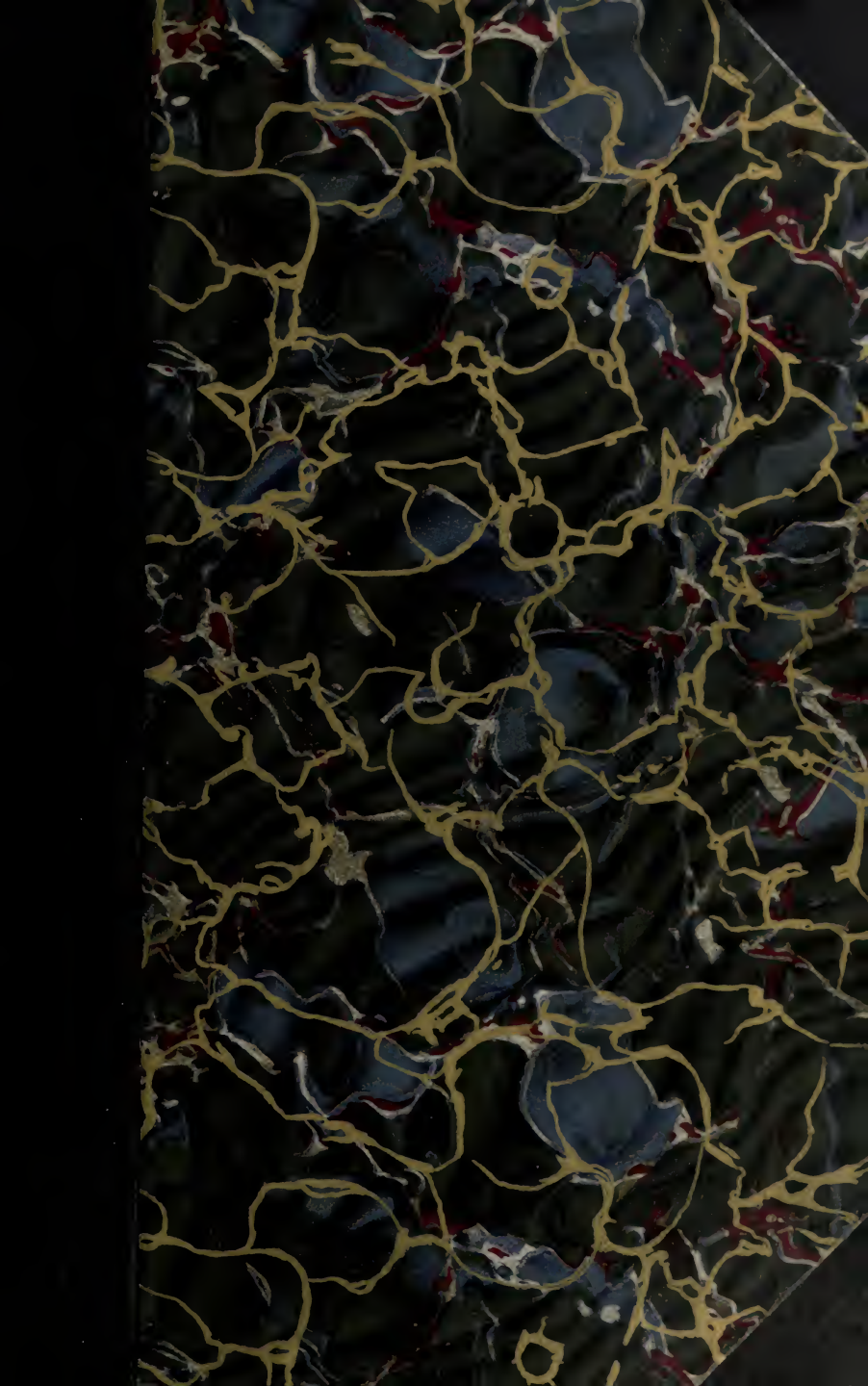

Tales from "Blackwood"

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

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VOLUME X

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

A MEDIUM OF LAST CENTURY.

BY MAJOR-GENERAL W. G. HAMLEY,
LATE ROYAL ENGINEERS.

ONE evening last spring my friend Clifton and I found ourselves at his fireside enjoying a bottle of West India Madeira. We had had a pouring wet day with the hounds, no kill, and *such* a ride home! So, there being nothing in the day's adventures to think or talk over with pleasure, we had both been out of sorts since half-past five o'clock, had come in to dinner in anything but high spirits, and had conversed chiefly in monosyllables during the repast. But the nice cosy dinner, and the good wine (Clifton's wines are undeniable), had operated powerfully during three-quarters of an hour, to bring us into something of a genial humour; and by the time the butler had retreated, and we were comfort-

ably arranged flanking the fire, our spirits were raised a little, and our tongues loosed. The rainy day had been followed by a stormy evening. We could hear the hail driven every now and then against the windows with startling violence; the wind roared in the chimneys and howled among the trees, whose branches gave out agonised creaks in the strong gusts. The fireside was decidedly the right place to be in just then. "This is pleasanter than Moscow," said Clifton, with the first attempt at a smile that either of us had made since we sat down. "Decidedly so," I answered; "pleasanter than any other place I can think of at this moment." "Just my idea," replied he. "That row outside — I shall be sure to find some trees down in the morning, but never mind— that row in some way or another greatly enhances the comfort of the hearth. I am glad I told Millett to turn down the lights."

"Yes, the glow of the fire seems the right thing. Lots of shadows and all sorts of unearthly noises. Just the time when one gets into a credulous mood, and can take in tales such as bards

> 'In sage and solemn tunes have sung
> Of tourneys and of trophies hung;
> Of forests and enchantments drear,
> Where more is meant that meets the ear.'"

"By Jove! yes. Do you believe in ghosts? I can't say I don't; and I don't know that I very distinctly do."

"Not a very decided confession of faith," said I. "But, in truth, one must word one's creed carefully nowadays; for there are so many new-fangled ideas about the invisible world that you don't know what you may be assenting to if you make a simple profession of belief."

"Yes; the terrible old sheeted spectre of our boyish days is very nearly exploded. I must say I rather regret it. Spiritualism seems to be the modern form of superstition."

"Oh, it hardly amounts to superstition. Don't call it so, Clifton. It is nothing but the most wretched, shallow charlatanry."

"Well, come, I don't know. Some of its phenomena are surely as well attested as the pranks of our old friends of the churchyard."

"Attested or not, I denounce it because of its utter uselessness. With all the wonderful powers which it professes to bring into action, do we get a bit wiser? I never heard of any of the spirits interfering for any good or reasonable purpose."

"Yes; you may take that ground. Whether there be anything astonishing about it or not, it does not repay the trouble of investigation."

"Of course not. The character of its professors pretty well explains what it is. A parcel of keen, designing fellows make money by it. It would be different if educated, disinterested persons thought it worth their notice."

"H'm, perhaps; but I can't say I think that argument so strong as the other."

"You surely admit that the credit of a science, art,—whatever you choose to call it,—must be very low when it is practised and preached chiefly by persons who do not otherwise enjoy a great reputation for accuracy or conscientiousness, perhaps quite the reverse."

"Of course I admit that a thing brought out under questionable sponsorship will justly be regarded with suspicion. But whatever we may suspect, nothing is proved for or against by the character of the agents or professors."

"I don't quite follow you. I think a great deal is proved."

"No," said Clifton. "Look here. If there be any truth in these things—spiritualism, clairvoyance, divination, fortune-telling, I don't care what you call them — there must be, behind the wizard, or medium, or somnambulist, some power greater than human. Now, then, why should such a power choose as we would choose? why should it select the learned, the wise, the good, to be the recipients of its revelations?"

"Well, of course, I can't answer," said I.

"More than that," said Clifton, rather warming in his argument — "if the powers which tell these strange things be, as many would have us believe, evil spirits, is it not conceivable that they might, out

of wickedness or wantonness, choose to make their announcements through some vile and contemptible channels?"

"You are miles beyond me in weird science. I shall only listen."

"Well, you haven't got much more to hear," said Clifton; "but you know it is just possible that spirits, from some motives of secrecy and mystery—just to avoid the inquisitiveness of minds accustomed to investigation—may reveal themselves through beings who do not half comprehend, and do not care to speculate on, the import of what they utter."

"May be so," said I; "but we are getting into very misty regions now."

"I think such an idea as that makes one understand how gipsies, spae-wives, and clairvoyants may sometimes utter oracles concerning things of which naturally they have no knowledge, and in which they feel no interest."

"Pardon me, Clifton," said I, "but you seem to me to speak as if you had some experience or other of such things."

"My dear fellow, everybody has had such experience, only some banish it from their minds. Think, now,—has something odd never come within your own knowledge?"

"By Jove! I do remember one or two strange inexplicable things—coincidences."

"Yes; well I have had knowledge of some coincidences too."

"Anything worth telling?"

"Well, of my own, no. But I have been thinking during these five minutes of something on record which I lighted on only a few weeks ago, and which has led me to ponder a good deal over these matters. By the by, it has something to do with the Madeira we are drinking; for our connection with the Spences, through whom my father obtained this wine, arose out of the circumstances of which I found the account."

"Just listen to that gust of wind. Well for you that your house is pretty solidly built, or we must have heard something crash before now. Suppose you stir the fire a little, or let me; I declare I am becoming quite nervous."

"Then help yourself to wine. I was hunting, you know, for something to throw light on that Ledyard dispute. It was imagined that my grandfather, having been so long in the regiment with old General Ledyard, might possibly have known something about his testamentary doings or intentions, and so I was requested to look among some heaps of old papers."

"Ah! and you were mysteriously guided to something explanatory of the whole secret. There's some sense in that."

"Not a bit of it. I couldn't find even a word bearing upon the Ledyard affair. But I found a

little family narrative which seemed to have been carefully drawn up by some indifferent person who had the whole of the facts presented to him of an episode in the early regimental life of my grandfather. We have been accustomed to think of him, you know, as a superior officer in the great wars under Cornwallis and Baird in India, and afterwards under Moore and Wellesley in Spain. But this story shows him to us as quite a fresh ensign. I confess I read it with a good deal of interest."

"Already you have kindled a similar interest in me. I feel that the *horrentia Martis arma*, in connection with which we have been accustomed to think of the general, have just now shrunk into nothing beside the youthful ensign, *gracili modulatus avenâ*, or whatever was the fancy of his early romance. After thus rousing curiosity you cannot refuse to gratify it. The tempest, the hour, are in keeping with the recital of a strange legend."

"I don't want in the least to make a secret of the thing," answered Clifton; "only it's a longish yarn. I haven't got it up perfectly, or I would abbreviate it. 'Twon't be in the least tedious to me to go over it all again; so, if you still wish for the story after hearing that it's lengthy, I'll fetch it at once."

I persisted in my request, and Clifton, after a short absence, during which he was heard making a considerable noise with the bolts of locks, came back

into the dining-room, bearing a manuscript on foolscap, which had turned yellow from age, and was spotted in places. The leaves were tied together with silk ribbon, which also had turned from white to yellow. It was written in an even round hand, such as a clerk's or scrivener's. The heading of the MS. was, "An Account of Some Passages in the Early Life of General Sir Godfrey Clifton, K.B.;" and it bore at the end the initials "G. C.;" but the story was told in the third person. Many times since that evening have I pored over its pages. I am two days' journey from Clifton now, so cannot give the exact words of the narrator, but if the reader will trust me he shall hear the substance of what he read, which is as follows:—

In the autumn of the year 1777, the freight-ship Berkeley Castle, of 600 tons burthen, sailed from Deal for Montego Bay, on the north side of the island of Jamaica. It was hoped that she would reach her destination a little before Christmas, she being laden with supplies which would be required at that season. Her state-rooms were not numerous; and it was only by the master turning out of his cabin and getting some accommodation rigged up for himself between decks, that she could take the few passengers who sailed in her. These were mostly, but not all, connected with a regiment at that time stationed in the neighbourhood of Montego Bay.

Travelling in Jamaica was not so easy a matter in those days as it is now; so those who were to serve on the north side found it convenient to be landed at a northern port. Dr Salmon, a military surgeon, his wife, and his daughter Flora, aged eighteen, were a little family party; and, appointed to the same regiment to which Dr Salmon belonged, there was Ensign Clifton, a young man of good family. The passenger, however, who sailed in the greatest state was a young lady who had been at school in Edinburgh, and was now returning home in charge of the master of the vessel. Every luxury that wealth could buy had been supplied to make the voyage agreeable to her; she was attended by two negresses; her dresses and ornaments were of a most costly description, and seemed inexhaustible. Miss Arabella Chisholm was evidently a personage of some consequence in her own land; and, let it be remarked, she could not have passed unnoticed anywhere. She was a remarkably pretty and well-shaped girl—a brunette, but such a splendid one as it was dangerous for young men to look on. Beside these there was a young man named Spence, also a Creole by birth, but a pure white.[1] He had been several years in England, had just taken his degree at Cambridge, and was now on his way back to his father's estate. Six, therefore, was the number of the cabin passengers, who, after a

[1] *Creole* means "born in the West Indies;" thus Creoles may be of any colour.

day or two (for they sailed in bright, calm weather), all showed themselves at the cuddy-table, and began an acquaintance which was to last, if all should go well, for more than two months. Two young ladies and two young gentlemen embarked together seemed likely enough to make the time pass pleasantly. The ensign had his seat at table next to Miss Salmon, but he sat opposite to the lovely brunette, by whose side Mr Spence was established, in right of an old acquaintance of their families, if not of themselves, and the neighbourhood of their estates. And Miss Salmon was a young lady by whose side, in nineteen voyages out of twenty, a young officer would have thought it a great privilege to sit. She was very nice-looking, pleasant, and rather witty in her conversation, and quiet and lady-like in her manner. But on this occasion the blaze and animation of the Jamaica belle threw her a little into shadow. Their first dinner was a cheerful one, at which everybody showed a wish to be friendly. The weather-beaten skipper was most attentive to Mrs Salmon, who sat on his right, and told her stories innumerable about the wonderful country to which she was going,—oysters growing on trees, crabs crawling about the hill-tops miles from the sea, cabbages rising sixty feet from the ground—and so on.

They liked each other's company so much that they sat a good while after dinner on this first occasion, and it was too cold for the ladies to go

on deck afterwards; so only the gentlemen walked the poop, and smoked in the twilight.

"You and Miss Chisholm have been acquainted before, have you not, Mr Spence?" asked young Clifton, while they thus paced.

"It is very possible that we have," answered Mr Spence; "but I have not the least recollection of her. It is nine years since I left Jamaica. I remember Mr Chisholm, though not very distinctly; but could not have said a week ago whether there were children at his house or not."

"I fancy that your information will be much more accurate after you get home, eh, Dr Salmon?" said the skipper. "By George, sir! old Sandy Chisholm, as they call her father, is one of the richest men on the island. I don't know how many estates he owns."

"Rich enough, I should think, by the style in which the young lady is appointed," answered the doctor.

"And I think I can tell you young men something," rejoined the skipper, in a confidential tone. "Mr Chisholm is exceedingly anxious that this daughter should marry well, and will give a very handsome fortune to a son-in-law of whom he may approve."

"However much she may bring her husband, I think she will know how to spend it, ha, ha!" laughed Dr Salmon.

"No, doctor, don't say so." returned the skipper,

who seemed a little jealous of the opinion entertained of his temporary ward. "Their habits appear more extravagant than those of people at home, without really being so. Their methods of spending money are restricted, and they lean a good deal towards dress and gewgaws. With an English education, such as my young friend has had, they make clever, sensible women."

"Perhaps so, perhaps so," conceded the doctor, somewhat grudgingly. "It would be as well, though, for a young fellow who might feel inclined to bid for the fortune, to consider how a handsome, extravagant wife might be disposed to deal with it."

"By Jove, sir!" said the gallant skipper, stopping short in his walk, and withdrawing his pipe from his lips with decision, "I only wish I was a smart young bachelor this day; if I wouldn't go in and try my luck, there's no salt in sea-water."

"Bravo, captain!" said young Clifton.

"You know," pursued the skipper, calming down again, after his little burst of excitement, "her father insists upon her 'doing things in style,' as he calls it. The display and luxury may be set down to the old gentleman's account. Those two negresses, now, he sent home with me last voyage, and had 'em kept in England five months, so that they might be ready to attend their young mistress on her voyage out."

"I wonder," put in Mr Spence, "that he didn't frank some white married couple on a trip to Eng-

land that they might return in charge of the young lady. I have known that done before to-day."

While the gentlemen were thus discoursing on the poop, the subject of their conversation was below showing a disposition to be very friendly with Mrs and Miss Salmon. Those ladies, so affably encountered, were not long, one may be sure, before they made some observations on Arabella's rich dress and ornaments; whereat Miss Chisholm, far from being displeased, entered into descriptions of all the treasures contained in her voluminous baggage, and promised to gratify them with a sight of the same.

"But how can you do it?" objected Miss Salmon, whose prophetic mind foresaw a difficulty in the way of this gratification. "You cannot have all these packages in your cabin, and the captain's directions were that we were to keep with us everything likely to be wanted for use, as none of the heavy things which had been lowered into the hold could be disturbed during the voyage."

"The captain's directions!" echoed Miss Chisholm, with disdain. "What do I care for the captain's directions? There are plenty of sailors in the ship to pull things up and down, and when I wish to have my chests and trunks brought up they will have to bring them." Her look seemed to add, "Nay, I'll tickle ye for a young Creole princess, i' faith." This imperious demeanour somewhat astonished the military ladies, who had no experience of Creole prin-

cesses, and believed that before all things it was necessary that "disciplines ought to be used." Arabella was not half so fond of answering the other ladies' questions about her native island, as she was of talking about her life in England; which perhaps was natural. She had been a child in Jamaica, but in England had expanded towards womanhood, and acquired new sentiments, new ideas, new aspirations, all of which were foreign to her West India recollections. She said she would be delighted to see her father again, but she feared she would find the island dull; "and if so," she remarked, "I shall make my papa go home for good. He has wasted quite enough of his life in the stupid colony." Her new acquaintances, who hardly knew what it was to move independently, marvelled at all this wilfulness.

The Creole beauty was as good as her word about her baggage. The captain, although he yielded to her as to a spoiled child, calling her "My dear," and made as though he were spontaneously according these exceptional indulgences, did nevertheless let her have her way; and the tars were manning the tackle and shifting the luggage as often as, and for as long as, it pleased Miss Arabella Chisholm to require their services in this way.

Mrs Salmon told her husband that there was something very frank and winning about the handsome Creole. She was good-natured too, and had forced upon Miss Salmon's acceptance trinkets and other

treasures which the latter young lady had admired. "But do you know," added Mrs Salmon, "her conversation is too free on some subjects—hardly what I call nice. When the two girls are alone, she says things to Flora about young men and love-making which it quite distresses our girl to hear, for she isn't accustomed to those subjects. I hardly know what to do about it."

"You can do nothing, I am afraid," answered Dr Salmon; "Miss Chisholm means nothing wrong, I am persuaded; and we must impute to her tropical blood and her early education among coloured people this foreign style. Flora is too well principled to be hurt by it; and as she will not encourage it, Miss Chisholm will probably soon find that other subjects would be more agreeable."

"My dear, she will find nothing of the sort. She will allow nothing and do nothing but what she pleases. There never was such an arbitrary creature."

"Well, well," answered the doctor, "the voyage is not to last for ever. Explain to Flora that this is not an English young lady, and therefore that she does not deserve the censure which we should direct against a countrywoman allowing herself such licence. As long as she has her mother to guide her, I feel quite easy about Flora's sense of propriety,"—with which compliment to his wife's good sense Dr Salmon closed the conversation, drew in his head, and went to sleep; for they had been talking in their state-room,

where they lay in little berths one over the other, and the doctor, being in the nether compartment, had to put out his head to listen to the oracles which came to him from above.

The same night on which this conversation occurred there were minds occupied with Miss Arabella in other cabins than the doctor's. Mr Spence, tossing in his berth, was reflecting that he, in right of his Creole origin and strong claims of family, was, under present circumstances, Arabella's natural ally, attendant, and sympathiser; and that she was bound to be a great deal more familiar and confidential with him than with that rather pensive and genteel ensign, whose natural affinity was with Miss Salmon. He did not venture, even in thought, to lay claim to more than this, though it is to be feared that neighbourly frankness would have gone but a small way towards satisfying the craving of his heart. Like a turbulent patriot, who puts in a reasonable demand for toleration and equal rights, when in his heart he abhors both liberty and equality, and aims at tyranny, so the self-deluding Spence fretted himself about the rights of neighbours, while already it was an idea of exclusive rights which was making him so restless. The young fellow was considerably smitten.

However reasonable Spence might take his own notions and arrangements to be, Ensign Clifton could not help seeing things in a very different light. In

that young officer's judgment, Miss Salmon and Mr Spence appeared to be admirably fitted for each other. As for Spence pretending to a lady so brilliant as Miss Chisholm, the idea was preposterous: it was a violation of the eternal fitness of things: it could not by possibility tend to promote the happiness of anybody, and might be productive of much misery. Now, for a calm bystander who could see all this mischief brewing, not to try and prevent it would have been gross dereliction of duty. And Clifton thought himself a calm philosophic bystander, laying claim to that character on the ground of a passion which he had entertained for a cousin some five years older than himself, who had thought him very clever when he was fifteen. For more than a year it was his dream to make this cousin his bride after he had raised himself to eminence; but the vision was disturbed by intelligence that a captain of dragoons, who considered himself already sufficiently eminent for the achievement, was about to marry her. The stricken youth mourned becomingly, then hardened his heart to study and ambition. He even grew to think that it would facilitate his future career to be thus early acclimatised to the trying air of love: he learned to set a value upon his scar, and to feel that the crushing of his affections gave him an immense advantage over even older men who were still vulnerable about the heart. So the ensign thought that while the voyage lasted it would be as well to obtain

as large a share as he could of Miss Chisholm's attention, just to shield her (she being very young and inexperienced) from plunging into mischief. Once they were on shore his responsibility would be over. It would be another thing then; and her father being at hand to care for her, it would be the father's affair, and very unfortunate if she should form an imprudent attachment—that was all. And Ensign Clifton sighed deeply, and turned himself over in his berth, as he came to this conclusion.

Miss Salmon had her thoughts too, as the Berkeley Castle, on this bright night, being now clear of the Bay of Biscay, walked steadily before the wind towards Madeira. And there was something in Miss Salmon's mind which coincided curiously with a thought which has been ascribed to Mr Spence. Flora Salmon was beginning to see very strongly the natural affinity between Mr Clifton and herself. They belonged to the same profession in a manner; at any rate they must have many ideas in common. Their lots might be cast in the same place for a long time to come. She, Flora, was perhaps a little more sprightly and *spirituelle* than the ensign; but what of that? it only made her more fit to be his companion and complement. He was very nice and gentlemanly, if a little shy and silent. Flora didn't think at all the worse of him because he wasn't noisy and silly like many ensigns whom it had been her lot to mark: but why didn't he recognise the claims of

his own cloth? It would not have been surprising if one of the brainless subalterns, of whom she had then two or three in her mind's eye, had been taken with the handsome person and not very reserved conversation of the sparkling Creole. *They* were incapable of appreciating anything which did not lie on the surface; but of Mr Clifton, who seemed to have a mind, better things might have been expected. It is just possible, too, that Flora perceived, or perhaps she had been informed, that Clifton was a youth of good family, and of a fortune that made him independent of his profession; but she didn't confess to herself that this had anything to do with her grievance, which she rested on general, open, unselfish grounds. Yet Miss Salmon was hardly just to Arabella. The latter young lady was not merely a pretty compound of pretension and coquetry, notwithstanding her wilfulness and variableness, and the trivial matters which often seemed to occupy her. Her caprices were not without their charm, and sometimes, though rarely, they spirited her into moods of reverie and feeling which were but the more winning from their suddenness and rarity.

"If tenderness touched her, the dark of her eye
At once took a darker, a heavenlier dye,
From the depths of whose shadow, like holy revealings
From innermost shrines, came the light of her feelings!"

Miss Chisholm, while all these cogitations were going on, had fallen very happily to sleep. She had

been accustomed to have her own way in most things, and there was nothing in the situation on board ship to hinder her sovereign will in the least. She may have been utterly indifferent about both the young men on board, or she may have preferred one to the other. However this may have been, she had not the least doubt about being able to please herself whenever she might ascertain what her own pleasure was. And so she dropped asleep tranquilly and early. A moonbeam, slanting into her cabin as she lay in her first slumber, glanced on the accurate moulding of an arm which, escaped from the loose night-dress, was thrown high on her pillow, and wound over the crown of her head, beyond which the hand rested in shadow. The sheen played softly on the curves of the regular features, and caught the tangles of her luxuriant hair in such wise as to graze each tress with a streak of light. In the day her tresses were of a rich dark brown, very effective in their mass, though the strands were not particularly fine; but this *chiaro-oscuro* gave them an unearthly richness, and made the lace about her neck, which peeped between their folds, gleam like fretted silver. We hear sweet things said about the sleep of virtue, and the sleep of innocence, also of the slumber of a mind at peace with itself; but the slumber of a young lady entirely satisfied with herself and with her lot, wants nothing that goodness or purity or quiet conscience could give. It is a tranquillity which acci-

dent may scare from the pillow; but while it lasts it is excellent.

The voyage proceeded prosperously. Rolling down the Trades is generally a not very checkered or perilous course; but the days, if uneventful, were not tedious to the passengers. Dr and Mrs Salmon had had too much of the bustle, and too many of the vicissitudes of life, to chafe at two or three weeks of calm, bright, listless days; and as for the rest of the company, they were all busily engaged in a little drama which was to reach its *dénouement* in other scenes; and the sameness was no sameness to them.

Flora and Arabella were in the latter's state-room, rummaging among a profusion of jewels and ornaments. Flora had never handled so many treasures in her life; and though she had sense enough to be somewhat angry with herself for being so delighted, yet the woman was strong in her, and she revelled among the gems and gold. One article after another was taken up and admired, and pronounced to be the most beautiful that ever was seen, until the next came up for criticism, and was in its turn found to surpass all others. A Maltese cross had just been returned to the case with a glowing eulogium, and was now being utterly eclipsed by a set of emeralds which took away Flora's breath. "Well, I never saw anything like it," said she; "how lovely!—how very lovely!"

"Flora," said Miss Chisholm, "I shall leave those emeralds to you when I die."

"Oh, will you?" said Flora, who was quick at a joke; "then if I live to be ninety I may deck my ruins with emeralds."

"A shorter life than that may bring you the bequest. I wasn't trifling." Then, said Arabella, after an instant's pause, "Flora, do you believe in spirits?"

"Certainly," answered Miss Salmon, astonished.

"Do you ever see them?"

"See them! no. They cannot be seen."

"I see them," said Arabella, in a subdued, mysterious manner. "All my life I have seen strange things, and they impress me always with the idea that my life will not last long."

"Nonsense," said Flora; "you should not allow yourself to think of such things."

"They do: they make me sad, so that I almost wish to die. Is it not dreadful?"

"It is dreadful if you give way to it, my dear. You must be ailing. Will you speak to my father about it?"

"No, Flora, not for the world. I don't give way. But my heart is sore sometimes. You shall have the emeralds."

"Thank you," said Flora; "but don't encourage morbid thoughts. It isn't right."

"Very well, then, let's laugh;" and Arabella was immediately in a new mood.

The reader will scarcely consider his credulity too severely taxed if he is asked to believe that Ensign Clifton soon descended from his platform of exalted benevolence towards Miss Chisholm, and became her devoted admirer. He had not found it easy to come between her and Mr Spence, except just when it was her pleasure that he should do so. She, and not he, pulled the wires; and after a little while he submitted to his fate and moved as he was impelled by the guiding power. Each young man got his share of sunshine, and neither could flatter himself long with the idea that he was preferred. Miss Salmon was hardly an unbiassed judge; but she (in bitterness of disappointment perhaps) thought that Clifton was the favourite.

One evening when they were approaching the Gulf of Mexico, Arabella was seated on a luxurious pile of cushions and wraps, looking over the ship's side. Clifton, who had managed to be in possession of her, was standing near, leaning on the gunwale. The girl was chattering earnestly about the grandeur of her father's house, his slaves, and his establishment, and declaring what great things should be done at home under her influence. When she gave him the chance of putting in a word, Clifton said it made him sad to hear of the magnificence to which she was going. Of course the wily youth intended to provoke a question, in answer to which he was going to deprecate pathetically the distance which so much wealth would

interpose between her and a subaltern of low degree. Her reply might possibly have given some comfort to his soul. But Arabella somewhat disconcerted him, by changing her manner suddenly and saying, "Yes; it makes me very sad too." His little plot thus foiled, it was now Clifton's turn to demand the meaning of what had been said.

