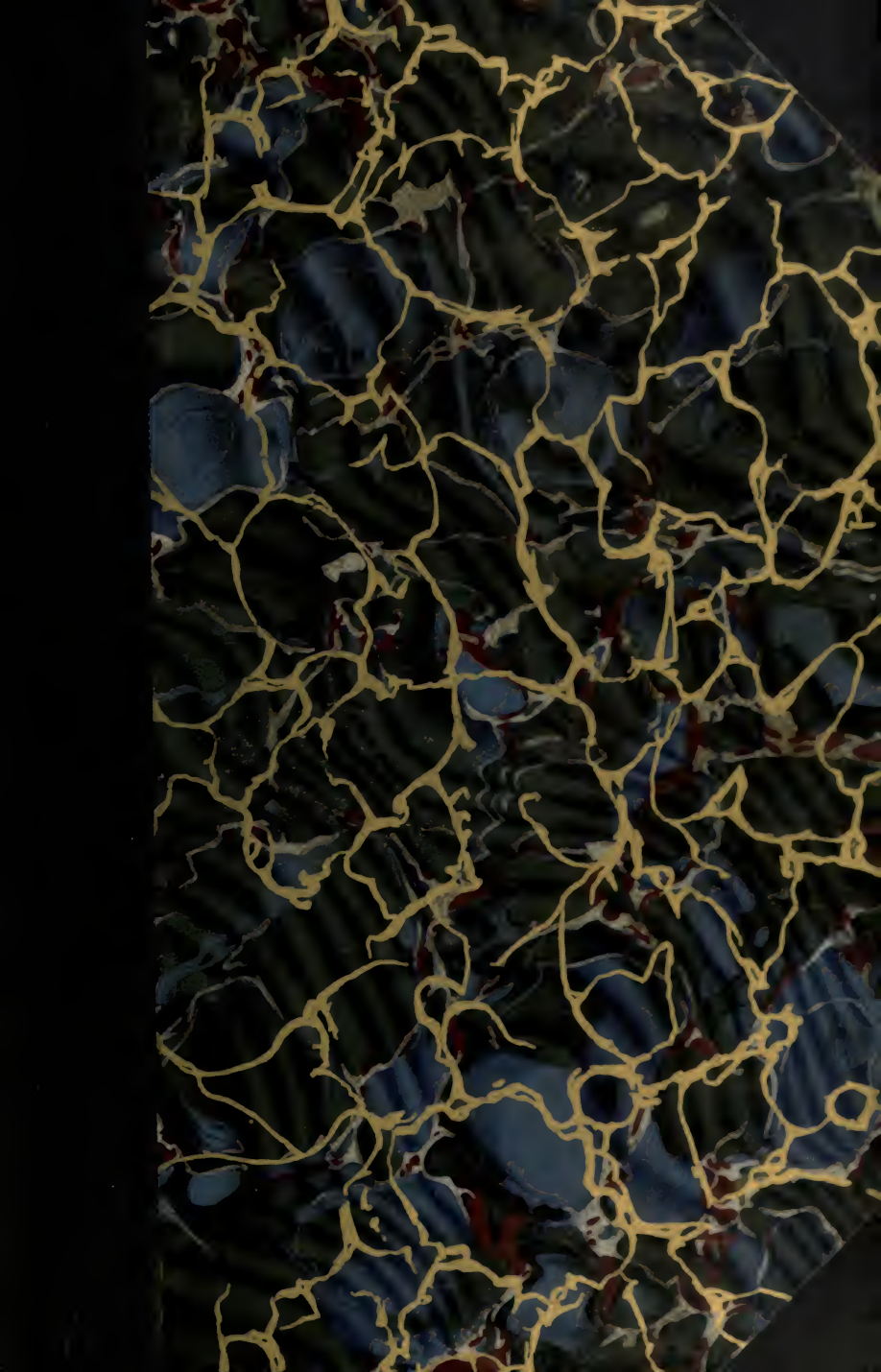

Tales from "Blackwood"

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD"

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

Selected by

H. CHALMERS ROBERTS

NEW YORK
Doubleday, Page & Company
1903

CONTENTS

VOLUME IX

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

BOURGONEF.

CHAPTER I.

AT A TABLE D'HÔTE.

AT the close of February 1848 I was in Nuremberg. My original intention had been to pass a couple of days there, on my way to Munich; that being, I thought, as much time as could reasonably be spared for so small a city, beckoned as my footsteps were to the Bavarian Athens, of whose glories of ancient art and German Renaissance I had formed expectations the most exaggerated—expectations fatal to any perfect enjoyment, and certain to be disappointed, however great the actual merit of Munich might be. But after two days at Nuremberg, I was so deeply interested in its antique sequestered life,

the charms of which had not been deadened by previous anticipations, that I resolved to remain there until I had mastered every detail, and knew the place by heart.

I have a story to tell which will move amidst tragic circumstances of too engrossing a nature to be disturbed by archæological interests, and shall not, therefore, minutely describe here what I observed at Nuremberg, although no adequate description of that wonderful city has yet fallen in my way. To readers unacquainted with this antique place, it will be enough to say that in it the old German life seems still to a great extent rescued from the all-devouring, all-equalising tendencies of European civilisation. The houses are either of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, or are constructed after those ancient models. The citizens have preserved much of the simple manners and customs of their ancestors. The hurrying feet of commerce and curiosity pass rapidly by, leaving it sequestered from the agitations and the turmoils of metropolitan existence. It is as quiet as a village. During my stay there rose in its quiet streets the startled echoes of horror at a crime unparalleled in its annals, which, gathering increased horror from the very peacefulness and serenity of the scene, arrested the attention and the sympathy in a degree seldom experienced. Before narrating that, it will be necessary to go back a little, that my own connection with it may be intelligible, especially in the

fanciful weaving together of remote conjectures which strangely involved me in the story.

The *table d'hôte* at the Bayerischer Hof had about thirty visitors—all, with one exception, of that local commonplace which escapes remark. Indeed this may almost always be said of *tables d'hôte;* though there is a current belief, which I cannot share, of a *table d'hôte* being very delightful—of "one being certain to meet pleasant people there." It may be so. For many years I believed it was so. The general verdict received my assent. I had never met those delightful people, but was always expecting to meet them. Hitherto they had been conspicuous by their absence. According to my experience in Spain, France, and Germany, such dinners had been dreary, or noisy and vapid. If the guests were English, they were chillingly silent, or surlily monosyllabic: to their neighbours they were frigid; amongst each other they spoke in low under-tones. And if the guests were foreigners, they were noisy, clattering, and chattering, foolish for the most part, and vivaciously commonplace. I don't know which made me feel most dreary. The predominance of my countrymen gave the dinner the gaiety of a funeral; the predominance of the Mossoo gave it the fatigue of got-up enthusiasm or trivial expansiveness. To hear strangers imparting the scraps of erudition and connoisseurship which they had that morning gathered from their *valets de place*

and guide-books, or describing the sights they had just seen, to you, who either saw them yesterday or would see them to-morrow, could not be permanently attractive. My mind refuses to pasture on such food with gusto. I cannot be made to care what the Herr Baron's sentiments about Albert Dürer or Lucas Cranach may be. I can digest my *rindfleisch* without the aid of the *commis voyageur's* criticisms on Gothic architecture. This may be my misfortune. In spite of the Italian blood which I inherit, I am a shy man—shy as the purest Briton. But, like other shy men, I make up in obstinacy what may be deficient in expansiveness. I can be frightened into silence, but I won't be dictated to. You might as well attempt the persuasive effect of your eloquence upon a snail who has withdrawn into his shell at your approach, and will not emerge till his confidence is restored. To be told that I *must* see this, and ought to go there, because my casual neighbour was *charmé*, has never presented itself to me as an adequate motive.

From this you readily gather that I am severely taciturn at a *table d'hôte*. I refrain from joining in the "delightful conversation" which flies across the table, and know that my reticence is attributed to "insular pride." It is really and truly nothing but impatience of commonplace. I thoroughly enjoy good talk; but, ask yourself, what are the probabilities of hearing that rare thing in the casual

assemblage of forty or fifty people, not brought together by any natural affinities or interests, but thrown together by the accident of being in the same district, and in the same hotel? They are not "forty feeding like one," but like forty. They have no community, except the community of commonplace. No; *tables d'hôte* are not delightful, and do not gather interesting people together.

Such has been my extensive experience. But this at Nuremberg is a conspicuous exception. At that table there was one guest who, on various grounds, personal and incidental, remains the most memorable man I ever met. From the first he riveted my attention in an unusual degree. He had not, as yet, induced me to emerge from my habitual reserve, for in truth, although he riveted my attention, he inspired me with a strange feeling of repulsion. I could scarcely keep my eyes from him; yet, except the formal bow on sitting down and rising from the table, I had interchanged no sign of fellowship with him. He was a young Russian, named Bourgonef, as I at once learned; rather handsome, and peculiarly arresting to the eye, partly from an air of settled melancholy, especially in his smile, the amiability of which seemed breaking from under clouds of grief, and still more so from the mute appeal to sympathy in the empty sleeve of his right arm, which was looped to the breast-button of his coat. His eyes were large and soft. He had no

beard or whisker, and only delicate moustaches. The sorrow, quiet but profound, the amiable smile, and the lost arm, were appealing details which at once arrested attention and excited sympathy. But to me this sympathy was mingled with a vague repulsion, occasioned by a certain falseness in the amiable smile, and a furtiveness in the eyes, which I saw—or fancied—and which, with an inexplicable reserve, forming as it were the impregnable citadel in the centre of his outwardly polite and engaging manner, gave me something of that vague impression which we express by the words "instinctive antipathy."

It was, when calmly considered, eminently absurd. To see one so young, and by his conversation so highly cultured and intelligent, condemned to early helplessness, his food cut up for him by a servant, as if he were a child, naturally engaged pity, and, on the first day, I cudgelled my brains during the greater part of dinner in the effort to account for his lost arm. He was obviously not a military man: the unmistakable look and stoop of a student told that plainly enough. Nor was the loss one dating from early life: he used his left arm too awkwardly for the event not to have had a recent date. Had it anything to do with his melancholy? Here was a topic for my vagabond imagination, and endless were the romances woven by it during my silent dinner. For the reader must be told of one peculiarity in me,

because to it much of the strange complications of my story are due; complications into which a mind less active in weaving imaginary hypotheses to interpret casual and trifling facts would never have been drawn. From my childhood I have been the victim of my constructive imagination, which has led me into many mistakes and some scrapes; because, instead of contenting myself with plain, obvious evidence, I have allowed myself to frame hypothetical interpretations, which, to acts simple in themselves, and explicable on ordinary motives, have assigned hidden and extraordinary motives, rendering the simple-seeming acts portentous. With bitter pangs of self-reproach I have at times discovered that a long and plausible history constructed by me, relating to personal friends, has crumbled into a ruin of absurdity, by the disclosure of the primary misconception on which the whole history was based. I have gone, let us say, on the supposition that two people were secretly lovers; on this supposition my imagination has constructed a whole scheme to explain certain acts, and one fine day I have discovered indubitably that the supposed lovers were not lovers, but confidants of their passions in other directions, and of course all my conjectures have been utterly false. The secret flush of shame at failure has not, however, prevented my falling into similar mistakes immediately after.

When, therefore, I hereafter speak of my "con-

structive imagination," the reader will know to what I am alluding. It was already busy with Bourgonef. To it must be added that vague repulsion, previously mentioned. This feeling abated on the second day; but, although lessened, it remained powerful enough to prevent my speaking to him. Whether it would have continued to abate until it disappeared, as such antipathies often disappear, under the familiarities of prolonged intercourse, without any immediate appeal to my *amour propre*, I know not; but every reflective mind, conscious of being accessible to antipathies, will remember that one certain method of stifling them is for the object to make some appeal to our interest or our vanity: in the engagement of these more powerful feelings, the antipathy is quickly strangled. At any rate it is so in my case, and was so now. On the third day, the conversation at table happening to turn, as it often turned, upon St Sebald's Church, a young Frenchman, who was criticising its architecture with fluent dogmatism, drew Bourgonef into the discussion, and thereby elicited such a display of accurate and extensive knowledge, no less than delicacy of appreciation, that we were all listening spell-bound. In the midst of this triumphant exposition the irritated vanity of the Frenchman could do nothing to regain his position but oppose a flat denial to a historical statement made by Bourgonef, backing his denial by the confident assertion that "all the competent authorities"

held with him. At this point Bourgonef appealed to me, and in that tone of deference so exquisitely flattering from one we already know to be superior, he requested my decision; observing that, from the manner in which he had seen me examine the details of the architecture, he could not be mistaken in his confidence that I was a connoisseur. All eyes were turned upon me. As a shy man, this made me blush; as a vain man, the blush was accompanied with delight. It might easily have happened that such an appeal, acting at once upon shyness and ignorance, would have inflamed my wrath; but the appeal happening to be directed on a point which I had recently investigated and thoroughly mastered, I was flattered at the opportunity of a victorious display.

The pleasure of my triumph diffused itself over my feelings towards him who had been the occasion of it. The Frenchman was silenced; the general verdict of the company was too obviously on our side. From this time the conversation continued between Bourgonef and myself; and he not only succeeded in entirely dissipating my absurd antipathy—which I now saw to have been founded on purely imaginary grounds, for neither the falseness nor the furtiveness could now be detected—but he succeeded in captivating all my sympathy. Long after dinner was over, and the *salle* empty, we sat smoking our cigars, and discussing politics, literature, and art in that sug-

gestive desultory manner which often gives a charm to casual acquaintances.

It was a stirring epoch, that of February 1848. The Revolution, at first so hopeful and soon to manifest itself in failure so disastrous, was hurrying to an outburst. France had been for many months agitated by cries of electoral reform, and by indignation at the corruption and scandals in high places. The Praslin murder, and the dishonour of M. Teste, terminated by suicide, had been interpreted as signs of the coming destruction. The political banquets given in various important cities had been occasions for inflaming the public mind, and to the far-seeing, these banquets were interpreted as the sounds of the tocsin. Louis Philippe had become odious to France, and contemptible to Europe. Guizot and Duchatel, the ministers of that day, although backed by a parliamentary majority on which they blindly relied, were unpopular, and were regarded as infatuated even by their admirers in Europe. The Spanish Marriages had all but led to a war with England. The Opposition, headed by Thiers and Odillon Barrot, was strengthened by united action with the republican party, headed by Ledru Rollin, Marrast, Flocon, and Louis Blanc.

Bourgonef was an ardent republican. So was I; but my colour was of a different shade from his. He belonged to the Reds. My own dominant tendencies being artistic and literary, my dream was of a repub-

lic in which Intelligence would be the archon or ruler; and of course in such a republic, art and literature, as the highest manifestation of mind, would have the supreme direction. Do you smile, reader? I smile, now; but it was serious earnest with me then. It is unnecessary to say more on this point. I have said so much to render intelligible the stray link of communion which riveted the charm of my new acquaintance's conversation; there was both agreement enough and difference enough in our views to render our society mutually fascinating.

On retiring to my room that afternoon I could not help laughing at my absurd antipathy against Bourgonef. All his remarks had disclosed a generous, ardent, and refined nature. While my antipathy had specially fastened upon a certain falseness in his smile—a falseness the more poignantly hideous if it were falseness, because hidden amidst the wreaths of amiability—my delight in his conversation had specially justified itself by the truthfulness of his mode of looking at things. He seemed to be sincerity itself. There was, indeed, a certain central reserve; but that might only be an integrity of pride; or it might be connected with painful circumstances in his history, of which the melancholy in his face was the outward sign.

That very evening my constructive imagination was furnished with a detail on which it was soon to be actively set to work. I had been rambling about

the old fortifications, and was returning at nightfall through the old archway near Albert Dürer's house, when a man passed by me. We looked at each other in that automatic way in which men look when they meet in narrow places; and I felt, so to speak, a start of recognition in the eyes of the man who passed. Nothing else, in features or gestures, betrayed recognition or surprise. But although there was only that, it flashed from his eyes to mine like an electric shock. He passed. I looked back. He continued his way without turning. The face was certainly known to me; but it floated in a mist of confused memories.

I walked on slowly, pestering my memory with fruitless calls upon it, hopelessly trying to recover the place where I could have seen the stranger before. In vain memory travelled over Europe in concert-rooms, theatres, shops, and railway carriages. I could not recall the occasion on which those eyes had previously met mine. That they had met them I had no doubt. I went to bed with the riddle undiscovered.

CHAPTER II.

THE ECHOES OF MURDER.

Next morning Nuremberg was agitated with a horror such as can seldom have disturbed its quiet; a young and lovely girl had been murdered. Her

corpse was discovered at daybreak under the archway leading to the old fortifications. She had been stabbed to the heart. No other signs of violence were visible; no robbery had been attempted.

In great cities, necessarily great centres of crime, we daily hear of murders; their frequency and remoteness leave us undisturbed. Our sympathies can only be deeply moved either by some scenic peculiarities investing the crime with unusual romance or unusual atrocity, or else by the more immediate appeal of direct neighbourly interest. The murder which is read of in the 'Times' as having occurred in Westminster, has seldom any special horror to the inhabitants of Islington or Oxford Street; but to the inhabitants of Westminster, and especially to the inhabitants of the particular street in which it was perpetrated, the crime assumes heart-shaking proportions. Every detail is asked for, and every surmise listened to, with feverish eagerness—is repeated and diffused through the crowd with growing interest. The family of the victim; the antecedents of the assassin, if he is known; or the conjectures pointing to the unknown assassin,—are eagerly discussed. All the trivial details of household care or domestic fortunes, all the items of personal gossip, become invested with a solemn and affecting interest. Pity for the victim and survivors mingle and alternate with fierce cries for vengeance on the guilty. The whole street becomes one family, commingled by an

energetic sympathy, united by one common feeling of compassion and wrath.

In villages, and in cities so small as Nuremberg, the same community of feeling is manifested. The town became as one street. The horror spread like a conflagration, the sympathy surged and swelled like a tide. Every one felt a personal interest in the event, as if the murder had been committed at his own door. Never shall I forget that wail of passionate pity, and that cry for the vengeance of justice, which rose from all sides of the startled city. Never shall I forget the hurry, the agitation, the feverish restlessness, the universal communicativeness, the volunteered services, the eager suggestion, surging round the house of the unhappy parents. Herr Lehfeldt, the father of the unhappy girl, was a respected burgher, known to almost every one. His mercer's shop was the leading one of the city. A worthy pious man, somewhat strict, but of irreproachable character; his virtues, no less than those of his wife, and of his only daughter Lieschen—now, alas! for ever snatched from their yearning eyes—were canvassed everywhere, and served to intensify the general grief. That such a calamity should have fallen on a household so estimable, seemed to add fuel to the people's wrath. Poor Lieschen! her pretty, playful ways—her opening prospects, as the only daughter of parents so well to do and so kind—her youth and abounding life—these were detailed with impassioned fervour

by friends, and repeated by strangers who caught the tone of friends, as if they, too, had known and loved her. But amidst the surging uproar of this sea of many voices no one clear voice of direction could be heard; no clue given to the clamorous bloodhounds to run down the assassin.

Cries had been heard in the streets that night at various parts of the town, which, although then interpreted as the quarrels of drunken brawlers, and the conflicts of cats, were now confidently asserted to have proceeded from the unhappy girl in her death-struggle. But none of these cries had been heard in the immediate neighbourhood of the archway. All the inhabitants of that part of the town agreed that in their waking hours the streets had been perfectly still. Nor were there any traces visible of a struggle having taken place. Lieschen might have been murdered elsewhere, and her corpse quietly deposited where it was found, as far as any evidence went.

Wild and vague were the conjectures. All were baffled in the attempt to give them a definite direction. The crime was apparently prompted by revenge —certainly not by lust, or desire of money. But she was not known to have a single rival or enemy. She was not known to stand in any one's way. In this utter blank as to the assignable motive, I, perhaps alone among the furious crowd, had a distinct suspicion of the assassin. No sooner had the news

reached me, than with the specification of the theatre of the crime there at once flashed upon me the intellectual vision of the criminal: the stranger, with the dark beard and startled eyes, stood confessed before me! I held my breath for a few moments, and then there came a tide of objections rushing over my mind, revealing the inadequacy of the grounds on which rested my suspicions. What were those grounds? I had seen a man in a particular spot, not an unfrequented spot, on the evening of the night when a crime had been committed there; that man had seemed to recognise me, and wished to avoid being recognised. Obviously these grounds were too slender to bear any weight of construction such as I had based on them. Mere presence on the spot could no more inculpate him than it could inculpate me; if I had met him there, equally had he met me there. Nor even if my suspicion were correct that he knew me, and refused to recognise me, could that be any argument tending to criminate him in an affair wholly disconnected with me. Besides, he was walking peaceably, openly, and he looked like a gentleman. All these objections pressed themselves upon me, and kept me silent. But in spite of their force, I could not prevent the suspicion from continually arising. Ashamed to mention it, because it must have sounded too absurd, I could not prevent my constructive imagination indulging in its vagaries; and with this secret conviction I resolved to await

events, and in case suspicion from other quarters should ever designate the probable assassin, I might then come forward with my bit of corroborative evidence, should the suspected assassin be the stranger of the archway.

By twelve o'clock a new direction was given to rumour. Hitherto the stories, when carefully sifted of all the exaggerations of flying conjecture, had settled themselves into something like this: The Lehfeldts had retired to rest at a quarter before ten, as was their custom. They had seen Lieschen go into her bedroom for the night, and had themselves gone to sleep with unclouded minds. From this peaceful security they were startled early in the morning by the appalling news of the calamity which had fallen on them. Incredulous at first, as well they might be, and incapable of believing in a ruin so unexpected and so overwhelming, they imagined some mistake, asserting that Lieschen was in her own room. Into that room they rushed, and there the undisturbed bed, and the open window, but a few feet from the garden, silently and pathetically disclosed the fatal truth. The bereaved parents turned a revealing look upon each other's whitened faces, and then slowly retired from the room, followed in affecting silence by the others. Back into their own room they went. The father knelt beside the bed, and, sobbing, prayed. The mother sat staring with a stupefied stare, her lips faintly moving. In a short

while the flood of grief, awakened to a thorough consciousness, burst from their labouring hearts. When the first paroxysms were over they questioned others, and gave incoherent replies to the questions addressed to them. From all which it resulted that Lieschen's absence, though obviously voluntary, was wholly inexplicable to them; and no clue whatever could be given as to the motives of the crime. When these details became known, conjecture naturally interpreted Lieschen's absence at night as an assignation. But with whom? She was not known to have a lover. Her father, on being questioned, passionately affirmed that she had none; she loved no one but her parents, poor child! Her mother, on being questioned, told the same story—adding, however, that about seventeen months before, she had fancied that Lieschen was a little disposed to favour Franz Kerkel, their shopman; but on being spoken to on the subject with some seriousness, and warned of the distance between them, she had laughed heartily at the idea, and since then had treated Franz with so much indifference, that only a week ago she had drawn from her mother a reproof on the subject.

"I told her Franz was a good lad, though not good enough for her; and that she ought to treat him kindly. But she said my lecture had given her an alarm, lest Franz should have got the same maggot into his head."

This was the story now passing through the curi-

ous crowds in every street. After hearing it I had turned into a tobacconist's in the Adlergasse, to restock my cigar-case, and found there, as everywhere, a group discussing the one topic of the hour. Herr Fischer, the tobacconist, with a long porcelain pipe pendent from his screwed-up lips, was solemnly listening to the particulars volubly communicated by a stout Bavarian priest; while behind the counter, in a corner, swiftly knitting, sat his wife, her black bead-like eyes also fixed on the orator. Of course I was dragged into the conversation. Instead of attending to commercial interests, they looked upon me as the possible bearer of fresh news. Nor was it without a secret satisfaction that I found I could gratify them in that respect. They had not heard of Franz Kerkel in the matter. No sooner had I told what I had heard, than the knitting-needles of the vivacious little woman were at once suspended.

"Ach Je!" she exclaimed, "I see it all. He's the wretch!"

"Who?" we all simultaneously inquired.

"Who? Why, Kerkel, of course. If she changed, and treated him with indifference, it was because she loved him; and he has murdered the poor thing."

"How you run on, wife!" remonstrated Fischer; while the priest shook a dubious head.

"I tell you it is so. I'm positive."

"If she loved him."

"She did, I tell you. Trust a woman for seeing through such things."

"Well, say she did," continued Fischer, "and I won't deny that it may be so; but then that makes against the idea of his having done her any harm."

"Don't tell me," retorted the convinced woman. "She loved him. She went out to meet him in secret, and he murdered her—the villain did. I'm as sure of it as if these eyes had seen him do it."

The husband winked at us, as much as to say, "You hear these women!" and the priest and I endeavoured to reason her out of her illogical position. But she was immovable. Kerkel had murdered her; she knew it; she couldn't tell why, but she knew it. Perhaps he was jealous; who knows? At any rate he ought to be arrested.

And by twelve o'clock, as I said, a new rumour ran through the crowd, which seemed to confirm the little woman in her rash logic. Kerkel had been arrested, and a waistcoat stained with blood had been found in his room! By half-past twelve the rumour ran that he had confessed the crime. This, however, proved on inquiry to be the hasty anticipation of public indignation. He had been arrested; the waistcoat had been found: so much was authentic; and the suspicions gathered ominously over him.

