel* of festivity and elegant enjoyment; yet, taken as a whole, the "let-off" was by no means the despicable affair which Mrs Stocks had predicted. The redeeming elements were the genuine musical talent of the party-giving family; their good-humoured fudge, polite manners, and the desire to oblige and please their guests, carried to the extreme of flattery. Flattery was indeed a characteristic of the whole family of Cripps; a habit become second nature. They flattered every one, and they flattered each other, even when alone; and every Cripps, at every hour, sung the praises, and attested the virtues and accomplishments, and amiable dispositions of each and all of the Crippses. A habit so established could not be taxed as insincerity; for it by no means prevented family brawls, politely conducted. It was the caressing, demonstrative style of the head of the house, carried down improved to the juniors; and it was pleasant as the sign of family affection, in a household now knit together by force of blood, as in after life, by considerations of a common interest; when the Cripps were still "each for all and all for each," as their best policy and most beneficial compact. There was at least no insincerity in their mutual admiration. Polly never doubted that her brother Quintin—her "brother the barrister," as she learned to designate him—was the greatest genius and the finest gentleman of his age: there was certainly nothing like Quintin among the dullards of W—. That her father was the most accomplished musician and perfect gentleman that was to be met with, was the strongest article of Susan's faith; and this opinion was a nearer approximation to the truth.

As Mr Cripps stood with his lady at the door of his teaching-room, converted for the night into the principal reception-room, in their best dresses, and very best, because happiest, looks, they appeared an exceedingly genteel and agreeable couple. Cripps, always neat and spruce, shone in his glossiest black suit and finest gala waistcoat; his lady was very well and becomingly dressed; both were distinguished in W— for good manners, with perhaps an exuberance of manner, an *empressment*, an elaboration of courtesy, which yet did exceedingly well in W—,

and which rather harmonized with the relative position of the hosts and their guests.

A great majority of the latter reckoned themselves, out of sight, the "better" of the Crippses, whose invitations had, however, been very generally accepted. The fashionable world of W—, happily for Mrs Cripps, had not the choice of twenty parties, of varying attraction, in one night; and it so happened that almost everybody went; each, where vanity or propriety suggested the need of an excuse, finding one in some amiable motive, actuating the condescending individual. The worthy rector could not make up his mind to vex his departing organist by sending an apology; and he went so far as to acknowledge to his sister some curiosity about Mademoiselle, which she courteously and truly imputed to benevolent interest in the young and forlorn stranger. Besides, if he stayed away now, as he had been in the habit of taking tea with the Crippses about twice or thrice a-year, it might be fancied that he felt piqued by the desertion of Mr Cripps to the *Yellows*. This would have been a victory over the *Blues* which he, as a Tory, a gentleman, and a true Churchman, despised yielding to misled men, Radicals and Dissenters.

Mrs Somers Stocks was actuated by different, though equally amiable, motives. When her scout, the housemaid, informed her that the rector and his sister, both in their clogs, but in full dress, had certainly entered the blazing dwelling, which made sunshine in the shady Mall, her doubts were resolved. Save the few finishing points of cap, scarf, and gloves, Mrs Stocks was already "dressed enough for such a party." And now that the rector and Miss Mortimer had set the example of forgiveness and graciousness, she would also grace "poor Cripps;" who must be demolished by so decided a rebuff, so dead a cut, as the banker's lady not looking in upon his party.

Mr Cripps, from his obliging manners and agreeable talents, was highly popular among the young people of the town; and now that he was going away to London, under the Member's patronage, there was a universal and friendly excitement about himself, his beautiful mysterious pupil, and, indeed, the whole family. Had the invitations been twice as numerous, it is probable that nearly all those asked would, for one sort of civil reason or another, have appeared. Cripps had been, as he had said, "sternly exclusive;" though, by means of old connexions, family intimacies, and the young companionships of Polly and the absent Quintin, of Susan and Edwin, the rule was sadly infringed upon; and though Mrs Somers Stocks could not approve—could, indeed, barely tolerate such promiscuous association—the party proved exactly so much the happier for those breaches in the rigid demarcations and the etiquettes of "good society."