"Well," answered Arabella softly, "money, and negroes, and a fine house, and ever so much gaiety, don't bring happiness, do they?"

Clifton wasn't ready with an answer; and, after an instant's pause, Arabella went on. "I feel sometimes, when I am thinking, as if I could be very miserable with all the comfort that I shall live in. There's something one wants that isn't in these fine things, isn't there? I don't know what it is, but it seems to be something far away, out of one's reach, you know; and I feel I shall never get it, and I shall be miserable among all my luxury."

"You desire sympathy, affection, Miss Chisholm," ventured Clifton, cutting in very cleverly for so young a player at the game. "Surely that is not a matter for *you* to be unhappy about. Your wealth is only fortune's gift, but you can command sympathy, and, and——" the boy hesitated, partly from want of courage, and partly from the fascination which her unwonted looks exercised. Her long lashes were drooping over her eyes; her features expressed gentle

sadness; the lips were parted, and her bosom rose with a sigh which was almost a sob.

"No," said she, "it is something that I never shall obtain,—never, never. I know that I shall not live very long. I can't tell how I know it, but I do."

If Clifton thought his opportunity was now come he was mistaken. No sooner did he attempt to avail himself of her soft mood than she shook herself into a merry laugh, saying, while the moisture could be seen in her reopened eyes, "How foolish one can be! Mr Clifton, you make me quite melancholy. Oh, come here, Mr Spence, if you please, and say something amusing. I know you can be entertaining if you like."

This day's experience did not lighten Clifton's heart a bit. While he thought Arabella a thousand times better worth winning than ever, he thought her a thousand times further removed beyond his reach. But he was making more progress than he knew of—indeed, more than she knew of either. Arabella was after a time conscious that she was rather pleased with the young man. But this, she was sure, was only a passing fancy. And teasing him passed the time so merrily! Yet she was venturing rashly.

At last the good ship reached her port. The north side of Jamaica showed itself one splendid evening, with its park-like slopes backed by the giant hills; all the colours of the rainbow smiled and glowed on its broken surface; and the beautiful town of Montego Bay, decked in white and green, lay a crescent on

the shore, and grasped the bright glowing harbour in its span. The black pilot came off while they were all overcome with the glory of the sunset, but he thought it better not to go in to the anchorage at once. "Bettar lay off to-night, sar; soon as de daylight come, me will take you in." This was not an inconvenient arrangement for the passengers. The Berkeley Castle was recognised by those on shore before sunset, and there would be plenty of time in the morning to come down with a welcome from Blenheim, Sandy Chisholm's place; from Stubbs Castle, the abode of Mr Spence's father; and from Elsinore, where lay the detachment to which Ensign Clifton would belong. Accordingly, when, soon after daybreak the next morning, the ship's anchor was dropped, boat-loads of demonstrative friends surrounded her berth. She was boarded first by two washerwomen, who stopped on the ladder to fight till the mate rope's-ended them, and who afterwards attempted to renew the combat on the quarter-deck. Then followed a troop of sable ladies and gentlemen offering mangoes, cocoa-nuts, star-apples, bread-nuts, *alligator*-pears (as they are called), spruce-beer, and a great assortment of island dainties which delight Jack after his voyage. While these were making their rush for the deck, Miss Chisholm recognised her father in a large barge, seemingly delighted at the sight of her; and Ensign Clifton saw the badge of his regiment on the dress of some persons in another

and smaller boat. The skipper himself stood at the gangway to receive Sandy Chisholm. He did not take off his hat to that personage, because the fashion of that country is for everybody to shake hands with everybody; but he showed by his manner (as indeed Sandy Chisholm showed by his), that as long as the latter gentleman should be pleased to remain on board, the whole ship would be at his commandment. Sandy caught his daughter in his arms, then he held her off to look at her, then pronounced her "bonny," and kissed her again: after which salutations, he issued orders about the barge and baggage to a henchman who attended, in that kind of style which we consider appropriate to the Great Mogul or the Grand Lama—orders which a troop of niggers, his own property, and all the sailors in the ship, hastened to execute. He then said a few patronising words to the skipper, whom he thanked for bringing him this "bonny bit of mairchandize" (parenthetically kissing the "mairchandize" again), and whom he made free of Blenheim during the ship's stay. This done, Arabella said she must introduce her fellow-voyagers, with all of whom the great Sandy shook hands, and to each and all of whom he then and there offered unlimited hospitality. As for Mrs and Miss Salmon, he insisted on taking them home with him until they could be joined by the doctor, who had first to go and report himself; and as for Mr Spence, he said he was right glad to see his father's son. Ensign Clifton, of course,

got a shake of the magnate's hand, and was enjoined to make his appearance at Blenheim to see his "auld messmate" (which meant his young idol) "as airly as poassible." Half an hour after that, the passengers were all on shore.

Clifton, after reporting himself to his colonel at Montego Bay, was ordered, as he expected, to Elsinore, which was a large country-house, unoccupied by the proprietor, and so a convenient place of sojourn for a detachment of troops which had been ordered temporarily to that region in consequence of some turbulence among the negroes. There is a great deal in the MS. concerning the impression made upon the pensive ensign by the magnificent scenery of the island, the details of which I omit, seeing that in these lettered days, they may be found elsewhere. Suffice it to say that the gorgeous colours, the ripe vegetation extending down to the tide-line and toppling over into the sea in the struggle for existence, the charmingly broken contour of the glorious hills, soothed in some degree the anxiety of his breast, and made him wonder how such scenes could be associated with pestilence and death.

It was Clifton's opinion at this period of his life that to come among a set of hearty, high-spirited comrades in a strange and beautiful country is the best possible antidote for melancholy; but at the date of the MS. (some years after) he had modified this opinion, and thought that the monotony of a

military life in quarters is in itself depressing. *Tempora mutantur.* It is, however, pretty plain that his jolly friends, and the novelties of the West Indies, delighted him greatly; and if absence made his heart grow fonder at odd times, when he found himself alone, their society prevented him from falling a prey to love-sickness. There was very little duty to do, and so these young heroes improved the occasion of their sojourn among the spurs of the mountains by roaming the country, looking after all that was worth seeing, which, according to their practice, included a great deal that was not worth seeing at all. However, the restlessness kept them in exercise, and that was a good thing.

One day, not long after Clifton's arrival, a member of the little mess announced at dinner that he had discovered an old witch; which announcement was received with derisive cheers and much incredulity. The discoverer, however, was not very seriously affected by the humour of his audience, but went on to say where he had heard of the old lady, and to tell of the marvellous things that she had done. She was a negress, and to be found at Higson's Gap, an estate belonging to that rich old fellow Sandy Chisholm. She had predicted marriages, shipwrecks, deaths, inheritances; had penetrated secrets which were supposed to be locked in one breast alone; had mapped out the destinies of certain individuals in oracles, which had been fulfilled to the letter; had held com-

munion with *duppies*—that is to say, ghosts—and had extracted the knowledge which lay hid with them beyond this world. Of course, there was a superior man present who asked how a sensible being could believe such confounded nonsense. Of course, the discoverer of the old lady knew that the facts were too well attested to be treated as nonsense at all. Of course, the company disputed the matter as if it had been one of life and death; and very fortunately the dispute ended in a bet, not a fight. The property of five doubloons hung in the balance until the proof or the failure of the old lady's skill should incline the scale. An expedition to Higson's Gap, nine or ten miles distant, was arranged for the morrow by four of them; and all was good-humour again.

"I tell you what it is, Dix," said he who had first made mention of the sorceress the night before, "I had this from old Henriquez, the merchant in town, and he wouldn't be likely to make more of it than it was worth; besides, he told me to use his name to the *busha*[1] at Higson's Gap if I chose to go and try the old lady."

"Did he?" answered Dix. "I've a great opinion of Henriquez, you know. Cashes my bills. Knows some friends of mine. Devilish rich, liberal old boy. So, Marten, my good fellow, we won't dispute any more just now; we shall soon see what she can do.

[1] Negro name for overseer; often used, also, as a slang name for the same.

I'm glad you have an introduction to the busha, though, because he'll give us some second breakfast."

Spite of the heat the young men pushed on, pulling up at various houses to ask their way, and always receiving an invitation to drink as well as the information they demanded. At last they rode through a gateway without a gate, over a villanously rough road, where their horses with difficulty could be kept from stumbling, and got safely into what in England would be called the farmyard of Higson's Gap. On one side of this stood the busha's house, supported upon piers, obviously with the intent that there should be a circulation of air between the inhabitants and the ground. But this intent had been in some degree frustrated, because a large portion of the space below had been boarded in and turned into rooms of some sort. The busha, from his veranda above, saw the arrival of the strangers, and descended to meet them. He was standing on the steps as they rode up, and called out, "Here, 'Kiah, Jubal! come, take the gentlemen's horses; cool them, and then come to me for some corn; hear?"

"Yes, massa," responded two darkies, appearing from somewhere about the premises; and when the young men had dismounted, they were hospitably invited to walk up and take a drink. Hereupon Marten pronounced the potent name of Henriquez, —said that he had told them of the fame of the old negress on the property, and that they had come to

test her power, which seemed a most strange thing to them, they being officers not long out from England. And then the busha told them he was delighted to find that they were not mere passengers, but had come to pay a visit to himself; and he bade them all to second breakfast, but recommended, in the meantime, that they should refresh with rum and water. Ice never found its way to Jamaica in those days—they trusted to the porous goglets for cooling their water; and unless the domestics were careful to place these in the breeze, the cooling was but imperfectly done, and the comfort of the drink far less than it might have been. The busha was a tall raw-boned young man, all over freckles except his long neck, which the sun had roasted to the colour of new copper. A very civil, honest fellow he was, but he had unfortunately some idea that he was a beau. His breeches and boots, though decidedly the worse for wear, had evidently been moulded with some attempt at style, and there was a picture of him against the wall of his hall which exhibited some hopelessly depraved artist's idea of a *petit mâitre*.

"Another drink, sir; you've had a long ride," said he to Dix. But Dix required no more at present. Might it not be as well if they were to visit the old lady before second breakfast? Was she really as clever as was reported?

"Well, sir," answered the overseer, "I think I know a little about the sex; but I confess she puzzles

me. A huge lot of what she says is right. I used to think she had agents among the people who brought her information;—they're confounded cunning, you know, especially the women — but no confederate could help her to some of her guesses, or whatever you may like to call them. Now, there was my predecessor out there" (and he pointed through the jalousies to a tomb over against the house), "she told him he would make a black Christmas; and he died on Christmas-eve, and was buried on Christmas-day. Odd, wasn't it?"

"Does she work on the estate?"

"Well, no, sir; she doesn't work. She's been a person of some consequence when she was younger" (with a wink), "and now she's in an honourable retirement—sort of a dowager."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Bacchus, go see where Mammy Cis is," called the overseer; on which a tall, thin, cadaverous negro, presenting himself at one of the numerous doors, answered, "He dere, massa; me see him jes' now."

"Very well, then, gentlemen, what do you say? Shall we go on and see her while they're laying the cloth?" and he led them down the steps, taking a glance, as he went, at a small mirror in the veranda, and adjusting his hat to a becoming cock.

The young men having heard of a dowager, and seeing the busha's little reference to the glass, imagined that they were to be taken to a dower-house.

But the busha's glance at his image or reflection was habitual, being the nearest approach he could make to the luxury enjoyed by society at large of looking on the original. The dower-house was part of the boarded space under the room where they had been sitting. Passing round to the gable-end after they descended to the ground, the gentlemen saw an apartment, open at one end, in which perhaps a chaise might occasionally have been placed, or something which might be not of sufficient value, or not sufficiently small, to stand in the house, and yet not weather-proof; or it was a place where a job of carpentry might be wrought, or where the people might do a little indoor work on a stormy day. The farther end was closed by a partition with a door in it, and this door the busha opened, letting out a villanous smell of salt fish. He called—

"Mammy Cis, come out a bit, will ye? Here's gentlemen come to see you. Smooth your ringlets, you know; and tighten your bodice and let down your skirt, for they're lively fellows." And here the busha, who had a pretty wit of his own, looked round, winked again, and laughed. As he did so, there issued through the door a stout mulatto woman of middle height. Her skin was greatly wrinkled, but her eyes were still bright, and her carriage good. It was impossible to guess how old she might be, for these coloured people, when their youth has once passed, wax hideous in a very short time. She had

a striped handkerchief bound round her head, with the ends depending behind; a short skirt was tied about her waist, and over it was a wonderful robe, just drawn together at one point, and made of some brightly flowered material, which would have been all the better for a visit to the wash-tub. Stockings, which might by courtesy have been called white, covered her ankles, whereof one was neat and slim, and the other exhibited a leaning to elephantiasis. A pair of exceedingly misshapen slippers adorned her feet. Large bright drops hung in her ears, and a showy necklace was about her neck.

"Mornin', gentlemen," said the old lady, as she saluted the company with much dignity. Then she turned her glowing eyes upon the overseer, looked through him for an instant, and asked in a quiet voice, but with a very pointed manner, "Who is you making fun of, sar? Is dis your manners to a leady?"

The youth was embarrassed. He was evidently not disposed to incur the weird woman's vengeance, and at the same time he was anxious, before the young officers, to maintain his superiority, and make good the sallies of his redundant wit.

"Accuse me of anything but that," said the gallant busha. "Ill manners to a lady I could never be guilty of. You mistake, mammy, I'm sure. I wish to treat you with the very highest respect." It was necessary to wink again, to make the irony of this

apparent; but he gave a very timid wink, hardly daring to look toward the strangers.

"You tink it respeckful, sar, to talk to me about ringlets and about my skirt? And what you mean, sar, by bringing gentlemen to see me widout sending fust to inform me?"

"Really, mammy, I thought you knew everything so well without telling, that it was quite unnecessary to warn you."

"You know, sar, dat is not true. Gentlemen, doan't let dis young man persuade you dat I am fond of making a show of myself. He knows better. He knows well dat, poor old woman as I am, I have plenty to care for me, and all my relations is not old and poor. He knows, too, dat it is not wise to be talking too freely about dis and dat dat I knows."

At all hazards, temporal and spiritual, the busha was constrained to wink when he was accused of saying what was not true, that he might demonstrate the exquisite flavour of the joke; but he was not at all comfortable when the wise woman boasted about her influence in this world, and the indiscretion of talking of her dealings with the other. It was a relief to him when she turned to look at the group of strangers. Her eye fell on Clifton, and she uttered, with emphasis, the exclamation, "Hei!" He appeared in some way to interest her. But before she could speak to him, Dix, impatient for some sorcery, stepped forward and said, "The

fact is, old lady, that we heard you could do something in the conjuring line, and we were geese enough to take a ride through the sun to witness your art. It looks very like nonsense, I'm afraid."

"Perhaps so, sar," said the sorceress, very calmly. "I wish for nobody to tink me a conjuror, as you call it. Well for you if I am not."

Hereupon Marten, who had more patience, and, as he fancied, more tact than his friend, stepped up and put a silver dollar in Mammy Cis's hand, saying at the same time in a soothing tone, "Come now, old girl, that will make it right, I daresay. Now, please, tell me my fortune."

"Look he', sar," said the old woman, drawing herself up; "you tink I want for you dollar? Chaw! I know where to get money in plenty if I want it. You is mistaken; for true you is. Take back de silber, and tank you all de same!" and she returned the dollar with a magnificent air.

It only remained now for the fourth of the party, whose name was Worth, to try his luck, and he fortunately chose to begin with a little fair speaking.

"Really, ma'am," said he, "I think we have been presumptuous in supposing that there was anything in the fortunes of ordinary people like us for spirits to care about. If there is nothing to tell, we must only regret having troubled you; but if any-

thing occurs to you worth mentioning, and you would be good enough——"

"Dere is something to tell, sar; and since you is polite, I have de pleasure of informing you dat, before you sleeps to-night, you will hear of something dat will sweet[1] you greatly."

"Indeed! and what is it?"

"I can't say, sar; but you will see." Then turning to Marten again, with something like a smile, she said to him, "Since you is so kind as to offer me money, sar, I can't do less dan tell you dat some money is comin' to you, but instead of silber you will get gold. My king, you is lucky."

"A piece of good news,—a bag of gold," put in Dix, sarcastically; "you know, old lady, we can get quite as good conjuring as this under a hedge in England. I can guess what the next announcement will be. You will promise me a princess for a wife; isn't that it?"

At mention of the princess, the busha eyed Lieutenant Dix much as a sportsman eyes a poacher. But there was not time for him to make a remark, for Mammy Cis sternly took up her parable and said, "It is not a princess, sar; and if your tongue didn't so long, I shouldn't speak to you at all. Come dis way, sar, and I will mention to you what I know privately. You can tell your friends or not, as you tink proper."

[1] Delight.

After hesitating a little, Dix, with a derisive ejaculation and gesture, withdrew in the direction to which the old lady pointed, and she began to make to him a communication in an undertone. It had not proceeded far when the bystanders saw the young man turn as pale as death. In a moment he stamped furiously on the ground and burst away, swearing that she was the devil.

"No, sar," said Mammy Cis; "I am not de debbil. It is de debbil dat put sich tings in your heart."

"What has she told you, Dix?" was the general cry.

"Oh, curse her! I can't tell you. Something disagreeable to listen to; but, of course, a lie."

The old lady did not speak in reply, but she glanced towards Dix, and "held him with her glittering eye" for a second; then released him. Dix, anxious for a diversion, then said, drawing Clifton forward, "Here, give him some of your wisdom. He's modest; he hasn't had any yet."

Instead of addressing Clifton, the prophetess, in a theatrical attitude, put her hands before her face, as if to shut out some disagreeable sight, and turned her head away from him. While her look indicated intense distress, she said, "Dis young buckra may bring much sorrow to me and mine; but I see noting clear; I can't tell what it will be. For true, sar, trouble will come between you and me. My king!

my king! But, sar, you doan't seem to mean wrong, and de trouble may pass. And now make me [*i.e.*, *let* me] say what you will mind more than de griefs of an ole woman. You is prospering already in what is nearest to your heart; but where you want to bring joy you may bring a curse if you and others is not careful.'

Clifton blushed at the first part of this prediction, and his heart bounded as it rushed to the interpretation. As to the second part, he could, in the pleasant idea which had been called up, find no place for it.

"By Jove! Clifton, you're in love. That must be it," exclaimed some of the youngsters; and the whole party laughed at his evident consciousness, while the overseer looked him over critically to discover what the devil there was about *him* that he should have a successful love-affair. Meantime the sorceress called "Pinkie, Pinkie!" and thereupon a little negress issued from the interior apartment and stood awaiting the old lady's commands, while she improved the occasion by scratching her head. It seemed that she had been summoned only to give dignity to Mammy Cis's retreat; which Cis now accomplished, after dismissing her visitors in a stately manner, and giving a few more words of caution to the overseer.

Out in the air once more, the young men were soon laughing and chattering over a host of subjects,

and the sorceress was for a moment out of mind. Their appetites reminded them, also, that they had breakfasted early, and they were not sorry to learn that the promised collation was nearly ready. They went above again, where they were accommodated with a basin, a towel, and a bucket of water, and left to perform their ablutions as they could, each chucking the water he had used through the window. Meanwhile the busha got off his boots, and assumed a pair of silk stockings well darned, also a shirt with a frill and ruffles, and turned out quite a stunning figure.

If the second breakfast was somewhat rude, it was given with hearty goodwill; and it was distinguished by some remarkably fine rum-punch, the influence of which made the youngsters talk again of the visit to the fortune-teller.

"Now that old lady," observed Marten—"what humbug, to be sure!—is, I suppose, what is called an *obi* woman"

"Not at all," the overseer answered; "she uses no incantation, does nothing illegal,[1] and she abuses Obeah. I can't, either, call her one of the Myall people, who profess to undo the mischief of Obeah. She takes not the slightest trouble to impress visitors, and says she doesn't know how she comes by her knowledge."

"Knowledge, indeed!" echoed Worth. "I never

[1] The practice of Obeah was illegal; perhaps is so still.

saw a much poorer attempt at fortune-telling. I am to hear of some good luck before night, isn't that it? But I say, Dix, she seemed to astonish you."

"Curse her!" said Dix.

"I am to win gold," said Marten; "but as for you, Clifton——"

"My friend here," interrupted the busha, in an aggrieved, supercilious tone, "is going to win a lady."

And on that hint, and inspired by the punch, the busha turned the conversation on ladies; and it became very confidential—so much so, that the substance of what occurred up to the hour of the guests' departure, about four o'clock, never transpired, the only thing recorded being that they made the busha promise to come down and have an evening with them.

An orderly from Montego Bay was pacing before the door at Elsinore when the young men, powerfully refreshed, clattered up to the house. He had come up on an estate-cart most of the way, and been despatched by the adjutant.

"Holloa! what's up now?" sang out Marten, who was in front.

"Despatch for you, Worth; hope you're not to be moved."

Worth began to read the note carelessly, but his eyes soon expanded over it. "By Jove!" he exclaimed; "only think! Poor Rowley was this

morning thrown from his horse against the angle of the barrack, and killed on the spot."

"You don't say so!" "Good heavens!" "Poor fellow!"

"And I get the company."

"By Jove! yes, of course. Glad of your luck, old fellow; but sorry for Rowley. Good fellow, Rowley."

No wonder that they were gloomy that evening. Felicitations for Worth would come hereafter when the promotion should be officially announced. They talked about Rowley, and kindly remembered all his good deeds, while most made arrangements for starting before daybreak to attend his funeral. In the midst of the regrets, Dix burst in with—

"By George! Worth, that ugly old devil said you would hear of some luck before night."

"So she did; how odd!" said they all.

"And she promised you gold, Marten. Here it is; not a large fortune—only five doubloons," added Dix, with a bitter smile.

"But, my dear fellow, don't be precipitate. This promotion of Worth's is only a coincidence. I don't feel at all satisfied that——"

"Take the money," said Dix, with an oath. "It isn't Worth's good luck that has convinced me. The wretch" (and he turned pale again) "told me darkly of what could not, I thought, be known to any one in the island but myself. Curse her!"

"The devil she did!" was the general rejoinder.

Clifton's heavy baggage had not yet come up. It was at that time lying by the roadside, somewhere about midway betwixt Montego Bay and Elsinore. In another week it was expected that it might make its appearance at the station. Clifton, therefore, could not get at his uniform, and could not conveniently appear at the funeral; which circumstance, as the others said, was not of consequence, as Clifton had never seen poor Rowley. So they arranged that he should remain about the station, which would enable all the others to go down; and to this arrangement Clifton readily agreed, because he had a little plan of his own which there would be now an opportunity of carrying out. He had scarcely mentioned Miss Chisholm's name, fearing lest his secret should be detected; and from the same shyness, he had refrained from making a visit to her. Nothing, perhaps, could have helped forward Clifton's cause more effectually than his thus postponing his visit to Blenheim. Arabella, accustomed to have everything done for her, had all her time disposable, and from the day of her arrival found some of it hang heavy during the hot hours. She had many apartments appropriated to herself, and among these was a gallery, formed to catch the grateful sea-breeze. Here she would swing in a grass hammock, and think over the days of her voyage out, and wonder why she could not be as well amused here at home as she had

been on board ship. It was nearly the same party. Flora was here, and there was an infinity of things strange to her to show Flora. Then Mr Spence, though he did not live at Blenheim, seemed as though he couldn't live away from it. Why should this society be less entertaining on shore than it had been at sea? It began to strike her that she missed Ensign Clifton.

Now an imperious young lady like Arabella, when she has once formed a wish, is most impatient for its gratification. She desired to see Clifton. She was hurt that he did not come; it was presumption in him to be able to stay away from her so long. She doubted whether his wound might not prove to have been a scratch which was fast healing, and whether his comrades might not have introduced him to many a belle quite capable of supplanting her. She grew angry, and had that exceedingly threatening symptom of tenderly yearning for the young man's visit in one fit, and in the next vindictively devising against him those penalties and pains wherewith lovers are not seldom tortured by their mistresses. Arabella was very proud and very politic, and so kept her feelings to herself, or, at least, intended to do so; but it is not certain that Flora was unsuspicious of them.

While matters went thus at Blenheim, Clifton's comrades, as has been said, left him one day to his own resources.

Here was the lover's opportunity, and he used it.

When they were all off in the direction of the coast, he got on a horse and made for Blenheim. The negroes whom he met directed him fairly enough, but their remarks about the distance did not enlighten him. Some, of whom he inquired "How far?" answered, "Far enough, massa;" and others, to the same query, said "Not so far, massa." However, he made his way thither somehow; and it may be inferred that his inner consciousness was very busy as he rode along, for he does not, as he was wont, expatiate much on the appearance of outward things. He found Blenheim to be a large rambling house, built principally of wood, well sheltered by trees, and surrounded by ground which there had been some attempt to make ornamental. The site commanded a splendid view, stretching down to the sea. There was an immense display of barbaric grandeur and profusion; and negroes and negresses of all ages swarmed about the place. Miss Chisholm's bright eyes sent forth an additional sparkle when she saw her visitor, who, however, could gather but small comfort from her looks; for he perceived that Mr Spence was in the room with her, established, as it would seem, on very easy terms. The Salmon ladies, also, were still there, and they all welcomed their fellow-voyager with cordiality. Mr Chisholm was away on business somewhere, and did not appear, but the ladies had plenty to say, and were full of a large ball which was to come off at Montego Bay in

a few days, and to which the military were of course to be invited. Arabella was too grand to do anything for herself, but Miss Salmon was very busy in getting up a little millinery for her mother and herself, to be worn at the coming entertainment. Flora managed to get possession of Mr Clifton, and seemed much to rejoice in his propinquity—a compliment for which he would have been more grateful had he not perceived Mr Spence at the same time monopolising Arabella. However, they found plenty to say about the past voyage and the coming ball, and the impression which the island had made on the newcomers. By-and-by Miss Salmon took occasion, guardedly, to hint that the affair between Arabella and Spence seemed very like a settled thing. "He is always here," said Flora, "and, I fancy, has plenty of encouragement to come." Perhaps she read in her hearer's features the pang with which the poor lad received this information, and perhaps Flora thought that he deserved for his perversity to feel the pang; she, however, tried to divert him from the subject by sprightly conversation, and when he offered to move away, pinned him to his place, by making him wind silk for her. A superior strategist, however, delivered him from this snare; for Arabella came to them and said she would take Clifton and show him the bloodhounds, which, when on board ship, he had often expressed a desire to inspect; and she commanded Spence to come and take Clifton's place as Flora's

silk-winder. If this had been intended expressly to favour Clifton's wishes it could not have been more craftily done, for Flora was in great fear of dogs generally, and could not possibly volunteer to be of the party to the kennel; so, with some chagrin, she accepted Mr Spence's services, and looked happy, and talked pleasantly, while there was bitterness in her heart. Meanwhile Clifton's heart beat a little more happily when he found himself walking forth with the lady of his affections. Arabella looked more charming than he had ever seen her. She was richly and becomingly dressed, and the escape from the confinement of the ship had told most favourably on her appearance and spirits. She did not hurry towards the dogs, but by the way called Clifton's attention to numerous things about the place which must be quite new to him. After a time she asked him if he did not think Miss Salmon looking particularly well. Clifton said he thought she was looking very well, and that her spirits and wit seemed improved by her residence at Blenheim.

"She was in high glee a quarter of an hour ago, certainly," said Miss Chisholm; "but do you know, I don't think she'll be quite so merry just now."

"Indeed! I don't understand you."

"I daresay not. How blind men are! I mean that she won't thank me for taking you away from her."

"Me!"

"Yes, you. I have a suspicion that she thinks very highly of you."

"You are joking, Miss Chisholm."

"No—no joke at all; I have my reasons."

"Which are?"

"That she seems particularly anxious to promote a good understanding between Mr Spence and me."

"Oh! does she? but how does that prove——"

"You are too tiresome, I vow. How shall I say it? Perhaps she thinks I might stand in her way a little, so she would like to see me disposed of."

The ensign would have said something very serious then and there, only his heart gave such a great jump at this plain speaking that his tongue refused its office.

"I only tell you now," went on Arabella, "what may be passing in *her* mind. Of course it is all nonsense. I wouldn't for the world cross her path, and she ought to know it."

"But tell me, Miss Chisholm, for heaven's sake——"

"Well, I never knew anybody so absurd," said Arabella, laughing heartily. "I wish I had never told you at all. Now do let us be reasonable, and talk of something else. There, now, what do you think of that horse? It is Wallenstein, and he won the Kingston Cup the year before last."

