

VIOLET HAMILTON; OR, THE TALENTED FAMILY.

(Continued from our April No.)

CHAPTER IX.

It is now some time since we took leave of our simple heroine, in what is generally considered the most vital and delicate crisis of a Woman's existence; that to which every circumstance of her girlhood points, and which is essentially, if not finally, to seal her fate to weal or woe; or to consign her to the cheerless, monotonous state of passive endurance, which, in deadening or obliterating her highest faculties and finest sensibilities, dwarfs her intellect, benumbs every generous affection of her heart, and perverts the noblest purposes of her being.

During the first tumultuary excitement of her feelings, Violet, the most blest of mortal creatures, though outwardly calm, yet really wild and dizzy with the exulting sense of rapture throbbing at her heart, imagined that she could never again know anxiety or sorrow. Evils which, to her inexperience, had looked appalling, and which really were of serious magnitude, disappeared for the moment; and it seemed treason to every nobler attribute of her nature to indulge one cowardly misgiving, one melancholy apprehension, while blessed beyond all imaginable blessing with the rich treasure of Herbert's love! Mrs Cripps, whose matronly assistance had been summoned when Mademoiselle was carried up stairs in a swoon, from which she had, however, instantly recovered, reported, on rejoining the family circle, that she knew not what to make of the girl.

"A very plain case of affectation," said Miss Cripps, with a frown of the head; "a pretty manoeuvre to alarm Charles Herbert, when found so opportunely in the conservatory; perhaps to quicken his dull mind, and draw forth the *ray-ther* tardy declaration."

"Extremely likely," added Mrs Cripps; "for, at all events, the Mademoiselle is no more seriously ill than I am, unless she be going out of her senses, which the ridiculous fuss that is made about her *genius* and her *beauty*, and what not, renders very probable. Fancy the silly chit beginning to weep on my bosom: but I know how to manage hysterical young ladies—she soon came to herself."

Professor Cripps, evidently alarmed for his pupil's sanity, on hearing so extraordinary a circumstance, eagerly expressed his concern.

"Pray don't afflict yourself, my good sir," said his meek helpmate: "saving a look of idiocy, tears in her eyes, and a fatuous kind of smile playing on her lips, I never saw Mademoiselle looking better."

"Nay, I did think Violet exceedingly lovely this evening, even when at the worst," said Cripps. "Expression, as Barker says, is the soul of her face; expression varying with every mood of her soul."

"Mr Barker must always be saying some clever nonsense or other, which papa takes

seriously," said Polly; "but I dare say something has occurred to flutter the meek dove. I fancied she was going to tell me all about it; but I presume the second thoughts of *prudent* young ladies are best."

In the rapturous feelings of the moment, and with the instinctive craving of the young and warm heart, at such seasons, for womanly, for motherly, for sisterly sympathy, poor Violet had been tempted to reveal what, but for maidenly bashfulness, she could indeed have proclaimed to the whole world—her new-born bliss—bidding it share in her abounding joy. Her affectionate tenderness, and even caressing manners to mother and daughter, when they approached her with offers of assistance, were so unlike the measured civility to which their uncongenial minds, and the harshly repulsive manners of the elder lady, had long restricted their intercourse, that Mrs Cripps' severe treatment of hysterical cases was probably required to awaken the sense of dignity, and restore Violet to her ordinary constrained demeanour with them; yet even then, the absent wandering air, the moist eyes, and the faint smile fluttering on her lips, spoke of those extatic feelings, the signs of which no exterior circumstances could repress; and which betrayed her, at least to the younger lady, who, at the subsequent family conference, proceeded to say—

"I could swear Charles Herbert has told his flattering tale, if he has not actually proposed."

"Then I wish to goodness he had her, and paid you forfeit, Cripps, for your runaway apprentice. £500, are not the penalties? You will never, I prophesy, make half so much out of her."

So hard run up was the Professor at this time—driven to such miserable and dangerous shifts to recruit his finances and "carry on the war in style," till the tide of fortune flowed—that the words *pay forfeit*, sounded magically on his ear. Yet to abandon his swelling schemes of professional glory, as well as of great aggrandizement, was highly imprudent, even in a pecuniary view—so he made himself believe—and also most mortifying. His mind was thus divided between the urgency of present necessity and the hopes of future gain, when the demon which ever stands ready to dodge the elbow of the needy, weak-principled, and vain man, in moments when conscience sounds a parley, appeared in the shape of his hopeful son. Jack drew his papa aside, and whispered something which banished the Professor's colour, and made his hands tremble. Jack himself maintained the utmost composure, and began to joke with his sister about her lover, and her very handsome "upper Benjamin," in allusion to her elegant robe, with an inuendo about the W—levy, which made the blood mount higher in Polly's face. She hastily, as a diversion, mentioned her mother's scheme of making Herbert pay forfeit.

"Capital stroke; but a wretched pittance, after all—only £500.—Were the case as you suppose, Poll, my darling, which is, after all, mere conjecture—not Herbert's love I mean, but Herbert's proposal—so poor as he is, and where there is no *blunt*, no *tin*, in the case—that paltry penalty would be but wretched indemnity to my father for the pecuniary loss he must sustain by his pupil bilking him, as the lawyers would say—in *re* CRYPPS *versus* HERBERT, damages £10,000—after"——

The black lustrous eyes of Mrs Barker elect flashed heathen fire, as she looked to her ingenious brother; and interrupting his nonsense, which, such was Jack's weakness, often came in the way of his finest ideas, she replied to her own thoughts.

"If Herbert had any *solid* fortune, any command of cash or means to raise it, I do indeed see an opening for you, papa. His pride will never brook to see the woman he intends to make his wife on the stage. Mr Barker detests the idea of professional life for *me*;" and the young lady, whose most ambitious wishes had so lately been the stage, drew up in disdain of the vocation in which her father placed all his hopes and glory.

"Let Herbert have her, in God's name," said Jack; "only she must run away either *with* or *to* him. All my fear is, he wont bite, or not in time for us; for, somehow, fellows like him in high life, when money must be had, always contrive to get it. The Wind must be raised, that's flat, though it blow great guns to drive us out of the water; and for to-morrow morning, too;—no dallying with a certain order of ugly customers."

Professor Cripps looked with perplexity and anguish upon his comforter and financier.

