

What Will He Do With It, Book 4.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

In the kindest natures there is a certain sensitiveness, which, when wounded, occasions the same pain, and bequeaths the same resentment, as mortified vanity or galled self-love.

It is exactly that day week, towards the hour of five in the evening, Mr. Hartopp, alone in the parlour behind his warehouse, is locking up his books and ledgers preparatory to the return to his villa. There is a certain change in the expression of his countenance since we saw it last. If it be possible for Mr. Hartopp to look sullen,--sullen he looks; if it be possible for the Mayor of Gatesboro' to be crestfallen, crestfallen he is. That smooth existence has surely received some fatal concussion, and has not yet recovered the shock. But if you will glance beyond the parlour at Mr. Williams giving orders in the warehouse, at the warehousemen themselves, at the rough faces in the tan-yard,--nay, at Mike Callaghan, who has just brought a parcel from the railway, all of them have evidently shared in the effects of the concussion; all of them wear a look more or less sullen; all seem crestfallen. Could you carry your gaze farther on, could you peep into the shops in the High Street, or at the loungers in the city reading-room; could you extend the vision farther still,--to Mr. Hartopp's villa, behold his wife, his little ones, his men-servants, and his maid-servants, more and more impressively general would become the tokens of disturbance occasioned by that infamous concussion. Everywhere a sullen look,--everywhere that ineffable aspect of crestfallenness! What can have happened? is the good man bankrupt? No, rich as ever! What can it be? Reader! that fatal event which they who love Josiah Hartopp are ever at watch to prevent, despite all their vigilance, has occurred! Josiah Hartopp has been TAKEN IN! Other men may be occasionally taken in, and no one mourns; perhaps they deserve it! they are not especially benevolent, or they set up to be specially wise. But to take in that lamb! And it was not only the Mayor's heart that was wounded, but his pride, his self-esteem, his sense of dignity, were terribly humiliated. For as we know, though all the world considered Mr. Hartopp the very man born to be taken in, and therefore combined to protect him, yet in his secret soul Mr. Hartopp considered that no man less needed such protection; that he was never taken in, unless he meant to be so. Thus the cruelty and ingratitude of the base action under which his crest was so fallen jarred on his whole system. Nay, more, he could not but feel that the event would long affect his personal comfort and independence; he would be more than ever under the affectionate tyranny of Mr. Williams, more than ever be an object of universal surveillance and espionage. There would be one thought paramount throughout Gatesboro'. "The Mayor, God bless him! has been taken in: this must not occur again, or Gatesboro' is dishonoured, and Virtue indeed a name!" Mr. Hartopp felt not only mortified but subjugated,--he who had hitherto been the soft subjugator of the hardest. He felt not only subjugated, but indignant at the consciousness of being so. He was too meekly convinced of Heaven's unerring justice not to feel assured that the man who had taken him in would come to a tragic end. He would not have hung that man with his own hands: he was too mild for vengeance. But if he had seen that man hanging he would have said piously, "Fitting retribution," and passed on his way soothed and comforted. Taken in!--taken in at last!--he, Josiah Hartopp, taken

in by a fellow with one eye!

CHAPTER II.

The Mayor is so protected that he cannot help himself.

A commotion without,--a kind of howl, a kind of hoot. Mr. Williams, the warehousemen, the tanners, Mike Callaghan, share between them the howl and the hoot. The Mayor started: is it possible! His door is burst open, and, scattering all who sought to hold him back,--scattering them to the right and left from his massive torso in rushed the man who had taken in the Mayor,--the fellow with one eye, and with that fellow, shaggy and travel-soiled, the other dog!

"What have you done with the charge I intrusted to you? My child! my child! where is she?"

Waife's face was wild with the agony of his emotions, and his voice was so sharply terrible that it went like a knife into the heart of the men, who, thrust aside for the moment, now followed him, fearful, into the room.

"Mr.--Mr. Chapman, sir," faltered the Mayor, striving hard to recover dignity and self-possession, "I am astonished at your--your--"

"Audacity!" interposed Mr. Williams.

"My child! my Sophy! my child! answer me, man!" "Sir," said the Mayor, drawing himself up, "have you not got the note which I left at my bailiff's cottage in case you called there?"

"Your note! this thing!" said Waife, striking a crumpled paper with his hand, and running his eye over its contents. "You have rendered up, you say, the child to her lawful protector? Gracious heavens! did I trust her to you, or not?"

"Leave the room all of you," said the Mayor, with a sudden return of his usual calm vigour.

"You go,--you, sirs; what the deuce do you do here?" growled Williams to the meaner throng. "Out! I stay, never fear, men, I'll take care of him!"

The bystanders surlily slunk off: but none returned to their work; they stood within reach of call by the shut door. Williams tucked up his coat-sleeves, clenched his fists, hung his head doggedly on one side, and looked altogether so pugnacious and minatory that Sir Isaac, who, though in a state of great excitement, had hitherto retained self-control, peered at him under his curls, stiffened his back, showed his teeth, and growled formidably.

"My good Williams, leave us," said the Mayor; "I would be alone with this person."

"Alone,--you! out of the question. Now you have been once taken in, and you own it,--it is my duty to protect you henceforth; and I will to the

end of my days."

The Mayor sighed heavily. "Well, Williams, well!--take a chair, and be quiet. Now, Mr. Chapman, so to call you still; you have deceived me."

"I? how?"

The Mayor was puzzled. "Deceived me," he said at last, "in my knowledge of human nature. I thought you an honest man, sir. And you are--but no matter."

WIFE (impatiently).--"My child! my child! you have given her up to--to--"

MAYOR.--"Her own father, sir."

WIFE (echoing the words as he staggers back).--"I thought so! I thought it!"

MAYOR.--"In so doing I obeyed the law: he had legal power to enforce his demand." The Mayor's voice was almost apologetic in its tone; for he was affected by Waife's anguish, and not able to silence a pang of remorse. After all, he had been trusted; and he had, excusably perhaps, necessarily perhaps, but still he had failed to fulfil the trust. "But," added the Mayor, as if reassuring himself, "but I refused at first to give her up even to her own father; at first insisted upon waiting till your return; and it was only when I was informed what you yourself were that my scruples gave Way."

Waife remained long silent, breathing very hard, passing his hand several times over his forehead; at last he said more quietly than he had yet spoken, "Will you tell me where they have gone?"

"I do not know; and, if I did know, I would not tell you! Are they not right when they say that that innocent child should not be tempted away by--by--a--in short by you, sir?"

"They said! Her father--said that!--he said that!--Did he--did he say it? Had he the heart?"

MAYOR.--"No, I don't think he said it. Eh, Mr. Williams? He spoke little to me!"

MR. WILLIAMS.--"Of course he would not expose that person. But the woman,--the lady, I mean."

WIFE.--"Woman! Ah, yes. The bailiff's wife said there was a woman. What woman? What's her name?"

MAYOR.--"Really you must excuse me. I can say no more. I have consented to see you thus, because whatever you might have been, or may be, still it was due to myself to explain how I came to give up the child; and, besides, you left money with me, and that, at least, I can give to your own hand."

The Mayor turned to his desk, unlocked it, and drew forth the bag which Waife had sent to him.

As he extended it towards the Comedian, his hand trembled, and his cheek flushed. For Waife's one bright eye had in it such depth of reproach, that again the Mayor's conscience was sorely troubled; and he would have given ten times the contents of that bag to have been alone with the vagrant, and to have said the soothing things he did not dare to say before Williams, who sat there mute and grim, guarding him from being once more "taken in." "If you had confided in me at first, Mr. Chapman," he said, pathetically, "or even if now, I could aid you in an honest way of life!"

"Aid him--now!" said Williams, with a snort. "At it again! you're not a man: you're an angel!"

"But if he is penitent, Williams."

"So! so! so!" murmured Waife. "Thank Heaven it was not he who spoke against me: it was but a strange woman. Oh!" he suddenly broke off with a groan. "Oh--but that strange woman,--who, what can she be? and Sophy with her and him. Distraction! Yes, yes, I take the money. I shall want it all. Sir Isaac, pick up that bag. Gentlemen, good day to you!" He bowed; such a failure that bow! Nothing ducal in it! bowed and turned towards the door; then, when he gained the threshold, as if some meeker, holier thought restored to him dignity of bearing, his form rose, though his face softened, and stretching his right hand towards the Mayor, he said, "You did but as all perhaps would have done on the evidence before you. You meant to be kind to her."

"If you knew all, how you would repent! I do not blame,--I forgive you."

He was gone: the Mayor stood transfixed. Even Williams felt a cold comfortless thrill. "He does not look like it," said the foreman. "Cheer up, sir, no wonder you were taken in: who would not have been?"

"Hark! that hoot again. Go, Williams, don't let the men insult him. Go, do,--I shall be grateful."

But before Williams got to the door, the cripple and his dog had vanished; vanished down a dark narrow alley on the opposite side of the street. The rude workmen had followed him to the mouth of the alley, mocking him. Of the exact charge against the Comedian's good name they were not informed; that knowledge was confined to the Mayor and Mr. Williams. But the latter had dropped such harsh expressions, that bad as the charge might really be, all in Mr. Hartopp's employment probably deemed it worse, if possible, than it really was. And wretch indeed must be the man by whom the Mayor had been confessedly taken in, and whom the Mayor had indignantly given up to the reproaches of his own conscience. But the cripple was now out of sight, lost amidst those labyrinths of squalid homes which, in great towns, are thrust beyond view, branching off abruptly behind High Streets and Market Places, so that strangers passing only along the broad thoroughfares, with glittering shops and gaslit causeways, exclaim, "Ah here do the poor live?"

CHAPTER III.

Ecce iterum Crispinus!

It was by no calculation, but by involuntary impulse, that Waife, thus escaping from the harsh looks and taunting murmurs of the gossips round the Mayor's door, dived into those sordid devious lanes. Vaguely he felt that a ban was upon him; that the covering he had thrown over his brand of outcast was lifted up; that a sentence of expulsion from the High Streets and Market Places of decorous life was passed against him. He had been robbed of his child, and Society, speaking in the voice of the Mayor of Gatesboro', said, "Rightly! thou art not fit companion for the innocent!"

At length he found himself out of the town, beyond its straggling suburbs, and once more on the solitary road. He had already walked far that day. He was thoroughly exhausted. He sat himself down in a dry ditch by the hedgerow, and taking his head between his hands, strove to recollect his thoughts and rearrange his plans.

Waife had returned that day to the bailiff's cottage joyous and elated. He had spent the week in travelling; partly, though not all the way, on foot, to the distant village, in which he had learned in youth the basketmaker's art! He had found the very cottage wherein he had then lodged vacant and to be let. There seemed a ready opening for the humble but pleasant craft to which he had diverted his ambition.

The bailiff intrusted with the letting of the cottage and osier-ground had, it is true, requested some reference; not, of course, as to all a tenant's antecedents, but as to the reasonable probability that the tenant would be a quiet sober man, who would pay his rent and abstain from poaching. Waife thought he might safely presume that the Mayor of Gatesboro' would not, so far as that went, object to take his VOL. I.-IS past upon trust, and give him a good word towards securing so harmless and obscure a future. Waife had never before asked such a favour of any man; he shrank from doing so now; but for his grandchild's sake, he would waive his scruples or humble his pride.

Thus, then, he had come back, full of Elysian dreams, to his Sophy, --his Enchanted Princess. Gone, taken away, and with the Mayor's consent,--the consent of the very man upon whom he had been relying to secure a livelihood and a shelter! Little more had he learned at the cottage, for Mr. and Mrs. Gooch had been cautioned to be as brief as possible, and give him no clew to regain his lost treasure, beyond the note which informed him it was with a lawful possessor. And, indeed, the worthy pair were now prejudiced against the vagrant, and were rude to him. But he had not tarried to cross-examine and inquire. He had rushed at once to the Mayor. Sophy was with one whose legal right to dispose of her he could not question. But where that person would take her, where he resided, what he would do with her, he had no means to conjecture. Most probably (he thought and guessed) she would be carried abroad, was already out of the country. But the woman with Losely, he had not heard her described; his guesses did not turn towards Mrs. Crane: the woman was evidently hostile to him; it was the woman who had spoken against him,--not Losely; the woman whose tongue had poisoned Hartopp's mind, and turned into scorn all that admiring respect which had before greeted the great Comedian. Why was that woman his enemy? Who could she be? What had she to do with Sophy? He was half beside himself with terror. It was to save her less even from Losely than from such direful women as Losely made his confidants and associates that Waife had taken Sophy to himself. As for Mrs. Crane, she had never seemed a foe to him; she had ceded the child to him willingly: he had no reason to believe, from the way in which she had spoken of Losely when he last saw her, that she

could henceforth aid the interests or share the schemes of the man whose perfidies she then denounced; and as to Ruge, he had not appeared at Gatesboro'. Mrs. Crane had prudently suggested that his presence would not be propitiatory or discreet, and that all reference to him, or to the contract with him, should be suppressed. Thus Waife was wholly without one guiding evidence, one groundwork for conjecture, that might enable him to track the lost; all he knew was, that she had been given up to a man whose whereabouts it was difficult to discover,--a vagrant, of life darker and more hidden than his own.

But how had the hunters discovered the place where he had treasured up his Sophy? how dogged that retreat? Perhaps from the village in which we first saw him. Ay, doubtless, learned from Mrs. Saunders of the dog he had purchased, and the dog would have served to direct them on his path. At that thought he pushed away Sir Isaac, who had been resting his head on the old man's knee,--pushed him away angrily; the poor dog slunk off in sorrowful surprise, and whined.

"Ungrateful wretch that I am!" cried Waife, and he opened his arms to the brute, who bounded forgivingly to his breast.

"Come, come, we will go back to the village in Surrey. Tramp, tramp!" said the cripple, rousing himself. And at that moment, just as he gained his feet, a friendly hand was laid on his shoulder, and a friendly voice said,

"I have found you! the crystal said so! Marbellous!"

"Merle," faltered out the vagrant, "Merle, you here! Oh, perhaps you come to tell me good news: you have seen Sophy; you know where she is!"

The Cobbler shook his head. "Can't see her just at present. Crystal says nout about her. But I know she was taken from you--and--and--you shake tremenjus! Lean on me, Mr. Waite, and call off that big animal. He's a suspicating my calves and circumtittyvating them. Thank ye, sir. You see I was born with sinister aspects in my Twelfth House, which appertains to big animals and enemies; and dogs of that size about one's calves are--malefics!"

As Merle now slowly led the cripple, and Sir Isaac, relinquishing his first suspicions, walked droopingly beside them, the Cobbler began a long story, much encumbered by astrological illustrations and moralizing comments. The substance of his narrative is thus epitomized: Ruge, in pursuing Waife's track, had naturally called on Merle in company with Losely and Mrs. Crane. The Cobbler had no clew to give, and no mind to give it if clew he had possessed. But his curiosity being roused, he had smothered the inclination to dismiss the inquirers with more speed than good breeding, and even refreshed his slight acquaintance with Mr. Ruge in so well simulated a courtesy that that gentleman, when left behind by Losely and Mrs. Crane in their journey to Gatesboro', condescended, for want of other company, to drink tea with Mr. Merle; and tea being succeeded by stronger potations, he fairly unbosomed himself of his hopes of recovering Sophy and his ambition of hiring the York theatre.

The day afterwards Ruge went away seemingly in high spirits, and the Cobbler had no doubt, from some words he let fall in passing Merle's stall towards the railway, that Sophy was recaptured, and that Ruge was summoned to take possession of her. Ascertaining from the manager that Losely and Mrs. Crane had gone to Gatesboro', the Cobbler called to mind

that he had a sister living there, married to a green-grocer in a very small way, whom he had not seen for many years; and finding his business slack just then, he resolved to pay this relative a visit, with the benevolent intention of looking up Waife, whom he expected from Rugges's account to find there, and offering him any consolation or aid in his power, should Sophy have been taken from him against his will. A consultation with his crystal, which showed him the face of Mr. Waife alone and much dejected, and a horary scheme which promised success to his journey, decided his movements. He had arrived at Gatesboro' the day before, had heard a confused story about a Mr. Chapman, with his dog and his child, whom the Mayor had first taken up, but who afterwards, in some mysterious manner, had taken in the Mayor. Happily, the darker gossip in the High Street had not penetrated the back lane in which Merle's sister resided. There, little more was known than the fact that this mysterious stranger had imposed on the wisdom of Gatesboro's learned Institute and enlightened Mayor. Merle, at no loss to identify Waife with Chapman, could only suppose that he had been discovered to be a strolling player in Rugges's exhibition, after pretending to be some much greater man. Such an offence the Cobbler was not disposed to consider heinous. But Mr. Chapman was gone from Gatesboro' none knew whither; and Merle had not yet ventured to call himself on the chief magistrate of the place, to inquire after a man by whom that august personage had been deceived. "Howsomever," quoth Merle, in conclusion, "I was just standing at my sister's door, with her last babby in my arms, in Scrob Lane, when I saw you pass by like a shot. You were gone while I ran in to give up the babby, who is teething, with malefics in square,--gone, clean out of sight. You took one turn; I took another: but you see we meet at last, as good men always do in this world or the other, which is the same thing in the long run."

Waife, who had listened to his friend without other interruption than an occasional nod of the head or interjectional expletive, was now restored to much of his constitutional mood of sanguine cheerfulness. He recognized Mrs. Crane in the woman described; and, if surprised, he was rejoiced. For, much as he disliked that gentlewoman, he thought Sophy might be in worse female hands. Without much need of sagacity, he divined the gist of the truth. Losely had somehow or other become acquainted with Rugges, and sold Sophy to the manager. Where Rugges was, there would Sophy be. It could not be very difficult to find out the place in which Rugges was now exhibiting; and then--ah then! Waife whistled to Sir Isaac, tapped his forehead, and smiled triumphantly. Meanwhile the Cobbler had led him back into the suburb, with the kind intention of offering him food and bed for the night at his sister's house. But Waife had already formed his plan; in London, and in London alone, could he be sure to learn where Rugges was now exhibiting; in London there were places at which that information could be gleaned at once. The last train to the metropolis was not gone. He would slink round the town to the station: he and Sir Isaac at that hour might secure places unnoticed.

When Merle found it was in vain to press him to stay over the night, the good-hearted Cobbler accompanied him to the train, and, while Waife shrank into a dark corner, bought the tickets for dog and master. As he was paying for these, he overheard two citizens talking of Mr. Chapman. It was indeed Mr. Williams explaining to a fellow-burgess just returned to Gatesboro', after a week's absence, how and by what manner of man Mr. Hartopp had been taken in. At what Williams said, the Cobbler's cheek paled. When he joined the Comedian his manner was greatly altered; he gave the tickets without speaking, but looked hard into Waife's face, as

the latter repaid him the fares. "No," said the Cobbler, suddenly, "I don't believe it."

"Believe what?" asked Waife, startled. "That you are--"

The Cobbler paused, bent forward, whispered the rest of the sentence close in the vagrant's ear. Waife's head fell on his bosom, but he made no answer.