"His limbs are too fine for hard work," faltered the baffled ensign.

"Yes, so my papa says; but he can go like the wind under a light weight. Now tell me what you have been doing since I saw you last."

And Clifton gave as good an account as he could of himself, taking care to make it appear that he had eagerly seized the first opportunity that offered of presenting himself at Blenheim. When he said that he had been the day before at Higson's Gap, Arabella turned sharply towards him, and asked what he was doing there.

"Well, we went to see an old witch," said Clifton.

Arabella bent her bright eyes on him with a look that pierced through the young man. "Well," asked she, "and did you see the old witch, as you call her?"

"Oh yes," answered Clifton, feeling as if something were wrong and not knowing what. "Oh yes, we saw her."

Miss Chisholm became silent and thoughtful after this. They saw the dogs and other things of interest beside; but the lightness of the young lady's manner had quite left her. At last, when they were nearly at the house again, she stopped and said—

"Don't, Mr Clifton, ever speak to anybody about that silly visit to Higson's Gap; I entreat you, I desire you."

Clifton said he would obey her, but he would like to mention that there were some rather extraordinary circumstances connected——

"No matter; nonsense; you are not to speak of it," said Arabella, peremptorily.

The remainder of his visit Clifton does not appear to have thought worth recording. He could not wait for dinner, and the return of Sandy Chisholm, because there was no officer at Elsinore, and he felt that he ought to return. And so he rode away pleased, distracted, puzzled, a conflict of emotions racking his breast. It was delicious to reflect upon Arabella's looks and words when she owned the consciousness that she might appear attractive to him; but her coolness about the subject, and the way she turned it off, presented less agreeable food for thought. And then the fuss she made about the sorceress. What on earth could it mean? On one point, however, he felt rather relieved. If Arabella had really felt a preference for Spence, she could not possibly, strange and wilful though she was, have spoken with such *sang froid* about her relations with him. Many doubts and fears, with just enough of hope lurking about his heart to exercise it pitifully, kept him perplexed and helplessly love-sick. He could not disburden his mind nor draw comfort from anywhere. But the ball was not far off; at present he lived for that.

Those West India balls of the olden time have been described by so many powerful pens that I must again take the liberty of abbreviating Mr Clifton's somewhat lengthy description, which, when

it was written, being new, would no doubt have been infinitely amusing. Quiet as he was, he seems to have had a keen sense of humour; and as he wrote before there was a Michael Scott or a Marryat, he did well to indulge his talent. He tells of the wonderful dresses of the company, which to his eye, fresh from Europe, presented an appearance exquisitely quizzical. He was more impressed by the degree and quantity of beauty in the ladies than by their dresses; but the men he evidently considered to be what we should now call "guys." The busha from Higson's Gap, perspiring in a laced velvet coat, is celebrated by him, as also the wearers of various costumes, some including thick wigs. But especially he notes the hilarity of the whole company, where nobody was *blasé* or cynical, and all the world seemed determined to have a night of thorough enjoyment if possible. He was astonished to observe how all these people, so languid and inanimate in the daytime, became now at night filled with the very spirit of action: how they tore and scampered about the room, the ladies more alive if possible than their partners, their eyes sparkling, their cheeks glowing, their feet twinkling; while the barbarous music screamed, and scratched, and brayed, and clanged, but entirely answered the purpose for which it was provided. Spite of his quiet habits he found himself more than once in the stream which, like that brook which brags that it goes on for ever, flowed incessantly

towards the "tap," where a dozen coloured people dispensed powerful refreshments through a window opening on a veranda, and freely exchanged compliments and observations with their customers. He understood, for he sympathised with, the thirst of his own sex; but it made him open his eyes to see dainty, delicate girls come up to the bar and toss off tumblers of beer, while the attendants remarked to them,—"My, missy, you really lubly dis evening! me long for come hax you to dance;" or, "Hei, my sweet missy, you too hansom! you pleay de debbil wid de buckrah gentlemen to-night; fifty or a hunded of dem, me hear, like a-mad, preasin' for you beauty. Gad sen' dere doan't nobody killed before de mornin', dat all *me* say!" and he marvelled to see them, thus refreshed, return to the business of the evening with a ten times better will than when they began. The entertainment, he says, took place in the Court-house. The fresh night air was let in from all sides, and would have been more agreeable than it was if, in passing through the verandas and doors and windows, it had not swept over some hundreds of negroes and negresses who thronged these communications, and laughed and shouted and made remarks with tolerable freedom, so as to elicit sometimes from within a hint of cowskin.

"I hear you, Sam Swig; look out for fum-fum to-morrow,—hear 'ee?"

"S'ep me gad, massa, it not me! it dis Bungo;

for him dam v'ice fabour mine. Hei, Bungo! is you not asheamed of you'self? my king!"[1]

And then such a supper! which for solidity, the ensign says, was fit to put before famished troopers in northern Europe. The viands disappeared, though, at a great rate; and the flying of corks kept up a *feu-de-joie* till long after daybreak. Some few gentlemen, it is hinted, did not, after the third or fourth visit to the supper-room, leave that apartment again until they were assisted out into the sunshine; and some others who did leave it stood about the walls of the ball-room, a little noisy and facetious. But offences like these were easily condoned; for, says Clifton, everybody was tolerably unrestrained. Old Sandy Chisholm appeared there at first the very pink of good-humoured condescension. He joked with the young ladies, and had his cracks with the men. Everybody was ambitious of drinking healths with this great man, who bore the process exceedingly well, and seemed only to become more good-humoured and jocular (perhaps a little broader in his fun) as the hobnobbing went on. After supper, he swore he would have a reel; and calling forth some of his countrymen and countrywomen, roared at the orchestra for "Loard Macdonald." But to the "spring" the native band was quite unequal: how-

[1] "For him" means "his": "fabour" for "favour" means "resembles." The Jamaica negro commonly forms his possessive pronoun by putting "*for*" before the personal.

beit, a hard-baked Caledonian of the company, laying hold of a musician's *feedle*, made it as potent as the chanter of Alister M'Alister, and set them working like dervishes. Old Chisholm vaulted and wriggled and tossed his nose in the air, and snapped his fingers, and, every time the tune recommenced, shouted like a Stentor. Never mind if it was in the tropics; the fit was on, and the dance kept going with such animation as was never seen before, and never since, except, perhaps, in Alloway Kirkyard. By Jupiter, it appears to have been great fun! But the ensign could not, he says, have given his description of it at the time, or for years after. His eyes took in all that was going on, but his mind was intent on far other things. He had gone to the ball determined to bring his suspense to an end, if only Arabella could be wrought for a while into a serious mood. But he was thrown off his balance, at first entering the room, by the sight of Mr Spence dancing with Miss Chisholm and looking much at his ease—nay, supremely happy. This need not have discouraged the ensign, but it was in those days his disposition to be timid and diffident in matters of feeling. He was like enough to be shy and unready at the best of times; but an unfavourable incident might have the effect of painfully increasing his bashfulness. He was conscious that his resolution had received a check, and angry with himself that such was the case: while into his mind, as he stood

gazing half entranced at the dancers, came some lines of a poet[1] who was known to youths of that time as well as Moore is to those of the present day :—

"Every passion but fond Love
Unto its own redress does move;
But that alone the wretch inclines
To what prevents his own designs;
Makes him lament, and sigh, and weep,
Disorder'd tremble, fawn and creep;
Postures which render him despis'd,
Where he endeavours to be prized.
For women (born to be control'd)
Stoop to the forward and the bold."

After a while he succeeded in recovering his equanimity, and when the dance was over, he went up and paid his compliments to Arabella with tolerable assurance. But unfortunately the young lady was not in the gracious mood which he had hoped for: she was engaged for another dance to Mr Spence, and for two after that to another gentleman; so that, for the present, Clifton was thrown out. He felt a little angry and resentful, and seeing Miss Salmon disengaged, he secured her hand for the next two dances. Flora was gracious enough, at any rate; and as the scene was new to both of them, they found plenty to talk about. She made amusing remarks on the queer customs and accidents, and soon raised her partner's spirits to a pleasanter level. She did not, however, fail to direct his attention to Arabella and

[1] Waller.

Mr Spence, or to repeat the expression of her belief that they were happy lovers. Clifton had his own reasons for not wholly accepting this view of the case; but he was sufficiently pained and fretted at hearing such remarks; and Flora, content with having just suggested the idea, was too wise to allow herself to be associated in his mind with disagreeable thoughts, and so became sprightly and entertaining, drawing the young man into free conversation. She had discernment to perceive that when the *mauvaise honte* was once charmed away, his words were worth listening to; the sound of them was infinitely pleasant to her ear.

It was late in the evening before the ensign's patience was rewarded by a dance with Arabella; but when this was obtained there did not come with it the slightest opportunity of pouring out the thoughts of which his heart was full. Arabella was as gay and animated as she could be. Her dress and ornaments, which would have been in excess for most styles of beauty, were not too much for her sultana-like head and figure. Clifton had never seen her look so splendid. But he was not the only one who thought her admirable. Attentions were offered in profusion from all quarters, and the young lady did not seem in the least disposed to give herself up to any particular admirer. The ball was a failure, the young man saw, as regarded any clearing up of his prospects with his love. But on the other hand,

he had no reason to complain of Arabella's father, who, coming across him, took him off for a drink, and then reproached him for not being more frequently at Blenheim, saying that when he was a youth, the "muckle deil" himself would not have kept him away from a place where he would have been welcomed by "twa bonnie lassies." He engaged Clifton to dine with him three days after, and told him to bring one of his brother officers, that he might begin to make their acquaintance.

Among the earliest departures was that of Mr and Miss Chisholm. Mrs and Miss Salmon had left them now, and rejoined the doctor; and they (the Chisholms) had come down to stay the night at a house a short distance from the town. Clifton, rather wearied, had gone outside, and was wandering about a part of the verandas which, affording no view of the ball-room, was free from negroes. From hence he caught sight of Miss Chisholm in the anteroom attended by a following of young men all eagerly assisting to wrap her up. He went inside the doorway, intending, as he could do no more, to say "good night" as she should pass out, and perhaps to tell her of his engagement to dine at Blenheim, but not in the least to interfere with her present attendants. Indeed, not to appear to be particularly interested, he turned away a little, knowing that she would have to pass him, and could hardly miss bidding him adieu. While he stood thus "cooling his heels," as

the MS. has it, he felt a soft hand placed on his arm, and looking round to the owner of it, he was electrified to find it was Miss Chisholm's. She had left all her beaux behind, and come up to him as deliberately as if he had been ordered to wait for her. "I will just step outside until papa is quite ready," she said; and then bowing to her deserted followers, she went on to the steps. The road was full of carriages and negroes, the latter of whom kept up a stunning jabber, calling up carriages, wrangling, and butting each other with their heads. Pausing there a moment in the bright starlight, and throwing her weight a little on Clifton's arm, she said in a clear, gentle key, very different from that of the Babel of negroes, and therefore audible to him—"You have not seemed happy to-night; has anything distressed you?" Taken aback as he had been, and notwithstanding that he was much inclined to be on his dignity, the young man did not waste this opportunity. "I have been unhappy, and disappointed too," he answered. "I came here hoping, Miss Chisholm, to have heard from your lips whether I was ever to be happy again or not."

"From me!" echoed Arabella. "Oh, if I could make you happy, you may be sure I would do it."

"You would! Oh, if I could only believe you meant that seriously!" and he took possession of the hand that lay on his arm, and continued, "Tell me in earnest that I *may* be happy."

"Nonsense!" she answered, but in very soft accents, and with her dark eyes resting gently on his face. "There is papa in the carriage, and waving his whip for me; we must go to him." As she stepped down towards the road a dozen niggers sang out, "Hei! clear de way dere!" But they simply pushed each other about without clearing the way at all, until a man with a long whip dashed in among them. Arabella got safely to the carriage, which was an open one, built for only two, with a flat board across the top supported on four standards, to keep off the sun. As she bade the young man good night, she said she hoped he would be happier now; and then taking her seat beside her parent, away they drove, escorted by two negroes on mules, and followed by her maids and her father's valet or boy on foot, each of these personal attendants carrying on the head a bandbox or a trunk. It is uncertain how long the ensign stood there in the roadway looking out his soul after the enchanting figure. He roused himself at last, and thought he did feel happy, although rather stunned. Presently he went back to the rooms, exhibiting a liveliness which none had ever seen in him before.

"What the deuce has come to Clifton?" asked one of his brother officers of another.

"Slightly inebriated, I should say," replied Worth, who was the person referred to.

He was, but it wasn't with wine or strong drink.

After this the melancholy ceased, and there was frequent visiting at Blenheim, the young man standing fire capitally when they rallied him. As for poor Spence, it was his turn now to feel anxious, and even Miss Salmon could hardly persuade him that his chance was still good. Indeed Miss Salmon herself was much exercised by what she heard, and began to make some very particular inquiries concerning Arabella's fortune, and so on—eliciting answers which rather set her thinking. Sandy Chisholm seemed to take very kindly to the ensign on acquaintance, and for a few weeks the life of the latter was an Elysium.

There must be breaks, however, in every happiness, and it was a little interruption of the current of bliss when Mr Chisholm one day, with a grave face, asked Ensign Clifton to give him a few minutes in his private room, and began their colloquy with "Noo, young sir." The old fellow spoke as kindly and sensibly as could be. He said he had observed Clifton's attentions to his daughter, as he doubted not others had done also, and the time seemed to him to have come when either these frequent visits must be discontinued, or, if ever renewed at all, renewed on an understood footing. Hereupon the young officer spoke up as eloquently and as heartily as a parent could have desired, and Chisholm took his hand and wrung it. He did not, however, depart from his grave tone; but after telling the suitor how entirely

he had won his esteem, went on to say that so young a man had no right to make an engagement to marry without the consent of his relations. He (old Sandy) knew the world, and thought old heads and young heads might view such matters differently. His "lassie" was not that forlorn or homely that she need marry into a family where they would look askance at her. And the short and the long of it was that, before he would allow the matter to proceed further, the ensign must obtain his father's full consent, keeping away honourably from Arabella until such consent could be produced. It was a cruel sentence, but Clifton saw the propriety of it, and said he was quite certain his friends would not, could not, object; which Sandy said drily that he was glad to hear. After some time Clifton said that if he was to be banished from his beloved he would rather not remain close to her, and that he would try and obtain leave (short as was the time that he had been out) and plead his cause himself, returning with his credentials.

"As ye like, sir," said old Sandy; "but remember ye'll tell your freens aiverything aboot Bell—the haill truth, ye understan'."

Clifton readily promised this, thinking that he understood the other's meaning, and believing that the more particularly he described "Bell" and everything connected with her, the more his family would exult in his having obtained such a prize; and then

with much entreaty he obtained leave to spend another hour with Arabella.

Unfortunately he did *not* quite understand, poor simple fellow, what old Chisholm meant; but he was soon to be enlightened. It has been said that Miss Salmon, in her chagrin, made many inquiries concerning Arabella; and she soon heard a good deal which she felt certain the ensign did not know, and with which, in her judgment, he ought to be acquainted. Her chief informant was a middle-aged native[1] lady, whose daughter had married an officer in the regiment; and this lady undertook, at Flora's solicitation, "to have a little talk" with Mr Clifton. Now that young officer, in order the more effectually to interest the adjutant and all influential men, ending of course with the colonel, in his petition for leave, went to stay a few days at headquarters, so that Mrs Evitt (that was the matron's name) soon found her opportunity. She bade her son-in-law to bring him to her house one evening; and having established herself *tête-à-tête* with him at cribbage, began to congratulate him on the favour with which he was received at Blenheim. He, as she expected, treated this as raillery, and their game went on swimmingly for a time. At length the lady remarked, "Indeed, then, you may laugh, Mr Clifton, but there's many a young officer that wouldn't mind winning Miss Chisholm, spite of all her drawbacks. She'll

[1] This does not mean a coloured lady, but a white Creole.

have a finer fortune than many a young miss that's been honestly come by. Hah, there! one for his nob!"

"Mrs Evitt," answered Clifton, turning very red, "I don't understand you. *Drawbacks! honestly come by!* How can you think of using such expressions in reference to Miss Chisholm?"

"How can I think? You haven't scored that five. Why, there's no scandal, I hope, in alluding to what is notorious. Surely you know very well who Arabella's mother is, and that the old lady is to be seen now on one of Mr Chisholm's estates—an old mulatto who tells fortunes."

"You are joking," faltered the ensign, turning now from red to pale. "Really you ought not—to—to——"

"Ought, or ought not," proceeded the lady, "there's nobody doubts that Mammy Cis (that's the old crone's name) is mother to the brilliant Arabella."

"For God's sake, don't trifle with — with — don't——"

"Take up your cards, Mr Clifton, and go on. It's your play. I'm heartily glad you disclaim all intention towards Arabella, since you appear not to know her origin."

"I know that she is Mr Chisholm's daughter," answered he, grandly, "and as charming a young woman——"

"Hoity-toity! Mr Chisholm's daughter?" inter-

rupted the not very refined lady. "It's Mr Chisholm's pleasure to make a pet of her, and to bring her out in state as his 'bairn,' as he calls her; but folks might call her by another name if they weren't afraid of flashing eyes and angry looks."

"Call her! what dare they call her?" shrieked the maddened lad.

"They might call her his *slave*. Heavens, don't bite me, but that's the truth! He might *sell* her instead of marrying her; for although not very dark, she isn't white by law—only a quadroon."

The young man got to his chamber he knew not how. He was hardly sane. Here was a pretty account with which to introduce an intended daughter-in-law to an old proud family! He felt in his soul that it was true. Arabella's prohibition of all mention of his visit to Higson's Gap, and Mr Chisholm's hints about the whole truth, were intelligible enough now.[1]

. . . . . .

Clifton had not to sue for his leave—the doctors got that as soon as it was safe to move him; for

[1] The selection by one of these old sinners of a daughter or of daughters, to be educated as gentlewomen, and acknowledged, was by no means uncommon. Such a selection involved a complete separation from the mother at the time of the daughter proceeding to school, if not before. Maternal and filial affections were generally very mild in such cases—the young ladies desired to have the relationship forgotten, and the elder ladies philosophically acquiesced in ignoring it.

he had a violent fever—a *seasoning* fever, as knowing people called it. But Mrs Evitt and Miss Salmon knew what kind of seasoning had produced it,—and Miss Salmon also had a fever. Sandy Chisholm, and Arabella too, came down to see the sick man while the fever was running its course, but he could recognise no one; and when he was free of the fever, and hovering between life and death, none but a nurse was allowed near him: and he was carried on board ship in a hammock, with a thick veil over his face.

. . . . . .

The blow of course fell as the reader may expect. Clifton did not return to Jamaica, but wrote like a good and feeling young man to Mr Chisholm, telling him that he had, as he had been desired, told everything to his friends, who would not hear of the match; that he had never, before leaving Jamaica, opened his lips to a soul concerning his proposal; and that he trusted his short visit there would be forgotten by most people before the letter he was writing could come to hand. He had made his offer with a sincere heart, believing that he could win over his friends to his wishes; but, alas! Mr Chisholm knew better than he. He implored Arabella, whom he still loved as fondly as ever, to forgive and forget him, — and a great deal more betokening honest remorse.

Mr Chisholm, as he had foreseen the possibility of

such an issue as this, bore the disappointment with equanimity. "I was no' mistaken in the laddie," he said to himself. "He's been aye honourable and true, and there's not a word of hypoacrisy in a' the letter. I'd have loved him weel as a son in-law, and the connection—but there, it's of nae use encouraging idle regraits: what maun be, maun be; and there's as gude fish in the sea as ever cam oot of it. As for Bell, she'll maybe greet sairly eneugh; but she's young, and she'll do weel belyve." Shrewd as he was, though, the old gentleman miscalculated altogether the effect which this news would have upon his daughter. He expected her to be affected as an English or Scotch girl would have been by such a reverse. But he was quite unprepared for the burst of passion with which Arabella received the communication. She wept and shrieked; then poured out a volume of reproaches against Clifton, whom she said she would spit upon and trample in the dust, raging and stamping while she thus raved, as if she were literally crushing her lost lover to pieces; then, exhausted by her violence, she threw herself on the floor, weeping bitterly again, and calling upon her beloved by every endearing name. The variations of her fury continued so long that the old planter was perfectly shocked, and even alarmed, at the paroxysms. Reasoning with her was quite out of the question; but after trying for a long while to coax and soothe her, he spoke a little sternly, and

tried to touch her pride. He told her that this was not the behaviour of a gentle body, but more like the savagery of the people on the estate, who were unable in any circumstances to control themselves. This, however, did very little good; and when the girl became more subdued, it was because she had expended her strength. She then turned sullen, lay on the floor, and moaned or threatened. It was a most pitiable case. The old man hesitated from shame to send for a medical man, and the young lady's negro attendants were of no use to him in the circumstances. "My, sar! someting mus' upon her mind," one abigail said; while another one brought her a piece of lead to bite (and Arabella bit it), saying, "She will better after she kick lilly bit." No food passed her lips that day, and she never spoke rationally. When she was not in the sullens, she was in such a violent fit as has been described. Of course this could not last, and after some hours Arabella became somewhat calmer; but she seemed a changed girl. She was careless of her appearance, would scarcely eat or drink, and lay sobbing and moaning the half of her time. To speak of anything connected with her trouble was impossible, for it made her rage like a pythoness. Her poor father was almost out of his wits with alarm, and the negro servants had a dreadful time of it. One of them having imprudently hinted, "I think missy mus' a crossed in love," was despatched under escort to the

driver, with an order that she should receive a sound flogging. Old Sandy watched the course of her temper; and as soon as he could let her be seen without shame, he entreated Miss Salmon to come and stay at the house, judging rightly enough that the presence of an English lady, before whom she had always appeared as a person of wealth and distinction, would prove a greater restraint on her humours than that of natives with whom her infancy had been familiar,—and Miss Salmon came. The old gentleman prepared Flora for the condition in which she would find her friend, and hinted that they had received disagreeable news concerning some one in whom they were interested in England. But Flora was very little behind him in knowledge of what had happened. Where there are negroes about, nothing can be kept very quiet. It was known all over the neighbouring estates, and from them had passed "a Beca"—that is to say, down to Montego Bay—that Arabella in a fit of passion had wellnigh lost her reason; and Flora was not slow to guess what it all meant. An old negress on the estate was very eloquent concerning the case: "I is nat supprise, for true; doan't me know him modda, hei? dat Cissy de moas' passiony pusson upon de prappety before him turn wise woman. Befo' dis creecha barn, him hab terrible fits ob vi'lence. I is nat astanish."

Whether Arabella cared to see Flora or not, is doubtful; but she did make an effort to be more

reasonable after her visitor arrived. Yet to Miss Salmon the change in her was very marked. She had lost all care about her appearance, and, indeed, seemed to take interest in nothing. Her looks were sadly altered, and though she did not always refuse to converse or to join in amusement, she would sit for hours silent or else weeping.

Mr Spence, who could hardly fail to perceive, after the ball at Montego Bay, that Clifton had distanced him, did nevertheless make his appearance again at Blenheim after the ensign sailed for England. But he no longer got any encouragement. Arabella, there is reason to believe, had wholly and determinedly given her heart to the young soldier, and was true in her affection, not wishing to practise hypocrisy or coquetry during her lover's absence. Miss Salmon, however, the first time she encountered Spence, mysteriously hinted that the ground might be clear now, and urged him to come and try his fortune again; and this probably she did partly out of pure goodwill to Arabella, whose melancholy might possibly be dissipated by the attentions of another young man more readily than by other means. At the same time, be it remembered, it was expected that Clifton would soon rejoin his regiment; and so, if Arabella should accept another lover before he came, it might be as well for her and for Flora too. Spence, who had declined further competition only because he believed it to be hopeless,

was not unwilling to recommence his suit. He renewed his addresses; and being by nature an easy-going, cheerful fellow, he was certainly a desirable guest at that season. The fear was as to how Arabella might receive him, connected as he was with the memory of the voyage out and of the chief incidents of the courtship. But she set all minds at rest by greeting him with rather more kindliness than she had of late been accustomed to accord to any one. Notwithstanding this, she did not improve in health or spirits, but still underwent the fits of sullenness and despondency. What to her friends was more painful still, was her indifference to her personal appearance and to the observances of society. She went about with her luxuriant hair tangled and disordered: often she would not be at the trouble of putting on a dress, but shuffled along in a dressing-gown, with loose slippers on her feet, and her stockings falling about her ankles; and she might occasionally be seen in this garb on a low seat, with her elbows on her knees and her face on her hands, rocking herself to and fro. In fact, she was unconsciously following the customs of the negroes. When told of her failings in this way, she would for a time endeavour to correct them; but she soon relapsed. She fancied that she saw visions, all indicative of an early death; and the negroes, who either had heard her utter words referring to these, or else recognised in her the symptoms which indicate a negro visionary,

quite adopted the idea that she was in some way doomed.

"Where you takin' dat roas'-fowl, Patience?" asked one of Arabella's *troupe* of another.

"I is takin' it away fram Miss Bell. She not goin' eat it."

"My! it smell nice too; and de ham, and de ochra saace look good. She doan't no better, now?"

"Better! no; she won't better."

"You tink she goin' die?"

"I can't tell, for true. What questions you ax, Iris! How is me to know?"

"Whisper, Patience. I hear Miss Dinah say she see duppy."

"Hei! Well, she really look like it."

"It bad when duppy come. Life doan't sweet noting after dat. You ever see duppy?"

"Me! chaw! my king! Me doan't want for see duppy. Me hope for live long, and be happy wid a sweet nyoung buckra dat come court me."

"Buckra! chaw! For you sweetheart black Billy de driver. It better dan a fun to hear about de buckra."

"Hei! you doan't b'lieve? 'Top and you will see. Him really charmin'. Him 'kin fabour lily. My! how me lub him! But Miss Bell, now; if she grieve, it will bad. She come of a sad race. Her granny, ole Frolic, pine away and die."

"But Mammy Cis no pine away."

"Hush-h-h; no 'peak of Mammy Cis. She will kill for me sweet buckra, and gib me crooked yeyes."

"She will a mad 'posin' Miss Bell die."

"Why she no come and send away de debil dat want for kill Miss Bell?"

Here a cook from the kitchen-door shouted "Patience!" and the two young ladies shouted "Hei!" and separated.

Sandy Chisholm, greatly grieved and annoyed to see his daughter, of whom he was very fond, and in whose beauty and accomplishments he had taken such pride, so afflicted, decided that a thorough change of air and scene would be the best remedy to make trial of. Although he could not without great inconvenience quit the island, he began to make arrangements for a long absence, intending to take the unhappy girl to entirely new scenes—that is to say, to the continent of Europe. There was, however, a good deal to be thought of before he could turn his back upon his possessions.

. . . . . .

We now look once more toward Higson's Gap, where Mammy Cis one morning was in a state of great excitement, and despatched little Pinkie to the busha to let him know that she wanted to see him. "Whew!" said the young man; "here's a mess now. I've shot at a pigeon and killed a crow"—the meaning of which exclamation was supposed to be, that Mammy Cis was enamoured of him, having fallen a

victim to fascinations and embellishments which he had been using for some days to subjugate a coquette in the neighbourhood. As a bit of fun, the dangerous rascal rather enjoyed the idea of the *affaire;* and he even speculated upon the bearing which he should adopt in case of his being introduced by the fond old creature to immaterial acquaintances. He finished his breakfast briskly, rather curious to see how the wise woman would conduct herself. When he got to the ground-floor he found her outside her own proper apartment, sitting on a bench and rocking herself from side to side, occasionally groaning as she did so.

"How d'ye, mammy?" the busha said; and hereupon the old body looked up, showing a very sad countenance.

"How d'ye, busha?" she answered.

"You wanted to see me."

"I have to tell you, sar, dat I shall want to use de big house dis evening. You will please open it and make dem sweep away de dus'."

There is, on nearly every estate, a larger house than that occupied by the busha, kept for the convenience of the proprietor in case he should choose to reside. It was this house that Mammy Cis desired to have at her disposal for a while. The overseer could not tell what to make of such a request, and began to suspect that the old lady was a little cracked. "Have you got an order from Big Massa?" he asked.

"No, sar, I have not seen de Big Massa," she re-

plied; "but dis mus' be done. I only want de pleace for to-night. I will keep you from all blame, sar."

"Yes, that's all very fine," said the busha, "but——"

"Sar, what I say I mean, and you know dat I don't always speak for noting. You will please to say if you will do what I wish, or wedder you will take de consequence."