"My Uncle, Heaven bless him for a friend in need, the truest I have ever found!" continued Jack.

"I will not hear of it, sir," interrupted the professor of music, flushing with a sense of anger and shame, which his son was utterly incapable of understanding. "I feel utterly disgraced by what you have led me to do already in that line. The old Scotchwoman, I am convinced, suspects us, if she has not proof positive."

Mr Cripps alluded to the valuable furniture, pictures, and plate, which his son had persuaded him to pawn, or send to the auction mart, to raise temporary supplies, when forced loans, bill-brokers, Barker's credit, and every other means had failed them.

"Take it easy, papa:—there, smooth your raven down, and go down stairs to receive your guests. Put a good face on the matter; and the deuce is in it if, in the broad and fertile field of London, with brilliant talents and splendid opportunities, the Cripps family, if true to itself, do not make a living, ay, and a figure too!—The world's my oyster, and I with *brains* will open it. There is an idea germinating here"—and Jack, leering up with his most comical squint, tapped on that part of his high and broad forehead where Spurzheim locates imagination—

"With but a trifle in hand, a nest-egg to tempt my golden goose to lay, by shewing that its golden deposit is safe, I could make a stroke."

"Another Bubble Insurance Company?" inquired his father with bitterness; "More paintings by the old masters? A mine in Eldorado?"

"All very good things, papa, in their way, but my present idea is sinking a shaft in the golden mine matrimonial."

"My affairs do not admit of impertinent jesting, sir," replied the angry father.

"Nor do I jest; upon my honour. But I will take Poll alone into my counsels; Mrs Barker elect has more of the inventive fertility and resource of high genius than all the rest of her family, self excepted: that stroke at *Benjy* was a master-stroke," he whispered.

"No more of your nonsense, Jack," retorted his sister, angrily; modestly declining the compliment her talents merited. "If one needs a trifle, to whom can one apply save to an old and intimate friend?"

"True, you clever industrious creature; though no friend would advance a rap for me to save me from hanging: women, particularly young and handsome ones, have many advantages over us poor fellows; so much more ought we to make ourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness. There is Scripture for it, Polly.—Old Stocks has a daughter, a golden girl—you look astonished.—But, hark! the footmen's battering rams! This will be my father's most brilliant private night for the season; the *Princess* is positively to come. Come, Poll, don your upper *Benjamin*;" and he wickedly pulled aside the Chantilly scarf purchased with Benjamin's sovereigns, "and let me lead you to the saloon. The man don't deserve you, girl, who won't make a stretch to maintain so fine a creature in the splendour to which she lends grace, and seems born to be surrounded with." And the conciliated sister, while Jack fastened her pearl bracelets, and gave to better view the cameos which looped up the drapery of her lace sleeves, smiled in acquiescence with the self-evident proposition. "*Thieves' literature*," now so fashionable, was even then beginning to be popular; and Jack, as he led her away, chanted, in an under voice, a stave of a forgotten but once favourite ditty:—

"In Limerick I was bred and born,
On Tyburn tree I die in scorn;
In Dublin I learned the baking trade,
Where I was counted a roving blade.

"I took to me a handsome wife,
Whom I loved dear as I loved my life;
And, to maintain her both fine and gay,
Though all the world for it should pay,

"I often used for to resort
To Hounslow Heath and St James's Park,
Where I robbed lords and ladies bright—
Five hundred pounds in a moonshine night."

They were on the second landing-place—"Rat-tat-at-tat—rumble, thump, clash—ay! that must be a flunky who fancies his lady-mistress no swipes. But stay"—continued Jack, peering curiously over the railing of the corridor; and

now even the undaunted Jack faltered, "What ugly mugs are these below? The Philistines are upon us!"—and Jack nimbly slipt back and vanished; while Miss Cripps, running down, saw her father pale as a corpse, a cold perspiration breaking on his face, sitting on one of the hall chairs, surrounded by three or four singular-looking persons, who yet could hardly be presumed foreign visitors.

Polly had an instant apprehension of how the case stood, and of the danger, for her thoughts travelled fast in the direction of self, which menaced her matrimonial prospects by this unlucky *contre-temps*. Nor was she without considerable affection for her father, or the natural feelings of a young woman new to scenes of this painful kind, and to whom an arrest—the actual presence and contact of those hateful phantoms, *bailiffs*, is always terrible. Yet her wits did not in this emergency forsake her. "Miss Cripps, my dear," faltered the father, "send your brother to me; you may remain above stairs; I have some trifling business with these gentlemen; the apartments are open for company: but in the—the butler's pantry, gentlemen, we will not be observed. There, my own angel, command your feelings. Has Barker come?"

"My brother has left," said Polly, readily and coolly, aware that Jack might have very particular reasons for avoiding recognition. "I believe Mr Barker will not be here; but Mr Herbert is in the house. The gentlemen will surely allow you time, papa, to summon your friends around you; to whom shall I send? to Sir George Lees?"

The Professor shook his head wofully. More company was arriving.

"The butler's pantry; the servants' room, below; any place save this," he cried, in anguish, attempting to retire; and the butler's pantry was retreated to, and the singular party supplied with lights and wine, by Polly's orders; after which she flew to her mother and her brother. The former sobbed, scolded, and cried; cried, scolded, and sobbed. The latter was quite self-possessed. Jack was indeed writing cards with great rapidity.

"A couple of flambeaux at the door, and a lugubrious tale, will suffice to turn back the mass of company to-night: but some of the expected must be treated with more ceremony. Never mind reading my notes, Poll; seal and address, girl:—Domestic calamity; sudden and alarming indisposition of Mademoiselle; excruciating spasms: if one now could have leisure delicately to insinuate that Monsieur Eustache, the secret agent of Malibran, has given her a *leelle* dose in an ice; but one can't do every thing. Don't, however, burn your charming fingers with the wax in your haste, Poll. Send off the notes, and pay well the messenger that shall make despatch. I must slip out by the offices, but will be back in an hour, at most, with the supplies; meanwhile, keep the gemmen below in good humour, and set Mademoiselle on Herbert. Lees is flint harder than the nether millstone.

The *gents* in the butler's pantry, to a gentleman like papa, will shew civility for his money."