The vulgar appliances and grosser elements of refined amusements—the air they breathe, and without which they die—were abounding. Mr Cripps understood all this. There were plenty

of wax lights—Mrs Stocks took pains to ascertain the fact of wax—abundance of refreshments, most hospitably distributed—pretty, well-dressed girls—good-looking lads—enchancing music—and, on this popular evening, not too much of it.

Mr Cripps, by bitter experience, had learned the true nature of a W— musical audience. He was no longer the enthusiast he had once been; fancying that every one who professed to like music partook of his exalted feelings. He would not throw his pearls before pigs; and neither Sir George nor Mr Herbert had yet appeared; so, with just as much music as offered no restraint or interruption to the more popular amusements of chattering, flirting, and eating ices and cakes, an atmosphere of freedom and gaiety, of ease and enjoyment, imperceptibly arose and diffused itself through the crowded small apartment, which proved contagious even with dignified and ungenial natures.

“Does not Cripps’ party go off charmingly,” whispered the rector to Mrs Stocks, who, seated in state at the head of the room, was unconsciously relaxing in dignity, and, from a spectator, becoming a sharer in the pleasures of the evening, until recalled to the recollection of her injuries by the rector’s speech. “It does me good to see so many of my young parishioners so innocently happy; and to witness the overflowing delight of Mr Cripps and his fine family, in having their friends around them.”

“Cripps would rather, though, see Sir George and Mr Herbert enter, than all of us put together, sir. Do I not understand the vain and ambitious, scheming creature,” returned the lady, whom Mr Cripps, by every art of polite assiduity, had done his utmost to conciliate, almost to the neglect of other matrons, with equal claims upon his attention.

“Pardon my vanity, if I cannot think so poorly of our noble selves, citizens of W—, ma’am. There is a time for everything. Cripps is, I am sure, a well-disposed little fellow at heart. . . . I fear, though, I shall have to depart before I obtain a glimpse of the great folks. It is *style*, I fancy, for the courtiers of the Mob to appear here just as their inferiors are going off. I am more disappointed at the absence of poor Mademoiselle Gabrielle; between whose spirits, and her fine appellation, there is, I imagine, little accordance to-night. Poor thing, we saw her—Sarah and I—from the parlour window, walking alone under the churchyard elms this afternoon.”

“There is something very suspicious—very suspicious, indeed, in that affair,” returned Mrs Stocks, now deeply in earnest. “It was not from Guernsey the whole of the money came for the girl’s premium, as I have now learned, but from America. She is an American born—a Virginian, I believe.”

“Quite wrong, pardon me, ma’am. English, I assure you, by my correspondent’s letter. He and his family, and, as he states, the whole neighbourhood, feel the greatest interest in the young lady’s welfare. She must be an amiable

creature to have touched so many kind and simple hearts. He says ‘she is the beloved child of our parish.’”

At this moment, the “glass of fashion and mould of form” to the aspiring youth of W— —Mr Charles Herbert, namely—entered, loudly announced by Mike Twig, the probationary page of Mrs Cripps, and followed by the very *elite* of the dandies of the *Yellows*. Their appearance produced certainly a more visible flutter, if not a stronger sensation than an event so important to the young and fair portion of the company might have done in the higher regions of Almack’s or May Fair. Gaiety and mirth were momentarily checked, curiosity was sharpened, and sentiment deepened.

It so happened that Miss Polly Cripps (from this night forth Maria) was sweeping the chords of the harp as the gentlemen entered. A string snapped; and Maria, laughingly, rose to meet the greetings of the guests as they were in turn released from the eager and overpowering welcomes of her father and mother. It was now in vain that the latter, during a full half hour, whispered—“Maria, you are not perceiving your old playmate, Mr Benjamin Jeffery, who is trying to catch your eye.” Maria could not have been wholly oblivious of the presence of the wealthy and bashful young manufacturer, who had incurred the severest displeasure of his father and mother, and awakened the maternal hopes of Mrs Cripps, by attentions which the young lady did not, in the least, mistake; but which, not caring one farthing for the bashful Benjamin, she treated with derision, from the moment that the London scheme was fixed. Mrs Cripps, like every prudent mother, was never contemptuous of an eligible *pis-aller*, not even when her heart swelled with all a mother’s pride as Maria was conducted up stairs to the attic closet, as Mrs Stocks maliciously named it, where, under the name of, the Refreshment Room, jellies, ices, lemonade, &c., &c., were dispensed to all comers, by the smartly dressed housemaid.

