VIOLET HAMILTON; OR, THE TALENTED FAMILY.

(Continued from our September No.)

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. CHARLES HERBERT having written to the father of the unfortunate Bigsby's widow, and in few words, but with all the address and delicacy in his power, appealed to his paternal feelings, was about to proceed to Mrs. Marion's dwelling to procure the necessary directions for forwarding his letter, and to consult this sagacious friend about the arrangements for the funeral of Burke Barker's victim. For in this light, Herbert could not help considering the provincial agent, admitting that he might in part have been the dupe of his own ambitious vanity and imaginary knowledge of the world, or of the arts of the designing.

Herbert had taken his hat to go out when Mr. Gryphon called upon him, with those morning newspapers in his pocket, containing the paragraphs quoted in our last chapter; though his chief object was to remind his young friend of the engagement he had made in his name for next morning with the Duke of Plantagenet, when all the matters in debate were to be concluded. When Herbert simply narrated his last night's adventures as they had really taken place, and in contrast with Mr. Burke Barker's gloss or "*Romance in real Life*," Gryphon, between amusement and anger, exclaimed, "Hang the fellow! he might compromise us with the Duke, if proper precautions are not instantly adopted: but I am a match for him. . . . . . He is, though, an infinitely clever rascal—and so plausible withal. . . . . Ten thousand pities but that Barker possessed enough of the alloy of vulgar, common-place integrity to give his reputation tenuity sufficient to stand the wear and tear of the world's ordinary handling—I do not stipulate for sterling probity—high principle, nice honour:—a man gets on well enough without these qualities—we are no longer in the times of chivalry."

"Would not *gold* enough, without any alloy, do the turn?" said Herbert—"if my friend were believed to be really *rich;* if he were a *good* man?"

"Ay, indeed," replied Gryphon with a shrewd smile, "if he *were* a *good* man."

"Or if his knaveries were practised under the common conventional sanctions—if they lay in the safe line of stock-jobbing tricks—or gambling in Mark Lane, or in any sort of accredited *scrip* or *omnium*—anything that *good* men call *speculation*."

"Ay, ay, indeed," returned Gryphon, now laughing freely. "But don't be satirical, Mr. Herbert. How ill you understand business by the way! You University men never do, in the large way. However, Mr. Barker is effectually blown:—even in the House I don't believe he could have passed muster, although the Plantagenet interest had foisted him in."

"Who is satirical now, my good sir?"

"Simple fact of his Majesty's Commons, Mr. Herbert. . . . . But there is no calculating upon the resources of a man like Barker, in a position which he understands so well as London, and all to which it is the key. If he issued proposals for a company for depasturing the mountains of the moon with Alpaca sheep, he would find people ready to take shares,—possibly a hot competition for them. Our retired suburban capitalists would peep through their glasses on the first moon-light night, and fancy the thing very promising, as they saw hills."

"And yet, Mr. Gryphon, I must regret him," said Herbert with feeling:—"With abilities so great, —accomplishments so brilliant,—a knowledge of men, but especially of the weaknesses and bad side of human nature, which looks like supernatural,— to see that man the slave of the lowest, vilest ambitions,—capable of the meanest, basest acts to gain a paltry object! There was a time when I should have been proud to be called 'the intimate friend' of Burke Barker."

"Hang his cool impudence! Your 'intimate friend!' From the commencement of his breakfast, until the conclusion of his lunch and his daily dutiful airing with her Grace and her poodle, the Duke potters over the newspapers till he has puzzled out an inconceivable deal of that daily trash, which it is astonishing to find him still taking for gospel. If he fall on this paragraph it may prove troublesome to our plans and your prospects."

"Am I not prudent in setting small store by prospects so easily damaged, Mr. Gryphon?"

"Nonsense! I won't hear a word of this; the thing can easily be put straight, although his Grace should scratch his shins over the stumbling-block laid in his way by the accomplished Mr. Barker:— pray hear me out," he continued, seeing Herbert about to speak,—"I tell you once for all, that I will take no refusal from you. I have appealed to the ladies. I trust to their superior and nicer discernment. Besides they are parties—principals indeed in the affair."

Herbert laughing at the pertinacity of his shrewd friend, at once agreed to this; and they walked together to Marion's door, where Gryphon left him.

When admitted below, he ascended the stairs very quietly, feeling that, if not in the presence, he was in the neighbourhood of sacred sorrow. Marion also gently opened her sanctum to his gentle tap. Her spectacles were on; she had been reading her Bible, which lay open on a small table by the darkened window. She pointed to the inner chamber opening from her watch-tower parlour, and made a sign of quiet; but when Herbert whispered his errand, so far forgot her own injunction, as to exclaim, though still in a suppressed tone,—"This is like yoursel', sir!—kind and good; and ye were aye good and kind;—and the blessing o' the Friend of the stranger and the widow, and o' them that have none to help, will be about you, sir,—about you and yours.——Pussey, ye misleard

limmer! will ye haud aff Mr. Charles.—Od, I'll take the tangs to ye. What cares he for your phrasin' and purring!"

"If example could make me good, if warning could make me thoughtful and thankful, I were the most grateful of men," replied Herbert in an earnest under-tone;—"but I do care for pussey's fondness, and her welcome of me;" and the heart of pussey's affectionate mistress glowed and melted as Herbert for a moment caressed her grimalkin, a condescension she did not fail to relate to Mrs. Charles,—politely remarking, while Violet laughed, "I would have thought nothing of it in you; but a grand, young gentleman, but the other day capering about in the Parks, or at the Clubs, or the hunts, like the other fashionable light-horsemen, sprauchlin' up to my garret to write a letter for a poor widow woman, and dawting my pussey."

For that poor widow Herbert meanwhile affectionately inquired, and was answered in the set terms, "As well, sir, as can be expected," to which, however, Marion added, "Wonderfu' weel, sir!—wonderfu', considering. Indeed I fear, Mr. Charles, that poverty is sometimes a great cooler of the affections. The forlorn thing is grieved for her silly *gudeman*, no doubt, but doubly so for the ill terms on which they parted yesterday morning, never to meet again on this side Jordan. Oh, sirs, but we are short-sighted creatures! If we could but look forrit a wee bit, what a check would that be on our angry passions, and bridle on our unruly tongues!"

"She must indeed be greatly depressed, poor woman," said Herbert, while he addressed the letter as Marion directed him.

"Ay, but on the other hand, I can see like a flickerin' o' consolation stealing through the darkness of sorrow, which is just so muckle the better. She maun be, and very naturally too, thinking now of her chance of being tenderly welcomed back to a *bein*, comfortable, parent-nest; and ye canna think of the diversion from grief—for I dare not call it comfort—that a bit widow's mutch, that's what ye call a *cap* or *hood* in Lon'on, has been to her, that I bought this morning, and the bit black brooch she had among her trash—the same Mrs. Snipson thought no' worth pawning."

Herbert now smiled, though gravely.

"And is not that just so much the better, Mr. Charles, that the feeblest spirit finds its ain suitable consolation. Now, if your dear young leddy had lost you, sir—which the Lord o' his mercy forbid!—what would the bravery of a' the widow weeds in Lon'on have been to her bereaved and broken heart?"

