

# MELCHIOR GORLES.

A Tale

OF MODERN MESMERISM.

BY

HENRY AITCHENBIE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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HENRY ALDEN

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# MELCHIOR GORLES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS FOR ONE GUINEA.

IT was on the Derby-day, I remember—the Derby-day of the year ——. Upon my word I cannot undertake to say what year to a certainty; although anybody of the most moderate pretensions to any knowledge or interest in sporting matters may within the next dozen pages or so, if he will only take the trouble to get on so far, find himself able to settle this important point without the least doubt or hesitation, though perhaps not altogether without some feeling of pity and contempt for me as an ignorant and simple individual. I am not a sporting character myself—I have never pretended to be so.

I am fully aware of my own deficiencies in this respect, and must humbly confess that it is with a sort of feeling of being out of my proper place, and as though I were almost guilty of a liberty and an intrusion whenever I do venture to go down to Epsom, and to try for a chance of seeing something of the

great race of the year, from as good a place as I can manage to squeeze myself into in the Grand Stand on the Derby-day.

Where in the whole world is to be found such another gathering together of the people?—where every one is sure to meet with every one else whom he has ever known, seen, or heard of.

Old friends and new, of all ranks of life, of all ages, and all degrees of acquaintance, collected from all parts of the three kingdoms—from all ends of the world, indeed, for that matter—recalling and renewing how many old associations, scenes, and recollections of every place one has been in, of every past year of one's life!

Here I have been on one side jammed by a sudden rush through the door against a noble duke, who, to my confusion, courteously apologises for temporarily inconveniencing the “funny-bone” of my elbow with his august ribs: the next minute I am pressed flat, like one of the biffins of his own native county, against the broad waistcoat of honest old Tom Korderoy, the jolly Norfolk farmer, who, years ago, used to give me such capital partridge shooting when I was at a private tutor's down in those parts. Now, again, I cannot help trampling on the very heels of little Chizzler, with whom I have been “*dead cuts*”

ever since I was compelled by a sense of public duty to convict him of mal-practices at *vingt-et-un*, at the chambers of a mutual friend in the Temple.

And there, hang him ! pressing close upon me in the rear is another unpleasant acquaintance in the person of Mr. Buckram, my tailor, who, if every one were to strictly insist upon claiming his own property, might even deprive me of the coat and et ceteras in which I am at this moment standing.

His present splendid appearance of a sporting gentleman at large, hardly, I think, agrees with the touching appeal for a remittance received through the post from that worthy himself, only this very morning as I was starting from home ; in which he alludes so feelingly to importunate creditors of his own, and engagements which must be met within twenty-four hours.

And so all around, without enumerating more examples of the same kind, one sees closely packed on all sides men one meets with everywhere every day—men one never by any chance meets anywhere else—men one has not seen for years—men one thought, and had every reason to believe, had died long ago in India or New Zealand. What a strange scene of jumble and crush and a regular pandemonium of excitement there is ! At every successive recurrence of the day, how you are invariably told the same

thing by every one you run against in the same excited tone, that there will be, that there must be, that there are, twenty, thirty, fifty thousand more people come down this time than have ever been known before upon the course.

And according to the usual custom of public regulations of any sort in this happy and free country, because in each succeeding year the numbers requiring to be accommodated increase, so of course it stands to reason that the space and accommodation, either by the encroachment of private boxes, or by cutting off half the lawn, or shutting off the best part of the balconies, or some other monopolizing alteration, is by an inverse proportion decreased; so that those who, like my humble self, are not amongst the initiated, or, as I have already confessed, do not feel quite at home in the midst of the crowd and turmoil, find themselves each year (literally as well as metaphorically speaking) rather more and more "*shoved to the wall.*"

But there, there, do we not all go down to the Derby to enjoy ourselves, and not to grumble? So let us make the best of circumstances, and feel as we ought, happy and pleased with everything.

Such, or something very like them, were the thoughts passing through my mind as, not having been able to make my way further than just through

the passage leading from the staircase to the front of the Grand Stand, I found myself gradually squeezed closer and closer against the iron rails which divide what is left of the Lawn from that portion more exclusively devoted to the betting-ring.

