Tales from "Blackwood"

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD"

Being the most Famous Series of Stories ever Published Especially Selected from that Celebrated English Publication

Selected by

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VOLUME IV

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

WHAT I DID AT BELGRADE.

BY BOB CONSIDINE.

I HAD made a most unfortunate book on the "Oaks." Hammersley told me, Bicknall told me, Sackville Jervas told me—they all told me—Glaucus was sure to win. They had had it from Locksley, who got it from Spooner, who knew a fellow who was constantly about with one of the stablemen. Then Argus said it in the 'Post,' and "Happy-go-Lucky" repeated it in 'Bell's Life,' and another in the 'Sport' said, "I borrowed a 'fiver' yesterday to lay it on Glaucus, and if any reader of this will kindly trust me with another, I pledge myself to send it in the same direction."

How was I then to doubt that I was on a safe thing? In fact, if I showed the slightest distrust

about it, all the fellows in the "Rag" began to chaff me about being a "downy cove" and an "artful dodger," accusing me of trying to raise the odds against my horse, and palpably insinuating that if not an out-and-out "leg," I was something not very remote from it.

I am not going over the miserable three weeks before the race, a time I now look back upon as a man might regard the delirium of a fever. I awoke every morning to go through a day of agonising alternations of hope and fear. Every man I met had something to tell me that was sure to set my heart a throbbing. "I say, Considine," would whisper one, "get all you can on it; Glaucus has it sure. Rig the Market was bled yesterday, and Highlander's leg is thicker than ever." "Back out of your horse, Bob," said another. "They don't mean him to win; he's only running for Pole Cat. It's the mare they stand on." "Ain't you on Glaucus?" cried a third. "Take a railway ticket then for Taganrog, I'd advise you, for he'll not be placed. Cut your lucky, old fellow, at once, and have your death inserted in the 'Times.'" "Glaucus will do well," muttered a stranger in my hearing, "if the course is heavy; dirty weather and deep ground will be seven pounds in his favour." Oh! didn't I watch the barometer after that? Was there in all England a farmer who prayed for rain as earnestly and eagerly as I did?

I cannot dwell on this terrible period. The eventful day came, and though the rain fell in torrents, and no man living had ever seen the "Oaks" run in such weather, a small wiry mare called Mrs Perkins won—Glaucus nowhere! nor I either! I sold out my troop in the "Roans," and with the price, and all I could scrape together, even to the sale of some Indian shawls and trumpery with which I had speculated on winning the affections of my aunt Dinah, a rich old damsel in North Wales, I paid all my debts on the turf, and found myself the next morning, as I awoke, with thirty-four pounds and some odd silver for all my fortune in the world.

I remember how I strolled down to the "Rag" to breakfast, affecting to think nothing of it—how I chaffed the fellows about their losses, and when some one asked me if I hadn't had it "hot and hot," I only laughed and said some commonplace about "better luck another time," and tossed off a liqueur-glass of brandy to keep me from fainting.

If, however, I escaped commiseration, it was only to incur something far worse; for seeing how easily I took my losses, the report immediately got about that I had made a splendid thing of it, that half the money won on Mrs Perkins was in *my* pocket, that I had been betting through agents—they actually named the men; in a word, that I was one of the sliest, deepest, craftiest fellows in existence; and I

even once overheard an encomium on my acuteness finishing off with "The Indian fellows are more wide-awake than any of us." This was too much for me. I started for the Continent the day after. I went over to Ostend, where I found scores of men who had been on the wrong side of the post, but who, unlike me, had not met their engagements. They were jolly rascals enough, who took their bad luck philosophically. They breakfasted on devilled mackerel and champagne, and bantered each other in the most jovial fashion over their respective books, and laughingly told over all the "robberies" they had meditated, but broke down in.

I found a few more of the same stamp at Brussels, and as I ascended the Rhine, I met here and there a stray levanter taking the waters at Ems, or waiting for some one. Your levanter has always a friend coming to join him; but wherever I chanced upon them, they were always well dressed and well-to-do, living at the best hotels of the place, and evidently denying themselves nothing that the locality afforded.

I own that I marvelled much and deeply over this strange mysterious fact, that men whom in their palmy days I had often seen anxious and fretful and careworn, should become, by the simple incident of being irretrievably ruined, not only the pleasantest, cheeriest, jauntiest of mankind, but, what was still stranger, to all seeming the easiest

on the score of expense, abounding in money, and living with a disregard to cost that was positively miraculous.

I wish I could tell my reader that I have sounded the depth of this mystery, and that I have read this enigma; but I own with shame that the puzzle remains to me what it was on the first day I encountered it. I could see plainly enough there was a sort of freemasonry amongst these men; and though so far as being ruined entitled me to being made free of the Guild, they made no advances towards admitting me, but left me out with the rest of the profane world to wonder at and admire them. Over and over again I was on the point of asking one of them to confide his secret to me, but I could not pluck up courage for the effort. Indeed, the question involved such a direct indelicacy, that I could not compass it; for by what right or on what pretext could I ask a man how he could afford saddle-horses, a box at the opera, Steinberger and Chateau La Rose at breakfast, and a score of other indulgences not less costly nor less engaging?

Perhaps I shall arrive at the knowledge some day, was my sole consolation. Perhaps a man only attains to it after being frequently ruined—being, so to say, acclimatised to misfortune. If so, I must only wait and have patience.

At all events I could not very long continue to frequent such costly companionship. Champagne

suppers and whist at "pound points" did not exactly chime in with the contents of my purse, and so I stole away from Wiesbaden on the morning of a picnic, my contribution to which had already nearly left me aground.

I wandered on to Schaffhausen, I scarcely can say why, except some hidden instinct had suggested to me that the falls of the Rhine might be an appropriate drop-scene to the luckless drama of my life. I was utterly purposeless, without aim or object. I only knew that when my last few francs were spent, my rambles must cease like a clock that has run down; but what was to happen to me after I could not imagine, nor, shall I own, did the thought press heavily on me. The world evidently had no want of me. I occupied no place in its business, its interest, or its pleasures. I felt as might a guest in a room where he knew no one, and who might slip away without even a word of farewell to his host.

After all, thought I, when I do drop out of the ranks, I have the satisfaction of knowing my name will not be remembered at roll-call. None will regret, none miss me. It was in some such frame of mind as this I sat at the large bow-window of the Weissen Ross, now looking out on the falls that were thundering away close beneath me, now trying to amuse myself with a 'Galignani' of three weeks old, not a little crumpled and mustard-stained.

The white and foamy sheet of water, spanned by a rainbow above, and lost in a cloud of foam below, had partly addled, partly soothed me. I had gazed so long at its seething flood, that I did not well know whether the water was going down or up. The roar had ceased to stun me, and was now murmuring a soft sleepy sort of croning song, suggesting evening rambles in a forest glade, or a soft moonlight row on a Highland tarn silent and still.

Though the busy waiters bustled about in preparation for the *table d'hôte* supper, and rattled knives and jingled glasses with all their wonted ability, I minded them not; nor was I aroused from my musings as the room filled with company, and many tongues of many languages jostled and encountered each other. These greetings and salutations swept across my senses, at times slightly disturbing me; but my dreamy stupor was too complete to be dissipated by their talk. At last they took their places at the table, and the solemn business of eating succeeded to the buzz of conversation.

"*Wollen sie nicht soupiren?*" asked the waiter, in his vile bastard German. I looked up, and was about to reply, when a young man arose from the table, and, rushing over to me, cried out, "What, Jemmy, is this really you? When did you come here?"

"My name is not Jem," said I, gravely.

"Not Jemmy—not Jemmy Considine of the Carbineers?" cried he, in amazement.

"No; I'm his brother," said I, with more courtesy, now that I saw the blunder. "We are constantly mistaken for each other, and we see the likeness ourselves."

"And are you Bob?" asked he, with a pleasant smile.

"Yes," said I, "I'm Bob."

"Haven't I heard stories about you! It was *you* who killed the two tigers the same morning at Nuttyghur. It was *you* went to the Governor's fancy ball as a she-gorilla, with a real monkey for a baby. It was you rode the nullah——"

"Stop, for mercy's sake!" said I; "they are staring at us:" and I whispered, "Half the people there are English."

"Come over and sup with me," cried he. "I'm Fred Ponsonby; your brother must have spoken of me."

"I know *you* as well as you can possibly know *me*; Jem's letters are always full of you. Have you left the Carbineers?"

"Yes; I have gone into the diplomatic service. Come along and let us eat something, and we'll have a cigar afterwards in my room, and a gossip till daybreak."

And so had we. It was bright rosy morning

ere we separated, that five hours' talk having knitted us together like friends of years' standing, and we were Fred and Bob from that hour forth.

I had no need to tell him of my misfortunes, he knew them all already: such things are soon bruited "about town."

He had tried to find me out in London, but in vain. At the clubs they had told him that though I was "hard hit," it was clear enough I didn't mind it; for three days after the "Oaks" I had given a splendid dinner at the "Trafalgar," some little incidents of which bespoke its costly character; and then he heard I had left town.

"And what do you mean to do now?" asked he curtly.

"If I don't throw myself down there," said I, "I really don't know;" and I threw my cigar end into the falls at my feet.

"Not a bit of it," said he, slapping me on the shoulders; "a fellow like you is not so easily beat. One cropper never spoiled a man's hunting."

"Except he broke his neck."

"That's not your case, Bob. You'll come all right yet; but we must have time to think it over —so, first of all, come along with me to Belgrade. I have got despatches for the Servian Government, and I am to wait there probably a month or two, till something is arranged. It's a dull place, but

we'll make the best of it; and you are my guest, remember, till you find something you like better."

He opposed all my objections, and conquered all my scruples so effectually that I gave in at last, and found myself on the road to Vienna—where we were to halt a day for instructions—almost ere I knew it.

"It's all right," said Fred, as he came in to dinner at the Archduke Carl Hotel at Vienna. "I'm to remain three months at Belgrade, master the Servian question, whatever that is, and come back strong in Montenegro and the Lower Danube."

"And do you know anything about these?"

"About as much as a cat does of cuneiform! But what does that signify? I'll get up my Servia, you'll see; and if I blunder, I have the supreme felicity of feeling that none can detect me. Diplomacy, my dear Bob, is like one of those drawing-room dramas, where every man speaks his part out of his own head, and when the rejoinders come right it is a happy accident. When you read my blue-book on Servia you'll be positively amazed where I got my learning."

Our journey was so interesting, and Fred's company so agreeable, that I almost forgot my misfortunes; and it was only at times, and possibly by a process of reasoning, that I arrived at the fact that I was ruined and left without a shilling

in the world. As it was a theme Fred would not suffer me to talk on, I was driven to keep it for my lonely hours; and, sooth to say, they were of the fewest, for after our long rambling, talking, and laughter we generally dropped off asleep, and woke only to renew intercourse in the same strain.

When we reached Belgrade we found a splendid suite of rooms prepared for us at the chief hotel. Fred had telegraphed, in fact, for everything; and horses and carriages and servants and *cavasses* had been all duly hired, and ready for our arrival. The first few days were occupied by Fred in his official visits — dreary performances, if I might judge from the exhausted, worn-out look he brought back from them, and the few tiresome details which were all he could give of his meetings with these people.

"I'm to be precious cautious," he said to me one day. "My instructions are to have no intimacies, and above all to beware of the Russians, who have spies everywhere. *You*, however," added he, "who have nothing at stake, you may know any one; therefore go about and dine at the various *tables d'hôte* and *cafés*, and learn all that you can of the place and its belongings, and whatever you can pick up, historical, political, social, or nonsensical, will do for my blue-book."

I was glad to fancy I could be of any use to my friend, and at once proceeded to carry out his

instructions. My accomplishments as a linguist had won me immortal fame in my regiment, but I grieve to own they did not sustain the coarse test of actual use. I had little French, less German, and no Italian; but by dint of frequenting *cafés* and public places, I at last acquired a sort of jargon, in which all the three tongues mingled, and which my interlocutors were pleased to recognise as a sort of *lingua franca*, wherein they accepted me as intelligible, and vouchsafed to answer my questions. In the course of my peregrinations I had made acquaintance with an old man, whose few words of English had introduced him to me, but with whom, if one were to pronounce from his dress, manner, or appearance, certainly there were not many inducements to intimacy. He was tall, and slightly stooped, with a very narrow head and face, a villanous squint, and a long white beard, which descended to his breast like a waterfall. He had been, as he told me, for upwards of forty years *dolmetscher* or interpreter to the Austrian Embassy at Constantinople, and was now on a retired pension. Rumour added that he eked out his financial deficiencies by acting as a Russian spy.

From him I learned that there was a species of *pensionnat*, kept by an old Albanian lady, where all that Belgrade contained of wit, brilliancy, and ability, was accustomed to dine every day; that he

had himself frequented it for years, and only ceased to do so from the expense—the dinner and wine, with coffee, cigars, and *chasse*, amounting to very close on two francs per diem. After a very brilliant description of the company, consisting, as it struck me, of spies from every nation of Europe, he proceeded to tell me that old Madame Narratochie was now nearly ninety years of age, and perfectly deaf; the establishment being managed by a young girl, her grand-daughter, who was also grandniece to the famous Mameluke who figured on the staff of the First Napoleon; that mademoiselle was the beauty, *par excellence*, of Belgrade; that she had refused the most brilliant offers of marriage, and had even declined the great honour of being part of the Sultan's own harem at Pera.

Having excited my curiosity to a high degree, my old friend concluded by an offer to present me the following day, with the simple condition of being my guest on the occasion. I readily acceded to this arrangement; and having told Fred of my project, and received from him the usual caution as to reserve and guardedness in all my intercourse with the company, I set out for the rendezvous.

It was some distance off in the surburb that the house stood. The approach lay through a thickly planted vineyard, dotted here and there with olive and mulberry trees, from which we came out on a species of lawn, beautifully green and level, where

there rose an enormous building, broken by towers and minarets and bastions in a way that left one uncertain whether it was a church or a fortress. It had been an ancient Greek convent at one time, purchased by the Servian Government for a barrack, and latterly disused. It was now let out in tenements — Madame Narratochie having secured the central portion, being that which contained the finest rooms and the chapel, whose walls boasted frescoes by a famed artist of Padua.

I was still in admiration of the spacious hall, lighted by two rows of windows, and roofed by an arched ceiling, a miracle of stucco-work, when a loud bell summoned us to dinner.

Though the table was laid for above forty guests, it only occupied a most ignoble portion of the ample chamber, the ancient refectory of the convent. We took the places assigned to us, and sat down amongst the very motliest company it was ever my fortune to forgather with. They were all men and mostly middle-aged or old, two or three only being under thirty. There was scarcely a nationality or a costume of Turkey, Greece, the Danubian Provinces, Hungary, or Croatia, without a representative there. Some were fine, actually noble looking fellows, splendid in their glittering dresses and picturesque weapons, and bearing themselves in all the conscious pride of their gallant appearance; others, not less picturesque in their

shabby finery, were as mangy and disreputable as need be. Beside an Albanian with scarlet vest all braided with gold, and a belt studded with embossed pistols, would be a fellow in a dirty yellow jacket, lined with sheepskin, his legs cased in leather gaiters, laced with a scarlet thong, and fastened above with a tag and tassel that might have sustained a curtain.

Fierce-eyed, wild-looking Hungarians, in dolman and attila, confronted grave-featured, dreamy-visaged Turks with soiled turbans and dirty white stockings.

It was a company in which one instinctively felt that any difference of opinion would have met a very speedy settlement, and by other methods than those taught in the schools. Perhaps some consciousness of this fact pervaded the company generally, for there was little conversation, and that little in a low tone, and only between those who sat side by side. When I asked my introducer—who, by the way, neither presented me to any one, nor explained how or why I was there—where were all those witty sallies and pleasant stories he had promised me, he cautiously whispered me to wait patiently, and above all, to let no one overhear me passing any opinion on the company. We were some time at table—it was nigh the middle of the dinner—when a short, thick-set, mean-looking man, of about fifty, dressed in a green attila with

silver frogs, and wearing a tall cap of Astracan, entered the room. He walked straight up to the top of the table, where a vacant chair stood, but instead of seating himself in it, he made a low and reverential bow to the empty place, and deposited on the folded napkin in front of it a bouquet of moss-roses, which ceremony over, he retired to a place near the foot of the table.

"Who is he?" whispered I.

"Prince John of Bulgaria; John Schiska," murmured my friend.

"And that ceremony, what does that mean?"

"Every guest in turn brings a bouquet to mademoiselle," said he, in the same cautious tone, "and she comes in at the coffee to salute the company, and receive their homage."

I give the old man's words here as he spoke them, but I cannot convey the almost tremulous deference of the tone he spoke in.

Poor old fellow! there was a film over his eyes as he told me how, rather than omit the customary tribute, or perform it ignobly, he had sold his meerschaum, and devoted the price to the purchase of a bouquet of pink camellias that came from Jassy. "She took one out, and gave it to me," said he, "as a keepsake, and I have it still. It is dead, to be sure, but she had touched it once, and it blooms to me for ever."

He was an ugly old fellow, with a treacherous

look, and a harsh voice, but, for the moment, I vow I thought him handsome and sweet-toned, and was actually shocked at the injustice I had done him hitherto.

While the dinner proceeded, I constantly kept my eye on the chair at the head of the table, but, to my intense disappointment, it remained unoccupied to the end. There was little spoken during the meal, the company devoting themselves to the solemn duties of the occasion with a quiet earnestness that showed what importance they attached to it. Scarcely was the dinner over than the guests arose, the table was removed, and a number of smaller ones were scattered throughout the room, at which coffee and *liqueurs* were served, the company breaking up into little coteries, as acquaintance and intimacy invited.

"We may join any knot we please—it is the rule of the place," whispered my friend; "let us sit down here." And accordingly we took our places at a little table, where the Prince Schiska sat with two others in Hungarian costume. The old man presented me, using some language new and strange to me, and the others rose politely and said something, which, from its tone, I judged to be a courteous welcome.

"They are asking me," said my friend, after a moment, "whether you speak Hungarian or Slavac or modern Greek or Romaic."

"Unfortunately not," said I; "I suppose they know French?"

"French or France are not in favour here," replied he; "do your best in German—it will be safer."

I accordingly mustered enough of the "mysterious gutturals" to say something civil and complimentary about the place, the dinner, and the company, which the Prince acknowledged politely, saying, "I believe you are the first Englishman who has ever set foot here. Your countrymen, I fancy, are too haughty to like to mix with indiscriminate company; and though the rule be a safe one, they lose something by their reserve. The people who sit about you now in this room comprise every class and condition of life. That large man with the cicatrix on his cheek is Prince Carl Dolgouroki; and the man opposite to him, in green velvet and gold, was his valet once. He is now the Greek Minister of Police. Yonder is a Mexican general, who is now in command of a troop of banditti in Patras; they are in Russian pay, and are meant for service in Thessaly. He with the spectacles is the correspondent of the 'Allgemeine Zeitung;' and the tall quaint fellow on his left is Hunyadi, who is under sentence of death in Austria; and the dark handsome man, next but one to him, is Seristarchi, a man ruined by high play, and compromised in that affair of Orsini's."

"Who is that noble-looking fellow near the

stove — he with the white attila over the scarlet jacket?"

"That's the headsman of the Valattica of Montenegro. It's a bold thing for him to sit down in a company many of whose sons and brothers have fallen under his sword. He's the vainest dog in Europe, and fancies the Queen of Greece is in love with him."

"And what do they all do here? What's their object in meeting thus?"

"What the Bourse is to the monied folk, this room is to the secret police of Eastern Europe, and those countries which depend for their existence on the Turkish empire. They play at espionage as men gamble at Homburg; each knows what his neighbour is after, and does his best to outwit him, now by bribing higher, now by sheer knavery, now by something a little more energetic than either," and he drew his finger significantly across his throat, and smiled as he spoke.

"The only real dupes are the newspaper correspondents. All conspire to cram them with lies, and half the rogueries of statecraft are done under the dust raised by these people's mistakes."

"Are you quite sure," said I, laughing, "that I am not one of the fraternity?"

"Perfectly sure," rejoined he, boldly. "I may tell you so in flattery, because you don't look like them; and I may say, in candour, that with such a

limited knowledge of languages as yours, you could never hope to glean enough for correspondence."

Seeing that I took his remark in good part, for it really amused me, and made me laugh, he went on, "I know, besides, your English theory, that there is no secret in politics worth paying for. You are so constantly duped by your secret agents that you disparage the whole system; and so you go on blundering away, while your despatches are being opened at Vienna and copied at St Petersburg, wondering how it is that you are always overreached, and continually venting sharp reproofs on your ministers and envoys for not being more fully informed, while you refuse to give them the only means of information. But here comes something more interesting than State rogueries;" and as he spoke, he arose and made a few steps forward to meet a young lady who had just entered the room, and who advanced with all the dignity of a queen. She was apparently about twenty years of age, slightly, very slightly, over the middle height, but seeming taller by her costume, which was that blending of the Servian with the Ottoman that persons of rank are fond of affecting in these countries; for while she wore the scarlet jacket of Greek fashion, on her head she wore the picturesque cap of Servia, of white cloth, diminishing in size to the top, where it finished by a deep lappet of scarlet, that fell with a heavy fringe of

gold upon her shoulders. She was a blonde, but of that rich creamy tint one sees in Giorgione's pictures, with fair brown hair, and eyes not blue but grey, shaded by the longest lashes. Her mouth was, however, her chief beauty; had the lips been a little fuller, it would have been faultless. Nor am I quite certain if the girlish beauty was not more perfectly typified by the more finely traced and less plump lip.

As she moved along, slightly bending in recognition of the profound salutations that greeted her, I thought I had never seen such graceful action united with winning loveliness. The Prince stepped forward to present his bouquet, and at the same time made a gesture towards me. She gave a sweet smile, and said, in French, "An Englishman is very welcome here; I have a great love for his nation."

Whether I said anything in return, or what it was, I cannot recall. My faculties were completely upset; and as she passed on, I stood staring after her till the crowd shut her out from my sight,—and so bewildered and confused was I, that when my old companion asked me if she were not beautiful, I answered something so inappropriate as to make him laugh.

"That's what folk call love at first sight, isn't it?" said Fred Ponsonby to me, when I reported my day's experiences; "but look out, old fellow,

it's just the sort of place a man might get a stiletto into his diaphragm for a mere glance of what you or I would call honest admiration. Be satisfied with what you have seen, and don't go back there. Promise me this, seriously."

As I only shook my head in silence, he went on to press me with his reasons for the advice he had given me, finishing with—"You are perhaps not aware that you have been passing the evening with the most accomplished scoundrels in all Europe. I have been asking the landlord here about this place and the people who frequent it, and he tells me that most of the company have been at the galleys, and that there is not one of them ought not to be there now. He mentioned two or three, whose names were new to me, who had been convicted of murder; and, in fact, a more disreputable society could not be imagined, nor one wherein an honest man would less like to find himself."

