

VIOLET HAMILTON; OR, THE TALENTED FAMILY.

(Continued from our January No.)

CHAPTER XVII.

To this day, and probably for as long as the affair shall be discussed—whether in the reading-room, when the gas-lights “o’ long October nights look rousingly,” or on “the pavement” on sunny summer noons—the appearance, and still more the abrupt disappearance, of that wandering star, who, under the appellation of Frederick Adolphus Fitzwagram, had, like some brilliant, fitful meteor, irradiated the dramatic heaven of the ancient northern town which formed the scene of our last chapter—will remain a mystery and a puzzle.

His especial patrons persisted in affirming, that the variously and richly-gifted Fitzwagram, whose private sources of court, fashionable, and political intelligence, were so extraordinary, must have been an errant nobleman of no ordinary consideration; while, on the other hand, Jem Winkin, the head waiter of the Crown and Mitre, had his own reasons for suspecting that the “play-actor gentleman, with the cast of the eye, and wry nose, as *bolked* by the Liverpool heavy coach,” had carried off, without leave asked or obtained, Mr. Herbert’s cloak and travelling-cap; as well as forgotten to pay his landlady 9s. 4d., being three weeks’ rent, coal, and candle; besides 1s. 10d. for pork-chops, two pots of beer, and the washing of a pink striped *fancy* shirt: though the lodger had left goods to the estimated value of 3s. 6d.; being the shirt aforesaid, an embroidered pale-blue faded satin waistcoat—which, however, the manager afterwards claimed as one of the properties of Don Felix—a dagger without the hilt, a foil *ditto*, half a pair of gauntlets, and a well-worn hair-brush. Mr. Fitzwagram’s personal friend, the draper, probably for his own sake, hushed up the landlady’s clamours, by paying her off at the rate of 10s. in the pound; and as Mr. Herbert said nothing about the cloak and cap—a circumstance which confirmed the popular belief of Fitzwagram’s being some very great personage, however disguised—and had peremptorily stopped the inquiries of his servant, Jem Winkin, for the credit of the house, was also dumb.

Mr. Herbert might be supposed otherwise occupied; for, before that gentleman left his room next morning, a messenger, by express, brought him a letter, upon the receipt of which he instantly ordered his carriage, and a pair of additional horses.

In carrying up the tray of coffee, which Mr. Herbert ordered for his lady, to the bed-chamber, Hannah White had been intercepted by that gentleman; who, as Amy Dobson, a younger maid, five minutes afterwards, whispered Jem Winkin in the bar, “gave her a piece of money,” and whispered in her ear, “better say no more about it, my dear; the past cannot be recalled: here you are in a reputable station; why risk your own good name, or provoke inquiries into your past life, for the poor pleasure of exposing another?”

To all this Amy could solemnly depose. She had been standing, with her slop-pail, snugly en-

sooned behind the open door of No. 59, in which the gentleman had slept whom Boots had neglected to call for the Newcastle coach, and who had made such a row. And, indeed, save the “my dear,” a pleonasm into which Amy very naturally fell, the report was substantially correct; and fully accounted to Jem for the young bride drawing her white veil closely over her face, when, some minutes afterwards, he, as representative, or viceroy of the absent landlord, attended the travellers to their carriage, to express the thanks of the house for their patronage, and see that all was right; and also confirmed his previous suspicions of the domineering London head-chambermaid, to whose inauspicious appearance he mentally attributed the sudden retreat of the Herberts, and the loss of a “genteel party” to the establishment, together with servants’ and horses’ keep.

Jem’s future prognostics of Mrs. Hannah were all, and only evil to the hitherto unspotted fame of the Crown and Mitre;—till now, a famous House; for all the civil waiters had been honest and active; all the pretty chambermaids tidy and modest.

The emotion which the sagacious Jem—arguing most logically, though from wholly false premises—had imputed to jealousy, or to the young wife discovering the early gallantries of her lord, certainly did, like much more earthly evil, originate with a woman; though the sinner was not Hannah White, but Jane Jenkins, the waiting-maid of Mrs. Herbert.

The carriage was no sooner fairly out of the town than Violet laid her pale face upon the shoulder of her husband, and gave way to that passionate grief with which the sympathetic Jem Winkin had seen her struggling, while hurriedly preparing for the sudden journey.

“I entreat, nay, Violet, I could almost command you, not to distress yourself so much. At first I was myself alarmed; but I know Jenkins too well. Depend on it, she has used the privilege of a true lady’s maid, to exaggerate her mistress’s little attack of nerves, or vapours, into this deadly illness.”

“Fainting fits; long, deadly faints: and the cause, dear Charles? Let me read that letter once again. It is too dreadful! If Mrs. Herbert should be dead!—and—how slowly they drive.”

For the fourth time, Violet perused the hyperbolic epistle of Mrs. Jenkins; in which, after many vague expressions of intense alarm, and prophecies of a fatal catastrophe, that circumlocutory person, in substance, informed Mr. Herbert that, immediately after the receipt of letters from London, Mrs. Herbert had been seized with spasms and fainting fits; and, at once changing her plan of proceeding northward, had expressed the utmost anxiety to reach London, and to be joined there, as soon as possible, by Mr. and Mrs. Charles; and, farther, that she had afterwards become so much worse, that Jenkins had taken the liberty to write by express; and so forth.

The cause of this sudden attack was no longer a mystery to Charles, to whom his agitated wife had just revealed every secret of her heart, and, in the interchange of confidence, first found consolation and returning fortitude; nor for that matter to Jenkins, who was naturally a little anxious to know something of her lady's affairs, both from motives of curiosity, and, perhaps, also to learn how they might affect the personal interests of her lady's lady's-maid; who, with a very handsome salary, and many small emoluments of office, would ill have liked to resign without good cause. Bramah locks to writing-cases are useful impediments in ordinary circumstances; but if "Love laughs at locksmiths," chambermaids may surely outwit Chubb. Mrs. Jenkins was fully aware that the affairs of the Calcutta House were in a very bad way; and, consequently, her place in her "present family" in imminent jeopardy. Her affairs, as well as those of her mistress, therefore, demanded an instant appearance in London; and Jenkins, considerably proposed going forward by the mail "unprotected," to have everything in order for her lady in Regent's Park. Her lady was, if not in a condition to be left without a friend, at least most happy to dispense with a waiting-maid, whose suddenly changed conduct gave her a mortifying foretaste of reduced fortune.

Mrs. Herbert was therefore left alone, at an inn on the road, to commune with her own heart, and wait the arrival of her children: not dying—not indeed in any serious danger—but far from being so well as Charles argued, while soothing his wife's impatience, and quieting her apprehensions.

"At worst, it is but the loss to my mother of the greater part of her fortune," said he; "nor can I believe that she, who never was worldly in the mammonish sense of worldliness, can now have permitted herself to be overcome by mere pecuniary adversity."

"'Tis for your sake, dear Charles, for us, she suffers—and that deepens my concern, is indeed its spring. But now that the worst is known, the worst is past. Were we but once again together, Mrs. Herbert will soon surmount this misfortune, and we shall yet be so happy."

