

VIOLET HAMILTON; OR, THE TALENTED FAMILY.

CHAPTER X.

Mrs HERBERT sat, sad and solitary, in a corner of her elegant drawing-room; a book lying open on the small table near her easy-chair; sunk in mournful reverie; and the traces of tears still visible on her pale face. When Violet, bent on the enterprise described in the last chapter, silently glided in and knelt before her, she started to her feet in agitation, at once recognising in the intruder the subject of her thoughts.

"Forgive me, madam," cried the suppliant. "If I have forced myself into your presence, it is because I am the most wretched creature upon earth; and, save you, there is no one can aid me."

Mrs Herbert stood like one struck dumb; when Jenkins, her maid, who had gained tidings of the stranger, and of Marion's manœuvre to procure the secret interview, entered hastily and much flurried, crying—

"Miss Cripps—the youngest Miss, ma'am. Did Mrs Herbert expect to see Miss Cripps?"

"Certainly I did not expect," replied the lady, hesitatingly; for the clasped beseeching hands, and expressive face of the distressed and agitated young creature now trembling before her, involuntarily softened her voice and manner. "Not any one," she added; "but, I presume, the young lady has business with me. You may withdraw, Jenkins."

"Don't you fancy she may be mad, ma'am," whispered Jenkins, "to run up stairs like a wild thing, without being announced. I shall have the men-servants at hand in case she should be violent. To have the audacity to disturb Mrs Herbert the very day after Madame Ramsden's ugly business; and the carriage and trunks!" whispered Jenkins, who had done the lady off, affecting great alarm for her personal safety.

Violet felt Mrs Herbert's questioning eye upon her, and summoned all her resolution. She recalled to memory the confidence which Herbert had so lately said he placed in her energy and firmness. The remembrance was invigorating. It was for his sake as much as her own that she had come hither; for him she was called upon to act in this delicate emergency; and affection came in aid of understanding: the child, the timid, bashful girl, merged at once into the devoted, but intelligent and spirited woman.

"I am not mad," she said, gently smiling, "though I own my present conduct baffles apology. My friend, Mistress Marion Linton, who accompanied me hither, will vouch for my sanity." She continued, turning to Jenkins—"You need not fear to leave me alone with your lady."

"I'm here, hinny," said a voice; and Mistress Marion, who was not far off, ventured to advance, and to tell Jenkins that the young lady had very confidential and private business with Mrs Herbert.

"Miss Cripps confidential business with me!" replied Mrs Herbert, haughtily and coldly.

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"You are under a great mistake, mem, if ye think my young leddy has ony connexion with the clan of fiddlin' swinglers that spulyie the public under that name; and if ye wad be so gracious as to hearken till her story be told, ye'll maybe have no cause to repent your goodness to the fatherless and motherless orphan."

"Ordinary courtesy imposes this much on me," replied Mrs Herbert, civilly; "though I cannot imagine the cause of so singular a request. Will you shew the young lady and her friend to my dressing-room, Jenkins?—I hope I do not encroach on your time too far, ma'am, if I request you to wait for a few minutes before I can listen to the story?"

Violet, colouring slightly at the insulting emphasis, curtsied, and withdrew as directed.

"The story, quo' she!" said Marion, when they were left alone, and mimicking Mrs Herbert's stately manner and sarcastic tone. "But she wants to prepare herself, my dear. For, as grand as she speaks and looks, she was shaking, every limb o' her, like an aspen leaf, and as white as my mutch: and what business has she to confound you with the gang, in spite o' a' Maister Charles or me can say—that's if she wad listen? but she's a politic lang-draughted gentlewoman, and will listen to nothing but what suits her ain purpose."

"Then there is no hope left me!" sighed Violet.

"What!—d'ye think Maister Charles will be man-sworn, break his troth-plight, and gang back o' his word?"

"O no, no; that I do not, though no troth has been plighted. But am I to blast all his prospects in life; to estrange him from his best friend; from this lady whose disfavour it is my deep misfortune to have incurred?"

"And most causelessly. Ye are carrying this ower far, my bairn: ye maunna forget yoursel a'thegither. If ye had not gained Mr Charles' heart, I ken none would be readier than this very gentlewoman—I'll no wrong her behind her back—to have befriended a young orphan gentlewoman, in your sore plight; and now—and I am sure it is for no fault of yours though—it is plain she cannot abide ye, and all for the sake of that lang Leddy Landers that her pride is set upon for her daughter-in-law. To give her the siller, too! My certy, auld Mr Herbert must have been but a simple man and her a cute madam when he put so much in her power."

"You will never forgive that disposition of the fortune," said Violet, smiling, but sadly.

"Indeed an' I will no. I tell ye what, Miss Violet, its no safe to gie womenfolk, gentle or simple, ower muckle power o' siller, or onything else, till they first get mair sense."

"You are not complimentary to the sex," returned Violet, now smiling rather more gaily.

"It has given me little cause. As lang as ye gie women bodies a' their ain way, its a' right enough, and they cannot do enough for ye; but once contre them, and I rede ye to expect but scant justice at their hands. They want *sense*, that 's the truth o't; and where man or woman wants *sense*, though they may even have some glimmering o' conscience, never ye expect justice at their hands."

"Mrs Herbert must believe that she is doing what is best for her son."

"That's the very mischief o't—for what right has she to believe ony such thing? None; but just because she likes it best herself. Every one best kens where their ain shoe pinches. Nae doubt, to her, this Leddy Laura is a silk and gowden slipper; but if the shoe pinch Mr Charles' tae, or call it but his corn, that is, his notions, or his whims, surely he is no to be plagued for life to pleasure his step-dame's pride. The truth is, in a reasonable way, I'm a friend to true-love matches, and young folk suiting themselves. Marriage, so far as I have observed, who am but a single woman of little experience, would need to set out with all the regard and good-liking folks can muster;—with husbands mair especially, for our silly sect are fond simple creatures, if we're but half weel guided. But for Mrs Herbert to give her idol o' quality a husband, who, in his secret heart, far prefers another woman—and that's yoursel, hinny—is waur than daft; and men are contramacious mulls, [mules,] Miss Violet, as she or any woman should ken, that has had ony experience o' them. How would she like to hear that, though married to Leddy Laura, he liked another a' the better that he could never hope to get her; and maybe hated the poor innocent lady to whom pride and plottin' had yoked him; hated her in spite of himself—or, if it's no hatred, what is it?"

"You place the matter in a strong light," replied Violet.

"In the true light, hinny. Though I'm far from saying headstrong young folks have a right to please themselves only; yet *I am* saying, for the Lord's sake, Miss Violet, never ye countenance marrying only to please others. They take mair than a fitting 'sponsibility on themselves who would dare to demand that o' their fellow-creature, were they parents and children." There was much to interest Violet's feelings in this homely and disjointed talk; much that was jarring to her feelings, though soothing to her hopes. The conversation was, however, interrupted by a servant announcing that "Mrs Herbert waited for the young lady."

The lady was found more composed than before, but quite as stately in her civility. She, however, beckoned her visiter to take a seat; but Violet, curtysying, did not sit down. "I attempt no apology for this intrusion," she faltered out. "Save for the sake of one very dear to you, Madam, I durst not, uninvited, and, I fear, unwelcome, have thrust myself into your presence. Mr Charles Herbert, ma'am"—and there was a pause.

Though Mrs Herbert perfectly recollected the girl whom she had seen at the theatre, and had met both alone and with Charles on the street, near their common residence, and whom, in spite of herself, she could not help thinking *exteriorly* a very lovely and engaging creature, the mention of her son's name ruffled her temper; and, suddenly losing her calm civility, she quickened the hesitating manner of Violet by saying—

"May I crave, *at once*, to learn your business with me, ma'am. It must be of more than usual urgency, since it makes the ordinary forms of society be laid aside."

"I have dared to think so, else had I not been here," returned Violet, finding courage in her pride. "Mr Charles Herbert has done me the honour to give me his esteem,—nay, to pay his addresses to me. Why should I conceal that of which I have reason to believe you perfectly aware?"