"Truly, these are *gruesome* images in a morning, Marion," replied Herbert, "especially to those bound like us on melancholy business. The Inquest is to be held at one o'clock, you are aware."

"Ye'll pardon me, Mr. Charles, but ever since I handed in my bit looking-glass, to let her try on her widow mutch i' the bed, and saw her study and admire her braid hems, I have been speakalatin' in my ain mind on the utility of dress and adornments to man, and especially to woman, in their fallen estate, or at least to the frivolous part of them. If there had been no Fall of Man from his original condition, what sort o' town, I wonder, would this same big Babylon have been? Ne'er a tailor, nor a mercer, nor a millender, nor a hair-dresser in it. There would have been a clean annihilation, or a non-existence, of the half of our present human avocations; and the things we prize the most would have been no more thought of than the baby-clouts that lassie-bairns busk their Flander dolls wi'. And what would have become of all my dainty lady's toilet-wark?—Weel may they ca' it *toil-it*, for hard and sair do they toil themselves, or their bond-slaves for them *toil* at it: decoring the vile body—pettlin' up food for worms."

"Not so fast, Mrs. Linton," replied Mr. Herbert, rising to go. "The *body* is not so very vile; and I plead for the hair-dressers: even in Paradise, ladies would have braided their tresses,—Eve at the Fountain,—though perhaps their hair-dressers might be their lovers: and men will, I hope, shave their beards, even after the millennium."

"You are laughin' at a daft auld wife's clavers and nonsense, Mr. Charles; and, troth, I deserve it."

"No, indeed: but these are questions for grave Scotch divines; and now you must follow me to the Inquest in good time."

"And give Mr. Burke Barker back his siller—if he appear. To me, yestreen, he looked like a man not lang for this world. . . . . My proud, natural heart rose in me, sir, at the thought of the poor woman he has bereaved of all, being beholden to him, were it but for a bodle. I have ordered a' thing frugally, but decently, at my *own* charge; and if I am not repaid by the freends, I have stood greater losses in my time."

Herbert admired this burst of honest spirit; while he said that he would arrange with the undertaker.

"'Deed, and ye'll do nae sic thing, sir," cried Marion briskly. "This is to be my job. Besides, it's all already settled. Hoot, awa', Mr. Charles! d'ye think a young gentleman like you can deal with these sharp Lon'oners like me, that's been up to the trap of a' kin-kinds o' them for thirty year? Na, na; ye had your ain way yestreen, and I'se have mine the day: time about is fair play, Mr. Charles." And the peremptory, and somewhat purse-proud old lady, jocosely shut her door, muttering blessings on her parting guest; and at the proper hour followed him to the Ship Tavern, where the Coroner's court had met; and where a reporter, who was a townsman and old school-fellow of the unfortunate Bigsby, had taken his place. One material witness failed to appear, and the reporter, to the great indignation of the Coroner, who hotly resented his interference, suggested that the Court should be adjourned till Mr. Burke Barker was compelled to appear, as he, the reporter, a barrister, on the part of the deceased, wished to put a few questions to that gentleman.

This suggestion could not be attended to. A note just then received, addressed by Dr. Edmund Cripps to the Coroner, mentioned that Mr. Burke Barker was seriously indisposed; that he had been very ill all night, and that fever was apprehended,

affecting the brain, from which the greatest danger might result if he were in any way disturbed.

"I protest against the proceedings," cried the reporter.—"Is the testimony of a notorious, impudent quack, the brother-in-law of Barker, to defeat the ends of justice?"

"Take down his words," exclaimed a person present, who was supposed to be in the interest or pay of Barker's associates in the Bubble Company; and it was as certain that the reporter, as a lawyer, really had been sent by parties having a different interest.

While this squabble over the dead body of poor Bigsby is going forward, we shall look back upon Mr. Burke Barker, whom we left shivering and miserable in the cabriolet in which Herbert had compassionately sent him home. That home he reached in less than four hours from the time he had left it; but already what revolution was there!

Before Barker had gone out, there had been something in his conduct exceedingly suspicious and inexplicable to his sharp-witted, distrustful helpmate. When whispering confidentially with her medical brother about the delicate state and brilliant prospects of the Countess Emmeline, Mrs. Barker had kept an eye on her husband's proceedings, especially when he carried away his desk to his own room. He and poor Bigsby had not disappeared for three seconds, when, from actual experiment, Mrs. Burke Barker convinced herself that the cash-box, which usually stood on a small table in his dressing-room,—a box which had of late not been remarkably heavy,—was considerably diminished in weight. Papers lay strewed about, as if rejected, while others had been selected; and from the drawer of a *chiffonniere*, in which Mr. Barker kept some valuables and a quantity of nicknackerie, several articles were gone. One of them Mrs. Barker, angry as it made her, in no ways regretted. It was the miniature of a pretty young girl, about which Barker, when rallied by his wife on its accidental discovery, could give no satisfactory account—about which he was grave, if not *mysterious*, though her brother Jack had told her that the picture of the girl, who so much resembled Violet Hamilton, was that of Barker's first love, and there was something more in the story,—"not," Jack delicately said, "for ladies' ears."

"That miniature gone! Then Barker certainly meditates flight!" was his agitated wife's audible thought, as she hurriedly rummaged on.—"What am I to do? Whither to turn:—the *plate*, the lighter valuables!—Those are safe yet, and for this night I am safe:—My mother,—I can depend on her services in this dreadful emergency. What a heartless wretch to betray and abandon me thus.—But he never cared for me."

In this crisis of her fate, Mrs. Burke Barker's courage and presence of mind did not forsake her. In less than two minutes her plans were taken.

In this gay family, every member of which, from the basement to the attic, was devoted to pleasure, and fond of public amusements, it was a frequent custom to present the servants with tickets to plays, and to a certain order of fancy balls. At the summons of the lady of the house, so soon as she had written a hasty note to her selected auxiliary, her active mother, and seated herself quietly and decorously at her work-table, the tall footman glided in like a zephyr, and presented to her the lighted taper required.

"Let the tiger take this note to Mrs. Crippes in Half-moon Street. By the way, Mr. Dobbs, the newspaper has just reminded me of a promise to my maid—to Miss Bish. She has not had three nights of pleasure since Jenkins went and she came to me. I promised that she was to see Fanny Kemble in Juliet the first time Fanny appeared in that part, ... , Now I am thinking that as Mr. Barker is to be at Great Marlow all night, with Lord St. Edward, and as the Countess is to spend the evening with me, I never could spare you all better. The cook is a Methodist, and wont go to "the devil's house"—she may send up the supper-tray, and the boy can wait. Now, Dobbs, you must promise me to take the greatest care of the girls—Miss Bish and the two housemaids and the laundress—and to be early home, not later than one or two at the farthest. I have for some weeks suspected a sly flirtation," continued Mrs. Burke Barker, looking exceedingly sly, and as the tall footman thought, uncommonly gracious. He simpered in coy consciousness, and held down his head, being still comparatively new to London service, while his lady, studying her watch, proceeded—"She is a nice girl, and I have a great regard for her; but you must both be prudent, though even if you were to marry, that need be no immediate reason for your leaving my family."