"In any event, my mother will have her widow's pension—that poor three hundred a-year, which, in the pride of riches, my poor father considered so paltry for his beautiful and high-bred young wife, that he advised she should, after his death, make it over to certain venerable spinsters of her early acquaintance, at whose school she had been educated. This she has avoided, lest the formal gift might have appeared ostentatious; though I believe she has never yet applied any part, of what may now be her sole provision, to other than benevolent purposes."

"How good and amiable she is! We shall still be rich enough, then," said Violet, trying to smile, and making no more distinction in her words than in her thoughts between the property of her husband and her mother-in-law than if it had all been her own. And Herbert also smiled, kindly but gravely, at her simple manner of thinking on subjects where clearness of ideas generally comes only too soon to the simplest.

"Thank Heaven!" he said at last, "my mother, if no longer wealthy, will not be utterly destitute: though the difference between three hundred and nearly three thousand a-year!—alas! . . . And, for ourselves, dearest:—It is a man's duty to provide for his wife, ay, and a man's pride and happiness, too: and who ever had motives so tender, so strong as are mine;" and he drew her to his heart, whispering, "you know our plans?"

"You make me too proud—too happy, dear Charles—and a wife's duty? But my own heart shall teach me that. Oh, that we were but all three together again!—settled, employed, very very busy, and so happy! Mrs. Herbert must feel privation the most, but she shall not, more than enough. I am sure I can supply Jenkin's place to her: she is always best pleased with how I do her hair. And if we could only live in the country: I can be so useful in the country—you smile, but it is true: you have no notion how much 'useful knowledge,' how many independent and useful habits my father's condition, and my happy education, forced upon me, both in my convent and in our dear little Jersey farm."

"And how many charming ones, I am sure; and both to bless and gladden our home wherever it may be, humble or great.—My poor mother!—she must, no doubt, as well as we, change her residence, and greatly reduce her establishment; yet we must, I fear, my own notable housewife, however well you may understand baking loaves, and the management of the dairy, remain in or near London:—where else am I to look for useful friends, or for professional employment, were I even fit for it?"

"Then so will Mrs. Herbert. I am not angry, though you are saucy, Charles, and laugh at me. I know—I can answer for her affectionate heart:—what could make up to her for the loss of you and me?"

"Thank you for your good opinion of her and of us," replied Herbert, affectionately; and he continued, more earnestly and gravely, "We must not, dearest, encroach on my poor mother. With all your useful and all your charming knowledge, you have, I fear, no idea of the many requirements of a fine lady. Even with Mrs. Herbert's restricted means, ladies of good fashion, in such places as Bath—nay, in Paris or London—contrive, in *pensions*, to enjoy many of the comforts and luxuries which habit has made necessary to them. My mother is the richest of our party; we must not be selfish."

"Selfish, Charles!" returned Violet. "In wishing Mrs. Herbert to share our happy, if humble home—to have a common home, a common fate—to be her loving children, her zealous servants, her cheering companions;—to lavish all our tenderness, all our cares upon her—go, sir," and she playfully, though in earnest, pushed him away, "you may know Greek and mathematics very well, but you have yet to learn a true woman's heart. To compare 'a genteel boarding-house,' 'a comfortable dowager pension,' with its old footman; and jobbed "roomy carriage," and whist-table every evening, with our bright and genial home!"

Would you place, in any comparison, a loveless, joyless existence, embellished by a few of the faded trappings of vanity and the indulgences of sense, with a life like what ours will be? O, Charles!"

"You may be right; I am certain you ought to be so."

"Nay, am; as the heart of woman answereth to that of woman, can I truly answer for her. 'A genteel boarding-house!' I could scold you for so meanly appreciating Mrs. Herbert."

Violet could not help thinking that the world had already tainted the mind of her husband with distrust, if not with cold pride, else what should he think it could signify which of the three was the richest, save to render the fortunate individual the most zealous to minister to the other two.

In the meanwhile, at a considerable town, where they halted next morning to obtain refreshments and change horses, Herbert, with Violet on his arm, repaired to a banking establishment opposite the inn, where he thought it probable he might obtain information, interesting to all commercial men, of the great failures in Calcutta; and of the particular *FIRM*, the *HOUSE*, in which his stepmother was interested; for by these stanch appellations erections of pasteboard and rags are as freely denominated as the most solid and enduring structures of Lombard Street.

Severely tried as the *House*, according to the first accounts, had been, its clients were not prepared for the worst; for the new intelligence represented it as bankrupt, past retrieval. The handsome balances, originally announced, had now dwindled into almost nothing. The richest imagined proprietor of the banking-house had, it was found, for several years, ceased to be a partner; and, while it continued to flourish upon faith in his credit, he no longer incurred liabilities. The credit and assets of the *House* were gone off in company, but its *honour* remained untouched;—so Mr. Herbert was assured by the spruce and very civil little gentleman, whom he saw at the banking-office. It had been unfortunate in large indigo speculations; more unfortunate in silk speculations; and its good luck in a magnificent opium venture to China,—a half desperate throw, a touch-and-go business,—had not, by nine days, been in time to avert the crash, and save the credit of the establishment.

"Yes, sir, if the *House* had been able to keep afloat for but another week, the trade-wind would have borne it triumphantly off the breakers," said the metaphorical banker, "and it would have netted £30,000 by the spec., at the lowest figure. . . . I am afraid you are touched, sir?"

"My personal share of the common calamity is trifling," replied Herbert. "My present anxiety is caused by the distress of a very near relative, and of many estimable friends, either ruined or irreparably injured by this unprincipled gambling with their money."

"Fair speculation, sir, pardon me. If the *Firm* had not long speculated boldly and fortunately too, it never could have stood that high rate of interest, which obtained the confidence of so many ladies and gentlemen. Think, sir, what it paid—higher, sir, than American securities!"

Herbert shrugged his shoulders. In his conscience he allowed that high interest must be accompanied by corresponding risks, and that the outwitted parties might sometimes have been the dupes of their own blind avarice.

"It is an unsound and bad system, I fear," said he; "covetousness, deception, and fallacy on all sides; nor is it always easy to say which party is the more culpable."

"My dear sir, your ideas are quite of the old school;—would cripple the very wings of commerce;—pinion down the buoyant energies of credit."

"Had the gentlemen in Calcutta made a great deal of money by the indigo and silk they bought with other people's money, would they have divided their profits among those whose cash they risked?" inquired Violet, with simplicity; which made Herbert smile on her, though very kindly, and the man of commerce laugh outright.

"Oh Lord, ma'am!—But very few ladies—no offence to the charming sex—can be made to understand the principles of business."

The abashed Mrs. Charles blushed as if she had said something as silly as the remark of the polite Mr. Bigsby seemed to intimate, though perhaps no idea could be more natural than her's.

"It is a pity that the fundamental principles of trade should ever be incomprehensible to plain-minded honest men—or even to ladies!" said Herbert.

"This house, ma'am," said the banker, in civil explanation, "gave the Nabobs six and hef;—a monstrous rate of interest—worthy of some risk that—wa'nt it, sir? We—Stocks' House, of which I am a branch—I am leaving, however—are at present doing loans at four;—on first land securities, so low as three and hef."