"And you have accepted them," interrupted Mrs Herbert, in a tone of bitter scorn, and rising from her chair. "This is scarcely intelligence which you, ma'am, could fancy particularly agreeable to me."

"I have *not* accepted them," returned Violet, quietly, but firmly. "Would that I might!"

"What! you tell me that you have not accepted Mr Herbert's attentions! But I am not in his confidence. I can know my step-son only as the affianced husband of a most estimable and amiable young lady, of high birth, and of excellence that far surpasses her exalted rank, to whom he was all but married, with the warmest approbation of friends on both sides; and the fairest prospects of happiness in a fitting and honourable station in society."

"And these fair and brilliant prospects it is my ill fortune to interfere with!"

"I have said that in me my son places no improper confidence," said Mrs Herbert, sternly. "If a whim, a young man's caprice—I can impute degrading folly to no higher or more stable motive—should have interfered, it will, I make no doubt, pass away. Mr Herbert will assuredly *some time* regain his senses; and, I trust, ere it be too late."

"Oh, do not speak so severely. I am ready to do all you wish—to renounce my dearest hopes for his sake, that he may do his duty and be happy; but not, ma'am—pardon me—to hear the sentiments that Mr Herbert has professed for me so mistaken."

"I conclude you have learned that, unless Mr Herbert marry the lady to whom he was engaged"—

"Was he engaged?" interrupted Violet; "did he indeed love her?"

Mrs Herbert's face fell before the earnest, inquiring, nay, rebuking eye of Violet; but she quickly replied:—

"There are many sorts and degrees of attachment, and of what is called love. The exalted sentiment which the noble lady, to whom I refer, is calculated to inspire, may differ from a fond youth's infatuated but fleeting admiration of a

pretty face, and yet afford a much more solid basis for the esteem essential to the connubial happiness of a man of understanding and honour. I do not mean to hurt your feelings, ma'am, by what is merely a general observation. I intended to say, in return for your unexpected frankness, that the fortune which I held solely for the advantage of my son, and as the steward of his father, is already settled upon the lady whom I had reason to believe he was to have the honour to marry; so that fortune as well as respectability is bound together in that auspicious union. I talk very freely to a mere stranger; but I have reason to think that you are not unacquainted with our family circumstances, though not probably aware till now that the young person who marries my step-son, marries a beggar, bred in luxury, and without friends, fortune, or profession."

Violet flushed with displeasure from the conflict of many feelings, but she kept silent.

"The language which I use may sound harsh; but there is none other that may truly describe the condition into which Mr Herbert's imprudence must plunge him in the circumstances contemplated."

"Were want of fortune all that is to be dreaded, I would not, madam, have intruded upon you to-day," said Violet, mildly.

"Nay, the lady may be so well endowed with worldly gifts, as to make their absence of less account in the gentleman," said Mrs Herbert, with keen sarcasm; and the eye of Violet kindled and flashed, yet, in an instant, she whispered—

"You do not know me, madam, or I feel you would be kinder in your judgment—more just."

"Pardon me," returned Mrs Herbert, quickly, half-ashamed of herself, and smitten with the candid look and gentle rebuke of her visiter. "I do not indeed know you, Miss Cripps; or, pardon again, I believe that is not your name."

"I am not Miss Cripps, madam; I am nobody: a friendless orphan girl, whom Mr Herbert has honoured and blessed by his regard. Yes! he has said he *loves* me; and though we must part—perhaps for ever—I *do*, I *must* believe him!" and the passionate earnestness of her features spoke exulting belief.

"What a strange creature," thought Mrs Herbert, fixedly eyeing her—"Is she mad or very artful; or an enthusiast like poor Charles himself? Can she fancy that she is able to fool me as she has him?" The idea was irritating, and Mrs Herbert quickly said—"Since so very good an understanding subsists between you and Mr Charles Herbert, ma'am, I fancy it entirely unnecessary to take me farther into your confidence, especially as you must know, young woman! that it cannot be in the least agreeable to my feelings. Was it to annoy or insult me with my lost son's infatuated folly? was it to triumph over my distress, that you came hither?"

"Oh, no, no! Alas, you do not know me; I came but to kneel at your feet as I do now, to entreat that Mr Herbert may be restored to your favour; and that in a little time, a very lit-

tle time, I may pass away and be forgotten:—I am come to place my fate in your hands; to bid you dispose of me, decide for me."

"Singular girl: but rise, I entreat you, and sit down by me;" and the lady, taking the poor young creature's cold and passive hands, Violet was placed on a sofa, where Mrs Herbert sat down by her.

"Am I, as I flatter myself, to understand that you see the propriety of putting an end to your intercourse—the propriety I mean of—of—your breaking off your engagement, if it ever went so far, with Mr Herbert; of forgetting the unfortunate attachment, which bodes no good to either of you, and which to him is certain ruin. I have dealt frankly with you. Mr Charles Herbert may, independently of me, marry whom he will. I have shewn you the inevitable and distressing consequences to himself, and whoever may be connected with him."

"You do not yet understand me, madam," replied Violet. "It is enough that through me he shall never forfeit the esteem and affection of the mother whom he loves so dearly, values so highly. It was in telling me of the tender affection, the cordial endearing and confidential intimacy subsisting between you, that he first taught me the more to love himself."

Mrs Herbert's generous feelings were at last fairly touched. She hastily bent forward, as if, to embrace the weeping girl, but stooped short, saying—"You are a strange, a very strange, and a very charming creature. Do not mistake me, however; you can never be my daughter: nay, take away your sweet pleading eyes: there is but one woman on earth, who, with my consent, can ever be Charles Herbert's wife. . . .

And he talked to you of our uncommon affection? Very uncommon, I believe, in such a relation as ours. Is he aware of your present visit to me?"

"No, indeed: all day I have not seen Mr Herbert."

"I presume he has been pretty closely engaged," replied Mrs Herbert, smiling for the first time. "It is then your own spontaneous movement, to your own good sense, I owe this visit? I cannot enough praise your wisdom—nay, your generosity. Charles, in his present humour, would scruple at no degree of folly, though I cannot flatter you that he might not afterwards regret precipitance; perhaps impute a little blame to the more innocent party. I conclude that you mean instantly to return to your friends in Scotland. I have understood from Charles, that you are not altogether happy in Mr Cripps' family; besides, they are unpleasantly situated at present."

"I have no friends in Scotland, nor anywhere else," replied Violet, sadly.

"No near relatives, you mean. You have had the misfortune, as I learn, to lose your parents; but friends you must have. I wish that I could in any way contribute to the happiness of one whose present line of conduct fills me with admiration."

These were flattering words; yet the heart of

her to whom they were addressed, was sinking and faint. The loneliness, the hopelessness of her condition, brought before her by Mrs Herbert's remarks, contrasted with the happiness which she thus voluntarily, and, perhaps, unwisely, surrendered, from an overstrained sense of what was best for him for whom she had presumed to judge. Circumstances had rendered necessary the immediate union for which Herbert had sued, and of which he had already that day spoken to her through her humble but maternal friend. As her husband alone could Herbert give her that protection which her present condition required; and though Violet thought with glowing disdain of *her* reputation, *her* honour, depending one iota upon the casual breath, whether of praise or calumny, she also keenly felt what was due to herself. After a silence of some length, she said:—

"I have not yet spoken all that is in my heart. I came to say, that without your approbation I will never marry Mr Herbert, but on one condition."

"You are a noble-minded, sensible creature; and I cannot say how much I admire your spirit and understanding," interrupted the somewhat hasty, and delighted lady; "but do tell me all that is in your heart. Sunshine and peace must soon gladden it, if your conduct is what I expect. You give up Charles?"