With the utmost deliberation, Jack took down an exquisite cabinet picture, the pride of Mr Shuttleton's dressing room—subject, a Cupid mounted on a swan—which he tied up in his pocket-handkerchief, and next he took the silver standish, from which he had just been writing; poured the different inks into the fireplace; put the silver-mounted ink-glasses, taper-stand, and all the other appendages, into his bosom—for Jack had no pockets, nor much use for them—and dexterously passed the body of the standish up his back, between his coat and waistcoat, tightly buttoning the former garment, while his admiring sister looked silently on.

"How do I look, Poll? Demnetion blousy; but, never mind, no one will see me at this hour—only raff abroad."

Jack had no sooner disappeared, than Miss Cripps sent a message down stairs, requesting to be favoured with a minute's conversation with Mr Herbert; but he had gone away immediately on hearing that Mademoiselle had perfectly recovered from her swoon. A few individuals, early comers, were now assembled in the principal drawing-room; and it seemed odd that none of the family appeared to receive them. After a short consultation, Monsieur Eustache was deputed to acquaint the guests with the "domestic calamity," or Mademoiselle's violent spasms; and the gentlemen walked off and procured hackney vehicles for the sullen ladies, whose excessive condescension to Professor Cryppes and his pupil, was thus rewarded by disappointment.

In the meanwhile, the imagined victim of excruciating torture, all unconscious of the troubled scenes passing under the same roof, had from the mere exhaustion of overwrought feelings, sunk into soft and tranquil sleep, and, wrapt in Elysian dreams, fancied herself sitting in the viny arbour of the well-remembered Jersey cottage, between her father and Mrs Herbert, who both smiled fondly upon her, and talked to her of Charles, and bade her sing to them.

"Ah, were the sweet vision real, or all of it that Heaven still permits, how blest were I, beyond all imagination of earthly bliss!" was Violet's thought, on recalling her delightful dream. Would the mother of Charles ever smile on her, and talk of her son? She remembered the stinging words so lately wrung from him—"All mothers are alike; cold, proud, and ambitious." And did these words too truly speak his experience of the mother whose generosity to her step-son was the theme of praise—of her on whom his fortunes depended—who had, until now, held the first place in his affections—with whom he had lived in such cordial, confiding intimacy, such perfect reliance, as if she had been the most devoted elder sister. "Is it my lot to sever hearts so affectionately knit, so tenderly united?" was the more mournful and regretful idea of Violet, in pursuing this train of thought; and then hope, the ever-springing, would whisper—"If she would do me the honour to know me—so amiable

and gentle as she is, so indulgent and kind as Herbert speaks her—prejudice might lessen. But identifying me with this family; with the forward audacity of some of them, and the equivocal position of all of us; can I blame Mrs Herbert for seeking to withdraw her son from such society, and especially from an intimacy which she must consider unworthy and degrading? How will he venture to tell that proud and dear lady that his thoughts have strayed to poor me?—Heaven forbid that I should be the means of creating a breach between them!"

With the generous elevation of genuine affection, ever seeking as its greatest good the happiness of its object, Violet fancied she *could* resolve, and that she certainly *would* resolve to do whatever the lady, whose claims on the duty and gratitude of her lover were so strong, and who so disinterestedly desired his honour and happiness, should deem most for his advantage. Yes! she would voluntarily give him up; try to forget all that had passed—her hopes, her dreams; and there came soothing with the energetic thought—"What ever is best for Charles, that I can do." And then crept in the sweet sophistry of love, whispering that perhaps her great sacrifice might not be required—to this overwhelming extent not.

That after her indisposition no one came near her during the long night, was not surprising to Violet in this family: but she wondered that no noise of company, no sound of music or dancing, was heard. And then she imagined that she had slept long; that it must be very late; that most of the company were gone; and the young men, and the few ladies who usually remained, set in to that stillest of pastimes, deep play. As she lay in the dark, her imagination in full activity, the sense of dead stillness became almost oppressive. Once or twice she fancied it broken by a footfall, and a rustle of motion near her door, under which the light as of a candle suddenly streamed, and she at last called out—"Is any one there?"

"Marmarzelle, its I," was blown through the keyhole, in the voice of Mike Twig. "Marmarzelle, open; I have a summut to say from Master Charles; its life and death."

Violet instinctively rose, hurriedly dressed herself, and opened the door, where stood Twig, screening a candle with his broad hand, seemingly much afraid, and yet looking particularly knowing.

"Marmarzelle, Master Charles says you must cut your stick," whispered Twig; and Violet stared in amazement.

"What do you mean?"

"You must run off, Marmarzelle, break your 'prenticeship—that's the thing! The 'ole 'ouse has been a' topsy-turvy while you were a sleeping. Sally sent off her box last night, and cook will steal off this morning; the p'lice is after Jack, and the catchpoles have a got the governor. There's a resurrection in the house, Miss; and if you would like your bits o' odds and ends smuggled out, I would get Mrs Herbert's Bob to place 'em in the hay-room with mine till dark, as you are a fellow-servant in distress, like."

And Mike nodded complacently; nor could Violet, however perplexed by the friendly proposal, be offended by what was meant in honest kindness.

"Thank you very much, Twig.—Although there should be an execution in the house, which I do not understand, I shall not require your services; at least not yet, nor in the way you mention: but you have a message for me, you said. How is that?"

"A letter, Marmarzelle," whispered Twig; "but hush, and I'll tell you all about it first. You see, Miss Polly sends me with a letter to Mr Charles to his mamma's, where was a grand party, to go bail for Mr Cripps, I s'poses; and so he comes and has a conference with the bums, and pen and ink work; and then they walks off, and then I lets out Mr Charles. 'Twig,' says he, 'you are a clever fellow;' and he tips me with a half sovereign, Miss. It was too much, it was," said Twig, overcome with the recollection of the largesse. "'Could you,' says he, 'deliver a note from me to Miss Hamilton, either to-night, if possible, or else very early in the morning.'"

"With all the pleazure in' life, say I; I'll send it up in Marmarzelle's little boots, when I clean 'em. And so he laughed, and out with a gold pencil in the hall, and scribbles like fire and tarnation; and 'here,' says he, 'deliver this yourself, with safety and speed, and you shall not repent it.' And so, Marmarzelle, knowing I was but a poor lad, without a place or a character, who might soon be on the wide world, I promised; and I wished to give you a warning, too, Miss, and help off your boxes to Bob's hay-room."