Charles Herbert thought of the mortgages, and other expenses, of his small, heavily-encumbered, and now but nominal estate. The reflection suggested prudence; and he had besides already consulted with Violet on the propriety of getting rid of the showy equipage and horses which Mrs. Herbert had presented to him on his marriage; which, he reflected, might perhaps be done to as much advantage in this town as at Tattersall's. He made the necessary inquiries of the banker; mentioning that they meant to travel by the mail the rest of the way; and to his surprise found his polite friend, after a survey of the goods, disposed to become the purchaser himself of "the stylish London turnout—quite as good as new." The bargain, where both parties were frank and liberal, was easily concluded. The banker promptly gave a check upon the "New Surrey and Middlesex Joint-Stock Bank."

"A banking establishment new to me," said Herbert—"but indeed I do not know the half of them in London."

"Capital, well-known house, sir—does the business of nearly all the eastern counties, particularly in the grazing line—premises, West Smithfield. But you ought to know the house—they are our bankers, Mr. Herbert; you must have been consulted in their appointment."

"Our bankers?" inquired the amazed Herbert.
"Bankers to our Company, I mean, sir."

Herbert was more and more perplexed. He laughed, saying, "I don't think I have ever yet had the honour of being consulted by any one in the choice of a banker."

"Your name, sir, is in the list of Ordinary Directors," replied the banker, taking up a newspaper from his desk. "Oh, sir, I have found you out. You have been *touring*, I understand, with your charming lady, and a truant from the shop. Our Ad. may be seen every week in every newspaper north of the Trent. The thing, though I say it, has been pushed handsomely in this county and the two next, as the head-office will admit. Expect soon to extinguish the *Sun*, reduce the *Phoenix* to ashes, and overturn the *Globe*, from York to Grantham—ha! ha! ha! Self-praise, to be sure, Mr. Herbert, is no honour; yet I flatter myself that you, and the whole Direction, sir, may yet find that you might have made a worse choice than your humble servant. Old Stocks would have found me worth an additional £500, I suspect."

Herbert, fearing that the speaker was touched in the brain, became somewhat selfishly apprehensive about the check upon the Joint-Stock Surrey and Middlesex Bank—which he would have much preferred on Coutts, Herries, Hankey, or twenty others of very inferior note on 'Change, to these magnates.

"I do not exactly comprehend," said he doubtfully.

"Ha! ha! Not how your humble servant sees through a millstone? . . . My dear sir, I see your card. I have a hint from headquarters, or have found out, that a member of our provisional committee was lately married; I see your handsome lady; I put this and that together. Ha! ha! Let me alone. Two and two make four; don't it? I am an old hand at figures."

"Very figurative indeed, sir."

"Ay, ay, and at *action*, as well as figures. The Direction, sir, never made a finer stroke than in my appointment; and you will yet say so. Why, this very day I have had half-a-dozen applications, both from respectable parties wishing to transfer from established offices to ours, and from new insurers. Dr. Jessop, Vicar of Whomlesford, £5000 endowment for a niece: suspected to be a daughter—But no matter. The Doctor is a Churchman, and never was married; so the young lady must be a niece. He looks to the *bonus*: does not clutch at our lowest rate—which, by the way, the Company doing things in so handsome and liberal a manner, as to salaries, advertisements, &c., must cut sadly on our profits. But, as the secretary remarks, if we should divide but 3 per cent. what signifies that, if we do three times the business of the high offices of the old school? We shall cut 'em all out beyond a doubt. There is old Mrs. Higginbotham, long the housekeeper, and scandal says, the *chère amie*, of Squire Simpson—the most prudent and cautious of old ladies; she last week bought an annuity from us. I believe she has lied about her age; I don't think her above sixty-eight, and she claims as seventy-three. Well, that I am in-

structed from the head-office don't signify; we do her as seventy-three for the sake of example. She has lately taken a turn to Methodism, and goes about everywhere among the evangelical ladies trumpeting up the Old Established Church of England Philanthropic Office for insurance against Fire, assurance on Lives and Survivorships, Family Endowments, and Deferred Annuities: all done on terms forty per cent. more favourable to the insurer than in any other office in her majesty's dominions. Archbishop of Canterbury, patron; Bishop of London, ditto, sub. . . . So useful an old lady deserves her policy free of expense, as I have hinted to our counsel, Mr. Barker, to hint to Mr. Twigg."

"Mr. Barker, did you say, sir? Mr. Burke Barker?"

"Ah! have I blabbed? But we are all friends. The truth is, sir, that though only our revising barrister, as I call him in a joke, and not an ostensible partner or functionary, Mr. Barker, is the soul of the concern. Ay, there is a man! Mr. Twigg, I understand, though he signs the policies, is a mere capitalist—a man of columns of figures; but for nice calculation, for finance, sir, Barker! Though holding aloof himself, he was the soul of the Provisional Committee; and, as I suspect, still is, though he does not appear:—and will continue to be—no reflections—*present* company always excepted, you know—the main-spring, the right-hand of the Philanthropic."

Herbert was stunned. "I shall be obliged to you," he said, "for a sight of one of the Company's advertisements or schemes. I have been rambling and rusticated for some months, and am quite a stranger to London affairs."

The truth was, that Herbert, like most persons uninterested, rarely looked at such advertisements as those with which the banker readily supplied him from a heap of newspapers lying beside him, and also with copies of the Scheme and Tables of the "Old Established Church of England Philanthropic Office," neatly printed in black, blue, red, green, and golden characters. Something like compunction visited Herbert for not warning this credulous and conceited person of his danger.

"Do you seriously intend to give up your agency for the respectable House of Stocks, and turn your premises—you say they are your own property—into an office for this new company?" he gravely inquired.

"A question not to be asked, Mr. Herbert. Why, I have already been for some months doing a little, on the sly, for the concern. I am a considerable shareholder myself; but, first term, as soon as our new front is finished—beautiful elevation!—I wish you would do me the favour to step into the bank parlour and look at it. I have *carte blanche* for the expenses of alteration;—so down I go with "Branch of Stocks & Co.," and hoist the colours of the *Philanthropic*. Hurrah!"

Herbert knew not what to say—what to think.

"All the other offices in town are as jealous as the devil of our concern, and no wonder. Malicious whispers at first went about—commercial jealousy; but I at once threatened prosecution, and had even commenced an action. Mr. Barker, our

counsel, advised dropping the affair. He is a prime fellow—a real trump.”

“He was wise,” said Herbert, coldly. “Meanwhile, if you could make it convenient to give me gold for at least a hundred pounds of the check on London, it would oblige me, as I shall require a good deal of ready money on the road.”

Herbert, the married man, was becoming wonderfully prudent.

“Most assuredly,” cried the manager of the “Philanthropic for the Northern Provinces.” “Anything to accommodate you, sir. Perhaps the whole price of the carriage and horses might be convenient?”