"And of the old lady herself—Madame Narratochie—did he speak of her?"

"Yes; she was the widow of an old professor of Prague, a great Oriental scholar, who came here to consult some curious manuscripts in the Armenian convent. Her only daughter married a Suliote chief, who had taken service with Russia against the Turks, and was beheaded at Sulina, Anno Domini—I forget what. The widow died of grief, and the old professor soon after following her,

Madame N. herself, gathering together the friends of her late husband and those of her son-in-law, a rather incongruous lot, set up a boarding-house for *literati* and cut-throats. Now, confess I have got my story off very creditably, considering that a good deal of it was imparted to me in a mixture of Slavac and Plat Deutsch; but in my anxiety to be of service to you I lent an uncommon amount of attention."

"So that," said I, interrupting, "there is nothing whatever against the old lady or her granddaughter?"

"Nothing beyond the fact that they keep a 'thieves'-home'—isn't that enough for you?"

"Well, now, shall I tell you what I have myself seen there? Will you accept my testimony against this man's hearsay?"

"No, Bob, I will not," said he, resolutely. "If you had not seen the beautiful Albanian I'd let you go into the witness-box at once, but now I regard your evidence as palpably one-sided." For the first time since I had known Ponsonby did I feel vexed or provoked with him. He was not only so manifestly unjust and unfair towards people he had never seen, but it was so offensive to me to find that he preferred this vulgar landlord's story to the evidences of my own experience, that I sulked and said nothing. He tried and tried to get me back to good-humour again; he reasoned, he argued, he bantered, he implored, he endeavoured to find out

some clue to my heart or to my understanding that might convince me, and at last, failing in every way, he said, "Come, Bob, I'll not worry you any more —let us talk of something else. Have you heard anything more about that philanthropic old aunt of yours? Is she really going to found an hospital for incurable Welshmen at Plmmtchllymo?"

"So says the 'Morning Post,'" rejoined I, curtly.

"What's her estate worth?"

"I've heard it called close on three thousand a-year; but she has got a tin-mine besides."

"And has she no nephews nor nieces to provide for, that she must needs go abroad for her charities?"

"Scores of us; but we have all displeased her in one way or other. Some of us wouldn't go into the Church, and some of us would go into the Insolvent Court; some married, and some remained single; some were extravagant, and some were misers,—none of us hit it off right. And *I*, who used to be her favourite, who all said was sure to be her heir, I refused to marry a Welsh parson's daughter—a little dumpy damsel, who rode man fashion and smelt of mushroom catsup. Aunt Dinah turned me off with a fifty-pound note, and told me never to see her again."

"Had she, then, taken such a violent affection for this girl?"

"No, it wasn't that; she's a strange old lady is

aunt Dinah. She was crossed in love herself when young. She wanted to marry a poor subaltern in a marching regiment; her friends forbade it, and she lived to see this man a General, a K.C.B., and what was somewhat harder to bear, the husband of a very beautiful woman of high family. This soured her and softened her at the same time, and her whole life has been passed between paroxysms of revenge and romance—now doing things old money-lenders would be ashamed of, now yielding to impulses of sentiment worthy of an exalted young girl in her teens. It's the most complete lottery in the world how she will accept any incident that befalls one of us—so that my brother Jem, in a fit of impatience, once asked her, 'Would she like him better if he was to commit a capital felony?'"

"I wonder you never turned such a temperament to account."

"How could I—how could any one? Who was to foresee in what spirit she would receive any tidings? She was as likely to send you a cheque for five hundred as to scratch you out of her will for the self-same action."

"I'd have taken my chance, at all events. Where the ticket costs nothing, I'd have been always in the lottery."

"Anything like importunity would have been certain ruin. In fact, our best policy was to write

seldom; and Jem never sent her any news of himself except by paragraphs out of a newspaper."

"And you—when did you last write to her?"

"I wrote to her after my grand smash. I was on my way down to see her—by invitation too, a rather rare thing, for on my arrival from India I had simply reported myself, and she replied in these terms:—

"'Dear Nephew,—If a little mountain air and Welsh ale might be deemed a good alterative after Indian heat and curry powder, come down and spend a month with your affectionate

Aunt Dinah.'

"There's the whole epistle: and when I read it I valued it at about thirty thousand pounds laid out in land."

"You thought you were about to be made her heir?"

"I was certain of it. Not one of us had ever been asked to Crwnwbiollych Castle."

"What a name!"

"I could soon give it a pronounceable title: I wish that was the only obstacle, Fred."

"Well, you said you wrote again."

"Yes, after my disaster in the 'Oaks' I wrote a few lines to say that I had come to grief; that when I had sold out of the service, and converted

into cash a few bonds I held in the Agra, I should still be deficient a couple of hundred pounds, and consequently in no mood to inflict her with my company: she simply sent me for answer a cheque for three hundred on Coutts, and the words—'Your excuse is more than sufficient. Your much-grieved aunt, Dinah Pritchard.'"

"I declare I like that old damsel!" cried Fred; "there is a deal of character about her."

"I like her too, and if she wasn't rich I'd be off to see her to-morrow, and ask her to counsel me and comfort me; for, her oddities apart, she's a mine of good sense and good feeling, and has a mood of genuine forgiveness for faults she could not possibly have ever committed herself, which is one of the very rarest things in the whole world."

"I like her," said Fred again, and with that amount of determination in his tone that said how much in earnest he was. He arose after this and walked the room from end to end without speaking; an unlit cigar was held fast between his lips, and he seemed unaware that he was not smoking. "So that," said he at length, as if following out his own train of thought—"so that, if she should found this hospital, you'll not be left one shilling?"

"Of course not."

"By Jove," cried he, "when the old lady was thinking of incurables she might have had the grace to remember her own nephews and nieces, eh?"

"I think so too," said I, half smiling at his jest.

"Now, Bob," said he, stopping his walk, and standing directly in front of me, "I have a proposition to make you; and mind me, if you agree to what I advise, you must give me your word of honour not to retract afterwards, nor, what I should feel even worse, not be angry with me if I fail in my attempt to serve you. Do you consent?"

"Don't you think I might fairly ask in what way it is that you intend to help me?"

"I'm not sure of that," said he, doubtingly. "I want a *carte blanche* from you; and without you feel you can give me full powers, I don't think I could accept the mission."

"That's being over-diplomatic, I think," said I, half stiffly.

"No," rejoined he, "it is simply being practical; but as I see you will only trust me by instalments, I will consent to impart the first step of my plan—here it is: I shall ask for leave—three weeks' leave to transact an urgent matter of family interest. I'll ask by telegraph, and I know they'll not refuse me. When I receive my answer, I'll start for England, and hasten down to Wales and see your aunt. What I shall say to her, what statement I shall make, how I shall reply to what she herself may object,—how, in one word, I shall conduct my whole negotiation, are the matters on which I ask

your confidence, and on which I claim now not to be questioned in any way. You either trust me or you do not, which is it?"

"Trust you and thank you both—thank you as the best fellow and the heartiest I ever met with," said I, grasping his hand in both mine, and pressing it warmly.

"Enough said," cried he; "let us now talk of something else. Tell me something more about those ragamuffins you met at dinner—I want to hear more about them."

After this we rambled on in talk for hours, and only said Good-night when the faint dawn streamed through the curtains, and blended with the yellow lamplight. I scarcely felt I had been more than fallen asleep, when Fred stood at my bedside, dressed and muffled for a journey. "Here's a most provoking thing, Bob," said he; "they require me, in all haste, at Constantinople; one of my late despatches has miscarried, and they want a personal explanation from me of a circumstance I have adverted to. The telegram says, 'Start on receipt of this;' and while waiting for the horses, I have written this letter to your aunt. Of course it is a poor substitute for what I might have done had I seen her and spoken with her. It remains with you now to decide if you extend the same confidence to me in my epistolary character as in my personal. Here's the letter, sealed and ready.

Take time to think of it, and throw it into the post-office or into the fire, as you deem best."

"Post it, by all means. I trust you to the fullest extent. When shall we meet again?"

"Within a fortnight, or three weeks at latest. I must be back here by that time. I have told the landlord to supply you with all you want, and money when you need it. There, no nonsense—we'll have a grand reckoning one of these days. Take care of yourself, be cautious with the Russians, and avoid the convent. Here come the horses: bye-bye"—and he was gone.

So sudden was it all, and so dead sleepy was I, that when I awoke about mid-day I could not clearly determine whether the whole had not been a dream.

Fred Ponsonby's courier, a most accomplished rascal, whom he had left behind "to take care of me," as he called it, assured me that his master had not been in bed more than half an hour, but had been employed writing till the post-horses came to the door.

I had so very little faith in the success of any appeal from a stranger to my aunt, that I scarcely troubled my head guessing what might have been the line Fred adopted in pleading my cause. In honest truth, there was not much to be said for me; nor is there ever for those who try to make a "spoon" with only one "horn" to experiment

upon. If aunt Dinah reply at all—and I think the point doubtful—she will most probably limit herself to a polite acknowledgment of the receipt of his letter, and express a civil amount of gratitude for the attention; for she was one who knew how to measure her passages and mete out her words very skilfully. Master Fred will find that her diplomacy will be a match for his own, thought I; and with this reflection I dismissed the theme from my mind, and rarely, very rarely, recurred to it after.

And now I come to a period which, if I feel reluctant to chronicle, I must ask my reader's indulgence, to wait till the time shall have come for me to explain the motives of my reserve, and when he, or more properly *she*, will probably concur in my reasons for guardedness.

Fred was absent three weeks and four days. These three weeks and four days have made the turning-point of my whole life. In one sense, too, they were the happiest. If I awoke each morning with a full conviction of my ruined condition—if I knew and felt that I was penniless, without a career, almost without a hope—my cold stage of despondency passed off almost ere I had finished my breakfast, and to it succeeded the hot fever of a delighted heart, as I hurried away to the convent, not to leave it again till late into the night.

"You are all wrong," I wrote to Fred, whose

courier, Maitre François, had duly informed him of my doings. "I am working harder than ever I worked before. I give two hours to modern Greek and Italian. Music was an accomplishment totally neglected in my education, and I have often bewailed my ignorance, consequently I devote an hour daily to the piano; a little rest—we garden occasionally—from three to four, and then, naturally, I must make some return for all this schooling of me. I give Katinka an English lesson till dinner-time. After dinner I try, as you used to call it, to air my vocabulary, and blunder away in Slavac and Romaic and Greek with the people here, till it is time to stroll out for a little *fresco* ramble with Katinka. I ought to tell you that old Madame Narratochie knew my grandfather, Sir Peregrine Considine, and looks upon me as an old friend—tells me about her money matters, and has imparted to me the names of her husband's relatives in Germany, who are to be written to about Katinka when she dies, and she has given me special directions about her funeral. The dear old soul cannot hear a word I say, and must be sorely puzzled by my manuscripts, which are purely phonetic. I hear I have given her the first laugh she has had for eighteen years.

"I see you shaking your wise diplomatic head over all this, and muttering, as intelligibly as your cigar will permit, a mournful prediction about how

it is all to end. I almost fancy I can hear you say, with that impatient toss of your chin—so like a horse with a tight-bearing rein—'The fellow is getting into a precious scrape, from which there will be no exit except by disgrace or ruin;' and I reply, Wrong on all the issues; wrong everywhere. There is no Love in the case on either side; each of us is well aware that we are both penniless, and Katinka herself made it the first condition of our intimacy, that anything bordering on courtship should be strictly excluded. 'If I catch you spoony' (she did not say spoony—she called it by a Greek word) 'I'll see you no more.'

"'That's all very fine,' you say, 'but——'

"But what? Are two people, fully conscious that Fate has separated them far as the poles asunder, and who have the courage and the candour to make this fact the condition of their friendship—are they to be such perjurers to their own hearts as to nourish hopes they have sworn to exclude? and are they, out of a cowardly mistrust of their self-control, to deny themselves the exquisite bliss of daily intercourse? hours of such ecstasy that I dare not dwell on them, lest you should misinterpret the rapture with which I recall them?"

It was in perfect honesty and in all truthfulness that I wrote this. I believed every word of it. If I did not confess that I was over head and ears in love with Katinka—that, waking or sleeping, her

image never left me—it was because I did not dare to own it to myself. The terrible forfeit I should have had to pay had I once, even once, lapsed in our contract, and ventured to talk to her of love, impressed me so powerfully, that I resolved my secret should never quit my heart.

Often and often—indeed, scarcely did a day pass without it—we talked to each other over what fate might mark our future. She knew her grandmother's project as regarded herself, and that she was to be consigned to the care of her grandfather's relations in Germany; but I could plainly see it was a plan she little liked, though she never openly declared she would resist it. She would dwell on the stiff formality of German manners, the dull routine of German life, and the horror which any trait of character excited which was not strictly in accordance with German notions. "Imagine," she would say, "my semi-savage habits introduced into one of these quiet households! fancy their shocked feelings if they asked me about some domestic care, and found that I was in utter ignorance of it—that my only education lay in talking some half-a-dozen barbarous languages, every idiom of which recalled a life of wild carelessness; and that, though I could break a colt for the saddle, or shoot a wood-pigeon with a ball, I could scarcely thread a needle, or use it when threaded."

If I remonstrated with her, and said she was un-

just to herself—that the very traits of her nature were such as were sure to find sympathy with a people so ready to dash the common work-a-day habits of life with a certain poetry—she would merely reply, "It would be very rash to try."

What project she had conceived in her own mind—and I am sure she had one—I never knew. She would burst out at moments with a wild *furor* about the destiny of women in the East, and declare it was in gross ignorance that men wrote of them as slaves; that in reality where their intellect fitted them for companionship, they were trusted and confided in. She had actually known of occasions where the counsels that swayed a Cabinet came from the harem; and though she would not in the remotest degree connect these opinions with anything in her own destiny, they were the kind of speculations she loved to revel in—not the less, perhaps, from the amusement she derived from the misery with which I listened to them. As for myself, she predicted that if I could only conquer my indolence, and address myself resolutely to some career, I should have a certain success. "I am one," said she to me, "who believes in luck, and I'd say you are lucky."

"I'm afraid," said I laughing, "that my experiences cannot exactly corroborate you."

"Possibly enough as regards the past, but I am looking to the future."

"Some men go in search of Fortune, and she plays hide-and-seek with them; and some, Fortune finds out for herself and adopts them for her own. I sometimes think that in a small way you are one of these."

I will not pause to own how she tortured me by the tone with which she would discuss our roads in life, always showing me how divergent they must be; and laughingly suggesting how the memory of our strange intimacy might possibly come up in after years, and how each of us would wonder what had become of the other.

I cannot dwell on the alternation of Hope and Fear in which I lived, nor say how by a word or a look she would make me the happiest or the most wretched of mankind—how no day passed without my having to experience the extreme of each state of joy or depression!

While I thus lived a life balancing between ecstasy and despair, the post brought two letters in my aunt's handwriting: one was for Ponsonby, the other for myself. Mine was very brief, but could scarcely have been more astounding. It ran thus:—

"Dear Nephew,—Your friend Mr Ponsonby has told me, with all becoming delicacy and regard for my feelings, of your rash marriage, and the misery in which your thoughtless conduct has involved a

most interesting and attractive girl. I will not distress myself or you by any bitter regrets, nor add to what I feel sure must be the severe self-reproach in which your days are now passed.

"I have fortunately not confirmed the act which would alienate the whole of my estate, and I can even yet do something for one who has not hitherto done much to conciliate my esteem or respect my anxieties. I enclose you herewith a bank post-bill for two hundred pounds, and beg you and your wife to come and stay some time with me; it shall be long or short at your pleasure, though I am not without hope that my niece will induce you to bear patiently the dulness of a lonely country-house and the not always cheery company of your aunt,

"DINAH PRITCHARD."

If my first feeling was simply horror at the daring fraud which Ponsonby had practised on my aunt's susceptible nature, and the outrageous effrontery with which he had involved me in his falsehood, my second thoughts strayed away to speculating on the bliss I should have felt had the story been a true one, and had I indeed possessed the unspeakable happiness of calling Katinka my own. So much more powerful was my imagination than my sense of shame—so much stronger my love than my reason—that I almost forgot the deception in the delight the vision of bliss evoked.

The mere idea that, if it were true, what a life would be mine, sufficed to obliterate all memory of the unworthy artifice which had worked upon my dear old aunt's feelings, and brought her back to the young days when she had "lived and loved." From this delightful dream I was aroused, however, by the sight of that piece of crisp bank paper which lay before me, and where the words, "Pay to Robert Considine, Esq., or to his order, the sum of two hundred pounds," gave a distinct character of fraud to the transaction from which there was no escape.

To touch that money was clearly impossible, and to return it with the reason which forced me to restore it was at once to dishonour Ponsonby, and to recall the trust which I had pledged myself to repose in him. My rashness in the unqualified way I had placed myself in his hands did not diminish —on the contrary, it greatly increased—my anger against myself. Of course, however, there was but one thing to do, cost what it might. Rupture, quarrel, or anything else with Ponsonby, I must write to my aunt, send back her cheque, and tell her, as well as I might, that the whole was a jest, —in the worst possible taste, it was true, but, which would be infinitely blacker if carried out to an actual fraud.

I sat down to compose my letter in no pleasant humour. It was to sever the last tie that bound

me to the kind old woman who had rescued me so often from my difficulties; and it was, as I felt, to prepare to stand alone in the world.

I began—

"My dearest Aunt,—As it is now certain I shall never dare to address you again after this letter, as it is the last opportunity I shall ever have of acknowledging the deep debt of affection I owe you, and of assuring you that of all the benefits you have bestowed upon me, none have ever had for me the same value as the love——"

As I got so far the clatter of post-horses entering the *porte cochère*, and the thundering noise of a carriage passing in, startled me. Almost in the same instant my door was thrown open, and Fred Ponsonby bounded into the room, and came towards me with all the cordial warmth of his genial manner. I cannot tell—I really know nothing of how either my looks or my gestures responded to his greeting; I can only remember that he stopped short and cried out—

"What's the matter, man? What do you mean by that sublime air of austerity?"

"Do me the favour to read that," said I, pointing to my aunt's letter, which lay open on the table.

He snatched it eagerly, and ran it over for an instant. "The kindest, dearest, best old damsel

in Christendom. I only wish I had half-a-dozen aunts of the same calibre, and you'd not see me cantering over the Continent with a white leather bag under my arm."

"That's all very well," said I, testily; "but it's no excuse for such a letter as you wrote to her—a deceit she never will, never ought to, forgive."

"Blow off the steam, old fellow, and just tell me when the boiler's getting cool," said he, divesting himself of his fur pelisse and his heavy travelling muffles.

"I'm not angry without cause," said I, slightly moderating my tone.

"Bring some breakfast," cried Fred to the waiter whom he had summoned to the room; "a grilled chicken, a bit of fish, an omelette—anything else you like—and good coffee for one, mind. Mr Considine will take a pomegranate ice."

"Chaff is well enough when one has nothing serious on his mind," began I, as the waiter moved away.

"Chaff! What do you call chaff? I have simply prescribed a cooling regimen to you, because you are blazing away there like Vesuvius. If you'll only condescend to come down from your hot-crater mood, I'll be as methodical and commonplace as a churchwarden. You are angry with me just as the man was angry at being saved from drowning by being dragged out of the water by his whiskers! Like him, you wanted to be taken up in a soft

blanket! There's the whole of it. But you are not the only fellow I have met who expects that he is to be pulled from beneath the wheel of a 'bus without as much as a stain on his white trousers!

"Your aunt Dinah was going to endow a hospital. You saw the news in the papers, and read it out to me. You knew well enough what that meant—disinheritance pure and simple! There was no time to be lost. To hold her hand was the first necessity; time was precious: had I said that you were simply in another scrape—had lost some hundreds at play, or done some similar folly—it would have been, as I well knew, perfectly useless. Her natural reflection would have been, 'How right am I to endow a charity, rather than squander my fortune amongst a set of spendthrifts.' I saw I must touch a chord which had vibrated once more. I must try if it will not still be sensitive to the old impression. That dear loving heart will not have lost its sympathy with those who love, thought I, and so I married you—married you to the sweetest, loveliest creature in the world, with a dowry of a thousand francs in Servian 'threes.'

"I knew well enough you would be in a precious rage with me when the whole was discovered. I was prepared for some rather bad language, and some very high and weighty airs. You have favoured me with the latter, and if you will only give me twenty minutes to swallow my breakfast, you

may have your wicked will of abuse of me till dinner-time!"

Though he said all this in an easy, jocular sort of way, it was not difficult to see that he was secretly deeply wounded at my want of gratitude for his attempt to serve me, and inwardly vowing it would be his last step in that direction. "At all events," said he in conclusion, "you have only to 'throw me over.' Write to Mrs Pritchard and say, 'Ponsonby's letter was a falsehood from beginning to end. I was fool enough to trust my cause to his hands, and this is what he has done for me. I can only assure you, my dearest aunt, that I was no party to the fraud practised on you; and though the reparation be a very poor one, I mean to cut the man who did it.'"

As he spoke he moved across the room, and throwing his pelisse on his arm, and gathering up his other stray articles of travelling gear, he turned to face me. "And now," said he, "I distinctly beg your pardon, and I hope you will not refuse me this as I say good-bye!"

I sprang towards him and cried out, "It is I have to ask forgiveness. It is I whose selfishness has so far blinded me that I have only seen one half of the sacrifice my friend has made for me. Forgive me, Ponsonby, I entreat you, and do not let me hate myself for ever."

Our reconciliation was complete, and so hearty,

so real, and so sincere that we were not driven to avoid the painful topic which had so excited us, but continued to talk it over for hours, and without a trace of the late unpleasant altercation.

"But what am I to do?" asked I; "how answer my aunt's letter?"

"For the moment do nothing. One of the ablest diplomatists we have in England once said to me, 'There are letters which should never be replied to till Time dictates the answer.' Who knows what a few days may bring forth? at all events, wait."

There was no great hardship in acceding to this counsel. I could "wait" where I then was without any very marked impatience, though how long I was to "wait," or what for, I had not the vaguest imaginable idea.

Ponsonby had so much to do now that for several days I scarcely saw him. We met, indeed, at breakfast, and I always awoke him when I returned home at night, to "report" myself, as he called it, and answer a host of questions he would put to me about my "goings on" at the convent, and whether my relations with Katinka were still confined within the limits of mere friendship.

The landlord had told Fred that I was watched; that I was always followed about by two or three men; and that such surveillance was generally the forerunner of something worse. In fact, he assured Ponsonby that if I set any value on my life, I had

no time to lose in getting away over the frontier. I will not say that I heard all this with indifference. I was fully aware that amongst the company I frequented there were men who bore me no especial goodwill. The marked favour with which I was admitted to Katinka's intimacy was an offence that many would have thought very cheaply atoned by my blood. Nor were they fellows to conceal their feelings—they very palpably let me know that I was no favourite amongst them.