"You are too good, ma'am," replied the tall footman, bowing low, overpowered by his lady's condescension; "and I mean nothing but what is honourable to the girl, ma'am—nothing, ma'am," and he drew up his head perkingly.

With a momentary glance of womanly contempt at this expression of the tall well-looking dolt's "honourable intentions" towards her clever and pretty maid—a person, woman as she was, so immeasurably his superior, as her mistress thought, Mrs. Barker proceeded with her own affairs.

Especially anxious to disarm the suspicions of her servant, should any be entertained, she said—"Well, make haste, and desire the girls to equip themselves. Bish must not be affronted at the other girls going along with you. I really cannot trust her alone, Dobbs—she is too pretty;" and this was said so roguishly, that Mr. Dobbs drew up his neckcloth, simpered worse than ever, and muttered, "O Lord, ma'am, beg pardon; surely you can't, ma'am, imagine——." So contradictory and conflicting a thing is human thought, that Mrs. Barker, though absorbed in her own important affairs, could have boxed her tall footman's ears for uttering the impudent thought which her speech was so well calculated to excite. She, however, only said hurriedly—"The carriage may set down the girls somewhere near the theatre, before it is put up for the night, and the coachman goes home, as usual;—only be prudent all of you. This sovereign will frank you all to the second gallery. I must not give you a taste for extravagance, now that, in conse-

quence of very heavy losses, Mr. Barker is limiting his expenditure for a time." Never had the delighted Mr. Dobbs seen his lady half so gracious and confidential, as he immediately told Miss Bish, when, jumping up at the welcome intelligence, she arranged her hair, exclaiming—"If we are only in time for the balcony scene!"

In ten minutes more the carriage, with four *ladies* inside, and Mr. Dobbs seated beside the coachman, was rolling on to the Haymarket. Miss Bish insisted on being set down at the very door of the theatre. She was not to be trundled off in the street, spoil her clothes, and perhaps lose half the balcony scene! That scene was long past; but there were others which detained Mr. Dobbs and his fair friends quite as long as Mrs. Burke Barker could have wished for.

The cook, besides her alleged Methodism, was suspected to love, not a glass, but many glasses, of gin, and, in consequence of this infirmity, had been seldom of late permitted to go beyond the precincts of the area; but the Countess was now momentarily expected to spend the evening with her sister, and being in a condition when ladies are privileged to have capricious appetites, and to eat at all hours, Mrs. Burke Barker graciously took her cook, who was a matron and a person of experience, into her confidence, and despatched her to the other end of London to hunt for a couple of *whitings*—two delicate *whitings*. She might go by any omnibus, or even take a coach, if necessary, but return without a *whiting* or *whitings* she must not, lest a future Duke of Plantagenet might bear a visible or hidden piscatory mark, in addition to his heraldic quarterings. The cook, curtseying for her crown-piece, promised to do her best, if she should knock up all Billingsgate, and proceeded on the way, on which Mrs. Barker, well loaded for one so little accustomed to porter's work, almost immediately followed; leaving her dwelling, the lights all blazing, to the care of Providence and the police.

Professor and Mrs. Cryppes, whose migrations, like those of the rest of their family, were frequent, had at this time no house of their own. They had occupied, since the high alliance contracted by their younger daughter, "genteel lodgings," taken for them by their elder daughter, in a good street off Piccadilly. As their style was now humbler, so were their hours earlier than those of the dashing Barker family; and not an hour after the latter had dined, the seniors were usually engaged at their nice little tête-à-tête supper. Let us now suppose Mrs. Cryppes thus engaged in her drawing-room, and her husband at a table apart, covered with sheets of music-paper, most intricately and elaborately blotted. The classical meal of supper is always the favourite repast of "the favourites of the public," whether players, musicians, or singers. Then the worrying business of their weary, if proud and brilliant, day is over, and then the exhaustion of both their physical and spiritual powers urgently require what Johnson pragmatically calls "the repairs of the table." Then, too, comes "the sweet of the night," which persons, whose vocation is the heavy one of universally pleasing, taste with such zest—the kernel of the twenty-four hours—whether the high-salaried theatrical *Star* banquets on the rarest dainties, and sips veritable champagne; or the "poor strollers," always social, procure a pot of stout to relish the Welsh rabbit or plate of sausages, over which they luxuriate. To Professor Cryppes supper had ever been the meal of the gods—social, jovial, musical, enchanting! but to-night he scribbled on, neglecting this favourite repast, to which his lady was doing all honour. "Will you put away these papers and eat your supper, Cryppes, or as sure as dickens, I shall order away the tray," said the professor's amiable partner, who had already had her full share of the lobster, and was deeply engaged with something equally nice.

"Be so kind as to mix me a glass of brandy and water—'screeching hot,'—and not disturb me, my love," replied the professor, not looking up, and scratching away, as for life and death, off and on those black lines, as if in a musical frenzy, "I have not had such a flood of sublime ideas for months."

"Stuff, Cryppes! has not your daughter, Barker, told you again and again, that in our present delicate relations with the Plantagenet family that opera of yours cannot be allowed to appear, although you could get it produced, which you cannot."

"I can, and I *will*, Mrs. Cryppes," retorted the indignant composer, "as soon as the necessary alterations are made. The loss of my original Prima Donna, Mademoiselle Gabrielle, now Mrs. Charles Herbert, has given me inconceivable trouble: but when the airs are arranged for——"

"Dont tell me such nonsense," interrupted Mrs. Cryppes; "you will always be fobbed off by some excuse or other—now this, now that; but the real reason is, the manager didn't give a fig for your piece, until the marriage of my daughter, the Countess——"

"Pray, ma'am, be so obliging as to hold your tongue," said the professor angrily; "you drive me stupid. . . . What an idea you have banished, Mrs. Cryppes!" and the disconsolate composer pettishly tapped with three fingers on his bump of music, and the other bumps in that vicinage, as if to woo back the evanescent or fugitive idea; then, throwing down his pen, he exclaimed, "It is vanished—gone!" He jumped up like a puff-ball, "Heaven! to what mischances are the rarest combinations of genius liable. Happy Beethoven, who could retreat to your den from vulgar annoyances! .... You cannot, my dear, guess the infinite mischief you have done to-night." The professor swallowed his hot punch at a gulp.

"Fiddlesticks, Cryppes!" have your compositions ever produced one penny to your family? answer me that? The Plantagenet family——"

"Don't tell me, woman, of the Plantagenet family!" interrupted the angry professor, swelling and using vehement gesticulation. "My daughter has married a nobleman. I shall be the grandfather of a line of dukes. But there are more illustrious honours than these. Your husband is a man of genius, madam, whether you know it or not. What is the gaudy tinsel of no-

bility to the sterling ore of heaven-born Art, Mrs. Cryppes? Nature's nobility, Mrs. Cryppes: princes and sovereigns, madam, have bowed to musicians. My great Master, Beethoven, taught them to know their own place. See him on the promenade, the imperial family approaching! See Goethe! see the sneaking Poet, shrinking aside, and doffing his castor!—but the Master, what says he?—'I crushed my hat more furiously on my head, buttoned up my top-coat, and walked with my arms folded behind me right through the thickest of the crowd:—the officials made a lane for me,—Archduke Rudolph took off his hat,—the Empress saluted me the first:—*These great people know me.* It was the greatest fun in the world to me to see the procession file past Goethe.'—There, ma'am, there! This is the homage which Rank pays to Art!"