"Speak," cried Merle; "say 't is a lie." The poor cripple's lip writhed, but he still spoke not.

Merle looked aghast at that obstinate silence. At length, but very slowly, as the warning bell summoned him and Sir Isaac to their several places in the train, Waife found voice. "So you too, you too desert and despise me! God's will be done!" He moved away,--spiritless, limping, hiding his face as well as he could. The porter took the dog from him, to thrust it into one of the boxes reserved for such four-footed passengers.

Waife thus parted from his last friend--I mean the dog--looked after Sir Isaac wistfully, and crept into a third-class carriage, in which luckily there was no one else. Suddenly Merle jumped in, snatched his hand, and pressed it tightly.

"I don't despise, I don't turn my back on you: whenever you and the little one want a home and a friend, come to Kit Merle as before, and I'll bite my tongue out if I ask any more questions of you; I'll ask the stars instead."

The Cobbler had but just time to splutter out these comforting words and redescend the carriage, when the train put itself into movement, and the lifelike iron miracle, fuming, hissing, and screeching, bore off to London its motley convoy of human beings, each passenger's heart a mystery to the other, all bound the same road, all wedged close within the same whirling mechanism; what a separate and distinct world in each! Such is Civilization! How like we are one to the other in the mass! how strangely dissimilar in the abstract!

CHAPTER IV.

"If," says a great thinker (Degerando, "/Du Perfectionment Moral/," chapter ix., "On the Difficulties we encounter in Self-Study")--"if one concentrates reflection too much on one's self, one ends by no longer seeing anything, or seeing only what one wishes. By the very act, as it were, of capturing one's self, the personage we believe we have seized escapes, disappears. Nor is it only the complexity of our inner being which obstructs our examination, but its exceeding variability. The investigator's regard should embrace all the sides of the subject, and perseveringly pursue all its phases."

It is the race-week in Humberston, a county town far from Gatesboro', and in the north of England. The races last three days: the first day is over; it has been a brilliant spectacle; the course crowded with the carriages of provincial magnates, with equestrian betters of note from the metropolis; blacklegs in great muster; there have been gaming-booths

on the ground, and gypsies telling fortunes; much champagne imbibed by the well-bred, much soda-water and brandy by the vulgar. Thousands and tens of thousands have been lost and won: some paupers have been for the time enriched; some rich men made poor for life. Horses have won fame; some of their owners lost character. Din and uproar, and coarse oaths, and rude passions,--all have had their hour. The amateurs of the higher classes have gone back to dignified country-houses, as courteous hosts or favoured guests. The professional speculators of a lower grade have poured back into the county town, and inns and taverns are crowded. Drink is hotly called for at reeking bars; waiters and chambermaids pass to and fro, with dishes and tankards and bottles in their hands. All is noise and bustle, and eating and swilling, and disputation and slang, wild glee, and wilder despair, amongst those who come back from the race-course to the inns in the county town. At one of these taverns, neither the best nor the worst, and in a small narrow slice of a room that seemed robbed from the landing-place, sat Mrs. Crane, in her iron-gray silk gown. She was seated close by the open window, as carriages, chaises, flies, carts, vans, and horsemen succeeded each other thick and fast, watching the scene with a soured, scornful look. For human joy, as for human grief, she had little sympathy. Life had no Saturnalian holidays left for her. Some memory in her past had poisoned the well-springs of her social being. Hopes and objects she had still, but out of the wrecks of the natural and healthful existence of womanhood, those objects and hopes stood forth exaggerated, intense, as are the ruling passions in monomania. A bad woman is popularly said to be worse than a wicked man. If so, partly because women, being more solitary, brood more unceasingly over cherished ideas, whether good or evil; partly also, for the same reason that makes a wicked gentleman, who has lost caste and character, more irreclaimable than a wicked clown, low-born and lowbred, namely, that in proportion to the loss of shame is the gain in recklessness: but principally, perhaps, because in extreme wickedness there is necessarily a distortion of the reasoning faculty; and man, accustomed from the cradle rather to reason than to feel, has that faculty more firm against abrupt twists and lesions than it is in woman; where virtue may have left him, logic may still linger; and he may decline to push evil to a point at which it is clear to his understanding that profit vanishes and punishment rests; while woman, once abandoned to ill, finds sufficient charm in its mere excitement, and, regardless of consequences, where the man asks, "Can I?" raves out, "I will!" Thus man may be criminal through cupidity, vanity, love, jealousy, fear, ambition; rarely in civilized, that is, reasoning life, through hate and revenge; for hate is a profitless investment, and revenge a ruinous speculation. But when women are thoroughly depraved and hardened, nine times out of ten it is hatred or revenge that makes them so. Arabella Crane had not, however, attained to that last state of wickedness, which, consistent in evil, is callous to remorse; she was not yet unsexed. In her nature was still that essence, "varying and mutable," which distinguishes woman while womanhood is left to her. And now, as she sat gazing on the throng below, her haggard mind recoiled perhaps from the conscious shadow of the Evil Principle which, invoked as an ally, remains as a destroyer. Her dark front relaxed; she moved in her seat uneasily. "Must it be always thus?" she muttered,--"always this hell here! Even now, if in one large pardon I could include the undoer, the earth, myself, and again be human,--human, even as those slight triflers or coarse brawlers that pass yonder! Oh, for something in common with common life!"

Her lips closed, and her eyes again fell upon the crowded street. At that moment three or four heavy vans or wagons filled with operatives or labourers and their wives, coming back from the race-course, obstructed

the way; two outriders in satin jackets were expostulating, cracking their whips, and seeking to clear space for an open carriage with four thoroughbred impatient horses. Towards that carriage every gazer from the windows was directing eager eyes; each foot-passenger on the pavement lifted his hat: evidently in that carriage some great person! Like all who are at war with the world as it is, Arabella Crane abhorred the great, and despised the small for worshipping the great. But still her own fierce dark eyes mechanically followed those of the vulgar. The carriage bore a marquess's coronet on its panels, and was filled with ladies; two other carriages bearing a similar coronet, and evidently belonging to the same party, were in the rear. Mrs. Crane started. In that first carriage, as it now slowly moved under her very window, and paused a minute or more till the obstructing vehicles in front were marshalled into order, there flashed upon her eyes a face radiant with female beauty in its most glorious prime. Amongst the crowd at that moment was a blind man, adding to the various discords of the street by a miserable hurdy-gurdy. In the movement of the throng to get nearer to a sight of the ladies in the carriage, this poor creature was thrown forward; the dog that led him, an ugly brute, on his own account or his master's took fright, broke from the string, and ran under the horses' hoofs, snarling. The horses became restive; the blind man made a plunge after his dog, and was all but run over. The lady in the first carriage, alarmed for his safety, rose up from her seat, and made her outriders dismount, lead away the poor blind man, and restore to him his dog. Thus engaged, her face shone full upon Arabella Crane; and with that face rushed a tide of earlier memories. Long, very long, since she had seen that face,--seen it in those years when she herself, Arabella Crane, was young and handsome.

The poor man,--who seemed not to realize the idea of the danger he had escaped,--once more safe, the lady resumed her seat; and now that the momentary animation of humane fear and womanly compassion passed from her countenance, its expression altered; it took the calm, almost the coldness, of a Greek statue. But with the calm there was a listless melancholy which Greek sculpture never gives to the Parian stone: stone cannot convey that melancholy; it is the shadow which needs for its substance a living, mortal heart.

Crack went the whips: the horses bounded on; the equipage rolled fast down the street, followed by its satellites. "Well!" said a voice in the street below, "I never saw Lady Montfort in such beauty. Ah, here comes my lord!"

Mrs. Crane heard and looked forth again. A dozen or more gentlemen on horseback rode slowly up the street; which of these was Lord Montfort?--not difficult to distinguish. As the bystanders lifted their hats to the cavalcade, the horsemen generally returned their salutation by simply touching their own: one horseman uncovered wholly. That one must be the Marquess, the greatest man in those parts, with lands stretching away on either side that town for miles and miles,--a territory which in feudal times might have alarmed a king. He, the civilest, must be the greatest. A man still young, decidedly good-looking, wonderfully well-dressed, wonderfully well-mounted, the careless ease of high rank in his air and gesture. To the superficial gaze, just what the great Lord of Montfort should be. Look again! In that fair face is there not something that puts you in mind of a florid period which contains a feeble platitude?--something in its very prettiness that betrays a weak nature and a sterile mind?

The cavalcade passed away; the vans and the wagons again usurped the thoroughfare. Arabella Crane left the window, and approached the little looking-glass over the mantelpiece. She gazed upon her own face bitterly; she was comparing it with the features of the dazzling marchioness.

The door was flung open, and Jasper Losely sauntered in, whistling a French air, and flapping the dust from his boots with his kid glove.

"All right," said he, gayly. "A famous day of it!"

"You have won," said Mrs. Crane, in a tone rather of disappointment than congratulation.

"Yes. That L100 of Rugges's has been the making of me."

"I only wanted a capital just to start with!" He flung himself into a chair, opened his pocket-book, and scrutinized its contents. "Guess," said he, suddenly, "on whose horse I won these two rouleaux? Lord Montfort's! Ay, and I saw my lady!"

"So did I see her from this window. She did not look happy!"

"Not happy!--with such an equipage,--neatest turn-out I ever set eyes on; not happy, indeed! I had half a mind to ride up to her carriage and advance a claim to her gratitude."

"Gratitude? Oh, for your part in that miserable affair of which you told me?"

"Not a miserable affair for her; but certainly I never got any good from it. Trouble for nothing! /Basta!/ No use looking back."

"No use; but who can help it?" said Arabella Crane, sighing heavily; then, as if eager to change the subject, she added abruptly, "Mr. Rugges has been here twice this morning, highly excited the child will not act. He says you are bound to make her do so!"

"Nonsense. That is his look-out. I see after children, indeed!"

MRS. CRANE (with a visible effort).--"Listen to me, Jasper Losely. I have no reason to love that child, as you may suppose. But now that you so desert her, I think I feel compassion for her; and when this morning I raised my hand to strike her for her stubborn spirit, and saw her eyes unflinching, and her pale, pale, but fearless face, my arm fell to my side powerless. She will not take to this life without the old man. She will waste away and die."

LOSELY.--"How you bother me! Are you serious? What am I to do?"

MRS. CRANE.--"You have won money you say; revoke the contract; pay Rugges back his L100. He is disappointed in his bargain; he will take the money."

LOSELY.--"I dare say he will indeed! No: I have won to-day, it is true, but I may lose to-morrow; and besides I am in want of so many things: when one gets a little money, one has an immediate necessity for more--ha! ha! Still I would not have the child die; and she may grow up to be of use. I tell you what I will do; if, when the races are over, I find I

have gained enough to afford it, I will see about buying her off. But L100 is too much! Ruggie ought to take half the money, or a quarter, because, if she don't act, I suppose she does eat."

Odious as the man's words were, he said them with a laugh that seemed to render them less revolting,--the laugh of a very handsome mouth, showing teeth still brilliantly white. More comely than usual that day, for he was in great good-humour, it was difficult to conceive that a man with so healthful and fair an exterior was really quite rotten at heart.

"Your own young laugh," said Arabella Crane, almost tenderly. "I know not how it is, but this day I feel as if I were less old,--altered though I be in face and mind. I have allowed myself to pity that child; while I speak, I can pity you. Yes! pity,--when I think of what you were. Must you go on thus? To what! Jasper Losely," she continued, sharply, eagerly, clasping her hands, "hear me: I have an income, not large, it is true, but assured; you have nothing but what, as you say, you may lose to-morrow; share my income! Fulfil your solemn promises: marry me. I will forget whose daughter that girl is; I will be a mother to her. And for yourself, give me the right to feel for you again as I once did, and I may find a way to raise you yet,--higher than you can raise yourself. I have some wit, Jasper, as you know. At the worst you shall have the pastime, I the toil. In your illness I will nurse you: in your joys I will intrude no share. Whom else can you marry? to whom else could you confide? who else could--"

She stopped short as if an adder had stung her, uttering a shriek of rage, of pain; for Jasper Losely, who had hitherto listened to her, stupefied, astounded, here burst into a fit of merriment, in which there was such undisguised contempt, such an enjoyment of the ludicrous, provoked by the idea of the marriage pressed upon him, that the insult pierced the woman to her very soul.

Continuing his laugh, despite that cry of wrathful agony it had caused, Jasper rose, holding his sides, and surveying himself in the glass, with very different feelings at the sight from those that had made his companion's gaze there a few minutes before so mournful.

"My dear good friend," he said, composing himself at last, and wiping his eyes, "excuse me, but really when you said whom else could I marry--ha! ha!--it did seem such a capital joke! Marry you, my fair Crane! No: put that idea out of your head; we know each other too well for conjugal felicity. You love me now: you always did, and always will; that is, while we are not tied to each other. Women who once love me, always love me; can't help themselves. I am sure I don't know why, except that I am what they call a villain! Ha! the clock striking seven: I dine with a set of fellows I have picked up on the race-ground; they don't know me, nor I them; we shall be better acquainted after the third bottle. Cheer up, Crane: go and scold Sophy, and make her act if you can; if not, scold Ruggie into letting her alone. Scold somebody; nothing like it, to keep other folks quiet, and one's self busy. Adieu! and pray, no more matrimonial solicitations: they frighten me! Gad," added Losely, as he banged the door, "such overtures would frighten Old Nick himself!"

Did Arabella Crane hear those last words,--or had she not heard enough? If Losely had turned and beheld her face, would it have startled back his trivial laugh? Possibly; but it would have caused only a momentary uneasiness. If Alecto herself had reared over him her brow horrent with vipers, Jasper Losely would have thought he had only to look handsome and

say coaxingly, "Alecto, my dear," and the Fury would have pawned her head-dress to pay his washing-bill.

After all, in the face of the grim woman he had thus so wantonly incensed, there was not so much menace as resolve. And that resolve was yet more shown in the movement of the hands than in the aspect of the countenance; those hands--lean, firm, nervous hands--slowly expanded, then as slowly clenched, as if her own thought had taken substance, and she was locking it in a clasp--tightly, tightly--never to be loosened till the pulse was still.

CHAPTER V.

The most submissive where they love may be the most stubborn where they do not love.--Sophy is stubborn to Mr. Rugge.--That injured man summons to his side Mrs. Crane, imitating the policy of those potentates who would retrieve the failures of force by the successes of diplomacy.

Mr. Rugge has obtained his object. But now comes the question, "What will he do with it?" Question with as many heads as the Hydra; and no sooner does an author dispose of one head than up springs another.

Sophy has been bought and paid for: she is now, legally, Mr. Rugge's property. But there was a wise peer who once bought Punch: Punch became his property, and was brought in triumph to his lordship's house. To my lord's great dismay, Punch would not talk. To Rugge's great dismay, Sophy would not act.

Rendered up to Jasper Losely and Mrs. Crane, they had lost not an hour in removing her from Gatesboro' and its neighbourhood. They did not, however, go back to the village in which they had left Rugge, but returned straight to London, and wrote to the manager to join them there.

Sophy, once captured, seemed stupefied: she evinced no noisy passion; she made no violent resistance. When she was told to love and obey a father in Jasper Losely, she lifted her eyes to his face; then turned them away, and shook her head mute and credulous. That man her father! she, did not believe it. Indeed, Jasper took no pains to convince her of the relationship or win her attachment. He was not unkindly rough: he seemed wholly indifferent; probably he was so. For the ruling vice of the man was in his egotism. It was not so much that he had bad principles and bad feelings, as that he had no principles and no feelings at all, except as they began, continued, and ended in that system of centralization which not more paralyzes healthful action in a State than it does in the individual man. Self-indulgence with him was absolute. He was not without power of keen calculation, not without much cunning. He could conceive a project for some gain far off in the future, and concoct, for its realization, schemes subtly woven, astutely guarded. But he could not secure their success by any long-sustained sacrifices of the caprice of one hour or the indolence of the next. If it had been a great object to him for life to win Sophy's filial affection, he would not have bored himself for five minutes each day to gain that object. Besides, he had just enough of shame to render him uneasy at the sight of the child he had deliberately sold. So after chucking her under the chin, and telling her to be a good girl and be grateful for all that Mrs. Crane had done

for her and meant still to do, he consigned her almost solely to that lady's care.

When Ruggie arrived, and Sophy was informed of her intended destination, she broke silence,--her colour went and came quickly,--she declared, folding her arms upon her breast, that she would never act if separated from her grandfather. Mrs. Crane, struck by her manner, suggested to Ruggie that it might be as well, now that she was legally secured to the manager, to humour her wish and re-engage Waife. Whatever the tale with which, in order to obtain Sophy from the Mayor, she had turned that worthy magistrate's mind against the Comedian, she had not gratified Mr. Ruggie by a similar confidence to him. To him she said nothing which might operate against renewing engagements with Waife, if he were so disposed. But Ruggie had no faith in a child's firmness, and he had a strong spite against Waife, so he obstinately refused. He insisted, however, as a peremptory condition of the bargain, that Mr. Losely and Mrs. Crane should accompany him to the town to which he had transferred his troupe, both in order by their presence to confirm his authority over Sophy, and to sanction his claim to her, should Waife reappear and dispute it. For Ruggie's profession being scarcely legitimate and decidedly equivocal, his right to bring up a female child to the same calling might be called into question before a magistrate, and necessitate the production of her father in order to substantiate the special contract. In return, the manager handsomely offered to Mr. Losely and Mrs. Crane to pay their expenses in the excursion,--a liberality haughtily rejected by Mrs. Crane for herself, though she agreed at her own charge to accompany Losely if he decided on complying with the manager's request. Losely at first raised objections, but hearing that there would be races in the neighbourhood, and having a peculiar passion for betting and all kinds of gambling, as well as an ardent desire to enjoy his L100 in so fashionable a manner, he consented to delay his return to the Continent, and attend Arabella Crane to the provincial Elis. Ruggie, carried off Sophy to her fellow "orphans."

AND SOPHY WOULD NOT ACT!

In vain she was coaxed; in vain she was threatened; in vain she was deprived of food; in vain shut up in a dark hole; in vain was the lash held over her. Ruggie, tyrant though he was, did not suffer the lash to fall. His self-restraint there might be humanity,--might be fear of the consequences; for the state of her health began to alarm him. She might die; there might be an inquest. He wished now that he had taken Mrs. Crane's suggestion, and re-engaged Waife. But where was Waife? Meanwhile he had advertised the young Phenomenon; placarded the walls with the name of Juliet Araminta; got up the piece of the Remorseless Baron, with a new rock-scene. Waife had had nothing to say in that drama, so any one could act his part.

The first performance was announced for that night: there would be such an audience! the best seats even now pre-engaged; first night of the race-week. The clock had struck seven; the performance began at eight.

AND SOPHY WOULD NOT ACT!