"Give me the letter," cried Violet, eagerly, "and be in the way, pray, in an hour or less. Hist!"

"O Lor'! its Miss Polly and the old dragon not a-bed yet;" and Twig, extinguishing his candle, ran off; while Violet shut and bolted her door, undiscovered.

"Are you asleep, Mademoiselle?" said Miss Cripps, in a minute afterwards, trying the door. "I hope you are quite well, now. I wish particularly to see you for a minute; open your door." There was no resource. "I have a favour to beg of you, Gabrielle. Barker and I have agreed, to-night, the license and all being ready, instead of a vulgar wedding, to steal quietly away to church, to-morrow morning; you must accompany me; we shall spend the day at Richmond, and, perhaps, make a little home-tour; but you can return from the church door with Jack. There, that's a love," kissing the elected bridesmaid. "Now, do be drest in time. Don't you envy me? but your turn will come, dear. Good night."

The probable nature of the missive in the custody of Mr Twig was, to our heroine, an affair of much greater interest than even a wedding and the office of bridesmaid to the prudent Polly, who had discovered that no time was to be lost in securing her matrimonial felicity. But Twig

had either gone to sleep, or been afraid to come back; for three anxious hours of broad daylight had elapsed before, rapping on the chamber-door, he sung out "Marmarzelle's boo-orts!" in the manner he had acquired in his first place in the inn at W—; and, with a beating heart, Violet extricated her letter, and nodded in return to the knowing look of Mike, who whispered her:—

"I'll take 'em still, Miss, to Bob's hay-room."
The hasty note of Herbert ran thus:—

DEAREST VIOLET,—The affairs of poor Cripps have taken a turn which compels me to urge you, for your own sake—may I not venture to say, for our united sakes—to leave his house immediately. Would that you had never entered it! This I had resolved, at all events, to urge upon you in the interview which I promised myself the happiness of having with you to-day, but which a series of most perplexing and unforeseen events will, I fear, prevent. I had trusted to find my mother's house open to you in this emergency: but her prepossessions are not easily overcome. Delicately as we are situated, I must not, as I at first proposed, take you away myself, although you were as willing to rely upon my prudence as I hope you are to confide in my honour and my love: but I go, on the instant, to provide an asylum for you; a safe and respectable, if an humble one. It is with your faithful old nurse, Mistress Linton. The person who delivers this is honest and respectful, and will give you every assistance in his power: but it is upon yourself I rely, upon your decision and courage, in this, the first of many difficulties which we may have the happiness to encounter and surmount together. I shall be in misery until I hear of your being safe in Fleet Street, which unless I learn by ten o'clock, I shall be compelled to brave all consequences and carry you off. But I rely, my own dearest Violet, upon your firmness and promptitude where their exertion is so needful to us, who, with one heart, have henceforth but one honour, one interest.—Poor Cripps is not so bad as those about him."

The part of Violet, on receiving this note, was easily determined. She found a pretext for again seeing Twig, whose greatest distress seemed to be "Marmarzelle" not getting her boxes smuggled off. The main difficulty now was the "ugly customers" who, having charge of the house, kept possession of the keys, and who were still asleep upon the elegant sofas on which they had unceremoniously thrown themselves. When awakened by Twig, though the principal growled a little, no opposition was made to a very pretty girl who carried nothing with her, not even a basket, going out on an errand, and Violet found herself alone in the street, and without a home. Comfortless and perilous as was that which she had clandestinely forsaken, it was not abandoned without pain. Feeling that every eye was upon her, reading her story in her face, and half afraid that she

had taken an improper and rash step; reproaching herself with leaving the family in their distress without a word at parting, she flew on, rather than walked, until, after making more than one wrong turn, she found herself in Fleet Street.

The tenement, of which Mistress Linton occupied a floor, in this ancient locality, was her own property. The principal floors were let to a tailor and milliner, who had taken their lot in matrimony together, but with whom Marion had few dealings. In her own phrase, she "lived within herself." Instead of using the common kitchen of the sunk floor, Mrs Linton had, by well-planned alteration, formed out of the attic floor a complete suit of apartments for herself—a house within a house—of which its owner's great boast was, that she "could lock her own stair-foot door and put the key in her pouch; a comfort which Lon'oners, living in joint-occupancy, never knew, living as they do *higgledy-piggledy*, and cheekie for chowie, gentle and simple, a' through ither."

Marion flattered herself that she had apartments which, both from their comfort and seclusion, were not unworthy of receiving "a born gentleman's" daughter in distress.

It was with some faintness of heart and misgiving that Violet timidly rung the bell at the door up three pair of stairs which shut in this Scottish fortalice. The consciousness of her very delicate situation, and the recollection of the gruff and homely, if not rude manners of her patroness, did not lessen the sense of shrinking apprehension for which there was never less cause. The door gave way at once, as if Marion had stood behind it; and there she was, her shrewd and intelligent features beaming with cordial welcome, ready to receive her expected guest.

"You knew then I was coming?"

"And glad and proud was I to hear it. Ower lang among that crew o' tinklers, hinny; but," and making a signal of silence, while slightly pointing to the regions below, she carefully bolted inside her "ain stair fit door," and then ushered her guest up the narrow and dark, but neatly carpeted stairs, and suddenly threw open the door of her parlour, of which the sunny lightness, the extreme neatness and even elegance, made Violet start, and half scream with delighted surprise. The dwelling was more like the lantern of a light house than an attic floor in Fleet Street. It was in the back of the house, looking to the Thames, and commanding a gay sweep of view, bounded by the Surrey hills.

"It is a decent bit pairt," said the flattered landlady, in reply to Violet's exclamatory compliment, "and maybe cost twa or three *hawbaes* striking out the outshot window, and making the other bits of repairs and easements: but what is world's gear without world's comfort. A proud woman its mistress will be, if ye find it a pleasant hame till a better offer: but the coffee is ready and hot, and ye have had a race, I'm thinking, Miss Violet."

A silver coffee pot was simmering over a lamp

of the same metal, and, on a rather small table, breakfast was set out with peculiar neatness. There was even fresh flowers and early strawberries.

"I would like weel to make ye comfortable," said the hostess, kindly.

"And this is the very seat of comfort. How have you contrived to make so nice a home out of a London garret, and to gather so many elegances and even luxuries about you?"