I might have felt contented with my place, or at any rate resigned, had it not been for the propinquity of a most excitable and purple-nosed individual, who just at the other side of the railings seemed to take a malignant joy in bellowing into my very ears ; so that besides the vibration of the interior arrangement of those organs from his stentorian tones, which were like the shrill notes of a cracked bassoon, I could actually feel my hair playing in the hot breezes of the wretch's poisonous breath, as louder and louder he poured forth the most reckless offers in regard to "laying any amount of odds, against any amount of horses," which I, his next neighbour, or I suppose any other individual of the thousands within ear-shot might feel inclined to name, "Bar one." In that hideous war-cry or refrain of "Barr-r-r one" did he seem more specially to take delight, yelling it out as I have said with ever-increasing vehemence, frequently even without the foregoing, and as I in my innocence should have thought, if for intelligibility only, necessary context.

Any chance of moving away seemed hopeless, willingly as I would have taken even an inferior position for seeing the forthcoming event, for we were literally packed like figs in a barrel, the broiling sun pouring down full upon our heads, and this horrible "Barr-r-r one" becoming more and more insufferable; when feeling a specially hard dig in the back with the point of a big stick, so specially pointed indeed as to be evidently intentional and denoting friendly recognition or even intimacy, and turning round, as well as under the circumstances I could manage any such movement, I to my great delight beheld—surely—my old friend and schoolfellow, Frank Lambard, nodding his head and grinning at me in my evident distress.

One moment's pause of consideration, scarcely amounting to doubt as to his identity,—though the dear old fellow's cheery face was disguised with a more than ordinary abundance of moustache and beard, and what was still to be seen of his once clear complexion was now tanned dark as mahogany, there was no mistaking those sparkling eyes, and that rattling, hearty laugh—Frank Lambard himself, whom I had not seen, or even heard of, for years.

Here was an example *à propos* to my late reflections. To what feelings and memories did that recognition immediately give rise in my mind's eye! Lambard,

certainly, as the saying goes, is no chicken. Six feet one in his stockings, and broadly built in proportion. His name, even after this lapse of time, still ranks high amongst the demi-gods of dear old Eton. For two years captain of the eight, and nearly equally famous for his swiping in the playing fields: do they not still talk of his great fight on the Brocas with Jem Badger, the boat-cad?—still point out the solid oak panel in the upper school through which he smashed his fist, and the iron window-bar, in the chapel staircase, twisted round, as you may see it even to this day, by the strong gripe of Badger Lambard's mighty fingers?

For after that famous Brocas fight, as in the old days of chivalry the victors were accustomed to assume the honours and devices of those who had fallen before their prowess, even so had Frank Lambard's applauding peers and contemporaries conferred on their hero the style and title of his discomfited antagonist.

Even now—and more years than I begin to care to reckon have sped by since that day—looking back, as I see him in my memory, after the fight was over, examining his own eye-tooth—picked up and returned to him by an obsequious little courtier of a fourth-form boy—and in vain trying to fit it back into

its place: then flinging a sovereign (the only one he had) to the defeated cad, with an admonition to "get home, and learn not to interfere with a gentleman another time"—I could even now, I say, shout and cheer again, as we all shouted for and cheered him then till we were hoarse.

I could cry, as I should almost like to have cried at the time, then and there, but was obliged to refrain, as having only just got into the fifth form—a position in life in which any such exhibition of excited feelings was of course entirely out of the question.

But to return after this digression, for which I must apologise, but positively could not help, when that scene recurred to my vivid recollection—could I possibly have been more fortunate than just at that time to have thus encountered, or rather to have been discovered as I was in that crowd by my friend Lam-bard, of all men in the world?

"Come here out of that, 'Little one!'" he cried (I have not, I think, mentioned that I am myself rather under than above the average height: I was always, I might say, small of my age when a boy).

"Come out of that awfully bad place you are in there; stick to me, and I will see if I cannot manage to bring you down to the front, to see the great

event." And seizing me by the arm, in a grasp like a vice, Lambard proceeded deliberately to work his way through the densely-packed crowd, partly by sheer weight, though no violence, and partly by persuasion, for he seemed to have a word and a joke ready for every one, whether he knew them or not.

We thus found ourselves, really to my astonishment, in no time close down to the front railings, in as good a place for seeing as if we had had the first choice of the whole enclosure, and had been there, like some of the more prudent, since the earliest moment of admission in the morning.