The child was seated in a space that served for the greenroom, behind the scenes. The whole company had been convened to persuade or shame her out of her obstinacy. The king's lieutenant, the seductive personage of the troupe, was on one knee to her, like a lover. He was accustomed to lovers' parts, both on the stage and off it. Off it, he had one favoured

phrase, hackneyed, but effective. "You are too pretty to be so cruel." Thrice he now repeated that phrase, with a simper between each repetition that might have melted a heart of stone. Behind Sophy's chair, and sticking calico-flowers into the child's tresses, stood the senior matron of the establishment,--not a bad sort of woman,--who kept the dresses, nursed the sick, revered Rugge, told fortunes on a pack of cards which she always kept in her pocket, and acted occasionally in parts where age was no drawback and ugliness desirable,--such as a witch, or duenna, or whatever in the dialogue was poetically called "Hag." Indeed, Hag was the name she usually took from Rugge; that which she bore from her defunct husband was Gormerick. This lady, as she braided the garland, was also bent on the soothing system, saying, with great sweetness, considering that her mouth was full of pins, "Now, deary, now, dovey, look at ooself in the glass; we could beat oo, and pinch oo, and stick pins into oo, dovey, but we won't. Dovey will be good, I know;" and a great patch of rouge came on the child's pale cheeks. The clown therewith, squatting before her with his hands on his knees, grinned lustily, and shrieked out, "My eyes, what a beauty!"

Rugge, meanwhile, one hand thrust in his bosom, contemplated the diplomatic efforts of his ministers, and saw, by Sophy's compressed lips and unwinking eyes, that their cajoleries were unsuccessful. He approached and hissed into her ear, "Don't madden me! don't! you will act, eh?"

"No," said Sophy, suddenly rising; and tearing the wreath from her hair, she set her small foot on it with force. "No, not if you kill me!"

"Gods!" faltered Rugge. "And the sum I have paid! I am diddled! Who has gone for Mrs. Crane?"

"Tom," said the clown.

The word was scarcely out of the clown's mouth ere Mrs. Crane herself emerged from a side scene, and, putting off her bonnet, laid both hands on the child's shoulders, and looked her in the face without speaking. The child as firmly returned the gaze. Give that child a martyr's cause, and in that frail body there would have been a martyr's soul. Arabella Crane, not inexperienced in children, recognized a power of will stronger than the power of brute force, in that tranquillity of eye, the spark of calm light in its tender blue, blue, pure as the sky; light, steadfast as the star.

"Leave her to me, all of you," said Mrs. Crane. "I will take her to your private room, Mr. Rugge;" and she led the child away to a sort of recess, room it could not be rightly called, fenced round with boxes and crates, and containing the manager's desk and two stools.

"Sophy," then said Mrs. Crane, "you say you will not act unless your grandfather be with you. Now, hear me. You know that I have been always stern and hard with you. I never professed to love you,--nor do I. But you have not found me untruthful. When I say a thing seriously, as I am speaking now, you may believe me. Act to-night, and I will promise you faithfully that I will either bring your grandfather here, or I will order it so that you shall be restored to him. If you refuse, I make no threat, but I shall leave this place; and my belief is that you will be your grandfather's death."

"His death! his death! I!"

"By first dying yourself. Oh, you smile; you think it would be happiness to die. What matter that the old man you profess to care for is broken-hearted! Brat, leave selfishness to boys: you are a girl! suffer!"

"Selfish!" murmured Sophy, "selfish! that was said of me before. Selfish! ah, I understand. No, I ought not to wish to die: what would become of him?" She fell on her knees, and raising both her clasped hands, prayed inly, silently, an instant, not more. She rose. "If I do act, then,--it is a promise: you will keep it. I shall see him: he shall know where I am; we shall meet!"

"A promise,--sacred. I will keep it. Oh, girl, how much you will love some day! how your heart will ache! and when you are my age, look at that heart, then at your glass; perhaps you may be, within and without, like me."

Sophy, innocent Sophy, stared, awe-stricken, but uncomprehending; Mrs. Crane led her back passive.

"There, she will act. Put on the wreath. Trick her out. Hark ye, Mr. Ruge. This is for one night. I have made conditions with her: either you must take back her grandfather, or--she must return to him."

"And my L100?"

"In the latter case ought to be repaid to you."

"Am I never to have the Royal York Theatre? Ambition of my life, ma'am. Dreamed of it thrice! Ha! but she will act; and succeed. But to take back the old vagabond,--a bitter pill. He shall halve it with me! Ma'am, I'm your grateful--"

CHAPTER VI.

Threadbare is the simile which compares the world to a stage. Schiller, less complimentary than Shakspeare, lowers the illustration from a stage to a puppet-show. But ever between realities and shows there is a secret communication, an undetected interchange,--sometimes a stern reality in the heart of the ostensible actor, a fantastic stage-play in the brain of the unnoticed spectator. The bandit's child on the proscenium is still poor little Sophy, in spite of garlands and rouge. But that honest rough-looking fellow to whom, in respect for services to sovereign and country, the apprentice yields way, may he not be--the crafty Comedian?

TARAN-TARANTARA! rub-a-dub-dub! play up horn! roll drum! a quarter to eight; and the crowd already thick before Ruge's Grand Exhibition,--"Remorseless Baron and Bandit's Child! Young Phenomenon,--Juliet Araminta,--Patronized by the Nobility in general, and expecting daily to be summoned to perform before the Queen,--/Vivat Regina!/"--Ruba-dub-dub! The company issue from the curtain, range in front of the proscenium. Splendid dresses. The Phenomenon!--'t is she!

"My eyes, there's a beauty!" cries the clown.

The days have already grown somewhat shorter; but it is not yet dusk.

How charmingly pretty she still is, despite that horrid paint; but how wasted those poor bare snowy arms!

A most doleful lugubrious dirge mingles with the drum and horn. A man has forced his way close by the stage,--a man with a confounded cracked hurdy-gurdy. Whine! whine! creaks the hurdy-gurdy. "Stop that! stop that mu-zeek!" cries a delicate apprentice, clapping his hands to his ears. "Pity a poor blind--" answers the man with the hurdygurdy.

"Oh, you are blind, are you? but we are not deaf. There's a penny not to play. What black thing have you got there by a string?"

"My dog, sir!"

"Deuced ugly one; not like a dog; more like a bear with horns!"

"I say, master," cries the clown, "here's a blind man come to see the Phenomenon!"

The crowd laugh; they make way for the blind man's black dog. They suspect, from the clown's address, that the blind man has something to do with the company.

You never saw two uglier specimens of their several species than the blind man and his black dog. He had rough red hair and a red beard, his face had a sort of twist that made every feature seem crooked. His eyes were not bandaged, but the lids were closed, and he lifted them up piteously as if seeking for light. He did not seem, however, like a common beggar: had rather the appearance of a reduced sailor. Yes, you would have bet ten to one he had been a sailor; not that his dress belonged to that noble calling, but his build, the roll of his walk, the tie of his cravat, a blue anchor tattooed on that great brown hand: certainly a sailor; a British tar! poor man.

The dog was hideous enough to have been exhibited as a */lusus naturae/*; evidently very aged,--for its face and ears were gray, the rest of it a rusty reddish black; it had immensely long ears, pricked up like horns; it was a dog that must have been brought from foreign parts; it might have come from Acheron, sire by Cerberus, so portentous, and (if not irreverent the epithet) so infernal was its aspect, with that gray face, those antlered ears, and its ineffably weird demeanour altogether. A big dog, too, and evidently a strong one. All prudent folks would have made way for a man led by that dog. Whine creaked the hurdy-gurdy, and bow-wow all of a sudden barked the dog. Sophy stifled a cry, pressed her hand to her breast, and such a ray of joy flashed over her face that it would have warmed your heart for a month to have seen it.

But do you mean to say, Mr. Author, that that British tar (gallant, no doubt, but hideous) is Gentleman Waife, or that Stygian animal the snowy-curved Sir Isaac?

Upon my word, when I look at them myself, I, the Historian, am puzzled. If it had not been for that bow-wow, I am sure Sophy would not have suspected. Taratarantara! Walk in, ladies and gentlemen, walk in; the performance is about to commence! Sophy lingers last.

"Yes, sir," said the blind man, who had been talking to the apprentice, "yes, sir," said he, loud and emphatically, as if his word had been questioned. "The child was snowed up, but luckily the window of the hut

was left open: exactly at two o'clock in the morning, that dog came to the window, set up a howl, and--"

Soppy could hear no more--led away behind the curtain by the King's Lieutenant. But she had heard enough to stir her heart with an emotion that set all the dimples round her lip into undulating play.

CHAPTER VII.

A sham carries off a reality.

And she did act, and how charmingly! with what glee and what gusto! Rugge was beside himself with pride and rapture. He could hardly perform his own Baronial part for admiration. The audience, a far choicer and more fastidious one than that in the Surrey village, was amazed, enthusiastic. "I shall live to see my dream come true! I shall have the great York theatre!" said Rugge, as he took off his wig and laid his head on his pillow. "Restore her for the L100! not for thousands!"

Alas, my sweet Sophy, alas! Has not the joy that made thee perform so well undone thee? Ah, hadst thou but had the wit to act horribly, and be hissed!

"Uprose the sun and uprose Baron Rugge."

Not that ordinarily he was a very early man; but his excitement broke his slumbers. He had taken up his quarters on the ground-floor of a small lodging-house close to his exhibition; in the same house lodged his senior matron, and Sophy herself. Mrs. Gormerick, being ordered to watch the child and never lose sight of her, slept in the same room with Sophy, in the upper story of the house. The old woman served Rugge for housekeeper, made his tea, grilled his chop, and for company's sake shared his meals. Excitement as often sharpens the appetite as takes it away. Rugge had supped on hope, and he felt a craving for a more substantial breakfast. Accordingly, when he had dressed, he thrust his head into the passage, and seeing there the maid-of-all-work unbarring the street-door, bade her go upstairs and wake the Hag, that is, Mrs. Gormerick. Saying this he extended a key; for he ever took the precaution, before retiring to rest, to lock the door of the room to which Sophy was consigned on the outside, and guard the key till the next morning.

The maid nodded, and ascended the stairs. Less time than he expected passed away before Mrs. Gormerick made her appearance, her gray hair streaming under her nightcap, her form indued in a loose wrapper,--her very face a tragedy.

"Powers above! What has happened?" exclaimed Rugge, prophetically.

"She is gone," sobbed Mrs. Gormerick; and, seeing the lifted arm and clenched fist of the manager, prudently fainted away.

CHAPTER VIII.

Corollaries from the problems suggested in chapters VI. and VII.

Broad daylight, nearly nine o'clock indeed, and Jasper Losely is walking back to his inn from the place at which he had dined the evening before. He has spent the night drinking, gambling, and though he looks heated, there is no sign of fatigue. Nature, in wasting on this man many of her most glorious elements of happiness, had not forgotten an herculean constitution,--always restless and never tired, always drinking and never drunk. Certainly it is some consolation to delicate invalids that it seldom happens that the sickly are very wicked. Criminals are generally athletic; constitution and conscience equally tough; large backs to their heads; strong suspensorial muscles; digestions that save them from the over-fine nerves of the virtuous. The native animal must be vigorous in the human being, when the moral safeguards are daringly overleapt. Jasper was not alone, but with an acquaintance he had made at the dinner, and whom he invited to his inn to breakfast; they were walking familiarly arm-in-arm. Very unlike the brilliant Losely,--a young man under thirty, who seemed to have washed out all the colours of youth in dirty water. His eyes dull, their whites yellow; his complexion sodden. His form was thickset and heavy; his features pug, with a cross of the bull-dog. In dress, a specimen of the flash style of sporting man, as exhibited on the Turf, or more often perhaps in the Ring; Belcher neckcloth, with an immense pin representing a jockey at full gallop; cut-away coat, corduroy breeches, and boots with tops of a chalky white. Yet, withal, not the air and walk of a genuine born and bred sporting man, even of the vulgar order. Something about him which reveals the pretender. A would-be hawk with a pigeon's liver,--a would-be sportsman with a Cockney's nurture.

Samuel Adolphus Poole is an orphan of respectable connections. His future expectations chiefly rest on an uncle from whom, as godfather, he takes the loathed name of Samuel. He prefers to sign himself Adolphus; he is popularly styled Dolly. For his present existence he relies ostensibly on his salary as an assistant in the house of a London tradesman in a fashionable way of business. Mr. Latham, his employer, has made a considerable fortune, less by his shop than by discounting the bills of his customers, or of other borrowers whom the loan draws into the net of the custom. Mr. Latham connives at the sporting tastes of Dolly Poole. Dolly has often thus been enabled to pick up useful pieces of information as to the names and repute of such denizens of the sporting world as might apply to Mr. Latham for temporary accommodation. Dolly Poole has many sporting friends; he has also many debts. He has been a dupe, he is now a rogue; but he wants decision of character to put into practice many valuable ideas that his experience of dupe and his development into rogue suggest to his ambition. Still, however, now and then, wherever a shabby trick can be safely done, he is what he calls "lucky." He has conceived a prodigious admiration for Jasper Losely, one cause for which will be explained in the dialogue about to be recorded; another cause for which is analogous to that loving submission with which some ill-conditioned brute acknowledges a master in the hand that has thrashed it. For at Losely's first appearance at the convivial meeting just concluded, being nettled at the imperious airs of superiority which that roysterer assumed, mistaking for effeminacy Jasper's elaborate dandyism, and not recognizing in the bravo's elegant proportions the tiger-like strength of which, in truth, that tiger-like suppleness should have warned him, Dolly Poole provoked a quarrel, and being himself a stout fellow, nor unaccustomed to athletic exercises, began to spar; the next moment he was at the other end of the room full sprawl on the floor; and two minutes afterwards, the quarrel made up by conciliating

banqueters, with every bone in his skin seeming still to rattle, he was generously blubbering out that he never bore malice, and shaking hands with Jasper Losely as if he had found a benefactor. But now to the dialogue.

JASPER.--"Yes, Poole, my hearty, as you say, that fellow trumping my best club lost me the last rubber. There's no certainty in whist, if one has a spoon for a partner."

POOLE.--"No certainty in every rubber, but next to certainty in the long run, when a man plays as well as you do, Mr. Losely. Your winnings to-night must have been pretty large, though you had a bad partner almost every hand; pretty large, eh?"

JASPER (carelessly).--"Nothing to talk of,--a few ponies!"

POOLE.--"More than a few; I should know."

JASPER.--"Why? You did not play after the first rubber."

POOLE.--"No, when I saw your play on that first rubber, I cut out, and bet on you; and very grateful to you I am. Still you would win more with a partner who understood your game."

The shrewd Dolly paused a moment, and leaning significantly on Jasper's arm, added, in a half whisper, "I do; it is a French one."

Jasper did not change colour, but a quick rise of the eyebrow, and a slight jerk of the neck, betrayed some little surprise or uneasiness: however, he rejoined without hesitation, "French, ay! In France there is more dash in playing out trumps than there is with English players."

"And with a player like you," said Poole, still in a half whisper, "more trumps to play out."

Jasper turned round sharp and short; the hard, cruel expression of his mouth, little seen of late, came back to it. Poole recoiled, and his bones began again to ache. "I did not mean to offend you, Mr. Losely, but to caution."

"Caution!"

"There were two knowing coves, who, if they had not been so drunk, would not have lost their money without a row, and they would have seen how they lost it; they are sharpers: you served them right; don't be angry with me. You want a partner; so do I: you play better than I do, but I play well; you shall have two-thirds of our winnings, and when you come to town I'll introduce you to a pleasant set of young fellows--green."

Jasper mused a moment. "You know a thing or two, I see, Master Poole, and we'll discuss the whole subject after breakfast. Ar'n't you hungry? No! I am! Hillo! who 's that?"

His arm was seized by Mr. Rugge. "She's gone,--fled," gasped the manager, breathless. "Out of the lattice; fifteen feet high; not dashed to pieces; vanished."

"Go on and order breakfast," said Losely to Mr. Poole, who was listening too inquisitively. He drew the manager away. "Can't you keep your

tongue in your head before strangers? The girl is gone?"

"Out of the lattice, and fifteen feet high!"

"Any sheets left hanging out of the lattice?"

"Sheets! No."

"Then she did not go without help: somebody must have thrown up to her a rope-ladder; nothing so easy; done it myself scores of times for the descent of 'maids who love the moon,' Mr. Ruge. But at her age there is not a moon; at least there is not a man in the moon: one must dismiss, then, the idea of a rope-ladder,--too precocious. But are you quite sure she is gone? not hiding in some cupboard? Sacre! very odd. Have you seen Mrs. Crane about it?"

"Yes, just come from her; she thinks that villain Waife must have stolen her. But I want you, sir, to come with me to a magistrate."

"Magistrate! !! why? nonsense; set the police to work."

"Your deposition that she is your lawful child, lawfully made over to me, is necessary for the inquisition; I mean police."

"Hang it, what a bother! I hate magistrates, and all belonging to them. Well, I must breakfast! I'll see to it afterwards. Oblige me by not calling Mr. Waife a villain; good old fellow in his way."

"Good! Powers above!"

"But if he took her off, how did he get at her? It must have been preconcerted."

"Ha! true. But she has not been suffered to speak to a soul not in the company, Mrs. Crane excepted."

"Perhaps at the performance last night some signal was given?"

"But if Waife had been there I should have seen him; my troupe would have known him: such a remarkable face; one eye too."

"Well, well, do what you think best. I'll call on you after breakfast; let me go now. Basta! Basta!"

Losely wrenched himself from the manager, and strode off to the inn; then, ere joining Poole, he sought Mrs. Crane. "This going before a magistrate," said Losely, "to depose that I have made over my child to that blackguard showman--in this town too, after such luck as I have had and where bright prospects are opening on me--is most disagreeable. And supposing, when we have traced Sophy, she should be really with the old man; awkward! In short, my dear friend, my dear Bella," (Losely could be very coaxing when it was worth his while) "you just manage this for me. I have a fellow in the next room waiting to breakfast: as soon as breakfast is over I shall be off to the race-ground, and so shirk that ranting old bore; you'll call on him instead, and settle it somehow." He was out of the room before she could answer.

Mrs. Crane found it no easy matter to soothe the infuriate manager when he heard Losely was gone to amuse himself at the race-course. Nor did

she give herself much trouble to pacify Mr. Rugge's anger or assist his investigations. Her interest in the whole affair seemed over. Left thus to his own devices, Rugge, however, began to institute a sharp, and what promised to be an effective, investigation. He ascertained that the fugitive certainly had not left by the railway or by any of the public conveyances; he sent scoots over all the neighbourhood: he enlisted the sympathy of the police, who confidently assured him that they had "a network over the three kingdoms." Rugge's suspicions were directed to Waife: he could collect, however, no evidence to confirm them. No person answering to Waife's description had been seen in the town. Once, indeed, Rugge was close on the right scent; for, insisting upon Waife's one eye, and his possession of a white dog, he was told by several witnesses that a man blind of two eyes, and led by a black dog, had been close before the stage, just previous to the performance. But then the clown had spoken to that very man; all the Thespian company had observed him; all of them had known Waife familiarly for years; and all deposed that any creature more unlike to Waife than the blind man could not be turned out of Nature's workshop. But where was that blind man? They found out the wayside inn in which he had taken a lodging for the night; and there it was ascertained that he had paid for his room beforehand, stating that he should start for the race-course early in the morning. Rugge himself set out to the racecourse to kill two birds with one stone,--catch Mr. Losely, examine the blind man himself.