"Now really, Cryppes, there is no enduring your nonsense," interrupted the lady. "Stuff your mouth with your supper, pray. Would you ruin our prospects with your folly? Beethoven, indeed! Are you Beethoven?—And he was crazy too,—what did he ever make of it? Even seven hundred a-year, properly secured for my life, is something. Polly turns up her saucy nose to be sure, but I wish the great Mrs. Burke Barker may never be worse off. She would have me incite dear Emmy to fly in the face of that old rogue Gryphon's pecuniary arrangements, and refuse to accompany her husband abroad with these cunning Herberts; but I don't see what we would take by that. As well my daughter's affections be seduced from me by those who can and will give us something, as by the Barkers, who would keep her all to themselves."

Our Professor had experienced too many of the rubs of professional life, and the mischances of ambitious town adventure, to be altogether indifferent to prudential considerations, even when he talked the loudest of his exclusive adoration of Divine Art. But the longings of vanity, and any present gratification, always with him predominated over prudence, and a future advantage, no matter how great. To complicate his perplexity, a certain scheming manager—may the gods pardon him!—had this evening excited his inordinate vanity by a fresh proposal for his piece, and propitiated his previous anger by the blandest apologies, and promises to bring out his Opera, without delay, in the highest and most novel style of splendour as to *spectacle*, and with every advantage possible, from the first appearance in it of the most celebrated foreign singers that were to appear during the season. The compositions of an old-fashioned provincial organist of the school of Handel, did not promise much; but an opera by the father of a dashing runaway Countess, about to become the mother of a ducal race, was of some mark and likelihood to a man distracted to find popular amusements for an unamusable and capricious fashionable audience—a man in despair of having the boxes properly let. The overture of the manager, and the brilliant family prospects formally announced that morning by Dr. Cryppes to his exulting parents, had, coming together, been too much for the Professor's brain, and the consequent excitement had produced that flood of musical ideas which had cost him, in the first place, the loss of his supper. Yet he was so far impressed by his wife's representations, as to come down a peg, though he said, "If my daughter possess one spark of her father's soul, Musical Art may, in the future representatives of the House of Plantagenet, find munificent patrons, and England may yet see something deserving of the name of a National Opera. If my humble contributions at the commencement ——"

"Humble enough, upon my honour, Cryppes," interposed the lady; "you have a head and so has a pin!—I wonder what keeps me from thrusting your whole trash at once into the fire! You have kept us beggars all your life with your folly; and now, when my daughter the Countess is about to help you to your bread ready buttered, you must fly in the face of the noble family. But if you are a fool, I am not;" and Mrs. Cryppes nodded her head many times with a most provoking air, as if she had taken some desperate but diverting resolution; and then, seizing the poker, she gave the fire an angry rummage, and flounced down.

A faint suspicion of the enormity, the petty treason meditated by Mrs. Cryppes against her liege lord, did steal over the mind of the Professor, but was dismissed as something too monstrous to be entertained. His sober reason suggested that the wife of his bosom was no more capable of the unheard-of crime of destroying his immortal master-pieces, though they might be imagined to stand in the way of a paltry pecuniary advantage, than to poison the great composer they were to immortalize; so, merely saying, with theatric dignity and stern emphasis,—"Beware, madam! beware, Mrs. Cryppes! there are bounds to forbearance"—the Professor had proceeded to the supper-table to finish his punch, when, enraged at the implied defiance and menace, Mrs. Cryppes sprung up like a sudden whirlwind, crying, "I'll make a clearing of 'em once and for ever."

The Professor's first maddening impulse, as he dashed down the second tumbler which he had just emptied, was to assault his lady in a style going somewhat beyond the moderate correction of "his woman,"—by the "Baron," sanctioned in such cases matrimonial by the authority of Judge Buller. Nor was it reason that restrained the impulse; but rather the self-preserving instinct of an author's vanity, which made him, instead of assaulting his wife, dash his hands into the flames to rescue some part of the blurred and blotted manuscripts, which he threw on the hearth-rug, and danced upon, while his lady indulged in half-forced bursts of spiteful and triumphant laughter, crying, "Dance away, Cryppes! will you have music?" and she began to sing, and kept singing, until the poor man dropt upon the carpet as if suddenly shot dead. This made the lady change her note.

At this instant Mrs. Burke Barker, looking particularly bulky, entered the room wrapped up in her ermine-lined satin mantle.

"What, in heaven's name, is all this? Is the chimney on fire? Is my father ill?"

"Only mad, I believe," replied Mrs. Cryppes, sulkily but faintly, and bending to assist her prostrate lord. "I merely—he provoked me so—threw a quantity of the lumber, with which your father will litter the place, into the fire—the scrawls he was to send to that cunning vagabond at the Opera House, to-morrow, who blarneys and butters him up for his own ends, that he is a Rossini, and a Weber, and all manner of stuff.—Get up, Cryppes, here is Mrs. Barker come." But Cryppes did not stir; and mother and daughter both became seriously alarmed, and the former violently.

"For any sake, mother, be quiet, and don't make a scene before the people of the house. Help me to raise papa, and he will do well enough; but first put this parcel carefully out of the way. How I wish poor Jack were here to-night, he could be so useful to me at this time. Stay, papa is coming round now"—she raised her father's head—"and you must call a coach—a *roomy* double coach, and come instantly with me, mother: I have things to tell that will horrify you." This Mrs. Barker hoarsely whispered, while bathing her father's temples.

"My daughter, the Countess!" half screamed Mrs. Cryppes. "Has Emmeline,—the abandoned wretch,—has she eloped, then?"

"Hush, mother, for Heaven's sake; you have another daughter, though you seem to forget that. Emmeline is well enough—safe under the wing of the Herberts;—will be well enough for herself and them, whatever becomes of me—of the most ill-used and unhappy woman, this night, in London! Barker has deserted me, mother!—I am certain he has,—without leaving me even a message or one sixpence!"

This affectionate mother half shrieked, "The d—— villain!—but I always had a very bad opinion of him. He was so high and mighty, too—such a wonderful man—he despised my son, Jack—the best of all my children—my dear Quintin, who was ever affectionate and dutiful to me."

"You have reason to say so," returned Mrs. Barker, in a satirical tone.

"Hand over my salts, Mrs. Barker; your father is coming round; but he is so conceited and obstinate—he feigns ill just to tease me." The Professor was giving signs of returning sensibility, and Mrs. Barker, thinking chiefly of her own affairs, and no longer greatly alarmed for her father's condition, again urged her mother to accompany her—every moment was precious. "We can perhaps save a few trifles in the general wreck," she whispered, and Mrs. Cryppes pricked up her ears. "We shall lock up papa, and send Edmund to him as we go along. It was rash, though, to burn his compositions, poor old man! but he is coming finely round now."