The open window of the airy chamber in which Violet had deposited her bonnet, admitted the soft, fresh breeze from the river, which moved the light muslin curtains of the little French bed, which Violet afterwards learned had been hastily put up early that morning for herself; for Marion's dwelling had hitherto contained but one substantial, old-fashioned bed."

"I was bred among the great folks, and like things right and tight about me; and, in my line, I have had good opportunities to pick up anorra thing or twa, as a bit china, or an auld-fashioned bit o' silver wark, or the like o' that ebony knock on the bracket aboon the buffet—they say it was the Duchess of Marlborough's; or that japan clock—it is real japan the case; and the auld spinnet—to think o' me buyin a spinnet! a spinning-wheel would be liker me; but I have ane, too, ben the house, a cock-up, made o' cedar-wood, with ivory virils. They say it was Queen Mary's—no the Queen o' Scots, but Dutch William's Queen: but they may be a' lees thae clatters."

"Your house is a perfect museum of curiosities and beauties."

"It's weel eneuch; but I'm proud o' the spinnet, since you are here, Miss Violet. Keep a thing seven years and ye'll get use for it, they say: but it's far travelled that spinnet. Its been ower the Border and back again. It belonged to the auld Duchess Anne, they say; though I'll no just uphold that. But I have walth o' books, too; ye'll no need to feel langer here, I hope. There's Burns, and Allan Ramsay, and the Marrow, and Logan's Sermons—that was a present, and no my choice—and some o' Sir Walter's nonsense, and the Ettrick Shepherd, and Christopher North, who is far mair naturaler, to my thought, and gars me mony a time rive my cheeks w' laughin by my lee lane here. I daresay the cat thinks I'm daft."

"You live in Fairyland," said Violet, approaching the large broad window, and gazing out, upon the bird's-eye prospect, where the endless variety of objects was seen as if by a camera obscura.

"A fairy land in which ye maun dree your weird for a time," replied Marion, smiling graciously. "But ye maun take some breakfast before we have any farther speak, though I ken fine what your een are asking. Meat and mass never hindered work."

They sat down, and Marion, in a distinct and solemn voice, reverently craved a blessing upon the "offered mercies," and breakfast was begun. If there was anything amiss, it might be the excessive pressure of hospitality.

"I have net made so good a breakfast in England," said Violet, in warding more attempts to force food down her throat. "Everything is so excellent, and so nice; and—I suppose, Mr Herbert called?"

"Ou, ay did he, or how should I have kenned I was to have the pleasure of getting you to myself for a gliff, hinny? But I have never been able to fa' into the fashion o' the hungry London breakfasts, lang as I hae sojourned in the tents o' Kedar; a bit wizened toast, scarted ower w' a scruffin o' butter, and a blash o' tea, without milk or crame; but if Mr Charles had sooner advertised me, I could have had a pick o' marmalet, as well as a caller egg for ye."

"Many, many thanks! but indeed you are too good to me; you must not mind me so much, else I shall fear that I am troublesome."

"Ne'er say that word again," said Marion, hastily: "but I see ye are hungrier for my news than my reflections, which is but natural; see just sit ye down a blink, and crack to the canary; the cat and him are grand freends; we are a weel-greeing family up in the selates here. I cannot say one word till all my odds and ends are in order about me."

Violet amused herself with observing the quiet neatness, the despatch without bustle, with which this notable housewife restored her gala breakfast equipage to its place, and arranged her bird-cage, her "lamp-o'-light" parlour, as she called it; yet, imperceptibly, Marion's young guest sunk into reverie.

"Hech! but that was a lang sair sich to come from so young a breast, Miss Violet; d'ye ken the freit of our country, my dear, that at every sich, a red drap o' life's blood falls from the heart? Ye maun have been tyning mony draps of your heart's blood of late, I fear, hinny?" continued the old woman, sitting down by Violet, and saying, in yet kindlier and more earnest tones, "And, now dear bairn, what think ye is to come o' ye?"

This was one of those questions that are much more easily put than answered.

"Alas! I cannot tell!" answered Violet, in pathetic and desponding tones.

"Weel, weel, I was an auld fool to speer. At a' rates, jewel, ye must not let down your heart,—that is, a'thegither down; for if it be between Mr Charles and you, as I jalouse—na, as he as good as telled me, when he knocked me up out o' my bed yestreen, for he is an honourable gentleman—though there may be a crook in your lot just at the first, if ye are baith leal, and true-hearted, which I cannot misdoubt, a' will come right yet—I cannot fear it."

Violet's soft moist eyes beamed sweet thanks for this consolatory hope. "Mrs Herbert," continued Marion, "is, no doubt, a lofty, pridefu', schemin woman; and she dotes on Mr Charles, whom she thinks mair than worthy of the Princess Royal of England, if we had ane, let alone Lady Laura Temple; and if she thought ye were to come between him and her Ladyship, I believe she could see ye at the back-o'-heyent,

lady-born though ye be, and bonny innocent lassie as ye are."

Another deep involuntary sigh was the only commentary.

"To mend a young man's fortune by breaking his heart, is a queer proof of regard; though, no doubt, it is a grand match Yearl Tarbet's daughter; and Lady Laura, by a' accounts, is out of her mind for Maister Charles."

Another deep sigh was, to the garrulous old lady, the silent reproof of her inconsiderate talk; and, as if afraid of crushing her young guest too far, she now attempted encouragement.

"But if ye are his fancy, hinny—and, for my part, if I were a young gentleman, I never could fancy these high-mettle stately dames—if ye are his fancy, that settles the matter in a sense; though, as to Mrs Herbert's consent, I own I see no hope o' that; and for Mr Charles to marry without it, would not only be undutiful, all matters considered, but certain beggary and ruin to ye both. Now, though I'm far from believing that it's aye the case that, when Poverty comes in at the door, Love flies out by the window, I fear there is something in that, like every ither auld byword; or, at any rate, love finds but a cauld and dowie fireside. Weel, but sich nae mair; that does nae good."

"I cannot help it," said Violet, sadly. "When Mr Herbert comes, I shall know better what to think. I have but one right course of action—whatever is best for Charles; and that must be to part. What would you, my kind friend, who are wise and experienced, have done in my painful circumstances?"