Fred urged me to greater caution, particularly as to the hours I kept, for I rarely returned home before daybreak; but though I promised to be more circumspect, my heart was far too full of other thoughts to waste time on personal safety.

One night that I came back somewhat earlier than my wont, I found a man asleep across the threshold of the house-door—a not uncommon practice in countries where the slight shelter of a porch or an eave is deemed protection enough against the weather. In the act of pulling the bell I slightly touched him with my foot, but almost before I had time to say a word of excuse he had sprung to his feet, and dashed at me with a knife. The night being warm, I had carried my cloak on my arm, and in the thick folds of the cloth three stabs were quickly received, the last of which penetrated the cloak and went deep into my flesh. An exclamation of pain broke from me,

and at the instant a window opened over my head and two pistol-shots followed in quick succession. The ruffian broke away at once and fled, and ere I could bare my arm to see my wound Ponsonby was beside me.

It was an ugly cut, and severed one of the arteries. This was secured by a surgeon of the place, and the whole incident strictly shrouded in secrecy, for, as the landlord said, so long as nothing is spoken about these things, the assassins are always convinced that measures are being secretly concerted for vengeance. With my arm carefully bound up and carried in my waistcoat, I resumed my place next day at table, and only to Katinka herself did I relate the adventure.

Though she grew deadly pale and her lip trembled as I told my story, she said very little either in the way of condolence or regret. She urged me, however, to get away from Belgrade; she said these things were never done by halves there, that assassination was a regular trade, and the men who followed it for a livelihood were not worse looked on than scores of people who earned honest bread. I must own that when I declared I would never yield to a menace, nor shrink back before a peril, she looked at me with her great eyes wide and her lips parted, with an expression that to have won such I would have faced a hundred deaths.

About ten days after this occurred, as I was entering the breakfast-room one morning, Ponsonby met me, saying, "You heard the arrival this morning?"

"I should think I did—such tramping of horses' feet and such jingling of bells would have awoke the dead."

"But you don't know who has come?"

"No; I never asked."

"Your aunt Dinah! true, on my honour," added he, as I sank overpowered on the chair. "I take it that, not hearing from either of us, she was determined to come out and satisfy her own mind as to what was best to be done. At all events, here she is. 'Madame Pritchard, avec femme de chambre et courier,' are inscribed in the police-sheet, and I made the landlord ask for her Christian name, and here it is, written in her own hand, 'Dinah Pritchard.'"

"This is ruin!" cried I, as soon as I could speak.

"It's an *imbroglio*, certainly," said he; "a tangled bit of web to unravel, without doubt."

"Ruin, nothing less than ruin!" said I, in utter despair. "To have brought the dear old soul over all Europe just to tell her that she has been made the sport of a practical joke; to have taken her from her quiet home and involved her in all the fatigue and worry of a long journey; to have so

far worked upon her kind nature that she could rise above every consideration of self!—what pardon could she ever give to such heartless conduct?"

"I suppose you had better 'bolt;' get away at once, make for somewhere in Thessaly, or get into Montenegro—anywhere, so that you can't be traced. I'll make up the best story I can. I'll say you are gone to get employment under Reshid Pasha, or take service with the Valattica. At all events, she shan't follow you."

I sat lost in meditation and in silence while he went over I knew not what arguments to enforce the counsel he had just given me. I could listen to nothing, for nothing could give me any comfort or any hope.

"I'll go over and see Katinka," said I at last. "She has a native finesse and acuteness in difficulties that we know little about."

"I'll not contest that point; but I don't see how she is to help you here. You'll scarcely like to tell her the story—the 'fraud,' as you were pleased to call it t'other day."

Again was I overwhelmed with doubt and uncertainty; and not knowing where I went or what I was about to do, I sauntered down into the street and made for the convent. As I went slowly along, a thought struck me, at first very vaguely, afterwards it grew more consistent. What if Katinka would consent to aid me here? Why should she not pretend

—it need only be for a few days at farthest—to be my wife? My aunt's few words of French—and she possessed no other foreign language—would not make her a very acute cross-examiner; and the old grandmamma's age and infirmity would be reason enough for refusing all invitation to return with aunt Dinah to England.

To induce Katinka, however, to accept this part, I must be able to show her how vital it was to my interests—that it made the whole difference to me between affluence and beggary; but to do this I must also confess my deceit. To be sure, I could place before her the fact that if I had made an imprudent match, if I had induced a girl to share my poverty with me, my aunt would not have been unforgiving, and possibly this subtlety might reconcile her to the past.

I met Katinka in the garden. She was in one of her quiet thoughtful moods, and, encouraged by this, I at once revealed to her the story of my difficulty, frankly declaring that she alone could rescue me, and that only by her help and her mother wit could I escape ruin.

"What shall I have to do?" asked she, calmly, but promptly.

"Next to nothing. You'll drive over to the hotel and see my aunt. Your watchful care of grandmamma will always serve as a reason to make a short visit. Aunt Dinah's French will

put a great curb on conversation. At the outside her stay will not go beyond a week; and when the question comes of going back with her——"

At this Katinka burst out into one of her joyous laughs, so that she could not hear a word I said.

"Mind," said she, seriously, "if I consent, it is on one condition, and that is, that your friend Mr Ponsonby must never presume to regard me as your wife: if he venture on the very smallest freedom, if he ever give me to understand that he is an actor in this drama, which by right has but three characters, I'll not only throw off my disguise, but I'll unmask you all."

I agreed to everything. I thanked her with a heart brimming over with gratitude; and having talked over the whole project for above an hour, and settled that she should be at the hotel at two o'clock, I hurried back to see Ponsonby, and prepare all for the approaching visit.

Ponsonby was eagerly expecting me when I entered. Aunt Dinah had twice sent to ask for him, and he was forced to deny himself till he knew what line of action I had resolved on.

"Go up and tell her that we live—I and my wife—some distance out of town, but will be here to see her by two o'clock," said I.

"What do you mean?" asked he, in amazement.

"Just what I have said," repeated I; "by two

o'clock, if not earlier." And now I briefly related the project we had conceived, and cautioned him strictly as to the reserve he should impose upon himself. He only remarked, with a slight irritation of tone, "Mdlle. Katinka's experiences of the 'tact' of a gentleman seem unfortunate."

"Come up with me, Bob," said he, after a pause; "I'd rather you spoke of your wife's coming than myself. I have done enough in this affair;" and the next moment I was in my dear old aunt's arms.

Her kindness and affection were unbounded, and though she owned that the long journey had wearied her greatly, she declared that if she knew she was to take us back with her she would think no more of her fatigues. Ponsonby, too, she liked greatly, and pressed him warmly to come and see her in Wales. We had got to talk so pleasantly, and had so much to say to each other, that it was two o'clock actually ere we knew it. Just as the pendule struck over the chimney, a gentle tap came to the door. The courier opened it, and Katinka entered. She was beautifully dressed in her national costume, and looking more lovely than I had ever seen her. My aunt clasped her in her arms in an ecstasy of delight, as she called out, "Oh, she is a queen!" Ponsonby, out of delicacy, soon withdrew, and we were left alone together. We talked till past four o'clock, I translating for the most part

what my aunt said in English, and giving Katinka's replies. To be present at one of my cousins' weddings, aunt Dinah was forced to return at once, and as we could not possibly leave grandmamma at a moment, the great discussion was when we might be expected. "Berto," said Katinka to me, calling me by my Christian name for the first time, "will settle everything."

"Doubtless, love," said I, for once daring to call her so, "we will arrange it together." Aunt Dinah frightened us, however, by saying she did not think she could bring herself to return without us, and rather than do so she would forego my cousin's wedding.

"When may I see grandma, darling?" asked she of Katinka.

"Come when you like — come this evening. Berto will fetch you."

"Then I will come this evening; and here, dearest, is something for you. Robert will put it into the carriage for you," and she handed me a small leather case strongly clasped in silver. I had to give Katinka a meaning look to prevent her at once refusing it. As we drove back to the convent I opened the case, and found it contained a necklace and ear-rings of pearls the most splendid I ever beheld.

"Oh, Berto! what pearls!" cried Katinka, and her cheek flushed crimson, whether at the thought

of the gems, or at remembering the deceit by which they were even momentarily in our hands. "Shut them up; don't let me look more at them," said she, half angrily. "I am ashamed of what we have been doing, and she so good and so kind."

I never knew Katinka so cross as on that evening. She did not speak of my aunt at all, but constantly adverted to tricky people, and the way in which their natures became, so to say, honeycombed by intrigue. For once in my life I was vexed with her, and we parted almost in anger.

The post of the next morning brought a most urgent letter to my aunt, entreating her not to fail to be present at my cousin's wedding, which was fixed for an earlier day than she had thought.

"Go and fetch Katinka," said she to me, "and see if I could not persuade her to come back with me for the wedding. She shall return here at once to grandmamma if we could not induce her to come with us."

"There," said I, half sulkily, to Katinka, "one visit more, and your disagreeable fiction is ended. My aunt starts to-night."

"Don't forget to restore the pearls. Take them with you," said she, tartly.

"I don't care what becomes of them, or of myself either," said I. "I only wish the fellow's knife had been better aimed the other night."

"You are in a sweet temper."

"It's all the more like my wife's," said I, grimly.

"Well, I'm glad the farce is nigh over," said she, with a haughty toss of her head. "I'll not readily forgive myself for the ignoble part I have played in it."

"You may console yourself by remembering that I shall derive no benefit whatever from your condescension."

"No benefit!—what! when she leaves you all her estate!"

"I'll not accept one shilling of it. I have a letter here to post the day she leaves this. I have confessed to her the whole deception I have practised on her. I have returned the last remittance she sent me, and bidden her adieu for ever."

"To go whither?—to do what?"

"To quarrel with the first fellow who'll cut my throat for me!"

"Benone!" said she, smiling sardonically. "Che bel temperamento!"

"What have I to live for? what to care for? I am ruined!—I have not a *sou* in the world—no one needs me—no one wants me: the only one, that dear old aunt, who would grieve for me, shall not hear of my fate. But come along—let us pay our visit, and let the curtain drop over the dreary comedy. Oh, Katinka!" cried I, as the tears rose to my eyes, and fell heavily along my cheeks—"oh, Katinka, if you could have loved me—if you

could ever have accepted my love, and let my life have been joined to your life! From being the most wretched of men I would have been the happiest."

She did not utter a word, but stood with her eyes downcast, silent and motionless.

"Be mine!" cried I, "for a day—for an hour: let me feel that as I go to death I have won the greatest prize of my existence, and I swear to you that if you bear my name to-day, you shall mourn me as my heir to-morrow."

"I don't think the prospect is very enticing," said she, slowly, "though I suppose you intended it as such."

"Come along!" cried I, angrily, for her air of coldness had stung me to the quick—"let me finish with this mockery. Let us say good-bye to my aunt."

"I'm ready," said she, taking up her shawl: "will you see grandmamma, and ask her when she will receive your aunt?"

I nodded silently, and followed her up the stairs. The old lady was seated in her accustomed place near a window, a slip of paper and pencil beside her, as her deafness was now complete.

"Signor Berto wants to know when you will permit his aunt to call on you, grandma," wrote Katinka, and the old lady made a gesture to imply at any time she liked to come.

"Have you any other question to ask grandma?" said Katinka, with a strange, half-droll twinkle in her eyes.

"Yes," said I, fiercely, for I was almost savage in my mood. "Ask her if she will consent that you should be my wife."

Katinka took the pencil and wrote some words: the old lady turned and motioned to us to kneel down. We did so at her feet, and, kissing us both on the forehead, she blessed us fervently, and joined our hands together. "Are you content?" whispered Katinka to me; but I could not speak. I threw my arms rapturously around her and pressed her to my heart—mine, my own for ever.

The Greek priest who lived in the convent celebrated our marriage within the hour, and when we drove back to the hotel the drama had become a reality, and I was the most blessed of mankind.

CHARLES LEVER.

WRECKED OFF THE RIFF COAST.

BY ALEXANDER INNES SHAND.

LIKE most of the towns of Spain and the Orient, Tangiers looks very inviting from the sea, and loses considerably on intimate acquaintance. Nothing can be more attractive than the dazzling houses rising tier over tier in the glossy green of the orange-groves, girdled by the grey walls and guarded by the frowning battlements of the fortress, with the whitewash of the whited sepulchre gleaming in the golden glow of an African sunset. And nothing can be much more repulsive than the interior of the tumble-down old city, especially of a rainy day, when each broken causeway comes down in filthy flood, and the hanging house-eaves are gushing in dingy water-spouts. The rains should wash the place, and no doubt they do; but it would take the flooding of many monsoons to cleanse that Augean stable. For the plateaux above are loaded with the miscellaneous deposits of the dry season, and the refuse and the garbage

that have been neglected by the jackals and vultures are gradually working their way towards the sea.

It had come to be our solitary excitement looking out of the windows of the small hotel, and speculating on what would next be whirled past us in the gutter. For we had been storm-bound in Tangiers for four mortal days, ringing the changes between moods savage and sulky, under the disappointment of blighted schemes for sport. We had crossed from "the Rock" in the cattle-boat, with light portmanteaus and heavy cases of ammunition; with central-fire breech-loaders, rifles, and revolvers. We had talked confidently at the mess-table of bloody bags, made up of everything from wild boar to woodcock. Arrived at Tangiers, we had interviewed the legation in the absence of its chief, and arranged for the escort of a Moslem soldier, detailed on the duty of answering for our heads with his own by the local representative of the Moorish vicegerent of Allah. Having secured this orthodox warrior's services, we should have felt bound in honour to find him employment, even had we been less eager to be up and doing for our own sakes. Twice we had saddled for the field and sallied resolutely out of the gates, under the gaze of the white-bearded elders who smoked and gossiped in their shadow. The first time we had been driven back by the falling floods before we had got well beyond the shelter of the consular garden-

walls. On the second occasion we had pushed somewhat farther. Encouraged by some watery blinks of sunshine, and fondly persuading ourselves that the heavens were shutting their sluices, we had persevered against our sounder judgment until it became plain that there had been nothing but a temporary obstruction. It was anything but an agreeable ride, as the wiry little barbs went labouring fetlock-deep through the holding ground, straining their sinewy loins as their hind-legs slipped from beneath them, and now and again half disappearing in a slough that seemed to surge up almost to the saddle-girths. The streamlets we forded were coming down in spate; the stagnant canals were brimming over with brown water; the gardens and enclosures were steaming in the tepid air; the solemn storks themselves looked more than ordinarily disconsolate, as if they were being hard put to it to pick up a living in spite of their lengthy legs and necks. Not more disconsolate, however, than Hamet, our soldier-guard, as he did his best to cover the priming of his primitive matchlock and pistol in the folds of his draggle-tailed *haik*. Yet persevere we did, till we drew bridle under the lee of the whitewashed tomb of some sainted *marabout*, which looked a likely place to make the best of our luncheon-breakfast. It was but a melancholy meal, however, as we bivouacked on spongy grass under the drip of the palm-boughs.

We felt somewhat the cheerier for applications to the sherry-bottles and cognac-flasks, which there was no object whatever in economising; for the moment the meal was at an end we were again in our soaking saddles, bent on escaping back from the plague of water into the comparative comforts of the city we were sick of. Hamet led the way home at a hand-gallop, although the heaviest weight and the most indifferently mounted of the party. But the weather and the example of his unbelieving employers had been too much for his principles. He had set at defiance the unsociable law of his prophet, and indulged in draughts that were the sweeter for being forbidden. And there he was, shoving along in advance of us, recklessly driving his rusty stirrups into his charger's smoking flanks, and laying the road and showers of mud behind him, regardless of protests, threats, and imprecations.

Plastered with the mud, and dripping from head to heel, the pitiful *mon Dieu* of our sympathising little landlord had welcomed us home, as we came straggling up the steep street that led to his hostelry. Since then, we had scarcely set foot across his threshold. The rain had been descending remorselessly as ever; depression had passed into despondency, and despondency settled into despair. Hamet, who had haunted the passage like an embodied reproach, had at last been dismissed with a

suitable guerdon. Our sporting experiences in Morocco had sufficed us. Even should the weather hold up, it must be days before the waters could subside; and our one idea was to effect a retreat, and find ourselves back again among our friends of the garrison.

It is true that we might have been worse off. So much of an admission was wrung out of us as we drew our chairs to the dinner-table of an evening, in the cheery little parlour with the bright chintz paper and gay crimson hangings, with the ormolu clock and candles on the chimney-piece, and the battle-piece of Solferino suspended over the fire where the President of the Republic in his *garance*-coloured pantaloons, was flourishing his *bâton* among volumes of smoke. The little dinner, served to admiration, made way for a voluptuous dessert. On the table were dates and figs, bananas and Tangerine oranges, sparkling crystal, and wax-lights in silver candelabra, long-necked bottles of ruby Bordeaux, with a squat decanter of topaz-tinged Manzanilla. But brightest of all was the visage of our lively host, M. Dumolard, who was easily prevailed upon to gratify us with his company, and who prattled away merrily when he had fairly slipped himself out of his prim court suit of decorous reserve.

It was on the fifth evening of our sojourn that M. Dumolard, for the third time, had made a movement to withdraw, observing incidentally—

"I will assure you, Sares, she shall not sail before to-morrow at mid-day; I come from seeing M. the Captain, and he tells me the half of the cattle are not charged as yet. There was a piece of the *bétail* passing down the street but now; Messieurs must assuredly have heard them."

So saying, M. Dumolard bowed himself away; and as he closed the door, Jack Roper remarked to me, "I'm quite as well pleased we shan't have to make an early start of it, although I believe I should burn myself the brain, as Dumolard would say, if we had forty-eight hours more of this infernal purgatory. By the way, I hope the wind may fall as fast as it got up,"—for, just at that moment, a gust caught hold of the great fig-tree outside and rattled its branches against the casement.

Now any one who had the pleasure of Roper's acquaintance in happier days—Captain Roper, V.C., of the —th battery of her Majesty's Royal Regiment of Artillery—would have been sorely puzzled to recognise that genial officer in the morose accents of the foregoing speech. For no one had been in the way of taking life more happily, or had looked more instinctively on the brighter side of things. As he had been but a few short months before, even monotonous confinement through five wearisome wet days would have sat upon him exceedingly lightly, without the creature-comforts he enjoyed

and the agreeable companion who shared his evil fortune. But through the last few months Roper had been changing fast, and thereby there hangs the present yarn.

His reputation had gone before him when he got the route for "Gib," and men who only knew him by name were prepared to give him a cordial greeting. In the course of a week or so, he was "Jack" before his face to the merry set he was shaking down among; while all the rest of the world of the garrison men called him nothing but Jack behind his back. He had a laughing eye and an open manner, with the faintest suspicion of an *arrière pensée*—something that warned you he could resent a liberty if need were. He was fairly good at most things, from rackets and billiards to waltzes and whist: he was an earnest and indiscriminate admirer of the fair sex—by the way, the prevailing tints of the Rock and the garrison ranged between olive and the yellow of parchment—but the ravages on his heart by each evening's flirtation were generally repaired with the morning's reflections. He had a modest certainty beyond his pay, with considerable expectations from a capricious uncle. So naturally he was weighted with a load of pecuniary embarrassments, although he contrived to carry it with unimpaired equanimity.

So life went smoothly with him at Gibraltar as it had gone elsewhere, till of a sudden its placid tenor

was ruffled. It was on a certain evening when yawning at the theatre that he set eyes upon the object of his grand passion without a presentiment of his coming fate. He merely admired as he was much in the way of admiring. It certainly struck him as odd next morning—not that the beauty of the evening had been smiling on him in his waking dreams, but that he had asked no one the night before who was the pretty girl opposite. Perhaps, had it been his habit to analyse the philosophy of his feelings, it might have occurred to him that the impression being deeper than he suspected, he had shrunk from the apprehension of hearing something either to his disadvantage—or hers. She might have been engaged, or married, or on a flying visit —possibly no better than she should be.

He met her again on the Alameda that very afternoon, and she bore the sunshine as well as the gas-light. She was accompanied, too, by the same elderly gentleman who had mounted guard over her at the theatre; but Roper had no eyes for her companion; and, as it happened, the friend who was lounging on his arm had no eyes for any one else.

"Osalez! by all that's infernal!" that gentleman exclaimed in considerable perturbation, pivoting round abruptly and carrying his companion with him. "What! you don't know Osalez?" he proceeded, in answer to Roper's inquiries and ex-

postulations. "Then all I can say is, that is very lucky for you. Bless my soul! he is as much of a public character as his Excellency. Perhaps there isn't a gentleman on the coasts of the Peninsula and Barbary to boot with a more miscellaneous acquaintance—and that's saying something. Osalez! why, he's reprobate of all trades and respectable in none—merchant, money-lender, smuggler, banker, broker—ay, and you may say butcher too. For he contracts to victual the garrison, and he coals the fleet. He goes shares with the contrabandistas, and he squares it somehow with the civil guard. He'll fly kites for anybody who makes it worth his while; but somehow when it's Osalez that raises the wind you're apt to be swept off your legs in a hurricane. Yes, you may say it's scandal"—for Jack had interposed with unusual cogency of argument, and still more unwonted excitement, pointing out that sleeping partners with smugglers were scarcely likely to obtain Government contracts —"you may call it scandal, and I don't profess to speak dispassionately, for he has more than one bill of mine, and he won't hear of renewing. But where there's a deal of smoke there must be fire, and Osalez lives in a most sulphureous atmosphere —ask any one."

To cut a long story short—a story Roper had latterly bored me with so often, that I had thoroughly mastered all its details—though he did not

follow up the conversation that gave him so little satisfaction, he was not to be deterred from an introduction to the beautiful Hebrew. Perseverance had its reward. Often baffled, he succeeded at last, but it was even less easy to improve the acquaintance when he had made it. There was a yawning chasm between the gay young officer and a lady in the ambiguous position of the lovely and wealthy Miss Osalez; and the gossips of the garrison watched his efforts to bridge it with the keenest and most curious interest. The Osalez went out but little into society. Regarded as pariahs by English sets, they held their heads far above the "Scorpions;" and when Jack had manœuvred himself into one or two meetings with them, recklessly risking the loss of caste, he found himself opening the trenches in the light of day, under the eye of an exceedingly watchful parent. It was a standing puzzle to him, and a source of perpetual irritation, how that shy fluttering beauty, who divined his admiration and did not seem to dislike it, whose lustrous eyes flashed and fell, and whose colour went and came under his ardent glances, could ever have been bred in such a vulture's nest. For Osalez was as unlike his offspring as might be, and had nothing whatever of the gentle or prepossessing about him. Short and stern, squat and grizzled, something like a sherry-butt rolling along on a couple of quarter-casks, you could only

read his race and religion in the *cachet* that nature had stamped upon his nose.

No wonder Esther was shy and fluttered, that the usually offhand Roper was extremely ill at ease, or that the shrewd Osalez never relaxed his observations on those very rare occasions when the trio came together in society. Roper's presence provoked remark and piqued curiosity. The whole room was wide awake to the unaccustomed visitor, as well as to the little drama that was going forward. Osalez felt he was being made a fool of. He feared, a little too late perhaps, that the same thing might possibly happen to his daughter; and finally, as the situation grew insupportably tense, he drew her away into absolute seclusion.