Mrs. Cryppes, who had been a good deal fluttered by his swoon or fit, and who was now assured of her husband's recovery, became enraged upon her own account. "Rash, Mrs. Barker!—rash, did you call your mother:—we are all rash betimes; but your mother will not be quite so rash as to accompany you in your pretty expedition, ma'am. D'ye hear, Cryppes! get up, will ye. Your wonderful son-in-law, the great orator, Mr. Burke Barker, who was to be a Member of Parliament and a Lord Chancellor, has bolted; just what I always expected of him,—the great man!—the wonderful genius, that despised my boy, Jack—left his fine lady wife there, to go on the parish—for she shan't come on us, I can tell her."

"I have deserved this—but, mother, not from you!" replied the wretched daughter and deserted wife, in a hollow whisper; and she unconsciously put the empty tumbler, lately used by her father, to her parched and burning lips.

"Don't be so furious, Mrs. Barker," said the mother, in a calmer tone. "There, Cryppes, you are on your feet again; lean down on the couch, and compose yourself; what a fool you are, to be sure." Mrs. Cryppes was by this time revolving that if she lost her Professor, that "infernal screw, Gryphon," as she termed the duke's confidential agent, might fancy that a much smaller annuity, or retiring allowance, might serve for the Professor's amiable widow. "It was all your own fault, you know. But see the end of the Barkers—ha! ha! ha!" and Mrs. Cryppes laughed scornfully. "What claim have you on us, ma'am? What have you and your husband done for me or for my family, save to come between us and my daughter, the Countess, and her husband—your great and wonderful husband and you."

The overwrought passions of Mrs. Barker now first fairly gave way, and she fiercely exclaimed—"Yes, he was great—great and wonderful—*my* husband; and you have been his ruin among you—curse you for it—*curse* you all!"

Mrs. Cryppes, who now sat by her husband, affectionately holding his hand, stared at her furious daughter for a few seconds, ere she said,—"I fancied you had more sense, Polly. Be off now, and attend to your own affairs, I advise you,—if you can get a few trifles off safely, I shall try to take care of them for you, though if I were personally seen or in any way implicated in the business, my daughter, Emmeline——"

"My Emmeline, my child, my darling Countess," whispered the Professor, whose mind evidently wandered, and he fixed his vacant and yet wild eyes on his elder daughter. Then all at once, as if moved by sudden recollection, he half rose, as if going to the fire-place, and next smote upon his forehead.

"Now, Cryppes, no more of that nonsense, if you please,—I really won't stand it. What matter about that trumpery music, when here is your daughter deserted by her vagabond husband, like a parish pauper, and left to disgrace us all; what will the Plantagenet family——"

"Mr. Burke Barker fled!" exclaimed the Professor, overwhelmed by this fresh calamity. He had ever entertained the highest opinion of his son-in-law's abilities, and his gentlemanly character, as he called Barker's specious manners. While Barker's tone of character only cowed and angered his vulgar mother-in-law, whom he treated with hardly disguised contempt, he had inspired Cryppes with respect and something like affection.

"Mr. Burke Barker flee,—abandon his wife and his position!" he repeated, raising himself as if he had been thunderstruck, and fixing his inquiring, bewildered eyes on his daughter.

"Barker has bolted, sir,—this evening,—taking all the cash and valuables he could muster with him. Ask your daughter else."

"My mother *lies!*" shrieked Barker's frantic wife in the hissing whisper of a fury, "Barker has not deserted me,—he will do—he has done nothing to touch his honour; who among your Plantagenets—the alliance which *he* obtained for your daughter—is to be compared with Burke Barker?"

"Leave my presence, you bold, unnatural hussey," roared Mrs. Cryppes. "You will dare to call your mother *liar*, you audacious woman, you! A pretty wife Barker has had of you, to be sure! no wonder he has left you;—and you to sit there, Cryppes, and hear your wife insulted!——Have you the soul of a cheese-mite?——O, if my son, Jack, were here!" and Mrs. Cryppes proceeded to get up a sobbing fit.

"You will drive me mad among you," exclaimed the Professor, now grasping his aching head with both hands,—while his daughter, wrapping herself hurriedly in her cloak, as if it were armour against Fate, abruptly ran out and down stairs. This brought her mother suddenly to her senses, and she followed, calling in a voice wonderfully composed, or wonderfully pitched to the ear of the House,—the lodging house, "I am ready to go with you, Mrs. Barker. Let me get my bonnet,—the Countess will accompany us." She followed her daughter to the next coach stand, and, without another word being interchanged, hired a vehicle intended to do the office of a baggage waggon, while the Professor was left thus to soliloquize. "Barker ruined, and fled,—my son, Quintin, in disgraceful imprisonment,—but of that all Europe shall yet ring!—my daughter Susan degrading her family by a low marriage. And my opera! —my wife—But I repudiate her! Never again shall your mother, my Countess, share Professor Cryppes's bed or board.—Grandfather of a line of illustrious patrons of music. . . . . Gad! there is some peg sadly wrong here," continued the wandering musician, tapping his skull, "I fancied I saw Emmeline before me,—my last hope,—the jewel of her house."

The Professor had fallen into the stupor of exhaustion, rather than into refreshing sleep, by the time that his lady and her daughter, so lately belligerent powers, but again united by a sound policy, had reached Mr. Barker's door.

To their mutual dismay he had preceded them; and the cab-driver, and afterwards himself, were now attempting to force admittance into the blazing, enchanted castle, which seemed to contain no inmate. Mrs. Cryppes, with ready ingenuity, would have thrown all blame on the servants, but Mrs. Barker, with farther-seeing sagacity, imputed the whole to a mistake, which she explained; and Barker, ready to sink, was far too ill and too wretched to make any observation, even when he perceived a basket of plate standing packed in the hall as if ready to be carried off. His condition—his return, which falsified all her own and her mother's suspicions, awoke some remorse, and even tenderness in the bosom of his wife, who, while she assisted him to throw off his still wet clothes—and to get to bed, and gave him water, for which he cried—could not help expressing her surprise and alarm. Had he attempted suicide?—he had certainly been in the water.

"Good God! Barker, have you been in the water? and you are burning——"

"In the *fire* and in the water," he replied. "But leave me in quiet, Maria—and don't, I entreat, let your mother near me—I shall be better to-morrow —don't alarm yourself needlessly—I was merely dragged into the water by the little madman with whom I left the house—and rescued, of all men, by Charles Herbert. . . . . . You will see it all in the morning papers. Good night, now—and don't sit up."

"Good night—but I must sit:" and Mrs. Burke Barker kissed her husband's burning brow with something of pity and fondness, and secretly repented all her sins of that night against him, and hoped that something might still save them. "Barker was a man of such extraordinary talents—could make himself so useful to any party"—— and forthwith she went to listen to her mother's proposal still to secure the plate. It could easily be restored, if necessary,—but was better to be placed in safety, whatever should occur. Mrs. Barker offered no opposition; indeed the original scheme had been her own. She saw her mother depart, in the hackney-coach which had brought her, with a load of pillage, and then took her place in the room adjoining her husband's, to wait the return of her servants from the theatre, and send Dobbs for a surgeon.