"Now, Miss Violet, that's a puzzler. The wisdom of Solomon could not manage to please a' parties; so I am gey and feared that, at your years, I would just have pleased myself and him I liked best:—ta'en my joe and my chance of his having the world for the winning—and left the leddy-mother to come to hersel' when she tired; though I'm far from saying that would be the richt course. Puir working folk, like me, have the whip-hand o' the gentles there; for it's no' what they really want with the great folk, but what nonsense and bravty they maun hae."

Mistress Marien was now obliged to go out on household errands, as well as to carry the gratifying intelligence to Herbert that their mutual plan had succeeded; and it was agreed that, as the safest way, Violet should be left under lock and key.

Left alone, and having read over Herbert's note at least six times, she tried to amuse herself by reading the newspaper, where the paragraph, grandly announcing her appearance at the private rehearsal, and detailing her romantic and imaginary history, made her cheeks tingle with anger and proud shame.

"And this tissue of impudent falsehoods is to meet the eye of Mrs Herbert. How she must despise the heroine of such a tale!"

These painful reflections dismissed, she endeavoured, for the fiftieth time, to imagine what detained Herbert; how he could be occupied, that at such a crisis, he could not spare one five mi-

utes to converse with her. At all events he could write; and, perhaps, Marion might—nay, she certainly would—bring a note from him on her return.

Making a mental picture of the curious and valuable antique movables crowded around her, was her next employment, which was interrupted by a ringing at Marion's stairfoot bell, gradually becoming more furious, and which, at length, brought out some of the other lodgers, to announce to the noisy assailant that Mrs Linton was probably from home, and had, as usual with her, locked up her apartments. To this the voice of Jack Cripps responded, in Jack's loudest and most brassy tones, that "the old woman might go to the devil and shake herself, but that there was a young one certainly secreted in her apartments, who had, early that morning, eloped from her guardian; that he was empowered to find and carry her back to her lawful protectors, and her he would have." The tailor, followed by his lady, the milliner, now came forth, to expostulate with the clamorous gentleman who startled the house from its propriety; but Jack stormed and swaggered the more, and threatened the police, that ultimate horror of respectable London housekeepers; and that he would throw the door on which he thundered on its back if it was not opened: when, at this critical juncture, Mrs Linton herself appeared.

"Break open my door, ye dirty dandy!" cried the indignant Scotchwoman; "let me but see you try your hand at it. Open my door at your command indeed! ye needy, seedy, swindling skemp! Gie the young lady up to your custody, or your father the Professor either—that is, allowing I had her in mine, of which there is no proof;—no, if I wared the last plack in my purse, and the last drop of blood in my veins, to keep her frae ye, and the pack o' ye. A black sight it was when first she saw ye. Sae down the stair wi' ye, ere I take the besom to ye."

"I take you witness, Ma'am," to the milliner; "you are my witness, sir," to the tailor; "and all of you, that this woman, forcibly and illegally, secretes a runaway apprentice—my father's articled apprentice—whom I am empowered to carry back to her master; and who may be sent to Bridewell for her misconduct, with this old lady to keep her company."

Scotch blood could endure no more, and Mistress Marion, making a desperate clutch at Jack's whiskers, while the tailor interfered to keep the King's peace, exclaimed—

"A prentice! ye ill-faured, hairy-faced, mis-leared knave! Major Hamilton's daughter—a born gentlewoman, highly connected wi' the best blude in Scotland, a fiddler's prentice! A bonny like tale." And Marion laughed aloud in bitter derision, shouting again, "Tramp, sir! aff wi' ye, or I'll mak ye."

"I scorn to answer your vulgar abuse, you foul-tongued Scotch beldame," said Jack, grandly. "Once more I order you to open your door and give up the girl, or I shall call in the police and have it burst open."

"Ay, call the police, my bonny man, it will save me the trouble; for I was just thinking o' calling them myself. Have ye ony notion whereabout that picture of the naked laddie riding on a goose, Mr Shuffleton was so proud of, rode off to this same morning, or late yestreen? A picture that cost £85; but a fool and his money is soon parted. Do you, Mr Snipson," to the tailor, "that have so long kept lodgers, know anything anent the statutes against their pawning or stealing the furniture o' their rooms?"

"What does the old witch mean?" said Jack, somewhat taken aback, and faltering in tone.

"I mean *Bow Street*, and no less; to be followed in due time by the Old Bailey, unless ye take the ill-favoured, bristly, pig's-face o' ye off, and never let it darken my honest door again."

"I tell you, good folks, this odious wretch has a young girl locked up in her rooms, whom she has sold to a gentleman. That girl is my father's apprentice; you will surely assist me to rescue her from ruin."

"Will ye dare, ye most impudent of profli-gates!" bellowed Marion. "Let me at him; let me at him, Mr Snipson. My corruption is fairly raised now. Sell her to gentlemen! It's you and the like would put innocence into peril and temptation; and there is news of that same the day. But Providence is aye a match for the devil in the long run; and, under Providence, her ye mean, ye vagabond, is in the care of friends, who both can and will protect her."

"Under the protection of Mr Charles Herbert? I suspected as much, ma'am," replied Jack, sneeringly, "though I scarcely expected you to be so frank with me."

"Let me be guided to haud my hands off him," screamed Marion, now fairly shouting for the assistance of the civil power. "If ye get Botany Bay, or strap for it, as mony a prettier man has done for far less, ye're blood be on your own head, birkie. Let him that stirs up a fray beware of the redding stroke."

How the matter might have ended, it is difficult to say; for Jack, seeing affairs getting unpleasant, nimbly tripped past his foewoman, and, with a volley of genteel slang oaths, promptly took his departure, but whistling, as he descended, to shew the tailor and his wife that he was not afraid. Jack's shabby-genteel appearance, and the weight and consideration of Mrs Marion as a woman of property, and a house-keeper of long standing, made exactly the impression which a low fellow, apeing the gentleman, running in debt on all hands, and, above all, bilking his tailor, might have been expected to do on Mr and Mrs Snipson; to whom the most odious and detestable of all human compounds was exactly such a character.

Without pausing to gratify their curiosity about her alleged inmate, Marion opened her door, locked it, as usual, inside, and ascended to her *sanctum*, where she found the fair cause of dispute pale and trembling.

"I must crave ye ten thousand pardons, Miss Violet. Ye heard the collicehangie then, dear?