Not being overburdened with military duties, Roper had leisure to indulge his despondency. Although Gibraltar is geographically Andalusian, the place is thoroughly English in pipeclay, pickets, rounds, and police arrangements. There is small toleration for serenades and rope-ladders. There is little of that "plucking the turkey," where the Peninsular lover presses and kisses the hands of his adored one through the ponderous window-bars that form her cage. Mr Abraham Osalez lived in a charming cottage villa looking across to Ape's Hill —all bay-window, verandas, and trailing clusters of creepers. But Miss Esther was as sequestered in it as if she had been double locked in a grilled and

duenna-guarded chamber of Cadiz, with the windows turned inwards on a Moorish *patio*.

In these desperate circumstances, Roper decided on a dashing *coup*—as he told his story to the present narrator, whom he had installed as his confidant, *bon gré, mal gré*.

"So, as matters had come to a dead lock, I thought the best thing I could do was to make Osalez's acquaintance professionally. He wasn't likely to decline to accommodate me on the ground of my being over-sweet upon his daughter; while, on the other hand, you know, it might increase his objection to me, if he heard that I had carried my custom past the family. And the connection seemed likely to be worth having; for, to tell the truth, since I had set eyes on the Rose of Sharon, I had taken to revoking at whist, and all manner of follies, and it was high time I made arrangements for replenishing my purse. As the novels have it, Osalez was civil but distant when I made my advances, and I can't say he showed me any great consideration on account of the romantic sympathy that drew me to him. Since then we have had no end of interviews, but the conversation has confined itself strictly to bills and discount—and now——"

"And now?"

"Now it seems to me I've been making sternway rather than otherwise. I see more of Shylock than I like, and just as little as ever of the lady."

So it had gone on. Now, as far as I could gather —and Roper would be only too diffuse in his confidences—Osalez was revenging himself in the way of business on the handsome young gunner for all the domestic bother he was causing; and if that were really the Hebrew's game, it must be confessed that Jack played into his hands. What with blighted love, and accumulating money worries, from being merely profuse he grew absolutely reckless. Whether he liked it or no, he had to seek more and more frequent interviews with the hard-fisted father of his Jessica, and the more he saw of him the less he liked him. The odd part of it was, that his growing antipathy for the parent was anything but an antidote to his fancy for the child: in an atmosphere that might so easily have nipped it, his love flourished as luxuriantly as the tropical vegetation on the Alameda; and what had begun like a hundred other caprices, had gradually grown into an absorbing sentiment. So between his attraction and repulsion for and from the Osalez family, Roper was falling off in flesh and spirits: friends and acquaintances began to drop away from him; the regimental doctor prescribed change of scene, and as he would not be persuaded to exile himself to England, he had got up this flying trip to Tangiers.

And there we are back again, after this long digression, awaiting the precarious departure of

the cattle boat, which lay taking in her cargo in the bay. Dumolard was gone down-stairs, and Jack was on the fidget in his arm-chair.

"I think I'll just stretch my legs before turning in: one sleeps all the better for being blown about a bit."

"Nonsense, my good fellow. Why, you'll never keep your cigar alight in the wind. The rain has hardly held up for an hour past, and you can hear the street coming down in flood."

But Jack was on his feet and obdurate: Osalez himself could not have been more impracticable, and, after all, the point was scarcely worth arguing. In a few seconds he was back again, looking rather pale and excessively savage.

"Stumbled across a ghost?" I inquired with some curiosity.

"No such luck," he answered with vindictive vehemence. "I'd sooner be haunted any day in the spirit than the flesh. Whom do you think I ran up against, just outside the door, of all impossible people?"

"Why, by the way you take it, I can only suppose it was that eternal *bête noire* of yours, that sets you on to worry me in season and out of season. And though I see no particular reason why he should not be in Tangiers, it does seem unlikely he should be abroad in this weather and at such an hour. A case of mistaken identity I

expect, or perhaps a spectral apparition produced by a morbid imagination, acting on a couple of bottles of claret. I can't say on an empty stomach, although you are so desperately——"

"Hang it, man, it's past a joke. There's a coincidence, a destiny—what do you call it?—about it. I tell you I spoke to him, and made him answer me."

"Well, I suppose I must give in to the evidence of a couple of your senses, for spectres seldom speak when they are spoken to, and I never heard that ordinary hallucinations go on from sight to sound. As I said, why should Osalez not be here? He must have irons in the fire at Tangiers as well as everywhere else. But if he has, you may be sure that old gossip, Dumolard, can tell us all about it, and something more. So ring the bell, and let's have him up again."

M. Dumolard proved to the full as well informed as I gave him credit for being.

"You ask if Monsieur has met M. Osalez. But I believe it well; and why not? While the gentlemen have been detained with me, where, I dare to hope, they have found themselves not too ill," observed M. Dumolard, parenthetically, with a comprehensive bow, "M. Osalez, by a hazard, has been sojourning opposite. M. Mordecai, my neighbour, is of the same faith; and indeed I believe is of M. Osalez's parents. In every case

M. Osalez has been there, as I tell you, and his daughter also — *très belle fille, parbleu!* I was admiring her from my belvidere but yesterday, when the heaven cleared itself, for a moment——"

"What!" shouted Roper, springing out of the chair into which he had subsided, and making the clock and candles clatter with the violence with which he threw himself against the chimney-piece —"what! you saw Miss Osalez yesterday; and you never told me a word of it. Pshaw! what am I talking of? I beg your pardon, Mr Dumolard: I forgot you knew nothing; how should you? You were saying, I think, that you saw the lady——"

And Jack had the nerve to recover his control as quickly as he had lost it; so that Dumolard, who had at first been scared at the mine he had sprung most innocently, quickly grew flattered at the extreme interest vouchsafed him, and exerted himself to gratify the curiosity he had piqued. The sum of his long story was, that it was by no means surprising M. Osalez should be here at Tangiers. Quite the contrary. He did more trade with the town than any half-dozen other merchants put together. He had a contract for provisioning the English garrison. "By Jove! and that's true," interposed Roper. He had a half share in the boat we meant to embark upon. And so on, and so on. M. Dumolard had plenty to tell; and all he had

to tell went to magnify the means of the Hebrew speculator.

After that last interpellation of his, Jack seemed somewhat *distrait*. M. Dumolard's facile sympathies and quick perception had told him that the handsome young Englishman's distraction had its origin in a profound interest in the beauty over the way, and to him accordingly he had addressed his animated narrative.

But chilled by the preoccupation that paid so little heed, his voluble talk flowed more and more sluggishly until, at last, with a slight but expressive motion of his shoulders, he relapsed into resentful silence.

Then my friend took the word, and, with a Machiavellian astuteness for which I should never have given him credit, addressed the Frenchman with the frankness that sat so naturally on him, but with a studied courtesy very foreign to his manners.

"You can do me a great service, M. Dumolard, if you will allow me to make a friend of you, and give you my confidence. I am persuaded I can rely absolutely on your discretion."

Our little host was equally flattered and gratified. His face wrinkled amiably as it wreathed itself in friendly smiles; and he stood there bowing and scraping with his jewelled hand pressed upon his flowered waistcoat. It was plain that Jack had

bound him to him, body and soul. So there Jack was away at score with the oft-told story—so much of it at least as suited his purpose; and he wound up with an "and now, M. Dumolard, if you only will, you can do me an inestimable service."

"Monsieur has but to command," M. Dumolard rejoined, courteously.

"It strikes me, you see, that as Osalez has so much to do with this boat he means most likely to go over in her."

"And Mademoiselle also — nothing more probable," assented M. Dumolard; "specially as he is always immersed in his affairs and enormously pressed for time."

"Exactly so. Now as he is master of the situation, and may send down sailing-orders at any moment, he's safe to try to steal a march, and leave us planted here; and I'm sure it would be impossible to be more comfortable anywhere," he added, politely, as an after-thought.

Dumolard, however, looked sorely puzzled at the British idioms Jack had slipped into. Jack saw it, tried back, translated, and went on again. "The captain promised to let us know in time—he'd do it too, I think, if it were left to him, if there be gratitude in man or honesty in faces. He smoked a dozen or so of my best *partagas* coming across, and said he liked them; but——"

"But M. Osalez is the master after all, as you

have said—a man who will have his orders attended to. However, gentlemen, confide yourselves to me. Mohammed shall go over to M. Mordecai's and inform himself. He is, as it were, a child of the household. Meanwhile, I shall despatch Achmet to the shore, and learn what they are doing on the steamer."

So spoke our zealous ally; and it was no sooner said than done. In ambush behind the darkened window-blind, Jack could watch the effect of Mohammed's mission. Not a gleam of light from the lattices opposite. The envoy knocked at the jealously-barred postern — first gently, and then as loudly as he dared. Not a sign of life on the part of the servants. It was clear the garrison had its orders — more than probable that this unnatural quiet portended a *sortie* later. So Jack took it; and speedily he was bustling about the baggage. Suspicions changed to certainty on Achmet's return. He had seen the Mary Anne with her steam up. There might have been reasons for that, besides the prospect of an early start; it was wildish weather and a shifty wind for a vessel lying in such open anchorage. But to make all sure, Achmet had boarded her with a boat-load of pilgrims, and then he heard from the crew that they expected to be off by morning.

"*Canaille of a capitaine! va!*" ejaculated Dumolard, apostrophising the absent skipper; "it's al-

ways agreed between us that he inform me of the departure of the boat." And Jack was chiming in with some anathemas of his own, when there came a tinkle at the door bell. It was the arrival of an anonymous and dirty scrawl that had been deposited in Mohammed's hands by a mysterious messenger.

"The Mary Anne may be at sea by the morning; and you had best burn this bit of writing."

"Our ally the Scotch captain's fist and caution, for a thousand! Now, M. Dumolard, there's not a shadow of a doubt. Don't let a soul be seen stirring. Have your people ready to carry our traps. Trust to me to keep a bright look-out; and when once our friends opposite are fairly under weigh, we'll slip down silently on their line of march."

And the lover was transformed into another man, all life and spirit, in place of languid indifference. He positively rubbed his hands at the prospect of a rough night on the straits, with but a plank between him and his mistress—to say nothing of a drenching for them both by way of prelude. As for Dumolard, he had caught fire at the other's excitement. I believe both of them would have forgotten all about the bill had not Mohammed and I been there to remind them.

Roper was an easy-going fellow generally—one of the last men you would have suspected of nerves—yet I fancied I could hear his heart thumping on

his ribs at the creaking of those heavy bolts of Mordecai's. As for Dumolard, he was dancing behind us like a dervish, now standing on tiptoe to peer out between our shoulders, now doubling himself up for a peep from under our arms. I was interested myself, I confess, for there was a strong dash of romance about the scene that was enacting. Hour, one of the clock, or somewhat over. A pale moon riding overhead among watery clouds that generally had the better of her. The plash of the rain. The wind moaning fitfully in the complaining boughs; and not another sound in the sleeping city, save the howl of a dog, or, it might be, the bark of a jackal. A Moorish archway opening into a *patio*, where you caught a glimpse of a sparkling fountain among the sombre orange-trees; the interior lit partly by the fitful moonshine, partly by the reflection of torches flashing in the passages. Moors were coming and going in their snowy raiment; and finally, Roper squeezed my arm hard as a couple of female figures emerged on donkeys, in Frankish waterproofs and under Frankish umbrellas. There was no mistake about the man's imagining himself in love, otherwise he would never have griped me as he did.

The procession got stealthily under weigh, having taken every precaution to attract no notice from our hostelry, which to all appearance must have been buried in slumber. The muzzles of the donkeys

were muffled in shawls. The glare of the torches was masked by umbrellas. Enveloped in a Spanish cloak, Osalez stuck close by his daughter's stirrup, drawing her wrappings carefully around her. We could see him throw a glance at our windows as he turned out of the yard. As for the lady, whatever she might have known or suspected, she never lifted her eyes.

Roper's head was out of the window before the last of the porters with the bags and the boxes had fairly disappeared round the corner of the house. When we set out in pursuit, it was all we could do to prevail on him to give them law enough, and let them commit themselves fairly to the deep before he ran into them on the steamer. "And after all," as I reminded him, "even once we are on board, I don't see you'll be much advanced. Depend on it, Osalez is Turk enough to condemn the beauty to close seclusion for the passage. I lay you five to one in ponies, if you like, the captain gives her over the cabin you scented so fragrantly with those pet *partagas* of yours."

Jack declined the bet, observing sadly that I might just as well make the five fifty; but added, more hopefully, that he would trust in luck and accidents to bring them together before the voyage was over. He spoke prophetically, as the sequel will show.

I have tried my hand at a sketch of Scene No. 1

—"The Start." Its *pendant*, Scene 2—"The Embarkation"—was even more characteristic. The moon riding overhead as before, but by this time with a more angry halo round her disc, and her wan rays more sinister in their glitter. The waters of the bay heaving and tumbling in breaking outlines that communicated a sympathetic thrill to the diaphragm—the "tideless sea" rolling in upon the beach with a fair imitation of an ugly surf, and a dismal grinding and churning among the pebbles. Considering the bay was half land-locked as the wind came, the strength of the ground-swell spoke volumes for what might be awaiting us outside. We had stopped short under the shadow of the rickety houses that swept in a broken crescent round the shore, to observe the proceedings of the party in advance. Had Osalez shown the white feather at the eleventh hour, I for one should have been exceedingly glad of it.

But it was clear that the Jew's mind was made up to play Lord Ullin's daughter with the parts reversed; equally so that the lady's lover had no idea of being left on the shore lamenting.

The torches had been extinguished; still there was moonlight enough to let us distinguish all that passed. A stalwart Moslem, tearing off his dripping *haik*, stood revealed in clinging shirt and pantaloons. He caught up in his muscular arms what Jack affirmed to be the fairy form of Miss

Osalez, although the bundle might have been a bale of waterproof for all one could tell to the contrary. He balanced himself on his bare and stalwart legs; trode gingerly into the surf, embarrassed as he was with the precious burden, and bent his oscillating steps towards a boat that was rocking uneasily among the billows.

"The idiot's over with her, by ——," ejaculated Roper, as the Moor made a stumble. And he would have rushed to the rescue, regardless of consequences, had not I made a snatch at his arm in time.

"The Moor's as sure-footed as the barb you bucketed so unmercifully a couple of days ago. The lady's as safe, at all events in the meantime, as if she were in bed at her kinsman Mordecai's, as I devoutly wish she were: how it may be towards the small hours is another question, and if you want to be near her when the danger may be real, you had better, for the present, keep as quiet as may be."

Indeed it was plain that the Moor knew his business, and once started he went as steadily as his comrade who was bestridden by the respectable Osalez in person. The boat took them all on board with their belongings, and went pitching away till we lost it in the uncertain light. Now it was our turn. Mordecai's myrmidons had hurried home and left the coast clear. We had taken a most touching farewell of Dumolard, who seemed to enjoy being

soaked in serving a love-affair ; not many minutes more and we were rolling in comparatively calm water under the bulging counter of the Mary Anne.

"Passengers" was our answer to the hail from the deck ; but it was not till after the look-out had been appealed to again, that the order was given to let down the side-ropes—we fancied we could hear Osalez in suppressed wrath, while the captain was soothing him in hoarse whispers.

Bluff and weather-beaten sea-dog as he was, that old Scotch skipper had the makings of an actor in him. He came forward into the circle of light thrown by the mate's lantern, looking to any one behind him, so far as his pea-jacketed shoulders were concerned, the very embodiment of astonishment and gruff discontent. But for us, there was a twinkle in his eye that belied his language, as he growled out his surprise at our arrival.

"Never supposed you gentlemen were in any haste to be gone : didn't dream you'd be for quitting your comfortable quarters and the weather like to be so coarse."

Jack acknowledged the signal the captain threw out with a faint quiver of his own eyelid.

"Haste indeed! you had our message, hadn't you? You don't suppose we sentenced ourselves to close confinement in this infernal hole till the weather should clear."

"Well, then, Captain, I was mistaken, as it would

seem, and there's an end of that; unless, indeed, you would be for putting cannily back again, now you've had some small foretaste of what we may expect round the point. You won't, you say? Very well, then, he that will to Cupar maun to Cupar; but I doubt you'll be scarcely so well put up this time as the last. My bit of a cabin's bespoke; and you'll find some queer-like characters in the saloon."

Some quick confidences that passed in the obscure companion gave the shrewd skipper a fair notion of how the land lay. At all events, when diving down through the darkness we emerged below in comparative light, I believe it was felt on both sides that we understood each other. The "saloon," as the master was pleased to term it, was far from a tempting apartment in any circumstances. The white-painted boarding of the panels was guiltless of all pretence of decoration. The dingy ceiling was smoked black in the centre by the vilely smelling lamp that was swinging beneath it. It was lucky, perhaps, considering the manners of its present occupants, that there was but a tattered scrap of wax-cloth on the floor, for on the benches that ran along the sides of the ship and encircled the battered deal table, were seated a strange company indeed, most of them smoking freely, and all dispensing with spitoons.

"Ay, they're a gey queer lot," repeated the captain, *sotto voce*, "gin only you could make them

out more clearly through the reek. But with the weather and hindrances in the lading, and one thing or another, we've been keepit here longer time than usual, and so they orra folk have been gathering in about. These Jews there" here he sunk his voice to a whisper—"are desperate hard set on the money-getting; and wasting time is like wringing out their very heart's blood, otherwise they would hardly be so fond to go across with us, for they've just a most desperate antipathy to the sea."

"You don't think there's danger, captain?" I inquired.

"Danger, no, not to say danger: gin there had been, I would never have taken my orders to sail from old Osalez, with that bonny bit lassie of his brought on board, for, after all, it's me that's responsible. Lord preserve me! what was I saying, gentlemen? Mr Osalez laid his injunctions on me —well, never mind, we're friends here after all, I hope, and gentlemen forbye; but as I was saying, for danger there's none; but discomfort's another thing, and with the wind and the water soughing and sucking us in to the Riff shore, it may be longer before we make the Rock than some of they fair-weather gentlemen will care about."

"Oh if that's all!" exclaimed Roper. He had been standing on full point at the door that divided this very common outer court from the inner sanctuary that shrined his idol. "Oh, if that's all!" and he

turned greatly relieved to have a look at our fellow-passengers. An odd lot they were, as the captain had remarked. Small as was the cabin, its atmosphere was so dense that we could scarcely embrace them in a single *coup d'œil*, but we could examine them more at leisure as we made our way along between them and the table. There were stately Moors in their floating white draperies, with searching black eyes, sallow complexions, and sharpened features, staring before them in *farouche* tranquillity and reminding me greatly of eagle-owls on the perch. All of them, I remarked, had singularly white and well-shaped hands, especially one venerable Santon with a snowy beard, who clearly had never put those hands of his to use, although possibly with perpetual genuflexions his knees might be hardened to horn. There was a merchant or two of pure Berber blood, attired very similarly to the Moors, although there was no mistaking the different types of figures. There were a couple of thoroughbred negroes from the remote palm-groves of Timbuctoo, dealing in dates as their staple commodity, though probably speculating in flesh and blood on occasion. There was a Berberised Frenchman, most likely a renegade. But the lives and souls of the motley party were those countrymen of Osalez that the skipper had alluded to. Some of them by their dress, settlers in Barbary; some of them from the Spanish sea-ports; not a few natural-

ised scorpions of the Rock,—they were jabbering to each other of gains and exchanges and every topic connected with money-getting, so far as we could make sense of their *lingua mixta*. One or two salutations I acknowledged from individuals whose faces seemed tolerably familiar to me, though I had never traded with them for cash, cigars, or anything else. But if we could make anything out plainly in that dim pandemonium, it was that we could not possibly stay below in it. Better a fresh hurricane from heaven any day, and beds on the sloppy decks *à la belle étoile*.

It might be pretty poetry talking of beds *à la belle étoile*, but looking at the matter practically they were altogether out of the question. The decks were as much encumbered as the cabin. The fore part of the ship was given up, of course, to the cattle. Dumolard's information had been accurate enough: scarcely half the animals had been shipped when Osalez took it into his head to be gone. But we were none the better off on that account—rather the reverse, indeed, in the event of a storm; for instead of being fast wedged, as otherwise they would have been, our loosely-secured live freight might break away from their lashings, when, as the mate remarked, there would be the devil to pay, and no mistake. Meanwhile they stamped and dragged at their halters, and filled the air with uneasy bellowings that might have seemed ominous of

coming disaster had one been much given to forebodings.

Under the bulwarks aft, rows of Africans had made themselves as snug as circumstances admitted of. There was a general effect of dark blue cloaks, picked out with white under-garments, of turbans and fezzes, and red and yellow slippers. For besides ordinary passengers we were freighted with a batch of pilgrims taken on contract. They were on their way to establish communication with a screw steamer chartered from Gibraltar for the Mecca voyage, and advertised to touch at the various African ports. While piled in barricades round the cabin skylights, were crates of poultry packed as closely as "the humans." Many of the cocks had apparently lost their heads already with the heat and stuffiness of their quarters. At all events they had entered on a mad crowing match at the moon, as if they had mistaken her watery ladyship for the blessed sun at day-dawn.

The captain civilly cleared a space for us between the paddle-boxes, and offered us the run of the gangway overhead. As for Osalez, we had seen nothing of him since we came on board, and I at least for the moment had forgotten both him and his daughter.

A yo-heave-oh-ing rises from the steerage over the lowing of the oxen. The anchor comes up, the paddles go round, and the Mary Anne is mov-

ing. A clumsy tub she was; immensely broad in the beam and round as an apple in the bottom, safe enough, in all conscience, so long as she had moderately fair play, but rolling frightfully to the slightest shock on her sides. So it may be imagined how we began to feel it, when at last we drew out from under shelter of the land. I hope Miss Osalez may have been happy below, though I doubt it. I only know that when I last looked down into the main cabin while we were still in the bay, the pipes had gone out, the jabber of voices had been silenced, and nothing was to be heard but groaning and gnashing of teeth; while the decks were littered with a moaning mass of miserable humanity, damped occasionally by the flying showers of spray. But all that was comparative Elysium to what was to follow. Even out of the shelter there was no wind to speak of, yet the swell was singularly heavy, considering it came from the shore. Soon the decks were nearly as wet as the surrounding water. Wave after wave flooded us forward, each of them having scarcely time to wash out through the scuppers before it was followed by another and another. As for the pious hadjis, they were put through a course of involuntary ablution that should have relieved them from such ceremonial observances for the rest of their natural lives. Meanwhile the engines were doing their best, but they sobbed like a pair of broken-winded screws, who

have been pumping themselves with violent over-exertion. We made pitifully little way, and I felt it was matter for heartfelt congratulation that the gale should have so nearly blown itself out. If we were in difficulties when labouring through the afterwash of a storm, how should we have behaved had we been caught in its fury?