When first Frau Fischer had started the suggestion it flew like wildfire. Then people suddenly noticed, as very surprising, that Kerkel had not that day made

his appearance at the shop. His absence had not been noticed in the tumult of grief and inquiry; but it became suddenly invested with a dreadful significance, now that it was rumoured that he had been Lieschen's lover. Of all men he would be the most affected by the tragic news; of all men he would have been the first to tender sympathy and aid to the afflicted parents, and the most clamorous in the search for the undiscovered culprit. Yet, while all Nuremberg was crowding round the house of sorrow, which was also his house of business, he alone remained away. This naturally pointed suspicion at him. When the messengers had gone to seek him, his mother refused them admission, declaring in incoherent phrases, betraying great agitation, that her son was gone distracted with grief, and could see no one. On this it was determined to order his arrest. The police went, the house was searched, and the waistcoat found.

The testimony of the girl who lived as servant in Kerkel's house was also criminatory. She deposed that on the night in question she awoke about half-past eleven with a violent toothache; she was certain as to the hour, because she heard the clock afterwards strike twelve. She felt some alarm at hearing voices in the rooms at an hour when her mistress and young master must long ago have gone to bed; but as the voices were seemingly in quiet conversation, her alarm subsided, and she concluded that instead of having

gone to bed her mistress was still up. In her pain she heard the door gently open, and then she heard footsteps in the garden. This surprised her very much. She couldn't think what the young master could want going out at that hour. She became terrified without knowing exactly at what. Fear quite drove away her toothache, which had not since returned. After lying there quaking for some time, again she heard footsteps in the garden; the door opened and closed gently; voices were heard; and she at last distinctly heard her mistress say, "Be a man, Franz. Good night—sleep well;" upon which Franz replied in a tone of great agony, "There's no chance of sleep for me." Then all was silent. Next morning her mistress seemed "very queer." Her young master went out very early, but soon came back again; and there were dreadful scenes going on in his room, as she heard, but she didn't know what it was all about. She heard of the murder from a neighbour, but never thought of its having any particular interest for Mr Franz, though, of course, he would be very sorry for the Lehfeldts.

The facts testified to by the servant, especially the going out at that late hour, and the "dreadful scenes" of the morning, seemed to bear but one interpretation. Moreover, she identified the waistcoat as the one worn by Franz on the day preceding the fatal night.

CHAPTER III.

THE ACCUSED.

Now at last the pent-up wrath found a vent. From the distracting condition of wandering uncertain suspicion, it had been recalled into the glad security of individual hate. Although up to this time Kerkel had borne an exemplary reputation, it was now remembered that he had always been of a morose and violent temper, a hypocrite in religion, a selfish sensualist. Several sagacious critics had long "seen through him;" others had "never liked him;" others had wondered how it was he kept his place so long in Lehfeldt's shop. Poor fellow! his life and actions, like those of every one else when illuminated by a light thrown back upon them, seemed so conspicuously despicable, although when illuminated in their own light they had seemed innocent enough. His mother's frantic protestations of her son's innocence—her assertions that Franz loved Lieschen more than his own soul—only served to envelop her in the silent accusation of being an accomplice, or at least of being an accessory after the fact.

I cannot say why it was, but I did not share the universal belief. The logic seemed to me forced; the evidence trivial. On first hearing of Kerkel's arrest, I eagerly questioned my informant respecting his per-

sonal appearance; and on hearing that he was fair, with blue eyes and flaxen hair, my conviction of his innocence was fixed. Looking back on these days, I am often amused at this characteristic of my constructive imagination. While rejecting the disjointed logic of the mob, which interpreted his guilt, I was myself deluded by a logic infinitely less rational. Had Kerkel been dark, with dark eyes and beard, I should probably have sworn to his guilt, simply because the idea of that stranger had firmly fixed itself in my mind.

All that afternoon, and all the next day, the busy hum of voices was raised by the one topic of commanding interest. Kerkel had been examined. He at once admitted that a secret betrothal had for some time existed between him and Lieschen. They had been led to take this improper step by fears of her parents, who, had the attachment been discovered, would, it was thought, have separated them for ever. Herr Lehfeldt's sternness, no less than his superior position, seemed an invincible obstacle; and the good mother, although doting upon her only daughter, was led by the very intensity of her affection to form ambitious hopes of her daughter's future. It was barely possible that some turn in events might one day yield an opening for their consent; but meanwhile prudence dictated secrecy, in order to avert the most pressing danger, that of separation. And so the pretty Lieschen, with feminine instinct of ruse, had affected to

treat her lover with indifference; and to compensate him and herself for this restraint, she had been in the habit of escaping from home once or twice a-week, and spending a delicious hour or two at night in the company of her lover and his mother. Kerkel and his mother lived in a cottage a little way outside the town. Lehfeldt's shop stood not many yards from the archway. Now, as in Nuremberg no one was abroad after ten o'clock, except a few loungers at the *cafés* and beer-houses, and these were only to be met inside the town, not outside it, Lieschen ran extremely little risk of being observed in her rapid transit from her father's to her lover's house. Nor, indeed, had she ever met any one in the course of these visits.

On the fatal night Lieschen was expected at the cottage. Mother and son waited at first hopefully, then anxiously, at last with some vague uneasiness at her non-appearance. It was now a quarter past eleven —nearly an hour later than her usual time. They occasionally went to the door to look for her; then they walked a few yards down the road, as if to catch an earlier glimpse of her advancing steps. But in vain. The half-hour struck. They came back into the cottage, discussing the various probabilities of delay. Three-quarters struck. Perhaps she had been detected; perhaps she was ill; perhaps — but this was his mother's suggestion, and took little hold of him—there had been visitors who had stayed later than usual, and Lieschen, finding the night so far

advanced, had postponed her visit to the morrow. Franz, who interpreted Lieschen's feelings by his own, was assured that no postponement of a voluntary kind was credible of her. Twelve o'clock struck. Again Franz went out into the road, and walked nearly up to the archway; he returned with heavy sadness and foreboding at his heart, reluctantly admitting that now all hope of seeing her that night was over. That night? Poor sorrowing heart, the night was to be eternal! The anguish of the desolate "never more" was awaiting him.

There is something intensely pathetic in being thus, as it were, spectators of a tragic drama which is being acted on two separate stages at once — the dreadful link of connection, which is unseen to the separate actors, being only too vividly seen by the spectators. It was with some such interest that I, who believed in Kerkel's innocence, heard this story; and in imagination followed its unfolding stage. He went to bed, not, as may be expected, to sleep; tossing restlessly in feverish agitation, conjuring up many imaginary terrors—but all of them trifles compared with the dread reality which he was so soon to face. He pictured her weeping—and she was lying dead on the cold pavement of the dark archway. He saw her in agitated eloquence pleading with offended parents —and she was removed for ever from all agitations, with the peace of death upon her young face.

At an early hour he started, that he might put an

end to his suspense. He had not yet reached the archway before the shattering news burst upon him. From that moment he remembered nothing. But his mother described his ghastly agitation, as, throwing himself upon her neck, he told her, through dreadful sobs, the calamity which had fallen. She did her best to comfort him; but he grew wilder and wilder, and rolled upon the ground in the agony of an immeasurable despair. She trembled for his reason and his life. And when the messengers came to seek him, she spoke but the simple truth in saying that he was like one distracted. Yet no sooner had a glimpse of light dawned on him that some vague suspicion rested on him in reference to the murder, than he started up, flung away his agitation, and, with a calmness which was awful, answered every question, and seemed nerved for every trial. From that moment not a sob escaped him until, in the narrative of the night's events, he came to that part which told of the sudden disclosure of his bereavement. And the simple, straightforward manner in which he told this tale, with a face entirely bloodless, and eyes that seemed to have withdrawn all their light inwards, made a great impression on the auditors, which was heightened into sympathy when the final sob, breaking through the forced calmness, told of the agony which was eating its fiery way through the heart.

The story was not only plausible in itself, but ac-

curately tallied with what before had seemed like the criminating evidence of the maid; tallied, moreover, precisely as to time, which would hardly have been the case had the story been an invention. As to the waistcoat which had figured so conspicuously in all the rumours, it appeared that suspicion had monstrously exaggerated the facts. Instead of a waistcoat plashed with blood—as popular imagination pictured it—it was a grey waistcoat, with one spot and a slight smear of blood, which admitted of a very simple explanation. Three days before, Franz had cut his left hand in cutting some bread; and to this the maid testified, because she was present when the accident occurred. He had not noticed that his waistcoat was marked by it until the next day, and had forgotten to wash out the stains.

People outside shook sceptical heads at this story of the cut hand. The bloody waistcoat was not to be disposed of in that easy way. It had fixed itself too strongly in their imagination. Indeed, my belief is that even could they have seen the waistcoat, its insignificant marks would have appeared murderous patches to their eyes. I had seen it, and my report was listened to with ill-concealed disbelief, when not with open protestation. And when Kerkel was discharged as free from all suspicion, there was a low growl of disappointed wrath heard from numerous groups.

This may sympathetically be understood by whom-

soever remembers the painful uneasiness of the mind under a great stress of excitement, with no definite issue. The lust for a vengeance, demanded by the aroused sensibilities of compassion, makes men credulous in their impatience; they easily believe any one is guilty, because they feel an imperious need for fastening the guilt upon some definite head. Few verdicts of "Not Guilty" are well received, unless another victim is at hand upon whom the verdict of guilty is likely to fall. It was demonstrable to all judicial minds that Kerkel was wholly, pathetically innocent. In a few days this gradually became clear to the majority, but at first it was resisted as an attempt to balk justice; and to the last there were some obstinate doubters, who shook their heads mysteriously, and said, with a certain incisiveness, "Somebody must have done it; I should very much like to know who."

Suspicion once more was drifting aimlessly. None had pointed in any new direction. No mention of any one whom I could identify with the stranger had yet been made; but, although silent on the subject, I kept firm in my conviction, and I sometimes laughed at the pertinacity with which I scrutinised the face of every man I met, if he happened to have a black beard; and as black beards are excessively common, my curiosity, though never gratified, was never allowed repose.

Meanwhile Lieschen's funeral had been emphati-

cally a public mourning. Nay, so great was the emotion, that it almost deadened the interest, which otherwise would have been so powerful, in the news now daily reaching us from Paris. Blood had flowed upon her streets—in consequence of that pistol-shot which, either by accident or criminal intent, had converted the demonstration before the hotel of the Minister of Foreign Affairs into an insurrection. Paris had risen; barricades were erected. The troops were under arms. This was agitating news.

Such is the solidarity of all European nations, and so quick are all to vibrate in unison with the vibrations of each, that events like those transacted in Paris necessarily stirred every city, no matter how remote, nor politically how secure. And it says much for the intense interest excited by the Lehfeldt tragedy that Nuremberg was capable of sustaining that interest even amid the tremendous pressure of the February Revolution. It is true that Nuremberg is at all times somewhat sequestered from the great movements of the day, following slowly in the rear of great waves; it is true, moreover, that some politicians showed remarkable eagerness in canvassing the characters and hopes of Louis Philippe and Guizot; but although such events would at another period have formed the universal interest, the impenetrable mystery hanging over Lieschen's death threw the Revolution into the background of their thoughts. If when a storm is raging over the dreary

moorland, a human cry of suffering is heard at the door, at once the thunders and the tumult sink into insignificance, and are not even heard by the ear which is pierced with the feeble human voice: the grandeurs of storm and tempest, the uproar of surging seas, the clamorous wail of sea-birds amid the volleying artillery of heaven, in vain assail the ear that has once caught even the distant cry of a human agony, or serve only as scenical accompaniments to the tragedy which is foreshadowed by that cry. And so it was amid the uproar of 1848. A kingdom was in convulsions; but here, at our door, a young girl had been murdered, and two hearths made desolate.

Rumours continued to fly about. The assassin was always about to be discovered; but he remained shrouded in impenetrable darkness. A remark made by Bourgonef struck me much. Our host, Zum Bayerischen Hof, one day announced with great satisfaction that he had himself heard from the syndic that the police were on the traces of the assassin.

"I am sorry to hear it," said Bourgonef.

The guests paused from eating, and looked at him with astonishment.

"It is a proof," he added, "that even the police now give it up as hopeless. I always notice that whenever the police are said to be on the traces the malefactor is never tracked. When they are on his traces they wisely say nothing about it; they allow it to be believed that they are baffled, in order to lull

their victim into a dangerous security. When they know themselves to be baffled, there is no danger in quieting the public mind, and saving their own credit, by announcing that they are about to be successful."

CHAPTER IV.

A DISCOVERY.

Bourgonef's remark had been but too sagacious. The police were hopelessly baffled. In all such cases possible success depends upon the initial suggestion either of a motive which leads to a suspicion of the person, or of some person which leads to a suspicion of the motive. Once set suspicion on the right track, and evidence is suddenly alight in all quarters. But, unhappily, in the present case there was no assignable motive, no shadow darkening any person.

An episode now came to our knowledge, in which Bourgonef manifested an unusual depth of interest. I was led to notice this interest, because it had seemed to me that in the crime itself, and the discussions which arose out of it, he shared but little of the universal excitement. I do not mean that he was indifferent—by no means; but the horror of the crime did not seem to fascinate his imagination as it fascinated ours. He could talk quite as readily of other things, and far more readily of the French affairs. But on the contrary, in this new episode he

showed peculiar interest. It appeared that Lehfeldt, moved, perhaps, partly by a sense of the injustice which had been done to Kerkel in even suspecting him of the crime, and in submitting him to an examination more poignantly affecting to him under such circumstances, than a public trial would have been under others; and moved partly by the sense that Lieschen's love had practically drawn Kerkel within the family—for her choice of him as a husband had made him morally, if not legally, a son-in-law; and moved partly by the sense of loneliness which had now settled on their childless home,—Lehfeldt had in the most pathetic and considerate terms begged Kerkel to take the place of his adopted son, and become joint partner with him in the business. This, however, Kerkel had gently yet firmly declined. He averred that he felt no injury, though great pain had been inflicted on him by the examination. He himself in such a case would not have shrunk from demanding that his own brother should be tried, under suspicions of similar urgency. It was simple justice that all who were suspected should be examined; justice also to them that they might for ever clear themselves of doubtful appearances. But for the rest, while he felt his old affectionate respect for his master, he could recognise no claim to be removed from his present position. Had she lived, said the heart-broken youth, he would gladly have consented to accept any fortune which her love might

bestow, because he felt that his own love, and the devotion of a life, might repay it. But there was nothing now that he could give in exchange. For his services he was amply paid; his feelings towards Lieschen's parents must continue what they had ever been. In vain Lehfeldt pleaded, in vain many friends argued. Franz remained respectfully firm in his refusal.

This, as I said, interested Bourgonef immensely. He seemed to enter completely into the minds of the sorrowing pleading parents, and the sorrowing denying lover. He appreciated and expounded their motives with a subtlety and delicacy of perception which surprised and delighted me. It showed the refinement of his moral nature. But, at the same time, it rendered his minor degree of interest in the other episodes of the story, those which had a more direct and overpowering appeal to the heart, a greater paradox.

Human nature is troubled in the presence of all mystery which has not by long familiarity lost its power of soliciting attention; and for my own part, I have always been uneasy in the presence of moral problems. Puzzled by the contradictions which I noticed in Bourgonef, I tried to discover whether he had any general repugnance to stories of crimes, or any special repugnance to murders, or, finally, any strange repugnance to this particular case now everywhere discussed. And it is not a little remarkable,

that during three separate interviews, in the course of which I severally, and as I thought artfully, introduced these topics, making them seem to arise naturally out of the suggestion of our talk, I totally failed to arrive at any distinct conclusion. I was afraid to put the direct question: Do you not share the common feeling of interest in criminal stories? This question would doubtless have elicited a categorical reply; but somehow, the consciousness of an *arrière-pensée* made me shrink from putting such a question.

Reflecting on this indifference on a special point, and on the numerous manifestations I had noticed of his sensibility, I came at last to the conclusion that he must be a man of tender heart, whose delicate sensibilities easily shrank from the horrible under every form; and no more permitted him to dwell unnecessarily upon painful facts, than they permit imaginative minds to dwell on the details of an operation.

I had not long settled this in my mind before an accident suddenly threw a lurid light upon many details noticed previously, and painfully revived that inexplicable repulsion with which I had at first regarded him. A new suspicion filled my mind, or rather, let me say, a distinct shape was impressed upon many fluctuating suspicions. It scarcely admitted of argument, and at times seemed preposterous, nevertheless it persisted. The mind which in

broad daylight assents to all that can be alleged against the absurdities of the belief in apparitions, will often acknowledge the dim terrors of darkness and loneliness—terrors at possibilities of supernatural visitations. In like manner, in the clear daylight of reason I could see the absurdity of my suspicion, but the vague stirrings of feeling remained unsilenced. I was haunted by the dim horrors of a possibility.

Thus it arose. We were both going to Munich, and Bourgonef had shortened his contemplated stay at Nuremberg that he might have the pleasure of accompanying me; adding also that he, too, should be glad to reach Munich, not only for its art, but for its greater command of papers and intelligence respecting what was then going on in France. On the night preceding the morning of our departure, I was seated in his room, smoking and discussing as usual, while Ivan, his servant, packed up his things in two large portmanteaus.

Ivan was a serf who spoke no word of any language but his own. Although of a brutal, almost idiotic type, he was loudly eulogised by his master as the model of fidelity and usefulness. Bourgonef treated him with gentleness, though with a certain imperiousness; much as one might treat a savage mastiff which it was necessary to dominate without exasperating. He more than once spoke of Ivan as a living satire on physiognomists and phrenologists; and as I am a phrenologist, I listened with some incredulity.

"Look at him," he would say. "Observe the low retreating brow, the flat face, the surly mouth, the broad base of the head, and the huge bull-like neck. Would not any one say Ivan was as destructive as a panther, as tenacious as a bull-dog, as brutal as a bull? Yet he is the gentlest of sluggish creatures, and as tender-hearted as a girl! That thick-set muscular frame shrouds a hare's heart. He is so faithful and so attached, that I believe for me he would risk his life; but on no inducement could you get him to place himself in danger on his own account. Part of his love for me is gratitude for having rescued him from the conscription: the dangers incident to a military life had no charm for him!"

Now, although Bourgonef, who was not a phrenologist, might be convinced of the absence of ferocious instincts in Ivan, to me, as a phrenologist, the statement was eminently incredible. All the appearances of his manner were such as to confirm his master's opinion. He was quiet, even tender in his attentions. But the tyrannous influence of ideas and physical impressions cannot be set aside; and no evidence would permanently have kept down my distrust of this man. When women shriek at the sight of a gun, it is in vain that you solemnly assure them the gun is not loaded. "I don't know," they reply,—"at any rate, I don't like it." I was much in this attitude with regard to Ivan. He might be

harmless. I didn't know that; what I did know was—that I didn't like his looks.

On this night he was moving noiselessly about the room employed in packing. Bourgonef's talk rambled over the old themes; and I thought I had never before met with one of my own age whose society was so perfectly delightful. He was not so conspicuously my superior on all points that I felt the restraints inevitably imposed by superiority; yet he was in many respects sufficiently above me in knowledge and power to make me eager to have his assent to my views where we differed, and to have him enlighten me where I knew myself to be weak.

In the very moment of my most cordial admiration came a shock. Ivan, on passing from one part of the room to the other, caught his foot in the strap of the portmanteau and fell. The small wooden box, something of a glove-box, which he held in his hand at the time, fell on the floor, and falling over, discharged its contents close to Bourgonef's feet. The objects which caught my eyes were several pairs of gloves, a rouge-pot and hare's foot, and a black beard!

By what caprice of imagination was it that the sight of this false beard lying at Bourgonef's feet thrilled me with horror? In one lightning-flash I beheld the archway—the stranger with the startled eyes—this stranger no longer unknown to me, but too fatally recognised as Bourgonef—and at his feet the murdered girl!

Moved by what subtle springs of suggestion I know not, but there before me stood that dreadful vision, seen in a lurid light, but seen as clearly as if the actual presence of the objects were obtruding itself upon my eyes. In the inexpressible horror of this vision my heart seemed clutched with an icy hand.

Fortunately Bourgonef's attention was called away from me. He spoke angrily some sharp sentence, which of course was in Russian, and therefore unintelligible to me. He then stooped, and picking up the rouge-pot, held it towards me with his melancholy smile. He was very red in the face; but that may have been either anger, or the effect of sudden stooping. "I see you are surprised at these masquerading follies," he said in a tone which, though low, was perfectly calm. "You must not suppose that I beautify my sallow cheeks on ordinary occasions."

He then quietly handed the pot to Ivan, who replaced it with the gloves and the beard in the box; and after making an inquiry which sounded like a growl, to which Bourgonef answered negatively, he continued his packing.

Bourgonef resumed his cigar and his argument as if nothing had happened.

The vision had disappeared, but a confused mass of moving figures took its place. My heart throbbed so violently that it seemed as if its tumult must be heard by others. Yet my face must have been

tolerably calm, since Bourgonef made no comment on it.

I answered his remarks in vague fragments, for, in truth, my thoughts were flying from conjecture to conjecture. I remembered that the stranger had a florid complexion; was this rouge? It is true that I fancied that the stranger carried a walking-stick in his right hand; if so, this was enough to crush all suspicions of his identity with Bourgonef; but then I was rather hazy on this point, and probably did not observe a walking-stick.

After a while my inattention struck him, and looking at me with some concern, he inquired if there were anything the matter. I pleaded a colic, which I attributed to the imprudence of having indulged in *sauerkraut* at dinner. He advised me to take a little brandy; but, affecting a fresh access of pain, I bade him good-night. He hoped I should be all right on the morrow—if not, he added, we can postpone our journey till the day after.

Once in my own room I bolted the door, and sat down on the edge of the bed in a tumult of excitement.

CHAPTER V.

FLUCTUATIONS.

Alone with my thoughts, and capable of pursuing conjectures and conclusions without external inter-

ruption, I quickly exhausted all the hypothetical possibilities of the case, and, from having started with the idea that Bourgonef was the assassin, I came at last to the more sensible conclusion that I was a constructive blockhead. My suspicions were simply outrageous in their defect of evidence, and could never for one moment have seemed otherwise to any imagination less riotously active than mine.

I bathed my heated head, undressed myself, and got into bed, considering what I should say to the police when I went next morning to communicate my suspicions. And it is worthy of remark, as well as somewhat ludicrously self-betraying, that no sooner did I mentally see myself in the presence of the police, and was thus forced to confront my suspicions with some appearance of evidence, than the whole fabric of my vision rattled to the ground. What had I to say to the police? Simply that, on the evening of the night when Lieschen was murdered, I had passed, in a public thoroughfare, a man whom I could not identify, but who, as I could not help fancying, seemed to recognise me. This man, I had persuaded myself, was the murderer; for which persuasion I was unable to adduce a tittle of evidence. It was uncoloured by the remotest probability. It was truly and simply the suggestion of my vagrant fancy, which had mysteriously settled itself into a conviction; and having thus capriciously identified the stranger with Lieschen's murderer, I now, upon

evidence quite as preposterous, identified Bourgonef with the stranger.

The folly became apparent even to myself. If Bourgonef had in his possession a rouge-pot and false beard, I could not but acknowledge that he had made no attempt to conceal them, nor had he manifested any confusion on their appearance. He had quietly characterised them as masquerading follies. Moreover, I now began to remember distinctly that the stranger did carry a walking-stick in his right hand; and as Bourgonef had lost his right arm, that settled the point.

Into such complications would the tricks of imagination lead me! I blushed mentally, and resolved to let it serve as a lesson in future. It is needless, however, to say that the lesson was lost, as such lessons always are lost; a strong tendency in any direction soon disregards all the teachings of experience. I am still not the less the victim of my constructive imagination, because I have frequently had to be ashamed of its vagaries.

The next morning I awoke with a lighter breast, rejoicing in the caution which had delayed me from any rash manifestation of suspicions now seen to be absurd. I smiled as the thought arose: what if this suspected stranger should also be pestered by an active imagination, and should entertain similar suspicions of me? He must have seen in my eyes the look of recognition which I saw in his. On hearing

of the murder, our meeting may also have recurred to him; and his suspicions would have this colour, wanting to mine, that I happen to inherit with my Italian blood a somewhat truculent appearance, which has gained for me among friends the playful *sobriquet* of "the brigand."

Anxious to atone at once for my folly, and to remove from his mind any misgiving—if it existed—at my quitting him so soon after the disclosures of the masquerading details, I went to Bourgonef as soon as I was dressed, and proposed a ramble till the diligence started for Munich. He was sympathetic in his inquiries about my colic, which I assured him had quite passed away, and out we went. The sharp morning air of March made us walk briskly, and gave a pleasant animation to our thoughts. As he discussed the acts of the Provisional Government, so wise, temperate, and energetic, the fervour and generosity of his sentiments stood out in such striking contrast with the deed I had last night recklessly imputed to him, that I felt deeply ashamed, and was nearly carried away by mingled admiration and self-reproach to confess the absurd vagrancy of my thoughts, and humbly ask his pardon. But you can understand the reluctance at a confession so insulting to him, so degrading to me. It is at all times difficult to tell a man, face to face, eye to eye, the evil you have thought of him, unless the recklessness of anger seizes on it as a weapon with which to

strike; and I had now so completely unsaid to myself all that I once had thought of evil, that to put it in words seemed a gratuitous injury to me and insult to him.

A day or two after our arrival in Munich a reaction began steadily to set in. Ashamed as I was of my suspicions, I could not altogether banish from my mind the incident which had awakened them. The image of that false beard would mingle with my thoughts I was vaguely uncomfortable at the idea of Bourgonef's carrying about with him obvious materials of disguise. In itself this would have had little significance; but coupled with the fact that his devoted servant was—in spite of all Bourgonef's eulogies—repulsively ferocious in aspect, capable, as I could not help believing, of any brutality,—the suggestion was unpleasant. You will understand that having emphatically acquitted Bourgonef in my mind, I did not again distinctly charge him with any complicity in the mysterious murder; on the contrary, I should indignantly have repelled such a thought: but the uneasy sense of some mystery about him, coupled with the accessories of disguise, and the aspect of his servant, gave rise to dim, shadowy forebodings which ever and anon passed across my mind.