He did catch Mr. Losely, and very nearly caught something else; for that gentleman was in a ring of noisy horsemen, mounted on a hired hack, and loud as the noisiest. When Rugge came up to his stirrup, and began his harangue, Losely turned his hack round with so sudden an appliance of bit and spur, that the animal lashed out, and its heel went within an inch of the manager's cheek-bone. Before Rugge could recover, Losely was in a hand-gallop. But the blind man! Of course Rugge did not find him? You are mistaken: he did. The blind man was there, dog and all. The manager spoke to him, and did not know him from Adam.

Nor have you or I, my venerated readers, any right whatsoever to doubt whether Mr. Rugge could be so stolidly obtuse. Granting that blind sailor to be the veritable William Waife, William Waife was a man of genius, taking pains to appear an ordinary mortal. And the anecdotes of Munden, or of Bamfylde Moore Carew, suffice to tell us how Protean is the power of transformation in a man whose genius is mimetic. But how often does it happen to us, venerated readers, not to recognize a man of genius, even when he takes no particular pains to escape detection! A man of genius may be for ten years our next-door neighbour; he may dine in company with us twice a week; his face may be as familiar to our eyes as our armchair; his voice to our ears as the click of our parlour-clock: yet we are never more astonished than when all of a sudden, some bright day, it is discovered that our next-door neighbour is--a man of genius. Did you ever hear tell of the life of a man of genius but what there were numerous witnesses who deposed to the fact, that until, perfidious dissembler! he flared up and set the Thames on fire they had never seen anything in him; an odd creature, perhaps a good creature,--probably a poor creature,--but a MAN of GENIUS! They would as soon have suspected him of being the Khann of Tartary! Nay, candid readers, are there not some of you who refuse to the last to recognize the man of genius, till he has paid his penny to Charon, and his passport to immortality has been duly examined by the customhouse officers of Styx! When one half the world drag forth that same next-door neighbour, place him on a pedestal, and have him cried, "Oyez! Oyez! Found a man of genius! Public property! open to inspection!" does not the other half the world put on

its spectacles, turn up its nose, and cry, "That a man of genius, indeed! Pelt him!--pelt him!" Then of course there is a clatter, what the vulgar call "a shindy," round the pedestal. Squeezed by his believers, shied at by his scoffers, the poor man gets horribly mauled about, and drops from the perch in the midst of the row. Then they shovel him over, clap a great stone on his relics, wipe their foreheads, shake hands, compromise the dispute, the one half the world admitting that though he was a genius he was still an ordinary man; the other half allowing that though he was an ordinary man he was still a genius. And so on to the next pedestal with its "Hic stet," and the next great stone with its "Hic jacet."

The manager of the Grand Theatrical Exhibition gazed on the blind sailor, and did not know him from Adam!

CHAPTER IX.

The aboriginal man-eater, or pocket-cannibal, is susceptible of the refining influences of Civilization. He decorates his lair with the skins of his victims; he adorns his person with the spoils of those whom he devours. Mr. Losely, introduced to Mr. Poole's friends, dresses for dinner; and, combining elegance with appetite, eats them up.

Elated with the success which had rewarded his talents for pecuniary speculation, and dismissing from his mind all thoughts of the fugitive Sophy and the spoliated Rugge, Jasper Losely returned to London in company with his new friend, Mr. Poole. He left Arabella Crane to perform the same journey unattended; but that grim lady, carefully concealing any resentment at such want of gallantry, felt assured that she should not be long in London without being honoured by his visits.

In renewing their old acquaintance, Mrs. Crane had contrived to establish over Jasper that kind of influence which a vain man, full of schemes that are not to be told to all the world, but which it is convenient to discuss with some confidential friend who admires himself too highly not to respect his secrets, mechanically yields to a woman whose wits are superior to his own.

It is true that Jasper, on his return to the metropolis, was not magnetically attracted towards Podden Place; nay, days and even weeks elapsed, and Mrs. Crane was not gladdened by his presence. But she knew that her influence was only suspended,--not extinct. The body attracted was for the moment kept from the body attracting by the abnormal weights that had dropped into its pockets. Restore the body thus temporarily counterpoised to its former lightness, and it would turn to Podden Place as the needle to the Pole. Meanwhile, oblivious of all such natural laws, the disloyal Jasper had fixed himself as far from the reach of the magnet as from Bloomsbury's remotest verge in St. James's animated centre. The apartment he engaged was showy and commodious. He added largely to his wardrobe, his dressing-case, his trinket box. Nor, be it here observed, was Mr. Losely one of those beauish brigands who wear tawdry scarves over soiled linen, and paste rings upon unwashed digitals. To do him justice, the man, so stony-hearted to others, loved and cherished his own person with exquisite tenderness, lavished upon it delicate attentions, and gave to it the very best he could afford. He was no coarse debauchee, smelling of bad cigars and ardent spirits.

Cigars, indeed, were not among his vices (at worst the rare peccadillo of a cigarette): spirit-drinking was; but the monster's digestion was still so strong that he could have drunk out a gin-palace, and you would only have sniffed the jasmine or heliotrope on the dainty cambric that wiped the last drop from his lips. Had his soul been a tenth part as clean as the form that belied it, Jasper Losely had been a saint! His apartments secured, his appearance thus revised and embellished, Jasper's next care was an equipage in keeping; he hired a smart cabriolet with a high-stepping horse, and, to go behind it, a groom whose size had been stunted in infancy by provident parents designing him to earn his bread in the stables as a light-weight, and therefore mingling his mother's milk with heavy liquors. In short, Jasper Losely set up to be a buck about town: in that capacity Dolly Poole introduced him to several young gentlemen who combined commercial vocations with sporting tastes; they could not but participate in Poole's admiring and somewhat envious respect for Jasper Losely. There was indeed about the vigorous miscreant a great deal of false brilliancy. Deteriorated from earlier youth though the beauty of his countenance might be, it was still undeniably handsome; and as force of muscle is beauty in itself in the eyes of young sporting men, so Jasper dazzled many a */gracilis puer/*, who had the ambition to become an athlete, with the rare personal strength which, as if in the exuberance of animal spirits, he would sometimes condescend to display, by feats that astonished the curious and frightened the timid,--such as bending a poker or horseshoe between hands elegantly white, nor unadorned with rings,--or lifting the weight of Samuel Dolly by the waistband, and holding him at arm's length, with a playful bet of ten to one that he could stand by the fireplace and pitch the said Samuel Dolly out of the open window. To know so strong a man, so fine an animal, was something to boast of. Then, too, if Jasper had a false brilliancy, he had also a false bonhomie: it was true that he was somewhat imperious, swaggering, bullying; but he was also off-hand and jocund; and as you knew him, that sidelong look, that defying gait (look and gait of the man whom the world cuts), wore away. In fact, he had got into a world which did not cut him, and his exterior was improved by the atmosphere.

Mr. Losely professed to dislike general society. Drawing rooms were insipid; clubs full of old fogies. "I am for life, my boys," said Mr. Losely,

"Can sorrow from the goblet flow,
Or pain from Beauty's eye?"

Mr. Losely, therefore, his hat on one side, lounged into the saloons of theatres, accompanied by a cohort of juvenile admirers, their hats on one side also, and returned to the pleasantest little suppers in his own apartment. There "the goblet" flowed; and after the goblet, cigars for some, and a rubber for all.

So puissant Losely's vitality, and so blest by the stars his luck, that his form seemed to wax stronger and his purse fuller by this "life." No wonder he was all for a life of that kind; but the slight beings who tried to keep up with him grew thinner and thinner, and poorer and poorer; a few weeks made their cheeks spectral and their pockets a dismal void. Then as some dropped off from sheer inanition, others whom they had decoyed by their praises of "Life" and its hero came into the magic circle to fade and vanish in their turn.

In a space of time incredibly brief, not a whist-player was left upon the field: the victorious Losely had trumped out the last; some few whom

Nature had endowed more liberally than Fortune still retained strength enough to sup--if asked;

"But none who came to sup remained to play."

"Plague on it," said Losely to Poole, as one afternoon they were dividing the final spoils, "your friends are mightily soon cleaned out: could not even get up double dummy last night; and we must hit on some new plan for replenishing the coffers. You have rich relations; can't I help you to make them more useful?"

Said Dolly Poole, who was looking exceedingly bilious, and had become a martyr to chronic headache,

"My relations are prigs! Some of them give me the cold shoulder, others --a great deal of jaw. But as for tin, I might as well scrape a flint for it. My uncle Sam is more anxious about my sins than the other codgers, because he is my godfather, and responsible for my sins, I suppose; and he says he will put me in the way of being respectable. My head's splitting--"

"Wood does split till it is seasoned," answered Losely. "Good fellow, uncle Sam! He'll put you in the way of tin; nothing else makes a man respectable."

"Yes,--so he says; a girl with money--"

"A wife,--tin canister! Introduce me to her, and she shall be tied to you."

Samuel Dolly did not appear to relish the idea of such an introduction. "I have not been introduced to her myself," said he. "But if you advise me to be spliced, why don't you get spliced yourself? a handsome fellow like you can be at no loss for an heiress."

"Heiresses are the most horrid cheats in the world," said Losely: "there is always some father, or uncle, or fusty Lord Chancellor whose consent is essential, and not to be had. Heiresses in scores have been over head and ears in love with me. Before I left Paris, I sold their locks of hair to a wig maker,--three great trunksful. Honour bright. But there were only two whom I could have safely allowed to run away with me; and they were so closely watched, poor things, that I was forced to leave them to their fate,--early graves! Don't talk to me of heiresses, Dolly; I have been the victim of heiresses. But a rich widow is an estimable creature. Against widows, if rich, I have not a word to say; and to tell you the truth, there is a widow whom I suspect I have fascinated, and whose connection I have a particular private reason for deeming desirable! She has a whelp of a son, who is a spoke in my wheel: were I his father-in-law, would not I be a spoke in his? I'd teach the boy 'life,' Dolly." Here all trace of beauty vanished from Jasper's face, and Poole, staring at him, pushed away his chair. "But," continued Losely, regaining his more usual expression of levity and boldness, "but I am not yet quite sure what the widow has, besides her son, in her own possession; we shall see. Meanwhile, is there--no chance of a rubber to-night?"

"None; unless you will let Brown and Smith play upon tick."

"Pooh! but there's Robinson, he has an aunt he can borrow from?"

"Robinson! spitting blood, with an attack of delirium tremens! You have done for him."

"Can sorrow from the goblet flow?" said Losely. "Well, I suppose it can--when a man has no coats to his stomach; but you and I, Dolly Poole, have stomachs thick as peajackets, and proof as gutta-percha."

Poole forced a ghastly smile, while Losely, gayly springing up, swept his share of booty into his pockets, slapped his comrade on the back, and said, "Then, if the mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain! Hang whist, and up with rouge-et-noir! I have an infallible method of winning; only it requires capital. You will club your cash with mine, and I'll play for both. Sup here to night, and we'll go to the Hell afterwards."

Samuel Dolly had the most perfect confidence in his friend's science in the art of gambling, and he did not, therefore, dissent from the proposal made. Jasper gave a fresh touch to his toilet, and stepped into his cabriolet. Poole cast on him a look of envy, and crawled to his lodging,--too ill for his desk, and with a strong desire to take to his bed.

CHAPTER X.

"Is there a heart that never loved,
Nor felt soft woman's sigh?"

If there be such a heart, it is not in the breast of a pocket-cannibal. Your true man-eater is usually of an amorous temperament: he can be indeed sufficiently fond of a lady to eat her up. Mr. Losely makes the acquaintance of a widow. For further particulars inquire within.

The dignified serenity of Gloucester Place, Portman Square, is agitated by the intrusion of a new inhabitant. A house in that favoured locality, which had for several months maintained "the solemn stillness and the dread repose" which appertain to dwellings that are to be let upon lease, unfurnished, suddenly started into that exuberant and aggressive life which irritates the nerves of its peaceful neighbours. The bills have been removed from the windows; the walls have been cleaned down and pointed; the street-door repainted a lively green; workmen have gone in and out. The observant ladies (single ones) in the house opposite, discover, by the help of a telescope, that the drawing-rooms have been new papered, canary-coloured ground, festoon borders; and that the mouldings of the shutters have been gilded. Gilt shutters! that looks ominous of an ostentatious and party-giving tenant. Then carts full of furniture have stopped at the door; carpets, tables, chairs, beds, wardrobes,--all seemingly new, and in no inelegant taste,--have been disgorged into the hall. It has been noticed, too, that every day a lady of slight figure and genteel habiliments has come, seemingly to inspect progress; evidently the new tenant. Sometimes she comes alone; sometimes with a dark-eyed, handsome lad, probably her son. Who can she be? what is she? what is her name? her history? has she a right to settle in Gloucester Place, Portman Square? The detective police of London is not peculiarly vigilant; but its defects are supplied by the voluntary

efforts of unmarried ladies. The new comer was a widow; her husband had been in the army; of good family; but a /mauvais sujet/; she had been left in straitened circumstances with an only son. It was supposed that she had unexpectedly come into a fortune, on the strength of which she had removed from Pimlico into Gloucester Place. At length, the preparations completed, one Monday afternoon the widow, accompanied by her son, came to settle. The next day a footman, in genteel livery (brown and orange), appeared at the door. Then, for the rest of the week, the baker and butcher called regularly. On the following Sunday, the lady and her son appeared at church.

No reader will be at a loss to discover in the new tenant of No. -- Gloucester Place the widowed mother of Lionel Haughton. The letter for that lady which Darrell had entrusted to his young cousin had, in complimentary and cordial language, claimed the right to provide for her comfortable and honourable subsistence; and announced that henceforth L800 a year would be placed quarterly to her account at Mr. Darrell's banker, and that an additional sum of L1200 was already there deposited in her name, in order to enable her to furnish any residence to which she might be inclined to remove. Mrs. Haughton therewith had removed to Gloucester Place.

She is seated by the window in her front drawing-room, surveying with proud though grateful heart the elegances by which she is surrounded. A very winning countenance: lively eyes, that in themselves may be over-quick and petulant; but their expression is chastened by a gentle kindly mouth. And over the whole face, the attitude, the air, even the dress itself, is diffused the unmistakable simplicity of a sincere natural character. No doubt Mrs. Haughton has her tempers and her vanities, and her little harmless feminine weaknesses; but you could not help feeling in her presence that you were with an affectionate, warm-hearted, honest, good woman. She might not have the refinements of tone and manner which stamp the high-bred gentlewoman of convention; she might evince the deficiencies of an imperfect third-rate education: but she was saved from vulgarity by a certain undefinable grace or person and music of voice,-- even when she said or did things that well-bred people do not say or do; and there was an engaging intelligence in those quick hazel eyes that made you sure that she was sensible, even when she uttered what was silly.

Mrs. Haughton turned from the interior of the room to the open window. She is on the look-out for her son, who has gone to call on Colonel Morley, and who ought to be returned by this time. She begins to get a little fidgety, somewhat cross. While thus standing and thus watchful, there comes thundering down the street a high-stepping horse, bay, with white legs; it whirls on a cabriolet,--blue, with vermilion wheels; two hands, in yellow kid gloves, are just seen under the hood. Mrs. Haughton suddenly blushes and draws in her head. Too late! the cabriolet has stopped; a gentleman leans forward, takes off his hat, bows respectfully. "Dear, dear!" murmurs Mrs. Haughton, "I do think he is going to call: some people are born to be tempted; my temptations have been immense! He is getting out; he knocks; I can't say, now, that I am not at home,--very awkward! I wish Lionel were here! What does he mean, neglecting his own mother, and leaving her a prey to tempters?"

While the footman is responding to the smart knock of the visitor, we will explain how Mrs. Haughton had incurred that gentleman's acquaintance. In one of her walks to her new house while it was in the hands of the decorators, her mind being much absorbed in the

consideration whether her drawing-room curtains should be chintz or tabouret,--just as she was crossing the street, she was all but run over by a gentleman's cabriolet. The horse was hard-mouthed, going at full speed. The driver pulled up just in time; but the wheel grazed her dress, and though she ran back instinctively, yet when she was safe on the pavement, the fright overpowered her nerves, and she clung to the street-post almost fainting. Two or three passers-by humanely gathered round her; and the driver, looking back, and muttering to himself, "Not bad-looking; neatly dressed; lady-like; French shawl; may have tin; worth while perhaps!" gallantly descended and hastened to offer apologies, with a respectful hope that she was not injured.

Mrs. Haughton answered somewhat tartly, but being one of those good-hearted women who, apt to be rude, are extremely sorry for it the moment afterwards, she wished to repair any hurt to his feelings occasioned by her first impulse; and when, renewing his excuses, he offered his arm over the crossing, she did not like to refuse. On gaining the side of the way on which her house was situated, she had recovered sufficiently to blush for having accepted such familiar assistance from a perfect stranger, and somewhat to falter in returning thanks for his politeness.

Our gentleman, whose estimate of his attractions was not humble, ascribed the blushing cheek and faltering voice to the natural effect produced by his appearance; and he himself admiring very much a handsome bracelet on her wrist, which he deemed a favourable prognostic of "tin," watched her to her door, and sent his groom in the course of the evening to make discreet inquiries in the neighbourhood. The result of the inquiries induced him to resolve upon prosecuting the acquaintance thus begun. He contrived to learn the hours at which Mrs. Haughton usually visited the house, and to pass by Gloucester Place at the very nick of time. His bow was recognizing, respectful, interrogative,--a bow that asked "How much farther?" But Mrs. Haughton's bow respondent seemed to declare, "Not at all!" The stranger did not venture more that day; but a day or two afterwards he came again into Gloucester Place on foot. On that occasion Mrs. Haughton was with her son, and the gentleman would not seem to perceive her. The next day he returned; she was then alone, and just as she gained her door, he advanced. "I beg you ten thousand pardons, madam; but if I am rightly informed, I have the honour to address Mrs. Charles Haughton!"

The lady bowed in surprise.

"Ah, madam, your lamented husband was one of my most particular friends."

"You don't say so!" cried Mrs. Haughton. And looking more attentively at the stranger, there was in his dress and appearance something that she thought very stylish; a particular friend of Charles Haughton's was sure to be stylish, to be a man of the first water. And she loved the poor Captain's memory; her heart warmed to any "particular friend of his."

"Yes," resumed the gentleman, noting the advantage he had gained, "though I was considerably his junior, we were great cronies; excuse that familiar expression; in the Hussars together--"

"The Captain was not in the Hussars, sir; he was in the Guards."