Next morning the summons of the Coroner, served upon Barker, first apprized his wife of the fate of Bigsby; and in part accounted to her for her husband's distress of mind. She shuddered herself for an instant at the catastrophe.

The Coroner, notwithstanding Barker's absence, refused to adjourn the inquest; and indeed the evidence of the boatmen, and of Herbert and Marion, was clear enough as to the manner of Bigsby's death; and the verdict, "Drowned himself in the Thames during a fit of temporary insanity," was after all the true one; since it was no business of Mr. Coroner's to trace the causes which had produced the fatal temporary aberration of mind. Marion produced from her ample pockets a pair of scissors which might have represented those of the Fates, and cut off a lock of hair to give to the widow:—and then all was over; and in another hour the remains of poor Bigsby were added to the mouldering heaps of a London burying-ground. It was a mournful duty to Charles Herbert to attend as chief mourner. His only associate, save the undertaker's men, was Mr. Snipson, the tailor, who generously lost a couple of hours of time, and exposed his best black suit to the chances of a showery day, in paying this respect to his late lodger; or in "lighting a candle to the devil," as his wife described a piece of decent hypocrisy, meant to conciliate rich Mrs. Linton.

The various melancholy engagements of the

morning had unfitted Herbert for study; and he lounged about in the Green Park till the hour he had appointed to meet at a bookseller's shop with Gryphon, and walk with him to Chelsea.

CHAPTER XXV.

Mr. Gryphon kept true tryst. He was very carefully dressed in his dinner suit, and looked in good spirits, and altogether remarkably well. Charles Herbert also recovered his spirits on their walk; and they sat down to dinner a cheerful and even gay *partie quarrée*, agreeing to put off the grand debate till they were assembled at the tea-table. Everything went off well. A showery morning had ended in a splendid evening, and everything was in harmony. Marion's Tweed salmon was perfection; the pretty, becoming cap, which Violet had constructed for Mrs. Herbert, was exquisite; and that lady, who liked pretty caps, and looked well in them, said, "It was almost too smart to be thrown away on old Gryphon." That gentleman, seeing to-day, in Mrs. Herbert, an ally in the furtherance of his project, looked upon her with unwonted complacence. He had long known that the spoiled widow of his client, the late rich East India Director, was a very pretty little woman, in excellent preservation, though endowed, as he thought, with sufficient *hauteur*. But this day, Mrs. Herbert's manners to himself were as complacent and engaging as they had usually been distant and reserved, though scrupulously polite. She was even studiously complacent;—and a man who takes any interest in the discovery soon finds out when a woman wishes either to repress or encourage his attentions. He began to have a vague idea that he had always done Mrs. Herbert injustice, or that she was not the person he had fancied, but, in reality, the gentle, sweet, and serene feminine creature that her step-son's reverence and fond affection had ever indicated.

Mr. Gryphon had certainly not of late seen this lady to the same advantage. Since her residence at Chelsea, and changed mode of life, she had improved in appearance. Her delicate proportions were fuller and rounder; her complexion clearer and more delicate; her looks and eyes softer—and they were ever soft. Mrs. Herbert's meetings with Mr. Gryphon, since the death of her husband, had all been on business, and generally on annoying business; and she had perhaps owed the astute and cool-headed lawyer a slight grudge for his interference and disapprobation of the extraordinary will made by her husband, which left his son nearly dependent upon her generosity or whim. Now, this circumstance was buried among past things. She had lost with her fortune the power improperly confided to her; and the ever-remaining proof that she had not abused it, was the warm and confiding affection of Herbert and his wife for their step-mother, with whom they lived in the same freedom and cordiality as with a beloved elder sister.

Mr. Gryphon was particularly gratified by the lively words addressed to him, when, as he opened the door for the ladies to retire, Mrs. Herbert, smiling irresistibly, said, "Don't be long, my gallant ally—for I am resolved that, with your aid, I shall conquer."

He lost not a moment, after the gentlemen were left to their wine, of commencing—"I had no idea of how charming a woman Mrs. Herbert is—even yet."

"Even yet! my good sir," returned Herbert, laughing. "What does the chill qualification of, even yet, mean?"

"Why, she looks not more than twenty-seven; and must be, let me see——"

"My mother's personal beauty is her least charm.—I scarcely now, I fear, think very much about even my wife's fresher beauty. I somehow am in love with the one—and love both for their altogetherness."

"What a happy fellow you are, Charles!—you may well afford to forgive him, if an old bachelor, after a family visit of this sort, should be a thought envious."

"Not envious, but *emulous*;—get such a home for yourself—only as much richer as you like—and don't envy your friend," returned Herbert, believing what he recommended utterly impossible; though Gryphon deserved a good wife, because he was likely to make an amiable and reasonable woman happy.

"Mrs. Herbert wont to be, or else I imagined so, rather on the high ropes with me; but to-day she is more than civil, she is almost kind; and what a change does kindness to one's dear self make in any, the plainest woman!"

"Anticipating your suit, perhaps, and letting you perceive that she means to be gracious," replied Herbert.

"My suit!" faltered the usually steady lawyer, with the look of momentary confusion which is the nearest approach that a man of his character ever does make to a modest blush. Their eyes met; and Herbert, for once, read a lawyer's hidden and incipient secret in his guilty face.

"Ah, you mean my suit for the Plantagenets," said Gryphon, recovering himself. "Ay! she is on my side, I know—one strong proof of her discernment."

"'And there's more sympathy,'" quoted Herbert, laughingly; but Mr. Gryphon was musing over his claret. Though he called himself by implication an old bachelor, he had in fact been a widower for more than twenty years. The death of his wife had well-nigh driven the hard-looking lawyer distracted; and the calamity had not been surmounted for many years. The remembrance of his short-lived domestic bliss was still at times as vivid as ever; and such reminiscences had often, of late, been renewed, when, on a Sunday afternoon, he visited the Herberts. For many years Gryphon had been a systematic play-goer and patron of the drama in his own way. There had been a freedom and sociality about the theatre, after the labours of the day, which, when as yet *genteel* clubs were not, formed a kind of substitute for the domestic circle. But, as he grew older, he became fonder of his own fireside. Many of his early favourites had died out or disappeared from the scene; and actors were no longer what they had