Did it ever occur to you, reader, to reflect on the depths of deceit which lie still and dark even in the honestest minds? Society reposes on a thin crust of convention, underneath which lie fathomless possi-

bilities of crime, and consequently suspicions of crime. Friendship, however close and dear, is not free from its reserves, unspoken beliefs, more or less suppressed opinions. The man whom you would indignantly defend against any accusation brought by another, so confident are you in his unshakable integrity, you may yourself momentarily suspect of crimes far exceeding those which you repudiate. Indeed, I have known sagacious men hold that perfect frankness in expressing the thoughts is a sure sign of imperfect friendship; something is always suppressed; and it is not he who loves you that "tells you candidly what he thinks" of your person, your pretensions, your children, or your poems. Perfect candour is dictated by envy, or some other unfriendly feeling, making friendship a stalking-horse, under cover of which it shoots the arrows which will rankle. Friendship is candid only when the candour is urgent—meant to avert impending danger or to rectify an error. The candour which is an impertinence never springs from friendship. Love is sympathetic.

I do not of course mean to intimate that my feeling for Bourgonef was of that deep kind which justifies the name of friendship. I only want to say that in our social relations we are constantly hiding from each other, under the smiles and courtesies of friendly interest, thoughts which, if expressed, would destroy all possible communion—and that, nevertheless, we are not insincere in our smiles and courtesies; and

therefore there is nothing paradoxical in my having felt great admiration for Bourgonef, and great pleasure in his society, while all the time there was deep down in the recesses of my thoughts an uneasy sense of a dark mystery which possibly connected him with a dreadful crime.

This feeling was roused into greater activity by an incident which now occurred. One morning I went to Bourgonef's room, which was at some distance from mine on the same floor, intending to propose a visit to the sculpture at the Glyptothek. To my surprise I found Ivan the serf standing before the closed door. He looked at me like a mastiff about to spring; and intimated by significant gestures that I was not allowed to enter the room. Concluding that his master was occupied in some way, and desired not to be disturbed, I merely signified by a nod that my visit was of no consequence, and went out. On returning about an hour afterwards I saw Ivan putting three pink letters into the letter-box of the hotel. I attached no significance to this very ordinary fact at the time, but went up to my room and began writing my letters, one of which was to my lawyer, sending him an important receipt. The dinner-bell sounded before I had half finished this letter; but I wrote on, determined to have done with it at once, in case the afternoon should offer any expedition with Bourgonef.

At dinner he quietly intimated that Ivan had

informed him of my visit, and apologised for not having been able to see me. I, of course, assured him that no apology was necessary, and that we had plenty of time to visit the sculpture together without intruding on his private hours. He informed me that he was that afternoon going to pay a visit to Schwanthaler the sculptor, and if I desired it, he would ask permission on another occasion to take me with him. I jumped at the proposal, as may be supposed.

Dinner over, I strolled into the Englische Garten, and had my coffee and cigar there. On my return, I was vexed to find that in the hurry of finishing my letters I had sealed the one to my lawyer, and had not enclosed the receipt which had been the object of writing. Fortunately it was not too late. Descending to the bureau of the hotel, I explained my mistake to the head-waiter, who unlocked the letter-box to search for my letter. It was found at once, for there were only seven or eight in the box. Among these my eye naturally caught the three pink letters which I had that morning seen Ivan drop into the box; but although they were *seen* by me they were not *noticed* at the time, my mind being solely occupied with rectifying the stupid blunder I had made.

Once more in my own room a sudden revelation startled me. Every one knows what it is to have details come under the eye which the mind first interprets long after the eye ceases to rest upon them.

The impressions are received passively: but they are registered, and can be calmly read whenever the mind is in activity. It was so now. I suddenly, as if now for the first time, saw that the addresses on Bourgonef's letters were written in a fluent, masterly hand, bold in character, and with a certain sweep which might have come from a painter. The thrill which this vision gave me will be intelligible when you remember that Bourgonef had lost or pretended to have lost his right arm, and was, as I before intimated, far from dexterous with his left. That no man recently thrown upon the use of a left hand could have written those addresses was too evident. What, then, was the alternative? The empty sleeve was an imposture! At once the old horrible suspicion returned, and this time with tenfold violence and with damnatory confirmation.

Pressing my temples between my hands, I tried to be calm and to survey the evidence without precipitation; but for some time the conflict of thoughts was too violent. Whatever might be the explanation, clear it was that Bourgonef, for some purposes, was practising a deception, and had, as I knew, other means of disguising his appearance. This, on the most favourable interpretation, branded him with suspicion. This excluded him from the circle of honest men.

But did it connect him with the murder of Lieschen Lehfeldt? In my thought it did so in-

dubitably; but I was aware of the difficulty of making this clear to any one else.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST LOVE.

If the reader feels that my suspicions were not wholly unwarranted, were indeed inevitable, he will not laugh at me on learning that once more these suspicions were set aside, and the fact—the damnatory fact, as I regarded it—discovered by me so accidentally, and, I thought, providentially, was robbed of all its significance by Bourgonef himself casually and carelessly avowing it in conversation, just as one may avow a secret infirmity, with some bitterness, but without any implication of deceit in its concealment.

I was the more prepared for this revulsion of feeling, by the difficulty I felt in maintaining my suspicions in the presence of one so gentle and so refined. He had come into my room that evening to tell me of his visit to Schwanthaler, and of the sculptor's flattering desire to make my personal acquaintance. He spoke of Schwanthaler, and of his earnest efforts in art, with so much enthusiasm, and was altogether so charming, that I felt abashed before him, incapable of ridding myself of the dreadful suspicions, yet incapable of firmly believing him to be what I thought. But more than this, there came

the new interest awakened in me by his story; and when, in the course of this story, he incidentally disclosed the fact that he had not lost his arm, all my suspicions vanished at once.

We had got, as usual, upon politics, and were differing more than usual, because he gave greater prominence to his sympathy with the Red Republicans. He accused me of not being "thoroughgoing," which I admitted. This he attributed to the fact of my giving a divided heart to politics—a condition natural enough at my age and with my hopes. "Well," said I, laughing, "you don't mean to take a lofty stand upon your few years' seniority. If my age renders it natural, does yours profoundly alter such a conviction?"

"My age! no. But you have the hopes of youth. I have none. I am banished for ever from the joys and sorrows of domestic life; and therefore, to live at all, must concentrate my soul on great abstractions and public affairs."

"But why banished, unless self-banished?"

"Woman's love is impossible. You look incredulous. I do not allude to this," he said, taking up the empty sleeve, and by so doing sending a shiver through me.

"The loss of your arm," I said—and my voice trembled slightly, for I felt that a crisis was at hand—"although a misfortune to you, would really be an advantage in gaining a woman's affections.

Women are so romantic, and their imaginations are so easily touched!"

"Yes," he replied, bitterly; "but I have not lost my arm."

I started. He spoke bitterly, yet calmly. I awaited his explanation in great suspense.

"To have lost my arm in battle, or even by an accident, would perhaps have lent me a charm in woman's eyes. But, as I said, my arm hangs by my side—withered, unpresentable."

I breathed again. He continued in the same tone, and without noticing my looks.

"But it is not this which banishes me. Woman's love might be hoped for, had I far worse infirmities. The cause lies deeper. It lies in my history. A wall of granite has grown up between me and the sex."

"But, my dear fellow, do you—wounded, as I presume to guess, by some unworthy woman—extend the fault of one to the whole sex? Do you despair of finding another true, because a first was false?"

"They are all false," he exclaimed, with energy. "Not, perhaps, all false from inherent viciousness, though many are that, but false because their inherent weakness renders them incapable of truth. Oh! I know the catalogue of their good qualities. They are often pitiful, self-devoting, generous; but they are so by fits and starts, just as they are cruel, remorseless, exacting, by fits and starts. They have

no constancy,—they are too weak to be constant even in evil; their minds are all impressions; their actions are all the issue of immediate promptings. Swayed by the fleeting impulses of the hour, they have only one persistent, calculable motive on which reliance can always be placed—that motive is vanity; you are always sure of them there. It is from vanity they are good — from vanity they are evil; their devotion and their desertion equally vanity. I know them. To me they have disclosed the shallows of their natures. God! how I have suffered from them!"

A deep, low exclamation, half sob, half curse, closed this tirade. He remained silent for a few minutes, looking on the floor; then, suddenly turning his eyes upon me, said—

"Were you ever in Heidelberg?"

"Never."

"I thought all your countrymen went there? Then you will never have heard anything of my story. Shall I tell you how my youth was blighted? Will you care to listen?"

"It would interest me much."

"I had reached the age of seven-and-twenty," he began, "without having once known even the vague stirrings of the passion of love. I admired many women, and courted the admiration of them all; but I was as yet not only heart-whole, but, to use your Shakespeare's phrase, Cupid had not tapped me on the shoulder.

"This detail is not unimportant in my story. You may possibly have observed that in those passionate natures which reserve their force, and do not fritter away their feelings in scattered flirtations or trivial love-affairs, there is a velocity and momentum, when the movement of passion is once excited, greatly transcending all that is ever felt by expansive and expressive natures. Slow to be moved, when they do move it is with the whole mass of the heart. So it was with me. I purchased my immunity from earlier entanglements by the price of my whole life. I am not what I was. Between my past and present self there is a gulf; that gulf is dark, stormy, and profound. On the far side stands a youth of hope, energy, ambition, and unclouded happiness, with great capacities for loving; on this side a blighted manhood, with no prospects but suffering and storm."

He paused. With an effort he seemed to master the suggestions which crowded upon his memory, and continued his narrative in an equable tone.

"I had been for several weeks at Heidelberg. One of my intimate companions was Kestner the architect, and he one day proposed to introduce me to his sister-in-law Ottilie, of whom he had repeatedly spoken to me in terms of great affection and esteem.

"We went, and we were most cordially received. Ottilie justified Kestner's praises. Pretty, but not strikingly so—clever, but not obtrusively so; her soft dark eyes were frank and winning; her manner

was gentle and retiring, with that dash of sentimentalism which seems native to all German girls, but without any of the ridiculous extravagance too often seen in them. I liked her all the more because I was perfectly at my ease with her, and this was rarely the case in my relations to young women.

"You leap at once to the conclusion that we fell in love. Your conclusion is precipitate. Seeing her continually, I grew to admire and respect her; but the significant smiles, winks, and hints of friends, pointing unmistakably at a supposed understanding existing between us, only made me more seriously examine the state of my feelings, and assured me that I was not in love. It is true that I felt a serene pleasure in her society, and that when away from her she occupied much of my thoughts. It is true that I often thought of her as a wife; and in these meditations she appeared as one eminently calculated to make a happy home. But it is no less true that during a temporary absence of hers of a few weeks I felt no sort of uneasiness, no yearning for her presence, no vacancy in my life. I knew, therefore, that it was not love which I felt.

"So much for my feelings. What of hers? They seemed very like my own. That she admired me, and was pleased to be with me, was certain. That she had a particle of fiery love for me I did not, could not believe. And it was probably this very sense of her calmness which kept my feelings

quiet. For love is a flame which often can be kindled only by contact with flame. Certainly this is so in proud, reserved natures, which are chilled by any contact with temperature not higher than their own.

"On her return, however, from that absence I have mentioned, I was not a little fluttered by an obvious change in her manner; an impression which subsequent meetings only served to confirm. Although still very quiet, her manner had become more tender, and it had that delicious shyness which is the most exquisite of flatteries, as it is one of the most enchanting of graces. I saw her tremble slightly beneath my voice, and blush beneath my gaze.

"There was no mistaking these signs. It was clear that she loved me; and it was no less clear that I, taking fire at this discovery, was myself rapidly falling in love. I will not keep you from my story by idle reflections. Take another cigar." He rose and paced up and down the room in silence.

CHAPTER VII.

AGALMA.

"At this juncture there arrived from Paris the woman to whom the great sorrow of my life is due. A fatalist might read in her appearance at this particular moment the signs of a prearranged doom. A few weeks later, and her arrival would have been

harmless; I should have been shielded from all external influence by the absorbing force of love. But, alas! this was not to be. My fate had taken another direction. The woman had arrived whose shadow was to darken the rest of my existence. That woman was Agalma Liebenstein.

"How is it that the head which we can only see surrounded with a halo, or a shadow, when the splendours of achievement or the infamy of shame instruct our eyes, is by the uninstructed eye observed as wholly vulgar? We all profess to be physiognomists; how is it we are so lamentably mistaken in our judgments? Here was a woman in whom my ignorant eyes saw nothing at all remarkable except golden hair of unusual beauty. When I say golden, I am not speaking loosely. I do not mean red or flaxen hair, but hair actually resembling burnished gold more than anything else. Its ripples on her brow caught the light like a coronet. This was her one beauty, and it was superb. For the rest, her features were characterless. Her figure was tall and full; not graceful, but sweepingly imposing. At first I noticed nothing about her except the braided splendour of her glorious hair."

He rose, and went into his bedroom, from which he returned with a small trinket-box in his hand. This he laid open on the table, disclosing a long strand of exquisite fair hair lying on a cushion of dark-blue velvet.

"Look at that," he said. "Might it not have been cut from an angel's head?"

"It is certainly wonderful."

"It must have been hair like this which crowned the infamous head of Lucrezia Borgia," he said, bitterly. "She, too, had golden hair; but hers must have been of paler tint, like her nature."

He resumed his seat, and, fixing his eyes upon the lock, continued—

"She was one of Ottilie's friends—dear friends, they called each other, — which meant that they kissed each other profusely, and told each other all their secrets, or as much as the lying nature of the sex permitted and suggested. It is, of course, impossible for me to disentangle my present knowledge from my past impressions so as to give you a clear description of what I then thought of Agalma. Enough that, as a matter of fact, I distinctly remember not to have admired her, and to have told Ottilie so; and when Ottilie, in surprise at my insensibility, assured me that men were in general wonderfully charmed with her (though, for her part, she had never understood why), I answered, and answered sincerely, that it might be true with the less refined order of men, but that men of taste would certainly be rather repelled from her.

"This opinion of mine, or some report of it, reached Agalma.

"It may have been the proximate cause of my

sorrows. Without this stimulus to her vanity, she might have left me undisturbed. I don't know. All I know is, that over many men Agalma exercised great influence, and that over me she exercised in a short time the spell of fascination. No other word will explain her influence; for it was not based on excellences such as the mind could recognise to be attractions; it was based on a mysterious personal power, something awful in its mysteriousness, as all demoniac powers are. One source of her influence over men I think I can explain: she at once captivated and repelled them. By artful appeals to their vanity, she made them interested in her and in her opinion of them, and yet kept herself inaccessible by a pride which was the more fascinating because it always seemed about to give way. Her instinct fastened upon the weak point in those she approached. This made her seductive to men, because she flattered their weak points; and hateful to women, because she flouted and disclosed their weak points.

"Her influence over me began in the following way. One day, at a picnic, having been led by her into a conversation respecting the relative inferiority of the feminine intellect, I was forced to speak rather more earnestly than usual, when suddenly in a lower voice she said—

"'I am willing to credit anything you say; only pray don't continue talking to me so earnestly.'

"'Why not?' I asked, surprised.

"She looked at me with peculiar significance, but remained silent.

"'May I ask why not?' I said.

"'Because if you do, somebody may be jealous.' There was a laughing defiance in her eye as she spoke.

"'And pray, who has a right to be jealous of me?'

"'Oh! you know well enough.

"It was true; I did know: and she knew that I knew it. To my shame be it said that I was weak enough to yield to an equivocation which I now see to have been disloyal, but which I then pretended to have been no more than delicacy to Ottilie. As, in point of fact, there had never been a word passed between us respecting our mutual feelings, I considered myself bound in honour to assume that there was nothing tacitly acknowledged.

"Piqued by her tone and look, I disavowed the existence of any claims upon my attention; and to prove the sincerity of my words, I persisted in addressing my attentions to her. Once or twice I fancied I caught flying glances, in which some of the company criticised my conduct, and Ottilie also seemed to me unusually quiet. But her manner, though quiet, was untroubled and unchanged. I talked less to her than usual, partly because I talked so much to Agalma, and partly because I felt that

Agalma's eyes were on us. But no shadow of 'temper' or reserve darkened our interchange of speech.

"On our way back, I know not what devil prompted me to ask Agalma whether she had really been in earnest in her former allusion to 'somebody.'

"'Yes,' she said, 'I was in earnest then.'

"'And now?'

"'Now I have doubts. I may have been misinformed. It's no concern of mine, any way; but I had been given to understand. However, I admit that my own eyes have not confirmed what my ears heard.'

"This speech was irritating on two separate grounds. It implied that people were talking freely of my attachment, which, until I had formally acknowledged it, I resented as an impertinence; and it implied that, from personal observation, Agalma doubted Ottilie's feelings for me. This alarmed my quick-retreating pride! I, too, began to doubt. Once let loose on that field, imagination soon saw shapes enough to confirm any doubt. Ottilie's manner certainly had seemed less tender —nay, somewhat indifferent—during the last few days. Had the arrival of that heavy lout, her cousin, anything to do with this change?

"Not to weary you by recalling all the unfolding stages of this miserable story with the minuteness of

detail which my own memory morbidly lingers on, I will hurry to the catastrophe. I grew more and more doubtful of the existence in Ottilie's mind of any feeling stronger than friendship for me; and as this doubt strengthened, there arose the flattering suspicion that I was becoming an object of greater interest to Agalma, who had quite changed her tone towards me, and had become serious in her speech and manner. Weeks passed. Ottilie had fallen from her pedestal, and had taken her place among agreeable acquaintances. One day I suddenly learned that Ottilie was engaged to her cousin.

"You will not wonder that Agalma, who before this had exercised great fascination over me, now doubly became an object of the most tender interest. I fell madly in love. Hitherto I had never known that passion. My feeling for Ottilie I saw was but the inarticulate stammerings of the mighty voice which now sounded through the depths of my nature. The phrase, *madly in love*, is no exaggeration; madness alone knows such a fever of the brain, such a tumult of the heart. It was not that reason was overpowered; on the contrary, reason was intensely active, but active with that logic of flames which lights up the vision of maniacs.

"Although, of course, my passion was but too evident to every one, I dreaded its premature avowal, lest I should lose her; and almost equally dreaded delay, lest I should suffer from that also.

At length the avowal was extorted from me by jealousy of a brilliant Pole — Korinski — who had recently appeared in our circle, and was obviously casting me in the shade by his superior advantages of novelty, of personal attraction, and of a romantic history. She accepted me; and now, for a time, I was the happiest of mortals. The fever of the last few weeks was abating; it gave place to a deep tide of hopeful joy. Could I have died then! Could I even have died shortly afterwards, when I knew the delicious misery of a jealousy not too absorbing! For you must know that my happiness was brief. Jealousy, to which all passion of a deep and exacting power is inevitably allied, soon began to disturb my content. Agalma had no tenderness. She permitted caresses, never returned them. She was ready enough to listen to all my plans for the future, so long as the recital moved amid details of fortune and her position in society—that is, so long as her vanity was interested; but I began to observe with pain that her thoughts never rested on tender domesticities and poetic anticipations. This vexed me more and more. The very spell which she exercised over me made her want of tenderness more intolerable. I yearned for her love—for some sympathy with the vehement passion which was burning within me; and she was as marble.

"You will not be surprised to hear that I reproached her bitterly with her indifference. That is the invariable and fatal folly of lovers — they

seem to imagine that a heart can be scolded into tenderness! To my reproaches she at first answered impatiently that they were unjust; that it was not her fault if her nature was less expansive than mine; and that it was insulting to be told she was indifferent to the man whom she had consented to marry. Later she answered my reproaches with haughty defiance, one day intimating that if I really thought what I said, and repented our engagement, it would be most prudent for us to separate ere it was too late. This quieted me for a while. But it brought no balm to my wounds.

"And now fresh tortures were added. Korinski became quite marked in his attentions to Agalma. These she received with evident delight; so much so, that I saw by the glances of others that they were scandalised at it; and this, of course, increased my pain. My renewed reproaches only made her manner colder to me; to Korinski it became what I would gladly have seen towards myself.

"The stress and agitation of those days were too much for me. I fell ill, and for seven weeks I lay utterly prostrate. On recovering, this note was handed to me. It was from Agalma."

Bourgonef here held out to me a crumpled letter, and motioned that I should open it and read. It ran thus:—

"I have thought much of what you have so often

said, that it would be for the happiness of both if our unfortunate engagement were set aside. That you have a real affection for me I believe, and be assured that I once had a real affection for you; not, perhaps, the passionate love which a nature so exacting as yours demands, and which I earnestly hope it may one day find, but a genuine affection nevertheless, which would have made me proud to share your lot. But it would be uncandid in me to pretend that this now exists. Your incessant jealousy, the angry feelings excited by your reproaches, the fretful irritation in which for some time we have lived together, has completely killed what love I had, and I no longer feel prepared to risk the happiness of both of us by a marriage. What you said the other night convinces me that it is even your desire our engagement should cease. It is certainly mine. Let us try to think kindly of each other and meet again as friends. AGALMA LIEBENSTEIN."

When I had read this and returned it to him, he said: "You see that this was written on the day I was taken ill. Whether she knew that I was then helpless I know not. At any rate, she never sent to inquire after me. She went off to Paris; Korinski followed her; and—as I quickly learned on going once more into society—they were married! Did you ever, in the whole course of your experience, hear of such heartless conduct?"

Bourgonef asked this with a ferocity which quite startled me. I did not answer him; for, in truth, I could not see that Agalma had been very much to blame, even as he told the story, and felt sure that could I have heard her version it would have worn a very different aspect. That she was cold, and disappointed him, might be true enough, but there was no crime; and I perfectly understood how thoroughly odious he must have made himself to her by his exactions and reproaches. I understood this, perhaps, all the better, because in the course of his narrative Bourgonef had revealed to me aspects of his nature which were somewhat repulsive. Especially I was struck with his morbid vanity, and his readiness to impute low motives to others. This unpleasant view of his character—a character in many respects so admirable for its generosity and refinement—was deepened as he went on, instead of awaiting my reply to his question.

"For a wrong so measureless, you will naturally ask what measureless revenge I sought."

The idea had not occurred to me; indeed I could see no wrong, and this notion of revenge was somewhat startling in such a case.

"I debated it long," he continued. "I felt that since I was prevented from arresting any of the evil to myself, I could at least mature my plans for an adequate discharge of just retribution on her. It reveals the impotence resulting from the

trammels of modern civilisation, that while the possibilities of wrong are infinite, the openings for vengeance are few and contemptible. Only when a man is thrown upon the necessities of this 'wild justice' does he discover how difficult vengeance really is. Had Agalma been my wife, I could have wreaked my wrath upon her, with assurance that some of the torture she inflicted on me was to fall on her. Not having this power, what was I to do? Kill her? That would have afforded one moment of exquisite satisfaction—but to her it would have been simply death—and I wanted to kill the heart."

He seemed working with an insane passion; so that I regarded him with disgust mingled with some doubts as to what horrors he was about to relate.

"My plan was chosen. The only way to reach her heart was to strike her through her husband. For several hours daily I practised with the pistol, until—in spite of only having a left hand—I acquired fatal skill. But this was not enough. Firing at a mark is simple work. Firing at a man—especially one holding a pistol pointed at you—is altogether different. I had too often heard of 'crack shots' missing their men, to rely confidently on my skill in the shooting-gallery. It was necessary that my eye and hand should be educated to familiarity with the real object. Part of the cause why duellists miss their man is from the trepidation of fear. I was without fear.

At no moment of my life have I been afraid ; and the chance of being shot by Korinski I counted as nothing. The other cause is unfamiliarity with the mark. This I secured myself against by getting a lay figure of Korinski's height, dressing it to resemble him, placing a pistol in its hand, and then practising at this mark in the woods. After a short time I could send a bullet through the thorax without taking more than a hasty glance at the figure.

"Thus prepared, I started for Paris. But you will feel for me when you learn that my hungry heart was baffled of its vengeance, and baffled for ever. Agalma had been suddenly carried off by scarlet fever. Korinski had left Paris, and I felt no strong promptings to follow him, and wreak on him a futile vengeance. It was on *her* my wrath had been concentrated, and I gnashed my teeth at the thought that she had escaped me.

"My story is ended. The months of gloomy depression which succeeded, now that I was no longer sustained by the hope of vengeance, I need not speak of. My existence was desolate ; and even now the desolation continues over the whole region of the emotions. I carry a dead heart within me."

CHAPTER VIII.

A SECOND VICTIM.

Bourgonef's story has been narrated with some fulness, though in less detail than he told it, in order that the reader may understand its real bearings on *my* story. Without it, the motives which impelled the strange pertinacity of my pursuit would have been unintelligible. I have said that a very disagreeable impression remained on my mind respecting certain aspects of his character, and I felt somewhat ashamed of my imperfect sagacity in having up to this period been entirely blind to those aspects. The truth is, every human being is a mystery, and remains so to the last. We fancy we know a character; we form a distinct conception of it; for years that conception remains unmodified, and suddenly the strain of some emergency or the incidental stimulus of new circumstance reveals qualities not simply unexpected, but flatly contradictory of our previous conception. We judge of a man by the angle he subtends to our eye — only thus *can* we judge of him; and this angle depends on the relation his qualities and circumstances bear to our interests and sympathies. Bourgonef had charmed me intellectually; morally I had never come closer to him than in the sympathies of public

questions and abstract theories. His story had disclosed hidden depths.