“As you please,” said Herbert; and the sum was promptly counted out in sovereigns and Bank of England notes. “Odd gold this is, which farmer Curtis paid in with bills and notes, in transferring from the three per cents. to the Philanthropic:—endowment for grandchildren—children of his deceased son. . . . I regret beyond expression that your short stay must prevent Mrs. B. and self enjoying the honour and pleasure of entertaining your charming lady and you beneath our humble roof. No getting up a dinner one could ask a gentleman to in this antediluvian beef-and-mutton concern of a town, as Mrs. B. calls it, without several days notice; nothing to be had for love or money presentable. Next year, if I have the honour to entertain you, or any of the gentlemen in the Direction, I hope to have both a little more elbow-room and better appointments. Along with the new front for the office, we contemplate a new dining-room, a saloon, and drawing-room. . . . I do wish that you could have leisure to look at the elevations. The mail won't be up for a full half-hour yet, and I should be so proud to submit the plans to any gentleman who could report on them. Some of the best ideas the architect, by the way, stole from Mrs. B. The present dining-room is only fifteen by nineteen—a cage, sir—we condemn it for a nursery.”

“I am extremely sorry,” said Herbert, again moving to go, his money safe in his pocket. “But I beg seriously to assure you, sir, that I am no Director of this or any other Company upon the face of the earth; and, though a stranger, I must take the liberty of warning you to be very wary how you engage with any new, flash London Company, and break off a safe, profitable, and reputable connexion with so respectable an establishment as that of Stocks.”

“New Flash Company, sir!” cried the northern manager, greatly excited, retiring a step and rising on tiptoe. “You are not then the Charles Courtney Herbert, Esquire, in the list of Directors? This company was first established and chartered, sir, in the reign of Queen Anne, sir—Anno Domini, 1705—capital, *One Million*. . . . It was intended to revive it by the name of the *Victoria Clerical Family Endowment Friendly Association*; but Mr. Barker approved the old name, recognised in 3 Geo. II., chapter 99th; 15 Geo. III., chapter 45th; and many subsequent acts of parliament; and 500,000 prospectuses were consequently cancelled. Surely you *are* the Mr. Herbert in the Direction?”

“If I be, I shall not be so much longer. Good morning, sir.”

Herbert had no leisure to read the advertisement, or study the flattering scheme of the Clerical and Philanthropic until seated in the mail-coach, to which his new acquaintance attended him. He had not left the town a half hour when the loungers in the windows of the reading-room, which was conveniently opposite the inn, (a great desideratum in country towns,) by some means or other, learned that the gentleman who had set off was a principal shareholder and Director of the office lately opened in the town, and had brought down a handsome new carriage and horses, as a present from the head office, to their zealous, able, and active agent Mr. Bisby. Several new applications were made at the office next day, both for annuities and assurances.

Herbert and Violet had the good fortune to be the only persons in the inside of the mail-coach; and when, in compliance with his entreaty, and wrapped in his arm, she tried to compose herself to sleep, after two nearly sleepless nights, he laid the prospectus quietly on his knee and began to study it with some curiosity and interest. Though the Archbishop of Canterbury flourished as patron, and a noble lord, then Governor-general of India, and therefore not likely to disturb the Company's appointments for some time as to its governor, Herbert could nowhere see the name of Barker, nor of any one Crippes, save, “Consulting Physicians, Sir Henry Halford and Dr. Edmund Crips Quintin.” His own name, or, at least, that of some Charles Herbert, Esquire, was blazoned at full length along with that of Sir George Lees, Baronet, M.P., and a long list of names dear and familiar to the ears of commercial England; arranged in such wise that not one bearing the name could question of the right of the company to make use of such well-sounding, though equivocal, appellations as Cosmo Labouchere, Esquire; Peregrine Bosanquet, Esquire; John Jonathan Hope, of Amsterdam, Esquire; Humphrey Ramsden, Esquire; Donald Trotter Coutts, Esquire; Colonel Charles Fox Windham; Alfred John Whitbread, Esquire; John Pitt Smith, Esquire; Theophilus Bouverie, Esquire; Payne Smith Spooner, Esquire; &c., &c., on to a whole host of monied Esquires, with a very attractive sprinkling of true knights, baronets, barons, and earls. There was but one marquis, but he was worth twenty;—the Marquis of Westminster had the honour. Among these names there were a good many familiar to Herbert; and the affair seemed so utterly inconceivable as a fraud that he began to imagine that it might possibly be a serious project, and probably a hopeful one. Barker was a very acute man. Herbert knew little of business himself, save through those surprising turns of fortune familiar to every one conversant with English manufacturing and commercial society, which, by the turn of the dice, exhibits a man one day in all the pride of wealth and luxury, and, in the next, rotting in a jail. No Crippes was to be seen in any department of the concern, save that little bit of patronage bestowed on Dr. Edmund, as Herbert supposed, in an office nearly honorary; which favour might be expected from a brother-in-law. This looked well; but Michael Twigg, Esquire, the capitalist—yet there might be many Twiggs.

At every stage in which Mrs. Herbert had preceded the travellers, they found little pencil notes left for them, which relieved Violet's immediate anxiety. Save that the money and the credit with Herries, which Herbert had brought from London some months before, were sensibly diminishing; that incipient symptoms of what he laughingly termed the "good old gentlemanly vice," were manifested in lessened largesses to post-boys and waiters; and that thoughts of the future, not dark, yet tinged with gloom, would occasionally intrude, he was wonderfully restored in spirits, while bowling along in what the English sage, who had tried different modes of enjoyment, has pronounced the most exhilarating human condition; and with an element of happiness which Johnson did not take into account—the lovely and beloved partner of his life and heart by his side, silent, or smiling, with feelings, in all moods, sympathetically attuned to his.

When at Grantham, the travellers overtook Mrs. Herbert, looking paler and thinner, indeed, than when they had parted, yet so much better than the hyperbolical waiting-woman had given them reason to expect; and when Charles saw the younger lady spring into the arms of the elder, and clasped his wife and mother in the same embrace, a happier three could not perhaps have been found in England. Next day, when Charles, seated between the ladies, heard them exchanging those points in the history of their several adventures since separation, which letters, even ladies' letters, could but imperfectly record, he began to understand how much of their domestic comfort might depend on their living together, and on this lively interchange of grave or mirthful important nothings. How they did laugh and chatter; and how much even Violet found to say which she had never thought of saying to him. And during the three days they were on the road, the same perennial flow of talk continued, though it became more varied and serious in character; for now Violet, by her picturesque narratives, contrived to interest his mother in details about the cottages and cottage gardens, maidens, children, and matrons, which they had seen, and to which he feared Mrs. Herbert might have been very indifferent from other lips. He, therefore, began to believe that Violet had, while judging only by her own feelings, reasoned more correctly than himself; and that Mrs. Herbert might not only contrive to do without Jenkins, and the many pretty new caps, and scarfs, in which she had formerly indulged, but, without, the society of those semi-fashionable spinsters and dowagers, who found her home pleasant at lunch-time, and her carriage always convenient; or those who had exchanged formal dinners, and dull evening parties with her. On the last day, and almost the last stage, Herbert, who had delayed the explanation which he considered necessary, affectionately requested to know his mother's future plans.

"My plans, Charles!" returned the lady, in some surprise; "like your wife's, my plans must depend on yours. You do not surely mean to discard me, now that I am poor as well as lonely."