The "consequence" was an ugly nut. If it meant only a complaint to Mr Chisholm, he thought he could defend himself by saying that he had no warrant for indulging the old woman; but if it meant a berth next his predecessor over there, he had no fancy for it at all. Conceiving as he did that he had in this world a very distinct mission in which the fair sex was largely interested, he did not quite like coming face to face with cold obstruction.

She let him ponder quietly. After a minute he said, "Well, I don't know what harm it can do. I take a great responsibility, but I suppose you can make all right with the proprietor. Yes, I will have the house opened."

"Tank you, sar. All will be well."

"But, mammy, what the deuce is the matter? You are not like yourself."

"Sar, great trouble come upan me. My chile is sick, and I greatly fearful for de end. Eberyting look black. You remember when you bring the nyoung soldier buckra to see me?"

"Certainly; but what has that to do with it?"

"My good sar, I see de same cloud dat darken all now when one of dem, de bashful one, come before me. Eber since, de same cloud black about me an' my chile. And now she sicken as if de duppy call her. It is de spirit and not de body dat bad."

"Well, I hope things will take a favourable turn yet, mammy," the busha said.

The old lady busied herself that day in seeing that the big house was properly cleaned and dusted, and tried in that way to keep down the dark presages that were oppressing her. Towards evening she attired herself in a showy robe which had at some time cost a great deal of money. She put silk stockings on her feet, and uncomfortably confined the same in satin shoes. Rings were on her fingers, bracelets round her arms, and on her head the ordinary handkerchief was replaced by a huge yellow turban, rich with pink flowers and tinsel. The principal rooms in the large house were lighted up after sundown, and the old lady took her seat there in great state, ordering several negroes to be about the building in readiness to obey her behests.

Mammy Cis had been, as has been hinted, a favourite slave; and while her charms were effective, had no doubt enjoyed a vast deal of barbaric grandeur. She had been indulged in all kinds of ornaments and attires that could set off her beauty. She had been allowed to tyrannise over other slaves;

and had enjoyed every kind of luxury according to her ideas. She was entirely ignorant, and in her grandest days became but little less uncouth than the negroes in the field. By consequence, when her bodily charms began to fade she was supplanted by a younger slave, and relegated to the retirement in which she was first introduced in this narrative. Of course the condition of such a person was absolutely according to the will of her owner. But generally, faded favourites had not to complain of illiberality on the part of their masters. If they relapsed into savagery, it was because that state was more congenial to them than civilised life. They liked salt-fish and plantain better than the dainty fare which they might have consumed. They liked to stow away in old trunks the finery of their former days, to be paraded, possibly, on some exceptionally grand occasions; but the finery was never allowed to encroach upon the ease of everyday life. Above all, they enjoyed the dirt in which the negroes lived, and preferred to "pig it." With all this, they were fond of reminding those about them that they were not as ordinary slaves, and that "they could, an' if they would," show themselves to be of considerable importance.

In Mammy Cis's case there was still a link to connect her with her ancient glory. She had a daughter whom it was the pleasure of her lord to distinguish above his other offspring, whom he allowed to bear his surname, and whom he did his best to bring up

as an English gentlewoman. But this link had been, according to the custom of that society, reduced to the weakest tenuity. The first step in anglicising the child was to separate her from her mother. Intercourse between them was more and more restricted as the girl grew up; on both sides the ties of nature were to a great extent effaced, but more especially on the side of the daughter. Children thus recognised by their fathers have in many instances disowned their mothers, especially while prosperous. Arabella had not been utterly unnatural, but she had been tolerably unmindful of her dark parent. And the old lady, however contemptible she might choose to appear to ordinary people, always endeavoured to be a person of some dignity in the eyes of her child, who had only too much encouragement to despise her.

It is not with certainty known how long Mammy Cis had been *en retraite* when she first took to divination. Neither can it be determined whether her greatness was thrust upon her by the invisible world, or whether she took to it as a good old-lady-like vice. She possessed, says the MS., some very curious powers, which it is useless to deny, or to daff aside as shallow imposture. How or why she came by it there is no pretence at explaining.[1] But to return.

[1] Since Ensign Clifton wrote this remark, the world has been informed how the Empress Josephine was in her early youth told by a coloured woman that she would wear a crown.

On the day of which we have been speaking, Sandy Chisholm had gone from home on business, and was not expected to return till next evening. In the afternoon Arabella issued orders through her attendants that a mule with a soft pad on it, and a man to lead it, were to be ready in the cool of the evening. She apologised to Miss Salmon for leaving her for a short time, and deputed Mr Spence to entertain the young lady. When the evening came she set off quietly and secretly, saying nothing of her destination until she was about a mile from Blenheim. Then she informed her escort (consisting of one man and three women, slaves) of her intention to proceed by the least frequented paths that could be found to Higson's Gap. There she arrived about dusk; and desiring all her attendants, save one woman, to remain without and to keep out of sight, she dismounted and went stealthily towards the busha's house, the girl who had come with her professing to know well how to guide her. But as they crept along, the slave-girl's arm was touched by an unseen hand, and the voice of little Pinkie whispered, "Miss Juny, de mammy say you is to come to the big house."

"Who can have told?" said Arabella, amazed.

"Chaw, missy! nobody tell," said Juno; "Mammy Cis know eberyting. Come, den."

The last words meant, "Let us change our course." This was accordingly done; and the party, guided

by Pinkie, made for the mansion. At the bottom of the stair (which was outside the house) two negro women were in waiting, who exclaimed "Hei!" when they distinguished the figures through the gloom. These preceded Arabella up the steps, and ushered her into the large hall, which was tolerably well lighted, and which looked brilliant to persons who had just come from the darkness outside. Mammy Cis, in gorgeous array, sat on a faded sofa, attended by two or three more women. She rose as Arabella crossed the threshold, and said, "Welcome, Miss Bell; how d'ye, my child?" At the same moment the glasses on a large sideboard at the end of the room began to jingle in an extraordinary manner; presently the floor shook, and a noise as of a multitude tramping was heard as it were under the house. The negroes looked aghast, and were for an instant speechless with terror. Then they made a rush towards the door, where Arabella was still standing. But the old woman's voice arrested them. "Where you goin' now, you creechas? 'Tand quiet, I tell you; nothing goin' for hurt you. De eart'quake pass." It was all over; it had not lasted three minutes; but it cast a mysterious awe over this meeting of the mother and daughter. There was no embrace, nor any demonstration of affection between them. Arabella said, "How d'ye, mammy?" and was conducted by Cis to the sofa, where they both seated themselves.

"You have come to live in the big house now, mammy?" inquired Arabella, opening the conversation.

"No, Miss Bell, I live where I did. But dat is not a place to receive a fine nyoung leady dat live more finer dan a princess."

"Yes," said Arabella; "I live daintily, and I have more than I wish for — everything splendid and delightful; but it does not make me happy."

"My chile," answered the mother, "I know what it is to live in grandeur, and I know your fader can be an open-handed man. I know, too, dat happiness don't come always wid fine tings."

"But, mammy, if you have come here to receive me, how could you know I was coming? I never spoke of it to a soul till after I left Blenheim a little before sundown."

"I knew dis mornin' early dat you would come see me before midnight. Eberyting prepare dis mornin'. But now, Miss Bell, you will take some coffee and refresh yourself. After dat I talk to you."

On a sign to the women, they proceeded to some part of the establishment, from which after a time they returned bearing two large cups of coffee, already sweetened and mixed with goat's milk, no waiter being used. While the women were absent, Mammy Cis had made inquiries concerning Sandy Chisholm, and as to whether there was any pickaninny about Blenheim that he was at all likely to make a "bairn"

of. Being satisfied on these points, she exhorted the young lady to drink her coffee, and herself set the example of so doing. When this process had been gone through, the old lady ordered all the negro women out of the apartment.

"You is sick at heart, my chile?" said Mammy Cis, when she and Arabella were alone.

"Yes, mammy, I am very, very miserable, and I feel as if I should die."

"What misfortune come to make you sad?"

"No misfortune; only my heart sinks, and nothing can raise it."

"Dere come a buckra soldier lad here, some time ago, who bring a shadow to de house. You sure he not bring de sorrow?"

"Oh, mammy, yes; you saw him. He told me so. Mammy, you are wise. You can kill him. Do kill him, and my heart will be light again."

"Ah! dis is de matter, den," the sorceress said. "De nyoung man doan't love you back."

"Oh kill him! kill him!" said Arabella, getting into one of her paroxysms.

"I think the nyoung man not bad. He seem soft and gentle. He please me."

"Yes, mammy, he *is* soft and gentle. He is the dearest man alive. I would die for him. But he is far away in England, thinking nothing of the quadroon girl. Tell me, mammy, is there a hope that he will be true and will come out again?"

"It was dark about him when he was here. It is all dark now. I can see nothing clear about him, only as at de fust—trouble to me and mine concerning him."

"Cannot you tell me, mammy, whether the light will come again? I will believe it if you say so."

"My chile, I can see noting plain concerning you."

"But what *do* you see?"

"It is all dark about you. I can see neider good man at your side, nor pickninny at your bres', and my heart doan't tell of noting pleasant."

"Then it is as I feared," returned Arabella, placidly. "I am going to a far country. I have often seen this fate in the distance; now it is near."

"Your heart is good?"

"Yes, for death my heart is good. I thought you could have given me comfort. At least you show me that no comfort is to be had."

The sorceress did not reply. And as Arabella looked towards her for her answer, it was plain that her thoughts were elsewhere. Her rapt gaze and motionless figure attested it. The quadroon girl sat still for a few minutes, until the old woman's form became less rigid; then she pressed her arm.

"I see you meet de gentle buckra by de cotton-tree in Broadrent Gully. But it not a joyful meeting. De shadow dere still, and you is pale as death."

"I shall meet him," were Arabella's words; "if it is in death, I shall meet him. Let me die, then."

Arabella had now risen to go, for it was getting late. "Go in peace, my chile," said the old lady, as she took Arabella's two hands in hers and pressed them gently. "De Lard sen' you better tings dan I can see for you."

And the young girl slid silently out into the night, and summoning her slave, made rapidly for the entrance-gate. As she turned out of the little square of buildings the busha happened to have come to the window to take a goblet of cool water off the sill, and a gleam of moonlight showed him a figure such as he well knew the estate did not own. Whereupon that young man, persuaded that some lady of distinction had fallen a victim to his charms, rushed to his toilet-table and gilded the refined gold of his person as much as was practicable in a few seconds. After that he sat in agony of expectation for some time, and passed a feverish, restless night—the first of many feverish, restless nights. And while he was waiting in the flurry of a vague hope, Arabella was proceeding homeward in the horror of a vague despair. Heavy clouds obscured the moon, and made the heavens as gloomy as the chambers of her heart.

The desponding negro races can be induced by an augury, a prophecy, or some equally trifling cause, to abandon hope or desire of living. Once they take a freak of this sort there is no turning them from it. They are as resolute to part with life as people of another temperament would be to preserve it.

Arabella was observed after this to be visited by frequent fits of excitement and depression: the former made her eyes flash like brilliants, and brought bright spots of colour to her now sunken cheek. She scarcely consumed food, and it was a marvel how she subsisted. Her father had already selected a gentleman to act as attorney for his estates, and now pushed on his preparations for departure vigorously.

One day when Mr Spence was exerting himself to amuse her, and Miss Salmon was not present, Arabella, being in a very low condition, for the first time gave way before him to weeping and moaning. The young man had presence of mind to ask no question and to exhibit no surprise, but he redoubled his efforts to cheer her. Suddenly she cast her glistening eyes upon him and said, "You are very good, Mr Spence, to try and comfort me. But it is of no use; I know my fate."

Spence replied that her fate was, no doubt, to be a healthy, happy woman, admired and beloved. But this remark somehow disturbed her, and her humour changed. There came the bright flashing eye again, and the excited, imperious manner. "I shall not be long here, you may rest assured. You will live and be happy, I hope. But if you care anything for me, there is a thing I will bind you to do for my sake."

"I shall only be too happy to serve you, Miss Chisholm."

"That is well. Now listen to me. You recollect —you recollect our fellow-passenger in the Berkeley Castle. I mean, of course, Mr—Mr Clifton," and as she pronounced his name she rose and stamped on the floor, and gave way to great rage. Then coming up to Spence and speaking in a calm voice, though her whole frame quivered with emotion, she went on: "You will go to England and kill him, for he has killed me. I give this to you as a charge: don't dare to disobey." This scene impressed Spence very profoundly. He perceived, or thought he perceived, that Clifton had acted infamously; and, in generous indignation, he thought it would be a chivalrous act to dare the traitor to the field. But he did not take for granted everything that Arabella said about her own condition. She had youth on her side, and might probably outlive, and learn to smile over, her sad anticipations. It was not long, however, before he saw reason to be less confident on this head. Miss Chisholm looked worse and worse, and all her strange symptoms were aggravated. By-and-by a curious rumour got about among the slaves, and soon found its way to the white people. "Hei! missy nyam dirt," which meant, *eats dirt*,—and imputed a disorder not uncommon among negroes belonging to a race inhabiting a certain region on the African coast. These tribes were known to be addicted to melancholy and suicide; and when they fell into their despondency, they were observed to swallow at

times a small portion of a certain kind of clay, the provocation to do which was never understood, so far as Clifton was informed, although the fact that such a practice indicated the worst form of hypochondria was undoubted. As all the negro tribes were not liable to this affliction, it was made a reproach to certain breeds of them. "For you modda nyam dirt"—that is, "your mother ate dirt"—being a common form of reviling. It is to be feared that Arabella had only too truly fallen into this dreadful infirmity which was incidental to her mother's blood. Her father heard of the appearance of the symptom with horror and alarm. He completed his preparations now with all speed, engaged passages, and only on the day preceding that of embarkation told the afflicted girl of the proposed change. She received the announcement without showing emotion of any kind, and simply acquiescing in the arrangement.

A little before sunset that evening the sky was black with clouds, and as the night fell, there came on one of those sudden storms with which dwellers in the tropics are so well acquainted. Wind, lightning, torrents of rain; Nature convulsed, as if she meant to wreck herself; and then after a few hours everything looking placid and bright, as though there had been no tempest.

The next morning there was an alarm — a great running to and fro—the young lady was nowhere to be found. Her father fancied that, in a fit of mania,

she had taken to flight; and he went himself and started all his neighbours to scour the roads and adjacent villages. The negroes seemed to see the hand of fate in her disappearance, and took part in the search without hope of success, and uttering all kinds of melancholy reflections, such as, "I know it mus' come." "She didn't care for live." "Me hear de duppy call her in de storm: him call her name." "O Lard, she gone; and we doan't see her no more."

The search continued all day, but in vain. Sandy Chisholm was in despair when he found the evening approaching; and Mr Spence, who had loyally kept at his side and assisted him, began to fear the worst. They were some way from home, and pausing to decide on what direction they next should take, when the overseer from Higson's Gap rode up and said he had been tracking them for the last hour.

"Have you anything to tell us of my bairn?" asked poor Sandy.

"Only this, sir, that Mammy Cis bade me follow you and say that you must go to the silk-cotton-tree in Broadrent Gully."

Mr Chisholm and Mr Spence looked at each other, each wishing to know what the other thought of this proposal. It was a place they would not have thought of; but Sandy remarked, "Cis is wonderfully sagacious sometimes. I can suggest nothing better. Suppose we go."

Broadrent Gully was a cleft on the mountain-side

opening an extensive view over many miles of variegated country, down to the blue sea. It was a place for sightseers and for pleasure-parties. But not only did it afford a glorious view — it was in itself a romantic and remarkable locality. The bottom of the cleft, which meandered charmingly, was the boundary between two distinct formations of ground. On one side of it—that is, to the right, as you looked towards the sea—the rock rose steep and sharp as a whole, but beautifully broken with rocky pillars and projections, interspersed with slopes and faces of earth, from which sprang forth grasses, shrubs, and trees in much variety. The rocks, where their shapes could be distinguished, were covered with mosses of many colours; the thinly-clad spaces diminished in number and size towards the summit of the steep; and the trees became larger and stronger, the height being crowned with large timber, which was the border of a primeval forest that stretched away for miles over the mountain. On the left side of the chasm the slope was generally much easier. Here, too, the ground was irregular; but it was not so ragged but that there was a turf all over it, which spread itself in graceful irregularity. It had to rise gradually almost to the height of the opposite steep; but it had shown the waywardness of a spoiled beauty or an Irishman's pig in taking its direction, and thus many a dint and fold diversified its breadth. Trees stood about on this side, but they were single or in

very small groups. The distinction between the two sides of the cleft was not invariable. In one or two instances the rock stretched across at a low level, and penetrated a little way into the grass bank on the other side. Where this occurred there was a sudden step in the bottom of the cleft, which would make a waterfall when a stream should be running in the channel. One of these outbreaks of the rock, bringing over with it some of the wild grass and foliage, and showing in itself charming forms and colours, was marked by the growth, at its extremity, of a gigantic silk-cotton-tree, the straight stem of which measured its height against the opposite precipice, and was hardly surpassed. When the waters flowed, there was a fine cascade at this point, and the general beauty of the spot made the cotton-tree noted; indeed it was a trysting-place for lovers, and had many legends.

One might have supposed that the grassy side of this chasm had been gently sloped away on purpose, to let the beams of the western sun glow on the steep side. At any rate, one easily perceived that, had there been no slope, some of the most gorgeous of tropical views would never have been known.

But if the fair-weather aspect of this gully was beautiful, it was in its war-paint or stormy dress frightful and desolate. The winds roared up and down it as if it had been formed for their boisterous diversions. The waters, rapidly collecting off the hillsides, made there a general confluence, and poured along it

with irresistible force, leaping over obstacles and down falls, and making such a tumult as nothing but the voice of the wind could overbear. The shrubs bending before the blast, and the agonised groaning of the trees above as their branches were wrenched round or torn from the trunks, had their part in the wild scene; and the volume of water, not dropping, but streaming from the clouds, made a mist which robbed objects of their outlines, and brought obscurity to intensify the effect. The darkness of the clouds was doubly dark by contrast with the usual brightness, and the glance of the lightning through the awful gloom was almost too much for mortal senses.

When Sandy Chisholm and his party made their way to Broadrent Gully, a heavenly evening seemed to deny the possibility of an elemental war having raged there recently. The beams were gilding the precipitous faces, and there bringing out the hues of Paradise; there was not wind enough to stir a leaf; only the brawling torrent—which, though much diminished in bulk, had not yet run out—bore testimony to the convulsion that had been.

As they approached the silk-cotton-tree, Sandy Chisholm, elder as he was, was the first to catch sight of something remarkable, and to rush forward. The others, following quickly, assisted him to raise from the earth the object of which they had been so long in search—the beauteous Arabella, silent now and motionless. Was it possible that she could yet

live? Her garments and hair were soaked with wet; the form was stiffened; and as her head hung over the father's arm, it was seen that the large gold drop in the ear had been melted into a shapeless mass, while the other drop retained its form. The hair, too, had the appearance of being singed. "My God!" sobbed out the old man, "she's been thunder-stricken." It was even so.

. . . . . .

I have forborne to quote more from this melancholy part of the story. The reader must imagine the consternation and the distress caused by this sad event. One so lovely and so apparently fortunate taken away by such a miserable death! The next morning, soon after sunrise, Arabella Chisholm was laid in the earth; and not many weeks after, was reared over her the tomb which visitors to that part of the island are to this day taken to see.

The monument was for a long time a great gathering-place for the black people, especially the females, who asked every educated passer-by to read to them the inscription. Patience and Iris had one evening heard it from the mouth of a white person, and were proceeding to moralise on it.

Iris. Dem tell out for her fader name big; why dem say noting about her modda?

Patience. Chaw! de modda isn't of no consequance. 'Posing a pusson's fader big man, any creecha will do for a modda.

Iris. Den, when your buckra come marry you, perhapsin you will bring him gubnas, an' big plantas, an' marchants? eh, Patience?

Patience. Perhapsin so; if him come marry me all will good, if him see me dam fust me can't help it; no make for you fun, Iris, here by de nyoung missy grave.

Iris. Me is not making fun, my dear. Only doan't tink too much upon black Billy till after de fus' one come all safe; for fear de pickninny complexion 'poil.

Patience. Hei! for you mouth too big! You really black, Iris; I not remark it before; I tink you was only bery dark brown.

Iris. Who dis you call black?[1] You fader black,

[1] The definable mixtures of races were (perhaps still are), in Jamaica, classed as follows:—

White and black produced a Mulatto.
White and Mulatto produced a Quadroon.
White and Quadroon produced a Mustee.
White and Mustee produced a Mustafina, who was white by law, if not in fact.

A Mulatto and a black produced a Sambo, and, as one easily perceives, the proportions of white and black blood might be varied *ad infinitum*, and the differences between some of them would be so slight, that to distinguish them would be most difficult. Nevertheless, every addition of *white* blood, though to a European it might have seemed inappreciable, was greatly prized and boasted of by the possessor. Nature not seldom declined to put her sign to these additions, and the actual colour seemed to belie the genealogy. Thus a Quadroon would now and then be almost white, while a Mustee might be very

you modda black, you huncle black, you haunt black, you broda black, you sista black—eberyting alongs to you black as de debbil.

The remainder of the conversation had better not be recorded.

. . . . . .

Mr Spence, hurried on by strongly roused feeling, which he mistook for the promptings of duty, and really sickened by so many sad scenes and events, took his passage for England; but when he had been a short time at sea, and his morbid feelings had somewhat worn off, he began to see that he really had but little reason to dare Clifton to mortal combat. The disappearance of the ensign from Jamaica had at first certainly opened a way for the prosecution of Spence's suit; and if Arabella had survived, might have proved greatly to Spence's advantage. Spence had only jumped at the conclusion that Clifton had behaved ill; he had no proof of it. Upon the whole he thought he had better hear Clifton's story before he condemned him; and after this his thoughts became less and less bloodthirsty. He did, however,

dark indeed. Accordingly, a brown (*i.e.*, in Jamaica a *coloured*) person might lay claim to a lineage not warranted by complexion, or might be gifted with a complexion which the lineage would not justify. Here was a fertile source of wrangling, quarrels, and revilings! What proverbially we are said to do sometimes by the devil, a brown person was always ready to do by his fellow—that is, to make him blacker than nature had painted him.

immediately on his landing, seek out Clifton, who by this time had exchanged into another regiment, and was by him so kindly and courteously received, that he at once blamed himself for entertaining doubt of Clifton's integrity; and the ensign was so frank in all he had to say, and evinced such genuine sorrow at the heavy news which Spence brought him, that all thought of disagreement vanished. From Spence it was that Clifton learned particulars of what had happened in the island since his departure. Most anxiously did he inquire every particular of the sad events to which Spence could bear such ample testimony, and Spence told him all that was known concerning Arabella's illness, explaining that what took place at Higson's Gap had been partly communicated by Mammy Cis, and partly learned from the slaves about the place. Clifton heard all with an interest and an emotion of the most lively kind, seeming to have no thought for any other subject. When Spence told of her death and the attendant circumstances, the ensign was greatly overcome, and for a long time could not continue the conversation. When at last he did so, he asked in a faltering voice the exact date of the event; and on being informed, he exclaimed, "Good God! how wonderful!" Clifton then recounted to Spence the details of an extraordinary occurrence which had happened to him at this very date, which details he had recorded at the time. (The record is attached to the MS., but it will

suffice here to give the heads.) It appears that Clifton was thinking over his Jamaica sorrows, and his mind was filled with thoughts of his still dear Arabella. Of a sudden he lost the consciousness of what was around him, and was, or fancied himself, in a tropical scene which was quite strange to him, but which he graphically described. There he saw his beloved girl pale and dripping with wet. She told him this would be their last meeting, and fell senseless on his breast. He was in an agony of grief, and greatly perplexed as to what should be done. After a moment's thought he judged it necessary to lay her down on the ground and to seek assistance. When he moved he discovered that a tempest was raging, of which until then his mind was too much occupied to take account. A tremendous peal of thunder shook the earth and deprived him of sense and motion. When his spirit came back to him he was in his apartment, as before, with the recollection of this vision so vivid that he was fain to write it down. It is remarkable that this record describes Broadrent Gully, which Clifton, in the flesh, had never seen.

Clifton had not much to tell Spence in return for his intelligence; but one little noteworthy item he did communicate, and it supplemented strangely the fulfilment of the predictions announced by Mammy Cis. Lieutenant Dix had left the service suddenly, and, at the first, mysteriously. After he had disappeared it came out that a very fraudulent transaction

had taken place, which might have led to worse consequences than Lieutenant Dix's retirement from his Majesty's service. The Berkeley Castle had, it seems, on the same voyage which has been described in this narrative, brought to Dix a letter, which gave him great delight. It was signed with the name of a London merchant of the highest character, and it authorised the lieutenant to use the said name as a means of obtaining money accommodations from Mr Henriquez at Montego Bay, who has been mentioned above. Henriquez at once cashed bills for Dix to a considerable amount. The latter had lost heavy sums at cards and on the race-course, and could not meet his engagements until this timely assistance became available. It was then supposed that remittances, which he had bragged that he could obtain from England, had arrived, and that his affairs were straight again. He had, before this, tired out the patience of his friends at home, and had his own reasons for expecting that his bills might be returned dishonoured. But he had fancied that, after his first strait was passed, he could infallibly make money enough to redeem the paper, if the worst should come; and the bills could not be back for a long time. He was disappointed—as is not infrequent with such clever youths. The bills came back at last; and what was worse, the London merchant on whose recommendation they had been cashed disclaimed all knowledge of the drawer. The truth was, as Dix

confessed to Henriquez, that the letter was written by a nephew of the London merchant, a friend and schoolfellow of Dix, who bore the same name as his uncle. It was not, therefore, a forgery, but it was a fraud. Henriquez, after Dix opened his breast to him, very generously declined to take any proceedings, and said he would leave it to the honour of Dix's friends to make good the loss. But, unfortunately, the matter got wind; and Dix's colonel dropped heavily on him, and made him retire, to avoid a court-martial. And Henriquez got his money after a while.

Instead of mortal enemies, Clifton and Spence became fast friends. Spence wrote from England several times to Miss Salmon, who had been always a faithful ally of his. When he went back to Jamaica, he renewed his acquaintance with her, and began to perceive that he had never half appreciated her merits. Clifton received, with much pleasure, before he embarked for India, the news of their having become man and wife. At intervals of years he met them again and again, and to the end of his days kept up a correspondence with them. From them it was that he heard of Mr Chisholm's death, years after Arabella's, and of the estate passing to a distant relative; also that Mammy Cis was still alive, very little changed, and likely to live, as many of her countrywomen do, to the age of a hundred.

I must not omit to mention that the overseer of

Higson's Gap did at last turn his charms to some account. He had left Mr Chisholm's service, and taken a place under another planter, equally rich, and maintaining very much the same sort of establishment. This new employer got very wet at a cock-fight, and had a long dispute about a bet, which prevented the change of his apparel until after he had got chilled. Two days after he was in a raging fever, suspected that it was all over with him in this world, and felt very uncomfortable about the next. There was a handsome slave-girl in the house, who occupied very much the same position as Mammy Cis at Blenheim. This woman he manumitted formally, and then made a will, bequeathing to her all his large property, making our friend the busha an executor, and informing him of the dispositions which he had effected. That being settled, he desired the busha to read the Bible to him; and a mutilated copy of the Scriptures having been, after a search of some length, extracted from a lumber-room, the busha tranquillised the sick man's mind by the description of Solomon's temple. After this preparation, the planter sank and died. While they were laying him out, the busha, who was a Briton born, proposed to the heiress to take her to church and marry her. She thought more of having a real buckra for a husband than of all the wealth that had become hers, and closed at once with the offer. In a week they were man and wife. The busha was a good deal baited at first about this con-

nection; but he was a plucky fellow, and did not allow disparaging remarks about the step which he had taken. After he had shot one friend dead, and lamed another for life, society conceived rather a high respect for him and his wife. His name has not been mentioned here, because descendants of his are alive to this day. They remained wealthy as long as the island flourished, and have furnished councillors, judges, and colonels of militia for generations. All of them have fiery hair, curling very crisp, and the sun tans their skin a bright red.

The friendship of the Spences and Cliftons descended to the next generation; and as Clifton (*my* friend Clifton, I mean) often says, the memory of it won't die out as long as there's a bottle of this splendid Madeira forthcoming.

ALIVE, AND YET DEAD.

SOME PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF A FRENCH CONVICT.

BY ANDRÉE HOPE.

CHAPTER I.