The airy cage of the Crippses on the Mall of W—, with three perches on each stage, was of a size which neither admitted of large rooms nor of thick partitions between the apartments. In the adjoining closet, or small bedroom—not attic—that representation being a spiteful sarcasm of the great lady who lived over to the banking office—was now seated, with wan cheeks and dimmed eyes, the forlorn future Malibran or Grisi of W—, the *Prima Donna* of to-morrow’s concert, whose non-appearance below stairs had caused wonder and disappointment to both ladies and gentlemen.

Mr Cripps had urged and pleaded; Mrs Cripps had taken the tone of affectionate command; Polly had coaxed and flattered; and Susan, Gabrielle’s favourite in the family, had entreated; but the unvarying tearful answer had been—“Do not urge me, dear Mrs Cripps; pray, dear sir, excuse me: who will miss me? I cannot—indeed I cannot sing before so large a party. I never did—I do not think—I am very

sure that my father, nor yet my poor kind friends, never meant that I should be a stage singer. They only intended that, through your instructions, sir, I should be able to gain my bread, as the organist of our quiet parish, and as a teacher there. Anything but that," was her secret thought. I would be a maid servant; or work from sunrise to sunset, with my needle: anything but a public singer! One appearance would annihilate me. Miss Cripps, who has so much more firmness and self-possession, and who has, from infancy, been accustomed to display her brilliant talents in company, must succeed, and be admired and applauded. But I—!

"Indeed, sir, you are entirely wrong about this" she said aloud.

Mr Cripps was too polite, perhaps too feeling, and undoubtedly too much interested in the result, to urge his "gifted pupil" beyond the point of endurance. Her natural disposition was singularly gentle and pliable. And she appeared anxious to oblige him—capable of understanding his superiority in his own art—grateful for his devoted attention to her improvement, and assiduous in her studies. He at last assured her, that she should neither be asked to sing nor play, save as was agreeable to her; but he did expect that she would join the party: he was convinced, that going more into pleasant, improving society, would be of advantage to her health and spirits. Violette promised to dress herself, and to slip down stairs some time in the course of the evening.

Every member of the family was too hurried and distracted with the "duties extraordinary" of the day, to think more about her. A brilliant display was to be made, which would have required the exertions of a proper complement of well-trained domestics, to fulfil Mrs Cripps' orders, and do Mr Cripps' spiring; and there were only available the maid-of-all-work; Mr Brown, the confectioner's servant, who having assisted in preparing the sweets and delicacies, now came to administer them; and the man of universal work, Mike Twig, the son of the bellos-blower, now on trials for preferment in the capital, as Mr Cripps' page. "Impossible to get on in London at all without a man-servant!" was Mr Cripps' reply to his wife's remonstrance on the gormandizing propensities of Mike, who worked for one boy, and ate for three men.

The lonely and sad Prima Donna having tried to drive away her headach and compose her spirits by a solitary walk under the churchyard elms—her only voluntary promenade—returned to the house. The scene into which the fully and forwardness of Miss Cripps had forced her—the insulting language of the crowd, hardly understood in its full import, yet revolting to maidenly pride and delicacy—the idea of how she must have appeared in the eyes of the gentleman who had come to the protection of her companion and herself—and a vague feeling of insecurity and degradation, connected with her position—had haunted her ever since the occurrence. It was impossible to banish the recollection of those

stinging expressions of the unthinking people; and to such mortifications was it her future lot to be continually exposed?

"O my dear, dear father, why were you taken from me when most I needed your protecting kindness," was her exclamation. "My kind friends—never surely—never would you have placed your little Violette under this bondage, had you been aware of its consequences." Gushing floods of tears effaced the restorative effects of the air upon the eyes and complexion of the incipient Prima Donna, who—blaming her own ingratitude to her master, to one so courteous, who so disinterestedly held out to her ambition hopes of fortune and fame—could not conquer that deep dislike, which the affair of the morning had increased to insuperable repugnance to his plans. "Anything but this—anything."