My old suspicions reappeared, and a conversation we had two days afterwards helped to strengthen them.

We had gone on a visit to Schwanthaler the sculptor, at his tiny little castle of Schwaneck, a few miles from Munich. The artist was out for a walk, but we were invited to come in and await his return, which would be shortly; and meanwhile Bourgonef undertook to show me over the castle, interesting as a bit of modern Gothic, realising on a diminutive scale a youthful dream of the sculptor's. When our survey was completed—and it did not take long—we sat at one of the windows and enjoyed a magnificent prospect. "It is curious," said Bourgonef, "to be shut up here in this imitation of medieval masonry, where every detail speaks of the dead past, and to think of the events now going on in Paris which must find imitators all over Europe, and which open to the mind such vistas of the future. What a grotesque anachronism is this Gothic castle, built in the same age as that which sees a reforming pope!"

"Yes; but is not the reforming pope himself an anachronism?"

"As a Catholic," here he smiled, intimating that his orthodoxy was not very stringent, "I cannot admit that; as a Protestant, you must admit that if there must be a pope, he must in these days be a reformer, or—give up his temporal power. Not that

I look on Pio Nono as more than a precursor: he may break ground, and point the way, but he is not the man to lead Europe out of its present Slough of Despond, and under the headship of the Church found a new and lasting republic. We want a Hildebrand, one who will be to the nineteenth century what Gregory was to the eleventh."

"Do you believe in such a possibility? Do you think the Roman pontiff can ever again sway the destinies of Europe?"

"I can hardly say I believe it; yet I see the possibility of such an opening if the right man were to arise. But I fear he will not arise; or if he should, the Conclave will stifle him. Yet there is but one alternative: either Europe must once more join in a crusade with a pope at the head; or it must hoist the red flag. There is no other issue."

"Heaven preserve us from both! And I think we shall be preserved from the pope by the rottenness of the Church; from the *drapeau rouge* by the indignation and horror of all honest men. You see how the Provisional Government has resisted the insane attempt of the fanatics to make the red flag accepted as the national banner?"

"Yes; and it is the one thing which dashes my pleasure in the new revolution. It is the one act of weakness which the Government has exhibited; a concession which will be fatal unless it be happily set aside by the energetic party of action."

"An act of weakness? say rather an act of strength. A concession? say rather the repudiation of anarchy, the assertion of law and justice."

"Not a bit. It was a concession to the fears of the timid and to the vanity of the French people. The tricolor is a French flag — not the banner of Humanity. It is because the tricolor has been identified with the victories of France that it appeals to the vanity of the vainest of people. They forget that it is the flag of a revolution which failed, and of an empire which was one perpetual outrage to humanity. Whereas the red is new; it is the symbol of an energetic, thorough-going creed. If it carries terror with it, so much the better. The tyrants and the timid should be made to tremble."

"I had no idea you were so bloodthirsty," said I, laughing at his vehemence.

"I am not bloodthirsty at all; I am only logical and consistent. There is a mass of sophistry current in the world which sickens me. People talk of Robespierre and St Just, two of the most virtuous men that ever lived—and of Dominic and Torquemada, two of the most single-minded—as if they were cruel and bloodthirsty, whereas they were only convinced."

"Is it from love of paradox that you defend these tigers?"

"Tigers, again—how those beasts are calumniated!"

He said this with a seriousness which was irresistibly comic. I shouted with laughter; but he continued gravely—

"You think I am joking. But let me ask you why you consider the tiger more bloodthirsty than yourself? He springs upon his food—you buy yours from the butcher. He cannot live without animal food: it is a primal necessity, and he obeys the ordained instinct. You can live on vegetables; yet you slaughter beasts of the field and birds of the air (or buy them when slaughtered), and consider yourself a model of virtue. The tiger only kills his food or his enemies; you not only kill both, but you kill one animal to make a gravy for another! The tiger is less bloodthirsty than the Christian!"

"I don't know how much of that tirade is meant to be serious; but to waive the question of the tiger's morality, do you really—I will not say sympathise, but—justify Robespierre, Dominic, St Just, and the rest of the fanatics who have waded to their ends through blood?"

"He who wills the *end*, wills the *means*."

"A devil's maxim."

"But a truth. What the foolish world shrinks at as bloodthirstiness and cruelty is very often mere force and constancy of intellect. It is not that fanatics thirst for blood—far from it,—but they thirst for the triumph of their cause. Whatever obstacle lies on their path must be removed; if a torrent of

blood is the only thing that will sweep it away—the torrent must sweep."

"And sweep with it all the sentiments of pity, mercy, charity, love?"

"No: these sentiments may give a sadness to the necessity; they make the deed a sacrifice, but they cannot prevent the soul from seeing the aim to which it tends."

"This is detestable doctrine! It is the sophism which has destroyed families, devastated cities, and retarded the moral progress of the world more than anything else. No single act of injustice is ever done on this earth but it tends to perpetuate the reign of iniquity. By the feelings it calls forth it keeps up the native savagery of the heart. It breeds injustice, partly by hardening the minds of those who assent, and partly by exciting the passion of revenge in those who resist."

"You are wrong. The great drag-chain on the car of progress is the faltering inconsistency of man. Weakness is more cruel than sternness. Sentiment is more destructive than logic."

The arrival of Schwanthaler was timely, for my indignation was rising. The sculptor received us with great cordiality, and in the pleasure of the subsequent hour, I got over to some extent the irritation Bourgonef's talk had excited.

The next day I left Munich for the Tyrol. My parting with Bourgonef was many degrees less

friendly than it would have been a week before. I had no wish to see him again, and therefore gave him no address or invitation in case he should come to England. As I rolled away in the *Malleposte*, my busy thoughts reviewed all the details of our acquaintance; and the farther I was carried from his presence, the more obtrusive became the suspicions which connected him with the murder of Lieschen Lehfeldt. How, or upon what motive, was indeed an utter mystery. He had not mentioned the name of Lehfeldt. He had not mentioned having before been at Nuremberg. At Heidelberg the tragedy occurred — or was Heidelberg only a mask? It occurred to me that he had first ascertained that I had never been at Heidelberg before he placed the scene of his story there.

Thoughts such as these tormented me. Imagine, then, the horror with which I heard, soon after my arrival at Salzburg, that a murder had been committed at Grosshesslohe—one of the pretty environs of Munich much resorted to by holiday folk—corresponding in all essential features with the murder at Nuremberg! In both cases the victim was young and pretty. In both cases she was found quietly lying on the ground, stabbed to the heart, without any other traces of violence. In both cases she was a betrothed bride, and the motive of the unknown assassin a mystery.

Such a correspondence in the essential features in-

evitably suggested an appalling mystery of unity in these crimes,—either as the crimes of one man, committed under some impulse of motiveless malignity and thirst for innocent blood—or as the equally appalling effect of *imitation* acting contagiously upon a criminal imagination; of which contagion there have been, unfortunately, too many examples — horrible crimes prompting certain weak and feverish imaginations, by the very horror they inspire, first to dwell on, and finally to realise their imitations.

It was this latter hypothesis which found general acceptance. Indeed it was the only one which rested upon any ground of experience. The disastrous influence of imitation, especially under the fascination of horror, was well known. The idea of any diabolical malice moving one man to pass from city to city, and there quietly single out his victims—both of them, by the very hypothesis, unrelated to him, both of them at the epoch of their lives, when

> "The bosom's lord sits lightly on its throne,"

when the peace of the heart is assured, and the future is radiantly beckoning to them,—that any man should choose such victims for such crimes, was too preposterous an idea long to be entertained. Unless the man were mad, the idea was inconceivable; and even a monomaniac must betray himself in such a course, because he would necessarily conceive himself to be accomplishing some supreme act of justice.

It was thus I argued; and indeed I should much have preferred to believe that one maniac were involved, rather than the contagion of crime,—since one maniac must inevitably be soon detected; whereas there were no assignable limits to the contagion of imitation. And this it was which so profoundly agitated German society. In every family in which there happened to be a bride, vague tremors could not be allayed; and the absolute powerlessness which resulted from the utter uncertainty as to the quarter in which this dreaded phantom might next appear, justified and intensified those tremors. Against such an apparition there was no conceivable safeguard. From a city stricken with the plague, from a district so stricken, flight is possible, and there are the resources of medical aid. But from a moral plague like this, what escape was possible?

So passionate and profound became the terror, that I began to share the opinion which I heard expressed, regretting the widespread publicity of the modern press, since, with many undeniable benefits, it carried also the fatal curse of distributing through households, and keeping constantly under the excitement of discussion, images of crime and horror which would tend to perpetuate and extend the excesses of individual passion. The mere dwelling long on such a topic as this was fraught with evil.

This and more I heard discussed as I hurried back to Munich. To Munich? Yes; thither I was post-

ing with all speed. Not a shadow of doubt now remained in my mind. I knew the assassin, and was resolved to track and convict him. Do not suppose that *this* time I was led away by the vagrant activity of my constructive imagination. I had something like positive proof. No sooner had I learned that the murder had been committed at Grosshesslohe, than my thoughts at once carried me to a now memorable visit I had made there in company with Bourgonef and two young Bavarians. At the hotel where we dined, we were waited on by the niece of the landlord, a girl of remarkable beauty, who naturally excited the attention of four young men, and furnished them with a topic of conversation. One of the Bavarians had told us that she would one day be perhaps one of the wealthiest women in the country, for she was engaged to be married to a young farmer who had recently found himself, by a rapid succession of deaths, sole heir to a great brewer, whose wealth was known to be enormous.

At this moment Sophie entered bringing wine, and I saw Bourgonef slowly turn his eyes upon her with a look which then was mysterious to me, but which now spoke too plainly its dreadful meaning.

What is there in a look, you will say? Perhaps nothing; or it may be everything. To my unsuspecting, unenlightened perception, Bourgonef's gaze was simply the melancholy and half-curious gaze which such a man might be supposed to cast upon a

young woman who had been made the topic of an interesting discourse. But to my mind, enlightened as to his character, and instructed as to his peculiar feelings arising from his own story, the gaze was charged with horror. It marked a victim. The whole succession of events rose before me in vivid distinctness; the separate details of suspicion gathered into unity.

Great as was Bourgonef's command over his features, he could not conceal uneasiness as well as surprise at my appearance at the *table d'hôte* in Munich. I shook hands with him, putting on as friendly a mask as I could, and replied to his question about my sudden return by attributing it to unexpected intelligence received at Salzburg.

"Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Well, I'm afraid it will prove very serious," I said. "But we shall see. Meanwhile my visit to the Tyrol must be given up or postponed."

"Do you remain here, then?"

"I don't know what my movements will be."

Thus I had prepared him for any reserve or strangeness in my manner; and I had concealed from him the course of my movements; for at whatever cost, I was resolved to follow him and bring him to justice.

But how? Evidence I had none that could satisfy any one else, however convincing it might be to my own mind. Nor did there seem any evidence forthcoming from Grosshesslohe. Sophie's body had been found in the afternoon lying as if asleep in one of the

by-paths of the wood. No marks of a struggle; no traces of the murderer. Her affianced lover, who was at Augsburg, on hearing of her fate, hurried to Grosshesslohe, but could throw no light on the murder, could give no hint as to a possible motive for the deed. But this entire absence of evidence, or even ground of suspicion, only made *my* case the stronger. It was the motiveless malignity of the deed which fastened it on Bourgonef; or rather, it was the absence of any known motive elsewhere which assured me that I had detected the motive in him.

Should I communicate my conviction to the police? It was possible that I might impress them with at least sufficient suspicion to warrant his examination —and in that case the truth might be elicited; for among the many barbarities and iniquities of the criminal procedure in Continental States which often press heavily on the innocent, there is this compensating advantage, that the pressure on the guilty is tenfold heavier. If the innocent are often unjustly punished — imprisoned and maltreated before their innocence can be established — the guilty seldom escape. In England we give the criminal not only every chance of escape, but many advantages. The love of fair-play is carried to excess. It seems at times as if the whole arrangements of our procedure were established with a view to giving a criminal not only the benefit of every doubt, but of every loophole through which he can slip. Instead of this, the Con-

tinental procedure goes on the principle of closing up every loophole, and of inventing endless traps into which the accused may fall. We warn the accused not to say anything that may be prejudicial to him. They entangle him in contradictions and confessions which disclose his guilt.

Knowing this, I thought it very likely that, however artful Bourgonef might be, a severe examination might extort from him sufficient confirmation of my suspicions to warrant further procedure. But knowing also that *this* resort was open to me when all others had failed, I resolved to wait and watch.

CHAPTER IX.

FINALE.

Two days passed, and nothing occurred. My watching seemed hopeless, and I resolved to try the effect of a disguised interrogatory. It might help to confirm my already settled conviction, if it did not elicit any new evidence.

Seated in Bourgonef's room, in the old place, each with a cigar, and chatting as of old on public affairs, I gradually approached the subject of the recent murder.

"Is it not strange," I said, "that both these crimes should have happened while we were casually staying in both places?"

"Perhaps we are the criminals," he replied, laughing. I shivered slightly at this audacity. He laughed as he spoke, but there was a hard, metallic, and almost defiant tone in his voice which exasperated me.

"Perhaps we are," I said quietly. He looked full at me; but I was prepared, and my face told nothing. I added, as in explanation, "The crime being apparently contagious, we may have brought the infection from Nuremberg."

"Do you believe in that hypothesis of imitation?"

"I don't know what to believe. Do you believe in there being only one murderer? It seems such a preposterous idea. We must suppose him, at any rate, to be a maniac."

"Not necessarily. Indeed there seems to have been too much artful contrivance in both affairs, not only in the selection of the victims, but in the execution of the schemes. Cunning as maniacs often are, they are still maniacs, and betray themselves."

"If not a maniac," said I, hoping to pique him, "he must be a man of stupendous and pitiable vanity, —perhaps one of your constant-minded friends, whom you refuse to call bloodthirsty."

"Constant-minded perhaps; but why pitiably vain?"

"Why? Because only a diseased atrocity of imagination, stimulating a nature essentially base and weak in its desire to make itself conspicuous, would

or could suggest such things. The silly youth who 'fired the Ephesian dome,' the vain idiot who set fire to York Minster, the miserable Frenchmen who have committed murder and suicide with a view of making their exit striking from a world in which their appearance had been contemptible, would all sink into insignificance beside the towering infamy of baseness which —for the mere love of producing an effect on the minds of men, and thus drawing their attention upon him, which otherwise would never have marked him at all—could scheme and execute crimes so horrible and inexcusable. In common charity to human nature, let us suppose the wretch is mad; because otherwise his miserable vanity would be too loathsome." I spoke with warmth and bitterness, which increased as I perceived him wincing under the degradation of my contempt.

"If his motive *were* vanity," he said, "no doubt it would be horrible; but may it not have been revenge?"

"Revenge!" I exclaimed; "what! on innocent women?"

"You assume their innocence."

"Good God! do you know anything to the contrary?"

"Not I. But as we are conjecturing, I may as well conjecture the motive to have been revenge, as you may conjecture it to have been the desire to produce a startling effect."

"How do you justify your conjecture?"

"Simply enough. We have to suppose a motive; let us say it was revenge, and see whether that will furnish a clue."

"But it can't. The two victims were wholly unconnected with each other by any intermediate acquaintances, consequently there can have been no common wrong or common enmity in existence to furnish food for vengeance."

"That may be so; it may also be that the avenger made them vicarious victims."

"How so?"

"It is human nature. Did you ever observe a thwarted child striking in its anger the unoffending nurse, destroying its toys to discharge its wrath? Did you ever see a schoolboy, unable to wreak his anger on the bigger boy who has just struck him, turn against the nearest smaller boy and beat him? Did you ever know a schoolmaster, angered by one of the boy's parents, vent his pent-up spleen upon the unoffending class? Did you ever see a subaltern punished because an officer had been reprimanded? These are familiar examples of vicarious vengeance. When the soul is stung to fury, it must solace itself by the discharge of that fury—it must relieve its pain by the sight of pain in others. We are so constituted. We need sympathy above all things. In joy we cannot bear to see others in distress; in distress we see the joy of others with dismal envy which sharpens our pain. That is human nature."

"And," I exclaimed, carried away by my indignation, "you suppose that the sight of these two happy girls, beaming with the quiet joy of brides, was torture to some miserable wretch who had lost his bride."

I had gone too far. His eyes looked into mine. I read in his that he divined the whole drift of my suspicion—the allusion made to himself. There often passes into a look more than words can venture to express. In that look he read that he was discovered, and I read that he had recognised it. With perfect calmness, but with a metallic ring in his voice which was like the clash of swords, he said—

"I did not say that I supposed this; but as we were on the wide field of conjecture—utterly without evidence one way or the other, having no clue either to the man or his motives—I drew from the general principles of human nature a conclusion which was just as plausible—or absurd if you like—as the conclusion that the motive must have been vanity."

"As you say, we are utterly without evidence, and conjecture drifts aimlessly from one thing to another. After all, the most plausible explanation is that of a contagion of imitation."

I said this in order to cover my previous imprudence. He was not deceived—though for a few moments I fancied he was—but replied—

"I am not persuaded of that either. The whole thing is a mystery, and I shall stay here some time in

the hope of seeing it cleared up. Meanwhile, for a subject of conjecture, let me show you something on which your ingenuity may profitably be employed."

He rose and passed into his bedroom. I heard him unlocking and rummaging the drawers, and was silently reproaching myself for my want of caution in having spoken as I had done, though it was now beyond all doubt that he was the murderer, and that his motive had been rightly guessed; but with this self-reproach there was mingled a self-gratulation at the way I had got out of the difficulty, as I fancied.

He returned, and as he sat down I noticed that the lower part of his surtout was open. He always wore a long frogged and braided coat reaching to the knees —as I now know, for the purpose of concealing the arm which hung (as he said, withered) at his side. The two last fastenings were now undone.

He held in his hand a tiny chain made of very delicate wire. This he gave me, saying—

"Now what should you conjecture that to be?"

"Had it come into my hands without any remark, I should have said it was simply a very exquisite bit of iron-work; but your question points to something more out of the way."

"It *is* iron-work," he said.

Could I be deceived? A third fastening of his surtout was undone! I had seen but two a moment ago.

"And what am I to conjecture?" I asked.

"Where that iron came from? It was *not* from a mine."

I looked at it again, and examined it attentively. On raising my eyes in inquiry—fortunately with an expression of surprise, since what met my eyes would have startled a cooler man—I saw the fourth fastening undone!

"You look surprised," he continued, "and will be more surprised when I tell you that the iron in your hands once floated in the circulation of a man. It is made from human blood."

"Human blood!" I murmured.

He went on expounding the physiological wonders of the blood,—how it carried, dissolved in its currents, a proportion of iron and earths; how this iron was extracted by chemists and exhibited as a curiosity; and how this chain had been manufactured from such extracts. I heard every word, but my thoughts were hurrying to and fro in the agitation of a supreme moment. That there was a dagger underneath that coat—that in a few moments it would flash forth—that a death-struggle was at hand,—I knew well. My safety depended on presence of mind. That incalculable rapidity with which, in critical moments, the mind surveys all the openings and resources of an emergency, had assured me that there was no weapon within reach—that before I could give an alarm the tiger would be at my throat, and that my only chance was to keep my eyes fixed

upon him, ready to spring on him the moment the next fastening was undone, and before he could use his arm.

At last the idea occurred to me, that as, with a wild beast, safety lies in attacking him just before he attacks you, so with this beast my best chance was audacity. Looking steadily into his face, I said slowly—

"And you would like to have such a chain made from my blood." I rose as I spoke. He remained sitting, but was evidently taken aback.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"I mean," said I, sternly, "that your coat is unfastened, and that if another fastening is loosened in my presence, I fell you to the earth."

"You're a fool!" he exclaimed.

I moved towards the door, keeping my eye fixed upon him as he sat pale and glaring at me.

"*You* are a fool," I said—"and worse, if you stir."

At this moment, I know not by what sense, as if I had eyes at the back of my head, I was aware of some one moving behind me, yet I dared not look aside. Suddenly two mighty folds of darkness seemed to envelop me like arms. A powerful scent ascended my nostrils. There was a ringing in my ears, a beating at my heart. Darkness came on, deeper and deeper, like huge waves. I seemed growing to gigantic stature. The waves rolled on faster and faster.

The ringing became a roaring. The beating became a throbbing. Lights flashed across the darkness. Forms moved before me. On came the waves hurrying like a tide, and I sank deeper and deeper into this mighty sea of darkness. Then all was silent. Consciousness was still.

. . . . . .

How long I remained unconscious, I cannot tell. But it must have been some considerable time. When consciousness once more began to dawn within me, I found myself lying on a bed surrounded by a group of eager, watching faces, and became aware of a confused murmur of whispering going on around me. "Er lebt" (he lives) were the words which greeted my opening eyes—words which I recognised as coming from my landlord.

I had had a very narrow escape. Another moment and I should not have lived to tell the tale. The dagger that had already immolated two of Bourgonef's objects of vengeance would have been in my breast. As it was, at the very moment when the terrible Ivan had thrown his arms round me and was stifling me with chloroform, one of the servants of the hotel, alarmed or attracted by curiosity at the sound of high words within the room, had ventured to open the door to see what was going on. The alarm had been given, and Bourgonef had been arrested and handed over to the police. Ivan, however, had disappeared; nor were the police ever able to find him. This mat-

tered comparatively little. Ivan without his master was no more redoubtable than any other noxious animal. As an accomplice, as an instrument to execute the Will of a man like Bourgonef, he was a danger to society. The directing intelligence withdrawn, he sank to the level of the brute. I was not uneasy, therefore, at his having escaped. Sufficient for me that the real criminal, the Mind that had conceived and directed those fearful murders, was at last in the hands of justice. I felt that my task had been fully accomplished when Bourgonef's head fell on the scaffold.

THOMAS.

BY MRS W. K. CLIFFORD.

I.

THE most remarkable thing about this little history is that it is quite true. If I knew how, I would make it into a real story going on from month to month in a magazine. But I could never invent the love-making, and without love a story is nothing. I should never know, for instance, what to make May and the Doctor say to each other. So I had better put down Thomas's story just as it all happened, and leave fiction to cleverer folk.

Twenty years ago and more, after my husband died, I lived in what was then a new street near Westbourne Terrace. It consisted of two rows of houses—very ugly houses outside, though inside they were comfortable enough. I had three little girls; the eldest, May, was just five, a pretty little thing

with golden hair and blue eyes; I often wish I had had her portrait painted. The others were quite tiny—four, and two and a half. The last was born a week before the news came from India that her father had died of sunstroke.

Opposite to us there was a house to be let. For a long time it was quite empty, bill in the window, dirt on the windows, dust on the steps, dreary and deserted. Suddenly one morning, though the bill was not taken down, the windows were cleaned, the steps swept, and a small cart-load of shabby furniture carried in. Evidently a care-taker had been put in charge, and I was glad of it, for it is never very safe to leave a house absolutely empty.

I used to sit by the window a good deal and knit. I had so much to think about that I could not settle to anything else. Books were never much in my way, and as for going out I never cared for it much even as a girl. So I used to sit and knit, seeing through the thick screen of plants on the window-sill all that went on in the street. Sometimes I saw the care-taker opposite going in and out, he and his wife and their two little children. He looked very respectable, but broken down and terribly thin; he was evidently far gone in consumption. The woman seemed worried and anxious, as well she might, poor soul; and in her arms there was always a skinny little baby, her third child. They were of the artisan class, and of course very poor, or they would not have been

taking care of an empty house. I used to wonder if they had enough to eat, for they all looked white and thin and half-starved.

The next time I went to the landlord's office I asked about them, and was told that they were respectable Cornish people, but Cornwall was starvation now, and there was nothing for any one to do. They had come to London a few years before, and the man, who was a mechanic, had kept his family well till he broke down in health. He could do nothing now, was an outdoor patient at Brompton Hospital, and had only the allowance from his club, and the few shillings his wife sometimes earned by going out to work.

There was a large leg of mutton for the children's dinner the next day. I cut off half-a-dozen good slices, put them between two hot dishes with some vegetable, and sent them to the Cornish folk. They were very grateful, the servant said, when she returned, and the dishes were brought back by the little boy, with "Father's much obliged, and it did him a world of good." One day a box of flowers came from the country, so I made up a nosegay and sent it across to the poor wasted-looking care-taker. This brought the woman, with tears in her eyes, to thank me.

"My husband he do like to smell a flower, ma'am," she said. "It's many a day now since he has seen them growing in the ground." Then I asked her if I might go and see him sometimes, or perhaps he

would like a paper and some books now and then? The woman's face brightened. "He would be pleased, ma'am, indeed," she said. "It's long since any one went to talk to him, and I often think it's dull for him. I doubt if I have him much longer," she added, simply; "and it's likely you can feel for me, ma'am."

So I went over to see Mr Lobb. He was sitting by the fire, warming his long thin hands.

"I am glad to see you, ma'am," he said, with the almost perfect manner one sometimes finds among working people who have not lived much in towns. "I would have come over to thank you for your kindness, but feared you might think it a liberty. I spend most of my time trying to keep warm by a bit of fire."

He was very simple and kindly. He knew that he was going to die, and faced it like a man. He spoke of it without fear or affectation. "It worries me to think of the wife and children," he said. "A man should not marry as I did, with nothing put by. I subscribed to a club, of course, and it's kept us from starving, and it'll bury me, but that's all. I ought to have saved before I married, and so ought every man. One is always so sure one is going to live when one feels strong. Well, God is good, and He'll take care of them," he added with a sigh, and a month later in that simple faith he died.

Then it became a question of what was to be done

with the widow and children. The woman was delicate; there was the skinny baby, a little girl of six called Gracie, and Thomas,—they always called him by his full old-fashioned name,—who was ten, or barely ten.