THE gloom of a December afternoon was deepening into night, and the grey shadows of twilight rendered still more dim and dreary the dismal court-house of the Palais de Justice at S——. Snow had not yet fallen, but a raw damp fog wrapped the city in its chilly winding-sheet. Notwithstanding the bitter cold, however, the atmosphere of the court was hot to suffocation, and almost stifling with bad air; for since early morning every bench had been filled, every corner thronged, by an eager and expectant crowd. A trial of exceptional interest was taking place—a trial for life or death; and though at this late hour the many pallid faces around showed how severely the spectators had suffered from heat and

fatigue, not one amongst them would leave his or her place, for the supreme moment was near—the moment when would be decided whether a fellow-creature would be restored to freedom and to life, or doomed to die a violent and shameful death.

That most miserable fellow-creature was a woman, and a woman young and good-looking. Many of those who had been watching her throughout this long and terrible day had known her, for she had at one time been a member of a troupe of circus riders and acrobats; some even pitied her, and felt compassion for the wretched creature, who hour after hour had listened with dull apathy to the recital of her cruel and dreadful crime; for this girl, so young and so fair to look upon, was being tried for her life for murder—for murder, under circumstances, as the public prosecutor declared, of peculiar atrocity. The victim had been stabbed when sleeping, and after having shown especial kindness to his murderess.

The girl did not deny her crime, but vehemently asserted that it had been unpremeditated. The man, she said, had insulted her by some rude expressions, and she became angry. He then laughed at her rage, until her anger was roused to fury. She entreated him to forbear, but he only laughed the more and mocked at her threats, until at length, irritated beyond endurance, she turned suddenly and struck at him with a knife, with which she had been cutting flowers and boughs. No sooner had the first blow

been dealt, than, maddened by the sight of the blood her own hand had spilt, hideously terrified and yet furious, she struck again and again. Like some wild animal, rendered ferocious by rage and fear, this wretched creature destroyed that which she most loved—yes, most loved,—for (and here she broke down into bitter weeping) this poor boy had been the only human being who had ever been really kind to her.

Alas! this story, whether true or false, was not believed, for in no respect was it borne out by the evidence. On the contrary, everything tended to show that the crime had been the result of cruel and determined premeditation. The girl was in debt. She had quarrelled with the woman of the house where she lodged, and wished to go away, but could not, on account of this debt. She had also said to one of her friends that money she must and would have at any cost, for she was determined to leave S——.

The knife, a very large and dangerous weapon, had been bought by the prisoner only the day before the murder was committed; and so sharp and formidable was it, that the shopman had asked for what purpose it was required; and the girl had answered, somewhat crossly, that she was going to be a cook, and should need it for cutting meat. This statement was proved to be false. Then, not only money, but several articles belonging to the murdered man were found in the prisoner's possession, and the deepest stab, supposed to have been the first, was in the

poor fellow's back. The body had not been discovered until the morning after the deed had been committed, and in the meantime the girl had returned home and shut herself up in her room, refusing supper, or to allow any one to enter. When arrested, she at first denied having been with her victim, but subsequently admitted the fact—many persons testifying to having seen the couple walking in the fields together. Not one of these, however, corroborated her statement that a quarrel had taken place; neither sounds of quarrelling nor angry words had been heard.

The public prosecutor pressed the case against the accused with more than ordinary severity; for during the last few months many instances of robbery, disappearance, and even of suspicious death had occurred amongst the soldiers belonging to the regiments quartered at S——, and it was believed that there existed an organised gang in the town, amongst whom were many women who aided and abetted, even if they did not actually commit, the crimes imputed to it. The girl now on her trial was well known to the police-agents. Daring, headstrong, violent in temper, unusually handsome and attractive, she had much influence with her associates; and although up to the present time she had succeeded in eluding justice, there was but little doubt that during her short life she had repeatedly rendered herself liable to the stern chastisement of the law.

Should the jury, therefore, return a verdict of guilty in this case, in all probability the plea of extenuating circumstances would not be admitted. The extreme penalty would be demanded and enforced—that of death by the guillotine.

. . . . . .

The trial had dragged on its weary length the whole day. The host of witnesses had been examined. The public prosecutor and the counsel for the prisoner had both made long and exhaustive speeches. The president had summed up, and had left the court; the jury had retired to deliberate; the prisoner had been removed to an adjoining cell. Then began to be heard, in the semi-darkness of the crowded hall, that strange subdued noise, that murmur which yet is silence, those sounds without words, that betoken the presence of an absorbed and anxious multitude.

From time to time a spectator more curious than his neighbours would rise from his seat and look down hastily, and not unfrequently with a shudder, upon some dreadful articles lying on a table in the middle of the court. Here were arranged in ghastly array what the French call "*Les pièces à conviction.*" A long grey coat, a shirt, a little purse, a knife,—poor common articles; but, deeply dyed as they were with the same dark and terrible stains, they had become, though silent, the stern and awe-inspiring witnesses of crime. As time went on, some one

might occasionally mutter a few words, but rarely was a sentence completed; for who could forget, for one moment, the momentous question,—Will this woman be condemned to death?

At length even these faint murmurs ceased. The crowd was voiceless, motionless, until the sudden closing of a distant door caused a perceptible thrill throughout the vast assembly. Was there one human being amidst that concourse of spectators whose heart did not throb more rapidly as the moment drew near when the doom of a fellow-creature was to be decided? As the echo of the closing door reverberated through the building, some of the women trembled and grew pale from emotion and expectation, some also cast nervous glances at the partition that separated them from the prisoner, but —not one amongst them left her seat.

Did any at that dread moment venture to dwell on the agony of terror and hope now endured by the miserable culprit, who was waiting, as it were, on the very brink of the grave? And who dared picture to themselves the last ghastly scene—the scaffold, the executioner, the glittering knife, the headless body of her who is now a living woman?

In the fever of waiting and expectation, each minute, as it passed, seemed an hour. Still the door through which the jury had withdrawn to their deliberation remained closed. The heat became intense, almost unendurable, for night had come,

and the court was ablaze with gaslight. Suddenly the tinkle of a little bell was heard. The door so anxiously watched was thrown open, and the jury were seen slowly entering their box. In another moment the judges had again taken their seats, and the prisoner was replaced upon her bench guarded by two *gens d'armes*.

An awful hush succeeded the slight noise produced by the entrance of the judges. Another brief pause, and then, amid breathless silence, the officer of the court, addressing the jury, demands whether they find the prisoner guilty or not guilty. The wretched woman, with clasped hands and quivering limbs, looks wildly at the stern and downcast faces of the men who are about to decide her fate. Not one of them will meet her eye. The most curious and hardened of the spectators—even those who, in order to have a better view of the sufferings of a fellow-creature, have mounted on their benches—shrink back appalled, unable to look twice on that agonised face.

Another instant and the foreman of the jury, a man well known in S—— for his exceeding benevolence, rises slowly from his seat on the first row in the jury-box, unfolds a paper, and reads in a low voice,—low from deep emotion:—

"Answering before God and before man, the jury find the prisoner *Guilty on every count.*"

. . . . . .

Before sentence is pronounced, the miserable creature is asked whether she has anything to say. With one sharp cry she has fallen back upon her seat; and now, with tongue so dried up that it seems to rattle within her mouth, she makes agonised but ineffectual efforts to speak. Nought but a hoarse murmur will issue from that quivering mouth. She cannot utter an articulate sound. With dilated and wildly appealing eyes she stares at the president as, in low but steady accents, he pronounces the dread sentence of the law. Then, as if seized with uncontrollable fury, she bounds madly to her feet, tosses her arms wildly above her head, and with one gasping sob falls back insensible into the arms of her jailers.

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Claire Dumont belonged to and was brought up (if such a term can be used in reference to one who was utterly neglected) amidst the most miserable and vicious class of the many poor and miserable classes that inhabit the magnificent city of Paris. Like her sister city, London, this superb capital offers frightful contrasts of luxury and poverty, of happiness and misery. Sometimes, indeed, the same roof may cover the millionaire and the wretch dying of hunger. Usually, however, in both cities, squalor, ignorance, and crime prefer herding together in some poverty-stricken quarter of the town; and in such districts, in the narrow pestilential streets and crowded courts, children swarm like bees in a hive.

Many of these neglected little creatures have no homes. They feed upon the refuse they may find in the streets; they sleep in cellars or under bridges, or in any hole they may discover when night approaches. Uncared for and untended, they prowl about the city, in worse plight than the vagrant dogs who are often their companions by night as well as by day, for no friendly hand will knock them on the head before their youthful sins can ripen into crimes. From these hotbeds of misery spring the plants that fill our jails, and that not unfrequently become the untimely fruit to be gathered by the executioner's hand.

In London, compassionate hearts have established some refuges for these unhappy little beings, these childish wanderers, these waifs and strays of life, whom we call street arabs. In Paris, also, there are numerous orphanages and charitable institutions, both religious and secular, for boys, girls, and infants. These establishments are well managed and liberally supported; but, notwithstanding these good works, there are nevertheless in both cities many thousand children who not only suffer all the physical ailments, all the physical deterioration, that ensue from exceeding poverty and neglect, but who have to endure the far worse injury and suffering that arise not only from a total absence of all moral culture, but from an early initiation into every description of vice.

Such had been the fate of Claire Dumont. Far

less happy than those deserted infants who, nameless and parentless, are laid in the *tour* of the Hospice of "Les Enfants trouvés," this poor child had the misfortune of being retained by her mother. It seems like a desecration of so sacred a name to apply it to such a woman. Once very handsome, drink, riotous living, and frequent imprisonment had rendered Madame Dumont not only a prematurely old woman, but had made her a fury in temper and a savage in cruelty. Rarely did she notice her child excepting to beat and ill-use it. Blows, starvation, and hard work were the earliest recollections of Claire. Her happiest moments were those when her mother was away in prison; for at such times Claire passed her days in the streets, and enjoyed the food she begged or stole.

This latter method of obtaining supplies was, however, but seldom needed, for the child was bright and good-tempered, obliging, ready to help any one—merry too, with a fresh young voice that only wanted to laugh and sing—honest withal in her way, for she never stole from those who had once been kind to her, and willingly shared what she had with others.

Yet was she wilful in the extreme, and passionate—quite as ready to fight as she was to give. But her chief delight, nay, her pride, was to cheat her mother. Innumerable were her attempts, though rarely were they successful, for the wary old woman was not to

be deceived by such a tyro. Little daunted by failure, Claire persevered, though she well knew that detection would be punished by starvation, imprisonment, and terrific blows.

It was when thus punished that the obstinacy or firmness of the girl's nature declared itself. With unflinching but sullen fortitude she would endure the torture of fearful lashes, and of her hair being torn in handfuls from her head. Imprisonment in darkness, want of food, cruel blows, could not extort from her one cry. Whatever the amount of suffering inflicted, she bore it without a moan, without a tear; but at such times there arose in that youthful breast feelings of savage fury, scarcely human in their intensity. Terrible indeed were the seeds of evil that cruel woman sowed in the heart of her child. Seeds that were to bear most bitter fruit; and, alas! fruit more destructive to the unhappy girl than to the wicked mother.

When about twelve years old Claire became dangerously ill from scarlet fever. It is well known that this disease, when severe, rarely fails to leave its fell mark upon its victims, in the shape of either physical or mental injury. In some cases, indeed, both mind and body are impaired. Claire rose from her sick-bed physically improved. From having been a thick-set, rather plain child, she developed into a tall and handsome girl; but the obstinacy that was originally implanted in her nature deepened into a stern

fierceness that would last for weeks. At such times she would frequently give way to fits of passion so terrific in their violence that even the reckless mother shrank from exciting a rage that was so nearly akin to madness.

As Claire grew older, her existence with her mother, the slavery in which she was kept, became more and more distasteful to her. It showed much good feeling on the girl's part that she had endured it so long, for rarely did a day pass without angry disputes. Hour by hour, however, did her longing for freedom, movement, and excitement increase. At length, after a quarrel of more than usual bitterness, she ran away from home (if home it could be called), and joined a wandering troupe of acrobats and players.

If the girl had pictured to herself a life of gaiety and amusement, she was speedily undeceived. She soon found she could neither act nor dance sufficiently well to take a place amongst the performers; but as she was strong, duties were put upon her of the hardest description. Her want of temper prevented her from making friends amongst her companions; for when irritated she could not refrain from the angry word, nor indeed from the angry blow. Her food, also, was both scanty and bad. Still, notwithstanding these drawbacks, she was comparatively happy. She had fresh air and constant movement; and with all the force of her strong nature she attached herself

to some horses and dogs, whom it was her duty to attend.

This life, however, lasted but a short time. Exposure to weather, hard work, and insufficient food, resulted in rheumatic fever. Believing there was but little chance of the girl's recovery, Claire's hard-hearted masters gave her a few francs, and then left her to shift for herself; and well would it have been for the unfortunate young creature had her wretched life now ended. But this was not to be, nor was there a helping hand held out to save. Youth, and the strength of a good constitution, prevailed over the malady; and once more was Claire restored to health, and to even increased beauty.

Unhappily with this returning health came the knowledge that she was not only destitute, but also in debt to the people in whose house she lodged, and who had tended her through her illness. In truth she had fallen literally into a den of thieves, and found herself in the power of the gang already mentioned. From that time her fatal slavery began, and with frightful rapidity she sank lower and lower. Her beauty, her cleverness, her reckless fearlessness, even the very violence of her temper, made her of importance amongst her companions, and ere long she began to take pride in the daring adventures in which she was engaged. It has been already stated that no overt act had ever been proved against her, but the police were convinced that many serious crimes

had been organised by her. The house also where she lived was known to be the resort of several desperate characters. Still, many of those who knew this girl acknowledged that with innumerable faults there was much to interest and even to be liked in her. Courageous, faithful, loving,—what might she not have been had her surroundings been different, had her lot been cast amongst good and truly religious people?

The sore problem of many such wasted and distorted lives must weigh heavily on all thoughtful minds.

At length came the time when Claire made the acquaintance of the soldier of whose murder she was accused. He was a young Breton, who, though he had been for some years in the army, was still in thoughts and feelings but a simple peasant, and kind-hearted and imaginative, as are most of his countrymen. The wild beauty and high spirits of Claire captivated him at once. Some letters from this poor fellow, written to his mother at home in Brittany, are touching in the extreme. Badly written and ridiculously ill-spelt, they evidence a certain poetry of thought, and show also with what ideal perfection he had invested the girl he loved. She, in return, seemed really attached to him. Her temper became subdued, and her very nature was softened under the influence of this affection, and in the prospect of a life better and happier than any she had yet known. Had she then murdered him for

the few francs he had about him? So it was believed.

She asserted to the chaplain of the jail, that when the term of his service should be over they were to marry and retire to his native village. She also declared that, during the early part of the day, when the dreadful quarrel took place, they had been delighting themselves by picturing the happiness of their secluded life in Brittany. The poor fellow had little more than a year to serve, and during this time one of her friends had promised to help her in obtaining a place as assistant-cook in an eating-house. Hence the purchase of the knife.

What happened subsequently to lead to the awful termination of a day that had begun so brightly, will never accurately be known. Be that as it may, at the close of the dreary December afternoon on which this narrative commences, the young Breton had been for months consigned to his untimely grave, and his far more unhappy companion was lying in the gloomiest cell in the prison of S——, a convicted murderess condemned to a felon's death.

CHAPTER II.

Weeks of deadly agony passed. An appeal had been made to the Court of Cassation, but no answer had as yet been received to the prayer for mercy, and

the wretched girl alternated between fits of the wildest despair and a sullen gloom, that rendered her deaf to the solemn and earnest exhortations of the good old man who was chaplain of the jail. So dreadful was the sight that even the Abbé Pichon, inured as he was to the mental tortures of the unhappy beings to whom he so nobly devoted his life, shrank almost appalled from the raging paroxysms of a young creature, whose life ought to be beginning, rather than about to end thus fearfully. Still, though his task seemed wellnigh hopeless, he laboured on, trusting that, ere it should be too late, his tender accents, his sympathising words, might reach the heart that appeared so hardened in sin and misery. Probably it was in some degree owing to this good man's representations that a merciful view was taken of the case.

To the surprise of most people, and, it must also be said, to the indignation of some of the police officials, the Court of Cassation admitted "extenuating circumstances."

Claire's life was spared, and her sentence commuted to that of perpetual imprisonment.

That which punishment could not do, mercy effected at once. When the announcement was made to her, the poor unhappy girl fell sobbing at the feet of the kind old man who had not only been instrumental in saving her life, but who had been the only one to speak to her those divine words of pardon and

love, both for this world and the next — without which, how rapidly may the black spot that is in every human being's heart grow, and grow, until perverted nature becomes capable of the blackest crimes!

. . . . . .

A few days after the commutation of the sentence, Claire was removed from S——, and conveyed to the great central prison at A——, where are confined those female criminals condemned to long periods of imprisonment. She was removed at night, for fear of any popular excitement. While being taken from the Court-house, the mob had howled and yelled around her, shrieking "Murderess! murderess!" in every accent of hate and fury. Even in her remote cell the miserable culprit had been aware how fiercely the savage populace was thirsting for her blood. It wished to see the unhappy creature die. Her terror and her anguish would be "distractions" for the hardened wretches who love to congregate around the scaffold and gloat over the hideous sacrifice to justice offered by the guillotine.

Did she not know this well? Could she not picture to herself the last dread scene, in which *her* agony would afford the coveted spectacle?

With starting eyes and livid lips she would dwell upon all these horrible details, until she shrieked aloud from the intensity of her fear.

But now this was not to be. . . . She was not to die. No, she was not to die.

Dear, blessed, most beautiful life was restored to her. That was sufficient for the present.

She was safe, yet she trembled whilst being conveyed to the station. Were not hurrying feet passing through the streets? Were not menacing voices approaching nearer and yet nearer? Would that awful mob be again awaiting her? It was a relief to hear the key turned in the lock of the little cell in the prisoners' railway van, in which her journey was to be performed. Every nerve was strained to the utmost, and when she felt the train in motion her hysteric joy could not be restrained. In spite of every effort, a shrill unmirthful laugh would from time to time escape from between her lips. She was safe. She was quite safe. She need no longer fear that cruel knife, that howling crowd.

Now she need no longer tremble throughout the day. She might sleep in peace throughout the night. She was not to die.

Onwards rushed the train, and the roar it made brought peace to her excited mind, rest to her wearied body. If it only would never stop! If only it would convey her thousands and thousands of miles away from the scene of all her terrors, all her crimes!

At last she slept,—slept that deep sleep, so profound in its absolute oblivion of all things past and present. That merciful sleep which, even on the rack, follows complete exhaustion. Only sufferers

from keen bodily or mental pain can ever know the exquisite boon of this rest while it lasts; but alas! it is dearly paid for in the anguish of the awakening. Does not sorrow then start anew into cruel reality? Does not the pain return with tenfold force when the mind awakes again to life, when the eyes are opened, only to see around all that witnesses, all that speaks, of sufferings yet to be endured?

To Claire, however, this blessed sleep was followed by a few moments of intense enjoyment. She awoke to the consciousness of bright rays of sunshine darting through the iron bars of a tiny aperture above her head. Oh the enchantment of such delicious light after the gloom and semi-darkness with which for weeks day had come to her within the dismal walls of a prison! With what ecstasy did she gaze at those bright rays, revelling in their warmth and brightness, and so placing herself that they might fall upon her face, her head, her hands!

But such rapture could not last. Soon, alas! how much too soon, did the knowledge of her real position return to her, the very fervour of her brief enjoyment making the awakening from it an agony all the more acute!

Tears, bitter tears, poured from her eyes, as now, her immediate terrors tranquillised, she realised almost for the first time what she was, and to what she was doomed. Never again to be free. To toil and to suffer as a prisoner for the rest of her life. She, so

young, so alive to happiness, so thirsting for it, never again to taste it, not even to have the hope that she might ever obtain it.

At this thought heavy groans burst from her overcharged heart; and cowering down into the dimmest corner, she covered her face with her hands to shut out the sunshine that now seemed but to mock her woe.

At length a sort of insensibility came over her, and it was with a start of painful and trembling surprise that she was aroused by the key grating in the lock of her cell; the door opened, and she was ordered to descend. It was still early morning, and no one excepting the officials were upon the platform of the station.

The prison to which she was destined is the Central Depôt for women, and it so happened that she was the only convict to arrive that morning. Two jailers at once took possession of her, and hurried her away out of sight of the few loiterers who were hanging about the gates.

The pretty town of A—— is built on the side of a hill, the summit of which is crowned by the immense mass of buildings where so many unhappy creatures are expiating their crimes. The road to it leads through the suburbs of the town, amidst pretty, peaceful dwellings, so neat, so clean, so quiet, that it seemed as if sin and shame could never disturb lives passed in a serenity so perfect. But who can say

what turbid passions may not be raging behind those delicate white blinds, beneath the waving branches of those shadowy acacias?

Notwithstanding the rapidity with which she was hurried onwards, for how many, many years did not this walk linger in Claire's memory! With what passionate eagerness did she breathe the fresh sweet air!—fresh and sweet with the fragrance of late roses, and damp newly-turned earth. With what intensity of pleasure did she raise her eyes to the glorious sun, that his rays might fall full upon her pallid face! But yet each breath of air, each ray of sunshine, was as a stab of pain, for she knew well that never again would she be permitted to enjoy these blessings in their full plenitude. Never again would they come to her in the exquisite enjoyment of freedom. Henceforth sunshine and air would come but scantily through prison bars.

The prison is at some little distance, and beyond the suburbs are lanes where the walls are overhung by the trees of neighbouring gardens. Though still midwinter, the day had all the charm of early spring. The sun shone clear and bright in the blue cloudless sky. His brilliant rays flashing here and there upon the old grey stones made them glitter, as if set with diamonds; and then perchance falling upon patches of brown and yellow moss, the dark lichens would no longer seem gloomy and neglected, but would be turned to masses of glorious

colour. The rugged bark of the old firs glowed warm and ruddy in the morning light, and even the short-lived warmth of a winter's day filled the air with the grateful resinous scent of their early swelling buds. The old trees overhead swayed to and fro with every rustle of the freshening breeze, and from the branches, that were not yet quite bare, little showers of leaves fell fluttering to the ground, bringing with them an inexpressibly sweet and balmy perfume.

What treasures would some of these tiny, brown, withered things have been to Claire! She longed to catch them as they dropped softly around her, but her arms were too tightly held. Great flocks of pigeons were wheeling above the roofs of the neighbouring houses; innumerable sparrows were twittering about the eaves. Sharply defined against the pure blue sky rose the golden cross of a distant village church: every now and then the wind brought the faint clang of its old bells. Never before had church bells been so dear to Claire's heart. A bird, perched high amongst the boughs, was blithely singing his early song. Soft and tender were the notes; but as she listened, tears rolled down the cheeks of the unhappy girl. The bird's song was of peace and hope; but peace and hope were not for such as her. Sounds and sights alike spoke of freedom and of happiness. Now how beautiful was the earth! how infinitely sweet life's daily work and daily pleasures! but

such work and such pleasures would never again be known by the prisoner sentenced to a lifelong imprisonment.

Fain would Claire have lingered on the way, but her conductors hurried her on. What was her emotion to them? Even the few persons they met on the road rarely raised their eyes as they passed. Prisoners were common enough in A——, and excited annoyance indeed, but very little attention.

Soon, much too soon, did they arrive at their destination.

Claire, who felt as if in a dream, had a dim consciousness that as they approached an extensive building, surrounded by lofty walls, some huge gates slowly swung open, closing upon them the instant they had passed with the sombre clash of heavy iron. The deep sullen noise made her shudder as if stricken with ague: it said so plainly, farewell to birds and sunshine, to flowers and trees, to freedom and to love. The shadow of the prison had verily fallen upon her. The sun could not warm so dismal a dwelling; the winter wind now blew with chilling keenness; around her were high cruel walls, before her gloomy yards, punishment, and pain.

Passing beneath a dark archway, they traversed a drawbridge that appeared to be the entrance to a fortress; then they went under another archway, and through a doorway, where the fastenings were more formidable than those yet seen. Each door, each

gateway, was guarded by jailers, and every entrance was relocked and barred the instant they had passed.

At length they arrived at a courtyard, at each corner of which rose a tall grey building—very tall, very smooth, very new. But few windows broke the ugly uniformity of the stonework, and these few were not only narrow and closely barred, but the lower half was covered by projecting screens of wood, which, while admitting light and air, effectually prevented the inmates from looking downwards.

There was something about this courtyard so cold, so dismally forlorn, so cruelly stern from the studied severity of its buildings, it was in such heartrending contrast to the warmth and sunny brightness without, that the unhappy prisoner felt that all hope even had now left her. Her heart seemed to die within her. Her very limbs failed her, and she was now pushed rather than led within one of these tall grey buildings. Passing through an iron door that opened into a narrow stone passage, she found herself in the office or receiving-room of the prison. Here, ranged on shelves, were hundreds of large, thick books, the registers in which were inscribed the description, or *signalement*, as it is called, of every woman who is brought here.

Behind a massive writing-table was one of the chief officials; yet this table, large and heavy as it was, was evidently not deemed a sufficient protection from the violence of some of the viragoes and termagants who

are brought here, for half-way across the room was a stout wooden barricade, of which the ponderous planks were strengthened by bars of iron.

With what fury must the wretched creatures be sometimes inspired that so formidable a barrier should be necessary! Those who have seen it have not unfrequently described it as more fitted as a fencing for a rhinoceros's den, than as a protection against those who are sometimes designated the weaker sex.

Here the paper brought by Claire's conductors was carefully examined, to compare the description it gave with the new prisoner's appearance. This done, she was passed into the interior of the prison, and consigned to the charge of the superintending sister of charity. This sister, in a quiet but authoritative voice, ordered Claire to undress.

Slowly did the new prisoner comply with this order. She could not forbear lingering over each garment, unwilling to give up for ever the clothing that was her last tie to a life of freedom. Finding that she thus delayed, the sister made a sign. Two female convicts immediately appeared, who, rapidly undressing Claire, almost as speedily reclothed her in the prison garb. Then forcibly seating her in a chair, they cut off her hair to within an inch of her head. As she felt the cold scissors touch her, and saw the beautiful chestnut tresses, of which she had been so proud, fall in masses to the ground, the unhappy creature burst into an agony of tears and bitter sobs.

Up to this moment she had borne the ordeal in silence, if not with calmness. Her cheek had paled and her lip had trembled, still she had neither resisted nor wept; but none but a woman can understand how the loss of her hair pierces a woman's heart. A few minutes after her entrance into this room, who would have recognised the brilliant and handsome girl, who had lorded it so gaily over her fellows, in the degraded-looking, numbered prisoner, who now stood miserable and trembling in her unaccustomed and uncomfortable attire?

They had placed upon her a chemise of the coarsest linen, more like sackcloth than linen, so coarse was it in texture—a blue woollen petticoat, gown, and apron, rough worsted stockings, and wooden shoes. Round her despoiled head they bound a striped brown cotton handkerchief. On her breast and on her arm she bore the number by which alone in future would she ever be known.

Those who enter here must part with everything they once possessed. They part even with their name. Henceforth they are dead to the world, and to all former associations and knowledge. The work of expiation demands a moral grave. Though alive, they are yet dead.

CHAPTER III.

The prison gates had finally closed upon Claire. She was within those walls, from which she would never again issue forth either alive or dead, for after death her body would be thrown into a nameless grave in the dreary and uncared-for prison cemetery.

Scarcely had she realised the fact of her arrival at this great prison, ere she had been clothed in prison garb. Before many hours had elapsed she had eaten prison fare, had slept in the hard prison bed, and had been made acquainted with the stern rules that were for the future to govern her existence.

The prisoners rose at five, and after rolling up their mattresses and blankets, and hearing the prayers recited by the sister superintending the ward, they descended to the refectory to eat a piece of bread and to drink a little water. At six they went into the labour-rooms—to the laundries, kitchens, bakeries, and yards, or wherever their work had been assigned to them.

The labour-rooms were large and airy, but cold, and dismally dreary. The women were seated on benches or stools in divisions, according to the description of work on which they were engaged. Each division was superintended by a sister, or by a prisoner whose good conduct had gained the confidence of the superiors. This post was eagerly coveted

by the better class of women, for not only did those holding it obtain some small privileges in the way of food, exemption from much forced exercise, &c., but from time to time they were permitted to speak a few words. But for this exception, silence was rigidly enforced. So strict was this rule, that should it be proved that a prisoner had whispered to her neighbour and the fault had not been immediately reported, the superintendent would be degraded from her place; the delinquent herself would be punished by the loss of a meal, and were the offence repeated, by confinement in a dark cell. At either end of the workrooms were raised seats, from which the superior sisters in charge could overlook every division.