—The dirty dandy!" Marion's most contemptuous expression of her strongest feelings of disgust, for filth and finery. "I had little to do to file my tongue wi' him. If it had not been that I am amaist as unwilling to have your young name brought into a brulyement, or posted through the public prents, as Mr Herbert himself can be, I should have laid his feet fast: but ye would be made come forward as a witness, and be reported in the papers, wi' your name at full length; for if a cat kittle in Lon'on, now, it maun be gazetted before the next mornin'."

"I am afraid something very unpleasant has happened to Mr Cripps and his family."

"An Old Bailey business it should have been—pack of swindling vagabonds—and that un-hanged, impudent dog the worst among them: but they are, like all such gentry, ower weel friended. If a poor starving family had played a thousandth part o' their tricks for pure want, it would be transportation at the least.

"Weel, but I have not tell'd ye I have seen Mr Charles wi' a' this, and a glad man was he. But I'm glad to see you smile again. He took hand and glove o' me to take the best of cares of ye, till he could come himself; though there is some mischief the matter wi' him the day, that I cannot make out. He's no himsel'. One thing, however, I have to cheer ye; though not from him, but Mr Shuffleton's attorney. Mr Charles, like a man of spirit and honour, as he is, has redeemed your captivity, whatever that blackguard means by persisting in calling you a prentice. Last night, when they met in conclave—auld Cripps in the custody of the officers, and as near transportation as a man can weel be, that's no tried yet—Mr Charles took the whole affair, anent Shuffleton, on his own shoulders—and, I warrant ye, £1500 will not clear him—on condition that he got up your indentures, or whatever the black bond is called: so ye are a free woman, hinny, and he a sair bound man, I fear, unless he come in his lady mother's mercy; for I'm sure he can no more raise fifteen hunder than I can fifteen million."

Violet was overcome with the conflicting feelings to which this announcement gave rise.

"O, what can I do for him who has acted so nobly by me?" she involuntarily exclaimed, clasping her hands passionately, while the tears burst forth in streams."

"Indeed, hinny, ye must just make him a good wife, and a very good wife; I ken nae ither way ye have of making it up to him."

"That is a happiness of which I dare not dream."

"Hoot, ay! It would be hard if huz bits o' silly women bodies durst no have our bit dreams: but ye must take a morsel of dinner, hinny; I ordered a cutlet or two, and an apple fritter, from a place I can trust; and there's a bottle or two o' good auld sherry in that *gard-de-vin*, with the brass rings; and that's the callant with the tray at the lower bell. Na!" continued Marion, listening, "its that confounded claverin tawple

Jenkins, Mrs Herbert's waiting-maid, come to deliver herself of some nonsense, or else to spy out the nakedness o' the land ; but, either way, she'll meet her match here. It's like she's so fu o' news she cannot carry hame without spillin' ; so I'll let her in, and ye'll step into the inner chamber hinny, and never heed what she says, for its just as like to be lees as truth."

Marion seemed to have great faith in locked doors ; she turned the key upon Violet, and went down stairs to admit the lady's-maid.

Mrs Jenkins was a person of immense importance in her own way ; and one of the first information, particularly in whatever related to matters with which she had no concern. After recovering her elegant West-End fatigue, from ascending so many flights of vulgar steep stairs, she announced that she had come abroad about the outfit of Mr Charles, in what she delicately termed "under wearables." "The careless fellow is so accustomed to depend on us, that I don't think he could do more for himself in getting a new chemise than a baby."

"Is he going to be married that you are fitting and outfitting the young gentleman?" asked Marion.

"Not that we know of, at least not officially. The truth is, ma'am, *désagréables* will occur in the best-regulated families ; our young man has got into a scrape and completely forfeited favour ; a sad rumpus there has been about it. My Mrs Herbert diplomatically allowed Mr Shuffleton's solicitor to carry matters yesterday to extremity with these Crippes or Croppes, or whatever they are, to shame Mr Charles out of an intimacy so very improper, and the foolish young man has plunged himself the more deeply into the volcano. He has, *entre nous*, been inveigled by an artful and immoral girl into a *loy-a-song dangereuse*."

"A what said ye?" interrupted Marion, gruffly.

"A connexion, ma'am, which young gentlemen will form with improper creatures of the other sex, not of the most moral kind ; and which modest veils under the delicacies of a foreign language," responded the refined waiting-maid.

"It's a confounded lee ! and that's plain braid Scotch, as ye may tell your ledly mistress frae me, or whoever else says the same to ye. If Mr Charles is attached to a young gentlewoman, who's his full equal in blude and birth, or if he has made her an offer of marriage, it is all in honour and innocence, I'll be sworn, as becomes them both ; and that I have from a sure quarter."

"Indeed, ma'am ! Well, to be sure, great liberties are taken with young ladies' names ; even I myself have been victimized in that style. But it must be all a mistake," continued Jenkins, with a sarcastic air. "Ye ought to know better than a *confidential* like your humble servant. It can't be true that my lady has cut off her step-son with a shilling, and settled the whole of her fine fortune on the younger children of Lady Laura Temple, when she shall be Lady Laura Herbert ; or, failing that, upon Lady La. herself. The truth is, Mistress Linton, we

saw that nothing but strong diplomatic measures could save that misguided youth from ruin ; Charles goes abroad immediately as ambassador-sub under the Earl. Lady La., dear creature, accompanies her noble father ; our young man forms a member of the family ; so it is all *en train*, as we say. You will, I fancy, find my information pretty correct, ma'am," continued the lady, rising with dignity.

"And has Maister Charles really agreed to go abroad?" inquired Mrs Linton, somewhat taken aback.

"Is he stark-mad, think ye? An extravagant self-willed young man, without a shilling, but what my lady pleases to give him, dispute my lady's plans for his own honour and advantage indeed ! However, *entre nous*, and under the seal of confession, as you are an old adherent, like myself, of the family, I think I may be a little more frank. But if one word should transpire to alarm the delicate pride of Lady La. about this creature"—

"Then ye better keep your news to yourself, mem."

But Mrs Jenkins brooked no such check.