"Of course he was; but I was saying--in the Hussars, together with the Guards, there were some very fine fellows; very fine; he was one of them. I could not resist paying my respects to the widowed lady of so fine a

fellow. I know it is a liberty, ma'am, but 't is my way. People who know me well--and I have a large acquaintance--are kind enough to excuse my way. And to think that villanous horse, which I had just bought out of Lord Bolton's stud (200 guineas, ma'am, and cheap), should have nearly taken the life of Charles Haughton's lovely relict! If anybody else had been driving that brute, I shudder to think what might have been the consequences; but I have a wrist of iron. Strength is a vulgar qualification,--very vulgar; but when it saves a lady from perishing, how can one be ashamed of it? But I am detaining you. Your own house, Mrs. Haughton?"

"Yes, sir, I have just taken it, but the workmen have not finished. I am not yet settled here."

"Charming situation! My friend left a son, I believe? In the army already?"

"No, sir, but he wishes it very much."

"Mr. Darrell, I think, could gratify that wish."

"What! you know Mr. Darrell, that most excellent generous man. All we have we owe to him."

The gentleman abruptly turned aside,--wisely; for his expression of face at that praise might have startled Mrs.

Haughton. "Yes, I knew him once. He has had many a fee out of my family. Goodish lawyer; cleverish man; and rich as a Jew. I should like to see my old friend's son, ma'am. He must be monstrous handsome with such parents!"

"Oh, sir, very like his father. I shall be proud to present him to you."

"Ma'am, I thank you. I will have the honour to call--"

And thus is explained how Jasper Losely has knocked at Mrs. Haughton's door; has walked up her stairs; has seated himself in her drawing-room, and is now edging his chair somewhat nearer to her, and throwing into his voice and looks a degree of admiration which has been sincerely kindled by the aspect of her elegant apartments.

Jessica Haughton was not one of those women, if such there be, who do not know when a gentleman is making up to them. She knew perfectly well that with a very little encouragement her visitor would declare himself a suitor. Nor, to speak truth, was she quite insensible to his handsome person, nor quite unmoved by his flatteries. She had her weak points, and vanity was one of them. Nor conceived she, poor lady, the slightest suspicion that Jasper Losely was not a personage whose attentions might flatter any woman. Though he had not even announced a name, but, pushing aside the footman, had sauntered in with as familiar an ease as if he had been a first cousin; though he had not uttered a syllable that could define his station, or attest his boasted friendship with the dear defunct, still Mrs. Haughton implicitly believed that she was with one of those gay chiefs of ton who had glittered round her Charlie in that earlier morning of his life, ere he had sold out of the Guards, and bought himself out of jail; a lord, or an honourable at least; and she was even (I shudder to say) revolving in her mind whether it might not be an excellent thing for her dear Lionel if she could prevail on herself to

procure for him the prop and guidance of a distinguished and brilliant father-in-law,--rich, noble, evidently good-natured, sensible, attractive. Oh! but the temptation was growing more and more IMMENSE! when suddenly the door opened, and in sprang Lionel crying out, "Mother dear, the Colonel has come with me on purpose to--"

He stopped short, staring hard at Jasper Losely. That gentleman advanced a few steps, extending his hand, but came to an abrupt halt on seeing Colonel Morley's figure now filling up the doorway. Not that he feared recognition: the Colonel did not know him by sight, but he knew by sight the Colonel. In his own younger day, when lolling over the rails of Rotten Row, he had enviously noted the leaders of fashion pass by, and Colonel Morley had not escaped his observation. Colonel Morley, indeed, was one of those men who by name and repute are sure to be known to all who, like Jasper Losely in his youth, would fain learn something about that gaudy, babbling, and remorseless world which, like the sun, either vivifies or corrupts, according to the properties of the object on which it shines. Strange to say, it was the mere sight of the real fine gentleman that made the mock fine gentleman shrink and collapse. Though Jasper Losely knew himself to be still called a magnificent man,--one of royal Nature's Lifeguardsmen; though confident that from top to toe his habiliments could defy the criticism of the strictest martinet in polite costume, no sooner did that figure, by no means handsome and clad in garments innocent of buckram but guilty of wrinkles, appear on the threshold than Jasper Losely felt small and shabby, as if he had been suddenly reduced to five feet two, and had bought his coat out of an old clothesman's bag.

Without appearing even to see Mr. Losely, the Colonel, in his turn, as he glided past him towards Mrs. Haughton, had, with what is proverbially called the corner of the eye, taken the whole of that impostor's superb personnel into calm survey, had read him through and through, and decided on these two points without the slightest hesitation,--"a lady-killer and a sharper."

Quick as breathing had been the effect thus severally produced on Mrs. Haughton's visitors, which it has cost so many words to describe,--so quick that the Colonel, without any apparent pause of dialogue, has already taken up the sentence Lionel left uncompleted, and says, as he bows over Mrs. Haughton's hand, "Come on purpose to claim acquaintance with an old friend's widow, a young friend's mother."

MRS. HAUGHTON.--"I am sure, Colonel Morley, I am very much flattered. And you, too, knew the poor dear Captain; 't is so pleasant to think that his old friends come round us now. This gentleman, also, was a particular friend of dear Charles's."

The Colonel had somewhat small eyes, which moved with habitual slowness. He lifted those eyes, let them drop upon Jasper (who still stood in the middle of the room, with one hand still half-extended towards Lionel), and letting the eyes rest there while he spoke, repeated,

"Particular friend of Charles Haughton,--the only one of his particular friends whom I never had the honour to see before."

Jasper, who, whatever his deficiency in other virtues, certainly did not lack courage, made a strong effort at self-possession, and without replying to the Colonel, whose remark had not been directly addressed to himself, said in his most rollicking tone, "Yes, Mrs. Haughton, Charles

was my particular friend, but," lifting his eyeglass, "but this gentleman was," dropping the eyeglass negligently, "not in our set, I suppose." Then advancing to Lionel, and seizing his hand, "I must introduce myself,--the image of your father, I declare! I was saying to Mrs. Haughton how much I should like to see you; proposing to her, just as you came in, that we should go to the play together. Oh, ma'am, you may trust him to me safely. Young men should see Life!" Here Jasper tipped Lionel one of those knowing winks with which he was accustomed to delight and ensnare the young friends of Mr. Poole, and hurried on: "But in an innocent way, ma'am, such as mothers would approve. We'll fix an evening for it when I have the honour to call again. Good morning, Mrs. Haughton. Your hand again, sir (to Lionel). Ah, we shall be great friends, I guess! You must let me take you out in my cab; teach you to handle the ribbons, eh? 'Gad, my old friend Charles was a whip. Ha! Ha! Goodday, good-day!"

Not a muscle had moved in the Colonel's face during Mr. Losely's jovial monologue. But when Jasper had bowed himself out, Mrs. Haughton, courtesying, and ringing the bell for the footman to open the street-door, the man of the world (and, as a man of the world, Colonel Morley was consummate) again raised those small slow eyes,--this time towards her face,--and dropped the words,

"My old friend's particular friend is--not bad looking, Mrs. Haughton!"

"And so lively and pleasant," returned Mrs. Haughton, with a slight rise of colour, but no other sign of embarrassment. "It may be a nice acquaintance for Lionel."

"Mother!" cried that ungrateful boy, "you are not speaking seriously? I think the man is odious. If he were not my father's friend, I should say he was--"

"What, Lionel?" asked the Colonel, blandly, "was what?"

"Snobbish, sir."

"Lionel, how dare you?" exclaimed Mrs. Haughton. "What vulgar words boys do pick up at school, Colonel Morley."

"We must be careful that they do not pick up worse than words when they leave school, my dear madam. You will forgive me, but Mr. Darrell has so expressly--of course, with your permission--commended this young gentleman to my responsible care and guidance; so openly confided to me his views and intentions,--that perhaps you would do me the very great favour not to force upon him, against his own wishes, the acquaintance of --that very good-looking person."

Mrs. Haughton pouted, and kept down her rising temper. The Colonel began to awe her.

"By the by," continued the man of the world, "may I inquire the name of my old friend's particular friend?"

"His name? upon my word I really don't know it. Perhaps he left his card; ring the bell, Lionel."

"You don't know his name, yet you know him, ma'am, and would allow your son to see LIFE under his auspices! I beg you ten thousand pardons; but

even ladies the most cautious, mothers the most watchful, are exposed to--"

"Immense temptations,--that is--to--to--"

"I understand perfectly, my dear Mrs. Haughton."

The footman appeared. "Did that gentleman leave a card?"

"No, ma'am."

"Did not you ask his name when he entered?"

"Yes, ma'am, but he said he would announce himself." When the footman had withdrawn, Mrs. Haughton exclaimed piteously, "I have been to blame, Colonel; I see it. But Lionel will tell you how I came to know the gentleman,--the gentleman who nearly ran over me, Lionel, and then spoke so kindly about your dear father."

"Oh, that is the person!--I supposed so," cried Lionel, kissing his mother, who was inclined to burst into tears. "I can explain it all now, Colonel Morley. Any one who says a kind word about my father warms my mother's heart to him at once; is it not so, Mother dear?"

"And long be it so," said Colonel Morley, with grateful earnestness; "and may such be my passport to your confidence, Mrs. Haughton. Charles was my old schoolfellow,--a little boy when I and Darrell were in the sixth form; and, pardon me, when I add, that if that gentleman were ever Charles Haughton's particular friend, he could scarcely have been a very wise one. For unless his appearance greatly belies his years he must have been little more than a boy when Charles Haughton left Lionel fatherless."

Here, in the delicacy of tact, seeing that Mrs. Haughton looked ashamed of the subject, and seemed aware of her imprudence, the Colonel rose, with a request--cheerfully granted--that Lionel might be allowed to come to breakfast with him the next morning.

CHAPTER XI.

A man of the world, having accepted a troublesome charge, considers "what he will do with it;" and, having promptly decided, is sure, first, that he could not have done better; and, secondly, that much may be said to prove that he could not have done worse.

Reserving to a later occasion anymore detailed description of Colonel Morley, it suffices for the present to say that he was a man of a very fine understanding as applied to the special world in which he lived. Though no one had a more numerous circle of friends, and though with many of those friends he was on that footing of familiar intimacy which Darrell's active career once, and his rigid seclusion of late, could not have established with any idle denizen of that brilliant society in which Colonel Morley moved and had his being, yet to Alban Morley's heart (a heart not easily reached) no friend was so dear as Guy Darrell. They had entered Eton on the same day, left it the same day, lodged while there in the same house; and though of very different characters, formed one of

those strong, imperishable, brotherly affections which the Fates weave into the very woof of existence.

Darrell's recommendation would have secured to any young protege Colonel Morley's gracious welcome and invaluable advice. But, both as Darrell's acknowledged kinsman and as Charles Haughton's son, Lionel called forth his kindest sentiments and obtained his most sagacious deliberations. He had already seen the boy several times before waiting on Mrs. Haughton, deeming it would please her to defer his visit until she could receive him in all the glories of Gloucester Place; and he had taken Lionel into high favour and deemed him worthy of a conspicuous place in the world. Though Darrell in his letter to Colonel Morley had emphatically distinguished the position of Lionel, as a favoured kinsman, from that of a presumptive or even a probable heir, yet the rich man had also added: "But I wish him to take rank as the representative to the Haughtons; and, whatever I may do with the bulk of my fortune, I shall insure to him a liberal independence. The completion of his education, the adequate allowance to him, the choice of a profession, are matters in which I entreat you to act for yourself, as if you were his guardian. I am leaving England: I may be abroad for years." Colonel Morley, in accepting the responsibilities thus pressed on him, brought to bear upon his charge subtle discrimination, as well as conscientious anxiety.

He saw that Lionel's heart was set upon the military profession, and that his power of application seemed lukewarm and desultory when not cheered and centred by enthusiasm, and would, therefore, fail him if directed to studies which had no immediate reference to the objects of his ambition. The Colonel, accordingly, dismissed the idea of sending him for three years to a university. Alban Morley summed up his theories on the collegiate ordeal in these succinct aphorisms: "Nothing so good as a university education, nor worse than a university without its education. Better throw a youth at once into the wider sphere of a capital--provided you there secure to his social life the ordinary checks of good company, the restraints imposed by the presence of decorous women, and men of grave years and dignified repute--than confine him to the exclusive society of youths of his own age, the age of wild spirits and unreflecting imitation, unless he cling to the safeguard which is found in hard reading, less by the book-knowledge it bestows than by the serious and preoccupied mind which it abstracts from the coarser temptations."

But Lionel, younger in character than in years, was too boyish as yet to be safely consigned to those trials of tact and temper which await the neophyte who enters on life through the doors of a mess-room. His pride was too morbid, too much on the alert for offence; his frankness too crude, his spirit too untamed by the insensible discipline of social commerce.

Quoth the observant man of the world: "Place his honour in his own keeping, and he will carry it about with him on full cock, to blow off a friend's head or his own before the end of the first month. Huffy! decidedly huffy! and of all causes that disturb regiments, and induce courts-martial, the commonest cause is a huffy lad! Pity! for that youngster has in him the right metal,--spirit and talent that should make him a first-rate soldier. It would be time well spent that should join professional studies with that degree of polite culture which gives dignity and cures hulness. I must get him out of London, out of England; cut him off from his mother's apron-strings, and the particular friends of his poor father who prowl unannounced into the widow's drawing-room.

He shall go to Paris; no better place to learn military theories, and be civilized out of huffy dispositions. No doubt my old friend, the chevalier, who has the art strategic at his fingerends, might be induced to take him en pension, direct his studies, and keep him out of harm's way. I can secure to him the entree into the circles of the rigid old Faubourg St. Germain, where manners are best bred, and household ties most respected. Besides, as I am so often at Paris myself, I shall have him under my eye, and a few years there, spent in completing him as man, may bring him nearer to that marshal's baton which every recruit should have in his eye, than if I started him at once a raw boy, unable to take care of himself as an ensign, and unfitted, save by mechanical routine, to take care of others, should he live to buy the grade of a colonel."

The plans thus promptly formed Alban Morley briefly explained to Lionel when the boy came to breakfast in Curzon Street; requesting him to obtain Mrs. Haughton's acquiescence in that exercise of the discretionary powers with which he had been invested by Mr. Darrell. To Lionel the proposition that commended the very studies to which his tastes directed his ambition, and placed his initiation into responsible manhood among scenes bright to his fancy, because new to his experience, seemed of course the perfection of wisdom. Less readily pleased was poor Mrs. Haughton, when her son returned to communicate the arrangement, backing a polite and well-worded letter from the Colonel with his own more artless eloquence. Instantly she flew off on the wing of her "little tempers." "What! her only son taken from her; sent to that horrid Continent, just when she was so respectably settled! What was the good of money if she was to be parted from her boy! Mr. Darrell might take the money back if he pleased; she would write and tell him so. Colonel Morley had no feeling; and she was shocked to think Lionel was in such unnatural hands. She saw very plainly that he no longer cared for her,--a serpent's tooth," etc. But as soon as the burst was over, the sky cleared and Mrs. Haughton became penitent and sensible. Then her grief for Lionel's loss was diverted by preparations for his departure. There was his wardrobe to see to; a patent portmanteau to purchase and to fill. And, all done, the last evening mother and son spent together, though painful at the moment, it would be happiness for both hereafter to recall! Their hands clasped in each other, her head leaning on his young shoulder, her tears kissed so soothingly away, and soft words of kindly motherly counsel, sweet promises of filial performances. Happy, thrice happy, as an after remembrance, be the final parting between hopeful son and fearful parent at the foot of that mystic bridge, which starts from the threshold of home,--lost in the dimness of the far-opposing shore!--bridge over which goes the boy who will never return but as the man.

CHAPTER XII.

The pocket-cannibal baits his woman's trap with love-letters, and a widow allured steals timidly towards it from under the weeds.

Jasper Losely is beginning to be hard up! The infallible calculation at rouge-et-noir has carried off all that capital which had accumulated from the savings of the young gentlemen whom Dolly Poole had contributed to his exchequer. Poole himself is beset by duns, and pathetically observes "that he has lost three stone in weight, and that he believes the calves to his legs are gone to enlarge his liver."

Jasper is compelled to put down his cabriolet, to discharge his groom, to retire from his fashionable lodgings; and just when the prospect even of a dinner becomes dim, he bethinks himself of Arabella Crane, and remembers that she promised him L5, nay L10, which are still due from her. He calls; he is received like the prodigal son. Nay, to his own surprise, he finds Mrs. Crane has made her house much more inviting: the drawing-rooms are cleaned up; the addition of a few easy articles of furniture gives them quite a comfortable air. She herself has improved in costume, though her favourite colour still remains iron gray. She informs Jasper that she fully expected him; that these preparations are in his honour; that she has engaged a very good cook; that she hopes he will dine with her when not better engaged; in short, lets him feel himself at home in Podden Place.

Jasper at first suspected a sinister design, under civilities that his conscience told him were unmerited,—a design to entrap him into that matrimonial alliance which he had so ungallantly scouted, and from which he still recoiled with an abhorrence which man is not justified in feeling for any connubial partner less preternaturally terrific than the Witch of Endor or the Bleeding Nun!

But Mrs. Crane quickly and candidly hastened to dispel his ungenerous apprehensions. She had given up, she said, all ideas so preposterous; love and wedlock were equally out of her mind. But ill as he had behaved to her, she could not but feel a sincere regard for him,—a deep interest in his fate. He ought still to make a brilliant marriage: did that idea not occur to him? She might help him there with her woman's wit. "In short," said Mrs. Crane, pinching her lips, "In short, Jasper, I feel for you as a mother. Look on me as such!"

The pure and affectionate notion wonderfully tickled and egregiously delighted Jasper Losely. "Look on you as a mother! I will," said he, with emphasis. "Best of creatures!" And though in his own mind he had not a doubt that she still adored him (not as a mother), he believed it was a disinterested, devoted adoration, such as the beautiful brute really had inspired more than once in his abominable life. Accordingly, he moved into the neighbourhood of Podden Place, contenting himself with a second-floor bedroom in a house recommended to him by Mrs. Crane, and taking his meals at his adopted mother's with filial familiarity. She expressed a desire to make Mr. Poole's acquaintance; Jasper hastened to present that worthy. Mrs. Crane invited Samuel Dolly to dine one day, to sup the next; she lent him L3 to redeem his dress-coat from pawn, and she gave him medicaments for the relief of his headache.