At nine the prisoners again entered the refectory for breakfast, which consisted of a mess of boiled vegetables, bread, and a mug of water. After breakfast some divisions returned to their work, others were taken out to exercise in one of the yards. Here they marched round and round in single file, and in melancholy procession, for half an hour, each convict walking at a regulated pace, about three feet apart from her companions, and with her hands clasped together behind her back. The measured tramp of the wooden shoes, echoing as it did all day long through the prison (for the several wards had different hours), produced the effect of some distant engine beating ever with mournful monotony. So oppressive, so

harassing was the noise, that it had driven some persons away from the few houses that were in the neighbourhood, few people caring to be reminded that the wearying dull sound came from the feet of unhappy women.

After exercise, work was recommenced, and continued without intermission until four. At four they dined, the dinner for five days during the week consisting, like the breakfast, of boiled or stewed vegetables—stewed perhaps with a little oil—bread, and water. On Wednesdays they had soup, and on Sundays a small quantity of meat, and occasionally a little wine, was given to them. After dinner they marched in the yard for another half-hour, or once a-week attended an instruction class; then worked again until nightfall, when they went to bed. On Sundays the prisoners twice attended chapel, and a certain number were seen by the confessor. No recreation, however, was ever permitted, nor was the rule of silence relaxed excepting during the time passed with the chaplain.

A prisoner by good conduct and diligence could earn weekly a small sum—a few sous—that she was permitted to spend in obtaining articles of food or comfort, such as a little wine or beer, or even a small quantity of meat. Some of the better class would occasionally get a towel, none being supplied by the prison, a large cloth only being hung up over a sort of trough in an outhouse, where the prisoners could

wash. Those employed in the laundry were much better off in this respect. Extra-good conduct would also release a prisoner from the wearisome drudgery of the labour-rooms, and make her eligible for employment in household work, such as helping in the kitchen, laundries, bakehouses, cleaning the prison, sweeping the yards, growing vegetables, &c. In the labour-rooms, also, good conduct regulated the description of work given to each woman. To the troublesome, and to the newly arrived, were, of course, assigned the hardest and most irksome duties; but by industry and obedience, a prisoner could in time obtain easier and more interesting employment, such as making linen, not only for the prison, but also for the shops. In some few instances they had been permitted to make vestments and hangings for the chapel, but this was a very rare privilege.

Hard as was the life, and stern as was the rule, still it could have been borne by a patient and a courageous mind, but for the terrible suffering of constant silence. At first the privation was not so much felt. In general, on arriving, the prisoners were much broken down by the anxiety and mental suffering they had probably undergone, for only those convicts were sent to A—— who had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment; and a great many, perhaps even the majority, had, like Claire, narrowly escaped the scaffold.

The severity and the regularity of the labour, the scanty and unpalatable food, the watchful, never-ceasing supervision, at first rendered the wretched prisoner either stubborn or abjectly miserable. But after a time, when the springs of life would again start into fresh vigour, when that marvellous elasticity which will return even within the walls of a prison is once more felt, then the suffering arising from privation of speech becomes perfect torture.

Every human being, but women especially, have so keen a desire to repose confidence, to obtain sympathy, that with the latter the longing becomes at last a necessity, and in time this necessity leads first to revolt, then to storms of passion and furious outbreak. Not unfrequently does it eventually produce either insanity or idiotcy. So well is this period of suffering recognised, that it is called "The Crisis," and very few women escape the frightful ordeal. Some there are who, possessing powerful minds, or some moral principle, perhaps a certain amount of education, or those who by nature are unusually gentle and patient, pass through this trial, and come forth from it, broken indeed as those who have made acquaintance with mortal sickness, but calm, resigned, and prepared to accept their lot with fortitude.

These exceptional cases, however, are but few; and even amongst them, the gentlest and the tenderest, for the most part, droop and die after very few years of incarceration. If the trial is so severe to

the resigned, to the disciplined, and to the educated, it may well be imagined what the suffering was to one so passionate, so undisciplined as Claire. Like a caged wild bird, she beat herself against the bars that imprisoned her. Furious and miserable, she would strike and rend herself; she would tear her clothes; she would throw herself on the ground, and scream aloud in her frantic suffering. But in vain were her struggles; in vain resistance; each fault, each outbreak, brought its punishment; the inexorable rule was ever over and around her. Held tightly in its iron grasp, she was forced to yield, she was forced to obey.

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Dead to the outer world, dead to old associations, dead even to her own name, No. 2024 for many long months lived as if in a trance; she scarcely believed in her own identity. This life, so wonderful, so hard, so rigid in its terrible monotony, must end some day. Surely some day she would wake and find herself Claire Dumont again,—gay, careless, merry, and free! And so strong was this conviction upon her, that one night, almost unconsciously, she burst into a bright, happy laugh. Alas! the happiness was but a dream,—and a dream that brought upon her the punishment due to an infringement of the rule. Poor Claire Dumont no longer existed. Claire Dumont herself was but a dream of the past. No. 2024, of ward B in the great central prison, was

lying in the little narrow bed, one amongst the fifty convicts who shared with her the same ward.

Haggard and wretched were the faces on which she looked. Probably by this time her face also had become haggard and lined with wretchedness. Beauty, freshness, and youth speedily sink into the grave dug for them by prison food, prison labour, and gloomy surroundings. The attitude of each figure, the expression of each countenance around her, told of coarse indifference or of hopeless pain. Shivering with cold, Claire drew around her the scanty covering, and with dull despair stared at the white-washed walls, so grim, so cruel in their unsullied whiteness. Then she gazed with longing eyes into the dim morning light as it entered, as if unwillingly, into such an abode of woe. The windows, placed high up near the ceiling, admitted the requisite amount of light and air essential for health; but closely barred as they were, the sight of the blessed sky was denied to the wretched inmates of the dormitory.

On the wall of every room, dormitories, refectories, or labour-wards, was suspended a large crucifix. The chaplain or the sister in charge would often, when reading aloud some holy book, point to the pain-stricken but compassionate face of the Divine Sufferer, and exhort her hearers to the repentance that leads to pardon. To such exhortations Claire would listen with ill-concealed anger and impatience. Of

what use was it to talk to her of mercy in another world, while she was being so severely chastised in this?

Man could discourse most eloquently of God's mercy. Would he have none himself?

For now the maddening thought that finally crushed the unhappy creature was ever before her, that, for her, time had no import, could bring no alleviation.

To her what mattered years? What mattered repentance? She was in this dreadful place for life. Would no crying to God or to man be of avail, only to give her some hope?

Only let there be a term to which she might look forward. Twenty years, thirty years, even forty years, would then be endurable. She would bear them cheerfully. How readily would she obey! How willingly would she work!

Only let her have some hope.

And if earnest repentance, and a hearty desire to amend, avails (as we humbly believe it does) in reaching the ear of our almighty and merciful Father, may not the same repentance, the same amendment, be allowed to be of avail in softening men's hearts, and inducing them, not to forgive indeed, but to mitigate in a considerable degree the appalling doom of lifelong punishment?

It is possible that *real* repentance might avail; but with other vices hypocrisy is rife amongst prisoners, and nowhere is it more skilfully practised than within

the walls of a prison. Is it therefore to be wondered at that the authorities are suspicious, that their hearts grow hard, that they become sceptical as to the possibility of radical improvement amongst the degraded beings whom they have under their charge?

The superior of the Maison Centrale of A——, a woman of generous heart, great experience, and of keen perception into human character, doubted much whether there had been three instances of real repentance, of an honest desire to amend, amongst the multitude of women who had come under her superintendence during the many years she had directed the establishment at A——.

The want of separate cells is a serious hindrance to moral improvement. Not only does every one require some period of solitude, when they may collect their thoughts and think a little perhaps on their past, their present, and their future; but notwithstanding the strictness of the discipline, and the severity with which the infringement of the rule of silence is punished, the prisoners constantly find means of communicating with each other; and as the evil-minded are generally the most skilful in conveying their thoughts, the injury of such communication is incalculable.

The convicts are taught trades, and various sorts of household and other work. There are also classes during the week for religious and secular instruction; but in the opinion of the superior very few

profit by the care bestowed upon them. Some are too old, some too careless, some too desponding. Obedience and docility may in some degree ameliorate their condition, otherwise there is little incentive to learning or to moral improvement. It is probable, also, that the mode of teaching adds to the difficulty of instruction, for women do not learn so readily in classes as men. Their attention is more easily distracted, they more quickly become restless and excitable, and their tempers and intellects have more shades of variety. Good teachers declare that ten minutes' individual teaching will convey more instruction than an hour's class work. From this prison very few of the women (their term of imprisonment over) ever return to the world morally or physically improved. Thus, while the deprivation of speech is a cruel aggravation of suffering, especially to those who have to endure a lifelong punishment, it is comparatively useless as a means of improvement. To those unaccustomed to such painful spectacles, there are few sights more humiliating and depressing than that which is presented by the labour-room of a large prison. Those who see it for the first time—those whose happy lot it is to live amongst the innocent and the good—can hardly fail to experience a shock of mingled surprise and horror, for displayed before them is every variety of vice and depravity that the human countenance is capable of expressing. The eye travels along the rows of faces

vainly seeking one that expresses aught of real contrition, humility, or hope. Cruelty, malice, hatred, and especially cunning, are here depicted with startling force. If by chance one really sorrowful countenance be found to break the dreadful uniformity of so much vice, it almost invariably belongs to some new-comer. Very few years of prison-life suffice to swell into gigantic proportions the seeds of every evil passion the human mind can know.

CHAPTER IV.

Every two months the prisoners were permitted to write to their friends, the letters of course being submitted to the approval of the superior. Claire had written many times, not only to her mother, but to every friend she could think of. She craved the sympathy that is the last solace of a miserable life. All in vain, however; not one of her letters had been answered. The selfish mother gave no thought to the unhappy daughter; and as years rolled on, the wretched creature understood that she was indeed dead to all—that no one on earth cared to recall to their memory the lost and degraded convict.

She could not make friends in the prison. The sisters and the officials were too overpowered by their never-ending and onerous duties to have time to devote to any one woman; and Claire, great as was

her own crime, despised her companions in the ward, finding them, for the most part, cheats and hypocrites.

One day, however, she was summoned. She had been asked for.

In strictness she was not entitled to the indulgence of seeing a visitor. She was under punishment for some act of insubordination; but the superior, hoping that the rebellious girl might become softened and more amenable to discipline, sent for Claire, and after rebuking her for her fault, gave her permission to see her friends. How Claire longed to throw herself at the feet of this kind woman, and with a torrent of words long restrained, and with the passionate tears that were burning her brain, pour forth the sore trouble and misery of her heart! But this could not, might not be. Such violence of expression was forbidden, nor had the superior any time to spare. Her duties were especially numerous and heavy, and every minute with her was precious. Alas! had she been able, had any of the authorities been able, to bestow a little thought and sympathy upon one who, though a great sinner, had yet many noble qualities, a miserable soul might have been lightened of much of its load of woe, and a blighted life might have revived to the knowledge at least of good. Who can long live without sympathy, without speech, without being permitted even to utter the cries of a breaking heart? When one is fettered within the bonds of eternal silence

and estrangement, death to the body or to the mind must inevitably ensue.

Awaiting Claire in the receiving-room were two young women,—two of the humble performers who had formerly been her companions. The *troupe* to which they belonged had arrived in the town, and these rough but kind-hearted girls had bethought themselves of their former associate, and so, partly from kindness and partly from curiosity, they had come to see her.

The surroundings of the prison, however, had evidently awed them. The ponderous doors, the gloomy passages, the strong locks, the iron grating that separated them from the culprit, impressed and alarmed them; and though they spoke affectionately to Claire, and gave her all the information they could think of respecting old acquaintance and past events, still they were uneasy and nervous, and evidently longed to be gone. With the generosity of their class — for no people in the world are more open-handed than these poor, wandering, ill-paid artists— they had brought with them part of their scanty earnings; and with tears of gratitude Claire accepted the small sum, that the superintendent said she might expend in obtaining a few comforts and indulgences.

This visit, short as it was, revived the poor girl, and for a time the occasional letters she received from these friends cheered her. But they never came

again; and after a few years their letters ceased also.

With them ended Claire's communication with the outer world.

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Year after year rolled on. More prisoners came, some went away, some died, but the stern rule remained unaltered, the wearisome daily life was ever the same. Slowly the untractable girl changed into a quiet but stubborn woman. No more did she give way to those paroxysms of revolt and passion with which outraged nature revenged itself for the restraints that were imposed upon it; but now, for hours together, she would mutter to herself in sounds so low and inarticulate that they could not be termed words. Often indeed her lips would move, though no voice came from them. She would then violently grasp her throat, and looking sometimes wildly, sometimes vaguely round, would seem to ask if there was not something there that prevented speech from coming.

There was something. It was the disease in the larynx that arises from continued silence.

She had not long been an inmate of the prison before the superintendents had perceived that Claire was a girl of no ordinary talent, and that in many respects she was superior to the common herd of prisoners. When she had become more docile and less subject to the mad fits of passion to which she

had at first given way, efforts were therefore made to instruct her in the better descriptions of work, and so raise her from the more trying drudgery of the labour-rooms. But these improvements were attempted by a system of hard routine that failed to touch the girl's heart. At first she had seemed pleased, and had been industrious and fairly well-behaved; but this human being needed human sympathy, and it was precisely this help that was denied her.

By degrees, therefore, her work ceased to interest. Ofttimes it would drop from her hands, her eyes would fix on vacancy, and a species of obstinacy, or rather catalepsy would come on, from which neither medical treatment nor punishment could rouse her. Still she was not ill, her bodily health was good. It was her mind, her soul, that was being broken and crushed slowly but surely, under the discipline that was gradually destroying not only her will, but every feeling of humanity within her. She lost by degrees all wish to resist; all sense of pain, whether mental or bodily, was becoming deadened to her. Still the craving for sympathy was strong, and she tried by greater attention to her religious duties to find favour in the sight of the sisters and of the chaplain. Who can doubt that He who sees into all hearts, looked with compassion on this poor creature? for the few succeeding years of this period were the most peaceful of her prison life; and the darkening mind, long

after other interests seemed dead to her, dwelt on the comforting words of our divine Saviour.

But the mischief was done. The unnatural restraint, the absence of hope, the death in life of such an existence, first attacked the brain and then the body of the unfortunate girl. Not only did she gradually cease to think, but she gradually ceased to feel. No longer did the bitter cold, the coarse clothing, the hard bed, the sharp and stern rebuke, give her pain. She became as if numb, and would constantly rub her hands together, and then look at them doubtingly, as if they were not her own.

All the beauty and freshness of her youth had long departed. The once brilliant complexion had become faded and yellow; the eyes were still lovely in shape and colour, but their brilliancy had gone for ever. At times they would have a sorrowful wistful look, as if they were searching for somebody or something far away in a distant land; but, as the mind became weaker and weaker, this earnest look would change into vacancy, and the poor eyes would become fixed in a lack-lustre stare. The lips that were once so beautiful in their rosy curves, and that had so often parted in joyous laughter, now pallid and unshapely, hung loosely apart, and were seldom closed; and the voice that in her childish years had been so ringing and merry in its tones, was now tremulous and husky. The few sounds it gave

forth were almost always inarticulate, and at length became nearly inaudible.

When she had been first brought to the prison, she had suffered severely from the cold, and had often wept, and implored for softer and warmer clothing and coverings; but by degrees she became insensible either to cold or heat, or indeed to any bodily or mental pain.

Hunger was the only sensation that seemed really to excite her. As her body became hardened her appetite grew fiercer, and she would eat with frightful eagerness anything she could obtain. All her childish cunning returned, and showed itself in stealing the food of her companions, but she appeared insensible to the punishment that followed, provided it were not the loss of food. If deprived of her dinner she would cry and moan like a beaten dog.

When spoken to by the chaplain she required time to think, in order to understand the question addressed to her, and even then often appeared to forget to reply. Any noise or unaccustomed sound frightened her. The woman in her was dying, and a second childhood was coming on.

For a considerable time Claire's condition was but little noticed by the superintendents. She had been, and still was, a troublesome and ill-behaved prisoner, but she was no longer violent or unruly; so, amongst the crowd of wretched women the prison contained, her peculiar suffering passed comparatively unobserved.

As soon, however, as the superior became acquainted with Claire's state, this good woman did all in her power to ameliorate it; but the deterioration had been so slow, the wretched girl had changed so gradually, that the evil had been gaining ground for years. Long before the injury came to the superior's knowledge it had become irreparable. It might perhaps not have been discovered until much later, but for an accidental circumstance.

Severe punishment could never be inflicted without the sanction of the chief officials and the superior. The latter, distressed at finding how frequently Claire's number appeared on the black-list, making it therefore necessary that some severity should be exercised, sent for the girl to remonstrate with her.

"No. 2024," she said, "it grieves me that you, who have of late years been so submissive, so attentive to your religious duties, and of whom I hoped better things, should not be able to resist this propensity to steal. Scarcely a Saturday passes that complaints are not made against you. I am unwilling again to deprive you of your Sunday dinner, but you must be aware you cannot be permitted thus to take your companions' portions. Tell me, my child, that you will be more reasonable."

No answer was made, and Claire stood silent, and apparently stubborn. A slight trembling, however, agitated her limbs.

"Speak," continued the superior; "will you not

give me the promise that I ask? Without it you know that I must again punish you, much as it pains me. Your offence, too, is so frequent, that this time the punishment must be severe."

Still no answer, and, with a sigh, the superior was preparing to sign the order that condemned Claire to the dark cell, instead of having her Sunday dinner, when the wretched woman, in a perfect convulsion of emotion, and tearing wildly at her throat, burst forth in accents barely human, "O my God! I cannot, I cannot!"

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This was the last time Claire ever spoke to be distinctly understood. This passionate cry was the last of expiring sense. From that moment her intelligence dwindled rapidly. Even the easy work that was assigned to her ere long proved beyond her feeble powers, and at length it was necessary to place her in the infirmary. In England those prisoners on whom some deadly malady has set its seal are usually permitted to go to their homes, there to end the last few days of life that still remain to them. Those who become mad or imbecile are removed to asylums for such sufferers. Not so at A——; the prison infirmary there is a truly dreadful sight. Bodily infirmity, mental imbecility, and madness are all gathered together here, in dreadful, hideous, indeed sickening groups.

Many indulgences, however, are permitted; amongst

others, the rule of silence is not enforced; but most of the inmates are old, and what have they to say? Many will sit for hours doing nothing but mumbling or muttering to themselves; others will unceasingly or restlessly move their claw-like hands over their own clothes, or amongst the coverings of their bed.

To these miserable creatures death alone can bring release; but Claire was young, and her case comparatively rare. Medical science was brought to bear upon it, but all in vain. Then, when too late, mercy was extended to the unhappy sufferer. Through the combined exertions of the authorities and the superior she was at length removed from the prison, and placed under the tender care of "Les petites Sœurs des Pauvres."

In this asylum these excellent women did their best for the poor creature. They tended her with soothing kindness, and smoothed for her as much as possible the passage to the grave; but her mental pains were soon over, and ere long her body was also at rest.

We who look on, however, see that human justice has killed not only the criminal's body but her mind. If expiation requires such a death, would it not be more merciful to inflict it at once, rather than ensure it by years of unutterable anguish? Surely a felon's grave would be preferable rather than while alive to be yet dead.

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Note.—The main incidents of this sad history, which she was given to understand were true, were related to the narrator by one who is now dead. In the details she was assisted by a French lawyer. She believes the tale is also given in a French novel.

AN UNEXPECTED FARE.

A TALE IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

BY MAXWELL GRAY,

AUTHOR OF 'THE SILENCE OF DEAN MAITLAND,' ETC.

CHAPTER I.

SOME people have a pronounced talent for despising the amusements and pleasures of life; and very fortunate creatures they are, for it is clear that more than their fair share of the amusement lurking about in odd corners of this labyrinthine universe has been given them to cause this satiety. Or perchance it may be truer to say that more amusement than they are able to assimilate has been offered to their mental palate.

Mark Forrester was one of these fortunate unfortunates: he seemed to have found everything out, and detected the hollowness of all things. Though a

younger son, he was afflicted with a fortune a-year, and no compensating skeleton in his closet; and, as he was neither a genius nor a scoundrel, he scarcely knew what to do with himself without the warm stimulus of necessary labour. He had not even the consolation of a hobby, nor the solace of being a fool. Of late he had taken to cab-driving, in which he found temporary comfort.

He was no common Mark; he was an Honourable, and consequently a noble Mark, and had made his mark till he became a mark of admiration in the pursuits most esteemed by the gilded youth of to-day. And he had even been marked with distinction in university lists. Naturally, he had received many marks of esteem from those members of the fair sex who no longer faced the arena of the ball-room on their own account, but on that of their young. He was the gilded mark at which the bold and wary hunter of the husband aimed with care. But he had as yet made no Mrs Mark. Of all things, he hated conventionality, and he found the fair creatures of society conventional to a fault. There were moments when, under the influence of this hatred, he even thought of eschewing the modern use of the tub, and putting it to the more comprehensive purposes of the Grecian sage — he who appropriated the sunshine. But in this the flesh—cradled, as it were, in cold water—was weak. Besides, he dreaded the ruler of the civilised Englishman, the British policeman.

At times he envied his brother, Lord Woodman, who, though little wealthier than himself, would, on the demise of Lord Grandveneur, their father, become a legislator of his country, and a large landowner, which, as the Honourable Mark knew, is not only a position of toil and difficulty, but also perhaps in a few years may be one of personal danger; for the example of grinding the faces of landlords has been set with success, and no one can tell to what lengths the despotism of the irresponsible many will be carried.

It was near the hour when good old-fashioned ghosts used to break churchyard, and good old-fashioned fairies to begin their revels — the once witching but now too familiar hour of midnight— and Mr Forrester had just left a theatre, where the after-piece had been a burlesque on something—perhaps on 'Paradise Lost.' He was always expecting some enterprising pulpiteer to run up a burlesque church, and start a burlesque liturgy. From his experience of the public taste, he thought that the thing would draw.

Thus musing, he mounted the driving-seat of his private hansom. The groom was about to step inside, when a gesture from his master warned him to go home, and the hansom-driver started on his lonely and adventurous career. It is supposed that one of the sweet little cherubs who keep watch over the recklessness of English tars, schoolboys, and street infants,

is told off to protect hansom cabs in London. Accidents do sometimes occur for all the cherub's care: these ought not to be called accidents but natural sequences, the safe journeys being the real accidents.

This private vehicle behaved as miraculously as its public fellows. It darted like lightning round abrupt corners; it wound a swift and sinuous course through densely packed vehicles going in five different directions at once at fifty different rates of speed; and it charged itinerant vendors' stalls and the forms of foot-passengers with the apparent purpose of cutting them in two, but relented in the very act, shaving these obstacles with the most delicate accuracy. The cabman, from his lofty elevation, surveyed such of mankind as were revealed by the artificial lights amid the natural, all-compassing darkness, with satisfaction: he was as happy as a Greek athlete, skilfully guiding his chariot to the goal on the Olympic course, though neither parsley, beech, nor olive was to crown his happy brows. All along Piccadilly he flashed like a star, and then in the quiet by the Green Park one of those dramas which the streets so frequently offered him began to unfold itself. A woman's form, closely pursued by that of a man, fled swiftly over the pavement; and when the pursuer gained upon her, she uttered a breathless cry. A policeman was apparently studying astronomy just within sight.

On the impulse of the moment, the cab was driven to the kerb, and stopped close to the fugitive, who, as

if the movement had been foreseen and fore-ordered, at once jumped in and shut the doors, with a panting but superfluous "Drive on!" and the honourable cabby, keenly interested in his fare, and ignorant whether he were assisting in a tragedy or a comedy, flicked his high-bred steed, and plunged into the dark distance of night. "So swiftly," he mused, "did the gloomy king of shades ravish his fresh bride from the flowery meads of Enna!"

But as he was not prepared for the reception of a Persephone in the realms of which he was king, he presently drew up, and opening the trap-door, asked, "Where to, mum?"

A very pale face, not particularly pretty, and still bearing the infantile sweetness of early youth, looked up. "Is he gone?" she cried,—"quite gone?"

"Half a mile behind, mum," he replied, in a re-assuring tone; and received an address which put his topography to the test. However, after threading a tangled maze of streets for a quarter of an hour or so, he landed his charge at the gate of a small villa, which had been left behind by mistake in an ugly quiet street of great new dismal houses.

"One moment, cabman, please," said the young lady, springing lightly to the pavement; "I have no change." And she ran in.

One would imagine that such an opportunity for vanishing unquestioned would have been gladly and promptly seized by an amateur cabman; but it was

not so. Mr Forrester had more than once before made himself useful to the British public in the capacity of cab-driver, and had frequently received a cabman's due,—coins which, when duly cleansed and polished, he treasured fondly in an ebony cabinet as the only money he had ever earned—and how sweet such money is, they who have won it only know. His charges were regulated by the countenances of the fares rather than by the distances traversed, and thus some were not charged at all. And one, a young lordling of his acquaintance, gloriously tipsy and apostrophising a lamp-post in the fondest terms, he had conveyed the length of a street for the sum of five pounds, — coins which he had returned, with their history and a timely sarcasm, next morning.

Not one lady returned to reward the gallant cabman, but three, and that after some moments' delay. There was a lamp just over the gate of the little villa, and by its light he saw an elderly lady in a bonnet, whom he at once recognised as Lady M'Whymper, his fare, and a taller girl with a woollen shawl thrown round her head and shoulders.

"Sixpence," he replied, in answer to the latter's question of how much.

"We don't want to impose on you, cabman," she said; "and however short the distance, nobody charges so little."

"Beg pardon, miss, I ain't nobody," returned the cabman, with more truth than she dreamed.

"Very true," she laughed, looking up in his face, which was a little above the lamplight, and muffled to the nose in a comforter. "But you ought to have a double fare for your kindness to my sister. She is young and easily frightened, and I am too much occupied to go about with her, as we are all working women. And I wanted to make an arrangement with you to take her to her singing engagements twice a-week in future. But if you fleece yourself in this way, the thing will be impossible. However, as we are poor, and Maisie has hitherto walked home on that account, I thought that a permanent engagement might be contracted for; but nothing shall induce us to cheat honest men, even with their consent," she added, putting three sixpences into his hand.

The honourable cabman was a little startled at being nailed, as it were, on the spot, in consequence of his chivalrous succour of a forlorn damsel. It was, however, a fine opening for him, since his mind had of late been seriously exercised with regard to the advisability of driving a stage-coach, an omnibus, or an engine. So he quickly caught at the offer; and Lady M'Whymper, whom he knew as a canny Scotswoman and strict treasurer of pence, having suggested an outrageously small payment, he declared the sum to be a princely reward; and the bargain was struck, not without hesitation on the part of the tall girl, who thought the price too small, and who

was yet evidently so poor that she could not afford more. "I can't have Maisie exposed to such terrors," she mused aloud; "and yet I don't like to take advantage of this good cabman."

The earnest consultation of the two young ladies on the subject moved him, for he had never yet realised the tragic importance of a few shillings to people of narrow means. Pounds and shillings were to him and his fellows as the common rain and sunshine to ordinary humanity. His knowledge of the poor was theoretic and fragmentary, by no means experimental, and he had yet to become acquainted with the vast border of decent and even cultured and refined poverty that separates wealth from squalid want.

On starting with Lady M'Whymper he received a card from the taller sister with the name Olivia Winter, and the address Normandy Villa, Bromley Road, W., that he might not fail in his assignation on the following Tuesday, and drove off highly interested and deeply speculating upon the circumstances of his novel acquaintances, and concluding that Olivia was probably a needlewoman or former maid of Lady M'Whymper's, and that Maisie, his fare, was in training for the ballet or some supernumerary stage employment. With all that, it was strange of Lady M'Whymper to be there at that time of night.

His fears that the old Scotswoman would recognise him were groundless. Having calculated the

exact fare, and given him it on her arrival at her lighted house, with its opened door and advancing servants, she was in far too great a hurry to get the door closed between herself and the injured cabby to bestow a glance either on him or his smart cab.

"Stebbing," said Mr Forrester, when his groom stepped up to take the reins from his hand, "have the crest painted out of the cab to-morrow, and get me a set of plain single harness without any plating or ornament."

"Certainly, sir."

CHAPTER II.