I was to have an opportunity of judging before morning. I had sunk into a troubled sleep with Roper's head bobbing against my shoulder, when a tremendous roll flung me forward on my hands in a rush of slimy briny water. Nothing like a cold douche of the kind to bring the slowest man quickly to his senses. I had staggered to my feet in a moment, instinctively looking out to the windward. The moon was brighter than ever overhead, in a sky that would have been clear but for the fleecy clouds that were drifting with ominous velocity; but when I had time to take the bearings, I saw the wind had gone right about. That thick grey curtain I started at, came travelling up from Tarifa, slanting uglily in the upper half of it, though as yet hanging heavily perpendicular below. Had I been innocent of what was awaiting us when the gale met the ground swell with the steamer for their plaything, a glance at the captain's face might have warned me. It did not show a sign of fear, but was eloquent with the sense of a terrible responsibility.

I had once been struck by a white squall off Candia, when we barely saved our bacon by the skin of our teeth; but so far as a vivid recollection serves me, it was milder than what we experienced now. For myself I felt assured that it was all over with us; no use attempting to float in such a sea, and the crazy boats would have been overcrowded and swamped, even had we ever succeeded in launching them safely. For a minute or two we were involved in a damp drifting curtain of darkness that might literally be felt, though it thinned and cleared fast as the gale tore it into tatters. It is true the sea did not run so very high, thanks to the conflict of opposing forces; but the jumble and turmoil of the breaking water gave one a good idea of indifferent weather in the Maëlstrom. The scene on the one deck and the other baffles description. I could command them both when I had scrambled up on the gangway. The half-drowned oxen were plunging wildly, filling the night with frantic bellowings—those of them at least that had not slipped down on their sides, to hang half-strangled in their halters. One or two had broken loose; so had a couple of water-butts, and these last went rattling about like shot in a bottle, making confusion worse confounded. The deck passengers had gone in a rush for the cabin doors, where the leading files had wedged themselves hard and fast. The rest were vocifer-

ating and blaspheming for the most part, clutching desperately at each other's garments, or anything else they could make themselves fast to; while a few were on their knees and praying devoutly. A hadji on pilgrimage who goes to the bottom has his felicity assured if he has faith to believe it. The cross waves were making free with the decks, but as yet there was little danger of being carried overboard, although sundry of the cratefuls of poultry had gone cruising on their own account. The truth is, it was an awful moment for all of us —Christian or Jew, Mussulman or Pagan.

But the mate backed the captain manfully, and their coolness somewhat steadied the crew. With a couple of men at the wheel, they got the boat before the wind again, and on the whole I thought we were well out of it. For the squall blew over almost as fast as it had come up, leaving nothing worse behind than a fresh nor'-westerly breeze, and a sea that was seething in circles like a boiling kettle. At another time I should have been horribly sea-sick; as it was, I was very much too busy in helping to secure the frightened cattle.

All at once, the labouring engines came to a standstill. There was a startling cessation of the vibration of the planks beneath our feet. Struck powerless, the steamer fell away, rolling purposelessly in the trough of the waters. There was a

general rush amidships, for most of us guessed what had happened.

They say a sense of common calamity tames the wildest and reassures the shyest of animals, making them forget their antipathies for the time. The wolf and the sheep have been seen cowering together while being swept down a flood on the same raft of refuge. Roper and Osalez almost rush into each other's arms as they meet over the scuttle of the engine-room.

Roper had clearly kept his head, whoever else might have lost theirs. He was much more curious than excited, when Osalez burst out with, "For God's sake, Captain Roper, is there any danger?"

Roper had come to loathe Osalez, and at that moment he despised him. To bring his only child to sea in such weather, and then to give a thought to his own miserable safety. So he looked down on him for a moment in silence, and then shouted out, with blunt incivility, "Never fear for yourself, Mr Osalez. I believe we're safe enough unless the storm comes up again, and you may take my word for it, that there are some of us who were never born to be drowned."

Probably, in selfish prudence, he would have given much to recall the words the instant they were spoken. At any rate he would quickly have done it from a more generous motive. It was just because he had brought his young daughter on

board with him that Osalez had forgotten his enmity for a moment. Reminded of it so brusquely, his angry eastern blood flushed up to his sallow face; but mastering himself with a strong effort, he answered shortly, but not without dignity. Roper's face got as hot as the Jew's. He would have given the world to atone for that piece of injustice. There was no unsaying his speech, but impulsively he seized his enemy's hand with characteristic vehemence that excited not the slightest response.

"I never was so sorry for anything in my life, Mr Osalez——" but before he had got further Osalez had turned away with a chilling smile, and a "Forgive me, sir, if I leave you to reassure my daughter." He could scarcely have picked out words to revenge himself more effectually. Had Roper made a snatch at the olive branch when it was offered, he might have been permitted to share in the work of consolation.

"Just like my luck and temper," he sighed. "I'll never have such a chance again, and——it serves me right."

"Who knows?" I ejaculated oracularly, looking away from the pandemonium on deck upon the surrounding turmoil of waters.

The engines had broken down past mending, but there was no return of the storm; the hours slipped by sluggishly, sea-sickness and Oriental fatalism

had generally got the upper hand again: most of us seemed resigned to endure stoically till time and the elements should drift us to some haven. I should have been tolerably contented myself, for simple squeamishness sits lightly on one after an escape from sudden death, had it not been for close observation of the skipper and his second in command. I saw them laying their heads together and whispering anxiously, and yet neither of them were men to "shake at shadows."

"Now that it's over, we're all right, captain, are we not?" I took an early opportunity of remarking cheerfully, as I went up to him where he stood on the gangway, peering eagerly out over the paddle-boxes.

His first answer was gruff enough and curt enough. But second thoughts succeeded, making him more civil and explanatory.

"God grant it, sir; but we may have our work cut out for us before breakfast-time, those of us that are men at least, for that lot of Jews and they riff-raff for Mecca are worse than the beasts that are bellowing below there." I looked inquiring, so he went on. "Ay, the wind's dropped, and it's as quiet as could be hoped for, and we might float for ever, if we had plenty of sea-room, and maybe we might rig up some duds of canvas that would serve well enough till we could get some kind of help."

"But, God bless me! man, we're in the Straits

of Gibraltar: they've only to get a sight of us and see that we are crippled, and they'll be racing after the salvage from Gibraltar and Algesiras. If you look to the money, of course——"

"I don't grudge the money, sir; and I'll be bound my owner there, well as he likes it, would cast his about as if it were dirty water if he knew all I could tell him at this moment."

"What is it, then? You may as well take me into the secret; it's my profession to risk my life, you know; and I don't happen to have a daughter on board."

"Well, then, it's just this. Where would you take us to be now? Somewhere in the course between the Rock and Tangiers?"

"Certainly. Where else?"

"Just so, and you would be sair mista'en. The worse luck ours. I haven't sailed the boat here, fair weather and foul, not to have made some small acquaintance with the currents. I know the set of them at least, if not their strength; the day'll be breaking on us in another hour at the most, and then——"

"Then?"

"Then I jalouse we'll be no that far from the Riff coast; and with the air this way and the steamer helpless, I don't see what's to save us from going ashore. So you'll have to stand by us, if need be, when the time comes; that's what

I wanted to say to you; and now I must be stepping below to see after they bellowing beasts of cattle."

A pleasant hearing truly. I had heard something of currents and under-tows in the Straits. I had seen the sea running like a mill-race off the opposite point of Tarifa. And I had heard even more of the Riffs than the currents — the most savage and lawless tribe of the wild and warlike population of Morocco. Living almost under the guns of our great Mediterranean garrison, they were as reckless of life, and as much of pirates within the limit of their means, as any rovers who ever put out from Salee. Fiercely independent as they were of control, their emperor had very little to say to them. I had listened to stories of garrison yachts becalmed in that dangerous neighbourhood, whose owners, although not men to make parade of their piety or their fears, had expressed most heartfelt gratitude for hairbreadth escapes. A broken-down steamer would be the most tempting of prizes; and here were we with the most helpless of freights, —our passengers sure to be panic-stricken or unmanageable at the very first appearance of danger. I saw how it would be, when I went to take Roper into my council, and I had fresh proof, too, of how ridiculously he had fallen in love. As brave a fellow as need be, in thinking of his Esther he lost courage altogether for the moment; then im-

mediately he was a man again and something more, in the hope that the chance he had missed would come back to him. "We must save her somehow," was all he said; and, upon my word, I believe he thought no more of myself and the rest of us, than I did of the Mary Anne with her cattle.

One has witnessed the enthusiasm of an audience when the dull curtain flying upwards to the spring unveils some brilliant effect of the scene-painter. Passive actors in an agitating drama, the crew and passengers of the Mary Anne were in no mood to be enthusiastic about anything; yet I imagine there were few of them but must have been impressed in a way with the view that burst upon us with the breaking of the morning. We had been pitching and rolling in a dense watery vapour, which had been slowly thinning from black to grey as the doubtful light came filtering through it. Of a sudden we felt some fresh puffs of wind, and at the signal there was a vivid reddening overhead like the fierce reflection of a fire from behind a canopy of canvas. Then a round ball of flame burned out above the eastern horizon, and the veil that had wrapped us hitherto floated away as by enchantment. The glorious range of the Atlas seemed within arm's reach. Peak rose on peak, their rocky foreheads flashing out in rosy effulgence, although here and there one of the shaven scalps was swathed

in a white vapoury turban, while shreds of the veil that had been about us but the moment before were still clinging round the mountains' waists or to be seen streaming away over their shoulders. In the sweep of an amphitheatre, those mountains embraced a bay, that still lay with their spurs and their lower limbs in the coldest and deepest shadow; save here and there to the westward, where some solitary sun-shaft, shooting down through a crevice in the serrated crests, had fallen in a line of radiance on the strip of pearly beach. There was very little beach, by the by: whatever the glories of the scenery in the eye of the artist, it was as ugly a bit of coast from the mariner's point of view as you need care to look upon. Jagged rocks sinking almost to the water's edge; long rugged reefs running out here and there, uplifting their heads in the most unlooked-for places, their slimy, weed-covered backs seeming to rise and fall on the swell like so many hideous sea-monsters on the watch to swallow any castaways.

I knew not whether the noise of the swell breaking into surf, deadened though it had been by the distance, had given the captain preliminary warning of the imminent dangers awaiting us. I had not spoken to him for the last hour or so. All I know is, that so far as Roper and myself were concerned, that bit of surprise was dramatic enough in all conscience; and before we had well time to ex-

change an ejaculation, a common thrill had run round the ship, followed by wailing and shrieking almost as loud and wild as that we had listened to when the squall caught us in the night-time. It said more for the skipper's nerve than veracity that he bellowed, from his stand on the gangway, an assurance that we were in no manner of peril. His Scotch speech was Sanskrit to the most of the mob, and if any one had listened to him nobody would have believed him. Instinctively I swept the seaboard northwards, to see if there were assistance in sight. There was nothing visible but one faint dark line of smoke. Gladly should I have given all I possessed in the world could we have been transhipped on board that invisible steamer.

"For heaven's sake, Esther—Miss Osalez, I mean —don't alarm yourself!"

The voice was Roper's; and when I wheeled round upon him, there was his beautiful lady-love half reclining in his arms. Don't believe that the fair dove had flown thither instinctively, when she came fluttering up from the cabin at the sounds of lamentation on the deck. But a tall Berber, "scroodging" like every one else, had sent her spinning aside with a shove from his square shoulder-blade, and that lucky Roper had been on the spot to receive her, and now he stood steadying and soothing her a considerably longer time than was in any way necessary. Most ungratefully he cast one truculent

glance at the unconscious Mussulman who had acted as the rough go-between of love.

If Miss Osalez apparently found some consolation in having her ruffled plumage smoothed by that manly yet gentle hand, it would have been hard to blame her. The circumstances were excuse enough for abridging ceremony; and then she had known Jack so long as a devoted admirer, who had stooped from his higher position in society to make a fool of himself for her pretty face. There was assurance besides, as well as most delicious flattery, in seeing him not only cool but happy, when most people about him were in miserable panic. When the ground has been cleared beforehand, love-making naturally goes forward at a gallop in a supreme crisis of the kind; and to do him bare justice, Jack was the very man to profit by so fair an opportunity. Miss Osalez disengaged herself leisurely with a grateful smile and a murmur, which of course he had to stoop his head to hear. She let him support her to one of the benches aft, where he deposited her carefully out of the way of the general confusion. As for the father, he stuck by the pair, but made no objection. Jack's coolness had its influence on him too: apparently he began to regard the stalwart gunner as a life-buoy that it would be as well to keep within reach of the family—at all events, in the meantime.

For the more you looked at the situation the less

you liked it. Our close vicinity to the land showed how fast the vessel must have drifted; and the set on the surface was still inshore, although it seemed as if some under-flow must be putting the drag on. It was a simple calculation however, that if nothing could be done in arrest of our fate, we should know the best and the worst of it in an hour or so.

All this passed of course far more quickly than I have written it. I was on the point of going in search of the captain, when he spared me the trouble by coming to accost me.

"A bad job, as I said, sir. I trust you and your friend will lend us a helping hand.

"You may count upon us, captain; but what's become of your crew?"

"The crew, sir — a wheen feckless, mutinous idiots! No, no; there's no a man we can reckon upon, forbye the mate and the engineer lad, who's a Yankee; and maybe—ay, there's ane dependable hand in the forecastle—that's Davidson."

"It might be well to see to the boats in case of accidents, eh?"

"Accidents!—it'll be nothing but an accident if anything save us; and that you had best lay your account wi'. Boats! od, the only boat I would trust to swim in siccan a sea as yon, got a boom through her bottom the time o' the squall, when the foresail was blown out o' the bolt-ropes. And as you may see yourself, all they Moorish and

Jewish scum are making a rush for them already: if they should get them into the water, they'll droon the sooner; but it's no worth disputing it with them, one way or another."

The skipper's speech had become more decidedly Scotch in his excitement, and I might have laughed at another time at his peculiar philanthropy; but now it was anything but a laughing matter. "What the deuce do you mean us to do, then? Is there no means of bringing us up with the anchor?"

"It's our best hope, but it might easily be better. I doubt the ground-tackle's some the worse for wear, though it did hold us in Tangiers' Bay yestreen, and it's bad mooring ground here; and then gin once the cable rub on they reefs, it would snap like a tow in the flame of a candle. We'll do our endeavour anyhow; and that's what brought me here to speak to you."

"I'll tell my friend what you say, and you may depend on us."

"Ay," said the captain, glancing over to where Roper was lounging about in contemplation of Esther Osalez. "It may be bad for us men, should we take our lives ashore with us; but it'll be worse, maybe, for some of the rest."

"Well, one good thing is, the coast seems quiet enough in the meantime—not a sign of life stirring anywhere."

"That's all you ken about it. Beg pardon, sir,

but I'll be bound now that they cliffs are swarming with the Riff deevils, if we could only see them. And it's like there will be ane o' those douars o' theirs, as they call their rickles of villages, up that bit of a gully. There's gey good pasturing about the nooks on the hillside, for all that it looks gruesome and barren. But I've no time for clavers, for here comes the mate, and it's like he's found the powther barrel: we may as well be signalling with the bit brass gun we've got—there's the reek of a steamer there, and, though she be to windward, maybe they might hear us. And, talking of powther, I wish you and Captain Roper would get up your arms and ammunition. You may have livelier sport than you missed at Tangiers before all's said and done."

The ancient piece of brazen ordnance made more noise than I should have fancied possible: the reverberation went rolling about among the rocks in the amphitheatre of mountains. Whether the people on the steamer heard it or not, it was very certain to give the alarm on the Riff coast. With that feeling strong upon me, I plunged below to look after the arms. Roper was after me the next instant. "I say, old fellow, I think everything's going as swimmingly as possible."

"The devil it is," was my unsympathetic rejoinder.

"Yes, I know it's hardly the time for philander-

ing; but isn't she a beauty, and such pluck. What do you mean taking the guns out of their cases, when everything's still dripping on the decks."

"We may want them before the day's an hour older—that's to say, if you don't intend that we shall be made peaceable prize of by these Riff savages."

A new light seemed to burst on Roper, and certainly I had no cause now to complain of his amorous distraction. He unpacked and overhauled our armoury and ammunition with a close and eager attention that augured indifferently for somebody, should the weapons be brought into play. A second salvo from the brass gun, and another rattle among the Atlas echoes, greeted our return on the deck, each of us loaded like Robinson Crusoe when he took the field against the cannibals. Esther Osalez gave a little scream, notwithstanding Jack's commendations of her courage. However, Jack threw out some private signal in return which seemed to reassure her, though we were very visibly drawing nearer to the shore. Now the sun was lighting everything down to the water's edge, and by this time the foreground had become unpleasantly animated. We were quite near enough to distinguish with the naked eye the dresses of the groups who were clustering at the mouth of the ravine the captain had remarked upon. And carrying the eye upwards and inland, I could see other individuals

scrambling down grooves in the rocks that might have been footpaths, but looked as if they had been worn by the rainfall. It was plain that these apparent solitudes were peopled by an eminently active population, indefatigably industrious in their particular avocation, and ready enough to help their providence when it sent them a god-send in the shape of a ship.

The stir that was going on ashore quickened the captain's movements, and impelled him to try our last chance of safety. Moreover, a stronger current had just laid hold of us, as we could tell by the increasing velocity of the foam-bubbles that went swirling past our sides.

"I doubt if the anchor'll grip yet; but it is best trying." The cable rattled through the hawse-hole as the anchor went over the side; we waited anxiously for the jerk that should have brought us up; but the sense of being swept smoothly onwards towards our fate was never lightened for a single moment. The captain shook his head ominously; the Yankee engineer's long face grew visibly longer, as he thrust his hands viciously to the very bottom of his trouser pockets. So we manned the capstan gloomily, and brought the anchor up again;—nothing, by the way, could be less reassuring than the fretted strands of the cable. And still the steamer was setting steadily for the shore. The warm sun was drying the limpid air till we could observe

the most minute details of the preparations made to receive us. The wild groups were gesticulating fiercely. Stalwart figures were flourishing lances, and fumbling over matchlocks of portentous length. What was more serious, it was not merely a question of patience with them—of waiting till the friendly currents should wash the waif to their feet. For more than one long boat had been dragged down from its berth in the sides of the ravine, and was bobbing about by this time in the waters of the little estuary. Masts were being stepped and yards hoisted. And, "Od, sirs, they'll lay us aboard in the twinkling of a bed-post if we don't find the means of fending them off!" ejaculated the captain.

But in the meantime a bustle on board distracted our attention. The sight of the threatening preparations on the land had changed the abject panic of our passengers into the frenzied courage of desperation. Better to chance it on the troubled straits than trust the tender mercies of the Riffs. There was a rush made on the only boat, two or three of the demoralised crew taking the lead; and somehow it was lowered without upsetting. The captain eased his conscience with a warning of its state, which went altogether unheeded. "Ye madmen! ye daft, doited idiots! I tell you she makes water like a bauchled boot; and she's bound to sink with you if you put over for the Spanish side." But, all the same, a ladder was let down, and a

human cascade of Hadjis and Jews and mongrel sailors began to precipitate itself over the side. The crazy tub floated comparatively comfortably under the steamer's lee. They managed to shove off before it was filled to the swamping point; and, selfishly speaking, we could easily spare them. Yet much of the company they left behind with us was even less desirable. There were the women and the children, the old and the feeble,—all harmless and helpless; but besides there was an ugly knot of sturdy Moslem fatalists. As no exertions of man can help him to elude his destiny, these had declined to scramble for accommodation in the boats. Besides, they might possibly think they had another chance. The miscreants ashore, although their hands were against most people, were, after all, of their own blood and faith. A judicious onset at the propitious moment might make them masters of the rest of us —infidel dogs, to be handed over as a peace-offering to our enemies.

"It's likely, no doubt, that may be their notion," responded the captain, when I suggested the idea. "And we'll do wisely to hold together when we go about our work, and keep an eye on each other and on them in case of accidents."

The weapons we could muster were distributed, so that five out of the half-dozen of an effective force were formidably armed. Roper and myself had handy breech-loading carbines, the very thing

for the circumstances, warranted deadly up to 300 yards, with revolvers into the bargain. The captain and his mate had our No. 12 central fires, loaded with B.B. cartridges, that would scatter like case-shot at short ranges. The Yankee engineer, back-woods'-bred, had taken kindly to a ponderous ducking-gun. Mr Davidson, able seaman, had to content himself with the rusty fowling-piece belonging to the vessel, and a pike which he contrived to improvise for the occasion.

While making our preparations, the Moslems watched us gloomily, huddling themselves together, draping themselves in their mantles, and fumbling beneath these, possibly at daggers, as if by way of counter-demonstration. Aft on the quarter-deck the Osalez had kept themselves very much to themselves. Certainly their isolation was by no particular wish of the young lady's, and indeed she seemed to gain something more than courage from the affectionate looks her lover threw at her. She actually appeared to enjoy the excitement, and at all events had brightened up amazingly with the beautiful morning. She had let a great burnous slip back on her pretty shoulders, and coquettishly adjusted her brilliant neck-ribbon. Positively, I saw her slip off her hat when Roper's back was turned, and, producing a tiny brush and comb from somewhere in her raiment, proceed to smooth those magnificent tresses of hers. It was certain she did

not realise the worst terrors of her situation, or her eyes and cheeks would scarcely have been so lustrous.

Her father did. Evidently he was exceedingly sorry for himself, and, perhaps, to do him justice, still more anxious for her. Knocking about the straits and the African coast in the way of his very promiscuous business, he could scarcely have been altogether unaccustomed to danger. But this time the danger was far graver than usual, and then, as a careful man of business, he might be irritated at having rushed into it wantonly. *Que diable* were he and his daughter doing on board of that unlucky *galère* at all?—at any rate, why had they insisted on sailing so soon, instead of waiting for more favourable weather? Why indeed? All because of that bull-headed Englishman, who, after persecuting them with his attentions in Gibraltar, would come blundering up against them in Tangiers, suggesting ideas of abductions and elopements. He blamed poor Roper for his own folly, and in fact was frank enough to blurt out as much, trusting, it may be assumed, to the impunity insured him by that idol-worship of Jack's which offended him. Were my life prolonged for a century I should never forget the figure he cut. He had got himself up against the night chills in a rough fur cap, a shaggy poncho, and a pair of ponderous riding-boots. Slung on one shoulder was a leathern bag, whose contents might

possibly be inestimably precious. Swinging to the other was a bell-mouthed blunderbuss of his own, a most formidable weapon at close quarters. He paced round the spot where his daughter was seated with the methodical tread of a sentinel on duty, but with the sullen ferocity of a wolf or hyæna exercising itself behind the bars of its cage. Every now and then he would stop to pull his daughter's wrapper more closely round her, giving her a savage pat of affection and encouragement. Then he would mutter, and make a dash out along the decks, probably bringing up alongside of Roper, who appeared to fascinate him with an odd attraction of repulsion. As the Moors on shore got more forward with their preparations he had grown more excited, until he began almost to rave.