"Alas, madam, do not try me too far. To-day Mr Herbert has let me know, through Mistress Linton, that at all hazards, and for reasons which ought to make him tenfold more dear to me, he desires our immediate union. The only friend I have in this great city—a humble, but a sincere and affectionate one—says that, in the painful circumstances that have arisen, I owe it to myself, and as the woman honoured by Mr Herbert's choice, to consent; for"—and Violet reddened with proud shame; and with the beautiful scorn, which gave a new and higher character to her lovely face, continued—"They say that I eloped with Mr Herbert; that I— But I cannot further degrade myself by explanation— Will you, madam, his mother, be my protector; or does honour plead with love for our immediate marriage?"

Mrs Herbert—a woman of warm and generous sensibilities, though too much under the conventional influences to which fashionable society, more or less, bends all its members, and to which a strong attachment had, for the time, made, as she fancied, her son unwisely superior—was now greatly affected. With fervent admiration, she clasped in her arms the girl who made this proposition, saying affectionately—

"Noble creature! yes, I will be your protector, against this and every base infamy. Welcome to my home and bosom! If any woman, save Laura Temple, could deserve my Charles, it is you, sweet Violet! You see I have already learned your pretty name. What a load you have taken from my heart, in restoring my son to me. It is death to me to quarrel with Charles."

Violet could not fully participate in all these raptures; yet, many humiliating apprehensions were allayed by this frank offer of an honourable and safe asylum; and the soothing idea that, by her means, Herbert was reconciled to his best friend, promised to spread peace in the bosom in which hope was, probably, not yet quite extinguished.

Mrs Herbert was not a woman to do anything by halves, where her affections were interested. An earthquake in the Regent's Park would not have surprised Jenkins more than the order given to her that the housemaid should prepare a particular chamber described, for her guest; and that Jenkins should accommodate her from Mrs Herbert's wardrobe with whatever she required for the night. Mrs Herbert's next and most pleasant duty was to extend the olive branch to her son, with which she proposed immediately sending forth Mistress Marion to the Albany. The missive intrusted to this faithful emissary, bore the important tidings that Violet was safe under the roof of the writer, where she was to remain for the present as the guest of Mrs Herbert, and probably afterwards as her companion. "All was forgiven, forgotten; all would be arranged: let the past be buried in oblivion:" yet Charles was delicately informed, that it was expected he was to hold himself in readiness to accompany the Earl of Tarbert to Germany, and that the preparations were in a forward state. By the promptitude of the solicitor, the fracas with Sir George Lees had been hushed up without getting into the newspapers, and pecuniary matters would soon be in train for arrangement.

Not finding Herbert at his chambers, Mistress Marion, having left the note with his servant, returned to her own house, where she found him in the act of coming down stairs after a vain attempt to gain admission.

"The bonny bird is flown away, Maister Charles," said Marion, with an air of mirth that shewed there was no cause for alarm; for Herbert did look alarmed: "and where has she lighted, think ye? but I'll give ye three guesses for that."

"Miss Hamilton cannot have been so unkind as to have set off for Jersey, without even seeing me," said he, "after the serious message which I am sure you delivered to her."

"Na—no just so far. What wad ye think if she had flown over tower and tree, mast and steeple, to find a cozy mother-nest wi' ane Mrs Herbert i' the Regent's Park?"

"You do not mean it, Marion?"

"Ay, but in good troth do I; that's a cut aboon the common, is it no Maister Charles? To think of Miss Violet casting her glamour ower Mrs Herbert as weel as ower you and me, which was mair easy and natural!"

"It looks witchery indeed," replied Herbert, with animation. "If I could believe this, it would make me the happiest of men. My mother, if she once know, cannot fail to love Violet—prejudice must give way. She has already, then, felt Violet's fascinations?"

"She is there sure enough, billeted in your ain chaummer ; I'm no just so sure though that all is to end fair at ance, like the peacock tail of auld ballant or play-book ; though so far so good. But to think of the high spirit of the bit gentle creature, for as backward and diffident as she is of her nature. Ye'll ne'er ken what spirit is in some lassies till they are tried. Now she may defy the Cripps and Crimps.—The dandy dyvour, the glead son, was after Miss Violet this forenoon. The auld ane is in Whitecross prison, they tell me."

"Then I am sure you gave the fellow his errand for his pains,—or a warm reception."

"What think ye I should have done, Maister Charles ? for, I dare say, Miss Violet thinks me an auld randy !"

"Kicked him down stairs, in the first place," replied Herbert, laughing.

"Atweel ! and I hae done many a worse turn in my time ; and I'm able for this too if I am vexed and made fractious."

Herbert laughed. The report of Jack's attempt helped to reconcile him to the disappointment of not finding Violet here, and made him the more rejoice at the thought of her security, which had indeed removed a load from his mind. He was damped again, for what so fluctuating as a lover's moods, when, in answer to his warm expression of thanks to Mistress Linton for her unceasing kindness, before hastily taking leave to proceed to the Regent's Park, that sagacious old woman advised him to go home first and read his mother's letter.

"I'm no just sure that its i' the bond that you are to gang courtin' under that leddy's roof, though she has kindly ta'en in the young orphan gentlewoman, maybe to keep her out o' harm's way. Ye'll no find Mrs Herbert sae simple a body as me wi' young folk ; and indeed, Maister Charles, to be plain wi' ye, I could not either been having young gallants like you coming about my quiet house. It might hae gotten a single maiden like me a light name in the gate-end." And Marion laughed off the imagined sharp point of her jest.

"You know the nature of my present errand. I had fondly hoped that Violet, situated as we are, would have been mine with all the despatch which the forms of marriage permit. This was the object of my present visit, as much as the pleasure of seeing your guest and you."

"Nae doubt there is great pleasure to a young gentleman in coming to see an auld wife like me. However, that's all past : new lairds new laws, Maister Charles. Since Miss Violet is in the good custody and ward where we would both best like to see her, that may siblins make a total change of views ; or, at any rate, a delay of measures."

This was meant for a fishing observation ; but Herbert either failed to perceive its drift, or was not disposed to be communicative. He went away ; and Mistress Marion, after the toils and anxieties of this eventful day, upon the whole, rejoiced at the turn which matters had

taken with her beloved nursling ; yet somewhat disappointed that her nice French bed, her uncorked pint of Sherry, and other domestic arrangements and festive preparations had gone for nothing ; sat down to her "refreshin cup o' tea," and thus soliloquized or addressed her constant confidante, who purred up to her side.

"Aweel, pussie lass, there is no saying how all this may turn out yet for our poor young leddy. She's a lang-draughted, up-setting woman that's gotten the young thing into her clutches. I am far from either saying or thinking ill of her : but she compassed her ain ends wi' the faither, and maybe will no speed less ill wi' the son ; and what comes of our bonny orphan lassie then, pussie, my woman ? Oh, she'll just tyne heart a'thegither, poor dear bairn. Ay, ye may 'mew !' Are ye wae for her, or are ye sayin' we'll get her back to oursels yet ? And blithe would we be, pussie ; but I'll no just say that Miss Violet would think an auld wife and her cat, let us do our best for her, equal to Maister Charles, for her gudeman, and her ain fireside. 'Deed I wish she had just bidden still wi' us, and we had made a waddin o't. Ay, ye'll set up your back and *mi-au* at that, ye sly limmer ?" And here Marion fondly and briskly caressed her pet.

"Na, I'll ne'er believe but that beast kens every word I say," continued Mistress Marion, who often found an escape for brooding thought, a safety valve, in such confidences and communications to her cat as the above. There was, however, one resolution which she neither told the cat nor her own left hand. This was, early next morning, and at her own risk, to discharge the debt to Madame Ramsden, the milliner ; the true history of which Violet had told her as they hurried to Mrs Herbert's, and which Marion felt almost as a personal stigma, and a national disgrace—something that concerned the honour of Scotland. Violet had made a similar communication to Mrs Herbert ; and, at the same time, explained and apologized for the impertinent liberty which the zealous Mike Twig had, without any authority from her, taken in sending her trunks into Mrs Herbert's premises without the knowledge or sanction of the owner.

How trivial appeared those petty circumstances, which had given her hostess so unfavourable an impression of her character, when thus accounted for. Mrs Herbert was too much ashamed of her uncharitable suspicions to acknowledge them.