When the appointed Tuesday came, Mr Forrester, true to his word, drew up at the gate of Normandy Villa five minutes before the trysted hour, carefully got up in the cabman mode as to his extreme outer man, while an abstraction of the cabman husk would have revealed a gentleman in ordinary evening array.

His punctuality was rewarded. In answer to the bell, which was pulled by a passing arab, Olivia Winter came to the gate in the lamplight, patted the horse's neck with a slim white hand, on which Mr Forrester detected the gleam of a diamond-ring. "I am so sorry, cabman," she said, kindly; "my sister will not be ready for at least ten minutes, and you really are a little before your time. I would ask

you to come in, but of course you cannot leave your beautiful horse. I never saw so fine a creature between cab-shafts before, though I know that a good deal of blood is sometimes to be found in hansom cattle. What is his name? Bright? Then you are on our side in politics. We are extreme Radicals. And your name? I hate to call people by their offices, as if they were mere machines. I recognise a brother in every man I meet, and think of his humanity rather than his accidental relations with myself."

"Mark Forrester, at your service, miss," he replied, touching his hat, not quite at his ease under the steady, frank gaze of the eyes beneath the woollen shawl.

"Mark—a nice manly name. Are you married, Forster?"

"Not exactly, miss."

"Not exactly? Trembling on the verge, Forster? I hope you will make a good choice. People don't reflect sufficiently before marrying, particularly when circumstances allow them to marry young and without difficulty. Now a cabman must find great comfort in a wife. But don't be in a hurry, Forster," she said, earnestly; "don't give up your life for a bright eye and a pretty face. Make sure first that she is good."

Mr Forrester smiled in his comforter. He had frequently before been lectured upon his matrimonial

duties and prospects, but never by a being so young, so bright-eyed, and so disinterested. He liked new experiences.

"There's a good deal in that, miss," he replied; "I'm blest if I don't turn it over in my mind."

"Do, Forster. And if you can manage it, bring her to see me, and I'll find out what she is made of. Women know women. I daresay you think that she is not quite in my class; but we have given up class distinctions, my sisters and I. We consider ourselves quite on an equality with you," she added, with a smile full of innocent and unconscious condescension.

"Do you now, miss?" he returned, with evident surprise; "well, now, if that ain't queer! Rum, I call it." The idea of a working girl on the second floor of a little Cockney villa descending to social equality with an earl's son was droll.

"Yes, I am plain Olivia Winter."

The cabman doubted it. Such a voice and such eyes could not belong to a plain woman, he was certain. However, he scarcely felt equal to expressing this opinion, and merely shook his head dissentingly in the darkness.

"I care little for the conversation of gentlemen. They speak to women as if they were highly developed pussy-cats. I prefer talking to men like yourself—honest fellows whose life is too serious to be fooled away in idle things." He thought of his own aimless

existence, and sighed. "What do you think of this war? You see the papers, I suppose, and have a vote, of course? And only think, *I* have none. Isn't it hard?"

"Things in general is rough upon women, miss. Howsomever, I shouldn't wonder if they was to pull the woman suffrage through Parlymint some of these days."

"Do you really think so, Forster? I *am* so glad. This is my sister, Geraldine Winter," she added, as a girl with a cup and saucer came tripping down to the gate,—"Mark Forster, Gerry."

Mr Forrester, by force of habit, lifted his hat in the usual way, to the great surprise of his friends.

"I have brought you a cup of coffee, Forster," said Miss Geraldine, with a frank smile. "Maisie is just coming. Would you prefer beer?"

Maisie then appeared, and was driven to her destination, which proved to be some well-known public rooms in which a concert was being held, and where the cabman had the pleasure of hearing his fare, who figured in the programme under a professional name, sing in a trained chorus, and once in a brief solo. Having driven her back to Normandy Villa, and having been cordially thanked, duly paid, and wished a pleasant good-night, he finished the evening at a ball, where the weariness of conventionality was specially borne in upon him.

"Are you a Radical?" he asked casually of Miss Mabel Coinless, after a turn in a waltz, during which it struck him that the lady's want of originality was surface-washed rather than ingrained.

"You are making fun of me, Mr Forrester. Are women ever anything?"

"I have recently had reason to believe that they are human beings, Miss Coinless."

"Really. Well, it is something to be allowed even that dignity." Mr Forrester looked thoughtfully at the lady's fan, which he held for some moments. She was one of ten daughters; and he knew, and she knew, and everybody knew, that the present object of her being was to secure a man of equal social standing and superior wealth to herself as husband. Then he looked at Miss Coinless, who was pretty and charming after the conventional pattern he abhorred.

"Are you perchance a woman's rights' woman?" he asked.

"Am I devoid of common-sense?" she replied, dropping the conventional mask, "or are you?"

"Such women are not devoid of common-sense," he objected.

"Did I say that they were? But to confess to such thoughts would be mere folly, particularly when on one's promotion," she added, bitterly. "In the slave-market," she said in her heart.

"I doubt it. Honesty is a good thing——"

"For the free. Really, Mr Forrester," she added, once more assuming the smiling mask that the Spartan cruelty of society imposes upon women, "what nonsense we are talking! I promised merely to dance with you, not to say my catechism."

He took the hint and the lady, and whirled agreeably round in silence, musing upon the occult cause of the conventional mask that so vexed him. He made an advance that night in the knowledge of human nature. "The conventional woman," he affirmed, "is a sham. She is a sham because she is not free." Then he stood apart, and mused what figures Olivia, Geraldine, and Maisie would make in that gay scene. Happy girls! born to the noble independence of labour, and blissful exemption from conventional fetters! But what were they? He wondered how a cabman might respectfully arrive at some knowledge upon that subject.

In the meantime, life had ceased to be dull. The pleasant aroma of the cab-nights pervaded the rest of the week. His fare always chatted agreeably and frankly with him, though with an unconscious condescension which tickled him immensely; and his curiosity was kept upon the stretch by the fact that beyond knowing that the three were working women, he could not tell the occupation of the two elder sisters, each of whom appeared from time to time, bringing him tea or coffee, and bits of carrot or sugar for the horse, and talked pleasantly upon general

subjects, particularly politics and literature, in which last he had much ado to keep at a proper level of ignorance.

One night Olivia accompanied her sister to her destination. "I'm having a holiday, Forster," she laughed, "and I have really earned it. Do you ever have a holiday?"

"Well, miss," he returned, with some embarrassment, "there's a good deal of sameness in a cabman's life, to be sure."

"I do hope you have your Sundays at least," she said through the trap, which was frequently opened for conversational purposes, a proceeding that by no means diminished street dangers. "I often think," she added, blushing with eagerness on learning that his Sundays were free, "what an intelligent and well-informed man you are, and what a pity it is that your calling should prevent you from still further cultivating your mind. Now, Forster, as a friend, I should like to do what little I can for you; and if you would like to have lessons in French, Latin, Greek, or anything that I or my sisters know, we should be too happy to teach you of a Sunday evening — of course if you have no better engagement," she put in, remembering the matrimonial bonds into which the cabman was probably drifting.

The driver felt quite dizzy for a moment, and was thankful that he did not drop from his elevated

perch. The idea of the girl knowing Greek, he thought, and proposing to teach him!

"Lord, miss, to think of your knowing Greek, now! That took my breath away, that did. I should like to have a try at Greek. I've heard it's the hardest of the lot, and one as you can't turn into ready money; and thinks I to myself, things that'll fetch no money is worth the most."

"Quite so. Why, Forster, you are a philosopher. You have chosen the Leaden Casket," returned his fare, with rapture.

"Maisie," she added, in a whisper, "I quite love this cabman. I do hope he won't marry that frivolous nurse-maid he is dreaming of."

Thus, before the cabman had had much opportunity for reflection, the eager Olivia had engaged him to come to Normandy Villa on the following Sunday evening for his first Greek lesson; and after this he felt that he could not disappoint the ardent girl, whatever his opinion of the expediency of the arrangement might be.

On the following morning he appeared at the house of his brother, the Hon. and Rev. Alan Forrester, vicar of a large London parish, into which he threw all his youthful energies and large heart.

"Alan," he said, entering the room in which his brother was snatching a hasty luncheon at a table piled with correspondence, reports, and statistics, to which he paid more attention than to the frugal

meal before him—"I want to know all about your cabmen."

"My cabmen—honest fellows," replied the honourable and reverend young man, smiling, "would make a pretty stiff subject for a competitive examination. They can't be crammed in a minute, Mark. Look here, dear old boy—we have a big tea on to-morrow night. Suppose you come and give them a bit of a jaw afterwards. No, you needn't preach; your happy chaff will be just the thing for them. We have opened several new shelters, and are going to propose a self-supporting coffee-tavern, in which they shall have shares. Woodman and I give £50 to start them."

"I won't be outshone by Woodman; write me down for £60. But what I want to know is something of the social and domestic life of the cabman. I've made the discovery, Alan, that women and cabmen are human beings; and further, that while the universe contains human beings, it contains objects of interest."

"Ah, dear old boy! you would say so if you saw what I see daily. What will you have? Claret? Come round to the shelters with me this afternoon, and you shall see cabmen galore."

This Mr Forrester did, picking up many choice flowers of speech on his way for future use; and he was touched to find the confidence reposed in his brother by these rough men, who all appeared to

know him intimately, and a little crushed by a sense of his own superfluity. He also went to the tea, and studied the festive attire proper to cabmen. This he found to consist chiefly of a bath of pomatum for the hair, a good deal of necktie, and a large occasional flower in the coat; and all these he himself assumed on the following Sunday. He made a very happy speech in the capacity of amateur cabman, magnified the difficulty and responsibility of the profession, alluded to the frequent newspaper reports of wife-beating, condemned the practice as unmanly, and declared that cabmen never appeared to answer such charges; upon which one or two looked out of the corner of their eyes in a sheepish way, not unmarked by their reverend friend.

"Alan," he observed, when the two were returning in the private hansom, "you are a radical and a philanthropist, and a liberty and fraternity man, and everything you ought not to be, in short. What should you say if a man in my position were to marry a clever, well-educated daughter of a—small tradesman?"

"I should say, Mark," returned the honourable and reverend leveller, quickly, "that you were an unmitigated ass."

"And you would say right," mused the other. For blood is thicker than water.

CHAPTER III.

When the evening dusk was gathering on the following Sunday, Mr Forrester, arrayed from head to foot in such attire as he had observed upon the persons of younger cabmen, stood on the steps of Normandy Villa and knocked three slow loud knocks on the door, feeling at the same time a succession of more aristocratic raps from within upon his own ribs.

The door was opened by a servant, who directed him to the second floor, upon the landing of which stood his hostess, all smiles to welcome him, though he observed that she did not offer her hand. He went through a good deal of puffing, and blowing, and scraping upon the mat in the narrow passage, and then entered a pretty little room, plainly furnished, but abounding in photographs, prints, and other objects of art, and having some tastefully arranged fresh flowers here and there. An easel and a piano stood in different parts of the room, which was full of books, and tea was laid upon the table.

It was the first time that he had seen the three sisters indoors and in a full light, and he was struck by their grace, and the easy manner in which they did the honours of their simple home. Neither of them was exactly pretty. Geraldine was a slim, graceful girl, with large clear eyes, a bright manner,

and a ready turn of speech: she was dressed in the high-art style, and looked like a picture. Olivia was the tallest of the three; she had a certain commanding air that went well with her impetuous speech and noble stature; her eyes were bright, her face sparkled with intellect, and there was a singular charm in her manner which the cabman was unable to resist. Maisie was smaller, younger, and less intellectual than her sisters, while in her lips the sweet voice common to all three became superlatively sweet. It would have been evident to a less acute perception than Mr Forrester's, that the three were ladies whose breeding could not be surpassed.

He sat on the extreme edge of a chair as near the door as possible, and deliberately got into difficulties with his hat in a sufficiently comic manner, which evoked no smile from the bright lips of the sisters, although their eyes were not unexpressive of mirth. Geraldine, however, suggested a place of repose for the hat upon a chair: he felt that her manner in doing so would have put the clumsiest real cabman at his ease in a moment.

"You will have some tea, won't you, Forster?" Geraldine asked, pouring out the perfumed drink. "Greek is dreadfully dry to begin upon, whatever my sister may say, especially when one is grown up. Have you a father? And is he a cabman too? Perhaps he is old, and you support him, or help to do so?"

"We want to hear all about your people," added Olivia, with her usual earnestness, "and then we will tell you all about ourselves."

Thus the cabman was led to confess a father, whose profession was that of gamekeeper, though he had now retired from active business and was fairly well off. On being pressed as to his present occupation, he said that he kept pigs, and a cow or two on a bit of land of his own, all of which was literally true.

"I wonder, Forster, that you didn't follow your father's calling, which is a very pleasant one," said the innocent Olivia, with the earnestness which made him long to speak to her on equal terms.

"My eldest brother, he had the first chance, and took to the gamekeeping," he explained; upon which Olivia made some reflections on the far-reaching injustice of primogeniture, which thus poisoned the happiness even of young gamekeepers.

"Has he a sister, has he a brother?" sang Maisie softly, while Geraldine gave her a merry look, during the temporary submergence of the cabman's comely face in the saucer of tea, which he held in the style affected at his brother's big tea, carefully drawing the back of his hand across his lips afterwards.

"Yes, Miss Geraldine," he said, "I've got another brother. His name's Alan. He's a preacher. And a sister, name of Jane. No, she ain't married. She lives 'long with father and mother."

"And milks the cows, and helps feed the pigs?" asked Olivia.

Mark nodded his head. He knew that Lady Jane had a pet dairy, and had once boasted to him of having mastered the art of milking, so that things were very pleasant with his conscience.

"Do have some more cake. It does one good to see an honest working man eat," said Olivia. "We are sorry not to be able to keep you in countenance; but you see our work is sedentary, and after all, we are only women."

The cabman shuddered; but he remembered the performances of his professional brethren at the tea, and manfully attacked a fourth huge slice of cake.

"How nice it must be for you to have this sweet country home to think of!" continued Olivia. "And your brother, the preacher—I should like to hear him: such peasant preachers are truly apostolic, whatever you may say to the contrary, Gerry, dear. And George the gamekeeper, and Jane milking her cows. We shall soon know them all for friends. And now about ourselves."

"I am a painter," said Geraldine; "I make my living chiefly by designs. My sisters call me a designing woman. These cups and saucers are my work. Maisie's calling you know."

"And I," said Olivia, with the frank smile that was rapidly turning her guest's head, "am as yet

little better than a drone. I am studying for a London university degree, and bringing a little grist to the mill in the meantime by giving lessons and writing."

"O Lord!" exclaimed the cabman, "to think now of fine-bred ladies doing that! Excuse me, miss, but you wasn't brought up to work. A cabman sees a good many ladies, and gets to know the real grit."

The sisters looked at each other, and burst into a merry laugh.

"Don't betray us, Forster," cried Olivia; "I knew you would find us out. But will you promise on your honour as a—a true man—to keep our secret? Well, then, the fun of it is, that we need not earn our living at all. We each have a tiny fortune of our own, though far too small for the station in which we were born. We have run away from our friends in order to lead a rational life."

"We hated idleness," said Maisie.

"We hated conventionality," added Geraldine.

"And we hated shams," continued Olivia, with a flushing cheek. "Our parents are dead, Forster, and we ran away from our brother and the trustees of our property, who wished to dictate our way of life to us. So we just wrote a note saying that we were off to Berlin under assumed names to teach English, and that they need trouble themselves no more about us. We did go to Berlin, but soon came

back, convinced that London is the only place big enough to hide in—and here we are. Our name is De Wynter, spelt with a *y*, and our brother is Lord Northwynd. Our father was a baron, so we put Honourable before our names. Northwynd tried to force Geraldine into a marriage, and he entered into negotiations with a certain Lord Grandveneur — a much greater lord than my brother, Forster — to marry me—*me* indeed!—to a son of his, the Hon.—what was his name, Gerry?—something Forrester. That is our story, Forster."

"Thank 'ee, miss. I won't let it out. I'm game. I suppose this here Forrester wasn't much in the way of a husband?"

"He was not, Forster. But that was not the point. It was the indignity of being offered to him, and the deeper indignity of being told to accept his advances. He was coming to stay at Northcourt when we fled. He would have trotted me out, Forster, and looked at my points and my paces; and then, perhaps, he would have trotted me back again. I! who never mean to marry at all—who will subject myself to no man's tutelage!"

"Seems to me it was rough on this here lord's son," observed Mark, who now distinctly recalled the invitation to Northcourt, and Lord Grandveneur's mystic discourse upon the duties of matrimony and the charms of Olivia de Wynter.

"Not in the least. He was better without a wife.

A poor creature, Forster, with no profession, no duties, ever so much money, and devoted solely to his own amusement. A wife, forsooth, was to steady him and keep him out of mischief, his father and Northwynd thought." Here Mark Forrester, little as he was given to admire his own moral rectitude, could not help thinking that the idea of Lord Northwynd seeking to keep *him* out of mischief was rather good. "When a man needs a wife to keep him steady, he is good for nothing."

"What could the poor chap have done, miss? I often pity them rich lords' sons, brought up with nothing to do and their victuals found."

"Nothing to do! Why, Forster, half the best work in England is done by rich men for nothing. But we have chatted too long. Now for Greek. Geraldine is going to Evensong, and Maisie has her book. I hope you won't be discouraged by the queer forms of Greek letters. One soon gets used to them."

Of all tongues Mark Forrester loved Greek, and of all tongues he knew it best. Like De Quincey, he could have harangued an Athenian mob better than many men can speak to an English one. Thus, with a little care, he was able to conceal his perfect knowledge, and yet to shine as a pupil. He had fallen in love with Olivia during the first cup of tea, and quite irretrievably, as he acknowledged with sorrow before the revelation of her parentage. But everybody who

has experienced a precipitation into this sort of madness, well knows that it has no bottom; so that the victim, once plumped into it, may go on falling for ever and ever, unless drawn back or suspended by some opposing force. Every time Mr Forrester looked at his teacher's earnest sparkling eyes, or met her sweet patient smile, he received a fresh downward impulse which lowered him at least a fathom, so that by the time the lesson was ended, he was in very deep indeed; and what with this affliction, and the amount of sweet solid cake he had consumed, he was strung to a high pitch of misery.

Olivia heaved a deep sigh of weariness as she shut the book. "I never had such a pupil before," she said, smiling him a couple of fathoms deeper down. "How I long to introduce you to Homer and Æschylus! You may perhaps have heard of Helen and Troy, and the wanderings of Ulysses?"

"I've been taking the liberty of thinking about that there brother of yours, miss," replied Mark, evading this question as dangerous. "Now if I had the charge of three young women under age, and they sloped, I should be in Queer Street, sisters or not."

"My dear Forster, we are all over age," laughed Olivia; "and why should we be in anybody's charge? We are free women, the citizens of a free country, and our English blood boils at the thought of restraint. Besides," she added, with a bitterness that

recalled certain episodes in Northwynd's career to her listener, "we have no vices to repress—we neither drink, bet, nor spend what we don't possess."

Mark smiled to himself. He was acquainted with Lord Northwynd, and had a shrewd suspicion that such failings in himself would appear to the young nobleman as virtues in comparison with his sisters' heinous wickedness in having a cabman to tea with them. No one knew better than he that men may commit every iniquity short of invading each other's purses, and be blameless, while women may not infract the most arbitrary convention without ruin.

"Livy and I are twins," said Geraldine, who had now come in from church. "We are twenty-four. Maisie is twenty-two. Don't you think we are old enough to refuse to marry unless we please, and to decline to countenance any husband-hunting on our account?"

Here the chivalrous cabman ventured to observe, with some diffidence, that he should have thought the ladies would have been called upon to enact the part of ardently chased prey rather than of hunters.

"Ah, Forster, how little you know of the miseries of the upper classes! In your fortunate circles a man looks to a wife as to a prize. But these men of rank and fortune walk into a crowded drawing-room like sultans, and know that they can pick where they like. However, we have renounced class distinctions now, and are going to do our best to bring

the mouldering old social fabric crashing to the ground."

"Lord! what a dust it will make, Miss Geraldine!" observed the cabman, tranquilly.

When he was gone, Olivia threw her arms round Geraldine's neck and kissed her. "Only think!" she exclaimed, with rapture, "we have a real live cabman, a mere son of the people, for our friend."

"It's delicious," added Maisie, "and so comfortable. We can be as friendly as ever we like, because no one could possibly fall in love with a cabman."

"And the cabman?" asked Geraldine, with a pensive air.

"Oh, my dear!" laughed the Radical and socialist Olivia, with a look that betrayed all the blue blood of all the proud De Wynters, "he would never dare aspire to that height. Besides, we have the advantage of not being pretty."

CHAPTER IV.

The amateur cabman rushed home, tore off his disguise, and puffed fiercely at a cigar to assist his meditations. The only solace for such a misfortune as falling in love is a similar mischance to the cause of such dolour. The question now arose how to entangle poor Olivia in the meshes of such a bewilderment. He thought of Miss Hardcastle, and decided that a

neat waiting-maid is a far more fascinating object than a Sunday cabman disguised in pomatum and false English. He remembered Zeus—the various disguises in which he had won the hearts of feminine mortals; but he doubted if even Zeus, in the guise of a cabman, would have made much impression upon the fastidious female fancy. As for carrying on a regular siege in his proper person to Miss Olivia, that was quite out of the question after her expressed opinion upon his character. Besides, he had learnt a good deal more than the Greek alphabet that evening: to see himself in other people's eyes (a thing that rarely ministers to vanity); to understand something of the position of women from their own point of view; and finally, to arrive at some solution of the dark mystery of husband-hunting, that last degradation of civilised humanity. How he envied Olivia her decided convictions! What would he give to share them! He would then no longer be a drone. Olivia in his position! What a world of good or of mischief she would do!

He had some thoughts of taking Lady Jane into his confidence; but unfortunately, Lady Jane, though one of the sweetest of human beings, had never yet thought for herself, and was governed by maxims and prejudices the most antiquated. She would certainly condemn the rebellious De Wynters. Meanwhile the cab-driving and Greek lessons went merrily on, and Mr Forrester loved Sunday as dearly as the

hero of "Sally in our Alley." Like most persons afflicted with love, his principal solace was to aggravate his malady, and he took a melancholy satisfaction in feeling much worse every Sunday. But every affliction has its consolation; and however deeply one may be in love, it is a comfort to think that it can only be with one person at a time: thus the blow having once descended, there is nothing more to fear. He was able, therefore, to study human nature, as revealed in Geraldine and Maisie, without dreading any pernicious consequences. He even consoled himself for the sublime misery of which Olivia was the innocent cause, by the opinion of the great Goethe, that to be in love with a woman is the only successful way of studying female character; though Goethe's affliction was always temporary, and though he usually contrived that that of the woman should be permanent, thus securing himself noble opportunities for human vivisection.

Now Lady M'Whymper was a distant kinswoman of Mr Forrester's, and she frequently reproached him for visiting her so rarely, and had given him a general invitation to dine with her on any night. She was an eccentric old woman, and had, as he knew, rebellious notions upon the subjection of her sex; and he sometimes reproached himself for caring so little for one who thought in some degree with his Olivia. Therefore one day he sent a note to say that he would dine with her, if quite convenient, and

requested her to telegraph to his club in case his presence should be superfluous. Having been out shopping all day, Lady M'Whymper did not receive the missive till late in the afternoon, when it was too late to write; and nothing short of life-and-death urgency, or the prospect of losing large moneys, would have induced her to commit the extravagance of a telegram. She therefore ordered an extra cover to be laid, and shrugging her shoulders at the thought of her previously invited guest's objection to meet people, made herself happy in an arm-chair, and awaited the arrival of her visitors.

The late Sir Dugald had been a firm upholder of marital authority, as well as a strict Calvinist; and though his lady had been twenty years a widow, she still sometimes shudderingly recalled the terrible joy with which she had seen Sir Dugald's eyes close and her own chains snap. Nevertheless she had been good to him in his life, and mourned him with pity after death. In her the De Wynters had confided, and to her alone was their *incognito* known; and further, as fate would have it, Olivia had promised to dine with her on this very evening, and arrived, all-unsuspecting, five minutes before the appointed hour.

"And now, dear cousin," said Olivia, with her little imperial air, as she sank upon an ottoman by the old lady's side, "I must tell you all about our cabman. He is the most charming creature in the

world, intelligent, but with a mind which is yet virgin soil; and I am teaching him—— Oh dear!"

Lady M'Whymper had listened but indifferently —her thoughts being preoccupied with the hope that any accident short of a broken limb might keep her other relative from his engagement—when the dreadful sound of a carriage stopping at the door, followed by the yet more dreadful announcement of Mr Forrester, reduced her to a state of temporary idiocy, in which she did not observe the horror and amazement of her guests, and in which she sought some comfort in the reflection that she had saved the telegram money. In her confusion the miserable old woman introduced Olivia by her proper name. "But surely, Livy, you remember Mark Forrester?" she added, by way of making things pleasanter. "You must have met at Northcourt. Or was it Lord Woodman? Northwynd and he were at Oxford together."

Olivia stood at her full height, looking like a princess in her black velvet, diamonds, and old lace; her nostrils quivered, and there was a dangerous flash in her eye. Having first levelled a direct, steady, and indignant glance of three seconds' duration at the unfortunate Mark, she made him a ceremonious salutation, and then turned and walked up to a table, where she began examining some prints. The whole thing seemed to flash through her mind at once,—her cousin's treachery, the plot concocted between Northwynd and Forrester, carried on for weeks and

now brought to a crisis in the house of the traitress. Though it was at least five seconds before she recognised her pet cabman — with his clumsy gestures, bad English, and pomatumed hair plastered down over his forehead—in the gentleman before her, severely spotless and neat, with sable coat and snowy shirt, with short, crisp, waved hair innocent of grease, and nicely pointed moustache, with shining boots, so different from the clumsy high-lows in which he was wont to stump heavily up the stairs at Normandy Villa; but the eyes, the square brow, and, above all, the voice, in spite of the different tone and accent, were unmistakable.

The hostess attributed these tokens of indignation on Olivia's part to her anger at meeting a guest, but Mark's apparent dismay she was quite unable to account for. Macbeth's discomfiture at the sight of Banquo's ghost in his own chair was nothing to this. The only parallel Mark could think of was the tender anguish of Tancred when Clorinda's helmet fell off, and he found himself in mortal combat with the lady of his affections.

The dinner was not a success. Dinners of three seldom are; particularly when one of the three assumes the office of a refrigerator, and makes the ice-pail a superfluity. Poor Lady M'Whymper, in her efforts to conciliate Olivia and put the young people on a pleasant footing, only made things worse. All her little artifices for drawing them into con-

versation merely served to confirm Olivia in her impression that the whole thing was a conspiracy, in which her hostess was arch-plotter, for effecting matrimony between herself and the unworthy Forrester, whose pleading glances and pathetic humility were yet further evidence of the crime.

When the dreary festivity came to an end, and the unfortunate Mark found himself alone with his reflections, Olivia, after some minutes' indignant silence, charged her hostess with her treachery, to the amazement of the innocent old lady, who was completely bewildered by her young friend's references to cabmen with matrimonial designs, and who stoutly maintained that she had quite forgotten the proposed alliance with Mark Forrester. They were still playing wildly at cross-purposes, though Olivia had satisfied herself that Lady M'Whymper was not guilty of complicity with her kinsman's designs, when Mark, instead of seizing, as his hostess devoutly hoped he would, this opportunity for evanishing, reappeared in the drawing-room.

It was an unlucky moment; for Olivia's indignation was then at its hottest, and she was seeking some object upon which to pour out the vials of her wrath. "Cousin," she exclaimed, with a wave of her hand in the culprit's direction, "beware of that man! He is a falsehood! He is a cabman! He creeps into people's houses on false pretences! He gets people to teach him Greek. Does he look as if he needed to

learn Greek? His father is a retired gamekeeper, and keeps a few pigs and poultry on a little bit of land of his own. His brother George is a gamekeeper. His brother Alan is a Methodist preacher. His sister Jane milks the cows. Does he look like a milkmaid's brother and a retired gamekeeper's son? Does he look as if he earned his living by cab-driving? Oh, he is a consummate actor! You should see him drinking tea out of a saucer, and hear him talking bad English! Beware of him, for there is no knowing what disguise he may assume next!"

So saying, the indignant Olivia vanished through the doorway, which she had been gradually approaching during this speech, and, before her dismayed auditors could recover from the first shock of this denunciation, had caused a cab to be called, and had driven home to fall into Geraldine's arms, burst into tears, and exclaim, "Oh, Geraldine, we are undone! Tricked, deceived, and mocked by that miserable cabman, who is one of Northwynd's own tools!"