"Now here we are, you see, and here we will abide," said my friend and leader, as I may well call him; "though you may come here and stand in front of me," gently handing forward a stoutish and short old gentleman, who was just commencing a remonstrance at this unlooked-for intrusion between himself and the course; "and what is more, sir, you will have no need to take off your hat, unless you prefer a *coup-de-soleil*, which would probably be your fate—and a great pity, too, because you seem such a nice little round gentleman, and I can see perfectly well over you, and your hat and all into the bargain."

The little old gentleman thus benignly addressed was growing very red in the face, and though he took

the place offered to him, seemed inclined to express some sort of resentment or at least indignation at the familiarity; but Lambard, taking no further notice of him, was addressing himself to me again as "Little one," which from any one else I should certainly not have been inclined to allow, but well knew that upon him all remonstrance or expostulation on the subject would be utterly thrown away.

"What special interest have you in the Derby, my dear 'Little one?' he inquired. "Come now, what will you give me for the ticket I have drawn in my club lottery?—a real genuine live horse, and an actual starter, too, I am told, though the odds are at something like sixty to one against him. You know nothing about the horses, you say?—no more do I, my dear fellow. I have been away so long, and entirely out of the whole sort of thing, that until three days ago I do not think I had even heard the names of half-a-dozen of the favourites, and those only from what I picked up in the smoking-room of my club. I myself have long ago (luckily, I so far really believe,) established the firmest faith in my own special bad luck. So constant and invariable has mine always been, that no horse in which I was even remotely interested could by any possible chance hope to win. Indeed, I verily believe that were I even to back

them all, or to bet that one of the thirty starters must come in first to the winning post, they would somehow or other all contrive to break down, or else all thirty come in together in a dead heat. It is only a wonder to me that I should have drawn any horse at all—an actual live one, that is, whose name is on the correct card, as a positive starter: but as I do not happen to have any sort of ill-feeling against the owner of that noble quadruped, whoever he may be, and as, I say, I am morally certain that if I can possibly gain anything by it he has not the vaguest chance of winning, partly moved by that truly generous and disinterested sentiment, and partly in consideration of my happiness in having thus fallen in with you, my dear ‘Little one,’ who are such an old and valued friend of days gone by, I will now offer that said ticket to you, to have and to hold for your own sole and special benefit, with all its advantages and chances of gaining the grand prize of no less than five hundred pounds, for that is the princely sum total to which the winner will be entitled, all for one guinea; by which transaction, besides the self-reward of performing a good deed in thus removing my spell of bad luck from, I have no doubt, a well-trained and well-deserving animal, I shall at the same time honestly realize a whole shilling sterling

by the Derby. It cost me one pound; and you shall have it, I tell you, for one pound one. So here you are, five hundred pounds actually going for one guinea only. Any advance on one guinea? for one pound one shilling only, is now offered this alarming sacrifice: going—going—”

“Done!” screamed a shrill pipe of a voice suddenly from behind. “I will give you a guinea for it.”

Lambard was leaning with his arm on my shoulder while thus rattling on in his noisy way, and in an instant I distinctly felt a shock exactly like that of a powerful electric retort, catch him up as it were with a sharp and sudden check.

Turning round as I did instantly to look up into his face, to my surprise, I saw that his colour had changed to a ghastly paleness; and his eyes were fixed with the wild expression of a frightened horse upon a very small, strange-looking individual, who was working up towards us, literally in between the legs and coat skirts of the half-dozen people who were immediately around us.

Taking into account a disproportionately tall hat, and very extra high heels to his boots, the stranger thus approaching us could not have measured much more than four feet six or seven inches in height; but

though no doubt a dwarf, his head and limbs seemed all in proportion, and symmetrically formed.