Jenkins, when that night undressing her lady, attempted to revive the tale of the trunks, and received a sharp check for her pains ; though, on a subsequent morning, when she maliciously informed her mistress that the bill to the importunate milliner had been settled by an *anonymous friend*, as she emphatically termed Mrs Linton, she had the satisfaction of seeing Mrs Herbert look disturbed. Mrs Herbert could not doubt that the "anonymous friend" was Charles, or some agent of his. This, however, was but a trifle to what she had already encountered from

the same cause, and had still to meet, before her schemes were placed on a fair footing, and the desire of her soul was accomplished. In the meanwhile, nothing was so pressing as Herbert's departure from England. That effected, and his transient boyish passion kept from the knowledge of Lady Laura, there was no obstacle that time and management might not remove.

Deeming it prudent to prevent all unnecessary intercourse between her step-son and her protégée, Mrs Herbert anticipated the expected visit of Charles by driving at a very early hour to his lodgings.

Charles was as much delighted as surprised by her appearance, of which he, however, suspected one motive; and yet once more to see in radiant good-humour the face which had never been turned on him save with kindness and affectionate frankness until yesterday, filled him with sincere joy.

"How gracious, dearest mother, to bring me your forgiveness yourself: let me hope that our first, and surely last, misunderstanding is for ever past."

"Past for ever, Charles!" replied the lady, as they cordially shook hands. "It is, I assure you, no such light matter to be, for a whole day, angry and vexed with one I love, as to make me long for the renewal of misunderstanding."

"Then, now that we are friends again, let me confess that I was rash and, perhaps, petulant the other day; but remember, dear mother, how I had been chafed, how tortured by one thing or another. I was at this moment on the eve of hastening to you, when your kindness prevented me.—Violet"——

"I had so much to say and do that I was up betimes to-day, and resolved to see what kind of bachelor housekeeping you hold. May I beg some breakfast from you, while we talk seriously of very serious business."

"If I could hope my servant might satisfy such a *gourmet*—I hope there is no feminine to that French noun—such a *gourmet* in coffee as you are."

"Robert, ma'am, begs to know if the carriage is to go home or to wait," said Herbert's servant, entering.

"To wait, by all means. I mean immediately to carry you to kiss hands, Charles;"—and Charles suddenly reddened from the delicious idea to which the words gave rise;—"to *kiss hands*," she continued, "at Earl Tarbert's, upon your appointment,—or your selection, should I rather say? It is the acknowledgment of a courtesy, nay, of an act of real and substantial kindness in the Earl, which should not be delayed for a moment. I could name twenty most eligible young men, who, with their families, would have been delighted had they your good fortune." Mrs Herbert did not fail to interpret aright the cause of the sudden glow, and as sudden pallor, which overspread the tell-tale countenance of her son, though it was not her cue to notice these symptoms. "That ceremony over," she continued, "we must drive to my solicitor's. I shall not

know an hour of peace until you are free of every paltry embarrassment. With the preparations for your journey I wholly charge myself; though the Earl must be my counsellor and guide in the necessary and the becoming."

Herbert saw that his fate was sealed. Honourable employment he had often longed for; and now the exigences of his fortune, his deep and pressing pecuniary involvements, so much increased by what he had undertaken for Professor Cripps, and in order to Violet's release, made employment more necessary than ever; though his immediate revenue as an *attaché* certainly afforded no prospect of extricating himself without the liberal assistance of Mrs Herbert. That was given so frankly, so cordially, so delicately, and yet so much as a matter of course, as if the fond and happy unfelt sacrifice of a mother for her darling son, that Charles could no more speak his gratitude than stop the impetuous current of her generosity, or thwart her strong self-will in fixing his destiny.

"I offer you *carte blanche*, my dearest Charles; only let us be friends; nor shall I now say one word about Laura Temple. I know what else you would say; you know I hold the key to your thoughts. Miss Hamilton is safe under my protection; no ill can happen to her, I assure you. Dame Linton and I for that, against all the Crippses in Christendom! She is, indeed, a sweet, pretty creature; and I am sure that, after you are gone abroad, and we are left to ourselves, I shall become very fond of her. At all events, it will not be my fault if she forfeit my friendship."

"I feel your kindness to Violet more, a thousand times more, than were it shewn to myself," replied Herbert, warmly. "The assurance that she is safe under your care—a member of your family—makes what yesterday looked so formidable—nay, so impossible—comparatively easy to me; but I must, indeed I must, first converse with Violet. Without her approbation, it is my happiness to think that I have no longer a right to fix upon any course of life which she may not prefer, and which may, for a long period, divide us, and delay the hopes I so lately and fondly cherished."

Mrs Herbert frowned and hemmed continuously for a second or two, stirred her coffee, and subdued her temper.

"Miss Hamilton has constituted me, so far as depends on her, the arbiter of your fate, Charles. I would ill discharge the task I have undertaken if I failed to give you both what I consider the best counsel. Are you ready to accompany me to Earl Tarbert's?"

"As his secretary, grateful for his kindness, and anxious to shew my sense of it by the zealous discharge of my duty, *Yes*; as the humble suitor of his daughter, *No*; highly as I esteem Lady Laura Temple, and amply as I understand you have endowed her."

"Charles, and do you blame me for that?" replied Mrs Herbert, colouring violently, and then turning very pale. "I may have been rash;

I may have been misled by my anxious fears for you, by my strong affection for you, supreme over every other feeling. I had, indeed, some cause, you will allow, to imagine this poor girl a very different person from what I hope to find her."

"What you already *know* and *believe* her," said Herbert, firmly. "But pardon me for the ungenerous allusion I ventured to make just now. I have been deeply wounded by what has passed; but not alone because it leaves me a very poor man: your fortune was your own to dispose of at your pleasure."

"My fortune was mine to promote the happiness and prosperity of my husband's beloved son,—of my dearest Charles. If I have failed, the heavier punishment is mine; but we will say no more of this; come"——

"Dearest mother, let us understand each other. I am ready to purchase your protection for my poor Violet at any price consistent with honour, and what I owe to her and to my own happiness. Ask no more. Why should those so dear to me be divided? You will learn to love her."

Nay, Charles, I will neither ask nor accept more. Is not even the very step you condemn a proof of how dear your honour and happiness are to me."

Had Mrs Herbert said, "your worldly exaltation," Charles had probably fancied the phrase more correct; but he said nothing.

They drove away in somewhat forced good spirits; and, to ward off graver discussions, Mrs Herbert gave an amusing or burlesque account of the circumstances attending the ejection of the Cripps family from Mr Shuffleton's house, and the doings of Mike Twig, from what she called "Jenkins' edition." This brought them to the end of their drive, when the graceful mother and grateful son expressed their warm and united thanks to the gracious Earl; and without seeing the dreaded Lady Laura, who, they were told by her father, was engaged in ordering preliminary arrangements for the journey. Mrs Herbert, on that day choosing to see no one at her own house, then drove with her son into the city. The engagements under which Charles had first and last come for Professor Cripps, and, latterly, for the redemption of Violet, amounted to a sum which made the solicitor look grave, and which did not improve the spirits or animate the talk of any of the party. The lady made one condition, the delicacy of which Charles warmly appreciated, though the motive might be double; it was that she personally, and not her son, should undertake the responsibility of indemnifying Cripps for his pupil forfeiting her engagements. This was now formally done, so far as depended on her; and Mrs Herbert gaily whispered—"Now Mademoiselle is my prentice; but don't look dismal, Charles; I do not mean, like Mrs Brownrigg, to starve her to death, and lock her up in the coal-hole; so I shall go home and give her some dinner. I have been such an early stirrer to-day, that I believe I must shut my doors against

all the world to-night, even Lady Laura, and rest myself. You also Charles have enough to do"——

"Then I shall only present myself at your breakfast table to-morrow morning, though to-night I had hoped"——

Mrs Herbert broke away, affecting not to hear. On returning home, she found her "apprentice" looking anxious and melancholy. The excitement of her enthusiastic resolve had subsided with Violet, though her judgment approved what she had done; and the continued absence of Charles—whose name Mrs Herbert, talking gaily of fifty things during dinner, never once mentioned—filled her with uneasiness and vague apprehension, increasing as the evening fled, and he did not appear. Mrs Herbert, after a time, seemed absorbed in her own reflections, and pleaded fatigue as an excuse for retiring early; having, in the course of three hours, which they spent together, dexterously defeated every little scheme which her guest devised for leading to more particular conversation, until, as they shook hands to say good night, she hastily said—"I have seen my son; we are the best of friends."