"I would like to stay in London; there's more going on, and I'd be more likely to get something," the poor woman said, when a proposal was made to send her back to her native place. "They be very poor in Cornwall where I come from; it would be no good going back; father and mother are dead, and there was only one other of us, my brother Joe, and he went off to Melbourne long ago."

"Couldn't you send to him?" I asked; "he might do something for you."

"I have sent, ma'am," she answered; "but I don't know if he's got the letter. We never kept much count of his address, for he never had the same one long together. I don't expect he'd be able to do anything; he was never much of a hand at helping himself, let alone others."

So we got together a little money and bought her a mangle. She went to live in two rooms close by, and just kept soul and body together for herself and children by mangling and occasionally going out to work.

Suddenly one day my housemaid went off without a moment's notice to her mother who was ill, and poor Mrs Lobb was unable to come and help us on account of her baby. "I can't bear to refuse," the

poor thing said, "but the little baby is that bad with bronchitus, I doubt if I keep it through the winter."

Then it was that Thomas first came into our lives. I had hardly noticed him before, except as a little dark-haired boy too small for his age. The morning after Jane went, I was told he wanted to see me. I remember the interview as well as if it were yesterday. I was in the dining-room when he knocked. "Come in," I said, and in came Thomas. He stepped just inside and pulled his front hair. Evidently he had been instructed that that was the correct way of making a bow.

"Please, mum," he said shyly, "mother says as how you have no housemaid, so I came to ask if you would like me to help a bit."

"You, Thomas!"

"Please, mum, I does for mother, sweeps and scrubs and dusts and washes up the things. Mother said I was to tell you I could clean knives and boots beautiful." He looked down as he said the last words, as though he felt ashamed at praising himself, and nothing but necessity would have driven him to do it.

"Why, you have quite a list of accomplishments, Thomas," I answered, and laughed, but he was evidently very anxious.

"Or I could take care of the children—the young ladies, I mean"—he said, correcting himself; "then perhaps nurse could help." He was quite a manager, and had evidently thought out how matters could be

arranged so as to make the best of things. "I am used to children. I have always taken care of ours," he added gravely, and the "ours" showed that he did not put himself on a level with his sister; "and I have pushed a perambulator often for Mrs Hicks, the grocer's wife, since her husband has been laid up, and her in the shop." I thought how funny he would look pushing my two babies along with one hand, and with the other holding little May, as she toddled beside him, and wondered what my most kind but proper mother-in-law would say if she met them. My mother-in-law always kept me well in hand, and does still, though I am getting to be an old woman. There is one thing I simply dread her finding out,—but that will appear by-and-by.

"Well, no, Thomas, I don't think we can make you head-nurse," I said. "But you can come in the morning and clean the knives and boots. You are quite sure 'you can do them beautiful'?"

"Yes, quite sure, mum," he answered, looking up with his great dark eyes.

So Thomas came every day, and was the comfort of my life. He was very quiet and attentive. When he carried in the coals he always looked round to see if there were letters to post or anything he could do; he always saw when my plants wanted watering or the leaves wanted washing. Even cook, who was difficult to please, said he "was a downright blessing." The only vexing thing was that whenever he had a

chance he would creep up to the nursery and play with the children. He adored May, and used to carry her up-stairs when she came in from her walk. She was delighted to let him do it, putting her arms round his neck, and looking up at him with her clear blue eyes. He was so careful with the children that in the afternoon nurse sometimes left him on guard while she was down-stairs.

"Thomas," I said one day, "what is that sticking out of your pocket?" He turned very red and pulled his hair.

"Please, mum, it's a pipe."

"A pipe! Where did you get it?"

"Bought it, mum."

"But you are not going to smoke, I hope?" He tried hard not to laugh, but the idea of smoking was too much for him.

"Please, mum, I bought it to teach Miss May how to blow bubbles," he said, with as grand an air as if he had bought it to teach her Arabic.

Another week, and Jane returned. Thomas got a place at a paper-shop, and carried out papers every morning; but on Saturday afternoons he generally paid cook a visit, and went up to see the children. One day I discovered that he had a voice. Going past the nursery door, I heard May say—

"Yes, do sing it again, please, Thomas," and then a weak little voice began—

"A little seed is in the ground,
A little tiny seed;
When it grows up what will it be,
A flower or a weed?"

I opened the door. "Why, Thomas," I said, "I didn't know you could sing."

"Please, mum, mother taught me," he said; "she sings beautiful, and so do little Gracie."

Then that time came in which May fell ill. There was hardly a hope of her recovery. And through all those sad days none grieved more than Thomas. Every morning, as soon as cook came down, she heard a tap at the kitchen window, and there stood Thomas at the bottom of the area steps, pale and anxious. She used to open the window, and before she could speak the eager voice would say—

"How is Miss May?—is she any worse?—has she slept?" And on that terrible night when we thought she was dying, Thomas sat at the end of the kitchen by the side-table white and silent, waiting with burning eyes and a breathless misery that almost seemed to suffocate him. Late that night Jane went down and reported, "The doctor says she is a little better." Thomas sprang to his feet for one moment, then sat down again, and resting his face on his arm on the table sobbed bitterly.

When May was better, Thomas was taken up to see her. He stopped for a moment outside her door as if to gather strength, and felt his side-pocket

anxiously: there was something there that bulged, but I pretended not to see it. He drew a long breath as he entered her room.

"Are you better, Miss May?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you, Thomas, dear," she said.

"You've been very bad," and he shook his head mournfully.

"Poor Thomas!" she sighed, just as if she knew all that he had suffered.

"I don't know what we should have done if you hadn't got better, Miss May."

"Do you know any more songs?" she asked. He shook his head: he had had no heart for songs.

"I kept your garden in order," he said; "the primroses are coming up, and there's three snowdrops out."

"I am so glad. What's that in your pocket, sticking out?"

"It's the mice," he answered, smiling for the first time. "I've had 'em this fortnight ready against you was better, Miss May," and then with a sigh of satisfaction he brought them out.

A little later in the spring brought us the last of Thomas. May was well. The gardener had just been to see about doing up the garden. I was sitting in the dining-room making up my books with the weekly expenses, wondering how it was that something extra always swelled them. There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," I said, and in came Thomas, of course.

"Please, mum, I'm come to say good-bye," he said, pulling his front hair as usual.

"Good-bye! why, where are you going?"

"Going to Australia, mum."

I was quite astonished.

"Has your uncle sent for you?"

"No, mum; but there's a gentleman who's been coming on and off to our shop a good deal, and he's captain of a ship. I always wanted to go about a bit, and he's offered to take me free for my work, and bring me back or drop me in Melbourne, which I like. I think it's a good thing, mum," he added, in his old-fashioned way. "I don't see that I can come to much good at a paper-shop."

"No, Thomas, perhaps not."

"And I wants to get on and help mother," he said, lifting his face and looking at me proudly. "Perhaps I might come across uncle out at Melbourne; and anyhow I'll know more, and have seen more, when I have been there and back, than I do now. The gentleman that's taking me, too, says the sea will make me strong and set me off growing. I shan't be any good if I'm not strong."

"Perhaps you are right.

"It's hard work leaving mother," he said with a little gasp. "But she's keen on my going, because she thinks I might meet uncle, but I don't like leaving of her, and I don't like leaving the two little

'uns." The tears came into his clear eyes, but he struggled manfully to keep them back; and then he added, "And I don't like leaving Miss May. I couldn't ha' gone if she hadn't been better."

"And when do you start?"

"To-morrow, mum; it's very sudden-like, but they say chances always is. I came to say good-bye. May I go up to the young ladies?" I took him up to the nursery myself. He looked at the children with the face of one who had suddenly grown older and knew much, and was going to know more. He explained all about his journey to them, and why he was going, just as if they had been old enough to understand, and then he gravely and sorrowfully shook hands with them all three and with nurse.

"I don't want you to go," May said. "I want you to stay here. When will you come back?"

"I don't know when, but I'll come, Miss May; never fear but I'll come back. Your garden is all in order," he added. "Maybe the gardener will look after it a bit now." They followed him, the three children and nurse, to the head of the stairs, and stood looking through and over the banisters.

"Good-bye, good-bye," called May and the others, watching him descend.

"Good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye," and suddenly May's little shoe, which was unbuttoned, fell through the railing on to the stairs beneath, touching him as it fell.

"It's good luck," nurse called out. "It's real good luck, Thomas; she's dropped her shoe after you." He picked it up and looked at it, a little old shoe, with a hole nearly through at the toe.

"Please, mum, may I keep it?" he asked, with a smile, and when I nodded, he looked up at her with a satisfied face. "I'll take it. Miss May, I'm going to keep it. It'll go all the way with me in the ship." He stopped in the hall, and turned round. "Please, mum," he said, and pulled his hair once more, "I want to say Thank you for all your kindness. You's allays been a good friend to us," he added approvingly.

"And you have been a good boy, Thomas," I answered gratefully, "and I know that you'll be one still."

"I'll try, for mother's sake, and yours, and Miss May's," he said, and strode sturdily towards the street door.

"You must shake hands with me too, Thomas," I said, and gave him a sovereign. He took the gold in silence, turning it over in surprise, as if to be sure that it was real. He looked such a baby while he did so that I wondered if the captain of the ship had taken a fancy to his pale face and sad eyes, or what hard work he thought those small hands could do. Poor little Thomas, going alone to the other side of the world, leaving all he cared for here, my heart went out to him. Did not his mother bear him

with the same pains that I had borne my children? Had she not once looked at him with the strange wonder that I had looked at my first little one? And now her heart would ache whenever a wind swept by, and she thought of the little lad at sea, trying to get strong in order to take care of her by-and-by. I thought of how he had sat and sobbed the night he heard that May was better, of how I had seen his father lying dead with the surprised smile on his face, as though he had seen the heavenly city — what would he say now, I wondered, if he could see his son starting alone out into the world?

"Good-bye, dear little lad," I said. "May you grow strong, and be a brave and good man," and I stooped and kissed him. Thomas said not a word; but I knew that he was crying, as he strode towards the door.

Mrs Lobb got on pretty well after her boy went. But sorrow overtook her again: the poor skinny little baby died. Life could never have been a joy to it. Surely it was a blessing in disguise when death took it.

II.

Eighteen years had gone by. The Lobbs had passed altogether out of my life. Thomas had never come back. I heard that he had found his uncle in

Melbourne, and had gone with him to Graham's Town, in South Africa. From there the uncle had sent for Mrs Lobb and Gracie, and that was the last I knew of them, or ever expected to know.

I had given up the house in which we had lived so long in England, and settled at Lutry, near Lausanne, where living and education were cheaper than in England. There the years slipped away peacefully enough till the three girls were grown up —till May was a woman of three-and-twenty. She was a pretty girl, just as she had been a pretty child, and at three-and-twenty looked eighteen,—a tall slim girl, with golden hair and blue eyes, and a merry happy laugh it did one good to hear. I used to wonder sometimes if she would ever marry. But we did not know a soul in Lutry, and indeed, from a marrying point of view, there was not a soul to know. We were going back to England, now that even Nina, the youngest girl, was grown up, to settle down in a pretty house at Hampstead. There I thought the girls would see a little more of the world, and their lives would shape themselves into the course they were meant to run.

Then my sister Elizabeth, who is unmarried, and alone and delicate, went to winter at Rome, and invited May to go with her. I could not refuse to let her go; but we felt parting, for we had never been separated. Still it could not be helped. So May went off with her aunt, who came all the way to

Lutry to fetch her, and I with the two other girls returned to England.

We had plenty to do at Hampstead, getting the house in order and settling down; and we spent a happy winter, even though May was not with us. We used to delight in her letters from Rome, and long for the spring that would see her with us.

My sister was an excellent correspondent, and she used to write to me every week, telling us of all their gaieties and of the admiration May won—even of all her little flirtations. I think Elizabeth was proud of her. Gradually into both their letters there crept frequent mention of a young English doctor, of whom they appeared to see a great deal. He was handsome, and very popular. He had been to tea, he had seen them home from a party, he had got up a picnic, and so on. At last I began, mother-like, to wonder if he was falling in love with May or she with him, to feel anxious as to what sort of a man he was, and whether he was capable of playing fast and loose with my child's innocent heart that had never known a lover.

As time went on, May's letters contained more and more about him. "Dr Millet asked so much about you, dear mother. I told him everything I could about you. He said he felt as if he loved you." "Dr Millet says he shall be in England soon; but we hope he won't go before we do,—we should miss

him so." And at last, in Elizabeth's letter, there was something definite. "I am certain Dr Millet is in love with May, and I am almost certain the dear child has lost her heart to him. It makes me very anxious, you not being here. At the same time, I don't know why things should not be allowed to take their natural course, for he is very charming, and is getting an excellent practice round him." So I waited anxiously, feeling that there was nothing to be done but to wait. The next letter worried me a little. "His manner is very distant," Elizabeth said. "In spite of his evident liking for her, he seems to be trying to hold off. Sometimes I can't make him out. Perhaps he does not want to marry, or thinks he has no chance." And after that came a climax,—I think it was in the very next letter. "Dr Millet has put some one in charge of his practice and has gone away. He did not come to see us before he went, and he made no mention of going last time he was here. I do not know where he has gone, nor how long he will be away. Our dear May tries to look as if she did not care; but I fear she is secretly grieving."

The letter fell from my hands. It worried me terribly. To think of May loving a man who had perhaps deserted her,—it was not to be borne. I knew what a sorrow of that sort does to a young life —the desolation, nay, perhaps the lifelong misery, it brings. And yet, if the man was a scoundrel, I

could not believe that so pure a thing as May's love could cling to him.

The next morning brought a letter from May herself that showed only too plainly how things were. "Aunt Elizabeth is very, very kind to me," she said. "I would not leave her for the world; but I am so tired of Rome and of all the people in it. I want to see you again, dear mother. I don't think I am very well, and I am not happy, darling. I long to go to you and to feel your dear arms round me again."

Alice and Nina had gone into town early. I was alone with that poor little letter, feeling all the pain, all the sorrow, that had suddenly come into my child's life,—it needed no words to tell me. I sat stupefied, trying to decide what would be best to do. Elizabeth was too delicate to come back to England before the March winds were over. Perhaps I could take one of the other girls to her and bring May back. I felt as if she wanted her mother's heart to comfort her and give her strength.

I got up and put a log on the fire, for we had not yet reconciled ourselves to the English fashion of burning coal, then walked about the room, looking vacantly at the polished floor and all the pretty new things about the room. It was a lovely morning: the sun was shining down on the trim lawn and neat garden, the snowdrops were coming up in the corner-bed. I thought of May, and of how pretty she would look in the summer-time pottering about among the

flowers, if she were only bright and well. She had so often longed for an English garden. Then looking down the road, I noticed a tall man a long way off. He was coming towards the house. As he came nearer I could see that he looked like a gentleman. He was tall and dark; he appeared to be about thirty years old, perhaps younger, and he was certainly handsome. He stopped before the gate and for a moment hesitated; then he opened it and entered. I watched him coming along the gravel walk by the lawn; I saw him disappear under the porch, and heard the bell ring. In some odd way he seemed to be familiar to me. The servant entered with a card. Before I took it, I knew perfectly that it was Dr Millet's, and that a crisis was at hand,—that in an hour's time May's future would be no mystery. The next moment he entered. I could not remember where I had seen him before, but he was not strange to me. He had a good face, clever and thoughtful; he looked like a simple-hearted honest gentleman. There was something sad about the face, too, as if he had suffered much, or understood suffering.

"Mrs Standing?" and he came forward with a curiously eager smile, as if in some way he knew me.

"Yes," I answered, looking at him again. Even his voice was half familiar, yet I could not remember where I had heard it before.

"You do not know me," he went on. "I have

just arrived from Rome. I know your daughter and sister there, and I thought you would forgive me for coming—I could not help it." The last words were said to himself, and seemed to have escaped him.

"I have heard of you," I said. "Won't you sit down? I am glad to see you." For he stood looking at me in an eager way, which I accounted for easily, but still it embarrassed me. "Did they ask you, or was it your own kindness that prompted you to come and tell me about them?" I asked, trying to put him at ease, for now that I had seen him I was satisfied. Something in the tone of his voice, in the expression of his face, told me that he was not the man to win a girl's heart and throw it away; and there was about him that which made me feel that the woman he loved would have little cause to fear anything that was in him. A great deal to find out perhaps all in a few moments, and from looking at a man's face; but there are some people whom just to see is enough, and about whom our instincts are unfailing.

"They did not ask me to come," he answered, in a low voice. "They did not even know that I was coming, though it was for this interview that I left Rome and hurried to England. I came trusting to your kindness to make my visit less difficult than it might be." He seemed overtaken by a great awkwardness, but I did not know what to say, and was silent. He went on suddenly, as if with a gasp, "I

wanted to see you very much, I have so much to say, though I am a stranger, or you think me one; and—and I am afraid to begin. Your answer means so much to me." Then he loved the child! But there was something behind his words—some obstacle, I was certain of that—some past to confess, something that made him doubtful of the future.

"Why are you afraid?" I asked; but for a moment or two he made no answer. I waited, looking at him, wondering again where before I had looked into those grave, almost sad eyes.

"Do you remember Thomas?" he asked abruptly —"Thomas Lobb?"

I nearly jumped off my chair. But no, it could not be!

"Yes—but——"

"I am Thomas," he said, simply. "I used to clean your knives and boots, and you bought my mother a mangle. I never forgot your kindness. I have often longed to see you and thank you."

"But where have you been all these years?" I asked, still gasping with astonishment.

"To many places. I was in England for a long time, at an hospital; but you were abroad, and though I tried I could not find out your address. Besides, I was afraid. I had better say it at once," he went on desperately; "but I did not want to see your daughter again. I have been in love with her all my life. She was a goddess to me,—a queen. I

never even dreamed of hoping. I met her again all in a moment one night at Rome. I was thinking of her and looked up, and she was there. She did not know me, she does not now; but I knew her—I did directly—though she was only five when I saw her last."

He hurried over the words quickly, as if he wished me to know the gist of what he had come to say as quickly as possible.

"Where is your mother?" I asked, thinking of the poor soul with the Cornish accent, carrying the skinny little baby in her arms, and of his father, as I saw him first, a dying man, warming his long thin hands by the fire in the empty house.

"My mother does not keep a mangle now," he said, with a short laugh. I think I should have known him before if he had laughed. "She is rich, and lives near my sister, who is married to a diamond-merchant in South Africa. It sounds terribly prosperous, does it not?"

"But tell me about yourself," I said. "How is it that you went away Thomas Lobb and come back Dr Millet of Rome? It is too puzzling altogether."

"I found my rich uncle," he answered. "I remember telling you that my mother thought I might, and I did. One always finds a rich uncle in a story; but I found mine at Melbourne. He had married and lost both wife and child, and was just going off to the diamond-fields in South Africa. He took me

in hand first, and was very good to me in his rough way. His ambition was to make me a gentleman; but that was Nature's business, perhaps. She has failed," he said, with a smile. "However, he put me to school while he went off to the diamond-fields, and in a few years came back with his fortune to fetch me. He was one of those men who are bound to make fortunes and to lose them from sheer carelessness, though he died too soon to lose his last one. He brought me to England and looked after me while I was at the hospital."

"But how did you get to Rome?" I asked, for he had stopped as if he could not go on without encouragement.

"He took me there, or perhaps I took him, for we went together, partly because he wanted to see Europe and partly because he said he wanted to see if I really could talk any language but my own, after all the schooling for which he had paid. At Rome there was a chance for another doctor, and there ultimately I settled down. Uncle Joe went back to Graham's Town and died." He stopped for a moment. "I wish I had been with him," he said in a low voice; "but I was not."

"Was he good to your mother?"

"He was good to every one, in a rough way sometimes that one reproached one's self later on for not better understanding. He was very good to my mother and to Gracie, whom he also had educated.

He became very great on education in his latter years, and used to say that money was thrown away on you unless you knew how to spend it."

"How did you come to be called Millet?" I asked, putting off as long as possible the great business of his coming. I was so staggered, so taken aback, at his proving to be Thomas. Moreover there was only one thing for me to do, and not for ever be ashamed of myself, and I knew it. Yet I could not bring myself to do it heartily.

"He left me some money, and wished me to take his name, which was very like the rich uncle in the story," he answered, with the fleeting smile that was part of the fascination of his face. "I have not spent any of it yet. My practice has been sufficient. I kept it in case——" He stopped, but still I went on looking at him, as though I had been fascinated, thinking of the days when he had carried up coals, and taught May to blow bubbles. I could not help it, it was snobby of me if you like, but in my heart there was some pride. I knew that he had come to ask me if he might try to win May for his wife. May, my pretty one, my queen, whom I should have thought too good for a king—he the boy who had blacked our shoes, whose mother had kept a mangle! He seemed to read my thoughts like a letter.

"Yes," he said; "I am the boy who used to clean the knives and boots, and afterwards carried out newspapers every morning."

"It doesn't matter in these days what any one has been," I said, hesitatingly, ashamed that he should have divined my thoughts so well.

"If she ever cares for me—it is too much to think of, too great a happiness—but if she does," he went on in a low voice, "perhaps she will be proud of it, as I am. It was honest work," he said, in a stubborn voice, "and pleasant too," he added gaily. "If I had made my own position, I should be a proud man, for being a doctor is of course a better thing than carrying out papers; but as it is, all the credit goes to the rich uncle, and is none of mine." I was silent, trying to remember who the well-known man was who had been a shoe-black, and who it was had sold oranges, and yet became a great man. But it is generally difficult to remember things at the right moment.

"You were always a good boy," I said, thinking of the thin little face of long ago, and forgetting the man before me.

"I am glad of that," he answered. "Do you remember my poor mother?" he went on, seeming as if he were determined I should realise all the past. "She kept a mangle and went out charing. She does not like me to remember it now, and Gracie quarrels with me if I mention it." And he laughed the short quick laugh of a man who has a sense of humour but does not always betray it. "Do you remember the day I wished you all good-bye? how,

when I was going off to sea, a poor little boy without a penny save the present you had given me, you kissed me, just as if I had been your own son? It has been my wild dream that some day I should be really your son,—won't you let it come true?" he asked eagerly, and leaning forward he tried to see my face better. But I could not wring an answer from myself.

"Does she know?" I asked.

"Does she know anything about this?—that I am Thomas? No, nothing. That I love her?—I think Yes. I would not speak to her until I had seen you, and told you, and perhaps——"

"That was like you, Thomas," I said. The old name came naturally to my lips. "You were always good."

"Was I?" he exclaimed. "I don't think so—but I will be, if she will only have me, if you and she will only put up with me. I love her with all my heart. See what I have in my pocket. I brought it to show you." He pulled out a little shoe with a hole in the toe. "Do you remember how she dropped it on my head?" he asked. I nodded, but could not speak, for I was killing the last little silly bit of pride left in my heart. The man before me was a gentleman, ten times more truly one than many born to be rich and idle. How could I be so foolish as to hesitate to give my child to a good and honourable man whom I knew she loved? I have always hated myself for

my conduct that day. I think perhaps if it had been any other person's shoes he had blacked, I should not have minded. If he had wanted to marry the daughter of my dearest friend, I should have assisted joyfully. It was only because it was May, whom I should have thought too good for the king of all the earth.

Then I looked at the shoe that was still in his hand, and thought of how she had clung to the banisters, calling out Good-bye; of his upturned face—the little anxious face—and the grave voice, saying "I'll come back, Miss May." Now he had come. He was sitting there opposite to me, asking me to give him leave to ask her to be his wife.

"Is it all right?" he asked, in a voice that showed he could not bear my silence any longer. "If you say No, I will go away, and never see her again. I could not bear to win her without your consent—only speak. You are not hesitating because we were so poor, because there was a time when we were starving, because——"

"No, no!" I interrupted, hating myself, and feeling my heart go out to him. I could not say more—there was something choking me. The tears were coming into my eyes.

"Then speak just one word. Is it all right?" I gave a little nod, for words had failed me. He got up and walked about, a great joy written on his face, and flashing from his eyes. "You trust me,

you will really trust me?" he said, stopping before me.

"Yes, dear," I answered, "I will trust you." It seemed as if he could not hear the words calmly. He strode across the room, then came back and stood before me again.

"I shall never be good enough for her—never," he said, with a joyous laugh,—"never at my best; and perhaps she won't look at me. I am terribly afraid of that. Do you think there is any chance for me?"

"I don't know," I answered, for I was not going to betray my child's secret.

"Something deep down in my heart tells me that there is," he said, simply. "Try to frighten myself as I will, I feel that she is the meaning of life to me. Let me go!" he exclaimed, suddenly—"I want to be alone, and walk the streets until the train starts. I cannot stay in a room any longer. I shall be in Rome the day after to-morrow, and will telegraph." He took my hands in both his, and looked at me tenderly. "I remember the day you came to see us first," he said; "my father was sitting over the fire: and how glad we used to be when the roast-mutton came. You always sent enough for us all," he laughed. "God bless you, dear mother!" he added; and lifting my hands, kissed them both. "Wish me good luck, when I ask my darling if she loves me."

"I do—I will, with all my heart!" I answered.

The telegram came two days later:—

"*From your son Thomas and your daughter May. —Our best love to you all. We are very happy.*"

And they are very happy still, and will be all their lives. He lives in England now, and his name is well known. May and I are very proud of him. The other girls are both married too. One married the son of a bishop; but I fear it is not a very happy marriage. Nina, the youngest, is a soldier's wife, as I was, and quakes whenever France is arrogant, or Germany buys a new big gun, and thinks there will be war to-morrow morning. He is a good fellow, but he is not like Thomas. My mother-in-law is still alive; and she is the one person in the family who does not know our romance. She is a stern old lady, proud of her descent from the Crauford-Greys; and she keeps me in order still, though I have married daughters of my own. The amusing part of it is that she is very proud of Thomas, and says it is odd that the colonies should have produced so perfect a gentleman. It was only the other day that she sent him most of her late husband's books; for she said he was the only man in the family who would really appreciate them.