Samuel Dolly venerated her as a most superior woman; envied Jasper such a "mother." Thus easily did Arabella Crane possess herself of the existence of Jasper Losely. Lightly her fingers closed over it,—lightly as the fisherman's over the captivated trout. And whatever her generosity, it was not carried to imprudence. She just gave to Jasper enough to bring him within her power; she had no idea of ruining herself by larger supplies: she concealed from him the extent of her income (which was in chief part derived from house-rents), the amount of her savings, even the name of her banker. And if he carried off to the rouge-et-noir table the coins he obtained from her, and came for more, Mrs. Crane put on the look of a mother incensed,—mild but awful,—and scolded as mothers sometimes can scold. Jasper Losely began to be frightened at Mrs. Crane's scoldings. And he had not that power over her which, though arrogated by a lover, is denied to an adopted son. His mind, relieved from the habitual distraction of the gaming-table for

which the resource was wanting, settled with redoubled ardour on the image of Mrs. Haughton. He had called at her house several times since the fatal day on which he had met there Colonel Morley, but Mrs. Haughton was never at home. And as when the answer was given to him by the footman, he had more than once, on crossing the street, seen herself through the window, it was clear that his acquaintance was not courted. Jasper Losely, by habit, was the reverse of a pertinacious and troublesome suitor; not, Heaven knows, from want of audacity, but from excess of self-love. Where a Lovelace so superb condescended to make overtures, a Clarissa so tasteless as to decline them deserved and experienced his contempt. Besides, steadfast and prolonged pursuit of any object, however important and attractive, was alien to the levity and fickleness of his temper. But in this instance he had other motives than those on the surface for unusual perseverance.

A man like Jasper Losely never reposes implicit confidence in any one. He is garrulous, indiscreet; lets out much that Machiavel would have advised him not to disclose: but he invariably has nooks and corners in his mind which he keeps to himself. Jasper did not confide to his adopted mother his designs upon his intended bride. But she knew them through Poole, to whom he was more frank; and when she saw him looking over her select and severe library, taking therefrom the "Polite Letter-Writer" and the "Elegant Extracts," Mrs. Crane divined at once that Jasper Losely was meditating the effect of epistolary seduction upon the widow of Gloucester Place.

Jasper did not write a bad love-letter in the florid style. He had at his command, in especial, certain poetical quotations, the effect of which repeated experience had assured him to be as potent upon the female breast as the incantations or carmina of the ancient sorcery. The following in particular,

"Had I a heart for falsehood framed,
I neer could injure you."

Another, generally to be applied when confessing that his career had been interestingly wild, and would, if pity were denied him, be pathetically short,

"When he who adores thee has left but the name
Of his faults and his follies behind."

Armed with these quotations, many a sentence from the "Polite Letter-Writer" or the "Elegant Extracts," and a quire of rose-edged paper, Losely sat down to Ovidian composition.

But as he approached the close of epistle the first, it occurred to him that a signature and address were necessary. The address was not difficult. He could give Poole's (hence his confidence to that gentleman): Poole had a lodging in Bury Street, St. James's, a fashionable locality for single men. But the name required more consideration. There were insuperable objections against signing his own to any person who might be in communication with Mr. Darrell; a pity, for there was a good old family of the name of Losely. A name of aristocratic sound might indeed be readily borrowed from any lordly proprietor thereof without asking a formal consent. But this loan was exposed to danger. Mrs. Haughton might very naturally mention such name, as borne by her husband's friend, to Colonel Morley; and Colonel Morley would most probably know enough of the connections and relations of any

peer so honoured to say, "There is no such Greville, Cavendish, or Talbot." But Jasper Losely was not without fertility of invention and readiness of resource. A grand idea, worthy of a master, and proving that, if the man had not been a rogue in grain, he could have been reared into a very clever politician, flashed across him. He would sign himself "SMITH." Nobody could say there is no such Smith; nobody could say that a Smith might not be a most respectable, fashionable, highly-connected man. There are Smiths who are millionaires; Smiths who are large-acred squires; substantial baronets; peers of England, and pillars of the State. You can no more question a man's right to be a Smith than his right to be a Briton; and wide as the diversity of rank, lineage, virtue, and genius in Britons is the diversity in Smiths. But still a name so generic often affects a definitive precursor. Jasper signed himself "J. COURTENAY SMITH." He called, and left epistle the first with his own kid-gloved hand, inquiring first if Mrs. Haughton were at home, and, responded to in the negative this time, he asked for her son. "Her son was gone abroad with Colonel Morley." Jasper, though sorry to lose present hold over the boy, was consoled at learning that the Colonel was off the ground. Afore sanguine of success, he glanced up at the window, and, sure that Mrs. Haughton was there, though he saw her not, lifted his hat with as melancholy an expression of reproach as he could throw into his face.

The villain could not have found a moment in Mrs. Haughton's widowed life so propitious to his chance of success. In her lodging-house at Pimlico, the good lady had been too incessantly occupied for that idle train of revery, in which the poets assure us that Cupid finds leisure to whet his arrows and take his aim. Had Lionel still been by her side, had even Colonel Morley been in town, her affection for the one, her awe of the other, would have been her safeguards. But alone in that fine new house, no friends, no acquaintances as yet, no dear visiting circle on which to expend the desire of talk and the zest for innocent excitement that are natural to ladies of an active mind and a nervous temperament, the sudden obtrusion of a suitor so respectfully ardent,—oh, it is not to be denied that the temptation was IMMENSE.

And when that note, so neatly folded, so elegantly sealed, lay in her irresolute hand, the widow could not but feel that she was still young, still pretty; and her heart flew back to the day when the linendraper's

fair daughter had been the cynosure of the provincial High Street; when young officers had lounged to and fro the pavement, looking in at her window; when ogles and notes had alike beset her, and the dark eyes of the irresistible Charlie Haughton had first taught her pulse to tremble. And in her hand lies the letter of Charlie Haughton's particular friend. She breaks the seal. She reads—a declaration!

Five letters in five days did Jasper write. In the course of those letters, he explains away the causes for suspicion which Colonel Morley had so ungenerously suggested. He is no longer anonymous; he is J. Courtenay Smith. He alludes incidentally to the precocious age in which he had become "lord of himself, that heritage of woe." This accounts for his friendship with a man so much his senior as the late Charlie. He confesses that in the vortex of dissipation his hereditary estates have disappeared; but he has still a genteel independence; and with the woman of his heart, etc. He had never before known what real love was, etc. "Pleasure had fired his maddening soul;" "but the heart,—the heart been lonely still." He entreated only a personal interview, even though to be rejected,—scorned. Still, when "he who adored her had left but the

name," etc. Alas! alas! as Mrs. Haughton put down epistle the fifth, she hesitated; and the woman who hesitates in such a case, is sure, at least to write a civil answer.

Mrs. Haughton wrote but three lines,--still they were civil; and conceded an interview for the next day, though implying that it was but for the purpose of assuring Mr. J. Courtenay Smith, in person, of her unalterable fidelity to the shade of his lamented friend.

In high glee Jasper showed Mrs. Haughton's answer to Dolly Poole, and began seriously to speculate on the probable amount of the widow's income, and the value of her movables in Gloucester Place. Thence he repaired to Mrs. Crane; and, emboldened by the hope forever to escape from her maternal tutelage, braved her scoldings and asked for a couple of sovereigns. He was sure that he should be in luck that night. She gave to him the sum, and spared the scoldings. But, as soon as he was gone, conjecturing from the bravado of his manner what had really occurred, Mrs. Crane put on her bonnet and went out.

CHAPTER XIII.

Unhappy is the man who puts his trust in a woman.

Late that evening a lady, in a black veil, knocked at No. -- Gloucester Place, and asked to see Mrs. Haughton on urgent business. She was admitted. She remained but five minutes.

The next day when, "gay as a bridegroom prancing to his bride," Jasper Losely presented himself at the widow's door, the servant placed in his hand a packet, and informed him blufly that Mrs. Haughton had gone out of town. Jasper with difficulty suppressed his rage, opened the packet,--his own letters returned, with these words, "Sir, your name is not Courtenay Smith. If you trouble me again, I shall apply to the police." Never from female hand had Jasper Losely's pride received such a slap on its face. He was literally stunned. Mechanically he hastened to Arabella Crane; and having no longer any object in concealment, but, on the contrary, a most urgent craving for sympathy, he poured forth his indignation and wrongs. No mother could be more consolatory than Mrs. Crane. She soothed, she flattered, she gave him an excellent dinner; after which, she made him so comfortable, what with an easy-chair and complimentary converse, that, when Jasper rose late to return to his lodging, he said, "After all, if I had been ugly and stupid, and of a weakly constitution, I should have been of a very domestic turn of mind."

CHAPTER XIV.

No author ever drew a character consistent to human nature, but what he was forced to ascribe to it many inconsistencies.

Whether moved by that pathetic speech of Jasper's, or by some other impulse not less feminine, Arabella Crane seemed suddenly to conceive the laudable and arduous design of reforming that portentous sinner. She had some distant relations in London, whom she very rarely troubled with a

visit, and who, had she wanted anything from them, would have shut their doors in her face; but as, on the contrary, she was well off, single, and might leave her money to whom she pleased, the distant relations were always warm in manner, and prodigal in their offers of service. The next day she repaired to one of these kinsfolk,--a person in a large way of business,--and returned home with two great books in white sheepskin. And when Losely looked in to dine, she said, in the suavest tones a tender mother can address to an amiable truant, "Jasper, you have great abilities; at the gaming-table abilities are evidently useless: your forte is calculation; you were always very quick at that. I have been fortunate enough to procure you an easy piece of task-work, for which you will be liberally remunerated. A friend of mine wishes to submit these books to a regular accountant: he suspects that a clerk has cheated him; but he cannot tell how or where. You know accounts thoroughly,--no one better,--and the pay will be ten guineas."

Jasper, though his early life had rendered familiar and facile to him the science of book-keeping and double-entry, made a grimace at the revolting idea of any honest labour, however light and well paid. But ten guineas were an immense temptation, and in the evening Mrs. Crane coaxed him into the task.

Neglecting no feminine art to make the lawless nomad feel at home under her roof, she had provided for his ease and comfort morocco slippers and a superb dressing-robe, in material rich, in colour becoming. Men, single or marital, are accustomed to connect the idea of home with dressing-gown and slippers, especially if, after dinner, they apply (as Jasper Losely now applied) to occupations in which the brain is active, the form in repose. What achievement, literary or scientific, was ever accomplished by a student strapped to unyielding boots, and "cabined, cribbed, confined," in a coat that fits him like wax? As robed in the cozy garment which is consecrated to the sacred familiar Lares, the relaxing, handsome ruffian sat in the quiet room, bending his still regular profile over the sheepskin books, the harmless pen in that strong well-shaped hand, Mrs. Crane watched him with a softening countenance. To bear him company, she had actively taken, herself, to work,--the gold thimble dragged from its long repose,--marking and hemming, with nimble artistic fingers, new cravats for the adopted son! Strange creature is woman! Ungrateful and perfidious as that sleek tiger before her had often proved himself, though no man could less deserve one kindly sentiment in a female heart, though she knew that he cared nothing for her, still it was pleasing to know that he cared for nobody else, that he was sitting in the same room; and Arabella Crane felt that, if that existence could continue, she could forget the past and look contented towards the future. Again I say, strange creature is woman; and in this instance, creature more strange, because so grim! But as her eyes soften, and her fingers work, and her mind revolves schemes for making that lawless wild beast an innocuous tame animal, who can help feeling for and with grim Arabella Crane?

Poor woman! And will not the experiment succeed? Three evenings does Jasper Losely devote to this sinless life and its peaceful occupation. He completes his task; he receives the ten guineas. (How much of that fee came out of Mrs. Crane's privy purse?) He detects three mistakes, which justify suspicion of the book-keeper's integrity. Set a thief to catch a thief! He is praised for acuteness, and promised a still lighter employment, to be still better paid. He departs, declaring that he will come the next day, earlier than usual; he volunteers an eulogium upon work in general; he vows that evenings so happy he has not spent for

years; he leaves Mrs. Crane so much impressed by the hope of his improvement that, if a good clergyman had found her just at that moment, she might almost have been induced to pray. But

"Heu quoties fidem
Mutatosque deos flebit!"

Jasper Losely returns not, neither to Podden place or his lodging in the neighborhood. Days elapse and still he comes not; even Poole does not know where he has gone; even Poole has not seen him! But that worthy is now laid up with a serious rheumatic fever--confined to his room and a water gruel. And Jasper Losely is not the man to intrude himself on the privacy of a sick chamber. Mrs. Crane, more benevolent, visits Poole cheers him up--gets him a nurse--writes to Uncle Sam. Poole blesses her. He hopes that Uncle Sam, moved by the spectacle of the sick-bed will say, "Don't let your debts fret you: I will pay them!" Whatever her disappointment or resentment at Jasper's thankless and mysterious evasion, Arabella Crane is calmly confident of his return. To her servant, Bridget Greggs, who was perhaps the sole person in the world who entertained affection for the lone gaunt woman, and who held Jasper Losely in profound detestation, she said, with tranquil sternness, "That man has crossed my life, and darkened it. He passed away, and left Night behind him. He has dared to return. He shall never escape me again till the grave yawn for one of us."

"But, Lor' love you, miss, you would not put yourself in the power of such a black-hearted villing?"

"In his power! No, Bridget; fear not, he must be in mine, sooner or later in mine, hand and foot. Patience!" As she was thus speaking,-- a knock at the door! "It is he; I told you so; quick!"

But it was not Jasper Losely. It was Mr. Ruge.

CHAPTER XV.

"When God wills, all winds bring rain."--Ancient Proverb.

The manager had not submitted to the loss of his property in Sophy and L100 without taking much vain trouble to recover the one or the other. He had visited Jasper while that gentleman lodged in St. James's; but the moment he hinted at the return of the L100, Mr. Losely opened both door and window, and requested the manager to make his immediate choice of the two. Taking the more usual mode of exit, Mr. Ruge vented his just indignation in a lawyer's letter, threatening Mr. Losely with an action for conspiracy and fraud. He had also more than once visited Mrs. Crane, who somewhat soothed him by allowing that he had been very badly used, that he ought at least to be repaid his money, and promising to do her best to persuade Mr. Losely "to behave like a gentleman." With regard to Sophy herself, Mrs. Crane appeared to feel a profound indifference. In fact, the hatred which Mrs. Crane had unquestionably conceived for Sophy while under her charge was much diminished by Losely's unnatural conduct towards the child. To her it was probably a matter of no interest whether Sophy was in Ruge's hands or Waife's; enough for her that the daughter of a woman against whose memory her fiercest passions were enlisted was, in either case, so far below herself in the grades of the

social ladder.

Perhaps of the two protectors for Sophy, Rugge and Waife, her spite alone would have given the preference to Waife. He was on a still lower step of the ladder than the itinerant manager. Nor, though she had so mortally injured the forlorn cripple in the eyes of Mr. Hartopp, had she any deliberate purpose of revenge to gratify against him! On the contrary, if she viewed him with contempt, it was a contempt not unmixed with pity. It was necessary to make to the Mayor the communications she had made, or that worthy magistrate would not have surrendered the child intrusted to him, at least until Waife's return. And really it was a kindness to the old man to save him both from an agonizing scene with Jasper, and from the more public opprobrium which any resistance on his part to Jasper's authority or any altercation between the two would occasion. And as her main object then was to secure Losely's allegiance to her, by proving her power to be useful to him, so Waifes and Sophys and Mayors and Managers were to her but as pawns to be moved and sacrificed, according to the leading strategy of her game.

Rugge came now, agitated and breathless, to inform Mrs. Crane that Waife had been seen in London. Mr. Rugge's clown had seen him, not far from the Tower; but the cripple had disappeared before the clown, who was on the top of an omnibus, had time to descend. "And even if he had actually caught hold of Mr. Waife," observed Mrs. Crane, "what then? You have no claim on Mr. Waife."

"But the Phenomenon must be with that ravishing marauder," said Rugge. "However, I have set a minister of justice--that is, ma'am, a detective police--at work; and what I now ask of you is simply this: should it be necessary for Mr. Losely to appear with me before the senate--that is to say, ma'am, a metropolitan police-court--in order to prove my legal property in my own bought and paid for Phenomenon, will you induce that bold bad man not again to return the poisoned chalice to my lips?"

"I do not even know where Mr. Losely is; perhaps not in London."

"Ma'am, I saw him last night at the theatre,--Princess's. I was in the shilling gallery. He who owes me L100, ma'am,--he in a private box!"

"Ah! you are sure; by himself?"

"With a lady, ma'am,--a lady in a shawl from Ingee. I know them shawls. My father taught me to know them in early childhood, for he was an ornament to British commerce,--a broker, ma'am,--pawn! And," continued Rugge, with a withering smile, "that man in a private box, which at the Princess's costs two pounds two, and with the spoils of Ingee by his side, lifted his eyeglass and beheld me,--me in the shilling gallery! and his conscience did not say, 'Should we not change places if I paid that gentleman L100?' Can such things be, and overcome us, ma'am, like a summer cloud, without our special--I put it to you, ma'am--wonder?"

"Oh, with a lady, was he?" exclaimed Arabella Crane, her wrath, which, while the manager spoke, gathered fast and full, bursting now into words. "His ladies shall know the man who sells his own child for a show; only find out where the girl is, then come here again before you stir further. Oh, with a lady! Go to your detective policeman, or rather send him to me; we will first discover Mr. Losely's address. I will pay all the expenses. Rely on my zeal, Mr. Rugge."

Much comforted, the manager went his way. He had not been long gone before Jasper himself appeared. The traitor entered with a more than customary bravado of manner, as if he apprehended a scolding, and was prepared to face it; but Mrs. Crane neither reproached him for his prolonged absence, nor expressed surprise at his return. With true feminine duplicity, she received him as if nothing had happened. Jasper, thus relieved, became of his own accord apologetic and explanatory; evidently he wanted something of Mrs. Crane. "The fact is, my dear friend," said he, sinking into a chair, "that the day after I last saw you I happened to go to the General Post Office to see if there were any letters for me. You smile: you don't believe me. Honour bright, here they are;" and Jasper took from the side pocket of his coat a pocket-book, a new pocket-book, a brilliant pocket-book, fragrant Russian leather, delicately embossed, golden clasps, silken linings, jewelled pencil-case, malachite pen-knife,--an arsenal of knickknacks stored in neat recesses; such a pocket-book as no man ever gives to himself. Sardanapalus would not have given that pocket-book to himself! Such a pocket-book never comes to you, O enviable Lotharios, save as tributary keepsakes from the charmers who adore you! Grimly the Adopted Mother eyed that pocket-book. Never had she seen it before. Grimly she pinched her lips. Out of this dainty volume--which would have been of cumbrous size to a slim thread-paper exquisite, but scarcely bulged into ripple the Atlantic expanse of Jasper Losely's magnificent chest--the monster drew forth two letters on French paper,--foreign post-marks. He replaced them quickly, only suffering her eye to glance at the address, and continued, "Fancy! that purse-proud Grand Turk of an infidel, though he would not believe me, has been to France,--yes, actually to ----- making inquiries evidently with reference to Sophy. The woman who ought to have thoroughly converted him took flight, however, and missed seeing him. Confound her!"

"I ought to have been there. So I have no doubt for the present the Pagan remains stubborn. Gone on into Italy I hear; doing me, violating the laws of Nature, and roving about the world, with his own solitary hands in his bottomless pockets,--like the wandering Jew! But, as some slight set-off in my run of ill-luck, I find at the post-office a pleasanter letter than the one which brings me this news. A rich elderly lady, who has no family, wants to adopt a nice child; will take Sophy,--make it worth my while to let her have Sophy. 'T is convenient in a thousand ways to settle one's child comfortably in a rich house; establishes rights, subject, of course, to cheques which would not affront me,--a father! But the first thing requisite is to catch Sophy: 't is in that I ask your help; you are so clever. Best of creatures! what could I do without you? As you say, whenever I want a friend I come to you,--Bella!"