On the first night spent under this roof, Violet had been almost happy; but now, on retiring, she wept without restraint, and almost wished herself back with her humble friends in Jersey, and far away from this proud lady, who certainly treated her with politeness, nay, marked kindness, but with neither confidence nor sympathy; and with whom she was probably to be considered, while Herbert remained in England, as a kind of state prisoner. And was he to leave England, on the destination to which the waiting-maid had alluded, and in society fatal to her hopes? Leave England, perhaps, without one word of farewell! True, she had voluntarily taken those decided measures pointed out by a high and pure sense of what was right, and which had, in gaining for her the protection of Mrs Herbert, also rescued her from a painful and embarrassing position, and restored him to his mother's favour; but at what a price was this accomplished—that of the happiness of her whole future life!

Violet went to bed in a state of great nervous depression; which, when another tedious day had elapsed—like the last, spent in solitude—became anxious, torturing misery.

On the third morning, Mrs Herbert could not help noticing how ill her young inmate looked; and, by many little unobtrusive attentions, she attempted to cheer her. "Poor little thing," thought that lady, giving a half sigh to certain tender though faint reminiscences; "I know what she is suffering, and can pity a love-lorn damsel. Woman's lot is on her: to suffer and pine in secret—to fancy she is to be a wretch for ever—to gradually forget—to become resigned—to form new hopes—to indulge more aspiring wishes and views—to make an ambitious, if not a mercenary marriage—to have a carriage—a certain rank in society—to be, on

the whole, if not a happy, yet a tolerably satisfied woman."

As they sat together, at work, in the early hours of the morning, at every knock and at every ring Violet would half start and, changing colour, betray her thoughts. There was one loud, prolonged knock, which Mrs Herbert could not mistake.

"The Tarberts, my dear," whispered she. "Perhaps it might not be pleasant to you to see company. I fear you are rather nervous this morning. I am keeping you too close a prisoner; but, next week, when my friends are gone, and my time is more at my own disposal"—

Violet becoming very pale, could but bow, and glide tottering away into the back drawing-room, whence she hoped to escape up stairs without encountering the visitors. Did Charles accompany them? but what to her did this signify. Had she not renounced him; promised that, without his mother's approbation, they should never meet; that she would hold no correspondence with him. Love is not remarkable for consistency; and Violet once more almost repented what she had done, and fairly wished herself back in Marion Linton's attic. She feared she had been rash; and was even unjust as to indulge the idea that her protectress had outwitted her, and taken an unhandsome advantage of her complicated distress. Her reason rebuked this injustice of feeling, but without mitigating her mental anguish.

The visitors remained much beyond the time of an ordinary morning call. When they went away, Mrs Herbert sought her young guest; delicately avoided noticing her evident misery, and proposed a drive, to which Violet passively consented. Before, however, they could set off, Mrs Herbert was again occupied with unexpected business. During dinner she looked abstracted, and, Violet fancied, cold; and when the servants had withdrawn, taking Violet's hand within her own, she said, with an effort at cheerfulness—

"My sweet guest does not repent the conditions of our agreement, or the step which has raised her so high in my esteem?"

The silent trickling tears were no satisfactory answer, nor yet the faltering—

"I never can repent what is best for Mr Herbert."

"Mr Herbert has got it into his head, my dear, that you do not know your own mind—an opinion which men are too apt to form of ladies. Will you do me the justice to set him right, so far as say that all that has occurred between us has been the dictate of your own understanding. You must write yourself, and explain exactly how we stand. Every hour just now is most precious to Charles; and I have promised, since less will not do, that he shall know your mind from your own hand. Let me recapitulate;—but I do not need; the fate of Charles is in your power, Miss Hamilton, and I rely upon your excellent principles and generous feelings; so infinitely above those of an ordinary love-sick damsel, so worthy of a noble and intelligent woman."

Violet heard this unmerited praise in silence; and, with downcast eyes, while Mrs Herbert took a strange delight,—a pleasure analogous to that of an enthusiastic chemist engaged in some delicate new process, or of an anatomist in a minute dissection,—in watching the play of her features and her proceedings, as, with an absent air, she arranged the writing materials, and vacantly held the pen—her busy and painful thoughts far distant.

At last, on Mrs Herbert rising and approaching her, she was roused to present duty:—"What shall I write, madam?"

"That I cannot dictate."

Violet made several attempts to write; commencing with saying what she felt to be chilling, and far too little, and as uniformly ending with so many more "last words," gushes of passionate feeling, as to go much farther on the other side. At last the note, which Mrs Herbert declined reading, was sealed and despatched; and then Mrs Herbert, to beguile her thoughts, kindly begged for the Scotch ballad which Violet had sung to her on the former day. It was an unlucky choice; and Violet, choking in the effort to proceed, at last, in good earnest, "Let the tears downfa' for Jock o' Hazledean;" and Mrs Herbert quietly kissing her brow, and whispering a few soothing words, kindly left her to herself. She remained for an hour afterwards seated on the same chair, and in the same woful mood, when her heart leapt to the sudden voice of Herbert talking in passionate tones to his mother in the front drawing-room, ere he burst upon her, holding her open letter in his hand.

"Faithless, cruel girl! can you thus forsake me? My mother is right. Had you ever loved me as I fancied, you could not now forsake me thus."

Without attempting to explain—without rightly comprehending what was said, she sprung forward, and rushed into his arms; and Mrs Herbert, who had followed him, became the silent and affected witness of the passionate embrace which gave them back to each other.

"O Charles, I feared you would never, never come!" was Violet's low exclamation; but, seeing Mrs Herbert, she shrunk back; while Herbert, clasping her waist, gently held her.

"Then, dearest Violet, you have wished for me? while this cruel letter? But I knew it was not you, not to yourself I owe this."

"Miss Hamilton, is this fair to me?" cried Mrs Herbert, angrily and sternly; "is this honourable dealing; is this what I have a right to expect from you?"

"O no, no; pardon and pity me! I am very wretched: but I will do all you will, all I ought. Charles, we must not meet again, that I know; though, when I saw you, I forgot all;—but that is all past."

"This, then, is to be a last interview," said Mrs Herbert, mildly, and commanding herself, and advancing. "Miss Hamilton, in her letter—her own spontaneous letter, which I have not even read—has, I presume, communicated her

decision to you. Be assured, her decision is unbiased by me. Is it right, Charles, is it generous, to inflict unnecessary pain upon her? From you, Violet, I expect more firmness and self-command," continued the lady, turning to Violet. "You have gained that place in my esteem and affection, which it would be most painful to myself to see you forfeit, by conduct which I cannot approve. In you I have found the duty and gratitude, wanting where I flattered myself my claims to both were much stronger, as they were of much older date."

"Do not reproach him," whispered Violet. "'Twas but a moment; never again will you be offended in this way."

"Forgive me, mother, if I cannot see with your eyes—feel with your feelings. Honour and affection alike forbid me renouncing the hope—the claim I have been allowed. Violet, you may give me up under a fatal delusion—from an overstrained idea of duty, or from pride; but I cannot so part with you, while I am happy enough to indulge the dear hope that I possess your heart, in spite of your pride."

The timid, stealthy glance of Violet, the soft pressure of the hand which held hers, were not lost upon Mrs Herbert, even while the blushing girl tried to extricate herself from her lover's clasp.