THE BRIGAND'S BRIDE:

A TALE OF SOUTHERN ITALY.

BY LAURENCE OLIPHANT.

THE Italian peninsula during the years 1859-60-61 offered a particularly tempting field for adventure to ardent spirits in search of excitement; and, attracted partly by my sympathy with the popular movement, and partly by that simple desire, which gives so much zest to the life of youth, of risking it on all possible occasions, I had taken an active part, chiefly as an officious spectator, in all the principal events of those stirring years. It was in the spring of 1862 that I found matters beginning to settle down to a degree that threatened monotony; and with the termination of the winter gaieties at Naples and the close of the San Carlo, I seriously bethought me of accepting the offer of a naval friend who was about to engage in blockade-running, and offered to land me in the Confederate States, when a recrudes-

cence of activity on the part of the brigand bands in Calabria induced me to turn my attention in that direction. The first question I had to consider was, whether I should enjoy myself most by joining the brigands, or the troops which were engaged in suppressing them. As the former aspired to a political character, and called themselves patriotic bands fighting for their Church, their country, and their King—the refugee monarch of Naples—one could espouse their cause without exactly laying one's self open to the charge of being a bandit; but it was notorious in point of fact that the bands cared for neither the Pope nor the exiled King nor their annexed country, but committed the most abominable atrocities in the names of all the three, for the simple purpose of filling their pockets. I foresaw not only extreme difficulty in being accepted as a member of the fraternity, more especially as I had hitherto been identified with the Garibaldians; but also the probability of finding myself compromised by acts from which my conscience would revolt, and for which my life would in all likelihood pay the forfeit. On the other hand, I could think of no friend among the officers of the Bersaglieri and cavalry regiments, then engaged in brigand-hunting in the Capitanata and Basilicata, to whom I could apply for an invitation to join them.

Under these circumstances, I determined to trust to the chapter of accidents; and armed with a knapsack, a sketch-book, and an air-gun, took my seat one

morning in the Foggia diligence, with the vague idea of getting as near the scene of operations as possible, and seeing what would turn up. The air-gun was not so much a weapon of offence or defence as a means of introduction to the inhabitants. It had the innocent appearance of rather a thick walking-cane, with a little brass trigger projecting; and in the afternoon I would join the group sitting in front of the chemist's, which, for some reason or other, is generally a sort of open-air club in a small Neapolitan town, or stroll into the single modest *café* of which it might possibly boast, and toy abstractedly with the trigger. This, together with my personal appearance—for do what I would, I could never make myself look like a Neapolitan—would be certain to attract attention, and some one bolder than the rest would make himself the spokesman, and politely ask me whether the cane in my hand was an umbrella or a fishing-rod; on which I would amiably reply that it was a gun, and that I should have much pleasure in exhibiting my skill and the method of its operation to the assembled company. Then the whole party would follow me to an open space, and I would call for a pack of cards, and possibly—for I was a good shot in those days—pink the ace of hearts at fifteen paces. At any rate my performances usually called forth plaudits, and this involved a further interchange of compliments and explanations, and the production of my sketch-book, which soon procured me the acquaintance of some

ladies, and an invitation as an English artist to the house of some respectable citizen.

So it happened that, getting out of the diligence before it reached Foggia, I struck south, and wandered for some days from one little town to another, being always hospitably entertained, whether there happened to be an *albergo* or not, at private houses, seeing in this way more of the manners and customs of the inhabitants than would have been otherwise possible, gaining much information as to the haunts of the brigands, the whereabouts of the troops, and hearing much local gossip generally. The ignorance of the most respectable classes at this period was astounding; it has doubtless all changed since. I have been at a town of 2000 inhabitants, not one of whom took in a newspaper: the whole population, therefore, was in as profound ignorance of what was transpiring in the rest of the world as if they had been in Novaia Zemlia. I have stayed with a mayor who did not know that England was an island; I have been the guest of a citizen who had never heard of Scotland, and to whom, therefore, my nationality was an enigma: but I never met any one—I mean of this same class—who had not heard of Palmerston. He was a mysterious personage, execrated by the "blacks" and adored by the "reds." And I shone with a reflected lustre as the citizen of a country of which he was the Prime Minister. As a consequence, we had political discussions, which were pro-

tracted far into the night, for the principal meal of the twenty-four hours was a 10 o'clock P.M. supper, at which, after the inevitable macaroni, were many unwholesome dishes, such as salads made of thistles, cows' udders, and other delicacies, which deprived one of all desire for sleep. Notwithstanding which, we rose early, my hostess and the ladies of the establishment appearing in the early part of the day in the most extreme deshabille. Indeed, on one occasion when I was first introduced into the family of a respectable citizen, and shown into my bedroom, I mistook one of two females who were making the bed for the servant, and was surprised to see her hand a little douceur I gave her as an earnest of attention on her part, to the other with a smile. She soon afterwards went to bed: we all did, from 11 A.M. till about 3 P.M., at which hour I was horrified to meet her arrayed in silks and satins, and to find that she was the wife of my host. She kindly took me a drive with her in a carriage and pair, and with a coachman in livery.

It was by this simple means, and by thus imposing myself upon the hospitality of these unsophisticated people, that I worked my way by slow degrees, chiefly on foot, into the part of the country I desired to visit; and I trust that I in a measure repaid them for it by the stores of information which I imparted to them, and of which they stood much in need, and by little sketches of their homes and the surrounding

scenery, with which I presented them. I was, indeed, dependent in some measure for hospitality of this description, as I had taken no money with me, partly because, to tell the truth, I had scarcely got any, and partly because I was afraid of being robbed by brigands of the little I had. I therefore eschewed the character of a *milordo Inglese;* but I never succeeded in dispelling all suspicion that I might not be a nephew of the Queen, or at least a very near relative of "Palmerston" in disguise. It was so natural, seeing what a deep interest both her Majesty and the Prime Minister took in Italy, that they should send some one *incognito* whom they could trust to tell them all about it.

Meantime, I was not surprised, when I came to know the disposition of the inhabitants, at the success of brigandage. It has never been my fortune before or since to live among such a timid population. One day at a large town a leading landed proprietor received notice that if he did not pay a certain sum in black-mail,—I forget at this distance of time the exact amount,—his farm or *masseria* would be robbed. This farm, which was in fact a handsome country-house, was distant about ten miles from the town. He therefore made an appeal to the citizens that they should arm themselves, and help him to defend his property, as he had determined not to pay, and had taken steps to be informed as to the exact date when the attack was to be made in de-

fault of payment. More than 300 citizens enrolled themselves as willing to turn out in arms. On the day preceding the attack by the brigands, a rendezvous was given to these 300 on the great square for five in the morning, and thither I accordingly repaired, unable, however, to induce my host to accompany me, although he had signed as a volunteer. On reaching the rendezvous, I found the landed proprietor and a friend who was living with him, and about ten minutes afterwards two other volunteers strolled up. Five was all we could muster out of 300. It was manifestly useless to attempt anything with so small a force, and no arguments could induce any of the others to turn out; so the unhappy gentleman had the satisfaction of knowing that the brigands had punctually pillaged his place, carrying off all his live stock on the very day and at the very hour they said they would. As for the inhabitants venturing any distance from town, except under military escort, such a thing was unknown, and all communication with Naples was for some time virtually intercepted. I was regarded as a sort of monomaniac of recklessness, because I ventured on a solitary walk of a mile or two in search of a sketch,—an act of no great audacity on my part, for I had walked through various parts of the country without seeing a brigand, and found it difficult to realise that there was any actual danger in strolling a mile from a moderately large town.

Emboldened by impunity, I was tempted one day to follow up a most romantic glen in search of a sketch, when I came upon a remarkably handsome peasant girl, driving a donkey before her loaded with wood. My sudden appearance on the narrow path made the animal shy against a projecting piece of rock, off which he rebounded to the edge of the path, which giving way, precipitated him and his load down the ravine. He was brought up unhurt against a bush some twenty feet below, the fagots of wood being scattered in his descent in all directions. For a moment the girl's large fierce eyes flashed upon me with anger; but the impetuosity with which I went headlong after the donkey, with a view of repairing my error, and the absurd attempts I made to reverse the position of his feet, which were in the air, converted her indignation into a hearty fit of laughter, as, seeing that the animal was apparently uninjured, she scrambled down to my assistance. By our united efforts we at last succeeded in hoisting the donkey up to the path, and then I collected the wood and helped her to load it again—an operation which involved a frequent meeting of hands, and of the eyes, which had now lost the ferocity that had startled me at first, and seemed getting more soft and beaming every time I glanced at them, till at last, producing my sketch-book, I ventured to remark, "Ah, signorina, what a picture you would make! Now that the ass is loaded, let me draw you before we

part, that I may carry away the recollection of the loveliest woman I have seen."

"First draw the donkey," she replied, "that I may carry away a recollection of the *galantuomo* who first upset him over the bank, and then helped me to load him."

Smiling at this ambiguous compliment, I gave her the sketch she desired, and was about to claim my reward, when she abruptly remarked—

"There is not time now; it is getting late, and I must not linger, as I have still an hour to go before reaching home. How is it that you are not afraid to be wandering in this solitary glen by yourself? Do you not know the risks?"

"I have heard of them, but I do not believe in them," I said; "besides, I should be poor plunder for robbers."

"But you have friends, who would pay to ransom you, I suppose, if you were captured?"

"My life is not worth a hundred *scudi* to any of them," I replied, laughing; "but I am willing to forego the pleasure of drawing you now, *bellissima*, if you will tell me where you live, and let me come and paint you there at my leisure."

"You're a brave one," she said, with a little laugh; "there is not another man in all Ascoli who would dare to pay me a visit without an escort of twenty soldiers. But I am too grateful for your amiability to let you run such a risk. *Addio*, Signor Inglese.

There are many reasons why I can't let you draw my picture, but I am not ungrateful, see!"—and she offered me her cheek, on which I instantly imprinted a chaste and fraternal salute.

"Don't think that you've seen the last of me, *carissima*," I called out, as she turned away. "I shall live on the memory of that kiss till I have an opportunity of repeating it."

And as I watched her retreating figure with an artist's eye, I was struck with its grace and suppleness, combined, as I had observed while she was helping me to load the donkey, with an unusual degree of muscular strength for a woman.

The spot at which this episode had taken place was so romantic, that I determined to make a sketch of it, and the shades of evening were closing in so fast that they warned me to hurry if I would reach the town before dark. I had just finished it, and was stooping to pick up my air-gun, when I heard a sudden rush, and before I had time to look up, I was thrown violently forward on my face, and found myself struggling in the embrace of a powerful grasp, from which I had nearly succeeded in freeing myself, when the arms which were clasping me were reinforced by several more pairs, and I felt a rope being passed round my body.

"All right, signors!" I exclaimed. "I yield to superior numbers. You need not pull so hard; let me get up, and I promise to go with you quietly."

And by this time I had turned sufficiently on my back to see that four men were engaged in tying me up.

"Tie his elbows together, and let him get up," said one; "he is not armed. Here, Giuseppe, carry his stick and paint-box, while I feel his pockets. *Corpo di Baccho!* twelve *bajocchi*," he exclaimed, producing those copper coins with an air of profound disgust. "It is to be hoped he is worth more to his friends. Now, young man, trudge, and remember that the first sign you make of attempting to run away, means four bullets through you."

As I did not anticipate any real danger, and as a prolonged detention was a matter of no consequence to a man without an occupation, I stepped forward with a light heart, rather pleased than otherwise with anticipations of the brigand's cave, and turning over in my mind whether or not I should propose to join the band.

We had walked an hour, and it had become dark, when we turned off the road, up a narrow path that led between rocky sides to a glade, at the extremity of which, under an overhanging ledge, was a small cottage, with what seemed to be a patch of garden in front.

"Ho! Anita!" called out the man who appeared to be the leader of the band; "open! We have brought a friend to supper, who will require a night's lodgings."

An old woman with a light appeared, and over her shoulder, to my delight, I saw the face I had asked to be allowed to paint so shortly before. I was about to recognise her with an exclamation, when I saw a hurried motion of her finger to her lip, which looked a natural gesture to the casual observer, but which I construed into a sign of prudence.

"Where did you pick him up, Croppo?" she asked carelessly. "He ought to be worth something."

"Just twelve *bajocchi*," he answered with a sneering laugh. "Come, *amico mio*, you will have to give us the names of some of your friends."

"I am tolerably intimate with his Holiness the Pope, and I have a bowing acquaintance with the King of Naples, whom may God speedily restore to his own," I replied in a light and airy fashion, which seemed exceedingly to exasperate the man called Croppo.

"Oh yes, we know all about that; we never catch a man who does not profess to be a *Nero* of the deepest dye in order to conciliate our sympathies. It is just as well that you should understand, my friend, that all are fish who come into our net. The money of the Pope's friends is quite as good as the money of Garibaldi's. You need not hope to put us off with your Italian friends of any colour: what we want is English gold—good solid English gold, and plenty of it."

"Ah," said I, with a laugh, "if you did but know,

my friend, how long I have wanted it too. If you could only suggest an Englishman who would pay you for my life, I would write to him immediately, and we would go halves in the ransom. Hold!" I said, a bright idea suddenly striking me; "suppose I were to write to my Government—how would that do?"

Croppo was evidently puzzled: my cheerful and unembarrassed manner apparently perplexed him. He had a suspicion that I was even capable of the audacity of making a fool of him, and yet that proposition about the Government rather staggered him. There might be something in it.

"Don't you think," he remarked grimly, "it would add to the effect of your communication if you were to enclose your own ears in your letter? I can easily supply them; and if you are not a little more guarded in your speech, you may possibly have to add your tongue."

"It would not have the slightest effect," I replied, paying no heed to his threat; "you don't know Palmerston as I do. If you wish to get anything out of him you must be excessively civil. What does he care about my ears?" And I laughed with such scornful contempt that Croppo this time felt that he had made a fool of himself; and I observed the lovely girl behind, while the corners of her mouth twitched with suppressed laughter, make a sign of caution.

"*Per Dio!*" he exclaimed, jumping up with fury, "understand, Signor Inglese, that Croppo is not to be trifled with. I have a summary way of treating disrespect," and he drew a long and exceedingly sharp-looking two-edged knife.

"So you would kill the goose"—and I certainly am a goose, I reflected—"that may lay a golden egg." But my allusion was lost upon him, and I saw my charmer touch her forehead significantly, as though to imply to Croppo that I was weak in the upper storey.

"An imbecile without friends and twelve *bajocchi* in his pocket," he muttered savagely. "Perhaps the night without food will restore his senses. "Come, fool!" and he roughly pushed me into a dark little chamber adjoining. "Here, Valeria, hold the light."

So Valeria was the name of the heroine of the donkey episode. As she held a small oil-lamp aloft, I perceived that the room in which I was to spend the night had more the appearance of a cellar than a chamber; it had been excavated on two sides from the bank, on the third there was a small hole about six inches square, apparently communicating with another room, and on the fourth was the door by which I had entered, and which opened into the kitchen and general living-room of the inhabitants. There was a heap of onions running to seed, the fagots of firewood which Valeria had brought that afternoon, and an old cask or two.

"Won't you give him some kind of a bed?" she asked Croppo.

"Bah! he can sleep on the onions," responded that worthy. "If he had been more civil and intelligent he should have had something to eat. You three," he went on, turning to the other men, "sleep in the kitchen, and watch that the prisoner does not escape. The door has a strong bolt besides. Come, Valeria."

And the pair disappeared, leaving me in a dense gloom, strongly pervaded by an odour of fungus and decaying onions. Groping into one of the casks, I found some straw, and spreading it on a piece of plank, I prepared to pass the night sitting with my back to the driest piece of wall I could find, which happened to be immediately under the air-hole, a fortunate circumstance, as the closeness was often stifling. I had probably been dozing for some time in a sitting position, when I felt something tickle the top of my head. The idea that it might be a large spider caused me to start, when stretching up my hand, it came in contact with what seemed to be a rag, which I had not observed. Getting carefully up, I perceived a faint light gleaming through the aperture, and then saw that a hand was protruded through it, apparently waving the rag. As I felt instinctively that the hand was Valeria's, I seized the finger-tips, which was all I could get hold of, and pressed them to my lips. They were quickly

drawn away, and then the whisper reached my ears—

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes."

"Then eat this," and she passed me a tin pannikin full of cold macaroni, which would just go through the opening.

"Dear Valeria," I said, with my mouth full, "how good and thoughtful you are!"

"Hush! he'll hear."

"Who?"

"Croppo."

"Where is he?"

"Asleep in the bed just behind me."

"How do you come to be in his bedroom?"

"Because I'm his wife."

"Oh!" A long pause, during which I collapsed upon my straw seat, and swallowed macaroni thoughtfully. As the result of my meditations—"Valeria, *carissima.*"

"Hush! Yes."

"Can't you get me out of this infernal den?"

"Perhaps, if they all three sleep in the kitchen; at present one is awake. Watch for my signal, and if they all three sleep, I will manage to slip the bolt. Then you must give me time to get back into bed, and when you hear me snore you may make the attempt. They are all three sleeping on the floor, so be very careful where you tread; I will also leave the

front door a little open, so that you can slip through without noise."

"Dearest Valeria!"

"Hush! Yes."

"Hand me that cane—it is my fishing-rod, you know—through this hole; you can leave the sketch-book and paint-box under the tree that the donkey fell against,—I will call for them some day soon. And, Valeria, don't you think we could make our lips meet through this beastly hole?"

"Impossible. There's my hand; heavens! Croppo would murder me if he knew. Now keep quiet till I give the signal. Oh, do let go my hand!"

"Remember, Valeria, *bellissima*, *carissima*, whatever happens, that I love you."

But I don't think she heard this, and I went and sat on the onions because I could see the hole better, and the smell of them kept me awake.

It was at least two hours after this that the faint light appeared at the hole in the wall, and a hand was pushed through. I rushed at the finger-tips.

"Here's your fishing-rod," she said when I had released them, and she had passed me my air-gun. "Now be very careful how you tread. There is one asleep across the door, but you can open it about two feet. Then step over him; then make for a gleam of moonlight that comes through the crack of the front door, open it very gently and slip out.

Addio, caro Inglese; mind you wait till you hear me snoring."

Then she lingered, and I heard a sigh.

"What is it, sweet Valeria?" and I covered her hand with kisses.

"I wish Croppo had blue eyes like you."

This was murmured so softly that I may have been mistaken, but I'm nearly sure that was what she said; then she drew softly away, and two minutes afterwards I heard her snoring. As the first sound issued from her lovely nostrils, I stealthily approached the door, gently pushed it open; stealthily stepped over a space which I trusted cleared the recumbent figure that I could not see; cleared him; stole gently on for the streak of moonlight; trod squarely on something that seemed like an outstretched hand, for it gave under my pressure and produced a yell; felt that I must now rush for my life; dashed the door open, and down the path with four yelling ruffians at my heels. I was a pretty good runner, but the moon was behind a cloud, and the way was rocky,—moreover, there must have been a short cut I did not know, for one of my pursuers gained upon me with unaccountable rapidity—he appeared suddenly within ten yards of my heels. The others were at least a hundred yards behind. I had nothing for it but to turn round, let him almost run against the muzzle of my air-gun, pull the trigger, and see him fall in his tracks. It was the work of a second, but it checked my pur-

suers. They had heard no noise, but they found something that they did not bargain for, and lingered a moment, then they took up the chase with redoubled fury. But I had too good a start; and where the path joined the main road, instead of turning down towards the town, as they expected I would, I dodged round in the opposite direction, the uncertain light this time favouring me, and I heard their footsteps and their curses dying away on the wrong track. Nevertheless I ran on at full speed, and it was not till the day was dawning that I began to feel safe and relax my efforts. The sun had been up an hour when I reached a small town, and the little *locanda* was just opening for the day when I entered it, thankful for a hot cup of coffee, and a dirty little room, with a dirtier bed, where I could sleep off the fatigue and excitement of the night. I was strolling down almost the only street in the afternoon when I met a couple of carabineers riding into it, and shortly after encountered the whole troop, to my great delight, in command of an intimate friend whom I had left a month before in Naples.

"Ah, *caro mio!*" he exclaimed, when he saw me, "well met. What on earth are you doing here?—looking for those brigands you were so anxious to find when you left Naples? Considering that you are in the heart of their country, you should not have much difficulty in gratifying your curiosity."

"I have had an adventure or two," I replied care-

lessly. "Indeed that is partly the reason you find me here. I was just thinking how I could get safely back to Ascoli, when your welcome escort appeared; for I suppose you are going there, and will let me take advantage of it."

"Only too delighted; and you can tell me your adventures. Let us dine together to-night, and I will find you a horse to ride on with us in the morning."

I am afraid my account of the episode with which I have acquainted the reader was not strictly accurate in all its details, as I did not wish to bring down my military friends on poor Valeria, so I skipped all allusion to her and my detention in her home; merely saying that I had had a scuffle with brigands, and had been fortunate enough to escape under cover of the night. As we passed it next morning I recognised the path which led up to Valeria's cottage, and shortly after observed that young woman herself coming up the glen.

"Holloa!" I said, with great presence of mind as she drew near, "my lovely model, I declare! Just you ride on, old fellow, while I stop and ask her when she can come and sit to me again."

"You artists are sad rogues,—what chances your profession must give you!" remarked my companion, as he cast an admiring glance on Valeria, and rode discreetly on.

"There is nothing to be afraid of, lovely Valeria,"

I said in a low tone, as I lingered behind; "be sure I will never betray either you or your rascally—hem! I mean your excellent Croppo. By the way, was that man much hurt that I was obliged to trip up?"

"Hurt! Santa Maria, he is dead, with a bullet through his heart. Croppo says it must have been magic; for he had searched you, and he knew you were not armed, and he was within a hundred yards of you when poor Pippo fell, and he heard no sound."

"Croppo is not far wrong," I said, glad of the opportunity thus offered of imposing on the ignorance and credulity of the natives. "He seemed surprised that he could not frighten me the other night. Tell him he was much more in my power than I was in his, dear Valeria," I added, looking tenderly into her eyes. "I didn't want to alarm you, that was the reason I let him off so easily; but I may not be so merciful next time. Now, sweetest, that kiss you owe me, and which the wall prevented your giving me the other night." She held up her face with the innocence of a child, as I stooped from my saddle.

"I shall never see you again, Signor Inglese," she said, with a sigh; "for Croppo says it is not safe, after what happened the night before last, to stay another hour. Indeed he went off yesterday, leaving me orders to follow to-day; but I went first to put your sketch-book under the bush where the donkey fell, and where you will find it."

It took us another minute or two to part after this; and when I had ridden away I turned to look back, and there was Valeria gazing after me. "Positively," I reflected, "I am over head and ears in love with the girl, and I believe she is with me. I ought to have nipped my feelings in the bud when she told me she was his wife; but then he is a brigand, who threatened both my ears and my tongue, to say nothing of my life. To what extent is the domestic happiness of such a ruffian to be respected?" and I went on splitting the moral straws suggested by this train of thought, until I had recovered my sketch-book and overtaken my escort, with whom I rode triumphantly back into Ascoli, where my absence had been the cause of much anxiety, and my fate was even then being eagerly discussed. My friends with whom I usually sat round the chemist's door, were much exercised by the reserve which I manifested in reply to the fire of cross-examination to which I was subjected for the next few days; and English eccentricity, which was proverbial even in this secluded town, received a fresh illustration in the light and airy manner with which I treated a capture and escape from brigands, which I regarded with such indifference that I could not be induced even to condescend to details. "It was a mere scuffle; there were only four; and, being an Englishman, I polished them all off with the 'box,'"—and I closed my fist, and struck a scientific

attitude of self-defence, branching off into a learned disquisition on the pugilistic art, which filled my hearers with respect and amazement. From this time forward the sentiment with which I regarded my air-gun underwent a change. When a friend had made me a present of it a year before, I regarded it in the light of a toy, and rather resented the gift as too juvenile. I wonder he did not give me a kite or a hoop, I mentally reflected. Then I had found it useful among Italians, who are a trifling people, and like playthings; but now that it had saved my life, and sent a bullet through a man's heart, I no longer entertained the same feeling of contempt for it. Not again would I make light of it,—this potent engine of destruction which had procured me the character of being a magician. I would hide it from human gaze, and cherish it as a sort of fetish. So I bought a walking-stick and an umbrella, and strapped it up with them, wrapped in my plaid; and when, shortly after, an unexpected remittance from an aunt supplied me with money enough to buy a horse from one of the officers of my friend's regiment, which soon after arrived, I accepted their invitation to accompany them on their brigand-hunting expeditions, not one of them knew that I had such a weapon as an air-gun in my possession.