The mournful meditations of "Mademoiselle Gabrielle," were only terminated by the necessity of dressing herself, in order to redeem her promise to her master. She resolved that, before she slept, she would write him a note, declaring her fixed determination not to appear at the public concert. Rather than comply, she would at once forfeit the little means placed in his hands, by her humble friends, for her board, and for the completion of her education; and seek employment in some other way. She had heard of the disappointment of Mrs Somers Stocks from the communicative Juliana; and a hope arose that, perhaps, in lieu of a better teacher, that lady might accept of herself.

This idea was another inducement to go down stairs, where she might see Mrs Stocks, and judge of the probable success of this plan.

She laid out her modest finery; and Mrs Cripps, having positively interdicted faded mourning, Violette attired herself in plain white muslin; fixed her few jet ornaments, put on her tiny black satin slippers, black lace gloves, and scarf; thinking to herself—"I am looking shocking enough to night; but who is there to notice or care about how I look: only, I hope, in goodness, that gentleman—that Mr Herbert—is not below, or will not see me. It would kill me with confusion to meet him."

The thought had not passed, when Herbert's voice—its tones were perfectly remembered—and that of Miss Maria Cripps, were heard, in gay talk, in the adjoining Refreshment Room. Mr Herbert "hoped that Miss Cripps' friend had completely recovered the alarm given her by the rascally mob."

"Oh, quite, and so grateful for your gallantry to us poor damsels in distress, that she has talked of nothing else ever since. We had heard so much of your eloquence, and were so desirous to hear you speak:— . . . Papa is nursing Gabrielle to-night, that she may be in full force to-morrow. She lost her father, poor dear, some few months back, and is in indifferent spirits at times: when she gets to London, no fear but she'll cheer up. I am predicting to her, when we laugh alone, that Quintin will fall in love with her. He is such a fellow for falling in

love with every lady with any pretensions to good looks; and Gabrielle is pretty. Papa says she will be much handsomer by and by. Edwin is more in Gabrielle's style than Quintin: Edwin is a sentimental and swainish chap; now Quintin is all life and fire; but yet I prophesy Mademoiselle will make a conquest. I hope it will be a mutual attachment. Their *styles* are quite opposite, certainly; but discords in character, where both parties are amiable and enamoured, make harmony in marriage, I have been told."

Mr Charles Herbert fancied Maria Cripps a singularly well-informed young woman for her years and opportunities. What thought the inmate of the next room?

"Her brother in love with me!" was the indignant idea of the mortified involuntary listener. "I do wish Miss Cripps would just say nothing about me to Mr Charles Herbert, or to any gentleman or person. To say I had talked of nothing else save his gallantry ever since! It is very odd of Maria."

The noises in the next apartment intimated the arrival of more ice-eaters, and, peering timidly out, to see if she could not make her escape into the crowd below unnoticed, Violette flew down stairs, and, gliding into the room, stole behind a whist-table in the door corner, where Mrs Somers Stocks was now established, her daughter Juliana leaning behind her chair. Violette stood a good while unobserved, save by the latter.]

"Dear mamma," said the daughter, coaxingly, during a deal, "this is Miss *Violet Hamilton*."

The girl fondly held Violet's hand.

"Indeed, my dear!" replied Mrs Stocks, with unusual benignity; for she could be kind and generous also, our Mrs Stocks: we have seen this lady hitherto on the wrong side. "I am very happy to make the acquaintance of Miss Violet Hamilton. But I must ask Mrs Cripps to introduce me properly. Can you not find a seat for your friend, Juliana?" continued the patronising lady, in a kinder tone, as the pale and lovely girl stood before her, only half conscious of where she was—her fragile but gracefully moulded figure slightly bent—her dewy eyes cast down.

"She is a Virginian," was the conclusion of the scrutinizing Mrs Stocks. "Quite the American style of beauty—a breath would dissolve her into air. An odd dress too; but she is a sweet-looking—a really fascinating girl."