"You've been persecuting us on the Rock for these months past, and what demon brought you after us to Tangiers, Captain Roper? Should I ever get back again in safety to my home——"

He looked the Shylock all over as he left the menace unspoken. Jack on his side burst out this time, but it was neither the unreasonable charge nor the implied threat he took fire at.

"What fiend prompted you, you miserable man, to bring your daughter into such fearful peril, for your blind, idiotical fancies? As if I had ever dreamed you were in Tangiers till that accursed hour when you ran into my arms."

The indignation in his eyes was the more terrible in a man habitually so calm and good-tempered. Osalez was overmastered and perhaps conscience-stricken. At all events he said nothing, though he stood his ground, till Jack, who remembered himself, made a mighty effort over his temper, and extended his hand.

"Forgive me, Mr Osalez, and set my speech off against yours. We have each of us grievances, it seems; and if I have done anything to make your life uncomfortable, again I frankly entreat your pardon. Surely when we are meeting a common danger, and know not what the next hour may bring to us, we can afford to forget our anger, and let bygones be bygones."

Osalez hesitated. His daughter had sprung up and drawn near to them at the first mutterings of the storm; her face was flushing with gratitude to the strong and stately Englishman for his forbearance; but, like a sensible girl, she resisted her impulse to interpose. That would have been enough to harden the heart of her stiff-necked parent. It was the skipper who volunteered for peacemaker.

"Ay, ay, Mr Osalez, let bygones be bygones, as the captain says. Shake hands, and let us all stand shoulder to shoulder, or else they misbegotten devils 'll be letting us have our kale through the reek long ere dinner-time. Take my word for it."

Sullenly acknowledging the cogency of the argument, though he only half understood it, the Hebrew touched the proffered hand.

"And now," resumed the captain, "we may as well clear the steamer forward, by heaving some of the brutes of cattle overboard; and when that's done, we'll have another trial with the anchor. They're but sorrow and trouble to us here, the cattle; but they may possibly divert the notice of our friends on shore there."

"The cattle belong to me," interposed Osalez; "and they're just as well where they are in the meantime. One never knows what may happen."

"But it's me that's answerable for the ship and the souls on board of her. You need not bend your brows that fashion, Mr Osalez; it's long odds against both of us being spared for the one to send the other to the right about."

"But it's no question of life, man—not for me at least," said Osalez, hurriedly, as if appealing to the captain against the doom he dreaded. "The Moors will know me: there are those on board who will tell them; though heaven knows what they may wring out of me for ransom."

The captain gave his shoulders a shrug worthy of Dumolard. I couldn't help whispering to Roper, "A beautifully unselfish character, your father-in-law;" but I don't believe he heard me. His face was speaking comfort and sympathy to Esther, who

was blushing and paling for her father, till she looked more bewitching than ever.

It was no very difficult matter getting rid of the cattle—only withdrawing a board and driving them overboard; soon they were to be seen striking out for the shore in all directions. And, as the captain had shrewdly surmised, the Riffs got ready to welcome them.

While our stray stock were being roped and penned ashore, we had once more let go the anchor. Indeed it was high time to make our last effort. There were reefs immediately ahead of us both to port and starboard; and judging by the whiter patches of broken water, we might strike on a submerged rock at any moment. Anxiously we watched again after the plash; again the anchor was dragging, and the steamer moving as before. Again we had gone despondently to the capstan-bar, when a jerk responded to the strain. The anchor had bit, and held firmly.

The sense of relief was great, but it did not last. The reprieve seemed likely to be very temporary.

"We'll have time to look about us now, eh, captain?" exclaimed Osalez, shooting buoyantly to the surface from the depths of his despondency.

The captain showed no corresponding exhilaration. "We might possibly have had the time and a chance, had you but fitted us with the new cable I begged of you the day before we left the Rock.

As it is, I'm thinking the few sovereigns you kept in your purse may cost you mair cash than you'll like to think of, and many a man his life forbye."

Whereupon Osalez made a clutch at the cap that covered his hair, and literally wept tears of rage and regret over that luckless piece of ill-timed economy. It was the captain's theory that the anchor had caught hold of a ledge of rock; that the cable at this moment must be fretting on the sharp stone edge. "And I'll take my solemn 'davy there isn't a sound strand in it; 'deed more than one of them were snappit already, as you saw and found for yourselves."

"The Riffs, at any rate, are not in the secret of the quality of your ground-tackle," exclaimed Roper, after a time. "See! the beggars are getting impatient, and mean to come off to us, as we won't go ashore to them."

It was even so. A couple of boats were being loaded down to the gunwales with people, and both parties bristled with matchlock-barrels and spear-heads. Sweeps were got out and manned by great muscular barbarians. They would be aboard of us in no time, if we made no objections. We looked blank, certainly, but I think determined. We had been preparing ourselves for this for some time; and then nothing is more wearying or worrying than suspense. Just then the mate, who stuck to his special charge like a man, and had been let-

ting off his brass cannon at irregular intervals, walked up to it to fire another shot. The usual reverberations had risen and died away—hark! could that be an echo of them from the Spanish side? Latterly we had been too much occupied nearer home to keep a very lively look-out to seaward; but now we made a simultaneous rush to various vantage-points. Lightest and most agile of all, Esther had anticipated the rest of us.

"The steamer! the steamer! the steamer!" she screamed in a melodious falsetto, letting her opera-glass rattle down upon the deck, clapping her little hands, jumping in joyous excitement on the cabin-hatch where she had perched herself.

"A gunboat either from Gibraltar or Algesiras," pronounced the captain, after a long, steady look through his telescope.

"The Groper, for a thousand! Calverley's surveying ship. She's always poking about the straits in all weathers." Such was the suggestion of Roper, and he was notorious for excellent eyes.

But Groper or not, she was yet a great way off, and it was hard to tell for the tumbling waves whether she were actually heading down for us. However, we hoped the best, and soon had reason to believe it. If that was her gun, it must have been in response to our signal; so we repeated it, and were distinctly answered this time.

Osalez having thrown himself down on his knees, jumped up to fling himself into his daughter's arms. Roper looked as if he would have liked to follow suit; but he had already taken advantage of the parent's paroxysm of devotion to press her hands in his and do everything short of embracing her. It was the cool and collected skipper who reminded us that our rejoicings were premature.

"It's a race after all, remember, between friends and foes. There's no doubt of it that the Riffs have sighted that boat long before we did, and that's the reason they're so set upon coming aboard here. They're dour deevils to deal with in any case; and they'll be harder to beat off than ever, now that they see us like to slip through their fingers."

"If it's a race, there can be no question who is making the running. I should say they must be pretty near the 400 hundred yards by this time, eh, Jack?"

Roper nodded assent, glanced round at his lady-love to see that she was admiring his adroitness, sighted his carbine to its longest range, and pitched it up to his shoulder. He "browned" the boatful, no doubt; still, allowing for the pitching of one craft and the other, it was a pretty as well as a lucky shot. The boat yawed visibly and shipped a wave. One of the rascals pulling had dropped his oar as if the handle had burned him. But all the same,

on they came again; the master of the engines tried his long piece with no results; and a couple of shots of my own had expended themselves on the air or the water. Our enemies regained their confidence, and while one of the boats deliberately slackened speed, the other went off upon a detour to approach us from a different quarter. We kept loading and firing again, but thanks probably to the double motion, our practice left a good deal to desire.

"This will never do," said the captain, very sensibly. "It's no time for practising at long ranges. We had best get down behind the bulwarks, let them draw nearer, and bide our time."

Roper and Osalez, acting as allies for once, forced Esther to lie down on her rug. She utterly refused to go below decks. Then they subsided like the rest of us, and we all waited. We could catch the splash of the sweeps in spite of the sound of the breakers. The captain raised his head over the bulwarks, and drew a scattering fire of musket-balls which did him no harm whatever. "Now then, all of you together, and take it steady, for God's sake!" This time the warning we gave them was unmistakable. A couple of individuals who chanced to be on their legs pitched head-foremost into the water, where they splashed about like wounded wild-fowl. One or two more dropped among the

ballast of the boat. While the Riffs were occupied picking up their crippled comrades, the battery of breech-loaders was charged again. Another round, more casualties, and the confusion became more confounded. Leaving their friends to their fate, they turned this time and headed for the beach, like Cleopatra's galleys flying from the fight at Actium.

The cheer that followed them in their retreat was cut short by a shriek. It appeared that Miss Osalez's feminine curiosity had tempted her to take an observation on the other side; and the sight that greeted her was the second boat far nearer than we should have fancied. It had fetched a compass, caught both the breeze and the current, and with hoisted sail was slipping swiftly down upon us. But what made the scream finish more shrilly than it began, was the proceedings of the handful of Mussulmans on board. Naturally anxious to cut short the exchange of shots, they thought the moment was come to interfere with decision. The leader of them, the man who had jostled Miss Osalez the night before, had shuffled out of his slippers and was gliding towards Roper with uplifted knife. Roper, all unconscious, was in the act of delicately adjusting one of the Moslem's co-religionists, when Esther's cry of warning brought him to his legs as if he had been galvanised. Changing his hands from the stock of his carbine

to the muzzle, with the quickness of thought he anticipated his assailant by knocking him senseless—"A most salutary warning for the rest of the blackguards," as the captain observed. And meantime Osalez had placed the contents of his blunderbuss at the disposal of the second boat's crew. It was a long range for the weapon, but by luck or skill he shot plump centre; though the charge did no serious damage, yet, thanks to the distance, it was so impartially distributed as to make the party stop short on their oars, and then promptly follow their fellows.

"Hurrah, my lads! here's the steamer coming!" exclaimed the captain in exceeding glee; and, indeed, it soon began to look like it. The hull was just rising out of the waters, and all hands agreed she was no other than the Groper. "Hurrah!" echoed Roper; "we'll get Calverley to spare us a couple of boats' crews and go and smoke the hornets out of their nest."

There's many a slip between the cup and the lip. The vessel gave a lurch that somehow sent Roper almost into Esther's arms, and the lurch was followed by a marked increase in our motion.

"The Lord help us!" exclaimed the captain, "it's the tow that's parted. You've done it this time, as I said, Mr Osalez; what would you offer now, would you have let me bend on the rope you refused?"

I believe most of us felt moved to cast the Hebrew overboard, but his fresh paroxysm of anguish and self-indignation might have disarmed us. It was only the tough texture of his garments that prevented his rending them; and failing that, he leaped up on a bench under the bulwarks, and began wildly gesticulating toward the distant steamer. Another roll — his feet go from under him, and he vanishes bodily from our sight. I rushed forward to see the fur cap disappearing down the vortex of a small whirlpool; what hope was there of his being saved, with that voluminous poncho clinging to him?

Esther, I must say, looked sublimely beautiful, as she tore her cloak from her throat as if she were preparing to follow her father. She turned like a fury on the captain, who had laid hold of her promptly with great presence of mind; and slight as she was, she must have tasked his strength to hold without hurting her, had not an incident come to divert her excitement. The moment Osalez had tilted over, Roper had begun to strip. In a second or two he had parted with coat, boots, and braces. He, too, had taken a flying observation over the side, and had marked Osalez disappear under the counter of the vessel. The next moment he had bounded across the deck, taken a neat header from the other side, dived, and disappeared also. I knew he was as strong in aquatics as at most other manly

pursuits, but I own I grew intensely anxious as the seconds went by and he never showed again. Ten to one his header might have brought him to grief upon a rock, and who could answer for the strength of the under-currents? As for Esther, she dragged the captain to the other side by strength of will rather than of body, and, seemingly unconscious of the man who held her, gazed wildly down into the seething water. In vain—there was no penetrating for an inch below these swirling circles; death might be grappling your dearest within a fathom of you, but at best you could only imagine the agony.

"Hold up, old fellow!" I shouted, as if he could hear me, and as if my shouting would help him, for I had seen the fair locks floating in the water beside the grizzled bullet-head of Osalez. A life-buoy, dexterously pitched, went skimming up to his very cheek, and the next moment Roper's arm was through it, and he was drifting a-head in comparative safety. A rope went after the buoy, and at last we hauled the couple on board. Osalez was utterly insensible when we laid him down, and for a moment we believed it was all over. But his daughter, when her first agitation was passed, showed herself the best physician of any of us. She ordered us about, telling us what to do, and directed the application of different stimulants from such scanty means as we had at our disposal. At

length the chest heaved, the eyelids trembled, and the languid blood began to stir in the veins, till we could perceive a faint flutter in the pulse. Then, and when she was assured that life had revived, she raised herself to thank his preserver. But Jack neither gave her time to speak nor said one word himself. He merely looked, and opened his arms, and, all dripping as he was, she flew straight into them, resigned herself to his eager embrace, and buried her face in his bosom.

"And why the devil shouldn't she? I would wish to ask you," exclaimed the captain, looking round savagely, as if any one had impeached her delicacy; though to tell the truth, in the tension of our nerves we all regarded the impulse as perfectly natural.

The yarn has run already to an unconscionable length, and it boots not to dwell on the fag-end of it. Broken loose from her moorings, our steamer still set for the shore, and the Riffs took heart to have another try for us. Again they had to beat a bloody and ignominious retreat, encouraged as we were by the swift approach of the Groper. Her Majesty's vessel took the Mary Anne in tow, and the tardy voyage which might have been disagreeable at another time, seemed delightful after our recent experiences. Roper, in high good-humour, did not press Captain Calverley for boat-

crews for a descent. By nightfall we were landed on the quays of Gibraltar, by special permission from the Governor. Osalez, enveloped in blankets, was under way for his residence, and, thanks to my preoccupations and the doubtful light, I can say nothing of Jack's leave-taking of his mistress. But, three months later, I had the pleasure of assisting at the quietest of weddings, when Esther Osalez, only daughter and heiress of the late Abraham Osalez of Trafalgar Cottage, Gibraltar, was married to John Augustus Roper, Captain in H.M.'s Royal Regiment of Artillery. What is more, I had been requested to give away the bride; for the lamented Abraham had died of the fever contracted on the eventful night when his ill-found steamer was wrecked off the Riff coast. I may add that, before breathing his last, he gave his child his blessing, with absolute *carte blanche* to marry the man who might please her fancy; surmising doubtless, with his customary shrewdness, the quarter in which her choice would fall. As for religious objections, Osalez, as it may be imagined, had never been a bigot, having kept a deal of Christian company in his time; while his daughter found Jack the most eloquent of controversialists, and changed her creed before her marriage.

For the rest of the *dramatis personæ*, the mercantile influence Jack had won in wedlock found ex-

cellent berths for the worthy skipper as well as the mate and the Yankee engineer. The boat-load of passengers, who had vanished from our sight and thought, had perhaps as much luck as they deserved. Driven ashore in the bay, they were duly stripped, but dismissed as scarcely worth the slaughtering.

DOLLIE, AND THE TWO SMITHS.

MY father was an Irishman and a writer of articles for magazines. I have never written in a magazine or anything else myself. My mother I don't remember. She died shortly after my birth. One of my earliest arithmetical efforts consisted in the discovery that I had nine brothers and sisters, concerning whom, as they are all alive and are some of them Fenians, I desire to speak only in complimentary terms.

I believe publishers did not pay so liberally in those days as I have reason to hope they do now, or possibly my father may have acquired dissolute habits through his contact with literary men; but from some cause or other I was so slenderly provided with food, clothing, and education, and my home was so inconveniently crowded and uncomfortable, that I left it at the age of fifteen with an outfit consisting of one extra shirt, one ditto pair of socks, a comb, and thirteen-and-sixpence that I borrowed, without alluding to it at the time, from

my eldest sister, who was keeping house and acted as treasurer generally, and whose balance in hand consisted of that amount. I have since paid it her back, with interest at 7 per cent. As, however, my present purpose in writing is not to dwell upon the varied and striking incidents in my own fortunes through life, so much as to portray certain scenes into which its destiny has led me, I will skip over the first twenty years after leaving home, and land myself in a neat white clapboarded house, with green venetians, and a veranda half round it, situated on a wooded hillside, and commanding a lovely view of a secluded lake about ten miles long and three wide, on the shores of which a few scattered clearings indicate that we are across the Atlantic, and in a part of the country not yet very thickly settled. Nevertheless, we are in one of the eastern States of America, at no very great distance from a city of fifty thousand inhabitants, and can hear the shriek of the engine as the cars stop at the little village at the head of the lake. As to whether that lovely creature with fair hair and blue eyes, and hands so small and white that it is a marvel how she can do so much house-work and preserve them as she does, and a pleasure to look forward to eating the bread they are now kneading,—I say, as to whether this young lady is my wife, or the "chattel," to take the legal English view of her, of that handsome broad-

shouldered man unyoking a team at the door of the barn, is a matter in which we three alone are concerned. It does not signify, either, who the farm or the two little chubby children belong to: the point to which I wish to call my readers' attention is this: Here I am, an Irishman by descent, an Englishman by birth, a citizen of the United States by naturalisation, and of the world by an extended knowledge of it. I confess to only one inveterate prejudice, acquired doubtless from a long residence among pure and simple Asiatics, and this is an intense abomination of, and contempt for, all society calling itself civilised, and especially for that mongrel race of money-grubbers, whether they are located on one side of the Atlantic or the other, which calls itself Anglo-Saxon, and which, to an inordinate conceit, adds an almost inspired faculty for "peddling." If, therefore, the extremely sensitive feelings of my American readers are hurt by this record of my experiences of village life in their country, I only request them to wait until I publish a few observations upon which I am engaged in regard to the commercial morality of London as compared with that of New York, when they will have an opportunity of judging for themselves of my extreme impartiality, and of venting their spleen against England, by republishing my very original and uncomplimentary criticisms on that country,

and pocketing the entire proceeds of the labour of my brains. I give them fair notice that for every dollar of which I am thus robbed I shall stick a pin into them somewhere; and people with such very thin skins had better make friends with me in time. I am to be bought. I have not purchased and paid for so many of my fellow-citizens without knowing to a cent what my own price is. My stock-in-trade consists of a certain faculty I have for washing the dirty ("soiled" we call it on this side —"dirty" is considered coarse) linen of the Anglo-Saxon race in public. So much as regards myself.

The name of my broad-shouldered companion and fellow-labourer is Orange Z. Smith. As there are two other Orange Smiths in the neighbourhood, we have to be very particular about the Z, pronounced zee, and not zed, in America, and so taught throughout the schools and colleges of the country. In the case of Orange, it does not stand for the first letter of any name, but is simply a distinctive middle initial; hence it follows that he is popularly known as Orange Zee. When our first little cherub was born, we called him Zuyder Zee, out of compliment to a Dutch ancestor on his mother's side. I may here remark that my name is also Smith. I dropped my Celtic patronymic and appropriated the English one upon the occasion of my taking the thirteen-and-sixpence from my sister above mentioned. The name of Zuyder Zee's mother is Mary, but she is

called "Dollie." All the pet diminutives of female names in the States end in *ie*, and not in *y* as in England, perhaps because there is a more refined flavour about *ie* than about *y;* and all Dollie's correspondents address their letters to her, not by the Christian name of her husband, or even by her own Christian name, but tenderly and affectionately as "Mrs Dollie Van Snook Smith," thus as it were inviting the affectionate sympathy and interest of the clerks in the post-office. So when I was so unfortunate the other day as to upset her out of the buggy and she broke her leg, the editor of the 'Van Snookville Democrat' touchingly alluded to "the limb of Mrs Dollie Smith, one of the most beautiful and highly respected residents of this township." Dollie's grandfather, Van Snook, had been the first settler here, and the town was called after him. When Zuyder Zee was born I asked Orange Zee whether the event ought not to be announced in the 'Van Snookville Democrat,' but he said it would not be considered proper to make any public allusion to the incident; and I remembered afterwards that I never saw a column for births in any American newspaper. Long may it be before our Dollie figures in any other column! but whenever she does, her affectionate relations will stick to the pet diminutive, and will announce the departure, not "of Mary, wife of —— Smith," but of "Mrs Dollie Van Snook Smith."

It is not necessary to say how Orange Zee and I first became acquaintances and then friends, and then decided "to go to farming" together, and were attracted to this pretty hillside, and to the immediate neighbourhood of the farm where Dollie was living with her parents. I had to trust to Orange Zee's farming experience in everything. My ignorance was so great that he never ceased wondering where I had been "raised." I should like to know how many of my readers know how to drive a nail so as not to split the wood. I think the profound contempt with which Orange Zee regards all Englishmen, to whom he owes his origin, is principally based upon the information which I gave him that there were actually many people in England who did not know how to drive a nail. Nor does he yet understand—as of course everybody must be constantly wanting to drive nails in England as in America— "what on earth they do, if they don't know how."

After Orange Zee and I had seen Dollie, and found that the adjoining farm was for sale, we determined to buy it; and we accordingly went to Dollie's uncle, to whom it belonged, and told him that the fences were all out of repair and the house was falling to pieces, and the meadows were all "run out," and that it was a miserable old place "any way," and not worth taking at a gift. Dollie's uncle saw at once from this that we were dying

to get hold of the place, and, as he was equally anxious to sell, he said that he had now given up all idea of selling, and intended to "hang on" to it. Orange Zee told me afterwards that the great art of buying and selling was to appear as if you did not want to buy or sell, and always to seem to hang back. So we hung back. As we were boarding with Dollie's parents, I found "hanging back" quite a pleasant occupation. At last one day Dollie's uncle came and said that he had been offered 75 dollars an acre for his farm, and that if we wanted it we had better speak, as he was going to let it go at that. To my surprise, Orange Zee said he had just offered 50 dollars an acre for a better farm on the other side of the lake, and expected to get a decided answer from the proprietor to-morrow. I felt quite angry with Orange Zee when I heard this, as I hated the looks of the other side of the lake; and when Dollie's uncle went away, I told him he might go there if he liked by himself, but that I should continue to "hang back." He laughed at my innocence, and assured me that what he had told Dollie's uncle was only as big a lie as what Dollie's uncle had told him, and "how else could we expect ever to get hold of the farm?" So then, of course, I said that it was all right, and we went on "hanging back." Finally, we had a talk with Dollie's father on the subject; and he said that if we would give him a hundred

dollars down, and a note of hand at six months for a hundred more in case he succeeded, he would get the farm from his brother at 50 dollars the acre; but in that case we must leave the place for the present and seem to have given up all idea of settling here. Orange Zee told me afterwards that the old man (we always called Dollie's father "the old man") had held a mortgage over his brother, and by threats of foreclosure forced him to sell. The old man was highly respected and looked up to for many miles round, as being the best horse-doctor and the "smartest" man at a trade generally to be found in that part of the country. He was also an elder of the Baptist Church, and exercised a most powerful gift on the occasion of "revivals" and "protracted meetings." When he found out how matters stood between Dollie, Orange Zee, and myself, he got nearly all our money out of us by secret promises of Dollie—first to one, and then to the other; and nothing but the accident of Dollie herself taking a decided stand of her own, prevented our being turned out of the house Dollieless and penniless. The whole details of this financially romantic transaction were afterwards reported in the 'Van Snookville Democrat;' and the old man received a sort of ovation for some time afterwards whenever he entered a store in the village, in compliment to his skill in having thus turned the charms of his Dollie to such good pecuniary account.