"We must talk apart, sir," said the lady, in a haughty tone. "I would avoid giving pain to one whose late conduct has awakened my highest admiration. I know that Miss Hamilton's firmness will be found equal to her high sense of womanly dignity; that sense of dignity which forbids any young lady from entering a family where, though not undervalued, she may be presumed unwelcome."

Violet coloured violently; and, freeing herself from Herbert's clasping arm, stood erect and alone.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, indignantly, "this is too much!"

"Forgive me, dear Miss Hamilton, if the pertinacity of this young man betrays me into rudeness: this is not a topic to discuss in your presence: we will leave you for a little. Mistress Linton is, I believe, waiting to see you."

Herbert whispering—"I must see you again, Violet; I have much to say which is solely for your own ear," followed his mother, and Marion was ushered in to witness the violent burst of love, pride, and sorrow, which could not be repressed.

"Hinny sweet, what is the matter? Is it the proud step-dame has grieved ye? It cannot be the young gentleman: I'll never believe that of him."

"Believe no wrong of him—he is too noble, too good, too generous; and I am the veriest fool, the most miserable creature that breathes."

"I'll no hear ye say that, Miss Violet: d'ye ken, hinny, it's a sin! Young, and healthy, and bonny, and good, and weel-beloved by a man like him with whom your lot is cast! Fye for shame, hinny! It is a sin, as I make bauld to tell ye. But, heh! they're loud i' the loan i'

the next room! Is she flytin' on poor Maister Charles, think ye?" continued Marion, bending a keenly listening ear, until the angry or passionate tones of Mrs Herbert's voice were lost in a violent fit of sobbing, which made Violet instinctively rush as if towards her, and from delicacy, as instinctive, hold back before she had opened the folding doors. The voice of Charles was heard in soothing entreaty, and presently all was hushed; but, in a few minutes, Mrs Herbert advanced, leaning on the arm of her son, and said—

"Miss Hamilton, my son craves a few minutes conversation with you. Violet, I feel that upon you I may rely."

"I have said, madam, that, without your approbation, I will not marry Mr Herbert, nor could he wish that I should; that I will hold no intercourse with him unsanctioned by you. More I cannot promise." And her eyes turned sadly on Herbert.

"Mak nae rash vows, Miss Violet," said Marion, whispering hurriedly; "come under nae promise. She disna ken her ain mind, Maister Charles; what lassie does about her ain marriage? though, if ye ken whereabouts the young heart leans, ye may guess the rest; begging your pardon, Mrs Herbert, madam, for puttin' in my oar. But ne'er ye heed her, Maister Charles," continued Marion, whispering him soothingly apart, while Mrs Herbert led Violet to a distant window to breathe her wishes; "ne'er a fear but she'll jump at ye when the right time comes; sae keep ye a calm sough, and come in the leddy's will; ye'll see how Miss Violet will win round her. When she was but a bairn she could hae wiled the laverock frae the lifts: and a' will be right enough yet, never a fear, though I'm sure I pity ye between the twa leddies—between love and pride—ane o' them being far mair than enuech to drive a man daft."

"I have your interest, any way," said Herbert, smiling.

"That ye have heartily."

"And if it should be possible," he said, very earnestly, "that when I am far away, this dear one is less than happy where she is—that, in short, any untoward event should arise—on you I am sure I may depend, until I can hasten to her; you, at least, have not promised not to correspond with me."

"It's no that like! And I see no cause Miss Violet had to be so rash. But what, now, if 'out o' sight out o' mind,' and some ither young leddy should wile her joe frae her?" said Marion, laughing, but, at the same time, fixing her keen grey-green eyes scrutinizingly on the young man. "It might be what she would deserve for colloguin' against him; though it would break the poor thing's heart, nevertheless."

"Do you fancy Violet one that is likely to be easily forgotten?" said Herbert, gazing with fond admiration on his beloved.

"That do I no! for where saw I ever her marrow, there where she stands? and better than she's bonny."

This clandestine talk was put an end to by Mrs Herbert calling Mistress Marion to come away with her, and leaving Herbert to the private interview with Violet, for which he had stipulated. As we have already seen but too many of the pranks of the wicked little naked urchin who rules the world, according to Marion, "riding on a goose," we shall merely intimate that, in an hour and a half by Mrs Herbert's pendule—and the watch she held in her hand—in ten minutes by the mental calculation of Charles, he joined his mother, and was in more composed if not high spirits. Violet had gone to her chamber, sending her apology by him for not appearing any more that night.

"Now I am ready to leave England," said Herbert; "to be separated, perhaps for years, from all that is and ever must be dearest to me. You may inform the Earl of Tarbert that I am now at his disposal; though I would prefer the mail coach, and the company of my own thoughts, so far as Dover, to making one in his retinue, if that could be accomplished."

"Everything shall be accomplished that is most agreeable to you," replied Mrs Herbert. "It will easily be imagined that I wish to detain you until the last moment. At Dover, then, you will overtake them."

Charles remained to a tete-a-tete supper with his step-mother; and their conversation turned chiefly on necessary pecuniary arrangements, and Mrs Herbert's plans for the summer. Let us thus leave them, and turn for a few moments to our *Talented Family*, now under dire eclipse.

CHAPTER XI.

Five dreary days had elapsed, during which Professor Cryppes had, nearly in total solitude, contemplated the rain-drops through the dingy grated window of a spunging-house. The most mortifying circumstance to himself, attending his arrest, was, that it was, after all, at the instance of a milkman, for the paltry sum of £17:8:2½, which Miss Cripps had diverted from its proper and prudent destination to the purchase of a pair of earrings and bracelets, most temptingly ticketed in a pawnbroker's window at only £18:18s. The arrest had been the signal for revolt among all the already alarmed tradesmen; and Cripps was now the prisoner of butchers, poulterers, bakers, harness-makers, &c., &c. "The mere *canaille* tradesmen," as he remarked; for his wine-merchants, his coach-builders, his musical instrument makers, his booksellers, were all persons of liberal ideas; and, it is certain that the wary and wealthy among them deemed it folly to throw good money after bad; while the younger men both fancied their first loss enough, and were afraid of the injury which persecuting a *nob* like Cripps, might do them among his fashionable associates, some of whom were among their best customers. In the meanwhile, Jack had been labouring hard to effect his father's emancipation, though still far short of the necessary means; and the Fleet was in full prospect, the Professor being no

longer in a condition to satisfy the expectations of the sharp lady-manager of the hotel, whose custom was, not alone prompt, but previous, payments.

On the third day, the Professor had been ejected from the second best drawing-room, to make room for the Honourable Ludovic Grandison, who, having been ousted from his seat in Parliament, by the operation of schedule A on his father's borough, did not in this year enjoy that best privilege of the Commons, freedom from arrest. The Professor had, without much ceremony, been transferred to a stifling dull room or closet, whose grated window looked into a back-court; the lady of the mansion informing her husband that she did not care how soon Cripps marched off, as not a penny was to be made of gentry like him; whereas for chaps like young Grandison—who had ordered dinner and champagne for a party of five—friends were always sure to come forward at last, were it only to save themselves from disgrace.

It wore late in the afternoon of the fifth day—the waiter had received the prisoner's last half-sovereign, before bringing in the cup of cold creamless coffee, which, with an untasted muffin, stood on an old japan tray on the small table, by which sat the Professor, unshaved and shabby, dismal and melancholy, the score of his unfinished opera lying before him, with several old letters and accounts which he had drawn from his pockets in search of consolation. Most impatiently had he been expecting his son, Jack, who, to do him justice, had left no stone unturned in assisting the family. Already had Jack managed to place the matron, summarily ejected from the Regent's Park, in handsome lodgings at Hampstead, where her husband, Professor Cryppee, *Mus. Doc.*, (whose embellished cards, together with those of other great personages, Jack liberally distributed in the drawing-room,) was to join her so soon as his town engagements permitted. These engagements promised to be of longer duration than Jack had anticipated; and the Professor had angrily and dolorously informed the sheriff's officer, the keeper of the spunging-house, that he would that night go to the Fleet, as his ungrateful friends had, to a man, deserted him in misfortune; when his son was at last announced.