"By George!" exclaimed Forrester, after interchanging glances of mutual stupefaction with his hostess for some moments.

"And pray, Mark, what is the meaning of all this?" she exclaimed, severely.

"It means that I'm in as lively a scrape as a man need wish for," he returned, with a melancholy air, as he proceeded to unbosom himself of the cab adventure, and all that it had led to.

CHAPTER V.

"It was all Maisie's fault!" cried Olivia, during the adjourned discussion upon the faithless cab-driver. "Stupid little thing, to lose her wits and run away from a clumsy insolent man like that!"

"Oh, Livy, I can't help my fears! my heart beats so when men are rude in the streets, especially at night!"

"Little coward! Why didn't you call a police-man? Miserable pretence of a woman! You had better go back to Northwynd and get married if you want a protector. Pray, what would you do if you were a maid-servant, with no knightly blood in your veins, with none of the courage which springs from fifty generations of good feeding, with no sense of *noblesse oblige*, with no education, no high thoughts of woman's destiny, and nothing to lift you above the natural terrors of crushed womanhood? When will you be a woman, and not a baby, that you must go about in the leading-strings of a deceitful cab-man?"

"Come, moderate your transports, Livy," cried Geraldine, "and remember that Maisie has neither our stamina nor our inches. Let us have no more of the cabman for pity's sake. Unless you like to make a ballad on the false fellow, and wind up the whole thing with a good laugh."

"He was not *your* cabman," sighed Olivia, with unintentional pathos: and while she was yet speaking, the hour being about two o'clock in the afternoon, the leisure moment after the mid-day meal enjoyed by the three sisters, there came a man's springing step upon the stairs, followed by a knock at the parlour-door, and the entrance of the object of all Olivia's anger. The indignant flashes of six bright eyes, and the chill stoniness of three once gracious and friendly faces, formed a by no means encouraging reception.

"And pray, sir," demanded Olivia, after a freezing bow, and without inviting her visitor to be seated, "to what are we indebted for the unexpected honour of this visit? We are not by way of receiving gentlemen at our rooms."

"I came," he replied, displaying a graceful skill in the manipulation of his hat, which contrasted strongly with his performances on the occasion of his first visit, "to offer my best apologies."

"Which are certainly needed," said Geraldine, severely.

"On the contrary," said Olivia, "conduct so *abominable* is beyond apology."

"My conduct is not so abominable as you imagine, dear ladies," he replied, with gentle pathos. Then he related the incidents that had led to his assumption of the disguise.

"And so you had no intention of marrying my

sister after all?" asked Geraldine, with a shade of disappointment in her voice.

"None whatever."

"Oh!" faltered Olivia, with an obvious absence of the satisfaction that she ought to have felt under the circumstances.

"You should not have concealed your true name," Maisie said. "Pray, why did you accept my sister's offer of learning Greek? It looks dark, Mr Forrester."

"Pardon me. I gave my name as Mark Forrester; was it my part to correct ladies who chose to pronounce me Forster? I accepted the Greek offer with a view to enriching my experience of character, and before I had seen Miss De Wynter in a full light, or was acquainted with her name."

"This casuistry is pitiful," cried Olivia. "You have not acted the part of a gentleman."

"Quite so: I did the part of cabman instead. You cannot say that it was an unhandsome part."

Geraldine here burst out laughing, and vowed that the *rôle* was perfect. "We accept your apology," she added, "and we confide the secret of our hidden life to your honour, and request that you will molest us no further."

"Also that you will cease to rob honest cabmen of their bread," fulminated Olivia, suddenly turning upon him.

"Do me the favour of accepting the bread," he returned, laying a bracelet of silver coins, elegantly

strung upon interlacing silver chains, before the sisters, who recognised the exact number of coins given him in requital of his services. "Of course I shall respect your *incognito*," he added; "but surely this dismissal is rather hard. As a cabman, I have been so kindly welcomed in these rooms."

"The case is now altered. You are an earl's son," said Olivia, with severe reproach.

"I can't help being an earl's son," he replied, with a melancholy air. "I didn't choose that state of life. I would rather have been Prince of Wales. His is the only rank save one in which a man can neither act, think, or speak as he likes, and in which one really earns his champagne and Havannas. His is the only station in which it is a credit to be jolly."

"No one supposes you to be guilty of your own birth, Mr Forrester," continued Olivia, with unabated majesty; "but I think you might see that it places a bar to your admission here. There are certain conventions with regard to the association of ladies and gentlemen——"

"Exactly. But Olivia Wynter told me that she despised conventionality, as I do. And I might perhaps hint that it is not usual for unmarried ladies to have young cabmen to tea with them."

"Really, Mr Forrester," interrupted Geraldine, with heat—for she felt that this was ungrateful as coming from the favoured cabman himself—"it must be evident to the densest intelligence that a

cabman is in a class so far beneath us as to be in quite a different category."

"Quite so. But then, Miss Wynter has renounced class distinctions. She recognises a brother in every man she meets, and thinks of his humanity rather than his accidents. Is it possible, Miss Wynter, that your sympathies have only a downward direction, and that the unfortunate minority known as the upper classes has no claim upon your kindness? What a deal of misapplied charity there is in this world, to be sure!"

"And misapplied talent," added Geraldine. "What a pity you are not a barrister, Mr Forrester! Your clients might commit the cruellest murders with a quiet mind!"

At this moment another step was heard upon the stairs, and was succeeded by a gentle knock at the parlour-door, which Maisie opened, disclosing the form of a young lady with a sweet smile and an elegant costume, and who appeared to be a stranger to the three sisters.

"What! Mark here?" she exclaimed upon seeing him; and jumping rashly to conclusions, she took it for granted that her brother's intended proposals were already accepted. "And you don't recognise me, Miss De Wynter? Don't you remember my Christmas at Northcourt? and the fun we had? and Mark kissing little Livy under the mistletoe? To think that he should fall in love with her in the dis-

guise of a cabman after all. Dear old Lady M'Whymper told me all about it this morning, and I thought I might venture to call."

"My sister, Lady Jane Forrester," said Mr Forrester, introducing her.

"What! the milkmaid?" cried Geraldine, laughing.

"Yes; Jane the milkmaid," replied the guest, sinking into the chair that was offered her. "Oh, it was quite true. I do milk the cows sometimes, and make the butter. Mark never fibs. Dear Miss De Wynter, I appreciate your life, and quite believe in women's disabilities, though I never admit it to men, for fear of being thought bold and unfeminine. But I do hope that you will marry Mark—the poor fellow is so dreadfully in love."

"It happened during the first cup of tea," he explained, looking hard at the ceiling, as if taking that mute object to witness.

"The order of things was apparently reversed," commented Geraldine; "the tea stirred the spoon, instead of the spoon stirring the tea."

Olivia rebuked her sister's levity with a look of considerable majesty, and then turned a withering glance upon the suitor, whose natural misery was tempered by a sense of humour. "This is quite new to us," she observed; "and pray, which of us does Mr Forrester intend to honour with his hand?"

"Her who showed him the greatest kindness," he replied, promptly. "Dearest Miss Olivia," he added,

"my sister has precipitated things. I should never have ventured to put the decisive question so quickly. But it is my firm intention to leave no stone unturned until I have persuaded you to marry me. In fact," he added, "I *will* marry you."

Olivia laughed a defiant little laugh, and motioned to the audacious suitor, who had approached very near to her, while Lady Jane and the other two had withdrawn under pretence of examining a picture on the easel, to keep his distance. "And do you think," she asked, "that I would marry a mere man?"

"Well," he replied, thoughtfully, "you could scarcely marry a woman, could you?"

Olivia bit her lip, perhaps to conceal a smile, and looked out of the window in the narrow recess of which they were standing, while the group devoted to the fine arts were in the other. "Marriage," she said, "does not enter into our scheme of life. It was partly to avoid it that we hid ourselves from the world. I have already told you of my views and aims in life, and you must see that they are quite incompatible with marriage. How could I renounce my freedom? I will never have a master."

"I am your slave."

"I require a slave as little as I do a master. Besides, your tastes and habits are quite different from mine. I have told you how I hate the frivolous social life of a woman in our class. I could never amuse the leisure of an idle man."

"Our tastes may not be so different as you imagine, and habits may be reformed. Dearest Olivia, believe me, it was because you are so different from conventional women that I first loved you. It was then that life began for the first time to be a reality to me. I, too, am sick of frivolity and selfish amusement, and wish to be something more than a mere drone. Won't you help me in this? It was something better than Greek that I came to learn on those sweet, quiet Sunday evenings. Don't leave your task incomplete. Dearest Olivia," he added, with earnestness, "I love you so tremendously!"

Olivia had several times changed colour during this speech, which, from obvious reasons, was spoken in low tones and close to the listener's ear. "Pray say no more," she cried; "it cannot be. The lines of our lives are cast."

But Mr Forrester, who was firmly convinced that the way to win a woman is to make resolute love to her, said a great deal more. All this time the other three, making more noise than is exactly expected from ladies — in fact, as the landlady's daughter commented from her post of observation at the key-hole, going on regular rampagious — discussed things in general, and finally performed a duet, the voice parts by Maisie and Lady Jane, and the accompaniment by Geraldine. What with the music, the grave discussion in the window, and a slight commotion outside the parlour-door, caused

by the rapid flight of the observer of society from the key-hole, the almost simultaneous arrival of Lady M'Whymper was unheard.

"Weel!" said this good lady, entering all smiles and benevolence, "and how does the little comedy end?"

"Very lamely," replied the lover, "since, as Biron said on a similar occasion, 'Jack hath not Jill.'"

"And is Love's labour quite lost?" asked Geraldine, in a melancholy tone. "Was all that solid cake eaten and Queen's English mangled for nothing?"

"Shall I be a milkmaid, a gamekeeper's daughter, and a cabman's sister for nothing?" continued Lady Jane.

"And shall I renounce mee aversion to marriage, and play the matchmaker for nothing?" added Lady M'Whymper. "I'm glad, Mark, that ye bear it like a feelosopher."

"Don't imagine, Lady M'Whymper, that I mean to give up," returned the philosopher stoutly; "I mean to marry her if she can be married." Then it was explained that Mr Forrester had received permission to improve his acquaintance with the three sisters, on condition that he made no further allusion to marriage until Olivia had taken her degree, and that at the same time he tried to make himself useful to society in some way or other. In the meantime, the De Wynters' *incognito* was to be strictly guarded, and the ex-cabman was only to be admit-

ted to the celestial parlour under the charge of a proper chaperon.

"It is a peety that ye couldn't have made things straighter," observed Lady M'Whymper, who, much as she disliked marriage in the abstract, was too much of a woman not to be disappointed at missing one in the concrete. "Come, lassies, give us a cup of tea. Leddy Jean, poor bit bairn, is just famished, for she ate no lunch for excitement. I'm thinking she would like some of the good solid cake that lay sae heavy on Mark's conscience."

Tea was therefore brewed, and the cabman's own special cake appeared, to the joy of Lady Jane, who maintained that a cabman's appetite was nothing to a milkmaid's.

"I can scarcely forgive Mr Forrester for telling us that his father was a gamekeeper, and devoted in his old age to cows and pigs," Maisie said, in the course of a general conversation of a revolutionary character.

"If a man who preserves the game of half two counties is not a gamekeeper, I don't know who is," he returned. "You are forgetting your Carlyle, Miss Maisie. It is also true that my father now leaves his game to Woodman, and Jane will tell you that the affairs of Europe are nothing to him in comparison with the good management of his pig-sties and the breed of his shorthorns."

"And the brother-preacher—the Radical, socialist, and Methodist?" continued Olivia.

"I deny the Methodist. The rest are visible any day to the eye of flesh in the vicar of St Radegunda's."

"Ye suld hear the lad preach!" added Lady M'Whymper, with enthusiasm. And they did so on the following Sunday.

When Lady M'Whymper's sixth cup of tea had vanished, the ex-cabman regretfully rose with the lady guests to take his leave. "What a blank next Sunday will be!" he whispered to Olivia on saying good-bye. "How I shall miss the Greek lesson!"

"And I too," replied Olivia, with her old impetuous air; "for I did like that cabman—as a cabman, I mean."

"And I did love that Greek teacher—as a teacher, of course."

"The comedy will be quite perfect," Geraldine was then saying to Lady Jane; "Jack will have Jill before long, and my sister will have to assert the independence of woman in the domestic circle. How Northwynd will chuckle!"

Lord Northwynd did chuckle three years later, when his long-lost sister returned to the bosom of her family as Mrs Forrester.

This occurrence was immediately preceded by the passing of Mr Forrester's celebrated Woman Emancipation Bill, which, as the young reader of this present twentieth century may have forgotten, took place in the year 1896, and is justly reckoned as the cul-

minating glory of the glorious period known in history as the nineteenth century. The majority in favour of this bill was overwhelming: there were but three dissentients. Of these, one was a working-man's candidate, who justly feared that the bill might injure one of the most precious privileges of his order—that of wife-beating. The second was an atheist, who, with the hyper-sensitive conscience peculiar to atheists, feared to vote lest this action should be construed into an acquiescence in Christianity, the only religion which insists on the rights of women. The third was a relic of a now extinct class of politicians, then known as Obstructionists, who dissented merely because this class held it a duty to impede all legislation whatsoever.

"How little," said the fortunate legislator on the eve of the wedding,—"how little did I dream that my hansom would procure me such a fair!"

REMINISCENCE OF A MARCH.

BY T. P. W.

SEVERAL years ago it fell to my lot to be on the march with a subaltern of my regiment in Ireland. I was taking a detachment into a remote part of the country, where I believe some disturbances were apprehended, and we had been started off at pretty short notice. I have even now a lively recollection of a long railway journey, the dingy stations we passed, the tedious stoppages, occasional plashes of rain against the carriage-windows, and our final exit from the train in a dark draughty shed with a sloppy platform. From here we had a good long march to our halting-place, through a sad-coloured waste, past hillsides of black bog, hardly a fence worth calling one to be seen, now and then a tumble-down hovel by the roadside, and off and on the rain pelting down in the sort of searching cold showers one gets in bleak parts of Ireland in the autumn-time. The town where we were to stay the night

was no exception to the general dinginess. After setting the men down into their billets, we "prospected" the principal inn in the place, got a couple of very middling bedrooms, and made up our minds to make the best of the situation. We had divested ourselves of our wet uniform, entered our little sitting-room with its welcome peat-piled fire, examined some hideous sacred prints hung round the walls—amongst them I remember one of St Veronica displaying a large handkerchief with the Saviour's face upon it—and were busy planning what to associate with whisky and the jacketed potato, when a note was brought in and handed to me, with a message that some one was waiting for an answer. It was addressed to "The officer commanding detachment, — Regiment;" but one saw at a glance it was not an official communication, the envelope being a dainty white one, and the handwriting almost unmistakably that of a lady. It turned out to be a very courteous invitation from a Mr and Mrs M—— of Innishderry Hall (we will call it), who, having heard that some troops were passing through Moynetown to-day, hoped for the pleasure of the officers' company at dinner that evening. This was really a timely as well as a hospitable offer, so A——, my subaltern, and I, at once agreed to accept it.

Fortunately, when evening came round, and the rickety-looking car that was to jolt us to our entertainers clattered up to the inn-door, the weather had

cleared a little. Well do I remember the drive: the cold keen air; a pale half-moon lighting up the sombre landscape; dark islands of bog alternating with pools of shimmering water; hill-slopes near but mysterious. As far as I can remember, we entered the grounds of Innishderry Hall about a mile and a half from the town. Already the country had begun to wear a prettier aspect; patches of wood appeared; and after passing the lodge-gate, we began to descend a valley — broken, rocky ground, with clumps of spruce and larch on either side — till, suddenly emerging from this, the drive swept round a corner, and we were in view of the sea. A few minutes more, and we were looking down over a charming little bay shut in by cliffs, with a boat high and dry up the beach; and from this point till we sighted the lights of the house, copse, park, and heather intermingled one with the other to our left, while on the right great white lines of surf quivered and broke in the moonlight.

It was a beautiful scene as it presented itself to us in the obscurity of the night-time. Possibly by day some of its enchantment might have been missing, but we did not see it in daylight. Such as it was, it probably impressed me and stamped itself in my memory, more on account of the subsequent incidents which ensued than anything else.

The house, as we drew up to it, seemed a large and handsome one. It had a great many windows, a

steep-pitched roof, and was partly ivy-clad. Two long ranges of out-buildings were attached to it, one at either end, and from that nearest us as we approached, ran out an old wall matted with ivy-stems, and forming an enclosure screened by a row of thorn-trees, behind which one could just make out the ruined gable-end of a small building. Our driver, who had been most uncommunicative all the way out as to our host and hostess, condescended to tell us this was a very ancient chapel, which some ancestor of the family had pulled down and dismantled —"bad luck to him!"

The fine entrance-hall—I can recall it now—warmed by an ample stove and well lighted up, with a few dressed skins lying about, and a huge ebon cabinet over against the door, made a cheery contrast to the outside car and surroundings we had just left. Round the walls were grouped a splendid pair of stag's horns, a fox's head and brush, a stuffed seal, and other trophies of a sporting life; and a black buffalo's massive frontlet, surmounting a sheaf of assegais, suggested at once what we afterwards learned to be the case, that our host had been in South Africa. "I wonder what sort of people they are, Major?" were A——'s words to me, *sotto voce*, as he gave his sleeves a final jerk and glanced down critically at his boots, while we followed the butler to the drawing-room. A moment more, and we were face to face with our new acquaintances.

I do not recollect anything very noteworthy about our host. He was a tall and rather handsome man, but of somewhat faded aspect—quiet and genial in his manner. "I am an old soldier myself," was his greeting to us, "and I never like any one in the service to pass our place on duty without our finding him out." But our hostess! As I shook hands with her, she at once engrossed my attention. I am at a loss now, as I was then, to define the nature or cause of the peculiar interest she seemed at once to excite in me. Certainly she was a remarkably handsome woman, but my observation of her at the moment of introduction was quickly diverted by the strange demeanour of A——. I had turned round, and was in the act of presenting him, when he suddenly started, stopped, and, without attempting a salutation or advance of any kind, stared at her. For the instant, the situation was embarrassing. Was the man going to faint, or was he off his head, or what? There he stood, stock still, facing Mrs M——, till in a severe tone I said, "A——, this is our hostess." "Mrs M——, allow me to introduce Mr A——." This appeared to rouse him a little, for he made a sort of backward movement which might do duty for a bow, though a very poor apology for it, and said, "I—I—I beg your pardon," retiring immediately into the background. If this was bashfulness, it was a curious form of it, I thought, and certainly new in my knowledge of A——. This

little incident over, I had leisure to look round the room. There appeared to be about a dozen people in all. Mr M—— introduced me to a relation of his, a baronet whose name I forget; to a parson, who assured me in Hibernian accents that troops had been down here "repea*tud*ly"; and to a niece, whom I was to take in to dinner. I caught a momentary glimpse of A——, and saw to my surprise that he was furtively but intently watching the lady of the house from an obscure corner. I was quietly slipping up to him to ask what it all meant, when dinner was announced.

At the dinner-table I found myself on the left of our hostess, the baronet opposite me. A—— was placed some distance down on the other side, so that I could keep an eye on him, which I soon began to think I must do. I had now an opportunity of noting more particularly Mrs M——'s personal appearance. Her age I should judge to have been somewhere about eight-and-twenty or thirty, considerably under her husband's. Her figure was faultless; neck and arms of that nameless tint one has so often seen imperfectly described in novels as "creamy-white"; a corona of hair of that deep auburn-red which so sets off a fair woman; and a face of singular beauty, of which you forgot everything but the eyes the moment you looked into them. Such eyes they were! Their particular size, shape, this or that colour, would never occur to one; it was their strange, almost weird, effect when turned on you, that one felt. It was as though they

divined what you were thinking of, and could answer your thoughts. Yet it was not a satisfactory or a restful face. I can recall certain half-disagreeable sensations I experienced as her eyes occasionally rested on mine while we talked, and once or twice a flash as of something almost malevolent seemed to pass out of them.

One incident I recollect. We were discussing pictures, and Mrs M——, pointing to some fine family portraits hung round the dining-room, said, "My husband and I are distant cousins, Major P——, so that you see we are mutually represented here; and yonder is a lady of bygone days, supposed to have been very wicked, and to be like me." I looked up, and sure enough there gazed down on me from the canvas a woman's face strikingly like the speaker's—so like, that except for the quaint costume, the portrait might have been taken for her own. It was a finer specimen than usual of the formal yet fascinating style in which our great-great-grandmothers have been depicted for us—a stately attitude, regular but immobile features, and exuberant charms sumptuously if somewhat scantily draped. The lady's figure, as it chanced, was turned towards our end of the table; she held a fan in her hand; the lips had a disdainful, almost derisive, smile; and the eyes, which in such pictures usually appear to be contemplating the spectator, and to follow him about, seemed directed full on our hostess. "There is certainly a

likeness," I said, "but the lady on the wall is entitled, I feel sure, to an entire monopoly of the wickedness." Mrs M—— laughed, and winged a glance at me, and the smile and the eyes were those of the portrait.

Another circumstance I remember discovering in looking round the table, which, had I been superstitious, might not have added to my comfort. We were sitting thirteen. Mrs M——, I rather think, must have noticed me counting the numbers, for she made some remark, as if in reply to my thought—"So sorry we were disappointed of one of our party at the last moment."

Meanwhile A—— was again attracting my attention by his extraordinary behaviour. His partner, a pretty-looking lively girl, was evidently doing her best to make herself agreeable, and he was answering her in an intermittent fashion; but I could see he was eating very little, and crumbling his bread in a nervous, preoccupied manner, while every now and then his eyes wandered to Mrs M——, with a curious fixed stare that was positively ill-mannered and altogether unaccountable. Instinctively I turned to the same quarter to see what could be the object of this persistent scrutiny, but in vain. There, indeed, was a beautiful woman, dressed to perfection, and with those wonderful eyes; but what right had he to gape at her like that? I began to wonder if she or any other of the guests would observe A——'s rudeness. I tried to catch his eye, but without success. In a

little while I lapsed into comparative silence, and set myself to watch A——'s movements more narrowly, as well as I could, across the table. After a time it seemed to me that the direction of A——'s gaze must be at Mrs M——'s head, or a little above it; but there was nothing I could see to account for this. To be sure, she wore, fastened into the thick top coil of her hair, a jewelled ornament of some kind that seemed to sparkle at times with intense brilliancy; but still, why this repeated and offensive contemplation at her own table of a married woman, on whom, so far as I knew, neither A—— nor I had ever set eyes before? Could these two have been known to each other in some bygone love-affair, or was the man gone out of his wits, or had he taken too much drink?

How this memorable dinner struggled on to a conclusion, I hardly remember. The more fidgety I got, the more irresistibly was I drawn to watch A——. His face wore a pale scared aspect quite foreign to him, for he was ordinarily a cheery, common-sense fellow, not easily disturbed. At length it seemed that our hostess became aware of the intent observation she was being subjected to; and before the ladies rose from the dinner-table, her handsome features had grown very white, there was a visible trembling movement in her hands, and her eyes took an uneasy expression not previously there.

As soon as we men were left alone, and almost

before we could reseat ourselves, A—— turned to our host, and in an odd muffled voice announced that he felt unwell, and begged permission to take his departure. Mr M—— glanced at me with a puzzled air—"He was so very sorry. Could he do anything? And, of course, the carriage was entirely at Mr A——'s service." By this time it was evident something was really amiss with A——; so I made some sort of excuse that I feared he had had a hard day's march and got soaked, sent our sincere apologies to Mrs M——, and rejecting the kind offer of the carriage, we found ourselves out again in the moonlight. The moon was well up; and as we passed the old ruinous chapel, you could see, through a little pointed window in the gable, the wall beyond half lit up, and dappled over with long shadows from the thorn-trees alongside. We walked for a little while in silence, I deliberating what to say, whether to be stern or sympathetic, but decidedly inclining to the former. Indeed, whether he were well or ill, the extraordinary gestures and demeanour of A—— that evening were unbecoming in the extreme, and taking place as they did in the presence of his senior officer, could not be passed over. "Mr A——," at length I began, in an official tone, "I must ask what is the meaning——" He had been hurrying on with his face averted from me; but now, as I spoke, he suddenly stopped, turned round, and grasping my arm, broke in with—"So help me God, Major, the devil

stood behind her!" "The devil stood behind her!" I said, in utter amazement; "what on earth do you mean?" "I mean what I say; the devil was standing behind her all the time." His voice fell almost to a whisper, and he looked back towards the house, which was still in sight. I could have no doubt who he meant by *her;* but I was so taken aback, that what to go on saying to the man, I knew not. It was obvious he was under some strange mental delusion. We walked on. Presently he spoke again, as if to himself,—"Behind her by the mantelpiece," —"behind her chair,"—"that fearful thing's face," —"those fiendish eyes, my God!"

As I said before, I am not superstitious, but it was neither quite comfortable nor canny hearing these queer exclamations under the peculiar circumstances: in a moonlight walk; dark, umbrageous thickets on one side of us; on the other, black cavernous cliffs, and the melancholy murmuring sea.

As far as my memory serves, we were still a little way from the lodge-gate, when A—— stopped again an instant, and said, "Listen! what's that?" I could hear nothing; but in a few seconds came the distant clatter of a galloping horse along the drive. "Something has happened to her," whispered A——, laying a chill hand on mine. "Anything the matter?" I shouted to the groom who passed us on the horse. The man called out something which we were unable to catch, and galloped on. We could see him pull

up at the gate, and a woman come out to open it; but by the time we reached her, horse and rider were out of sight. She was standing staring down the road after them, and I asked her if anything was wrong. "Jesu save us, sur!" she exclaimed, crossing herself, "the man says meelady is dead—she has taken her life!" "Dead! taken her life!" was my ejaculation. "Why, we've only just left the house." Here was indeed a climax to my bewilderment! But what an announcement! I was utterly unable to realise it—it seemed too monstrous. My first impulse was to run back at once to the Hall and see if we could be of any use; but on second thoughts, it seemed better not. Then, as we hurried out of the park through the tall massive gateway, I heard my companion mutter, evidently still possessed with his hallucination, "Did she see It too?"

About half-way to Moynetown we met our car coming out to fetch us, and mounted it. "I seen M——'s man ridin' by jist now like smoke," was the remark of our whilom taciturn jarvie; "there's somethin' up, I belave. They tells quare tales of that house, an' the ould chapel, an' the lights seen about it o' nights, an' the sthrange noises paople hears thereabout. Och, thin, shure an' there's bad luck in that house, sur!" I was too stupefied to stop the fellow's gabble till his words were out, and they have often recurred to my mind since. When we got back to our inn, the ill news was already in the

air. I sent for the landlord, inquired for the principal medical man in the town, and despatched an urgent message to him intimating what we had heard, and begging him to go out to the Hall immediately. Word was brought back that the doctor had already been sent for, and gone. This done, I felt I hardly dared ask further questions of any one just then. Yet the whole thing seemed like a horrid dream, hardly credible. We two sat up late into the night in the little inn-parlour,—I absorbed in the occurrence of this eventful evening, and in painful anticipation of hearing more; A—— speaking not a word, but glowering into the fire.

Next morning we were to make an early start. Before the fall-in bugle sounded, the little bustling landlady had communicated to us all sorts of rumours concerning the terrible event that had taken place the night before. Clearly the tragic story was all over the town by this time; but the only coherent upshot of the matter we could extract was, that the poor lady down at the Hall had gone up to her bedroom immediately after dinner, and then and there taken poison—that they found her stretched on the floor quite dead, the face turned to one side, as if averted from something, and with an awfully fearsome look upon it.

It may be imagined I was anything but sorry when I and my men mounted the steep hill overlooking Moynetown, on the road to our next billets, with our

backs turned upon the scene of this ghastly and mysterious business.

I never heard of the M—— family again, nor did I ever revisit Moynetown. I believe there was an inquest, and a verdict of temporary insanity. A few months afterwards I chanced to see something in a local newspaper about Innishderry Hall being to let; and "that dreadful affair down in County ——" was talked of for a while in Dublin in a certain circle of society. As for A——, he too passed out of my observation very soon after, as he applied for leave, and got an exchange. He never told me more than what I have told the reader, and never again spoke to me on the subject.

I suppose some would maintain that A—— was gifted with what in Scotland is called "second-sight." Be that as it may, the mystery of how or why "the devil stood behind" that singularly beautiful and fascinating woman—an acquaintance of an evening only—will, I suspect, never be cleared up.