This did not prevent our having a wedding, which was the occasion of great rejoicing amongst all the members of the church to which Dollie belonged, and which bore grateful testimony to her popularity among the farmers' daughters in the neighbourhood, who flocked to her marriage, in very elaborate Parisian toilets, in buggies and spring-waggons, and accompanied by "beaux" the honesty of whose intentions it was refreshing, to one accustomed to less primitive conditions, to contemplate. If I decline, for reasons which may hereafter appear, to say whether Dollie was married to Orange Zee or myself on this auspicious occasion, it is not because either Dollie or her husband have ever since done anything to be ashamed of. Of the purity and simple innocence of our *ménage* there has never been a question. Nor did the fact that one of us had failed to realise his aspirations in respect of this estimable young lady, embitter our home relations. The sceptics in virtue on the other side of the Atlantic may sneer, but I am proud to say that no cloud of jealousy ever disturbed the serenity of our domestic horizon. Nor was the disappointed Smith ever for one instant false to the pure and innocent sentiment of fraternal affection which bound him to the other two. Indeed I may say that we were (and I trust still are) all three very justly considered models of propriety by the highly moral community of the village.

The said village consists of a single street, with three churches and a schoolhouse, all facing each other, in a little square in the middle, with pugnacious-looking steeples and a hostile cock to the gables, as though they were all longing to fly at each other. There are three dry-goods stores, and a hardware store, and a drug-store, and a blacksmith's shop, and a billiard saloon, and two taverns, besides grist-mills, saw-mills, carpenters' shops, &c. The population is a genial, good-natured race enough. Everybody is familiarly known by his or her abbreviated Christian name; and the most minute details of the daily life of every family, and every obscure member of it, are accurately known and carefully discussed at post-time in the store that keeps the post-office, and which serves as a club and resort for idlers generally throughout the day. For although the inhabitants of Van Snookville are a tolerably industrious and prosperous community, they manage to spend a large share of their time in gossip, and find in the ever-varying excitements of politics and religion abundant occasion for quarrel and intrigue. To one not familiar with their habits, their severe language and the harsh judgments they entertain of each other might be supposed to lead to irreconcilable feuds. But this is rarely the case, for the simple reason that an irreconcilable feud is a very unprofitable investment of time and temper; and men seldom hate

each other so much as to interfere with their prospects of being able to cheat one another. Of course the more rich and influential a man is, the more he can afford himself the luxury of a temper. In America, as in England, civility is a marketable commodity; and I had frequent occasion to remark with admiration that my Van Snookville friends rarely permitted their warmth or indignation of feeling to interfere with their prospective pecuniary interests.

Orange Zee said that, until we could increase our capital, our best chance of becoming respected in the village would be to join the Methodist Church, and get the better of the old man "on a trade." He has therefore already become a "class leader;" and in consequence of certain secret information regarding her father, conveyed to us by Dollie, we see a way by which we shall be enabled to obtain possession of a good deal of the old man's property, without rendering ourselves liable to imprisonment. We are indebted for the idea to Swomp, the pettifogging lawyer, who is the old man's rival in politics and in piety, and who is to obtain a percentage on the whole amount resulting from the transaction. After we had obtained possession of the farm and of Dollie, we found that it would be necessary to improve our living accommodation; and instead of building, we determined to buy a ready-made house which was for sale half a mile distant, and move

it to our own land—a proceeding which involved a great deal of the process known as "dickering." To "dicker" successfully, one must have a great aptitude for chewing straws and whittling. The great art is to force your opponent to be the first to put a value on the article to be bought or sold. You choose a morning when you are not busy, for it is ruinous to let any indication of anxiety or haste appear. You walk slowly with your opponent to a fence-rail, and both sit leisurely across it, and chew straws thoughtfully. I say opponent, because in one sense every man is your natural enemy—all the members of the community, whether they are engaged in agriculture, commerce, or politics, being trained from their earliest infancy to prey upon each other's pockets. You find yourself engaged in a gigantic game of grab (which means getting all you can, and giving as little as possible in return), and the weakest goes to the wall. Some win the game as bullies, others as sneaks; but you have very little chance unless you are either the one or the other. Moreover, it is important to remember that if you do not treat every man with whom you have any dealings upon the assumption that he is both a liar and a rogue, he considers you a fool; nor is there the least danger of his feelings being wounded by your openly doubting and requiring proof of his most solemn asseverations. This entire absence on your part of any gentlemanlike feeling

excites his respect for your "smartness," and leads him to doubt equally every statement made by you in return, as the highest compliment he can pay you. I remember my first attempt at a trade was made in Dollie's presence, and what I imagined were feelings of delicacy, she called weakness, and my sense of honour she said was *non* sense,—a fossil sentiment which had its origin in ages fitly called "dark," when idiots in armour devoted themselves to the protection of weak-minded women when they might have been making money, and sacrificed their material progress to an abstraction called Chivalry. I explained to Dollie that among the Anglo-Saxons on the other side of the Atlantic it was only considered honourable to tell lies when they were necessary to screen the woman you had betrayed; and that, according to modern ideas of chivalry, it was not considered important that you should respect the virtue of your friend's wife, if you religiously paid him your gambling debts. Nor could I get this obtuse Dollie to admit that the unscrupulous pursuit of dollars by men of business in the New World, was a more degrading occupation than the unlicensed pursuit of women by men of pleasure in the Old.

Orange Zee, who has an immense *physique*, trusts a good deal to his overbearing voice and manner in a trade; and it was amusing to hear him endeavour, by sheer force of will, to extort

from little Deacon Brown a price for his house, and to see the little Deacon wriggle, and writhe, and protest that he had not the faintest idea of how much it might be worth, that he had never sold a house in his life before, and that unless Orange Zee would make him an offer, he felt quite powerless and paralysed. At least two hours elapsed before either of them would name a figure. I think it was Orange Zee who, in spite of his browbeating, was forced to name a sum, which so wounded the Deacon's feelings, that he quietly rose and walked off without vouchsafing a word in reply, leaving our big Orange Zee ignominiously chewing his straw. In this game the little Deacon made the first score. It was protracted over many days with varying fortunes, and might finally be considered drawn, as I do not think we paid either too much or too little for the house.

The next thing was to dicker with the "house-mover" to transfer our new residence bodily on to our farm, which he did for a hundred dollars, with the assistance of an old broken-winded horse, a man, and a boy. The *modus operandi* is simple enough. You go into the woods and cut down two trees long enough to pass under the whole length of the building, which is of course of wood. By means of screws the house is raised from its under-pinning and placed upon these timbers,

which are in their turn placed upon wheels; the old horse walks round and works a sort of capstan fixed in the middle of the road, and attached by a rope to the house, which moves upon the wheels along planks placed under them as it slowly progresses. Most farmers in America are carpenters as well, and build their own houses without any assistance; but we were in a hurry, and Orange Zee had too great a contempt for my powers as an assistant for us to undertake it.

The most expensive operation was the purchase of stock. Twenty-five cows, at from 60 to 80 dollars apiece, made a considerable inroad into what the old man had left of our capital.

Orange Zee and I work our whole farm of 100 acres without any help. We have a team for which we paid 300 dollars, and a lumber-waggon and a mowing-machine, with ploughs, harrows, and other farm-implements. Dollie has a German "help" called "Lizer," who is not considered worth more than her board until she can speak English. We are consoled for her stupidity by her cheapness. She and Dollie milk all the cows, make all the butter, wash all the clothes, bake all the bread, cook all the food, and mend and make a great part of our clothing, to say nothing of looking after the children and the house generally.

We have a parlour with some ornaments made with dried "fall" leaves, and some cheap china

shepherds and shepherdesses, and a picture worked by Dollie's mamma in worsted-work. This room is kept carefully closed, and its finery covered up, excepting on the monthly occasions when Orange Zee, in his capacity of class leader, has a prayer-meeting in it. We live in the kitchen, out of which open two bedrooms, a buttery, a wood-shed, an attic staircase, and a cellar staircase, so that the walls may be said to be almost composed of doors. Lizer shares the attic with dried apples and empty trunks.

The cooking is all done at a stove, not at an open fireplace, a thing never to be seen in an American farmhouse. The staple articles of diet are pork and beans, and apple-sauce; besides which, Dollie is an excellent hand at corn-bread and griddle-cakes. We get up at five, and Orange Zee and I go out and do "the chores"—in other words, attend to the stock, draw water, and make Dollie's fire, chop wood, &c. At six we breakfast, and at mid-day we dine, and at six we have supper and do our "chores" again. The quantity of things Dollie does by machinery is surprising. She washes with a machine, and she dries with a machine, and she sews with a machine, and can knit a pair of stockings in half an hour with a machine, and makes butter with a machine; and pares apples with a machine; and she "cans" tomatoes and sweet corn, and preserves black-

berries, and saves wood-ashes, and makes soap with "lye" (which is water that has soaked through them), and is a perfect repository of domestic receipts; and turns out on Sunday to go to meeting with a big "chignon," which she calls a "waterfall," and a long train, as neatly *chaussée* and *gantée* as if she lived on the Boulevards instead of on Beaver Lake. How she manages to effect these sudden and entire transformations is only one of the mysteries which attach to Dollie, and are a source of perpetual wonder and admiration to Orange Zee and myself. Then she takes in 'The Revolution,' and seems to me to have more advanced opinions on "Woman's Rights" than Susan B. Anthony herself; and she reads 'The Radical' regularly, and watches the new development of the religious idea of Boston with such keen relish that I sometimes suspect she is a secret contributor. I verily believe she is corresponding with those two strong-minded opponents of stringent ceremonial observances, Olive Logan and Eleanor Kirke, on the marriage question; but she does not at present admit either Orange Zee or myself into her reasons for always going to the post-office herself for her letters. We have perfect confidence in her, and are waiting without alarm for the results. So long as she is the most efficient house-wife in the county we have no right to complain; and I believe that it is when she is on her

knees scrubbing the floor that her most brilliant inspirations come to her, and suggest those abstruse problems of theology with which she occasionally plies Elder Fisher, much to that poor orthodox minister's embarrassment. Notwithstanding all which, there is not a Sunday-school teacher in the district (pronounced *dee*strict) more universally respected and beloved; and no "sewing bees" are so popular as those which our pretty little Mrs Dollie gives alternately with Orange Zee's prayer-meetings in the front parlour. Upon these occasions the neighbouring farmers' wives flock to the manufacture of our "pants" and petticoats, and discuss the latest inventions in sewing-machines and theology over an abundant supply of tea. Dollie is a specimen of a new type developed since the race was transplanted to America, and is as peculiar to the soil as are the beavers which used formerly to inhabit our lake; and I believe, notwithstanding her regular attendance at Elder Fisher's, she is surely but silently sapping the foundations of his theology in the minds of a large section of his congregation. Like the beavers aforesaid, I sometimes think that Dollie acts entirely by instinct, and without any exercise of the reasoning faculty. She always speaks under some strong, quick impulse, which is irresistible to the listener. A beaver is taught by intuition how to make use of his tail: why should not the same intuition teach a

woman how to use her tongue? The fact that it has never done so yet, does not cause me to despair. Since I have known Dollie I have become sanguine. Orange Zee and I both feel that she is rapidly developing us into something, but we don't yet know into what. Time will show.

Meantime, like Dollie, we do as much farm-work as we can by machinery too. We have a sowing-machine and a mowing-machine and a reaping-machine. In the hot haying-time we mow before breakfast, and rake and cure our hay with horse-rakes and tedders, and load it by a patent process on to our waggon, and get our bright "Timothy" into our barn with another patent thing like a harpoon, the same afternoon. Think of that, you poor befogged farmers of the old country! The amount of hay that we two can cut, cure, and mow away in one day, is so great that I shall not mention it, lest you should imagine that I had been born as well as naturalised in America. We never stack it outside, and have a hay-press of our own, which we work, as we do most things, by horse-power, and press for our neighbours as well. We have a horse-power threshing-machine also, with which we thresh our neighbours' grain at from four to eight cents a bushel, and make a good thing of it; and by killing all our calves two days after they are born, and sending all our milk to the cheese-factory, we are able to contribute to the large cargoes of cheeses which

annually cross the Atlantic for consumption in the British Isles. What old fogies you British farmers are not to kill your calves, and so save the milk!

Then Orange Zee can do almost anything he wants with a plough and team: he has surface-drained all our farm with open ditches three feet deep with the plough alone. As for me, all my most brilliant inspirations in regard to agriculture have been suggested by the remarkable farming experiences published by Mr Horace Greeley in the columns of the 'Tribune.' I believe, in spite of Orange Zee's knowledge, we should have been repeatedly ruined, had it not been for the original ideas we derived from the lucubrations of that truly great man. Indeed, as I can't be of much assistance to Orange Zee by my practical knowledge, I endeavour to make up for it theoretically by studying the rural 'New-Yorker,' 'The Country Gentleman,' and other agricultural journals. Had I been allowed to have my own way, I should have invested in a variety of advantageous patents, and experimented upon a large scale with all the numerous varieties of oats, potatoes, tomatoes, and other produce which are warranted to make the fortunes of farmers courageous enough thus judiciously to risk their capital. Among the varied occupations of Orange Zee, however, he had passed a year of his life peddling patent rights, and

the information he had thus acquired in regard to their value induced him invariably to prohibit my ever buying one. This was a great trial to me, for scarcely a week passed without some eloquent traveller calling, and offering for a few dollars the exclusive right to make and sell in the county stoves warranted to season as well as cook meat; or fences which were cheaper and more durable than either wood or iron; or clothes-pegs which possessed the remarkable property of drying the clothes as well as of attaching them to the lines; or lightning-rods, which not only protected the house from lightning, but bottled up the electricity for private consumption;—besides many other ingenious contrivances which marked the fertility of the American brain. In fact I feel sure that, had it not been for Orange Zee, we might have become proprietors of many exclusive privileges which would have secured us a comfortable independence for our lives. I was confirmed in my opinion of my own good judgment and ability in these matters by overhearing myself spoken of one day as a "good, clever sort of fellow." As Dollie made the same remark in regard to the stupidest man in the neighbourhood, I afterwards discovered that a "clever fellow" signified here a "good-natured fool." After this personal application it was natural that the violent transformation which English words undergo after crossing the

Atlantic should rouse my indignation. I once seemed to plunge a whole supper-table into a douche-bath, because I remarked that a species of porridge called Graham Mush was "nasty." I do not yet know the exact meaning of this awful word, but it is evidently something more than the opposite of nice; and certain it is, that this cock-and-bull account of farm-life in America will be called there a "Rooster-and-Ox" story.

Besides our agricultural operations, we are called upon as good citizens to devote some of our attention to politics. The election of the town officers every year is an occasion of great excitement and intrigue. It is here that the youthful American mind acquires the rudiments of that exalted statesmanship which finds its full fruition in the adroit achievement of great State or national financial frauds. A "State" in America is divided into counties and towns; the towns are in fact rural districts, each one large enough for half-a-dozen ordinary English country parishes; in each town there may be one or more villages or hamlets, though the villages, properly so called, require charters of incorporation giving them municipal officers and independent local government. Where there is no such village incorporation, the town chooses annually its own officers: these consist of town supervisor, road commissioner, sheriff, constables, &c. Politics may thus be said to be

brought into the minutest details of every man's daily life.

For instance, Orange Zee, vowing vengeance against the old man, Dollie's father, and being also animated by the desire to attain the first round of the ladder by which he might possibly ultimately climb to the presidential chair at Washington, determined to put himself forward as the Republican candidate for the exalted office of town constable. In pursuance of which design Orange Zee donned his go-to-meeting coat, and after consulting Swomp, who was going himself to run for supervisor on the Republican ticket, drove to several of the leading Republican farmers, and announced to them that he had been so urgently pressed by his friends to have his name put upon the ticket as constable, that he had reluctantly consented, and that he would consider it a favour if they would support him. Meantime Swomp having held a private caucus of his friends at one of the "stores" in the village, decided upon the list of officers which they would offer to the Republican party in opposition to the list headed by the old man, who comes forward as Republican candidate in opposition to Swomp. A few days after, all the Republicans in the town rally to the Republican tavern, where Swomp's supporters hand each arrival a ticket containing his own name at the top, and Orange Zee's name at the bottom;

and the old man's supporters hand each arrival a list with his name at the top: on receiving which the voters plunge into an inner room reeking with humanity, smoke, and profanity, where all the respective candidates and their supporters are struggling round a table, at which are seated the scrutineers; and after a day of confusion and excitement, Swomp's supporters announce triumphantly that they have carried their ticket, and Orange Zee returns to our longing arms covered with dust and glory, and smelling of whisky. But this is only a preliminary stage. The Democrats go through the same form a few days afterwards, and then both political parties having thus decided on their tickets, try issues with each other. It is only to be expected that a number of the old man's supporters, disgusted with their defeat, vote Democratic; but then a number of Democrats on the same ground vote Republican,—so the one set of malcontents about balances the other. Still the issue is as uncertain as it is in England, because a vote in America is worth as much money as it is in England, though it is only for the State, or United States Legislatures, that they are worth paying for in money: in their local elections the consideration is various, and may be illustrated by Orange Zee's own proceedings. He having a marvellous faculty for diving into the private affairs of his fellow-townsmen, went to some who had

large amounts owing to them, and promised, if they would vote for him, to collect their debts in his capacity of constable, and charge them nothing for it; and he went to others who he knew were overwhelmed with debts, and promised that if they would vote for him he would always give them warning before he came to distrain, so as to enable them to convey their goods away in time: in fact, Orange Zee managed so to impress people with the extent of the powers which he could wield to benefit those who voted for him, and to injure his opponents, that many who voted Democratic scored out the constables nominated on their own ticket, and substituted Orange Zee's name.

Thus it happened that although the Democratic ticket was finally elected, and Swomp and the old man both defeated, Orange Zee came in triumphantly at the tail of the Democrats—thus in these early days proving political capacity of a very high order, and inspiring both Dollie and me with great expectations for the future. I did not then know that Orange Zee had begun life as a boot-black in the lobby at Albany, and thus at a tender age had imbibed, as it were, through the soles of eminent politicians, those first principles which he was turning to such excellent account. Where life is one gigantic system of barter, one of the earliest lessons to be learnt is, how much one's social position, political influence, professional know-

ledge, and religious standing, are severally worth "on a trade."

Take the case of Gouge, who was elected democratic town supervisor against Swomp and the old man. Gouge was a director of the Van Snookville and Boghole Branch Railway. The V.S. and B.B.R. is Democratic; no Republican conductors, porters, and brakesmen need apply. At the State elections the V.S. and B.B.R. vote Democratic to a man; and the nomination of the Democratic candidate for our Congressional district may practically be said to rest with the President and Board of the V.S. and B.B.R. Gouge had been first a porter, then a conductor, and finally had run a wild-cat on said railway with such success that he was promoted to station-master. To run a wild-cat for any length of time on a single line without an accident, requires both skill and daring. A wild-cat is a sort of extra goods train that has no stated times for running, but dodges from one station to another between the regular trains whenever the line happens to be vacant, and the engineer thinks he can reach the next station before any train leaves it, and go fast enough not to be overtaken by the lightning express behind him. Metaphorically, Gouge had run a wild-cat all his life; he had a wonderful faculty of dodging past people on his upward career. He knew so well the value of his position as station-master, that though his salary

was only a thousand dollars a-year, he managed by dexterous trading to exchange the information, opportunities, and power which his position gave him, for over twenty thousand dollars in two years. Gouge it was who saw how much money was to be made by a hotel at the depot; and he sent for his brother, who was a hotel-keeper, and promised to secure the privilege of the hotel to him, on condition that he should receive a share of the profits; and so he introduced Gouge junior to the President, who saw no objection to the scheme, provided he had another share in the profits. So the President and the two Gouges share the profits of the hotel between them. In the same way he secured a valuable railway contract for the leading Democrat in Van Snookville, upon the understanding that he should command the whole vote whenever he required it, a few refractory Democrats being "squared" with small shares in the contract, and the whole helping to swell the political influence of the President of the V.S. and B.B.R., who received besides a large pecuniary share in the profits of the contract. And so Gouge quietly slipped with his twenty thousand dollars from being station-master into the proprietorship of the 'Van Snookville Democrat,' which paper he worked so successfully for the interest of the railway and the Democratic party in general, and himself in particular, that when the Van Snookville National Bank

was started, the voice of public opinion unanimously pointed to Gouge as President; and Gouge finding himself, to use his own words, "reluctantly forced into this position of responsibility and prominence by his appreciative fellow-townsmen" (who are by this time so completely cowed by him, that they are afraid to call their souls their own), runs that flourishing institution, the First National Bank of Van Snookville, as he did the wild-cat, entirely for his own benefit. Is there any wonder therefore that, though the majority of the population of Van Snookville is Republican, by some mysterious dispensation the vote of the town is always largely Democratic? for could not Gouge, who is President of the First National Bank, Director of the V.S. and B.B.R., town supervisor, proprietor of the 'Van Snookville Democrat,' part proprietor of the Van Snookville Railway Hotel, and joint-owner with his son, who "runs it," of the principal store in the village, with one half of the population in debt to his bank, and the other half dependent in some form or other on the V.S. and B.B.R.,—could not Gouge, I say, bring such terrific pressure to bear upon any luckless individual who ventured to thwart his sovereign will, that life in Van Snookville would be a burden to him? If Gouge wants to force a public road across a man's field, all he has to do is to tell the judge, who owes his election to Gouge's influence, that he had better appoint

assessors prepared to "lay" the road thus, and do his (Gouge's) will, or he need never more hope to dispense justice in that neighbourhood. Gouge's life seems bent on the invention of political and social screws, and instruments of moral torture; and as all the functionaries are elected, and he practically controls the elections, he manages to work the electors and the elected against each other with such adroitness, that the power he wields may be said to be absolute. Providentially Gouge drinks! Van Snookville, as ungrateful as her rival Paris, to the man to whom she owes, if not her beauty, at least her prosperity, — Van Snookville, less bold than her "irreconcilable" sister, is afraid to vote "no" against her oppressor, but finds a grateful solace in the consolatory reflection that he drinks. For a week at a time whisky renders Gouge unable to rule over us. Then Swomp, who is perpetual arch-grand knight of the Good Templars, rallies his sons of temperance, and the leading church members enter into deep mysterious conclave as to the best means of ridding themselves from the hated yoke of Gouge.