"My own dearest mother," cried Charles, match-

ing her hand, fondly, "then we understand each other."

"Did I not know it, Charles?" cried Violet, with bright looks.

"Ultimately my plans must depend on yours, my son: for the present exigency, I mean to put myself entirely into the hands of Mrs. Charles and old Marion, who have so much more knowledge of what is proper for us. I make no condition, save that we remain one family. In heart and interest, we never can be disunited; but I will not have even a garden wall divide us."

"Nor shall it," said Herbert.

"A threefold cord is not easily broken," said Violet, pressing to her side the fair and delicate hand which she had clasped.

"Are we not, Charles, quite as we used to be?" asked Mrs. Herbert, in a quivering voice.

"A great many thousand pounds poorer—the *House* is," replied Herbert, laughing, "than it used to be. I, however, congratulate you upon your philosophy, mother, by which I reckon to benefit."

He did not now say that he feared the philosophy had not yet been fairly tested.

"When I reflect upon the misery which this affair has brought upon so many of my Indian friends and acquaintances, some of them ladies in old age, whose incomes were before too narrow for their comfortable maintenance in that style of life which habit has made necessary; and on those with young families, where delay of education is next to ruin, I am ashamed of my selfish regrets; and now that I have got you both back, not, as I foolishly feared, overwhelmed and in despair, but with smiling faces, as well as warm hearts, to soothe or gladden me, what is there that a rational being dare murmur about? I should despise myself as poor in spirit, as well as most thankless to the Almighty for numberless mercies and blessings, if I durst repine."

Herbert was delighted with this firm and cheerful spirit. He no longer hesitated to leave every necessary domestic change and arrangement to the judgment of his female allies, and to turn his thoughts wholly and steadily to his own department.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HERBERT had resolved to begin to study law, as a profession. This demanded a long consultation with Mr. Gryphon, his solicitor, whom he rightly regarded not only as an able lawyer, but also as a clear-headed, sound-hearted friend,—as the term is understood in the best merely worldly sense,—that is, a man capable of giving excellent counsel, and even of performing useful services, which involved no pecuniary risk nor responsibility. Herbert would not willingly have accepted of more than this from his friendly solicitor, who, from very natural prejudice, perhaps fortified by shrewd observation, entertained serious doubts of any young man of fashion, after the age of twenty-three, being capable of the persevering drudgery—as such a man must consider it—and long course of steady application necessary to make a thorough-bred lawyer. He

did not conceal his opinion when Herbert anxiously asked his advice. Indeed, many months elapsed before Gryphon reluctantly confessed that he might for once have been deceived, and that Herbert might prove an exception to the rule. In the meanwhile, he gave an account of the double lawsuits in which Herbert was engaged. That with the Earl of Tarbert, for the recovery of Mrs. Charles Herbert's fortune, was represented as in a fair train; but Gryphon did not conceal that, although gained, of which there was every prospect, the fortunate winners might be little the richer. The earl, like many noblemen whose estates are too large for management, was in very embarrassed circumstances; and his death—at his age not improbable, though not at present likely—might renew the suit, if his heirs were troublesome. It was understood that, after the first intelligence from India, which made the earl feel some alarm for the impoverished condition in which his daughter Lady Laura might be left, if her expectations through Mrs. Herbert failed, he had insured his life for a very considerable amount.

"When the earl gives up the ghost, we may attach that," said Gryphon.

"The provision made for Lady Laura Temple seized for my wife! O, no; that may never be."

"Will, though," thought Gryphon, who fancied he knew how a very high strain of generosity in pecuniary matters usually ended.

"Of the other provoking case I have better news. Old Cripps is quite willing to compromise it, if you will engage to use your influence with Mr. Stocks, to check the rigorous pursuit of his son Jack. Stocks begins to be sensible that he will do his daughter no good, by blazoning the absurd affair farther; and his passion has considerably cooled down. Besides, the most guilty party, in the opinion of every man of common sense conversant with the case, namely the dashing Mrs. Burke Barker, has got off with flying colours—complimented by the judge! She carries her head higher than ever. Mrs. Barker and her husband are of the mysteries of iniquity of this good town."

"Though I am quite of your opinion as to Jack Crippes' comparative guiltlessness, scamp as he is, I shall never consent to any such compromise, though a word to Stocks should insure me from further molestation. Let them and their pettifogging agents drop the shameless suit they never should have raised, and then speak to me about interceding for Jack."

"I think it very likely that it will be dropt. Barker sets his face against it; he does not relish any farther *éclat* connected with his wife's relations; and I believe his voice is potential in that quarter."

"What is Barker about?" inquired Herbert with some curiosity, remembering his provincial friend, the banker.

"Heaven knows; for a time he was overcast; but he has lately flared up more dazzlingly than ever. He has dropt the newspaper concern, I believe, save as an amateur to serve his purposes; but is still a mighty politician; meddling, directly indirectly, in almost every contested election."

"For the Radicals? He was a Liberal."

"Pooh! Radicals!—where could they, poor devils, enable a man to keep a carriage, and a good house for his wife on Cornwall Terrace, chambers for himself, and all sorts of equipage befitting? Barker chooses again to be known as a barrister—at least nominally—and wishes, as I understand from the old fellow, to devolve his editorships upon his raffish brother-in-law: yet he has got no appointment, no visible means of life, . . . An adventurer like Barker must be fully the master of his masters before he can compel them to do anything permanent for him."

Without at this time mentioning what he had learned or suspected of some of the present pursuits of Mr. Barker, Herbert told of his encounter with Jack, who, he imagined, might now be on the high seas on his way to America. But he reckoned without his host. The desire of returning to London, always strong, had seized Jack, as soon as he had a few sovereigns in his pocket, like the *maladie du pays*, or home-sickness of the mountaineer of Switzerland; and as the money he had gotten from Herbert, together with the sale of Herbert's valuable cloak, were sufficient to bring Mr. Quintin Crippes on the top of the coach round by Liverpool to the metropolis, he pushed forward; in spite of the terrors of the police and its argus-eyed myrmidons, and of his deep distrust of the Barkers, which was almost as great as of the law.

It was a desperate venture; but Jack had, in fact, safely reached London two days before Herbert, though lurking, half afraid to make his arrival known even to his father and mother. He had not been twenty-four hours in London, and fairly seen the end of his last sovereign melted in a jolly supper, than the folly of the step he had taken stared him in the face. In the ups and downs of the family fortunes, he did not even know in what part of the town his parents lodged; and his last resource was, either boldly to face the Barkers, and by threats of exposure, at all hazards, to wring from them what might carry him out of the country; or to throw himself once more upon the mercy of old Marion. Stimulated partly by the love of adventure, and somewhat by a double dose of brandy and water, Jack finally resolved upon the latter measure; and as, at dusk, Herbert was hastening along Fleet Street, after his long consultation with his friendly solicitor, there came shooting past him from a lane, a few yards from Mrs. Marion's door, the very man whom he concluded to be ten hundred miles off by land or water. He at once remembered what Gryphon had said; and, from this and other impulses, clutched at the elbow of the figure, who for once gave a start that would have done honour to any stage.