His features were common-place enough, though in the hasty glance I had at him, even in the astonishment of the moment I was struck with the extraordinary sly and malicious expression in his narrow little slits of eyes; and there was a most repulsively sarcastic grin about the sides of his mouth, as he made his way close up to us, half hesitatingly, and then as though pretending after a moment's doubt positively to recognise my friend, with—

“Ah! is it you really then, Lambard? It is so long since we have met, that I did not know you at first, though I thought I recognised the voice. I will take that ticket off your hands, since your friend here—Mr. Littleton, did you say?”—with a half bow and a grin towards myself (confound his impudence!)—“does not seem to accept your handsome offer. You ought to give me the next refusal, you know, for I have become a near relation of yours since we last met. Bless me, how long it seems! A guinea you said, I think, didn't you? Thank you. If it should turn out to be the winner, it would have been a pity to have let the chance go out of the family, you know, ha! ha!”

I feel that I cannot attempt to convey the look and

manner of triumphant malignity with which these few sentences were squeaked out by this remarkable little party in the shrill tones of a cracked pitch pipe.

I again looked round to see what answer Lambard, who had just before been in such boisterous spirits, and so full of fun and chaff, would have ready for this impertinent fellow. To my great amazement, he seemed utterly spell-bound, with his eyes still staring fixedly, and an expression, not of amusement or even perhaps of scornful contempt which I might have expected, but of actual terror on his face. He made no attempt at any reply, but holding out the ticket which he had just before been waving about in his hand, exchanged it for the proffered coin without seeming to know what he was about; and then as if with a very strong effort over himself—

“For heaven’s sake, my dear fellow, help me to get out of this,” he said, in a deep hoarse whisper: “let us get away from here—anywhere.”

And in the next moment, with a violent rush, he was pulling me along by the arm through the closely-packed crowd, with tenfold the impetuosity with which we had so lately before made our way down to the front of the enclosure.

“Who is he? what is the matter with you, my good friend?” I gasped out, as we arrived almost

breathless with the frightful exertion of fighting our way through that dense mass of obstructive humanity ; and then for the first time the thought which struck me, as not the least odd part of the affair was, that the strange little man should have been so anxious to buy that ticket without knowing or having even asked what horse's name was upon it.

Lambard had certainly never proclaimed it. I was in the very act of asking him ; for at the place to which we had then struggled, in the door-way leading through into the interior of the stand, further progress was absolutely impossible.

“What horse was it, by the way, you thus parted with ?” I was, I say, in the very act of inquiring, when arose the loud cry of, “They're off! they're off!” “Hats off in front there, if you please. Hats off. Down there in front—get down.”

A spasmodic movement runs through the whole dense mass, as every one of which it is composed makes a last simultaneous effort to better his chance of seeing. “Every man for himself,” is felt by each separate individual ; and then in another moment the whole of that vast multitude of thousands of human beings are held together in one strong, common feeling of intense interest and excitement.

A distant murmur from the further corner of the

course comes rolling on, and gathering force like a huge wave of the sea, as it draws nearer and nearer, and then bursts into a gigantic roar, as the many-coloured phalanx, brilliant in the sun, flashes by like a meteor. There is a momentary lull of breathless expectation, and then a roar ten thousand times louder than before proclaims that Number 16 has been run up at the signal-post; and the name of the fortunate winner (perhaps, as in the instance I speak of,) hitherto comparatively unknown, is now repeated by ten times ten thousand mouths, all talking and holloaing at once; and before another hour has passed will be known, and again and again repeated, in every quarter of the United Kingdom.

“You were asking the name of the horse which was on that ticket, were you not?” said Lambard, in a hard and unnatural voice, through his tightly-clenched teeth. “You may hear them shouting it.”

“Caractacus?”

“Yes, that was it. He was, I believe, considered to be a hopeless outsider; but the moment I made it over to that fellow, I felt a conviction that that horse would win.”

Then, with a fierce burst of execration, he turned, and rushed away through the building, and out of the doorway on the other side.

I hardly knew why I felt so strongly impelled to follow him as I did. It was ridiculous to suppose that I could be of any help or protection to a great fellow like him, who was twice my own size, even if I had had time to reflect that there could possibly have been a need of anything of the sort. If my motive was only a latent curiosity, or say interest, in the curious rencontre and scene which I had thus chanced to witness, I was not at the time conscious of any such feeling.

But, heedless of the doorkeeper's friendly warning of having passed out without having taken a return-ticket, I ran out after my excited friend, who was striding away straight down the side of the hill at the rate of twenty miles an hour.

He seemed surprised when, puffing and blowing as I was, I managed to bring myself sufficiently within ear-shot to shout to him to stop.