been. The taste of every inveterate play-goer is, in a great degree, conventional. No new actor, even though really superior, can ever fill the place of Liston, or Incledon, or Emery, or Kemble, or Abingdon, or Farren, to an old play-goer, whose first love they have been. In the approaching season, Mr. Gryphon had almost made up his mind to avoid the theatre altogether. It was becoming an annoyance to sit out a play, and painfully to contrast the new twinkling stars with the vanished lustres of Old Drury. Yet the prospect of his long solitary evenings was lonely; and one could not every night of the week play backgammon with old Joe Smith. Here seemed the very woman to brighten a home; though young-looking, not young;—found in a happy home that, though to it she lent so great a charm, could spare her to another where she would hold the first place. One of Gryphon's great matrimonial misgivings, for he had several, was on the score of temper—and here he was safe. His own outward bearing was not of the softest; and he could judge very fairly of the real tempers of men under all exteriors; but he was afraid that in the lovely sex, under the most creamy and velvety, or sugar-frosted manners, ladies sometimes conceal qualities the most fatal to the forbearance, and ease, and companionable cheerfulness which was all he promised himself in a wife. But here were unimpeachable sweetness of disposition, united to lively intelligence and elegant manners, and a really remarkable share of personal loveliness—for her years. And Mr. Gryphon wished these were more, and her beauty less; for then his chance were the better of obtaining so delightful a domestic companion. But the modest Mr. Gryphon was, on the other hand, a lawyer, and a wealthy man, and he did not quite despair. This charming widow was comparatively poor and dependent; and her tastes were what is called refined, and her habits had long been expensive and self-indulging. Mr. Gryphon had too much sense and manhood to think of buying or bribing any lady to be his wife; but Mrs. Herbert, well and cheerfully as she had borne adversity, was, he knew, not insensible to those *agremens* of life, to which Charles Herbert and his wife, wrapt in the rapturous bliss of their mutual attachment—all the world to each other—still appeared indifferent. They might not perhaps always continue so, philosophers as they were, —and their mother had a better appreciation of the value of well-regulated luxury, as her present Plantagenet leanings demonstrated. Gryphon thought all the better of the lady for entertaining those tastes which he shared and could afford to gratify in her. So he mused, as he cracked fresh filberts; and remarked that his old housekeeper paid no attention to the dessert, which was always neglected where there was not a lady.

Herbert, who knew by experience, that Gryphon liked to give his friends a glass of good wine, and to indulge himself with one or more, now pressed another bottle of the best, and now very old, vintage of his late father's diminished cellar; but Gryphon, though praising the claret, protested that he would not be kept longer from the side of his fair ally. "If I had your motive to move, Charles, my friend, I should become a Frenchman—go off with the ladies, sir!"—which gallant speech Herbert instantly repeated in the drawing-room.

As soon as the gentlemen appeared, Violet took her post by the old-fashioned round-about tea-table used in this house—one of much ease, though of narrow dimensions and few domestics. She wished to cause no delay in the business of the evening, the gentlemen proposing to return to their respective chambers,—Herbert, to be ready for his studies in the morning.

Herbert made his stepmother take his wife's place at the piano, saying to Mr. Gryphon, "I am a stoic to music save when I steal out here to 'Paradise and the Peri,' so I cannot afford to lose a minute from the practice of my last new song. Play, mother, if you please, the accompaniment of my present favourite."

"Nay, Charles, you may surely select something more classic than that simplest of all simple Scottish melodies to entertain Mr. Gryphon: this is not the kind of music he will relish."

"I should not wonder if the play-house had corrupted his taste. Has it, Mr. Gryphon, taught you to prefer art, and low art too, to the loveliest nature? It usually does; but never mind, mother: we'll try to regenerate him. . . . The lady does not admire this simple style of music herself, to tell you truth, Mr. Gryphon; yet the particular melody is as light, airy and tripping as ever a Venetian canzonet. And *my* singing too," he added in a comic voice, and hemming, to clear his throat: "you should really come to us oftener, to learn in what the charm of social music consists."

"I wish the ladies would only give me leave," said Gryphon gallantly, yet with a touch of sorrow in the tone of his voice. "I may say with poor Lord Dudley—though my forlorn case is much less surprising—that there is not a house in London to which I could go for a cup of tea."

"O, for that," cried Herbert, "you are almost as over-modest—if it be not rather, 'the pride that apes humility,' in both of you—as Dudley himself."

"Am I to play this then, Charles?" inquired Mrs. Herbert, while Gryphon hovered behind her chair, as if meditating the outrageous gallantry of turning the leaves of the music for her. He however shrunk back, but still stood behind the performer.

"I presume, I must gratify this peremptory married gentleman," said Mrs. Herbert, while her jewelled, and very delicate fingers, glanced like sunbeams over the keys; and she turned up her side face with a winning smile, as if asking Gryphon for permission to gratify Charles.

The melody, played with great spirit and lightness, deserved all the praise that Herbert had given it; and his heartfelt expression did it all the justice which the most exacting Scot could have demanded for the sweetest lays of Burns. It was the well-known little Scottish song—

' *My wife's a winsome wee thing.*

Mr. Gryphon was enchanted; he made Charles

repeat the song—he attempted it himself, whilst Mrs. Herbert laughingly covered his blunders with the instrument, until he succeeded to the general admiration.

"Bravo!" cried Charles. "Try it once more;—if you are tired, *Maman*, I shall try to knock off the accompaniment." "I can never tire of playing for Mr. Gryphon, if he really wish it," said Mrs. Herbert, again turning up an animated and complacent face to the lawyer, and commencing again; and then the Scotch fell to be translated by her. Herbert had a notion that the scholar understood the language much better than his mistress, but Gryphon took his lesson with the most edifying gravity and interest.

She is a winsome wee thing—
She is a handsome wee thing—
She is a bonnie wee thing—
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

"You understand this—the chorus, Mr. Gryphon?"

"I fancy I now do; but I understand no more of it."

I never saw a fairer,
I never lo'ed a dearer,
And neist my heart I'll wear her,
For fear my jewel tine.

"This is pretty plain too—lo'ed is the Scotch for loved; and——." Mrs. Herbert stopt, and cried out in some confusion, for Charles was smiling roguishly—"Take Charles for your dragoman."

Mr. Gryphon protested against the change, but did not push the matter too far; and Charles took up the last verse to expound.

The warld's wrack we share o't,
The *warstle* and the care o't;
Wi' her I blithely bear it,
And think my lot divine.
For she's a winsome wee thing, &c.

"Your 'winsome wee wife' will make your other wife give Mr. Gryphon cold tea, Charles," said Mrs. Herbert, somewhat impatiently.

"I made tea too soon, fancying you bent on business—but it is pleasure you prefer," said Violet.

"Are we not wiser!" replied Herbert—"but that last stanza was *german* to the matter of our present business.—It contains my creed. Long life to the peasant-bard who brought such philosopy to our firesides, and in a garb so fascinating;" and having sung the air so often, Herbert now whistled it, while Mr. Gryphon placed a chair for Mrs. Herbert, and sat down by his "fair ally," on what she sportively named the Opposition benches.

"Well, lady and gentlemen," she commenced, "since I have the honour to open the debate, I begin by avowing myself a Plantagenist out and out—ready to support my opinion *à l'outrance*."

Mr. Gryphon's eyes sparkled with pleasure and approbation, while he said—"And I say ditto to whatever Mrs. Herbert says; and will to the best of my ability, by solid argument, cogent reason, and lucid statement, support her cause,—though truth from her lips——"

"Oh! if you come to ladies' lips, I say idle gallantry has no business with the question at issue:—at all events we are still two against two. You see, sir, how cheerful and happy a poor affectionate family we are. Is it wise, mother, to risk this 'sober certainty' for any perilous good that can be offered us? What say you, my winsome wee wife? You speak now."

"Indeed, Charles, indeed, Mr. Gryphon," replied Violet, blushing, and shaking her curls in her pretty infantile manner, when slightly embarrassed, "you know best—far best. I have no opinion—none but yours."