"Good Lord! Mr. Herbert! speak of the devil—you know the proverb. I was just thinking to myself if I could fall in with that generous fellow Herbert, he would give me a lift in my need."

"Can it be you Crippes?—are you perfectly mad?—What has brought you to London?"

"Mad I would soon have been if I had remained out of town much longer; but not, even in madness, ungrateful to you, Mr. Herbert. By Jupiter

Ammon! you are a noble fellow! I shall never forget your kindness to me in that demned place.—What was the name of it? You make me say in the teeth of Brutus,

‘Virtue, thou art not an empty name.’”

While Cryppes was thus speaking, he was keeping, at the same time, a sharp look-out up and down the street; and had an alley or two under his lee-bow.

“But, in short,” he continued, “I abhor the provinces; that confounded noise of nothing always humming in one’s ears, as somebody says:—I was a desperate man! Like the great Montrose, I resolved ‘to put my fortune to the touch, to gain, or lose it all!’ If, like so many thoughtless, innocent young men, I am to be the victim of vindictive law for a frolic, I shall, at least, have the satisfaction of having those blasted Barkers share along with me. Nor to me, can any part of her majesty’s Australian colonies prove more inhospitable than the northern portion of her majesty’s patrimonial dominions.—I am a desperate man, Mr. Herbert. Besides,” he continued, in a confidential tone, “there is a delicious little devil of a tailor’s wife, right under the old Scotch lady, up there. O hem! Don’t, however, look ‘so severe in youthful virtue.’ I quite forgot you were married!—but never, upon my soul, my obligations to you.”

“Cryppes, if you have any remaining sense left, try to make your way to your family, and lie by, or, depend on it, you will fall in with those who do not understand jokes. That tailor’s wife would as readily make forty sovereigns by your arrest as would Hannah White.”

“Pardon me,” replied Jack, in a tone of pique, —“can’t understand that. Just before leaving London, I had made an impression in that quarter.”

“Cryppes, you have been drinking deep. If you have any regard to your own safety—”

“Drinking deep!” interrupted Jack, “I should have been devilish glad to drink a little deeper, had that been convenient, in order to expel the blue devils by a much more agreeable description of spirits—the *ambers*,—brandy and water. . . . Ha! a beak!—I must bolt. I smell ‘em out a street’s length off.” Jack now looked extremely flurried and uneasy. His lately vaunted courage or desperation had oozed out.

“Call at Mr. Gryphon’s. You know his chambers. To-morrow, by twelve, you shall hear of me there.”

“A thousand thanks!—I shall never forget your kindness.—But for to-night—?”

Herbert took the hint, and slipped a couple of half-crowns into the hand neatly but modestly extended; and Jack shuffled off at an alert pace.

When the family of Mrs. Herbert had that evening, over their coffee, resolved itself into a committee of ways and means, that lady hinted one point, in which lingering and not unamiable vanity prevailed over her better judgment. She could not willingly change her present residence, for the modest retirement which loss of fortune dictated, until the young couple had received and returned those congratulatory marriage-

visits, so long delayed by their tour. She wished that her friends should see how entirely the extreme loveliness and sweetness of manners of the Earl of Tarbert’s niece, besides her famed musical accomplishments, justified her partiality, and the choice of her son; and she secretly shrunk from the humiliation of the name of Mrs. Charles Herbert first appearing in connexion with some one of those snug, brick and plaster, small houses, with a green door, and a staring brass name-plate, in one of the many *Paragon Places* or *Paradise Rows*, of which the West-end ladies, when they know them at all, entertain either aversion and horror, or profound contempt; identifying them with everything pitiful, vulgar, and “out of society”—beyond the pale. Herbert was disappointed by this betrayal of latent weakness, which, amiable as the motive might be deemed by those who look only to the surface, was in his eyes, at this time, both paltry and silly. Was his mother still unprepared for that change, which was already welcome to him, since in it lay all his present comfort, and with it was interwoven every rational and every ambitious hope for the future.

Had there been no Violet at this crisis, to stand, like a mediating angel, between the son’s haughty pride and the mother’s milder vanity, and by innocent wiles and gentle persuasion, to have drawn and held them together; coldness, estrangement, and want of courageous frankness—the bane of domestic happiness—might have followed misunderstanding, to the lasting injury and discomfort of both. It was, at the same time, somewhat surprising to Violet, young and inexperienced as she was, how little either the mother or son seemed to know about those constant petty annoyances and vulgar realities of the work-day world, which daily tax the patience and forbearance of ordinary mortals, but from which the wealthy of England are shielded with a sevenfold golden panoply; by a cordon of porters, valets, and accomplished upper servants, whose business it is to divine the wishes of their masters, and suffer no one to prey upon or torment them, save confidential domestics. Mrs. Herbert, for example, had been exempted from all the petty plagues of life, save those which came to her through the medium of that too clever Jenkins, without whom she had, until lately, fancied it impossible to exist.

The pride of Herbert, at this time, took a direction exactly opposite to that of his mother, and was carried as far to the extreme. It revolted at remaining in holiday costume, and in the holiday house, only until he and his wife had received the unmeaning congratulations and ceremonious visits of a set of impertinent, indifferent, or prying persons; and had accepted and given a round of parties, for which he could neither afford patience nor money.

“You cannot, Charles, mean to break off all intercourse with society, at the very moment that you have the power of contributing so much to what gives society its highest charm?—now when your marriage marks an era in life; when to form agreeable acquaintances and solid friendships becomes so desirable.”

"Far from it—But there can be no lasting friendships, save among equals—at least in London. Most of my former *friends*, as it is customary to call our acquaintances, were, even before this, my superiors in fortune—many of them my inferiors in —But no matter; I shall not care much for the loss of those *friends*." Herbert was beginning to employ bitter tones. The cold or changed manner of one or two of his Club acquaintances had that same day taught him that he was now a poor man—or no longer one of them. "Those sunshine *friends*, who cannot find us out in the brick-house with the two or three small sashes, muslin curtains, and mignonette boxes, ay, though set down from the 'Bus at our green door, I shall not care for."

Mrs. Herbert reddened, and looked vexed at his manner.

"Oh, Charles!" said Violet, reproachfully, secretly fearing that his pride laid his serenity of mind but too much at the mercy of such friends. "Don't believe him, ma'am. He is much prouder than we poor women are, that saucy gentleman—and much more jealous of disrespect—Disrespect!—as if any one save ourselves had the power of making us experience that humbling feeling!—Do tell him what we have seen this morning, ma'am—good Marion's discovery, Charles.—Our Scotch *Brownie* has been so actively on the out-look for us, since Mrs. Herbert wrote her from Grantham. . . . I am sure Charles will be as much charmed with our good fortune as we were ourselves."

"It is a house and quarter any one might be pleased with," said Mrs. Herbert; still unwilling to renounce the hope that their fashionable acquaintance should receive their first impressions of Charles in his married character, and of his beautiful wife, in as brilliant external circumstances as possible—"but for those absurd, conventional notions of localities and neighbourhood which influence people in all great towns, but especially in London."