Again I noticed that same expression of wild fear pass over his face, as he turned round to see who was in pursuit of him ; but there was something of relief and satisfaction in his voice, as he said—

“Oh ! it's you, is it, Little one ? Why, what on earth do you want, or mean, by running after me in this manner ?”

I told him that it was so long since we had met,

that I did not want to lose sight of him directly again; but that if he liked I would walk with him, as I did not care to go back to the Stand, not to speak of having forfeited my right of re-entry.

“Are you man enough to walk across to Kingston?” he asked. “We shall get back to town more quietly that way, without the chance of again meeting—anybody,” he added, after a pause, “whom one does not care to meet. It is seven or eight miles across, and perhaps you may find the sun too warm.”

It was, indeed, a piping hot day in June, and the road would be, I knew, over our very boots in dust; but the tone of doubt in which Lambard spoke, decided me. So only stipulating that he should slightly moderate the tremendous pace at which he had started, we stepped out without another word.

## CHAPTER II.

## INFLUENCES.

LAMBARD still for some time seemed to be brooding over the rencontre which had evidently so thoroughly upset him. For at least a mile and a half we trudged on, side by side, in profound silence. From time to time I noticed that he knit his brows, and clutched his stout oak stick in a tighter grasp, as though his thoughts were stern ones; when, quite suddenly, he pulled up, to ask me if I had ever heard of or believed at all in "Influences?"

"What do you mean?" I asked. "What sort of influences? I certainly should not have been influenced by you to have started on this frightfully hot and dusty walk of eight miles, if I had thought you were going thus to shut up and trudge on without exchanging a single word with an old friend, whom you have not met for so long."

To that remark of mine he only vouchsafed a laugh, something more like his own usual hearty manner;

and then, as if dissatisfied with himself for thus relenting, assumed a darker aspect even than before, and we plodded on for another quarter of an hour in the same grim silence; then, just as suddenly as before, he seemed determined to shake off his dark mood; thanked me warmly for the friendly feeling I had shown in coming so far with him, and without further preface began there and then a full explanation of what he meant by "Influences."

"Influences," he repeated again, solemnly, "such as those which, as sure as I am here walking by your side, were exerted over me by that loathsome little wretch to whom you saw me, in spite of myself, compelled to hand over that ticket—(though I feel even now that if I had kept it, the five hundred odd which it has gained, and of which, under existing circumstances, I should just now have been most specially glad, would never have come to me, so I put that out of the question, for the horse would not have won)—but whether by the influence of our stars or of our nati- vities coinciding, or rather clashing, or some of the spiritualist-mesmeric contrivances, I cannot say; but all I know for a fact is, that somehow or another that little toad"—(he seemed to find a different epithet to apply to his enemy every time it became necessary to recur to him)—"that little toad exercises a most un-

accountable and irresistible influence and control over me and my actions.

“You may smile,” he went on, bitterly; “but though I can in no way explain or even describe it, I have myself as little doubt of the fact, as that I have a soul to be saved. Avoiding—flying from that fellow, as I have always done—he has turned up against me continually; and though accidental as our meetings at all sorts of times and places have often seemed to be, I have invariably had immediate reason to regret and abhor the very sight of him; and although, as witnessed by yourself to-day, I could not actually prove any premeditated evil in this instance, yet I believe him to be, and instinctively shrink from him, as malicious and wicked a little monster as ever trod this earth.

“His name, you ask? His name is *Gorles!*” Lam-bard quite yelled in answer to my simple and very natural inquiry. And then there rushed forth a volley of ugly words and sentiments, in a tone which caused a poor husbandman to start with astonishment, just as he had put his head over the hedge to respectfully ask if he could tell him what horse had won the Derby.

Blank dismay was depicted on that honest rustic’s countenance as, civilly touching his forelock, he replied, “Oh, *Gorles*, was it? Thank’ye, gentleman.

I don't think I'd ever heard tell of that name, though, as a favour—ite!" And by his expression of face, I could see that he evidently thought that one of us must have stood heavily against the said strangely-named but fortunate winner.

At any other time how old Lambard would have laughed at and enjoyed the poor fellow's mistake! but he was just then too much preoccupied with anathematizing his enemy, and then went on to answer the continuation of my inquiry.