"We have but one course to take with our young man : he *must* go abroad ambassador-sub as I said ; and, in due time, marry Lady La. ; or walk into the Fleet if he please ; for he has taken engagements upon himself for that improper girl, from which, without help, he never can extricate himself. Well, yesterday, the King, who quite swears by our friend the Earl, sends for him post haste to Windsor—her Majesty, the Queen, lately taught Lady La., who is quite a prime favourite, a new stitch in knitting, that I'll shew you some day—and dubs him ambassador, when he drives post to our house in the Park, and proposes the sub-ship for our misled young man. My Mrs Herbert quite jumped at the offer. 'It has always been my ambition,' she remarked, 'to see Charles devoting his talents to the service of king and country.'"

"The country is vastly obligated to her and the like of her," remarked Marion, gruffly ; and not at all sure how this arrangement might affect the feelings or interests of her guest in the inner-room.

"Well, but there was a counter diplomacy on foot, most afflicting to us ;—the very means taken to bring the swindlers to justice—a sad, low, immoral set, those to whom you—and I am sure inadvertently—let Mr Shuffleton's house, ma'am ;—turned against us ; and in the general break-up, our foolish boy is inveigled to take the girl into keeping ; and, would you believe it, fought a duel about her this morning, with our old family friend, Sir George Lee. Hist ! what noise is that ? sure no one overhears us, Ma'am."

"Go on," cried Marion, impatiently staring and bursting. "He was not hurt, any way?"

"O no. only a trifling graze in the occipital regions : no wound save in honour ! That, as my lady said, 'that is deadly.' She was half-frantic ; the family solicitor killed a horse in

driving round in a cab to gag all the editors. But the fracas will get wind; and fancy the foolish boy meeting his best friend Sir George on the hostile field about such a paltry concern as that, and telling my lady to her face, that he would marry her to-day yet, if she would have him; there was no other course left him, as a man of honour, and that my lady only precipitated by her rash interference what must be."

"It's a ravelled hamp altogether," said Marion, hoarsely.

"As if to exasperate us beyond endurance, what does Madame Ramsden to-day, on hearing the Cripps were turned out of doors in disgrace, but send in a bill which the girl had run up with her, one day that our poor infatuated Charles took the very great liberty of putting her into our carriage; when, like a true female swindler of the first water, she drove round among our tradespeople, and ran up enormous bills for goods of all sorts."

"That would be Miss Polly."

"No, the other Miss."

"I'll hardly believe that."

"Oh, because she is Scotch; 'good patriotism, but bad logic,' as my late lady said one day." And Mrs Jenkins, now on her feet, and smiling at her own wit, twitched her shawl, while she aimed another dagger. "Nothing can be more illiberal, I am aware, than national reflections, Ma'am, which are quite cut in good society; and, no doubt, improper female characters may be found even in England; but a circumstance occurred, immediately before I came abroad, that you will allow really was a little too much. Fancy this creature sending her boxes into our house, to be taken care of for her, after she had gone off to our deluded boy—sent, no doubt, by his direction. I thought it a duty incumbent upon me to apprise my lady. 'Anything but this I could have forgiven,' she observed. I never saw her so angry before. 'This is unpardonable insult to my widowed roof. My husband's son must learn that it is possible to press me too far.' Yet, so dotingly fond is she of this unpardonable young man, that, if his disgrace could only be concealed from Lady Laura, and he could be coaxed and got abroad with the Earl, I fear she would have the weakness to forgive him all."

"I am not just sure of how far her gracious forgiveness is needed; we have a something to forgive to one another; though I am was to think so much should have come between such near and dear friends. She was so fond and proud of him; and he was as fond of her as ever real son was of true mother."

A faint groan from the adjoining apartment startled the waiting-maid.

"I beg your pardon, but I was not aware you had company," said Jenkins, colouring.

"I have company, mem, and good company, but safe company too; so ye need not fear for a' ye have said here, though ye should be cautious o' your tongue elsewhere. And now, good afternoon to ye; let no me keep you longer from preparing Mr Charles' outfit; it may be needed."

When Marion, her visiter fairly down stairs, unlocked the door of the chamber, its inmate fixedly looked on her in silent, unutterable anguish.

"Dinna look to me that awful way, hinny sweet. Surely ye cannot believe the half of that prying pyet's clavers. Hers is but the chambermaid's gospel, according to the keyhole; and ill hearing makes ill rehearsin'. If there be truth in it, we will soon hear a' the outs and ins from Maister Charles himself. And was no ye proud to hear what he said o' ye, dearest? A rash word it was to his proud mother, too; but he said nearly the same thing in substance to myself this forenoon—'Mrs Linton, ye must give me Miss Violet, and your blessing, when I come next to see you, an' I'll no believe myself a sair ruined man: do prepare her to accept me.' Only he said it, no doubt, in English; but that, ye ken, comes to the same thing.—And what is mair, since a' has come to a', I think ye maun just take him aff hand."

"How shall I deserve his matchless love?" cried Violet, rising up from the bed in which she had flung herself in anguish; and her eyes gleaming as if with the sudden inspiration of high resolution, she went on:—"I have but one course left, and if it fails, honour forbids that I should longer shrink or throw from me the crowning blessing of my life, the immediate hope of being Herbert's wife. Oh, let me now deserve that dear happiness, by proving myself not wholly unworthy of it, and I leave the rest to Heaven."

"What, dearest Miss Violet, do ye mean? Sit down, hinny; ye are sair flurried."

"No, no; I cannot rest. I will go to Mrs Herbert; and will throw myself at her feet; I will tell her the whole truth; and will compel her to listen to me—for the friendless orphan's sake; for the sake of honour and womanhood; for his sake so inexpressibly dear to us both. And I have a presentiment that she will listen to me. I will put my heart, my fate into her hands!"

Mrs Marion looked, for a minute, as if overcome, and as if fearful that her young friend was going deranged; but she was a woman of clear head and strong character, quite capable of comprehending the course of action which Violet indicated, and gradually her troubled eye cleared and brightened, and she too rose, saying with solemnity—

"Then go; and the Lord speed your errand! and He will, for surely this is His inspiration. Licht is comin' in on us out of darkness. But let me help ye to dress, hinny; or will I rin for a coach?"

"Come with me yourself; that will be better—and no time be lost."

And this was done. Though, on reaching Mrs Herbert's house, and having ascertained that she was alone, Marion contrived to smuggle her protégée up stairs without the knowledge of the vigilant lady's-maid, she judged better than to tarry further than to see Violet rush in and throw herself at that lady's knees.

(To be continued.)