Violet's furtive pleading glance checked farther sallies of temper; and Herbert listened with interest until his mother, in expatiating upon the beauties and advantages of the residence which she and Violet had been inspecting, forgot her secret wishes respecting the bridal visits. It combined every quality on which Violet had the most strongly set her heart, and had no drawback save the great distance from the spot where Herbert must pursue his legal studies.

"And we will have no carriage," sighed Mrs. Herbert, when this was adverted to. "If Charles drove to the Inns of Court in the morning, he might easily, in fine days at least, walk home for exercise."

"There are the convenient, cheap omnibuses," replied Violet.

Mrs. Herbert said nothing, but sighed more deeply. The elegant Charles Herbert, one of the handsomest and most gentlemanlike young men in London, going and returning from Chambers to a *box* at Chelsea by the 'Bus!

"And the river," said Violet.

That was a shade less dismal to Mrs. Herbert. She strove to exert the philosophy on which Charles

had complimented her. Her mind had been so imbued with apprehensions of something squalid and cheerless in a low-rented house, that the one discovered by Marion had proved an agreeable surprise. There was a small garden behind it; a smaller lawn or grass-plot, with flower-borders, in front; verdure and shady trees; and from the little drawing-room an airy view of the river, and an infinity of gay, pretty, and lively objects.

"So nice and sweet a little drawing-room, dressing-room, and bedchamber all together for Mrs. Herbert!" cried Violet.

"A much nicer house than my last dear lodgings at Brighton, Charles," said Mrs. Herbert.

"A study for you below," continued Violet, looking into the sweet little garden,—“a very pretty dining parlour, and a set of three airy chambers and closets on the second floor, and a housemaid's attic.”

"But what, then, for yourself?" asked Herbert fondly. "You talk like a Robins' advertisement."

"O, I shall niche myself everywhere; but there is a little store-room next door to the study—I may have that for my *sluttry*, I dare say. It is rather dingy just now; but with a little paint and paper, which I can put up myself, it will be so snug."

Mrs. Herbert, like any other far-seeing middle-aged matron, concluded that a *nursery* must be meant by this odd name or delicate periphrasis.

"Give your *sanctum* a fitter name, my dear," said she, "than one which is a libel on your orderly tastes and neat habits."

"Ah!" replied Violet, smiling and sighing, "that was the name my poor father went to give to the little niche, with its four little embowered panes, in the roof of our Jersey cottage, which I called my *boudoir*; and where I kept all my treasures alive and dead, and conned those tasks which were play. You recollect, Charles, it was the name which Swift—there must have been some strange attaching quality about that odious man—gave to poor Miss Vanhomrigh's drawing-room: there were no *boudoirs* in those days I fancy; and they are, I believe, out of fashion, at least in name, in ours. Swift was a great favourite with my father. I myself delighted in his Journal to Stella, and the 'little language.' Ah, yes! he must have had a heart once!—though pride and ambition cankered and killed it, and by a lingering cruel death. . . . In solitude one gets so intimate, so personally intimate, with one's favourite authors, that their peculiar phrases become household words."

"You have shown cause why we should leave you your *sluttry*," said Herbert; "though the name sounds rudely enough to an English lady's nice ears."

"How I wish we were fairly inducted!" rejoined Violet: "you in your study—I in my *sluttry*. Mrs. Herbert's apartments have quite a *grand aspect*;—a balcony for plants over the portico, but above all, a conservatory!"

"A conservatory!—We shall be too grand," said Herbert.

"But so ingeniously and cheaply formed! The *ocullery* and some of the offices are, you must

know, in one wing. But so clothed, so draped, so richly embroidered, with a perfect entanglement of luxuriant and beautiful creepers, that not an inch of dead wall is visible. It is a perfect piece of living mosaic! Well, upon the roof of the said humble *scullery*, is raised a small green-house, conservatory, or what you will, with a glass door opening from the drawing-room; and with merely the cost of a little glass, and a little trouble,—there you have it!”

“Most tasteful and ingenious gentleman, or haply, lady of Chelsea!” exclaimed Charles, “who has created an Eve’s paradise above a scullery! Were not this house a discovery of Marion’s, who knows so well about houses, and many other things, I should fear that the delicious *campagne*, with a view of the Thames, was too expensive for us.”

Violet looked at Mrs. Herbert, unable to utter all at once what remained to be told. She had somehow come to understand, that to speak frankly of such a calamity as a lady laying down her carriage, was as shocking as of the impending death of her first-born, or the amputation of her limbs. It was Mrs. Herbert herself who said, “We can let the coach-house and the three-stall stable to advantage—they have a separate entrance from a lane; and so have our house for nett fifty guineas.”

“Bravo!” cried Charles, “less than Jenkins’ salary and perquisites,—we shall make rich at Chelsea. When do we get possession?”

“Since you seriously wish to remove before receiving your marriage visits”—sighed Mrs. Herbert—

“Yes, yes, I do,” interrupted Charles; “and to receive the congratulations of our future good neighbours of Chelsea, rather.”

“Then, as soon as I return from Windsor, I must, in common decency and humanity, visit and console my poor old friend Mrs. Briscoe, who quite relies on me in this distressing affair of the bankruptcy. You will, in the meantime, make Mr. Gryphon settle about the house and fixtures, and to-morrow very early, Mrs. Marion comes to us, to direct Violet and myself, what to select from the furniture here for our new abode, that it may be at once removed before—before—the *sale*. . . . Good night, my children.”

“Ah, Charles, is she not the sweetest, most amiable of women,” said Violet, as the door closed.

“Of all women, save her who, with much higher intelligence, much purer taste, can still bear with those pribble-prabbles which make me, naughty as I am, sometimes rather impatient—nay, perhaps, love her the better for them. You are one of those happy and only female creatures, Violet, created but to taste the sweets, the honey, of whatever you touch; while I, like so many of my brethren, as if by instinct, suck all or a good share of the gall.”

Next morning, long before Herbert, to his shame be it told, was out of bed, the ladies and their valuable auxiliary were at hard work from garret to cellar. It was Violet’s duty to make out the inventories of the goods to be left for sale; and anxiously did she study the looks and wishes of the owner, as, one by one, Marion summarily con-

demned to auction her endless elegancies and luxuries in cabinet-work, silk-hangings, pier-glasses, Indian china, and generally what dealers class as articles of *virtu*.

“Virtue, indeed!” exclaimed Marion. “I see little virtue in them, save in sinking and running away with good siller; but whatever virtue they may have in this grand mansion, I am sure they will be only plagues and incumbrances in the bit *villabin* at Chelsea.”

Still Violet often pleaded for a reversal of the sentence, when she perceived how fondly memory, association, or mere habit, had endeared some piece of convenient or beautiful dead matter, to its gentle owner; or openly rebelled against Marion’s stern fiat, and begged off the article as if for herself. Mrs. Herbert had herself pointed out—along with her finely-wrought toilet-plate, and many useless and costly toys, in ivory and filagree—toys, as Marion regarded them—for she had great respect for plate—a particular article which Violet knew the owner prized highly, and which had been one of her indulgent, elderly husband’s many gifts to his spoiled wife. It was a delicately-formed watering engine of silver; so small, as to seem the mere model of a garden engine, with which Mrs. Herbert had been in the daily habit of watering the plants which ornamented her balcony and rooms.