Our *modus operandi* on these occasions was as follows: On receiving information from some proprietor that the brigands were threatening his pro-

perty,—it was impossible to get intelligence from the peasantry, for they were all in league with the brigands; indeed they all took a holiday from regular work, and joined a band for a few weeks from time to time, — we proceeded, with a force sufficiently strong to cope with the supposed strength of the band, to the farm in question. The bands were all mounted, and averaged from 200 to 400 men each. It was calculated that upwards of 2000 men were thus engaged in harrying the country, and this enabled the *Neri* to talk of the king's forces engaged in legitimate warfare against those of Victor Emmanuel. Riding over the vast plains of the Capitanata, we would discern against the sky-outline the figure of a solitary horseman. This we knew to be a picket. Then there was no time to be lost, and away we would go for him helter-skelter across the plain; he would instantly gallop in on the main body, probably occupying a *masseria*. If they thought they were strong enough, they would show fight. If not, they would take to their heels in the direction of the mountains, with us in full cry after them. If they were hardly pressed they would scatter, and we were obliged to do the same, and the result would be that the swiftest horsemen might possibly effect a few captures. It was an exciting species of warfare, partaking a good deal more of the character of a hunting-field than of cavalry skirmishing. Sometimes, where the ground was hilly, we

had Bersaglieri with us; and as the brigands took to the mountains, the warfare assumed a different character. Sometimes, in default of these active little troops, we took local volunteers, whom we found a very poor substitute. On more than one occasion when we came upon the brigands in a farm, they thought themselves sufficiently strong to hold it against us, and once the cowardice of the volunteers was amusingly illustrated. The band was estimated at about 200, and we had 100 volunteers and a detachment of 50 cavalry. On coming under the fire of the brigands, the cavalry captain, who was in command, ordered the volunteers to charge, intending when they had dislodged the enemy to ride him down on the open; but the volunteer officer did not repeat the word, and stood stock-still, his men all imitating his example.

"Charge! I say," shouted the cavalry captain; "why don't you charge? I believe you're afraid!"

"*E vero*," said the captain of volunteers, shrugging his shoulders.

"Here, take my horse—you're only fit to be a groom; and you, men, dismount and let these cowards hold your horses, while you follow me,"—and jumping from his horse, the gallant fellow, followed by his men, charged the building, from which a hot fire was playing upon them, sword in hand. In less than a quarter of an hour the brigands were scampering, some on foot and some on horse-

back, out of the farm-buildings, followed by a few stray and harmless shots from such of the volunteers as had their hands free. We lost three men killed and five wounded in this little skirmish, and killed six of the brigands, besides making a dozen prisoners. When I say we, I mean my companions; for having no weapon, I had discreetly remained with the volunteers. The scene of this gallant exploit was on the classic battle-field of Cannæ. This captain, who was not the friend I had joined the day after my brigand adventure, was a most plucky and dashing cavalry officer, and was well seconded by his men, who were all Piedmontese, and of very different temperament from the Neapolitans. On one occasion a band of 250 brigands waited for us on the top of a small hill, never dreaming that we should charge up it with the odds five to one against us—but we did; and after firing a volley at us, which emptied a couple of saddles, they broke and fled when we were about twenty yards from them. Then began one of the most exciting scurries across country it was ever my fortune to be engaged in. The brigands scattered—so did we; and I found myself with two troopers in chase of a pair of bandits, one of whom seemed to be the chief of the band. A small stream wound through the plain, which we dashed across. Just beyond was a tributary ditch, which would have been considered a fair jump in the hunting-field: both brigands took it in splendid style. The hind-

most was not ten yards ahead of the leading trooper, who came a cropper, on which the brigand reined up, fired a pistol-shot into the prostrate horse and man, and was off: but the delay cost him dear. The other trooper, who was a little ahead of me, got safely over. I followed suit. In another moment he had fired his carbine into the brigand's horse, and down they both came by the run. We instantly reined up, for I saw there was no chance of overtaking the remaining brigand, and the trooper was in the act of cutting down the man as he struggled to his feet, when to my horror I recognised the lovely features of—Valeria.

"Stay, man!" I shouted, throwing myself from my horse; "it's a woman! touch her if you dare!" and then seeing the man's eye gleam with indignation, I added, "Brave soldiers, such as you have proved yourself to be, do not kill women; though your traducers say you do, do not give them cause to speak truth. I will be responsible for this woman's safety. Here, to make it sure, you had better strap us together." I piqued myself exceedingly on this happy inspiration, whereby I secured an arm-in-arm walk, of a peculiar kind it is true, with Valeria, and indeed my readiness to sacrifice myself seemed rather to astonish the soldier, who hesitated. However, his comrade, whose horse had been shot in the ditch, now came up, and seconded my proposal, as I offered him a mount on mine.

"How on earth am I to let you escape, dear Valeria?" I whispered, giving her a sort of affectionate nudge: the position of our arms prevented my squeezing hers, as I could have wished, and the two troopers kept behind us, watching us, I thought, suspiciously.

"It is quite impossible now — don't attempt it," she answered; "perhaps there may be an opportunity later."

"Was that Croppo who got away?" I asked.

"Yes. He could not get his cowardly men to stand on that hill."

"What a bother those men are behind, dearest! Let me pretend to scratch my nose with this hand that is tied to yours, which I can thus bring to my lips."

I accomplished this manœuvre rather neatly, but parties now came straggling in from other directions, and I was obliged to give up whispering and become circumspect. They all seemed rather astonished at our group, and the captain laughed heartily as he rode up and called out, "Who have you got tied to you there, *caro mio?*"

"Croppo's wife. I had her tied to me for fear she should escape; besides, she is not bad-looking."

"What a prize!" he exclaimed. "We have made a tolerable haul this time,—twenty prisoners in all—among them the priest of the band. Our colonel has just arrived, so I am in luck—he will be delighted. See, the prisoners are being brought up to him now:

but you had better remount and present yours in a less singular fashion."

When we reached the colonel we found him examining the priest. His breviary contained various interesting notes, written on some of the fly-leaves.

For instance :—

"Administered extreme unction to A——, shot by Croppo's orders : my share ten *scudi.*

"Ditto, ditto, to R——, hung by Croppo's order ; my share two *scudi.*

"Ditto, ditto, to S——, roasted by Croppo's order, to make him name an agent to bring his ransom : overdone by mistake, and died—so got nothing.

"Ditto, ditto, to P——, executed by the knife by Croppo's order, for disobedience.

"M—— and F——, and D——, three new members, joined to-day : confessed them, and received the usual fees."

He was a dark, beetle-browed-looking ruffian, this holy man ; and the colonel, when he had finished examining his book of prayer and crime, tossed it to me, saying,—"There ! that will show your friends in England the kind of politicians we make war against. Ha ! what have we here ? This is more serious." And he unfolded a piece of paper which had been concealed in the breast of the priest. "This contains a little valuable information," he added, with a grim smile. "Nobody like priests and women for carrying about political secrets, so you may have made a

valuable capture," and he turned to where I stood with Valeria; "let her be carefully searched."

Now the colonel was a very pompous man, and the document he had just discovered on the priest added to his sense of self-importance. When, therefore, a large, carefully folded paper was produced from the neighbourhood of Valeria's lovely bosom, his eyes sparkled with anticipation. "Ho, ho!" he exclaimed, as he clutched it eagerly, "the plot is thickening!" and he spread out triumphantly, before he had himself seen what it was, the exquisitely drawn portrait of a donkey. There was a suppressed titter, which exploded into a shout when the bystanders looked into the colonel's indignant face. I only was affected differently, as my gaze fell upon this touching evidence of dear Valeria's love for me, and I glanced at her tenderly. "This has a deeper significance than you think for," said the colonel, looking round angrily. "Croppo's wife does not carefully secrete a drawing like that on her person for nothing. See, it is done by no common artist. It means something, and must be preserved."

"It may have a Biblical reference to the state of Italy. You remember Issachar was likened to an ass between two burdens. In that case it probably emanated from Rome," I remarked; but nobody seemed to see the point of the allusion, and the observation fell flat.

That night I dined with the colonel, and after

dinner I persuaded him to let me visit Valeria in prison, as I wished to take the portrait of the wife of the celebrated brigand chief. I thanked my stars that my friend who had seen her when we met in the glen was away on duty with his detachment, and could not testify to our former acquaintance.

My meeting with Valeria on this occasion was too touching and full of tender passages to be of any general interest. Valeria told me that she was still a bride; that she had only been married a few months, and that she had been compelled to become Croppo's wife against her choice, as the brigand's will was too powerful to be resisted; but that, though he was jealous and attached to her, he was stern and cruel, and so far from winning her love since her marriage, he had rather estranged it by his fits of passion and ferocity. As may be imagined, the portrait, which was really very successful, took some time in execution, the more especially as we had to discuss the possibilities of Valeria's escape.

"We are going to be transferred to-morrow to the prison at Foggia," she said. "If, while we were passing through the market-place, a disturbance of some sort could be created, as it is market-day, and all the country people know me, and are my friends, a rescue might be attempted. I know how to arrange for that, only they must see some chance of success."

A bright thought suddenly struck me; it was

suggested by a trick I had played shortly after my arrival in Italy.

"You know I am something of a magician, Valeria; you have had proof of that. If I create a disturbance by magic to-morrow, when you are passing through the market-place, you won't stay to wonder what is the cause of the confusion, but instantly take advantage of it to escape."

"Trust me for that, *caro mio*."

"And if you escape, when shall we meet again?"

"I am known too well now to risk another meeting. I shall be in hiding with Croppo, where it will be impossible for you to find me, nor while he lives could I ever dare to think of leaving him; but I shall never forget you"—and she pressed my hands to her lips—"though I shall no longer have the picture of the donkey to remember you by."

"See, here's my photograph; that will be better," said I, feeling a little annoyed—foolishly, I admit. Then we strained each other to our respective hearts, and parted. Now it so happened that my room in the *locanda* in which I was lodging overlooked the market-place. Here at ten o'clock in the morning I posted myself—for that was the hour, as I had been careful to ascertain, when the prisoners were to start for Foggia. I opened the window about three inches, and fixed it there: I took out my gun, put eight balls in it, and looked down upon the square. It was crowded with the country people in their bright-

coloured costumes, chaffering over their produce. I looked above them to the tall campanile of the church which filled one side of the square. I receded a step and adjusted my gun on the ledge of the window to my entire satisfaction. I then looked down the street in which the prison was situated, and which debouched on the square, and awaited events. At ten minutes past ten I saw the soldiers at the door of the prison form up, and then I knew that the twenty prisoners of whom they formed the escort were starting; but the moment they began to move, I fired at the big bell in the campanile, which responded with a loud clang. All the people in the square looked up. As the prisoners entered the square, which they had to cross in its whole breadth, I fired again and again. The bell banged twice, and the people began to buzz about. Now, I thought, I must let the old bell have it. By the time five more balls had struck the bell with a resounding din, the whole square was in commotion. A miracle was evidently in progress, or the campanile was bewitched. People began to run hither and thither; all the soldiers forming the escort gaped open-mouthed at the steeple as the clangour continued. As soon as the last shot had been fired, I looked down into the square and saw all this, and I saw that the prisoners were attempting to escape, and in more than one instance had succeeded, for the soldiers began to scatter in pursuit, and the country people to form

themselves into impeding crowds, as though by accident, but nowhere could I see Valeria. When I was quite sure she had escaped, I went down and joined the crowd. I saw three prisoners captured and brought back; and when I asked the officer in command how many had escaped, he said three—Croppo's wife, the priest, and another.

When I met my cavalry friends at dinner that evening, it was amusing to hear them speculate upon the remarkable occurrence which had, in fact, upset the wits of the whole town. Priests and vergers and sacristans had visited the campanile, and one of them had brought away a flattened piece of lead, which looked as if it might have been a bullet; but the suggestion that eight bullets could have hit the bell in succession without anybody hearing a sound, was treated with ridicule. I believe the bell was subsequently exorcised with holy water. I was afraid to remain with the regiment with my air-gun after this, lest some one should discover it, and unravel the mystery; besides, I felt a sort of traitor to the brave friends who had so generously offered me their hospitality, so I invented urgent private affairs, which demanded my immediate return to Naples, and on the morning of my departure found myself embraced by all the officers of the regiment, from the colonel downwards, who, in the fervour of their kisses, thrust sixteen waxed moustache-points against my cheeks.

About eighteen months after this, I heard of the capture and execution of Croppo, and I knew that Valeria was free; but I had unexpectedly inherited a property, and was engaged to be married. I am now a country gentleman with a large family. My sanctum is stocked with various mementoes of my youthful adventures, but none awakens in me such thrilling memories as are excited by the breviary of the brigand priest, and the portrait of the brigand's bride.

THE MISOGYNIST.

BY HENRY PROTHERO.

LAST year I was taking a solitary walking tour in out-of-the-way parts of Normandy, and towards the end of the summer I found myself at a little unfrequented village-town, composed of one dull "Place" surrounded by white-shuttered houses, a few little smelly streets, a fine Flamboyant church, a "mairie," and a convent or two. It was an old-world place, but not specially picturesque; and as the guide-book contemptuously dismissed it in a couple of lines, I expected to be alone, so far as the society of my countrymen went.

A morning walk with my knapsack from another little town (also composed of a dull "Place," a Flamboyant church, &c., &c.), had brought me to this place a little before noon on a blazing September day. "And now," thought I, "for *déjeuner;* then a quiet afternoon's sketching at the church or by the

stream, and some letter-writing at night,"—that was my programme.

There was an unpretentious hotel — the "Singe d'Or"—on one side of the square, with an awning and little tables, and a landlady with a surpassing white cap. "Could madame give me a room?" But certainly she could. "And *déjeuner?*" Immediately — would monsieur enter? So monsieur entered, and after due ablutions descended to the *salle-à-manger*.

In a moment my expectations and hopes of isolation from my countrymen vanished; for there, waiting for his breakfast, sat a large, heavy-looking, respectable, middle-aged English gentleman, on whose countenance solemnity, pomposity, dulness, and self-satisfaction sat enthroned. There was no escape. He recognised a compatriot, and for the rest of the day I was a prey to him.

First he regaled me during our meal with slow and measured complaints about his food, and he would fain have made me the medium through whom our good-humoured hostess was to have her soul vexed and harassed; but as I contrived to frustrate him in this matter, he essayed to explain himself, happily without one word being intelligible to madame.

After breakfast he lay in wait for me, and caught me going out; and throughout that unhappy afternoon his dissertations on the Church of Rome, while

I was looking at the church (*I*, not *we*; for he looked at nothing), and on the position of women when we passed a convent, together with his glorification of his own domestic arrangements, and of the high moral and mental state to which he had brought his wife and daughters (whom he was to rejoin next day, poor things!)—all this, combined with the thought that I should have more of it at dinner, drove me nearly frantic.

So great was my dread of further infliction, that the thin *potage*, with paving-stones of bread, was already on the table, and madame had been up to say that "*Monsieur est servi*," before I ventured to face my dinner and my enemy. But hunger drove me down at last, and in deep dejection I opened the door of the *salle-à-manger*.

Pomposity was there; but, oh joy! he was not alone. The slow pounding tones of his voice were being addressed to other ears than mine. He had a new victim!

Sitting opposite to him was a little, plump, rosy-faced, elderly man in an auburn wig. He had no whiskers, moustache, beard, eyelashes, or eyebrows, but above his little twinkling eyes were two reddish marks where eyebrows ought to have been; and never did I see so much expression and humour in any human countenance as I now saw flitting about in those little twinkling eyes and red marks, and the odd little wrinkles and dimples on the plump red cheeks.

The old story was being dinned into his ears: all through dinner, from the soup to the *Gruyère*, we heard about the low state of morals in France, the high position of the English matron,—especially, we were to infer, of Mrs Pomposity, and her family, the Miss Pomposities,—the horrors of conventual life, and so on, until our *convive*, hitherto silent, but making wonderful little faces, now lit his first cigarette.

Then he said quite suddenly, "There is one thing to be said for convents—they keep a lot of women out of the way."

At this sally, uttered in a cool crisp voice, I was fairly electrified; but joy was the prevailing feeling. There could be no remark so shocking, so contrary to all received morality, but I should have welcomed it at that moment with ecstasy.

As for Solemnity, he sat aghast. The Wig had hitherto been a good listener: he had apparently drunk in words of wisdom; he had accepted interminable platitudes on the true position of women, as lying between political forwardness on the one side, and conventual seclusion on the other. But now, what was this ribaldry? Pomposity determined to put his foot on it.

"No Englishman," said he, "or at least no Protestant, can approve of the immuring of females."

"Cranmer did," retorted the Wig, with an impassive countenance. "He shut up his wife in a box."

In a voice of indignant but ponderous contempt, Pomposity demanded, "A member of the Church of Rome, I presume, sir?"

"Not at all," said the Wig, with a chuckle of suppressed merriment; "I am no more a Papist than Cranmer was." Then, after a moment's pause, he added, "I don't believe the story about Mrs Cranmer." At this statement Solemnity was slightly relieved, and was beginning, "I should presume not indeed," when the other cut in—

"For this reason,—that if the Archbishop had once got her safe in the box, it is incredible that he should ever have let her out again."

By this time I was enjoying myself; the discomfiture of my tyrant was delightful to me, and my only fear was that he would not provoke further argument. As for him, he dimly saw that he was being jested with, and his slow soul was roused; he must bear testimony against this levity. So, after a truly awful allusion to the Wig's "facetiousness," he gave us several minutes on the blessings of a married clergy. My spirit sank again, but an unwary pause gave the foe a chance of interposing.

"Some great authorities, speaking from actual experience, have thought otherwise," said he. "Look at Archbishop Usher, whose wife burnt all his pet MSS. against Bellarmine. Bishop Hooper's wife, I have heard, was a sad scourge; and you will doubtless remember, sir" (this with an air of assumed

deference to Pomposity, who did not remember, for he had never heard these items of ecclesiastical history), "how a bishop of Down in the seventeenth century said of his wife that he was *pertœsus*, utterly weary of her? So also the Reverend Laurence Sterne declared that he was *œgrotus ac fatigatus*, sick and tired—*uxoris meæ*—of Mrs Sterne. Then again——"

But Pomposity would hear no more. He took up a French paper (which he could not read, and would certainly not have studied so intently, respectable man, if he had had any notion of the contents), and retreated from the distasteful conversation.

The misogynist blinked peacefully over his cigarette at the now averted figure of his antagonist; then turning to me, he remarked that some of the leading Reformers had a very just estimate of women; and he proceeded to quote some very rude remarks made by John Knox in his "First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstriferouse Regiment of Women." This led him to a few anecdotes reflecting on queens generally, and his face was a study when he alluded to the Empress Bianca's unfortunate decease from a surfeit of snails.

This discourse on queens once more brought Pomposity into the field, who, being unable to read his paper, had reluctantly listened. "You speak, sir," said he, "thus disrespectfully of crowned ladies, as though they were all Jezebels——"

("Jezebel was a woman of some spirit," put in the misogynist meditatively.)

"Or Messalinas." And now we had to endure a solemn eulogy of good queens as a set-off against what we had heard about bad ones. Fortunately, a rash challenge as to what he thought of Queen Elizabeth brought the Wig to the front again.

"Aylmer, in his 'Harborough,' does certainly make an exception of Queen Bess," said he, "but I don't know why. He contrasts her with all other women, whom he calls 'triflers,' 'folyshnes,' 'flibbergibbes,' and so forth."

This, it will be observed, was a new move in the campaign. We had passed from clerical wives to queens, and now we were passing from queens to an attack on the sex generally. There is no need to give Pomposity's homily which followed. The British matron had a stout but wearisome defender. Her deportment, we were told, unlike that of the French matron, gave respectability to our very streets.

"Ah, that's just it!" cried the Wig. "How true is Washington Irving's description of such matrons! 'Thus have I seen,' he says, 'some pestilent shrew of a housewife, after filling her home with uproar and ill-humour, come dimpling out of doors, swimming and curtseying, and smiling upon all the world.'" After this, with his queer little face puckered up in enjoyment of his theme, he launched out into a dia-

tribe on the disadvantages of matrimony. First he quoted a rude comparison—I think by Seneca—between telling one's wife a secret and unnecessarily taking a sea voyage. Then he bethought him of Montaigne's saying, "Cato, like ourselves, was disgusted with his wife." From that he proceeded to another saying of Montaigne's, that marriage was like a cage; those who were out of it were always wanting to get in, and those who were within were all for coming out—a saying which, he said, was no doubt borrowed from Chaucer's lines:—

> "Marriage is such a rabble rout,
> That those who were out would fain get in,
> And those who are in would fain get out."

The last line, he thought, was certainly true, the second one less universally so. Then he had a fling at people who married twice, and wondered if any one had ever been so fortunate as Mabœuf in 'Les Misérables,' who, being asked whether he had ever been married, replied, "*J'ai oublié!*"

Thus he chatted on, encouraged by my attention and Pomposity's dismay, till it was time for me to retire and write my letters.

"You deserve," said I, as I rose, "as a punishment for your misogynism, to spend a long purgatory with a mother-in-law!"

"A mother-in-law!" cried he. "Ah! see there again!—the monster of modern comedy, the byword

of all ages! Yet she, like the *Injusta Noverca* of ancient times, is only the matron moved one step on! Did you ever,"—this to Pomposity, who only answered by a solemn stare,—"did you ever read 'Holy Living'? You will find there what a saintly man thought of mothers-in-law. He tells how a man threw a stone at a dog; the stone missed the dog, but hit his mother-in-law. 'Thus,' says the pious author, 'the stone was not wholly in vain.'"

The party was now breaking up. Pomposity was for bed, after spending, I fear, a most disagreeable evening. The auburn Wig was lighting a fresh cigarette. "Good night, sir," said I. "I wish I could keep you company a little longer, but I shall have to spend half the night over my letters, and must keep myself awake with endless cigars."

Pomposity thought that I was speaking to him, and answered with friendly gravity, "It is a pity to do that, young man. One of the advantages of that holy state which we have heard so strangely aspersed, is the influence of the matron in discouraging irregular hours. I wish you a good night, sir."

"Good night, sir—good night," chirped the voice of the misogynist after us. "You know what Jeremy Taylor says? 'Better sit up all night than go to bed with a dragon!'"

The next morning, waking rather late, I looked out upon the "Place." Pomposity was just depart-

ing in a *voiture*, with an air of perplexity and displeasure on his countenance, caused by madame's *bon voyages* and *à plaisirs*, which he did not comprehend, and dimly conceived to be connected with the bill which he still held in his hand; and so, without a smile or a wave of the hand, he departed.

Then I turned my eyes to a little marble-topped table below my window, over which the awning was stretched later in the day. There I beheld our friend the misogynist taking his *café au lait*. His wig was surmounted by a grey wideawake, so that I could not see his face, but his voice mounted up from under it in cheery strains; and what was he doing? He was actually engaged in presenting chocolates to two little girls in very tight white caps—one our hostess's Cecile, the other from the *boulangerie* opposite—who were capering and dancing round him, like the "daughters of the Horseleech, crying, Give, give;" and at the same time justifying his conduct with sundry bows and compliments, and wavings of the wideawake, to the two *mamans*, who were laughingly scolding him for spoiling *les petites*.

As I surveyed this prodigy, there arose in my mind some very profound, original, and philosophic considerations, which I here set down in order:—

First, That things are not always what they seem.

Secondly, That when any person endowed with dulness and authoritativeness says one thing,

then it is pleasing to unregenerate human nature to say the opposite.

Thirdly, That this faculty for opposition is a very useful one; for see what a miserable afternoon I had spent for want of it.

Hear, then, in one word, the moral of my tale:—
When any one bores you, start a paradox.

A FETISH CITY.

BY FREDERICK BOYLE.

SOME of the irreverent have long felt a suspicion that the ancients knew more about this world of ours than is accredited to them in the 'Classical Atlas.' Greeks and Romans did not publish the log of every ship entering their ports, nor examine the crew of each *oneraria* returned from parts unknown. The silence of pedantic geographers, who evidently took small pains to verify the accounts handed to them, is not to be relied on. Gentlemen of that sort feel more interest in refuting a predecessor, in triumphing over his misstated facts and mangling his theories, than in widening the general knowledge. Nevertheless a man is startled at first when local antiquaries invite him to credit Greek ruins in the Transvaal. They do wisely to put forward unquestionable evidence in support of such a statement. That has been done. Friezes, capitals, and miscellaneous objects, Greek in character beyond any doubt, have been forwarded to Cape Town from the neighbour-

hood of Bloemhof. They are important enough to show—if one may trust the judgment of those who have examined them—that a large city once stood there, and that high civilisation reigned therein. As is usual when the spell of oblivion breaks, it is suddenly discovered that the fact was known long ago. The œkist of Cape Colony, Van Riebeck, mentioned incidentally (edition of 1657, London) that far to the north lay a great city, Momotopata, adorned with temples, porticos, and columns. No one appears to have heard of the place from that time till now. Upon this evidence the ruins below Bloemhof have been called by the name Van Riebeck gives;—by the by, he adds that diamonds abound there. Without committing myself to any opinion, I wish to put forward a very curious report I received on the Diamond Fields from a digger, very poor and very eccentric. At that time the idea of a Greek city in South Africa would have been ridiculed without mercy. I myself paid no attention to the tale, but since a Greek city is now admitted, I cannot but remember this man's declaration.

Very poor and very eccentric he was indeed. At that time rags commanded no pity on the Fields, for they often contained, in their dirtiest recesses, some little store of gems which duchesses might envy. Nor were we prone to accept a miserable way of life as evidence of poverty, since examples familiar to every one inculcated caution. But seeing this man every day—for I lived just above his claim at

Bultfontein — seeing him always at work, with an animated jack-jumper of a bush-boy for sole companion, I fell into the habit of wishing him good-day and luck. He seldom answered, which fact gave, perhaps, a zest to my unwearied courtesy. But when he did throw back the dirty hair from his eyes, swollen and bloodshot — the digger's eye, inflamed with dazzle of the grit, and sunshine blazing in the snowy walls of "stuff," and poisonous dust of lime that fills the air—his reply was always "Nix, mate!" Early in our acquaintance I told him to bring me his first "find," promising a fabulous price for luck. He never brought it. His bush-boy grew more bird-like and less human daily. It was not difficult to see that these poor wretches were starving, presently. The conviction struck me one day, and I invited the man to my tent, whilst intrusting his boy to my head Kaffir, Chawles.