"Made up your mind to go to *quod*, papa!—O fie, fie! unlike a gentleman," said Jack, on hearing the intention announced, and preventing the load of complaint and reproach which his father's visage foreboded.

"What a lucky dog you are, old fellow, to have such a son as self—eh! Not a word, now, papa, of ingratitude, neglect, &c., &c. Mrs Burke Barker has been on her marriage jaunt My mother;—but she called for you?"

Mrs Cryppes certainly had halted the hackney coach, which bore her to Hampstead, to load her husband with reproaches, and to recapitulate her old prophecies of the ruin he would infallibly bring upon his family; and it was not to be expected that Mrs Barker was to dim the lustre of her bright honeymoon in the dingy damps of a spung-

ing-house, though it held the parent whose favourite child she was, and whom her unprincipled extravagance had helped to send there.

"My sister impatiently expects you," said John. "She has been home for some days, and gives her first dinner and At Home to-day. We should be incomplete without you. Barker fancies you down at W——, raising the wind. No use for family affairs to travel out of the family."

"Her first dinner—is it to be in the Fleet?" asked the Professor, bitterly.

"Hang it, Governor, why so doleful?" said Jack; and he put the coffee to his lips, sipped some, and made a face of disgust. "Come, off with this cold slop, and let us have a few oysters and a broiled kidney, or a cutlet, or something comf.—for lunch;" and Jack rang for the waiter, and accompanied his order, according to the rule of the house, with a sovereign in advance. "I have good news for you," continued he; "Why, one might fancy you the first gentleman ever was under eclipse, so melancholious and dismal you are. Hark! don't you hear Grandison singing below. Before you have been three or four times through the mill, you will take the grinding more gaily, I guess, old gentleman."

"Then you have prevailed with Bounce to purchase my Opera," said the Professor, laying his hand fondly on the cherished production of his genius, about, as he imagined, to escape his grasp, to immortalize some fictitious composer, and enrich the manager or patentee of the King's Theatre. "Then, sir, you surely stipulated that the name of the *real* composer—*my* name—appears; and that I superintend the rehearsals. What does he give?"

"Bah!" cried Jack. "Never mind, father; the present market price of trunk-lining, perhaps; and so many new poems and novels, by persons of quality, are coming out,—that that, I understand, is looking down. Your opera, however, is a good sterling opera. I say it, who, in music, know a thing or two; but you may keep the copyright, I dare say. Well, never mind, it will have its chance yet. To force it out just now, were madness. Wait the tide in the affairs of music. We have other resources: congratulate yourself, sir, on having a son who is a father to you."

"Who has plunged me into debt, and almost disgrace," replied the mortified composer. "Had not Herbert come forward to hush up that affair of Shuffleton's, the honour of my name and family had been tarnished for ever. I might have been criminally prosecuted, sir; and you know it. Yes, criminally! good heavens! a man of eminent professional respectability, and of good fashion, the head of a family of highly accomplished, and talented young people, moving in the best circles of West End society. O boy, boy! what your levity and your dear sister's thoughtlessness have brought me to!" And the Professor theatrically struck his open palm on his forehead; while Jack, fearing that something really was going awry in that region, squinted peeringly at his revered father, ere,

seeing all was right, and Mr Cripps, only in heroics, he said—

"Mon cher Gouverneur, take it easy, pray. Ah, here comes lunch. My compliments to your master, Wattie, and say, if I find his champagne fair, I mean to give him a small order; he is a private dealer, I know, and a deuced civil fellow. Let him have Professor Cripps' discharges ready to sign; we shall go as soon as we have lunched."

Wattie the waiter, and an old acquaintance of Jack's, disappeared. Having first helped his father, he drank two glasses of champagne in rapid succession, thrust his finger into the bottle to preserve the effervescence, and with the other hand, swallowing open oysters as if for a wager, Jack cried—

"And now to business. If Herbert—by the way, he has got a devilish brilliant foreign appointment; but no brass, no salary beyond midshipman's half pay,—nothing-a-day, and find yourself,—if Herbert acted like a gentleman to us, he could not well do less to old and intimate friends; besides, he wished to keep all snug about a certain Mademoiselle—. I should not wonder if he marry that girl some day. She certainly is a bewitching, tantalizing little devil. Conceive, after having her in keeping at the old hag of a Scotswoman's, who has so plagued our family—a foolish and low place, by the way—that he has been able to get her palmed off on Mrs Herbert. But Herbert was always sly. It would have been too much to attempt, all at once, to get her over with the rest of the ambassador's smuggled baggage."

"I will not hear this," replied the Professor, indignantly. "You lie, Jack, and you know it. Do you fancy me, sir, a libertine and profligate, like a Sheridan or a Dodd; a man without morals, like the managers and masters of the old school, with their actresses and pupils."

"By the simplicity of Venus' Doves! but you are the most original and innocent elderly gentleman I ever had the honour to hear of, father. . . . Whatever be the reason of Mrs Herbert harbouring your little runaway apprentice—and it may be only to keep Charlie a good boy, and out of the way of mischief—I for one rejoice at it. 'Tis another capital name and party to our action. Prepare, old fellow, for a master-stroke! Health, papa, and success. Your action is already raised; damages £12,000; and son, mother, and the old Scotswoman, who is as rich as a Jewess, all in the scrape. The deuce is in it if we don't squeeze out a neat thing among 'em."

"I don't exactly comprehend, John."

"You can comprehend that you are at liberty to leave this dog-hole: very respectable quarters though, begging its pardon; only it was dem'd shabby of Snatchum to turn you out of the drawing-room to accommodate Grandison: I and my friends have been good customers to his house. Well, but you comprehend that, with the rich and beautiful prospect of this action of damages aforesaid, the respectable firm of Bubble, Squeak, and Nickem—Barker's Chan-

cery Lane friends—have advanced the needful for present exigences; nay, have come down, for a liberal consideration—I never stand upon trifles in business—advanced the sinews of war for my other grand spec.”

“I see, I see—I am to be released; you have raised cash—how much?”

“Enough for your purpose, old fellow. Come, we shall reckon of that as we jog along. You shall dress at my new lodgings—a half-way, raffish place I have taken for convenience, in Fleet Street, right under the old Jezebel Scotch-woman. Blow her up some night, as she did me with my landlord, the tailor; whose wife—shabby rogues—made me come down with a week’s rent in advance.”

Professor Cripps had been musing. “After the handsome and liberal way in which Herbert has behaved to me, Jack, can I in honour—after he has taken all the Shuffleton liabilities on himself, and got up my pupil’s papers—can I”——

“Can you? To be sure you can, and will too, get out of this pleasant retirement as fast as ever you are able. You may be sure Bubble, Squeak, and Nickem think well of the project, else had they never tabled, and buckled frankly to a ready-money risk. Come, tie up your music; a fine mess Mademoiselle has made of it for you: she ought to be well mulcted, the young baggage.”

Cryppes had felt some transient compunction to move, or be a party in this transaction. Where the mere victimizing of a tradesman was all, he had no scruples whatever; but Herbert was “a gentleman, and had behaved like one.” But then liberty, bright goddess! wooed him; and the discomfort and filth of a jail were as disgusting to his habits as its disgrace was to his pride; but, above all, the fate of his opera fairly turned the scale. He must be present at the rehearsals.

“It is quite true,” said the yielding man, “no one can estimate the pecuniary loss, and the much greater loss in professional fame, which the defalcation of my pupil at so critical a juncture of my fortunes may have inflicted.”

And thus came avarice and vanity to stifle the temporary feelings of conscience and gratitude; nor were they often unsuccessful with the Professor.

“Not easy to calculate your loss, indeed; but we have made a rough guess, £12,000.

“£12,000! Well, my opera might have had a run like that poor stuff—stale Scotch and Irish plunder the *airs* are—the Beggars’ Opera; or like Pizzaro, or”——

“True, true; why should it not? But make haste; we dine with Mrs Burke Barker. Polly has been receiving congratulatory morning visits as a bride,—quite resplendent! Took the shine out of every woman in the upper tiers, last night. Barker is perfectly uxorious—as proud of his wife as if she had brought him a title or a plum.”