“Oh, not this, not this,” pleaded Violet, who had so often seen the pretty machine gracefully used by its fair mistress, in what was one of the most important daily occupations of her luxurious life. “Do you think that, at Chelsea, Mrs. Herbert is not still to have flowers, and plants, and daily use for her pretty watering-pot?”

“Ye’ll better just flit bag and baggage, hinny, if yon bonny bird-cage will hold all your trinkum-trankums,” said Marion humorously. “Ye beg for this easy-cheyre, and that ottoman; and this dwarf book-case, and that wark-table: never a muckle wark, I’m jalousing, was e’er done at the side o’ ane o’ the frail concerns yet. Wark-tables! Idling-tables rather! If ye want to see a wark-table, gang away amang the puir, wan-faced, shilpit, bits o’ millender and mantua-maker lassies: dizzens o’ them gathered round a real wark-table, and getting their dead frae its lang, weary hours, and thin fare, puir things!”

“Mistress Linton is right, my love,” said Mrs. Herbert, who had just entered. “I guess the motive of your reservations. How self-indulgent, nay, how utterly selfish, you must fancy me, if my personal accommodation is to be the sole study in what we reserve.”

“Take not blame to yourself, madam,” replied Marion boldly. “Ye may observe that Mrs. Charles is just as careful and tender of some other useless or cumbersome gear, as of your delicate up-fittings. There’s Mr. Herbert’s leeberry-cheyre. Poor studying was ever studied in one of them, I trow. They are greater deceptions still than the leddies’ daidlin’ wark-tables. Awa wi’ the lazy lounge! I do not believe ever Mr. Charles crooked his hough in it yet. It’s splendor new, and will bring a good price; and let the young gentleman work and win his easy-cheyre ere he

loll in it. They are just fit for pursy deans and gouty prelates, thae feather-bed seats, and no for men, to call men, who have their way to make in the world by unravelling, or, it's as like, warping and ravelling the toils and meshes o' the law."

"Here, then, goes 'a Spanish reclining library chair,'" cried Violet, gaily.

"That's right! When the gentleman has once wrought for and won the privilege of rest, he will find his cheyre the safer. But let the leddy keep her settee; sorry woman should I be to see the day she wanted it, or anything else that sae weel befits her station. And now, I am thinking, mem.," said Marion, her face mantling with sly humour, "since Mrs. Charles has been so considerate and mindfu' of everybody's wants but her ain, we must indulge her. I saw she cast a longing eye on that auld hobby-horse of Maister Charles's, up in the garret."

"O, you wicked Marion," said Violet, laughing and blushing.

"We will e'en let her get that keepsake—it would not bring 5s. at a roup the morn :—But there is another piece of gear," continued she, seriously, "and this Lon'on has a market for a' wares. Mrs. Burker Barker, or whatever that bouncer's proper appellation may be,—I mean the *Professor's* high-flying dochter,—is setting up in a grand way, however lang it may last, and come the siller frae where it likes; and it can come from no good gait. Weel, having got free o' the law, she maun hae, among her many gettings, a leddy's maid no less; and Jenkins is the very *cut* for her, and will, I guess, keep her at the staff's end."

"That person want my maid!" replied Mrs. Herbert in a voice of surprise, in which Violet might have discerned a slight shade of haughty pique; but it passed off in a moment. Of the endless belongings to be disposed of, there was none half so troublesome as Jenkins, nor of which she was now so desirous to be handsomely rid; so that, after the momentary shock, she was really pleased with Marion's intelligence.

"Nay, I did not see Madam Barker myself: it was the mother o' her, the Professor's leddy,—there is sorts o' Professors and sizes o' leddies,—did me honour to call on me last night about Jenkins, with her tale; but allenarly, as I suspect, as much about her "buay," as she calls the hairy-faced ne'er-do-weel I was so simple as to let loose on the country, with my five pound in his pouch.

Weel, the woman may have a mother's heart for her blackguard, for aught I ken; and it does no become me to slight that sawered thing. They could, it seems, get Jack pardoned "the frolic," or the thing winked at, now that it has blown by; and they have something grand in view for him. They are wonderfu' folk, even for Lon'on;—the auld ane, that was but the other day scrambling about in her rusty black sarsnet, with her bit basket below her shawl, trying where she could pick up a cheap morsel of dinner for her guidman in Whitecross jail, was dinked out yestreen as braw as Bink's wife, when she becked to the minister; and in comfortable lodgings in Bury Street, for I ken the house. But this is nothing

to you, madam," said Marion, for Violet gave her apron a gentle twitch. "She wanted to know when you could conveniently receive Mrs. Burker Barker to inquire Jenkins' character. I said I would myself give her a' the character required, but that would not do; and so, as I guessed, ye would be well pleased to get quit of that piece of goods before going to Windsor or fitting to Chelsea, I made bold to say this day at one o'clock; but if it be not convenient—"

"Quite, quite convenient—the sooner the better," replied Mrs. Herbert. "And much obliged I am to you for this and many other kindnesses."

"Say nothing about that. . . I would have spared you this troublesome visit if I could; but there are a parcel of idle, impudent huzzies about this and a' toons, wha take pure delight in rambling from house to house every term, asking after maid's characters, just to stare about them, and spy ferlies in places where otherwise they could not get in their snouts;—though this is but the sma'er sort of leddies—"

"I believe Mr. Herbert could tell the poor mother something of her son," said Violet, deeply compassionating the maternal distress of her former harsh hostess. Mr. Herbert met this person in the north one evening."

"This person! Ye must not be sae mim wi' my *proddy-jee*, as Maister Charles calls him,—a very *proddy-jee* he is, or else no. Have his moustaches sprouted again, I wonder, after the sharp singeing I gave the natural ornaments? He is a beauty without paint yon." And Marion laughed aloud at her own mirthful recollections. "I maun hae damages off him when he comes to the kingdom the dam o' them forebodes for her hopefu' cleckin, for scathe done my guid name by giving harbourage for two nights in my meat-safe to the cheat-the-widdie. I'm no thinkin', howsoever, my *proddy-jee* the weel warst o' the crew, though he has been made the scapegoat. . . . But where were we? French timepiece *or-molu*—of all ores commend me to the sterling *ore*, for that is aye easy carried about, and keeps its value in the market;—but go on, hinny. Naething but ups and downs in this weary schene o' our pilgrimage; though there is little need, madam, to envy Mrs. Burker Barker of her fine coach and grand dwelling. What says the Psalmist of the unstable condition of the wicked?

For over it the wind doth pass,

And it awa' is gone :

—Na, Jack is the best o' them."

"Mr. Herbert imagines that Cryppes has gone off to America," said Violet, to whom Herbert had not mentioned his encounter with Jack.

"To Ameriky? The hail filth and scum o' Europe is spewed out upon that wide land. Yet for a clever, fair-fashioned, sleeky-tongued, lang-headed rascal, or a downright cunning villain, commend me to this same big Babylon; though it's utter destruction to rogues in a sma' way."

The inventory, relieved by such disjointed chat as this, was happily accomplished, just as the new, flashy, bright yellow, carriage of Mrs. Barker drew up.

(To be continued.)