"How long have I known him? Ever since I first went up to Eton. That was the last Montem year, which was, I think, two or three years before you came up there. Strapper as I am now, I was a very little fellow, small of my age, and was at first placed far down in the lower part of the school; and Gorles, strange as it seems to look back to, was the head boy, or captain, as we used to call them, you remember, of my tutor's house, and was then what seemed to me ever so much bigger than myself. I remember considering him quite 'a big fellow'—fancy!

"I had not been at the school above two or three weeks, when having been ordered up one morning with half-a-dozen other lower boys to breakfast-fagging at the captain's mess, Gorles, who had never yet exchanged

a single word with me, or, as might have been supposed, ever even noticed my existence, walked round to where I was standing, and bringing his odious face close down to mine, with that same satanic grin which you may have observed to-day, and which I have never had out of my mind from that day to this, deliberately took aim with his clenched fist, measured his distance, and then, without the slightest cause or provocation, struck me with all his might on the spot covered by about the third button of my waist-coat.

“By all the pepper of the Lambards! this was more than I could stand. Like a young tiger cat, I was at him in an instant, and I felt my little fist go smash into his grinning face with all my power, such as it was,—childish, of course,—but with all the goodwill that fury and indignation could lend to it.

“You, who remember the strict rules of public school discipline, and how utterly unheard of such an atrocity as a fag—a new lower boy—daring to raise his fist against a Fifth-form is, and ought to be—can appreciate the astonishment and consternation of my surrounding fellow-fags, not perhaps unmixed with suppressed delight.

“Though probably such feelings on their part were as nothing compared with those of the cowardly little

bully himself, who could never have dreamt of such quick returns to his unprovoked assault.

“But I gave him no time to think, for in at him I went ‘hammer and tongs;’ and so, with right on my side, I called to mind and felt I was acting up to the last words of advice my poor dear old father had given me, when shaking me by the hand as he left me at the door,

“‘Never tell a lie, my boy!’ he said; ‘never tell tales of your school-fellows, and never take a blow from any of them, great or small, without returning it, if given for nothing!’

“And although this last did not, it is true, quite answer in this instance, I think, as a general rule, it was good counsel, founded on a sound knowledge of human nature.

“‘Depend upon it none but a rank coward at heart will ever strike a little fellow for nothing; and if you stick up to him (my father had himself been at Eton, and kept many of his old school expressions through life), ‘ten to one he will leave you alone for the future, even if you get the worst of it for the time. You can but have a licking after all, while you have given back at least something in return; and one good fight against odds will save you from scores of bullyings, if not lickings, which, I dare say, you will deserve!’

“And so as this idea flashed through my mind, at him I went; and when he tumbled backwards over his breakfast-table, amidst a smash of crockery, as he did,—more, I suppose, from surprise than under the actual force of my sudden attack,—I flung a sausage-dish at his head; and it was well for him that it smashed against the opposite wall instead of its intended object.

“But short was my triumph, for he was up again directly, and springing at me, we closed and tumbled over together; when, although I kicked away at his shins as hard and as long as I could, yet having got me under him and sitting astride my chest, he seized me by my ears and was pounding my poor little head against the floor, till I really believe he would have killed me, if Mary Anne, the boys'-maid, had not rushed in and rescued me, but not before I was all but senseless: and so for nearly three days I lay in my turn-down bed, queer and delirious.

“Indeed I believe it was even longer than that time before I could appreciate the visits and levées of friendly lower boys to my room, and understand entirely their reports of how Gorles had been sent up to the Doctor, and though he had escaped a flogging, had been turned down into the lower division for the rest of the half.

“ That he had also been mobbed and publicly hooted in the school-yard; which led to further and confusing discussions whether with such demonstrations of public sympathy towards myself, I should still have to undergo, ‘ a college hiding ’ in long chamber for hitting an upper boy; to which awful penalty I had no doubt rendered myself in strict law liable; but, under the circumstances, whether it would be carried out? And then followed other wonderings and serious topics which are wont to obfuscate the lucid brains of each succeeding generation of small boys while still in a fourth-form state of development.

“ The fact is, that when I recovered and was ‘ in school ’ again I found myself, if not quite a hero, at least famous, and the object of a ‘ sensation ’ as they call it now-a-days.