"Most simply spoken, my dear little daughter," said Mrs. Herbert, somewhat piqued; and turning to Mr. Gryphon, she continued—"These married folks, with their conjugal alliances, offensive and defensive, are more than a match for us simple single people, Mr. Gryphon. But can Mrs. Charles, being a married woman, have a voice potential in any important matter? Can she, being 'under coverture'—under which term English law disguises woman's slavery—have a vote independently of her husband? We are the majority still—two to one, Charles, two to one!" and the lively lady, in triumph, clapped the delicate hands which Gryphon would fain have made captive. He, however, contented himself with taking less by his motion, and only said—

"Pardon me if I cannot hear my profession impeached without defence. Woman is a great favourite of the English law, as I hope to be able to convince you, ma'am."

The old lawyer seemed so much in earnest that Herbert was tickled by a sense of the ludicrous.

"Stand up for our shop, Gryphon!" he cried, sportively; "though it is hardly worth while to throw away an ingenious pleading; as I am certain that my mother, instead of a slavery, considers a well-assorted marriage as infinitely the happiest condition of every woman from sixteen to one hundred and six."

A great deal of badinage of the same sort passed, and the business had scarce been entered on, when an event occurred which gave a new complexion to the whole matter. A carriage was heard drawing up at the door, to Mrs. Herbert's great annoyance. She cried out, hastily—

"To tell the whole truth, though Violet has deserted me now, she almost promised Lord St. Edward and his wife, this morning, to accede, when they drove out together, to plead their suit. The young Countess is really an intelligent, interesting young creature. She is most anxious to leave London immediately, and do whatever the family of her husband thinks best; and he is the most charming, modest, ingenuous youth I have ever met with in his rank. They seem fondly attached to each other; and we, in short, cannot withhold consent. . . . . But who can that be? It is really too bad to be liable to such inroads at all hours. This is one unhappy consequence of our present rather humble if happy style of living." She rose. "The Brabazons invited themselves to tea—but that was for to-morrow, I shall order that we be denied."

"They are admitted already, I fear," said Violet.

"Well, Heaven send me the luxury, if not of a regular fat porter lolling in my hall to defend

my presence and premises from obnoxious intruders, then, at least, a footman, or even a housemaid, who can tell a needful lie. This is so tiresome! These are among those mortifications attendant on poverty, Mr. Gryphon, which I feel peculiarly. It was so different in my past times."

Before Mr. Gryphon could sympathize with a feeling which he was not sorry to perceive, the Scotch housemaid entered, to say, that she could not help disobeying Mrs. Herbert's orders, for that the young gentleman below would take no denial —"he seemed in the greatest distress of mind." The girl herself had caught the contagion of the visiter's reported agitation.

"I am sure the young lord ails something very bad indeed, ma'am. Ane need not light a candle to see true sorrow."

Violet instantly sprung up, crying, "Emmeline must be worse, she complained a little this morning."

"Lady St. Edward has eloped!" ejaculated Gryphon, true to his character of a lawyer, and a hater of all the house of Cryppes, without one exception. Mrs. Herbert looked shocked; and Gryphon added, "or the Duke is worse, and I am wanted. He had a touch of flying gout, and the announcement of another *expected* heir to his titles and estates ruffled him not a little. He will be pleased by and by at having one security more, though it come through a wrong channel."

"Not you, sir, are wanted, but Mrs. Charles," said the girl, eagerly; and Violet, obeying the natural impulse, ran down stairs.

ACTION OF THE CORN-LAWS.*

This Pamphlet proceeds from the same author whose letters in *The Times*, begun more than twenty years since, "mainly contributed," it is here stated, "to awaken public attention to this subject." But many concurrent causes have tended to this effect, though these letters are not among the least. We cite a paragraph or two to show the nature of the pamphlet :—

> The Corn-Laws properly so called were enacted *avowedly* for the protection and encouragement of agriculture; that is to say, of tillage. We have in proof of this intention an old law, still on the statute-book, forbidding land once made arable to be laid down again in grass. It appears, however, that the landed-proprietors, seeing how well Corn-Laws properly so called worked to maintain and raise the price of the products of arable land, were not slow to come to Parliament and to obtain other prohibitory laws *against the importation of the products of grass land*.
>
> It is impossible not to perceive that the intended extension of tillage, by means of the Corn-Laws properly so called, was defeated by these other Provision-Laws protecting grass-lands; and that the combined result has been an artificial high price of all the products of land, constituting a private tax on all the other classes of society in favour of landlords.

We never wish again to see the Corn-Law Abolition Question disjoined from that of the repeal of the other Provision Laws; viz. the beef, mutton, pork, bacon, butter, and cheese laws, or, landlords' monopolies. These kindred iniquities ought to be treated as one and indivisible. Here is another detached paragraph showing the spirit of the pamphlet.

> Are the people to have employment and food, or are they not? The injurious claim to increase of tithe, with increase of produce, without having contributed to such increase, is as preposterous as it is oppressive—oppressive in the ample part it takes in preventing the extension of tillage, thus depriving the rural population of employment. Ministers of the Gospel, ask yourselves, what you are doing! What reasoning man must not be forcibly struck with the increasing scale of products, and of employment, from the common to the enclosed field, from the simply enclosed, to the ploughed and cultivated acre, and from the simply arable, to garden culture!
>
> Away with the hypocritical sophistry, that it is useless to produce more food, and cheap food for those who have not the means to purchase it! Make laws which shall really promote arable culture, or at least abolish those existing laws which militate against it, and you will give the means of purchasing its products by the very employment you have given: this among, obviously and directly, the agricultural population.

This author does not believe that the abolition of the Corn and Provision Laws will have the effect of throwing inferior soils out of cultivation,—an idea which he deprecates and also ridicules. His arguments on this point ought to soothe the alarms of the landowners and their friends. Comparatively advanced as agriculture is in England, this author anticipates immense advantages from an open trade exciting the agriculturalists to useful competition. Nay, he goes the length of thinking that some other countries have gone beyond us in really productive, if not in showy, agriculture. As our publication finds a way into many quarters where pamphlets are never seen (though the present is luckily a rather cheap one) we shall, from pure good will to the cause, borrow one more extract.

> We will now compare the system of agriculture in some other countries with that of England, and their productive results.
>
> Of the seventy-six millions of statute acres in the United Kingdom, there are about twenty-six millions remaining in waste and sheep-walks. Of the other fifty millions there are about thirty-two millions in natural grass, and only eighteen millions in tillage; that is to say, little more than one acre in tillage to two acres in grass; or in other words, that in every three acres, only one is cultivated.
>
> We know, in a general way, that in the populous parts of Germany, the proportion of grass-land to the arable is about one acre in seven or eight acres. We know also in a general way, that in the populous parts of Italy, the proportion of grass-land to the arable is about one acre in every twelve or fourteen acres. In France sta-

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* Action of the Corn-Laws, and of the other Provision Laws, considered on the Principles of a Sound Political Economy and of Common Sense. By the Author of Letters in *The Times*, which, more than Twenty Years since, so mainly Contributed to awaken Public Attention to this Subject. London; Saunders & Otley, Conduit Street. 1841.