The urchin had a due share of those extraordinary gifts with which Providence has supplied his race for our bewilderment. He mimicked successively a lion, an elephant, a baboon, an ostrich, and other animals within his experience; fought a battle, and died; imitated me; and then, whilst my Kaffirs rolled with laughter, suddenly changed to a likeness of Chawles, —all in that nervous, restless, uncomprehending manner which makes the bush-boy resemble a bird the more, the more he shows a simian intelligence. He neither laughed nor seemed to know what he was doing. His eyes never ceased to glint and turn.

His small muscles quivered restlessly even when he imitated, with marvellous truth, the stately pawing of a lion. Before his performance, and immediately after, he devoured "mealies" and offal, nearly raw, in quantities to astonish even a Kaffir. And then he laid him supine, and slept, with features twitching, stomach swollen like a drum, and little thin legs extended, but unrelaxed, ready to bound upon his feet at the slightest noise. An extraordinary creature is the Bushman,—one to drive conscientious anthropologists to despair.

Meanwhile I entertained my guest. He told me that he was an Africander of Huguenot blood. He had traded on a large scale up country; but one misfortune after another had broken up his connection with the Kaffir chiefs, and reduced him to digging on Bultfontein. Compassion would be quite thrown away upon many of his fellows in that state of life, but Vasson was not lucky. In four months of hard work he had found nothing. I was able to put the poor fellow into a small claim I had just purchased, where the usual percentage of half the finds for his labour should make him comfortable, and might give him a fortune. So, the next day, he set to work rejoicing.

I did not see much of Vasson after that, except on a Saturday, when he brought my diamonds, if any, and balanced accounts. The venture was fairly successful. After a time I moved to New Rush, with a round sum which my particular claim had brought

me; and then, though not unlucky upon the whole, I met with an accident which laid me up for several months. It was in that time that I really made acquaintance with Vasson, who was very shy and retiring. Many stories he told to relieve the horrible tedium of my illness. My friends more prosperous were not unkind; but the business of diamond-digging in that halcyon day was too full of excitement, too cruelly checkered by ups and downs, to leave remembrance for those "shut up and left" in the struggle. A joyous word at the door, a hasty tale of somebody's luck, or of somebody's folly, exhausted the charitable impulse of my comrades. Vasson was a man of another stamp—lower, I think, but more grateful to me then. Somewhat dull, very self-conscious, silent, as are all who have passed their life among savages, and unable by constitution and habit to see the best point of his own stories, he was still my pleasantest companion—in fact, my only one. Many curious hints and details I picked up from him of life "up country," which I now regret to have let pass without a note. But one tale of his—that which I am about to transcribe—was impressed by three repetitions. I am sure I have it correct. After hearing, the reader may decide for himself whether Cape Town antiquaries are right in identifying the ruins below Bloemhof with the ancient Momotopata.

In 1861 Vasson went up towards "the Lakes" with a train of five waggons, carrying about £5000 worth of goods, cotton, gunpowder, cutlery, and the

like. Even at that time the trade was not what it had been. Competition had set in, and, as a necessary consequence, a reckless system of credit. Though the great chiefs still held themselves bound to one or other trader, they began to cease coercing their inferiors. These, unrestrained by pride, and incapable of balancing the advantages of honesty, did not regard their bargains as sacred. They took what they could get, promised everything, and performed as little as possible. Under sufficient pressing, the kings would still perpetrate horrible tortures upon a swindler; but the ferocity of their justice deterred humane traders from appealing to it, the more especially since one serious word from his black suzerain would have stopped any chief—which word was not pronounced. In fact, the monopoly was breaking up. But without monopoly, in these days of enterprise and universal speculation, savage trade cannot be carried on. I must ask the reader to think out for himself the necessity of this case, since I have no room to demonstrate it. His reflections will be greatly aided by a short conversation with any merchant who has commercial relations with Africa, with the far East, and such latitudes.

Vasson understood his business, and he foresaw the dead-lock which has since come about. He resolved to leave the track, already too much beaten by Jews and carpet-baggers, who, getting their own goods on credit, could afford, in a dishonest sense, to sell them on the same terms. After eighteen months'

wandering amongst old customers, he reached the northern limit of the Matabele country. That warlike people claim authority over all bordering tribes; and if the king had known that one of "his traders" had ventured across the frontier, it might have cost that daring man his life. But Vasson was well acquainted with the risk. The Matabele keep a line of desert round them, like the ancient Suevi. Their ferocious bands constantly traverse it, but Vasson trusted to his own vigilance, and the superhuman cunning of his bush-boys. These people to the trader are more than dogs to the sportsman. My friend's oxen and horses were all "salted"—that is, had suffered and survived the attacks of the tzetze-fly; with them he confidently ventured into parts unknown; and upon leaving the trade-route, he followed a course due westward, in about the latitude, as he thinks, of Sofala.

The desert barrier of the Matabele is about thirty miles wide, beyond which, as they tell you, extends a country to which "no man comes nor hath come since the making of the world." That was the question which Vasson proposed to test. A week's journey through lands where his oxen found abundance of forage, showed him that the Matabele, in this respect as in others, are indifferent to the truth. He came upon a district well wooded, full of game, and not uncultivated, though the people remained invisible. They had cause to hide, with such savage neighbours. Vasson scouted assiduously, but failed

to discover so much as a farm-hut. He had not yet quite passed the area of *veldt* lands, and with some judgment and risk could take his waggons in a line tolerably straight. Twenty Hottentots and Bastards well armed made his company, besides half-a-dozen teamsters, and as many bush-boys. They had stood by him in worse fights than he was likely to encounter.

Where there is cultivation there must be people, and where people, trade. For the raw material appeared in plenty, and if these barbarians did not yet know the delight of cotton cloths and rum, business would be only the more profitable. Exciting work it is to push through an unknown country when the population remains obstinately out of sight, but African traders of the old school do not easily take alarm. Nevertheless, when he had marched for three weeks on end through this peopled solitude, passing never a road, seeing no house nor any inhabitant, Vasson began to feel anxious. For his life he entertained no fear at all, but a thousand accidents might wreck his fortune; and his Hottentots, afraid, like all negroes, of the unknown, grew more and more gloomy as they advanced. Game, however, showed in plenty, and thus the men escaped all pretence of hunger, that supreme excitement of insubordination and alarm.

After three weeks' steady journeying they found themselves before a chain of hills which barred their course. The vegetation had become more dense, and

each day it grew more difficult to force the waggons on. Vasson announced that if from their tops no satisfactory prospect could be seen, he would turn back, and try districts eastward of the Matabele, which are known, indeed, but rarely visited. Accordingly, he left the waggons there, and climbed the nearest hill with a few trusty Hottentots. A day and a half brought him to the top, and from a clear knoll he looked across the plain below. First to catch his sight was a great river flowing northward, along the foot of the high ground. Its banks, thickly wooded, were patched with clearings of lighter green, which showed more frequent towards the left, where a long space seemed to mark a town. Not less than twenty miles of country lay before Vasson's eye, so far as he could judge, and it was all peopled and cultivated. He took rough bearings of a *kloof* or pass which seemed likely to be practicable for his waggons, and returned in great contentment. Halfway back he met a couple of the men left in charge escorting a number of strangers. The latter halted, whilst the Hottentots delivered their message. They brought overtures of friendship from an unknown sovereign. Vasson instantly produced his flask, and opened communication. The ambassadors were much like any other negroes—almost naked, well-shaped, and snub-featured. Their ornaments and clothes showed no sign of intercourse with Europeans, at which view the trader rejoiced. They wore a smiling and gentle expression, and carried no arms. The one peculiarity

which struck Vasson was their mode of arranging the hair—that distinctive mark among negro tribes. These people shaved the crown of the head, and twisted their wool back over a pad from forehead to nape. They spoke Matabele with some difficulty.

The purport of their message was an invitation to the royal kraal. They said that the white man's presence had been reported to their king long ago, to his great satisfaction. He wished no better than to trade, and he would make himself responsible for the white man's stock. In earnest of his good intentions, he had sent these officers to guide the travellers, intrusting them with presents of food. All this is so usual on the part of a negro monarch that Vasson did not feel surprise. Though omitting no precaution, he followed the ambassadors readily. They did not lead him through the kloof which his sagacity had chosen, but guided the waggons by a longer route, perhaps more convenient, but toilsome enough.

It is hard work to gather details from an African trader. A negro is a negro to him, a king is a king, and his palace is sufficiently described by the noun-substantive. All that occurred to Vasson as worth mentioning about this people was, that they seemed more intelligent and better-tempered than the warrior tribes with whom he had hitherto done business. They were fairer, perhaps; but in a negro kraal of the interior every shade of complexion may be noticed, from soot-black to bronze-yellow. Their feat-

ures, too, were comparatively regular, but scarcely more so than in other cases. No exercise of memory could recall anything more peculiar about king or subjects. His majesty received the guest with usual ceremonies, raised him a large hut, and showed a perfect bewilderment of joy at the presents offered. He had never seen a white man before; and such European manufactures as had hitherto made his choicest spoil had been won from marauding Matabele. The king was young and good-looking. He possessed some hundreds of wives, a little army of *caboceers*, and used such ceremonial as is affected by other negro potentates. Trade proved to be excellent. The people had quantities of ivory, dressed skins, a good deal of gold-dust, and a few ostrich-feathers of high-class. Some ancestral stones they valued also, which Vasson now recognises to have been diamonds. For the sake of encouragement he bought a few from influential personages; but putting no value on them, they were soon lost. The trade could be properly described by no word less emphatic than "roaring." Whole tusks of ivory Vasson bought for a roll of cotton, feathers at six pennyworth of rum, superb *karosses* at a similar rate. In two months he had sold all his stock remaining, and justly considered himself a capitalist.

During this time he passed through the adventure which struck my imagination. The royal town, as I have said, was clustered on a spur of the mountain, with an arm of the river at its foot. The guides had

brought Vasson over a defile many miles to the southward, and so down the river-bank. But when he began to think of returning, he remembered that kloof upon the northern side of the spur, which would certainly cut off many miles of road, if practicable. To his inquiries the answer was unanimous, that a thousand difficulties intervened. But something in the manner of his hosts convinced Vasson that they were telling a falsehood. Having now such a precious cargo, all kinds of fancies and suspicions gathered in his mind. He resolved to explore; and with that object accustomed the people to see him take long walks into the country, with his gun and a bush-boy. Then, having disarmed the jealousy of these simple fellows, he set out one day for the excursion.

Several paths led from the town to farm-lands on the river-bank. Vasson intended to round the hill, but, after walking a couple of miles, he crossed a narrow track that mounted on his right. Without hesitation he followed this short cut. The steep and broken path seemed to have had few travellers of late, but it climbed in a direction such that Vasson began to hope it would take him to the kloof itself. The distance was greater than he had thought; four hours' good walking carried him only to the crest of the descent. He met no soul, but fetishes in abundance, which chilled the very marrow of his bush-boy. Fearsome objects they were indeed,—bits of awful rag tied to sticks, rotten chunks of wood across the

road, feathers and strings fluttering on a branch. These things became more frequent as they went on, and Vasson began to fear that the kloof might be a fetish place, which would account for everything.

The path ended suddenly at a table-rock, which stood sheer above the entrance to a defile. Vasson halted in amaze. Before and above him rose a great propylon garlanded with creepers. Its blocks of huge stone showed scarcely one effacing mark of time. Gods long forgotten held court thereon, accepted tribute of peoples extinct, received the worship of mighty monarchs unrecorded. The cornice harboured flowers and birds in its bold ledge, but the shadow of it fell almost as clean as on the day when ancient colonists raised it—who shall tell how many centuries ago! The great arch stood at right angles to Vasson's place, and spanned nearly half the narrow cleft. Twenty men abreast could have walked through it, and the ground below was level like a causeway, though overgrown with brush. To left, the sheer precipice advanced so suddenly that Vasson could catch but a glimpse of the river; to right, at a hundred yards' distance, the semicircle was completed, shutting out all further view up the pass. A deadly silence reigned. Not a breath stirred the glossy leaves, shining and glittering against the hot blue sky. Whip-like creepers trailed from the cornice without a shiver, and their bright stars of blossoms hung motionless. The sunshine burnt with stilly vehemence upon the pale-red

stone, and checkered it with shadows deep as sculptured leaves. Such sight as that never came before the wanderer's eye. Vasson was seized with a reckless curiosity to know what lay beyond.

Right and left the cliff rose like a wall, so cut by human labour. Where he looked down, the vines beneath his feet had been smoothed away, but at a little distance on either side they fell to the very ground. He turned to force a way through the bush, and thus caught sight of his companion, who lay prostrate and shivering with fear, his eyes covered. Thus were the natives used to fall, no doubt, while they supplicated the fetish. Vasson told the half-inanimate creature that he wished to consult the gods in their very home, and left him there. He pushed without difficulty along the escarpment, for such it was — designed, without doubt, for the use of archers in case of attack. A few yards on, he found a creeper suitable, slung his rifle, and dropped down. Thoughtlessly letting go his hold, he fell waist-deep into a morass, hidden by broad-leaved plants and herbage. A cry of despair escaped him, but the bottom of the morass proved to be hard as stone. After great exertions, sounding with his ramrod, he gained the bank, which was faced with slabs of granite. Superhuman in its grandeur the arch appeared as Vasson stood beneath it and looked through. Upon the side remote from his former station, footholes had been rudely cut, and two strong ropes hung from the top. He guessed

a secret now. By this staircase mounted the fetish-priests to play their savage tricks upon the simple folk who asked their aid.

Keeping a look-out for magicians and snakes, Vasson walked up the kloof. After two or three turnings, always between those barriers of cliff, which at each corner bore a ruined turret, he saw at length the open space beyond, and once more halted with a thrill. What he had supposed a kloof was a level basin of many hundred acres. Though it was well clothed with trees, he could trace the lie of the land; but no opening appeared save that in which he stood. Lofty hills closed round it like a wall. But other sights absorbed him. The causeway he had followed led to another propylon, and through that to a maze of stately ruins. White as marble in the distance shone the walls of a city, gapped, dismantled, but still superb. Only a glimpse of their circuit could be gained through intervening clumps of wood. Above and under and among the ruins green heads of foliage rose high into the air, with white columns gleaming through. Vasson was but a trader, and not imaginative; but such a sight killed fear. Experience told him that the fetish-men themselves would not be likely to dwell in these haunted ruins; indeed he marked a few brown huts under a knoll, with people moving to and fro. Heedless of consequences in his excitement, he plunged into the woods upon his left.

Stumbling over broken columns, turned from his

course by walls half erect, he struggled on, guided by the hunter's instinct. After two hours' work the bastions of the city gleamed on a sudden through the trees. He had approached within fifty yards before seeing them. Like a hill of masonry the dismounted blocks sloped upwards. Trees stood amongst them, bushes sprang in every cleft between huge stones. Ten yards in air hung a big rock, lifted by the crest of a young cotton-tree, hurrying towards the light. Vasson climbed easily over the ruins. Within he found a vigorous jungle reigning, pavements all covered and broken, streets and houses uprooted. A few yards on either side bounded his utmost view, but what he saw convinced him of the luxury once ruling in this savage land. To right and left he made his way, finding only trees and thickets in a wilderness of rubbish. The tall white columns evidently stood in another quarter of the town. It was time to set back. But just as he made up his mind to turn, Vasson caught a glimpse of more important ruins, and pushed on for a last chance.

Another scramble on walls overthrown brought him to the edge of such a cavity as misdirected experience enabled him to recognise with ease. It was a "pan," says Vasson, fitted with seats half-way round. Those who know South African scenery will perceive how natural was the mistake. What Vasson thought to be a "pan" was doubtless a theatre. It seemed to me strong evidence of truth that the man should intelligibly describe objects so far beyond his knowledge

as a propylon and a Greco-Egyptian theatre. The ranges of seats were almost perfect, and the wall of the uposkenion—to use the proper word—could be distinctly followed. Enough of it was left to give half-a-dozen persons a lofty seat. So many, in fact, lounged upon it, basking in the sun. The bright colours of their dress caught Vasson's eye upon the instant. He crouched in superstitious awe, for his nerves had been long on stretch. The skin of these people was white, their costume strange. Instinctively the explorer hid, but not in time. They saw him, and, leaping from the perch, they fled with an eerie clamour. Peering down, Vasson saw them pass between the shattered orchestra and the public seats. All his tremors vanished. The white complexion was yellow and diseased, the white hair sapless, the brilliant dresses fluttering tufts of rag. The creatures who dared to occupy that haunted city were Albino idiots, a class common in negro-land. Of their colour the fetish-men made use, no doubt, when needful, and their foolishness preserved them from the terrors of the place.

Vasson hasted back, though he judged that the Albinos' exaggerated report would be more likely to alarm the priests than to stir them to pursuit. He had marked his track, of course, and followed it with speed. When the brown huts again came into sight, he was not surprised to observe a great animation reigning. The Albinos all were there, fluttering like a small crowd of parrots on the ground. But the

fetish men and women had doubtless withdrawn to perform the incantations in which they at least believe, and to construe this portent with awful alarms. Vasson crept from bush to bush across the open, gained the kloof, plunged into the morass where he had sounded it, swarmed the cliff, and found his bush-boy—still prostrate, still with eyes covered, still praying or sleeping, or—one knows not what to fancy of a creature but half human. At his master's kick he raised himself quietly to follow. Choosing a back way they reached the town before sunset, and Vasson called upon the king at once for his P.P.C. He "grasped the situation," and perceived that the fetish-men would be no long time before discovering that the white stranger had explored their mysteries. The small surplus of his stock Vasson distributed amongst the royal household and the most powerful *caboceers.* Twenty-four hours after beholding these strange sights he inspanned for the home journey.

Vasson passed safely through the Matabele realm, not without suspicion, however. Judicious bribes saved him. In reaching the colony he found himself a man of fortune. But successful traders in South Africa are the favourite victims of legal knavery. They gain an exaggerated notion of their shrewdness, which is only rectified by disastrous matching with the trained wit of German Hebrews. Vasson, like others, was as good as ruined the day he opened business. Three years after, he was obliged to take the "Kaffir road" once more, and his course was naturally

directed towards that rich, retiring, and unsophisticated population, the secret of whose existence he had breathed to no soul living before me. But circumstances had changed. Who shall guess how the Matabele had heard of his illicit explorations, or how rumours wander across the desert? That question has occupied many minds, but it did not seem *actuel* to Vasson when the Matabele seized his waggons, arms, goods, and Hottentots for treason, taking credit for leaving him his life. My poor friend returned with a single horse and a sack of "mealies." The first venture into fairyland made his fortune; the second ruined him beyond hope. After that catastrophe he rubbed along with petty trade, penuriously saving up for another expedition. The ancients were wise. It costs a man his life to see the mysteries of the gods. In the hope of sudden wealth Vasson had tried the Diamond Fields, but to no purpose, for the object he had in view. None who keep before them a definite design succeed there, the evil Fates alone know why, for surely these deserve protection. When I left, Vasson had gathered but a very few hundred pounds toward the thousands needed. I have heard nothing from him since, but the newspapers inform us that Momotopata has been identified in certain Greek ruins below Bloemhof in the Transvaal. What, then, was Vasson's city? Were there two Greco-Egyptian colonies?

THE GASCON O'DRISCOL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE FORGING OF THE ANCHOR."

THE O'Driscols have long ceased to be a ruling family in West Cork, where they once held sway as petty kings of Corca Laidhe, a district nearly corresponding to the diocese of Ross. Their power was broken at the battle of Tralee, where "The Gascon," and many of his house, fell before the lances of the Anglo-Norman chivalry, A.D. 1235. He was Aulay, fourth son of Domnach Mor, whose pedigree to Ith, uncle of Milesius, may be read at large in the 'Genealogies of the Corca Laidhe' (Misc. Celt. Soc. Dublin, 1849), a tract enriched with curious matter by the late Dr John O'Donovan and by the present learned and Reverend Dr John Quarry. Not the least curious item in the pedigree is the note which states how young Aulay got his surname, furnishing the foundation for the following ballad:—

"*Is aire a débradh in Gasguineach de: a n-gill re fín tucadh h-é do lucht luingi cendaigh a cind a*

dá bhliadhan déc, acus do bhí thoir no cor cuiredh do fhairi fhína h-é, cor dearbhadh air beith na fhuil uasail, acus tánic in fín cen uireasbaidh ré na lind, acus da h-indlaicedh ar a ais h-é chum a thíri bodhen."

Here observe that, while no one is more verbose than the Irish Celt in his highflown bardic compositions, so no one can tell his story in fewer words where the facts have to be recounted by way of chronicle or family history. The form of this ballad is that of a large class of poems devoted to local and personal history under the generic name of *Dinnsenchus*. Pieces of this kind begin by proposing the subject as a question, to which the answer is "Not difficult": then follows the substance of the story, told in most cases with great directness, and ending regularly with a repetition of the initial words of the first line.

I.

In old O'Driscol's pedigree,
'Mong lords of ports and galleys,
"The Gascon" whence? and who was he
First bore the surname? tell us.
Not difficult the task
To answer what you ask.

II.

The merchants from the Biscay sea
To ports of Munster sailing,

With wines of Spain and Gascony
Supplied carouse unfailing
To guests of open door,
Of old, at Baltimore.

III.

Till when, against one festal day,
O'Driscol stocked his cellars,
He found not but of gold to pay
In part, the greedy dealers;
And, for the surplusage,
Gave this good son in pledge.

IV.

They bore the boy to fair Bayonne,
Where vines on hills were growing;
And, when the days of grace were gone,
And still the debt was owing,
The careful merchant's heart
Grew hard with angry smart.

V.

"The wine I sold the Irish knave
Is spent in waste and surfeit;
The pledge for payment that he gave
Remains, a sorry forfeit:—
Bring forth the hostage boy
And set him on employ."

VI.

"Now, youth, lay by the lettered page,
Leave Spanish pipe and tabor
To happier co-mates of thy age,
And put thy hands to labour.
Ten ridged rows of the vine
To dress and till, be thine."

VII.

From solar-chamber came the lad;
In sooth, a comely creature
As e'er made eye of mother glad
In well-shaped limb and feature.
As 'mid the vines he stepped,
His cheek burned, and he wept.

VIII.

"The grief that wrings this pungent tear
Springs not from pride or anger;
Let be the hoe my hunting-spear,
The pruning-knife my hanger:
The work ye will I'll do;
But, deem my kinsmen true.

IX.

"Be sure, in some unknown resort
Their messengers have tarried;

Some head-wind held their ship in port,
Some tribute-ship miscarried;
Else never would they leave
Their pledge without reprieve.

X.

"I've seen when, round the banquet board
From stintless-circling beaker
To all the Name our butlers poured
The ruby-royal liquor,
And every face was bright
With mirth and life's delight.

XI.

"And, as the warming wine exhaled
The shows of outward fashion,
Their very hearts I've seen unveiled
In gay and frank elation;
And not a breast but grew
More trusty, more seen through.

XII.

"These vineyards grew the grape that gave
My soul that fond assurance;
And if for them I play the slave,
I grudge not the endurance,
Nor stronger mandate want
To tend the truthful plant."

XIII.

The seniors of the sunny land
Beheld him daily toiling,—
(Old times they were of instincts bland
The pagan heart assoiling)—
And this their frequent speech
And counsel, each with each:—

XIV.

"A patient boy, with gentle grace
He bears his yoke of trouble;
Serenely grave the ample face,
The gesture large and noble,
Erect, or stooping low,
Along the staky row.

XV.

"Where'er he moves, the serving train
Accord him their obeisance;
The very vintagers refrain
Their rude jests in his presence;
And—what is strange indeed—
His vines their vines exceed.

XVI.

"The tendrils twine, the leaves expand,
The purpling bunches cluster

To pulpier growth beneath his hand,
As though 'twere formed to foster
By act of mere caress
Life, wealth, and joyousness.

XVII.

"It seems as if a darkling sense
In root and stem were native;
As if an answering effluence
And virtue vegetative
(Anointed kings own such)
Went outward from his touch.

XVIII.

"Behold, his nation's sages say
A righteous king's intendance
Is seen in fishy-teeming bay
And corn-fields' stook'd abundance,
In udder-weighted cows
And nut-bent hazel boughs.

XIX.

"These Scots, apart in ocean set
Since first from Shinar turning,
Preserve the simple wisdom yet
Of mankind's early morning,
While God with Adam's race
Still communed, face to face.

XX.

"Not in the written word alone
He woos and warns the creature;
His will is still in wonders shown
Through manifesting Nature;
And Nature here makes plain
This youth was born to reign.

XXI.

"Ill were it, for a merchant's gains,
To leave, at toil appointed
For horny-handed village swains,
God's designate anointed:
But good for him and us
The act magnanimous.

XXII.

"Blest are the friends of lawful kings
To righteous rule consenting:
Secure the blessing that he brings
By clemency preventing;
And, granting full release,
Return him home in peace.

XXIII.

"And, ere your topsails take the wind,
Stow ye within his vessel

A pipe the ripest search may find
In cellars of the Castle;
Of perfume finer yet
Than rose and violet.

XXIV.

"That, when, at home, his kin shall pour
The welcoming libation,
Such rapture-pitch their souls shall soar
Of sweet exhilaration,
As Bacchus on his pard
With moist eye might regard."

XXV.

They stowed the ship; he stepped on board
In seemly wise attended;
But this was still his parting word
When farewells all were ended:
"Be sure my father yet
Will satisfy the debt."

XXVI.

And, even as from the harbour mouth
They northward went careering,
There passed to windward, steering south,
O'Driscol's galley bearing,
From Baltimore, the gold
Of ransom safe in hold.
In (h)old.