Mrs. Crane surveyed Jasper's face deliberately. It is strange how much more readily women read the thoughts of men than men detect those of women. "You know where the child is," said she, slowly.

"Well, I take it for granted she is with the old man; and I have seen him,--seen him yesterday."

"Go on; you saw him,--where?"

"Near London Bridge."

"What business could you possibly have in that direction? Ah! I guess, the railway station to Dover: you are going abroad?"

"No such thing; you are so horribly suspicious. But it is true I had been to the station inquiring after some luggage or parcels which a friend of mine had ordered to be left there; now, don't interrupt me. At the foot of the bridge I caught a sudden glimpse of the old man,--changed, altered, aged, one eye lost. You had said I should not know him again, but I did; I should never have recognized his face. I knew him by the build of the shoulder, a certain turn of the arms, I don't know what; one knows a man familiar to one from birth without seeing his face. Oh, Bella; I declare that I felt as soft,--as soft as the silliest muff who ever--" Jasper did not complete his comparison, but paused a moment, breathing hard, and then broke into another sentence. "He was selling something in a basket,--matches, boot-straps, deuce knows what. He! a clever man too! I should have liked to drop into that d----d basket all the money I had about me."

"Why did not you?"

"Why? How could I? He would have recognized me. There would have been a scene,--a row, a flare up, a mob round us, I dare say. I had no idea it would so upset me; to see him selling matches too; glad we did not meet at Gatesboro'. Not even for that L100 do I think I could have faced him. No; as he said when we last parted, 'The world is wide enough for both.' Give me some brandy; thank you."

"You did not speak to the old man; he did not see you: but you wanted to get back the child; you felt sure she must be with him; you followed him home?"

"I? No; I should have had to wait for hours. A man like me, loitering about London Bridge! I should have been too conspicuous; he would have soon caught sight of me, though I kept on his blind side. I employed a ragged boy to watch and follow him, and here is the address. Now, will you get Sophy back for me without any trouble to me, without my appearing? I would rather charge a regiment of horse-guards than bully that old man."

"Yet you would rob him of the child,--his sole comfort?"

"Bother!" cried Losely, impatiently; "the child can be only a burden to him; well out of his way; 't is for the sake of that child he is selling matches! It would be the greatest charity we could do him to set him free from that child sponging on him, dragging him down; without her he'd find a way to shift for himself. Why, he's even cleverer than I am! And there--there; give him this money, but don't say it came from me."

He thrust, without counting, several sovereigns--at least twelve or fourteen--into Mrs. Crane's palm; and so powerful a charm has goodness the very least, even in natures the most evil, that that unusual, eccentric, inconsistent gleam of human pity in Jasper Losely's benighted soul shed its relenting influence over the angry, wrathful, and vindictive feelings with which Mrs. Crane the moment before regarded the perfidious miscreant; and she gazed at him with a sort of melancholy wonder. What! though so little sympathizing with affection that he could not comprehend that he was about to rob the old man of a comfort which no gold could repay; what though so contemptuously callous to his own child,--yet there in her hand lay the unmistakable token that a something of humanity, compunction, compassion, still lingered in the breast of the greedy cynic; and at that thought all that was softest in her own human

nature moved towards him, indulgent, gentle. But in the rapid changes of the heart feminine, the very sentiment that touched upon love brought back the jealousy that bordered upon hate. How came he by so much money? more than days ago he, the insatiate spendthrift, had received for his task-work? And that POCKETBOOK!

"You have suddenly grown rich, Jasper."

For a moment he looked confused, but replied as he rehelped himself to the brandy, "Yes, rouge-et-noir,--luck. Now, do go and see after this affair, that's a dear good woman. Get the child to-day if you can; I will call here in the evening."

"Should you take her, then, abroad at once to this worthy lady who will adopt her? If so, we shall meet, I suppose, no, more; and I am assisting you to forget that I live still."

"Abroad,--that crotchet of yours again! You are quite mistaken; in fact, the lady is in London. It was for her effects that I went to the station. Oh, don't be jealous; quite elderly."

"Jealous, my dear Jasper! you forget. I am as your mother. One of your letters, then, announced this lady's intended arrival; you were in correspondence with this--elderly lady."

"Why, not exactly in correspondence. But when I left Paris I gave the General Post Office as my address to a few friends in France. And this lady, who took an interest in my affairs (ladies, whether old or young, who have once known me, always do), was aware that I had expectations with respect to the child. So some days ago, when I was so badly off, I wrote a line to tell her that Sophy had been no go, and that, but for a dear friend (that is you), I might be on the pave. In her answer, she said she should be in London as soon as I received her letter; and gave me an address here at which to learn where to find her when arrived,--a good old soul, but strange to London. I have been very busy, helping her to find a house, recommending tradesmen, and so forth. She likes style, and can afford it. A pleasant house enough, but our quiet evenings here spoil me for anything else. Now get on your bonnet, and let me see you off."

"On one condition, my dear Jasper,--that you stay here till I return."

Jasper made a wry face. But, as it was near dinner-time and he never wanted for appetite, he at length agreed to employ the interval of her absence in discussing a meal, which experience had told him Mrs. Crane's new cook would, not unskilfully, though hastily, prepare. Mrs. Crane left him to order the dinner, and put on her shawl and bonnet. But, gaining her own room, she rang for Bridget Greggs, and when that confidential servant appeared, she said, "In the side pocket of Mr. Losely's coat there is a POCKET-BOOK; in it there are some letters which I must see. I shall appear to go out; leave the street-door ajar, that I may slip in again unobserved. You will serve dinner as soon as possible. And when Mr. Losely, as usual, exchanges his coat for the dressing-gown, contrive to take out that pocket-book unobserved by him. Bring it to me here, in this room: you can as easily replace it afterwards. A moment will suffice to my purpose."

Bridget nodded, and understood. Jasper, standing by the window, saw Mrs. Crane leave the house, walking briskly. He then threw himself on the

sofa, and began to doze: the doze deepened, and became sleep. Bridget, entering to lay the cloth, so found him. She approached on tiptoe, sniffed the perfume of the pocket-book, saw its gilded corners peep forth from its lair. She hesitated; she trembled; she was in mortal fear of that truculent slumberer; but sleep lessens the awe thieves feel or heroes inspire. She has taken the pocketbook; she has fled with the booty; she is in Mrs. Crane's apartment not five minutes after Mrs. Crane has regained its threshold.

Rapidly the jealous woman ransacked the pocket-book; started to see, elegantly worked with gold threads, in the lining, the words, "SOUVIENS TOI DE TA GABRIELLE;" no other letters, save the two, of which Jasper had vouchsafed to her but the glimpse. Over these she hurried her glittering eyes; and when she restored them to their place, and gave back the book to Bridget, who stood by breathless and listening, lest Jasper should awake, her face was colourless, and a kind of shudder seemed to come over her. Left alone, she rested her face on, her hand, her lips moving as if in self-commune. Then noiselessly she glided down the stairs, regained the street, and hurried fast upon her way.

Bridget was not in time to restore the book to Jasper's pocket, for when she re-entered he was turning round and stretching himself between sleep and waking. But she dropped the book skilfully on the floor, close beside the sofa: it would seem to him, on waking, to have fallen out of the pocket in the natural movements of sleep.

And, in fact, when he rose, dinner now on the table, he picked up the pocket-book without suspicion. But it was lucky that Bridget had not waited for the opportunity suggested by her mistress. For when Jasper put on the dressing-gown, he observed that his coat wanted brushing; and, in giving it to the servant for that purpose, he used the precaution of taking out the pocket-book, and placing it in some other receptacle of his dress.

Mrs. Crane returned in less than two hours,--returned with a disappointed look, which at once prepared Jasper for the intelligence that the birds to be entrapped had flown.

"They went away this afternoon," said Mrs. Crane, tossing Jasper's sovereigns on the table as if they burned her fingers. "But leave the fugitives to me. I will find them."

Jasper relieved his angry mind by a series of guilty but meaningless expletives; and then, seeing no further use to which Mrs. Crane's wish could be applied at present, finished the remainder of her brandy, and wished her good-night, with a promise to call again, but without any intimation of his own address. As soon as he was gone, Mrs. Crane once more summoned Bridget.

"You told me last week that your brother-in-law, Simpson, wished to go to America, that he had the offer of employment there, but that he could not afford the fare of the voyage. I promised I would help him if it was a service to you."

"You are a hangel, miss!" exclaimed Bridget, dropping a low courtesy, --so low that it seemed as if she was going on her knees. "And may you have your deserts in the next blessed world, where there are no black-hearted villings."

"Enough, enough," said Mrs. Crane, recoiling perhaps from that grateful benediction. "You have been faithful to me, as none else have ever been; but this time I do not serve you in return so much as I meant to do. The service is reciprocal, if your brother-in-law will do me a favour. He takes with him his daughter, a mere child. Bridget, let them enter their names on the steam-vessel as William and Sophy Waife; they can, of course, resume their own name when the voyage is over. There is the fare for them, and something more. Pooh, no thanks. I can spare the money. See your brother-in-law the first thing in the morning; and remember that they go by the next vessel, which sails from Liverpool on Thursday."

CHAPTER XVI.

Those poor pocket-cannibals, how society does persecute them! Even a menial servant would give warning if disturbed at his meals. But your man-eater is the meekest of creatures; he will never give warning, and--not often take it.

Whatever the source that had supplied Jasper Losely with the money from which he had so generously extracted the sovereigns intended to console Waife for the loss of Sophy, that source either dried up or became wholly inadequate to his wants; for elasticity was the felicitous peculiarity of Mr. Losely's wants. They accommodated themselves to the state of his finances with mathematical precision, always requiring exactly five times the amount of the means placed at his disposal. From a shilling to a million, multiply his wants by five times the total of his means, and you arrived at a just conclusion. Jasper called upon Poole, who was slowly recovering, but unable to leave his room; and finding that gentleman in a more melancholy state of mind than usual, occasioned by Uncle Sam's brutal declaration that "if responsible for his godson's sins he was not responsible for his debts," and that he really thought "the best thing Samuel Dolly could do, was to go to prison for a short time and get whitewashed," Jasper began to lament his own hard fate: "And just when one of the finest women in Paris has come here on purpose to see me," said the lady-killer,--"a lady who keeps her carriage, Dolly! Would have introduced you, if you had been well enough to go out. One can't be always borrowing of her. I wish one could. There's mother Crane would sell her gown off her back for me; but 'Gad, sir, she snubs, and positively frightens me. Besides, she lays traps to demean me; set me to work like a clerk!--not that I would hurt your feelings, Dolly: if you are a clerk, or something of that sort, you are a gentleman at heart. Well, then, we are both done up and cleaned out; and my decided opinion is, that nothing is left but a bold stroke."

"I have no objection to bold strokes, but I don't see any; and Uncle Sam's bold stroke of the Fleet prison is not at all to my taste."

"Fleet prison! Fleet fiddlestick! No. You have never been in Russia. Why should we not go there both? My Paris friend, Madame Caumartin, was going to Italy, but her plans are changed, and she is now all for St. Petersburg. She will wait a few days for you to get well. We will all go together and enjoy ourselves. The Russians dote upon whist. We shall get into their swell sets and live like princes." Therewith Jasper launched forth on the text of Russian existence in such glowing terms that Dolly Poole shut his aching eyes and fancied himself sledging down the Neva, covered with furs; a countess waiting for him at dinner, and

counts in dozens ready to offer bets to a fabulous amount that Jasper Losely lost the rubber.

Having lifted his friend into this region of aerial castles, Jasper then, descending into the practical world, wound up with the mournful fact that one could not get to St. Petersburg, nor when there into swell sets, without having some little capital on hand.

"I tell you what we will do. Madame Caumartin lives in prime style. Get old Latham, your employer, to discount her bill at three months' date for L500, and we will be all off in a crack." Poole shook his head. "Old Latham is too knowing a fellow for that. A foreigner! He'd want security."

"I'll be security."

Dolly shook his head a second time, still more emphatically than the first.

"But you say he does discount paper,--gets rich on it?"

"Yes, gets rich on 'it, which he might not do if he discounted the paper you propose. No offence."

"Oh, no offence among friends! You have taken him bills which he has discounted?"

"Yes,--good paper."

"Any paper signed by good names is good paper. We can sign good names if we know their handwritings."

Dolly started, and turned white. Knave he was,--cheat at cards, blackleg on the turf,--but forgery! that crime was new to him. The very notion of it brought on a return of fever; and while Jasper was increasing his malady by arguing with his apprehensions, luckily for Poole, Uncle Sam came in. Uncle Sam, a sagacious old tradesman, no sooner clapped eyes on the brilliant Losely than he conceived for him a distrustful repugnance, similar to that with which an experienced gander may regard a fox in colloquy with its gosling. He had already learned enough of his godson's ways and chosen society to be assured that Samuel Dolly had indulged in very anti-commercial tastes, and been sadly contaminated by very anti-commercial friends. He felt persuaded that Dolly's sole chance of redemption was in working on his mind while his body was still suffering, so that Poole might, on recovery, break with all former associations. On seeing Jasper in the dress of an exquisite, with the thrills of a prize-fighter, Uncle Sam saw the stalwart incarnation of all the sins which a godfather had vowed that a godson should renounce. Accordingly, he made himself so disagreeable that Losely, in great disgust, took a hasty departure. And Uncle Sam, as he helped the nurse to plunge Dolly into his bed, had the brutality to tell his nephew, in very plain terms, that if ever he found that Brummagem gent in Poole's rooms again, Poole would never again see the colour of Uncle Sam's money. Dolly beginning to blubber, the good man relenting patted him on the back, and said, "But as soon as you are well, I'll carry you with me to my country-box, and keep you out of harm's way till I find you a wife, who will comb your head for you;" at which cheering prospect Poole blubbered more dolefully than before. On retiring to his own lodging in the Gloucester Coffee-house, Uncle Sam, to make all sure, gave positive orders to Poole's landlady,

who respected in Uncle Sam the man who might pay what Poole owed to her, on no account to let in any of Dolly's profligate friends, but especially the chap he had found there; adding, "'T is as much as my nephew's life is worth; and, what is more to the purpose, as much as your bill is." Accordingly, when Jasper presented himself at Poole's door again that very evening, the landlady apprised him of her orders; and, proof to his insinuating remonstrances, closed the door in his face. But a French chronicler has recorded that when Henry IV. was besieging Paris, though not a loaf of bread could enter the walls, love-letters passed between city and camp as easily as if there had been no siege at all. And does not Mercury preside over money as well as Love? Jasper, spurred on by Madame Caumartin, who was exceedingly anxious to exchange London for St. Petersburg as soon as possible, maintained a close and frequent correspondence with Poole by the agency of the nurse, who luckily was not above being bribed by shillings. Poole continued to reject the villany proposed by Jasper; but, in course of the correspondence, he threw out rather incoherently--for his mind began somewhat to wander--a scheme equally flagitious, which Jasper, aided perhaps by Madame Caumartin's yet keener wit, caught up, and quickly reduced to deliberate method. Old Mr. Latham, amongst the bills he discounted, kept those of such more bashful customers as stipulated that their resort to temporary accommodation should be maintained a profound secret in his own safe. Amongst these bills Poole knew that there was one for L1,000 given by a young nobleman of immense estates, but so entailed that he could neither sell nor mortgage, and, therefore, often in need of a few hundreds for pocket money. The nobleman's name stood high. His fortune was universally known; his honour unimpeachable. A bill of his any one would cash at sight. Could Poole but obtain that bill! It had, he believed, only a few weeks yet to run. Jasper or Madame Caumartin might get it discounted even by Lord -----'s own banker; and if that were too bold, by any professional bill-broker, and all three be off before a suspicion could arise. But to get at that safe, a false key might be necessary. Poole suggested a waxen impression of the lock. Jasper sent him a readier contrivance,--a queer-looking tool, that looked an instrument of torture. All now necessary was for Poole to recover sufficiently to return to business, and to get rid of Uncle Sam by a promise to run down to the country the moment Poole had conscientiously cleared some necessary arrears of work. While this correspondence went on, Jasper Losely shunned Mrs. Crane, and took his meals and spent his leisure hours with Madame Caumartin. He needed no dressing-gown and slippers to feel himself at home there. Madame Canmartin had really taken a showy house in a genteel street. Her own appearance was eminently what the French call /distingue/; dressed to perfection from head to foot; neat and finished as an epigram; her face in shape like a thoroughbred cobra-capella,--low smooth frontal widening at the summit, chin tapering but jaw strong, teeth marvellously white, small, and with points sharp as those in the maw of the fish called the "Sea Devil;" eyes like dark emeralds, of which the pupils, when she was angry or when she was scheming, retreated upward towards the temples, emitting a luminous green ray that shot through space like the gleam that escapes from a dark-lantern; complexion superlatively feminine (call it not pale but white, as if she lived on blanched almonds, peach-stones, and arsenic); hands so fine and so bloodless, with fingers so pointedly taper there seemed stings at their tips; manners of one who had ranged all ranks of society from highest to lowest, and duped the most wary in each of them. Did she please it, a crown prince might have thought her youth must have passed in the chambers of porphyry! Did she please it, an old soldier would have sworn the creature had been a vivandiere,--in age, perhaps, bordering on forty. She looked younger, but had she been a hundred and

twenty, she could not have been more wicked. Ah, happy indeed for Sophy, if it were to save her youth from ever being fostered in elegant boudoirs by those bloodless hands, that the crippled vagabond had borne her away from Arabella's less cruel unkindness; better far even Rugge's village stage; better far stealthy by-lanes, feigned names, and the erudite tricks of Sir Isaac!

But still it is due even to Jasper to state here that, in Losely's recent design to transfer Sophy from Mr. Waife's care to that of Madame Caumartin, the Sharper harboured no idea of a villany so execrable as the character of the Parisienne led the jealous Arabella to suspect. His real object in getting the child at that time once more into his power was (whatever its nature) harmless compared with the mildest of Arabella's dark doubts. But still if Sophy had been regained, and the object, on regaining her, foiled (as it probably would have been), what then might have become of her,--lost, perhaps, forever, to Waife,--in a foreign land and under such guardianship? Grave question, which Jasper Losely, who exercised so little foresight in the paramount question, namely, what some day or other would become of himself? was not likely to rack his brains by conjecturing!