“And well he may, sir. The talents and accomplishments of Miss Crippes, independently of her very great personal advantages, may well render proud the man who has had the good for-

tune to obtain her hand. . . . Polly ought, though, to have come to see her father in this beastly hole.”

“*Impossible*, pa-pa,” said Jack, who often, as a mark of breeding, spoke either the Cockney dialect or French *patois*. “Polly has received Eustache from us, and come down for you—positively she did—£25, dear creature! which had been allotted to a Parisian cashmere, for which Ramsden would not tick!”

“Excellent creature! There is, indeed, a daughter to be proud of,” said the Professor, in his grand original court manner, which the flippant and impudent style of Jack often ruffled, but could not subdue.

“Bravo! pa-pa. That is a truly Siddonian touch! ‘*A daughter to be proud of!*’ Now I am a Keanite; not a Kembleite—all nature and fire; and I think Poll a dem’d clever wench—a capital tactician for her years and sex. Wonderfully shrewd, cool, and self-possessed, considering. Why, it was Poll put me up to our present enterprise; but here comes Mister”—— Jack bowed to the sheriff’s officer; “your name has quite escaped me, sir, but I perfectly recollect your face.”

“*Possibly*,” replied the sheriff’s subordinate, emphatically, “as I have had the honour of seeing you before I believe, and oftener than once.”

The milkman’s claim was produced: £17 : 8 : 2½ —expenses, £34 : 6 : 5½. It was promptly discharged. But then came another and another. They were like Banquo’s shadowy offspring. Jack’s money ran low: the Professor fumed at seeing it depart.

“Very unhandsome this, sir: why not at once have told me of all these claims. I would, upon my honour, rather have gone to the Fleet than been treated in so ungentlemanlike a way.”

“D’ye hear that, Snatchem? My father would have left this cool sequestered grove of yours and gone to jail rather than have countenanced the impudent villany of those low blackguards. Why, this I call diddling me: give me back that skim-milk fellow’s money. If my father don’t get out, as well that the whole lot go in the schedule, when he is whitewashed.”

“Thank ye, sir; but that is not the way we do business here! The gentleman is quite welcome to stay or go.”

Cripps was so enraged, that, for the moment, he would have gone to jail rather than have yielded to what he termed this most ungentlemanlike treatment; but Jack had more wisdom in his anger, and, in this particular line, more personal experience than his progenitor; and, one by one, “the paltry bills of the pitiful, peddling, *canaille* tradesmen” were discharged, the original amount often doubled by costs.

“Thus it is to have to do with low vermin for trifles,” said Cripps, now breathing freely in the streets. “I must give my daughter, at the outset of life, warning on this head. Never, Jack, my dear, go in debt for small sums to low, sordid tradespeople; they have no feeling, no sense of honour, or of what is due to gentlemen!”

"Thank ye, papa; I have tried it both ways; can't tell which is best."

The meeting between the emancipated Professor and his newly-married daughter was quite a scene. The former was, beyond doubt, delighted to see his daughter in handsome lodgings, richly dressed, and in remarkably good spirits, in anticipation of presiding at her own table and her first party; while Mrs Burke Barker, fully alive to all and each of these advantages, was in her best looks, and altogether in a most complacent humour, "transported," as she expressed herself, "to see her dear family around her in her own apartments."

"We shall be quite *en famille*," said the lady. "I expect only the Count, and, perhaps, Sir George, if he can find a pair. Conceive, papa, the impertinence, nay, downright rudeness, of Gabrielle:—after I had overlooked her elopement, and sent her my marriage tickets and a slice of bridecake, as if to an old friend that I meant to countenance after my marriage, never to call on the days I received visitors, as a bride; and, when I called myself, to-day, at Mrs Herbert's, and asked her to join our family party, telling her I expected mamma and you from the country—to decline! High airs, indeed, for Mrs Herbert's toady to give herself to Mrs Burke Barker!"

"Why, Polly, darling, the girl has obliged us," said Jack. "Here would have been a *pre-munire*, the runaway Mademoiselle dining with her prosecutors!"

"I did not think of that; but now, please, Jack, call me by my own name. Barker don't like these freedoms with his lady. And not a word to him, pray, of—of—of Edmund's flame. Literary and political characters, like Barker, don't like to be mixed up in silly love affairs or runaway matches."

Mrs Burke Barker had taken her brother's arm, and led him away for a private chat.

"Edmund! the embryo Professor of Obstetrics! no, no, Poll, it is the Count is the man, I tell you."

"No, indeed, Jack! I have thought better. One may be pardoned for doing something to help a love-sick brother to a rich wife; there is fashionable precedent for that; but, a stranger like the Count?—one could not hold up one's face to that."

"But I have negotiated with Rodolpho, Mrs Barker, signed and sealed. He is our best card, I assure you. The whole tot of the Stocks would soon learn to gulp a Count—a gilded pill! Now, the Professor of Obstetrics—still in the crystalis state—our poor Neudy, would, I fear, revolt them."

"No such thing, Quintin," interrupted Mrs Burke Barker. "Though the Stocks' women at first went mad after the Count, when he went down to the provinces about purchasing merino flocks for his Hungarian estates, the banker pulled up. There was some awkward overdraw-ing or bill business, and vulgar rumours afloat, such as are ever rife in dear, dirty W——. Now, at we: st, we can hold up our faces for Ned. . . . My father's son is surely equal to Stocks'

daughter any day, in all but pelf; and the young people may be in love, which Juliana never could be supposed with Rodolpho, as she had gone to school before her wise mother fêted him."

"Have you spoken to Edmund?"

"No."

"Then don't. I have unlocked to the Count, and he won't let me off, I'm afraid. Eustache, too, has been sounded."

"Then be on with him yourself, sir, for I shall have nothing to say to him. Have you no regard for your own family interests, Quintin? Besides, I could not have the least reliance on Rodolpho, either word or bond. He would make his peace with the old people, and we should be left in the lurch. Barker has a very bad opinion of him—always had."

"A fiddlestick end for opinion, Mrs B. B. A properly executed bond is, in business, worth fifty opinions. You will allow that Bubble, Squeak, and Nickem, in business, are matches for all the counts and quarterings of the Germanic empire, whether *genu-ine* or Brummagem. And how the Count adored your charms, Polly! really you owe him a service." And Jack looked most provokingly impudent.

"I have said," replied Mrs Barker, with dignified firmness, and drawing up her head.

"Then Rodolpho must taste booty, that's poz, Poll, or he will blow us; and Eustache, too, that pearl of price"——

"Blow us! What do you mean by using vulgar slang to me, sir?"

"Pardonnez moi, Madame," said Jack, bowing with mock contrition. "You are a novice in business, my dear, though with natural genius which a veterau might envy. . . .

Now, you must know that, in matters of this sort, all must be in honour—upon the square. You take me? The spec. is a fair spec., a capital spec., nay, a most promising spec.; and we can't manage it well without you, Polly. The girl gets a husband—the very thing all girls most desire; old Stocks a son-in-law, with sixteen quarterings, or a tailor's pattern book equal to thirty-two; Madam Stocks adores a title, and here is one, at all events, quite as good as any of the new-baked English ones. Why, we ought to receive a *douceur* from both parties; the something handsome from the Count, *under the rose*; and a per centage from the old folks, who catch a match for their Miss; which, but for us, they never could have dreamed of."

From the somewhat incongruous luxury, the gaiety and mirth, the sparkling wit and the flow of music, which graced Mrs Burke Barker's first party, no one would have imagined that debt danger, disgrace, and a jail were immediately behind several of the company; and before some of them a project which the law of the land regards and punishes as a capital crime, namely, the stealing of an heiress. That idea, they would, one and all, have repudiated. They merely designed to assist in a runaway love match, and secure half of the lady's fortune for their trouble.—(To be continued.)