"Mamma! Mr Herbert taught us such a pretty game just now: he said all the young ladies at the *soirées* should be flowers—Miss Susan Cripps is the *pink*, and Miss Polly the *dahlia*, and sweet Lucy White the *hawthorn blossom*. Miss Violette had not come down then. I wont call her the *violet*, though she be one, but the *lily*. Oh, yes! the pure, white lily she is! I shall go ask Mr Herbert if I have not chosen right for Miss Violette."

"How your tongue runs, my Juliana," replied the gratified, smiling mother, as the lively girl danced off indecorously, through the gay crowd.

"I am aware, Miss Violette," said Mrs Stocks, "that it is quite contrary to the usages of good

society to be acquainted with those to whom we are not properly introduced; but in peculiar circumstances one dispenses with strict etiquette. I am promising myself a most delightful treat—quite a musical banquet—at your *debut* to-morrow; the rare merits of your instructor I am well acquainted with, (my own discovery they were, I may say; for, between ourselves, we are not a musical community in W—,) and I am quite aware of the loss my daughter must sustain in the change of style, even should I obtain a superior new teacher; but I waive these considerations at this time, and shall certainly do myself the pleasure of witnessing your *debut*."

"You are very kind—very good, ma'am; but it is all a mistake!" said the girl in a low, earnest, and very sweet voice—her pale cheeks becoming suffused with a delicate rose-tint: "I will never come out as a public singer—NEVER! Mr Cripps has been most kind: but this—I have no taste, no heart, an utter repugnance. . . . My poor father would *never*—she could not proceed. . . . "If—if any lady would do me the very great kindness to receive me as her daughter's musical teacher, or as a needle-woman, or in any capacity." Violette could get no farther. The words stuck in her throat. The blood ebbed from her face, leaving it more pale than before; she trembled in every limb, and durst not look up to her judge, who was now, however, looking with eagerness at some one behind her.

"Ah! Mr Charles Herbert! it is you: we short-sighted people are so stupid."

"Have not I named her right?" cried the rather intrepid Juliana. "The gentle lily, bending on its stem."

Violette shrunk away like a ghost, nor stopped until she was again bolted in her closet-chamber, when a burst of tears relieved her choking bosom.

"I fear I have interrupted your conversation with Mademoiselle Gabrielle, ma'am," said Mr Herbert, after an awkward pause, and without replying to Juliana's appeal for his verdict; "and frightened her away, too. I am a sad blunderer."

"Ah, poor thing!—but our conversation can be renewed. You overheard her petition to be received into my family, as my daughter's governess."

"O mamma, delightful! Surely you will engage Violette at once?"

"I will do my duty, my giddy Juliana," returned the prudent, if still smiling mother, probably remembering that Juliana was near fifteen, and Mr Herbert not entitled to marry, by his own choice, for three years yet. "Mademoiselle's talents are brilliant, of the first order: no question of that; but the *morale*, Mr Herbert."

Mrs Somers Stocks gave her head a Burleigh shake, which, communicated to her blonde lap-pets, set every spray of her redundant fuschias a-waving in sympathy with her virtues.

Mr Herbert stood musing—"That sweet,

lovely, and certainly timid girl—so very young—looking too, so innocently modest.”

Herbert was neither of the age nor character which leads to harsh or uncharitable conclusions; and the poor girl seemed so unhappy in her present position, so disinclined to what seemed her destiny, that, had she been as plain as she was beautiful, she would have interested his feelings. Would she or would she not appear to-morrow? He half wished that she might keep her word, and revolved how he could be instrumental in procuring her the favour of Mrs Somers Stocks, as he led that lady to her cloak, clogs, and lantern, and now first recollected to assure Miss Juliana that she had hit on an admirable choice for Mademoiselle Gabrielle, who, with her slender drooping figure, and in her white dress, had all the lily's delicacy and purity.”

“Don't you, Mr Herbert, please sir, call Violette by Mr Cripps' nickname. Her own name is Violette Hamilton, and one day, when she was very sad, she said to me, ‘Don't you, Juliana, call me Mademoiselle Gabrielle; do give me the pleasure to hear at least one kind voice sometimes call me Violet as my father did.’ I assure you, mamma, I almost cried; and now both Susan Cripps and I always call her Violet when we are by ourselves.”