Meanwhile Mrs. Crane was vigilant. The detective police-officer sent to her by Mr. Rugge could not give her the information which Rugge desired, and which she did not longer need. She gave the detective some information respecting Madame Caumartin. One day towards the evening she was surprised by a visit from Uncle Sam. He called ostensibly to thank her for her kindness to his godson and nephew; and to beg her not to be offended if he had been rude to Mr. Losely, who, he understood from Dolly, was a particular friend of hers. "You see, ma'am, Samuel Dolly is a weak young man, and easily led astray; but, luckily for himself, he has no money and no stomach. So he may repent in time; and if I could find a wife to manage him, he has not a bad head for the main chance, and may become a practical man. Repeatedly I have told him he should go to prison, but that was only to frighten him; fact is, I want to get him safe down into the country, and he don't take to that. So I am forced to say, 'My box, home-brewed and South-down, Samuel Dolly, or a Lunnon jail and debtors' allowance.' Must give a young man his choice, my dear lady."

Mrs. Crane observing that what he said was extremely sensible, Uncle Sam warmed in his confidence.

"And I thought I had him, till I found Mr. Losely in his sick-room; but ever since that day, I don't know how it is, the lad has had something on his mind, which I don't half like,--cracky, I think, my dear lady,--cracky. I suspect that old nurse passes letters. I taxed her with it, and she immediately wanted to take her Bible-oath, and smelt of gin, two things which, taken together, look guilty."

"But," said Mrs. Crane, growing much interested, "if Mr. Losely and Mr. Poole do correspond, what then?"

"That's what I want to know, ma'am. Excuse me; I don't wish to disparage Mr. Losely,--a dashing gent, and nothing worse, I dare say. But certain sure I am that he has put into Samuel Dolly's head something which has cracked it! There is the lad now up and dressed, when he ought to be in bed, and swearing he'll go to old Latham's to-morrow, and that long arrears of work are on his conscience! Never heard him talk of conscience before: that looks guilty! And it does not frighten him any

longer when I say he shall go to prison for his debts; and he's very anxious to get me out of Lunnon; and when I threw in a word about Mr. Losely (slyly, my good lady,--just to see its effect), he grew as white as that paper; and then he began strutting and swelling, and saying that Mr. Losely would be a great man, and he should be a great man, and that he did not care for my money; he could get as much money as he liked. That looks guilty, my dear lady. And oh," cried Uncle Sam, clasping his hands, "I do fear that he's thinking of something worse than he has ever done before, and his brain can't stand it. And, ma'am, he has a great respect for you; and you've a friendship for Mr. Losely. Now, just suppose that Mr. Losely should have been thinking of what your flash sporting gents call a harmless spree, and my sister's son should, being cracky, construe into something criminal. Oh, Mrs. Crane, do go and see Mr. Losely, and tell him that Samuel Dolly is not safe,--is not safe!"

"Much better that I should go to your nephew," said Mrs. Crane; "and with your leave I will do so at once. Let me see him alone. Where shall I find you afterwards?"

"At the Gloucester Coffee-house. Oh, my dear lady, how can I thank you enough? The boy can be nothing to you; but to me, he's my sister's son,--the blackguard!"

CHAPTER XVII.

*"Dices laborantes in uno
Penelopen vitreamque Circen."*--HORAT.

Mrs. Crane found Poole in his little sitting-room, hung round with prints of opera-dancers, prize-fighters, race-horses, and the dog Billy. Samuel Dolly was in full dress. His cheeks, usually so pale, seemed much flushed. He was evidently in a state of high excitement, bowed extremely low to Mrs. Crane, called her Countess, asked if she had been lately on the Continent and if she knew Madame Caumartin, and whether the nobility at St. Petersburg were jolly, or stuck-up fellows, who gave themselves airs,--not waiting for her answer. In fact his mind was unquestionably disordered.

Arabella Crane abruptly laid her hand on his shoulder. "You are going to the gallows," she said suddenly. "Down on your knees, and tell me all, and I will keep your secret, and save you; lie, and you are lost!"

Poole burst into tears, and dropped on his knees as he was told.

In ten minutes Mrs. Crane knew all that she cared to know, possessed herself of Losely's letters, and, leaving Poole less light-headed and more light-hearted, she hastened to Uncle Sam at the Gloucester Coffee-house. "Take your nephew, out of town this evening, and do not let him from your sight for the next six months. Hark you, he will never be a good man; but you may save him from the hulks. Do so. Take my advice." She was gone before Uncle Sam could answer. She next proceeded to the private house of the detective with whom she had before conferred; this time less to give than to receive information. Not half an hour after her interview with him, Arabella Crane stood in the street wherein was placed the showy house of Madame Caumartin. The lamps in the street were now lighted; the street, even at day a quiet one, was comparatively

deserted. All the windows in the Frenchwoman's house were closed with shutters and curtains, except on the drawing-room floor. From those the lights within streamed over a balcony filled with gay plants; one of the casements was partially open. And now and then, where the watcher stood, she could just catch the glimpse of a passing form behind the muslin draperies, or hear the sound of some louder laugh. In her dark-gray dress and still darker mantle, Arabella Crane stood motionless, her eyes fixed on those windows. The rare foot-passenger who brushed by her turned involuntarily to glance at the countenance of one so still, and then as involuntarily to survey the house to which that countenance was lifted. No such observer so incurious as not to hazard conjecture what evil to that house was boded by the dark lurid eyes that watched it with so fixed a menace. Thus she remained, sometimes, indeed, moving from her post, as a sentry moves from his, slowly pacing a few steps to and fro, returning to the same place, and again motionless; thus she remained for hours. Evening deepened into night; night grew near to dawn: she was still there in that street, and still her eyes were on that house. At length the door opened noiselessly; a tall man tripped forth with a gay light step, and humming the tune of a gay French chanson. As he came straight towards the spot where Arabella Crane was at watch, from her dark mantle stretched forth her long arm and lean hand and seized him. He started and recognized her.

"You here!" he exclaimed, "you!--at such an hour,--you!"

"Ay, Jasper Losely, here to warn you. To-morrow the officers of justice will be in that accursed house. To-morrow that woman--not for her worst crimes, they elude the law, but for her least by which the law hunts her down--will be a prisoner,--no, you shall not return to warn her as I warn you" (for Jasper here broke away, and retreated some steps towards the house); "or, if you do, share her fate. I cast you off."

"What do you mean?" said Jasper, halting, till with slow steps she regained his side. "Speak more plainly: if poor Madame Caumartin has got into a scrape, which I don't think likely, what have I to do with it?"

"The woman you call Caumartin fled from Paris to escape its tribunals. She has been tracked; the French government have claimed her--ho!--you smile. This does not touch you?"

"Certainly not."

"But there are charges against her from English tradesmen; and if it be proved that you knew her in her proper name,--the infamous Gabrielle Desmarts; if it be proved that you have passed off the French billets de banque that she stole; if you were her accomplice in obtaining goods under her false name; if you, enriched by her robberies, were aiding and abetting her as a swindler here,--though you may be safe from the French law, will you be safe from the English? You may be innocent, Jasper Losely; if so, fear nothing. You may be guilty: if so, hide, or follow me!"

Jasper paused. His first impulse was to trust implicitly to Mrs. Crane, and lose not a moment in profiting by such counsels of concealment or flight as an intelligence so superior to his own could suggest. But suddenly remembering that Poole had undertaken to get the bill for L1,000 by the next day,--that if flight were necessary, there was yet a chance of flight with booty,--his constitutional hardihood, and the grasping cupidity by which it was accompanied, made him resolve at least to hazard

the delay of a few hours. And, after all, might not Mrs. Crane exaggerate? Was not this the counsel of a jealous woman? "Pray," said he, moving on, and fixing quick keen eyes on her as she walked by his side, "pray, how did you learn all these particulars?"

"From a detective policeman employed to discover Sophy. In conferring with him, the name of Jasper Losely as her legal protector was of course stated; that name was already coupled with the name of the false Caumartin. Thus, indirectly, the child you would have consigned to that woman saves you from sharing that woman's ignominy and doom."

"Stuff!" said Jasper, stubbornly, though he winced at her words: "I don't, on reflection, see that anything can be proved against me. I am not bound to know why a lady changes her name, nor how she comes by her money. And as to her credit with tradesmen,--nothing to speak of: most of what she has got is paid for; what is not paid for is less than the worth of her goods. Pooh! I am not so easily frightened; much obliged to you all the same. Go home now; 't is horridly late. Good-night, or rather good-morning."

"Jasper, mark me, if you see that woman again; if you attempt to save or screen her,--I shall know, and you lose in me your last friend, last hope, last plank in a devouring sea!"

These words were so solemnly uttered that they thrilled the heart of the reckless man. "I have no wish to screen or save her," he said, with selfish sincerity. "And after what you have said I would as soon enter a fireship as that house. But let me have some hours to consider what is best to be done."

"Yes, consider--I shall expect you to-morrow."

He went his way up the twilight streets towards a new lodging he had hired not far from the showy house. She drew her mantle close round her gaunt figure, and, taking the opposite direction, threaded thoroughfares yet lonelier, till she gained the door, and was welcomed back by the faithful Bridget.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Hope, tells a flattering tale to Mr. Ruge. He is undeceived by a solicitor; and left to mourn; but in turn, though unconsciously, Mr. Ruge deceives the solicitor, and the solicitor deceives his client,--which is 6s. 8d. in the solicitor's pocket.

The next morning Arabella Crane was scarcely dressed before Mr. Ruge knocked at her door. On the previous day the detective had informed him that William and Sophy Waife were discovered to have sailed for America. Frantic, the unhappy manager hurried away to the steam-packet office, and was favoured by an inspection of the books, which confirmed the hateful tidings. As if in mockery of his bereaved and defrauded state, on returning home he found a polite note from Mr. Gotobed, requesting him to call at the office of that eminent solicitor, with reference to a young actress, named Sophy Waife, and hinting "that the visit might prove to his advantage!" Dreaming for a wild moment that Mr. Losely, conscience-stricken, might through his solicitor pay back his L100, he rushed

incontinent to Mr. Gotobed's office, and was at once admitted into the presence of that stately practitioner.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Gotobed, with formal politeness, "but I heard a day or two ago accidentally from my head clerk, who had learned it also accidentally from a sporting friend, that you were exhibiting at Humberston, during the race-week, a young actress, named on the play-bills (here is one) 'Juliet Araminta,' and whom, as I am informed, you had previously exhibited in Surrey and elsewhere; but she was supposed to have relinquished that earlier engagement, and left your stage with her grandfather, William Waife. I am instructed by a distinguished client, who is wealthy, and who from motives of mere benevolence interests himself in the said William and Sophy Waife, to discover their residence. Please, therefore, to render up the child to my charge, apprising me also of the address of her grandfather, if he be not with you; and without waiting for further instructions from my client, who is abroad, I will venture to say that any sacrifice in the loss of your juvenile actress will be most liberally compensated."

"Sir," cried the miserable and imprudent Ruge, "I paid L100 for that fiendish child,--a three years' engagement,--and I have been robbed. Restore me the L100, and I will tell you where she is, and her vile grandfather also."

At hearing so bad a character lavished upon objects recommended to his client's disinterested charity, the wary solicitor drew in his pecuniary horns.

"Mr. Ruge," said he, "I understand from your words that you cannot place the child Sophy, alias Juliet Araminta, in my hands. You ask L100 to inform me where she is. Have you a lawful claim on her?"

"Certainly, sir: she is my property."

"Then it is quite clear that though you may know where she is, you cannot get at her yourself, and cannot, therefore, place her in my hands. Perhaps she 's--in Heaven!"

"Confound her, sir! no--in America! or on the seas to it."

"Are you sure?"

"I have just come from the steam-packet office, and seen the names in their book. William and Sophy Waife sailed from Liverpool last Thursday week."

"And they formed an engagement with you, received your money; broke the one, absconded with the other. Bad characters indeed!"

"Bad! you may well say that,--a set of swindling scoundrels, the whole kit and kin. And the ingratitude!" continued Ruge; "I was more than a father to that child" (he began to whimper); "I had a babe of my own once; died of convulsions in teething. I thought that child would have supplied its place, and I dreamed of the York Theatre; but"--here his voice was lost in the folds of a marvellously dirty red pocket-handkerchief.

Mr. Gotobed having now, however, learned all that he cared to learn, and not being a soft-hearted man (first-rate solicitors rarely are), here

pulled out his watch, and said,

"Sir, you have been very ill-treated, I perceive. I must wish you good-day; I have an engagement in the City. I cannot help you back to your L100, but accept this trifle (a L5 note) for your loss of time in calling" (ringing the bell violently). "Door,--show out this gentleman."

That evening Mr. Gotobed wrote at length to Guy Darrell, informing him that, after great pains and prolonged research, he had been so fortunate as to ascertain that the strolling player and the little girl whom Mr. Darrell had so benevolently requested him to look up were very bad characters, and had left the country for the United States, as happily for England bad characters were wont to do.

That letter reached Guy Darrell when he was far away, amidst the forlorn pomp of some old Italian city, and Lionel's tale of the little girl not very fresh in his gloomy thoughts. Naturally, he supposed that the boy had been duped by a pretty face and his own inexperienced kindly heart. And so, and so,--why, so end all the efforts of men who entrust to others the troublesome execution of humane intentions! The scales of earthly justice are poised in their quivering equilibrium, not by huge hundred-weights, but by infinitesimal grains, needing the most wary caution, the most considerate patience, the most delicate touch, to arrange or readjust. Few of our errors, national or individual, come from the design to be unjust; most of them from sloth, or incapacity to grapple with the difficulties of being just. Sins of commission may not, perhaps, shock the retrospect of conscience. Large and obtrusive to view we have confessed, mourned, repented, possibly atoned them. Sins of omission so veiled amidst our hourly emotions, blent, confused, unseen, in the conventional routine of existence,--alas! could these suddenly emerge from their shadow, group together in serried mass and accusing order,--alas, alas! would not the best of us then start in dismay, and would not the proudest humble himself at the Throne of Mercy?

CHAPTER XIX.

Joy, nevertheless, does return to Mr. Ruge: and hope now inflicts herself on Mrs. Crane; a very fine-looking hope too,--six feet one, --strong as Achilles, and as fleet of foot!

But we have left Mr. Ruge at Mrs. Crane's door; admit him. He bursts into her drawing-room wiping his brows. "Ma'am, they're off to America!"

"So I have heard. You are fairly entitled to the return of your money--"

"Entitled, of course, but--"

"There it is; restore to me the contract for the child's services."

Ruge gazed on a roll of bank-notes, and could scarcely believe his eyes. He darted forth his hand,--the notes receded like the dagger in Macbeth. "First the contract," said Mrs. Crane. Ruge drew out his greasy pocket-book, and extracted the worthless engagement.

"Henceforth, then," said Mrs. Crane, "you have no right to complain; and whether or not the girl ever again fall in your way, your claim over her

ceases."

"The gods be praised! it does, ma'am, I have had quite enough of her. But you are every inch a lady, and allow me to add that I put you on my free list for life."

Rugge gone, Arabella Crane summoned Bridget to her presence.

"Lor', miss," cried Bridget, impulsively, "who'd think you'd been up all night raking! I have not seen you look so well this many a year."

"Ah," said Arabella Crane, "I will tell you why. I have done what for many a year I never thought I should do again,--a good action. That child,--that Sophy,--do you remember how cruelly I used her?"

"Oh, miss, don't go for to blame yourself; you fed her, you clothed her, when her own father, the villing, sent her away from hisself to you,--you of all people, you. How could you be caressing and fawning on his child,--their child?"

Mrs. Crane hung her head gloomily. "What is past is past. I have lived to save that child, and a curse seems lifted from my soul. Now listen. I shall leave London--England--probably this evening. You will keep this house; it will be ready for me any moment I return. The agent who collects my house-rents will give you money as you want it. Stint not yourself, Bridget. I have been saving and saving and saving for dreary years,--nothing else to interest me, and I am richer than I seem."

"But where are you going, miss?" said Bridget, slowly recovering from the stupefaction occasioned by her mistress's announcement.

"I don't know; I don't care."

"Oh, gracious stars! is it with that dreadful Jasper Losely?--it is, it is. You are crazed, you are bewitched, miss!"

"Possibly I am crazed,--possibly bewitched; but I take that man's life to mine as a penance for all the evil mine has ever known; and a day or two since I should have said, with rage and shame, 'I cannot help it; I loathe myself that I can care what becomes of him.' Now, without rage, without shame, I say, 'The man whom I once so loved shall not die on a gibbet if I can help it' and, please Heaven, help it I will."

The grim woman folded her arms on her breast, and raising her head to its full height, there was in her face and air a stern gloomy grandeur, which could not have been seen without a mixed sensation of compassion and awe.

"Go now, Bridget; I have said all. He will be here soon: he will come; he must come; he has no choice; and then--and then--" she closed her eyes, bowed her head, and shivered.

Arabella Crane was, as usual, right in her predictions. Before noon Jasper came,--came, not with his jocund swagger, but with that sidelong sinister look--of the man whom the world cuts--triumphantly restored to its former place in his visage. Madame Caumartin had been arrested; Poole had gone into the country with Uncle Sam; Jasper had seen a police-officer at the door of his own lodgings. He slunk away from the fashionable thoroughfares, slunk to the recesses of Podden Place, slunk into Arabella Crane's prim drawing-room, and said sullenly, "All is up;

here I am!"

Three days afterwards, in a quiet street in a quiet town of Belgium,-- wherein a sharper, striving to live by his profession, would soon become a skeleton,--in a commodious airy apartment, looking upon a magnificent street, the reverse of noisy, Jasper Losely sat secure, innocuous, and profoundly miserable. In another house, the windows of which--facing those of Jasper's sitting-room, from an upper story--commanded so good a view therein that it placed him under a surveillance akin to that designed by Mr. Bentham's reformatory Panopticon, sat Arabella Crane. Whatever her real feelings towards Jasper Losely (and what those feelings were no virile pen can presume authoritatively to define; for lived there ever a man who thoroughly understood a woman?), or whatever in earlier life might have been their reciprocated vows of eternal love,--not only from the day that Jasper, on his return to his native shores, presented himself in Podden Place, had their intimacy been restricted to the austere bonds of friendship, but after Jasper had so rudely declined the hand which now fed him, Arabella Crane had probably perceived that her sole chance of retaining intellectual power over his lawless being necessitated the utter relinquishment of every hope or project that could expose her again to his contempt. Suiting appearances to reality, the decorum of a separate house was essential to the maintenance of that authority with which the rigid nature of their intercourse invested her. The additional cost strained her pecuniary resources, but she saved in her own accommodation in order to leave Jasper no cause to complain of any stinting in his. There, then, she sat by her window, herself unseen, eying him in his opposite solitude, accepting for her own life a barren sacrifice, but a jealous sentinel on his. Meditating as she sat and as she eyed him,--meditating what employment she could invent, with the bribe of emoluments to be paid furtively by her, for those strong hands that could have felled an ox, but were nerveless in turning an honest penny, and for that restless mind hungering for occupation, and with the digestion of an ostrich for dice and debauch, riot and fraud, but queasy as an exhausted dyspeptic at the reception of one innocent amusement, one honourable toil. But while that woman still schemes how to rescue from hulks or halter that execrable man, who shall say that he is without a chance? A chance he has: WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT?

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