The old man and Swomp sink their religious and trading animosities to combine against the common enemy; and a holy alliance is formed between the Methodists and Baptists, which results in the announcement that Splurge, the great revivalist

preacher, will shortly arrive, to quicken the slumbering consciences of the Van Snookvilleites; and the junior members of the community, of both sects and sexes, look forward with some little flutter of excitement to the prospect of "a protracted meeting," and unlimited opportunities of flirtation. It is hoped that by a tremendous effort of religion and morality Gouge may be crushed. I did not take any part in the revival myself, because Dollie did not approve of it, and she only allowed Orange Zee to go because he said he ought to be there in his capacity of town constable; but his real object was to act as spy upon Swomp and the old man, and report their machinations against Gouge, to that accomplished operator and boon-companion. Orange Zee, you see, did not believe that the great Gouge could be crushed, even by a Splurge, although that distinguished divine likened him to a roaring lion seeking whom he could devour, and called upon his hearers to "flee from him and his contracts, and his newspaper, and his hotel, and his store, and all his works."

During the fortnight that the protracted meeting lasted, all farming operations were suspended. It took place at a season of the year when work was not pressing, and day after day waggon-loads of old and young of both sexes, in their best costume, drove up alternately to the Methodist and Baptist churches; and the voice of Splurge might be heard

for some distance down the village street exhorting his hearers to come forward to "the mourners' bench." Here those who had been most powerfully acted upon made their confession and their profession, and from that time forward they were said to have "got" or "experienced religion." The exact number of persons who "got religion" during this visit of Splurge's was afterwards published among those interesting heart-statistics, if I may be allowed the phrase, which are to be found in those spare columns which the religious journals do not devote to abusing each other. It is quite an interesting study to turn over a file of these, and add up the total of broken and contrite hearts that have resulted during the year from the labours of the various Splurges all over the country, and to read how bitter these rival Splurges sometimes get with one another, and how jealous of each other's special gifts, and how furious are the feuds which arise from the difficulty of sharing the spoil. Even now the war which resulted from the Van Snookville revival is still raging, for Swomp declared that the old man had persuaded a number of those who intended to "experience" Methodist religion, to join the Baptist Church; whereas it had been clearly understood, before Splurge's arrival, that all the broken hearts he made were to be divided equally between the two denominations; but the fact is, on a trade, whether it be in human con-

sciences or anything else, the old man is always more than a match for Swomp.

The practical inconvenience of this revival was, that its influence was not confined to quickening the consciences only of those who benefited by it; they seemed to get quicker all over. One young man, before he got religion, with whom I was dickering for a horse, positively assured me he had paid 200 dollars for it, and could not sell it to me for less. Our trade was interrupted by Splurge for a fortnight, and at the end of it he had undergone the quickening process, and swore as positively he had paid 245 dollars for the animal.

This is only one illustration. I did not know of a single instance of greater honesty in trade after the revival than before it. It never once seemed to occur to two men of contrite spirit to say to each other, "Come now, we have persistently thought everything worth whatever we could get for it, irrespective of its intrinsic value, and have considered false representation in regard to articles we had for sale a merely venial offence; let us, now that we have got religion, never try to get more for anything than it is honestly worth." If even Splurge cannot venture to recommend people when they are asked for their coats to give their cloaks also, without extinguishing himself and his popularity as an imparter of the Christian religion

for ever, let him, at least, suggest that when a man asks for your coat, you should not turn upon him and strip him naked as an evidence of Christian "smartness." O my dear Splurge, I am sorry to have to tell you that my experience has been that the sooner men get over the effects of your labours on their consciences, the more I like to deal with them; and I would also venture to suggest that it is very difficult to give to others what you have not got yourself.

Orange Zee did not get religion, but he got a good deal of useful information, by the dexterous management of which he hopes to increase his social and political influence, and thus rise to higher spheres of usefulness.

I do not mean to divulge what these are—in fact I am at this moment interrupted by a piece of intelligence which for a time will disturb our domestic arrangements, and which involves to no small degree the future happiness both of Orange Zee and myself. I have before alluded to the remarkably philosophical and speculative character of Dollie's mind, and that we have both been conscious that her advanced habits of thought were not unlikely to produce a strong influence upon us. She has just imparted to us the important discovery that she has married the wrong Smith. I need not say that we saw it both in the same light instantly. Why it never flashed upon us before during the

last five years it is useless to attempt to inquire. It was the real solution of a great domestic problem, which, like Columbus's egg, we had missed from its extreme simplicity.

As the laws of divorce in the State in which we are now residing interfere in the most absurd and arbitrary manner with the private matrimonial arrangements of its citizens, we have determined at once to proceed to the more enlightened State of Indiana, and have telegraphed to have the preliminary measures taken: this will enable us to start to-morrow. Dollie, who has made herself acquainted with the whole course of proceedings, assures us that in that State the ceremony of divorce by mutual consent will not occupy above half an hour, and she then wishes to proceed to New York to have the marriage ceremony performed by at least two leading liberal divines. She is strongly inclined in favour of Mr Ward Beecher and Mr Frothingham. She says she does not care so much about the mere ceremony, but she wishes to commit those influential men to a great principle. Orange Zee asked her stupidly whether she thought it likely she would ever change back again. Dollie, of course, told him to mind his own business. Orange Zee said he thought it was his business; but his mind is so little able to rise above the ordinary interests of everyday life, that we never attend to what he

says on these more profound questions. Whether I am the Smith from whom Dollie is going to be divorced, or the Smith to whom she is going to be married, is not a matter of the smallest interest to my readers. I may tell them what happens to us in Indiana and New York, or I may not, on some future occasion; but I can't know till it is over whether it will be worth telling. Meantime, of this the public may rest assured, that Orange Zee, Dollie, and I, all have the strongest possible affection, esteem, and admiration for each other, and are all profoundly indifferent to anything the world may think of us.

A RAILWAY JOURNEY.

BY LADY MARGARET MAJENDIE.

A CLOSE cab laden with luggage drove up to Euston Station in time for the 7.30 A.M. train for the north. While the porters surrounded the boxes, the occupants of the cab passed straight through on to the platform, looking rather nervously about them. They were two — a very pretty girl in a most fascinating travelling costume of blue serge and fur, and an elderly woman, who, from her appearance, might have been her nurse.

"Sit here, and don't move, Miss Edith, while I take your ticket: now, mind you don't stir;" and she deposited her on a bench.

"Are you the young lady as has ordered a through carriage reserved?" asked a guard, with official abruptness.

"Yes."

"Then come along of me, miss."

"No, no; I must wait," and Edith, who was quite unused to travelling, grasped her bag and did

not move. The guard looked astonished, but only shrugged his shoulders and walked off. Presently he came back.

"You'll be late, miss," he said, not encouragingly. "Train 'ill be off in another minute." Edith looked at him in despair. Should she leave her post? Would Jenkins never come back? A loud aggressive bell began to ring. Edith started up; she seized all the things Jenkins had put under her charge—rugs, carpet-bag, umbrella-case, loose shawl, and provision-basket—and was trying to stagger away under the load, when Jenkins came back very hot and flurried, seized half the packages, and hurried her to the train. The guard unlocked the special carriage and put her in.

"No hurry, ma'am," he said; "four minutes still."

"I don't at all like it, now it has come to the point, Jenkins," said Edith, leaning out of the window.

"Nor I, miss; and how your mamma could let you go all alone like this, passes me; but I have spoken to the guard and written to the station-master, and you've a good bit to eat, and not a blessed soul to get into the carriage from end to end; so don't be afraid, my dear, and I make no doubt that your dear uncle will meet you at the other end."

"I have no doubt that one of my uncles will

—I hope Uncle John, as I have never seen Uncle George."

"Everything you want, miss?" said an extra porter. "I have put in all the rugs and a hot-water tin, and the luggage is all right in the van just behind."

"All right, all right!" said Mrs Jenkins.

"Thank you, ma'am," said the porter, pocketing a shining half-crown.

A gentleman suddenly came running on to the platform; the train was just about to start. "Here, porter, take my portmanteau; quick—smoking carriage!"

"All full, sir! quick, sir, please!"

"It's Mr George!" cried Jenkins, suddenly. Edith started forward. "Oh!"

The gentleman caught sight of Jenkins. "Here, guard, guard! put me in here!"

"Can't sir—special."

"Quick; let me in! it's—it's my niece!"

The train began to move.

"Confound you, be quick!"

The door was opened just in time, and Edith, as excited as Mr George, seized him with both hands by the coat-sleeves, and pulled him in with all her might into the carriage. They were off.

Mr George sat down opposite to Edith with a sigh of relief.

"I am so glad to see you, Uncle George," said Edith, timidly; "for though I am generally bold enough, I was rather afraid of this long journey."

"I will take care of you," said the uncle. "I am very glad to make your acquaintance, my dear." The "my dear" sounded a little strained, as though it were not a common expression on Uncle George's lips, and Edith looked up at him. She had not expected her uncle to be so young in appearance; but she had often heard her mother say that he was the youngest-looking man of his age she had ever known; and now she quite agreed, — for though she knew him to be really about fifty-eight years of age, he might from his appearance be taken for five-and-twenty, or even less. He was remarkably good-looking — more so than she had expected — and his eyes looked very young, and frank, and blue. There was a twinkle in them also; she was sure that he was fond of fun. Edith felt quite fond of her uncle; she was not one bit afraid of him — his face was so open, and good, and kindly.

"Now we must make ourselves comfortable," said Uncle George, and he proceeded to set to work. He put the rugs and baskets into the nets, he pushed the carpet-bag and portmanteau under the seat, took off his hat, put on a very becoming Turkish fez, extracted newspapers from his pocket,

spread a shawl over Edith's knees, and then wriggled himself comfortably into a corner seat.

"How well old Jenkins wears!" he said. "She looks like a young dairy-maid."

"Oh!" said Edith, a little shocked at his irreverence.

"I remember how she used to feed me with dried fruit and macaroons out of the store-room."

"Really! surely she is not old enough for that?"

"Oh, ah! I forget her age; but the fact was, I wasn't of course a boy."

"Of course not. Why, I think mamma said that you and Jenkins were born the same day—or was she the eldest?"

"Oh, I was the eldest."

"No, you were not; I remember she was three weeks older than you, and it was because she was your foster-sister that she always was so fond of you. Indeed, mamma said that she wanted to leave her to go to you and Aunt Maria when your eldest children were born, even out to India."

"My eldest children! what do you mean? Oh! by the by, yes; they are dead."

"Dead! my cousin George dead?"

"Yes, yes, my dear."

"Poor little Addie? was it true that George never got over her loss?"

"Don't!" said Uncle George, abruptly; and he held up a newspaper upside down.

Edith touched his arm very gently.

"I am so sorry, Uncle George," she said, sweetly. "If I had known that you had lost them both, I would not have said anything; please forgive me. And poor Aunt Maria, too! Oh, I beg your pardon."

Uncle George threw down his paper and looked smilingly at her.

"Does your mamma ever speak of me?"

"Constantly, perpetually," said Edith, her voice still a little choked.

"And what does she say of me?"

"She says that you are the dearest, kindest, warmest-hearted, most sweet-dispositioned old gentleman existing; she says you have been a gallant officer, and a loyal, true-hearted soldier." Edith's eyes kindled. "And I have heard how you distinguished yourself in India, and I—I am very glad to see you, Uncle George."

"Yes, yes, he is all that," said he, with enthusiasm.

"What? who?" asked Edith, confused.

"My father—I—I—I mean my son."

"Poor George! he was a most distinguished soldier also. I wish I had known him. No, Uncle George, I won't speak so—I do not want to pain you."

"I like to hear all you tell me about him, my dear."

"I have only heard how good a soldier he was, and that he was so handsome and so good."

"And had he faults and defects?"

Edith looked surprised.

"I used to hear that he was conceited."

"No, no," said Uncle George, hastily; "he never was that. He was proud, I grant—perhaps too proud—but never conceited."

"Poor George!" sighed Edith; "I had so looked forward to knowing him."

"Had you really?"

"Yes; I never had a companion of my own age. Do tell me, shall I like my cousins at Hatton?"

"I think so, some of them: do you mean Uncle John's daughters, or his step-children?"

"Both."

"I think you will like Mary, tolerate Susan, abhor Agatha, admire Jane, and adore Alice."

"Alice is the adorable one, is she?" said Edith, laughing; "and is she the one they say is so pretty?"

"Oh no; poor Alice is deformed, and can never leave the sofa; but she has the sweetness of an angel and the courage of a martyr: she is not in the least pretty."

"Oh, what a trial! always on the sofa!"

"What a sweet little thing this is!" thought Uncle George, but he said nothing.

"How comes it that you know none of your cousins?" said he, suddenly.

"Why do you want me to tell you what you know so much better than I do, Uncle George?"

"Yes, yes, of course; but naturally I want to know your side of the story. Have you never been at Hatton?"

"Never; and I thought it so very kind of you to induce Uncle John to persuade mamma to let me go."

"Yes; I thought, you know, that a few companions of your own age would do you good. How old are you?"

"Did you not get mamma's letter, in which she told you that I was to be eighteen to-morrow?"

"No; it must have been late. I never heard of it."

"How very unfortunate! Then no one will know I am coming. She asked you to tell Uncle John about the trains and things."

"Oh, ah! *that* letter! oh, of course, that is all right. I don't—I—I sometimes don't read letters through."

Edith laughed.

"I will tell you one version of my story. Mamma being papa's widow, and papa having been the eldest son, had to leave Hatton when

I was born and turned out to be a stupid little girl; and she went abroad because she was so delicate, and became a Roman Catholic."

"Holloa!"

"What is it, Uncle George?"

"You are not one, I hope?"

Edith looked rather indignant. "It is *very* odd of you to say that," she said, "when you know as well as I do all that you did about it; indeed I shall never forget your kindness. I was very unhappy when mamma wanted me to change; and Uncle John's letters and all Aunt Maria wrote made it worse than ever, only your letters made all smooth; and mamma was so much touched by the one you wrote to her about papa's trust in her, and my not being hers only, and all that, that, indeed, I have always loved you—you have seemed to me like my own dear father."

"I am very glad, my dear child, and I hope that in future you will be guided by my advice."

"I hope I shall see a great deal of you, Uncle George, for I know how fond I shall be of you, for my mother loves you dearly."

"It is very kind of her."

"And do you know, since we came to live in England, I have never paid a single visit, or been for one week away from home. Oh, it is such fun going to Hatton! Do my cousins ride?"

"Yes, a great deal; are you fond of it?"

"I love it; there is nothing in the world to me like a good gallop. Ah, it was the greatest trial of all my life when Queen Mab was sold!"

"When was that?"

"Mamma made me give up riding, or rather I gave it up of myself, because it made her so nervous."

"What else do you care for?—dancing?"

"Oh, I love it; but I have never been to a ball in my life."

"There are to be two at Hatton next week, and you must promise me the first valse at each."

"Do *you* valse?"

"Oh yes. You see I am not such an old fogy as you expected."

"No; nobody would believe you to be fifty-eight, except for one thing."

"What is that?"

But Edith blushed and would not answer.

"You need not mind, child—I never was at all sensitive; and alas! now my memory is not what it was."

"That's it," said Edith, eagerly; "only I did not like to say it. Here we are at a station."

It was now ten o'clock; Uncle George bought the 'Times' and 'Daily News,' and they both began to read. About twelve o'clock the pangs of hunger began to assail Edith, and she exclaimed—

"Uncle George, it is only twelve o'clock, and I must eat to live."

"I have been existing merely for the last hour with the greatest difficulty, but I have got nothing wherewith to refresh exhausted nature; I calculated on a bun at Carlisle."

"Hours hence! No, I am amply provided. Will you have beef or chicken sandwiches, or cold partridge, or what?"

They made a very good lunch, and uncle and niece grew hourly better acquainted.

"I believe we ought to look out of the window," said he, presently. "My father said that the country about here was quite beautiful."

"That must have been before the days of railways," said Edith, gravely. "Those coaching days must have been quite delightful."

"They were."

"Mamma has told me about that extraordinary adventure you and papa had on the Aberdeen coach."

"It was extraordinary."

"Papa caught the branch of a tree, did he not?"

"Yes; and do you remember what I did?"

"You jumped out just as the coach upset, and sat on all the horses' heads."

"And a most uneasy seat it must have been; and did Uncle Arthur—I mean your papa—remain suspended in mid-air?"

"No, he swung into the tree. I have often heard of your climbing exploits, and that when you were young you could climb any tree."

"I have not lost the power," said Uncle George, stretching himself. "Holloa!"

"What is the matter?" said Edith, startled.

"Nothing—nothing—sit still!"

But she followed the direction of his eyes. The train (a very long one) was going round a sharp curve, they were in one of the last carriages, and to her horror and terror, she saw, about a hundred yards in front of the train, a whole herd of cows on and off the line—two or three frantically galloping.

All heads were stretched out of the windows, clamouring tongues and even cries resounded from the other carriages, but neither Edith nor George uttered a sound, only she put back her hand and caught his; he seized it very tightly in the suspense, knowing well that a terrible accident might be impending. It was hardly a second, but it seemed a lifetime. The frantic cattle rushed off the line in a body, all but one unfortunate beast. The guards put on the very heaviest brakes, but the impetus was so great that the slackening was hardly perceptible. It may have been fortunate that it was so, for instead of upsetting the train, the cow was tossed off the line utterly destroyed, and the engine rushed on in safety.

George and Edith sat down opposite to each other; both were very pale.

"Thank God!" said Edith, and she covered her face with one hand. George did not speak, but he took off his cap and looked out of the window for one minute.

"Now I shall give you some sherry," he said, suddenly. "You are the pluckiest little brick I ever came across. Any other girl would have screamed."

"I never scream," said Edith, indignantly; "and I don't want any sherry."

"I am your uncle, and I say you are to have some—drink it up."

"I hate wine," she said, giving back the flask.

"There, good child, to do as you are told."

At the next station a perfect crowd of passengers was waiting for the up train. A great *fête* was going on in the next town for the visit of some royal personage, and the train was filled to overflowing. Presently the civil guard came up to the special carriage and said most deprecatingly that there was one gentleman who couldn't find a place anywhere; and as he was only going to the next station, would they admit him just for that twenty minutes? Uncle George consented very discontentedly, and very grudgingly moved his long legs to admit of the entry of a very stout old gentleman,

who sat heavily down, and received into his ample lap a perfect pile of packages and baskets, and a brace of hares and a rabbit tied by the legs which he had dexterously suspended by a string round his neck.

"Not worth while, indeed, my dear madam," he said, as Edith began to make room for his things. "Only twenty minutes—no inconvenience, I assure you."

The heavily-weighted train moved off. The old gentleman now began a series of playful bows which made the hares and rabbit dance up and down.

"It really was too good of you to admit an old fogy like me," he said, blandly; "for of course with half an eye I can see the tender situation."

A deep growl from Uncle George. He gave a little start and went on to himself—

"Sweet young couple! just wedded, eh?"

Edith felt half choked with laughter, but she managed to say convulsively—

"Will you give me my book, Uncle George?"

The old gentleman started, cocked his head as a blackbird does when he perceives a very fat worm, and muttered—

"Impossible!"

Edith and George were wrapped in their respective novels. The old gentleman fidgeted, sighed, and arranged his features into a most sanctimonious

expression. There was dead silence till he reached his station, where he descended. The departure bell was ringing, when his head suddenly reappeared at the window, the hares and rabbit streaming wildly from the back of his neck.

"My children," he said, "take my advice—go back to your friends. This——" A little shriek ended his discourse; the train was going on; and he, being borne along on the step involuntarily, two stout porters rushed to the rescue and lifted him off. Edith and George laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks.

"I could eat again, with a little persuasion," said George, presently.

"Why, what o'clock is it?"

"Just five, and we shall not get in till eight-thirty. Remember that we had our luncheon at twelve."

"Very well." And they proceeded to eat.

The sun had gone down, and the whole sky was gorgeous with gold and crimson light, on which great black clouds floated prophetically.

"What a grand sky!" said Edith.

"Magnificent! Nowhere does one see such clouds as in England."

"Were you very fond of India?"

"Of course I am; my work lies there, my hopes, my future."

Edith looked astonished. "I should have thought," she said, "that *now* you would have been content to rest at home; but I admire you for loving work. Shall you go out again?"

"That depends very much upon circumstances. It would be a great grief to me to give up my profession."

"It is very odd, but I certainly thought that mamma told me you had given up your profession."

"She was mistaken," said Uncle George, shortly.

"I have often longed to go to India," cried Edith.

"Have you?" said George, very eagerly.

"Oh yes, beyond anything; life there gives everybody a chance. I mean, heroic men and great characters are formed in India, and men have great responsibilities and development for quite a different class of most desirable qualities there."

"That is quite true; and you are just the sort of woman to help a man to do anything."

"I am so glad you think so, Uncle George," she said, laughing and blushing.

At seven o'clock they reached a very large station, where the train had half an hour to wait. They got a cup of tea, and then, both being rather cold, they began to walk vigorously up and down

to the very end of the terminus. It was quite dark at the far end, and they stood side by side, looking up into the mouth of the great station with its mighty arch. Trains rushed past, or heavily moved away with a harsh, discordant whistle. Great red lamps loomed out of the darkness like dragons' eyes. George drew Edith hastily on one side that she might not be struck by the chain of a huge cart-horse which passed close by them, on its way to bring up a coal-truck. It was very cold, and they stamped up and down, and George enjoyed a fragrant cigar.

"Take your seats!" shouted the porter. "Take your seats!" And they resumed their places.

"Them's a bride and bridegroom," said a stout country-woman to a friend; and the loud guttural "Lor!" with which the news was received reached the ears of the travellers.

A blazing lamp was in the carriage, and under its yellow light Edith tried to read.

"Don't read, Edith," said the young uncle, suddenly. "Talk instead."

She shut up her book.

"To tell you the truth, Uncle George," she said, "we are getting so near that I am beginning to feel ridiculously nervous."

He looked at his watch, and suddenly started.

"So late," he said. "We shall be there in ten minutes."

"Oh!"

"And the fact is," he began, restlessly fidgeting; "the fact is—a—a—I have got a confession to make to you."

"To me! oh, Uncle George!"

"D—n Uncle George!"

Edith looked startled beyond measure.

"The fact is, Edith, I am not my father."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I am my son."

"But he is dead."

"No, no; only, what was a fellow to say when you pressed me so hard? I am your cousin George!"

"Oh!"

"And we have been such friends, you won't be angry? Are you vexed, Edith?" and he took both her hands.

"No; only astonished. I think—on the whole, I am rather—glad."

"That's all right; for, do you know, Edith, I seem to have known you for years! You have shown to-day every good quality a woman can possibly possess."

"Don't spoil me by such sayings."

"And Edith, dear Edith, do you know—confound it! here we are!—only this, I should like to go on travelling with you, like this, for ever and ever—and——"

Hatton! Hatton! tickets, please. Hatton!

"Here, Jones! take Miss Edith's bag. Is the carriage up?"

"Yes, sir."

"And a cart? there is a heap of luggage."

"All right sir."

"Come along, Edith? here we are, and my father is in the carriage."