“O that chatter-box! Thanks, thanks, Mr Herbert. That gold hook and eye—never mind it—you are too good. Well, good luck to us to-morrow at the poll! I conclude you will be off for London as soon as the poll closes?—The Concert cannot commence before then.”

Mr Herbert gave no satisfactory answer, and Mrs Stocks set out, marshalled by the bank porter carrying the lantern. The rector was also gone, nearly all the dignified presences had withdrawn, and the younger part of the company became gayer than ever. There was now music in earnest. Violette slipped open her door and stole out upon the stairs as the thrilling and delicious tones of Cripps' violin raised her into a world of enchantment.

The poor *Prima Donna* was not missed in the revel. Miss Cripps, ably supported by her father, took the abdicated part, and sustained it with undaunted courage, and, save to the ear and judgment of her fastidious father, with splendid success.

Sir George now, at long and last, dropped in; and was received with rapturous welcome by the whole of the grateful and delighted family, and obtained the earnest whispered thanks of Mrs Cripps for the couple of dozens of champagne which he had taken the liberty to send to her. Choice wines, of all sorts, had been sent from London for his election dinner of the former day, together with fruit, oysters, venison, &c., and the remainders were placed at the command of Mrs Cripps for her party,—Sir George stating that he ventured the freedom, because he was so well aware that it was impossible for Mrs Cripps to get things as she would wish to have them in

W—. The landlord of the Royal Oak grumbled at the innovation, and resolved to remonstrate, on his lawful perquisites going away in this illegiti-

mate manner; but recollected himself, and put his grumbling in the bill.

An ample and luxurious supper, where, from the want of space, the gentlemen first gallantly waited on the ladies, speeded the laughing hours; and the night concluded with comic and convivial songs, glees, and catches, in which the old chorister of Windsor jollily and heartily bore his part. Violette fell asleep to the distant lullaby of “A Friar of Orders Gray.”

“He is a fellow of infinite fun and glee my little friend Cripps, is he not, Herbert?” said Sir George, as the friends took their way to their inn, at an hour which it would not have been safe to have mentioned to all the *Yellows*. “He has done me immense good, in his small way, in this canvass; and I like it all the better that it is for myself, and not like Stocks, and those yea-forsooth fellows, who support me for my Liberal principles, forsooth! We must do something for him when he comes to town.”

“Is not that a hazardous cast—and the good little man and his family so snug here?”

“Hazardous!—has he not that girl, his pupil, to produce? Some would propose to Italianize her for a couple of years. I say, *No*. English feeling can yet appreciate English talent and genius. That girl has both. Mademoiselle—what the deuce does he call her?—coming out as Polly, in the Beggar's Opera—sterling English—none of your *Mandane's*; and his own pert Miss, as Lucy. . . . Don't let that girl get too affectionate, by the way, Herbert. I noticed your *petits soins*, my friend. It wont do. Remember I am security to your mother for your good behaviour. . . . But, as I was saying—Polly and Lucy; little Cripps holds a flush—Tom Welsh never held such trumps. And the gipsy must give herself airs too; take headaches and caprices, as if she already had a salary of fifty guineas a-week!”

“How came you to hear her sing, Sir George, as it seems this is a favour she rarely bestows on an ordinary audience?”

“Oh! little Cripps had me stowed away in the next room. ‘The delicate organization of his pupil—her excessive timidity’—all humbug, you know. She warbles like a dear angel, though; and we must lend her a hand when she is fit to produce. Cripps is quite the fellow for managing the puffing, the press, and all that sort of thing.”

On the morning after the GRAND FAREWELL CONCERT, and the election of Sir George Lees, by a majority of five, Mrs Somers Stocks sent a polite note, requesting to see Miss Violette Hamilton immediately, on business of importance. Her note was returned. Mr Cripps, his daughter Maria, and Mademoiselle Gabrielle, had gone off to London by the early mail; Mr Charles Herbert and Cripps outside—the Member and the ladies within! Mrs Somers Stocks, at first stunned by the intelligence, in five minutes rang to order her clogs.

“If any particular friend calls, I am only over at the rectory, Sally.—There will be news of this hasty journey!” was an aside.

(To be continued.)