“ And so far let me here mention that I found the parental advice proved right after all; for in the whole course of my time at Eton, which was, I should say, as happy and jolly a one as perhaps any one of the many thousands who have been through the same, I never once, I think, received a gratuitous licking, or had occasion for another fight, from that day, until of course my mill on the Brocas, just before I left, with the Badger.

“ But now to return to Gorles, and what I was going to tell you.

“ On the second or third night, as I lay still confused and but half sensible from the effect of the pounding my poor little head had received—they have always tried to persuade me that it was a dream and delusion—but I know better, and as true as I am here in this dusty road telling you, so am I sure and ready to swear that what I now relate to you is a positive fact and no delusion.

“ I will allow that I had been asleep for some little time before, but was quite wide awake—broad awake—and distinctly heard the college-clock chime the four quarters, and then strike one—two—three, when I became conscious of a heavy pressure on my chest; and, how he came there I cannot say, but there was Gorles, partly dressed, astride as he had sat on me when he banged my head, and his mouth was close down to mine, as I lay there helpless on my back; and he was either breathing into, or, as my impression was then, and still is, himself inhaling my breath with great deep sucks.

“ Our eyes met: there was a dim light burning in the room, and for what, certainly as I look back seems an interval of some minutes, there he was and con-

tinued his operation, while I could feel my heart, thump, thump, thumping, like the pendulum of a great church clock.

“As to the exact duration of time, I may be under a delusion ; but as to the fact I am so certain and positive, that I would swear to it with my last breath.

“I was powerless. I tried to struggle, and did my best to cry out, but without avail, as one feels in a nightmare—and yet that was no nightmare or sleeping imagination—it was fact.

“It was Gorles who himself broke the silence first, as he again seemed to inhale with special force at my heavy breathing, for he muttered to himself as it were, “There is real Spirit here, and it shall serve me through life.”

“Then it was that, with a redoubled strain, I found utterance for my voice, and with a loud cry of agony roused the whole house.

“It seemed in less than an instant that my room was full of boys in their night-shirts, some looking frightened out of their wits, some laughing while their teeth were chattering with cold, others angry and beginning to abuse me for disturbing them from their warm beds : and a comical figure old Mary Anne the boys'-maid looked, wrapped tight up in her counterpane like a mummy, though I was then, heaven

knows, in no state much to appreciate the absurdity of her appearance.

“I was nearly wild with terror, and Mary Anne, who, as you may remember, was apt to be sharp and handy enough with her tongue as a regular rule, was quite gentle with me; and when she had cleared the room, and driven all the other fellows back to their beds, she tried to soothe and comfort me almost as if I had been a baby in arms.

“No one would listen to my account of what really had made me cry out; no one would believe a word of it. All declared that Gorles had never been to my room; indeed, was the only one in the house who had not joined the rush to see what was the row. One or two at first had so far corroborated my statement as to agree that they thought they had heard the noise of some person running by, and the slam of a door at the end of his passage.

“But when, after a parley as to the propriety of invading the Captain's room at such an hour and on such an unlikely charge, some of the elder fellows did go in to satisfy themselves, Gorles was in bed, and fast asleep.

“That is, of course, shamming to be so, the only soul in the house who had been entirely undisturbed by my shriek. I was very ill, indeed, after that night;

delirious, I believe, at times, and by night and day haunted by visions of my tormentor.

“I shudder even now to look back upon the rage and misery it used to put me into when I found that no one would listen for a moment, firmly and unchangeably as I stuck to my account of the visitation and unhallowed operation I had undergone from that abominable little vampire.

“Gorles himself, when told of my accusation against him, never would deny it, though he, of course, never admitted it; but, always grinning with an evil expression of malice, seemed rather to vaunt himself and be rather pleased than not at the horrible idea.

“I could not myself understand or attempt to define, but with all my soul I dreaded the spiritual power which I intuitively felt that Gorles had gained over me. For hours together, long after I had recovered and was all right again, I used to brood over and wonder in what shape I should begin to be actually conscious of his influence; but it steadily grew and increased upon me.”

## CHAPTER III.

## ETON REMINISCENCES.

“AFTER my recovery I was appointed fag to another fifth-form master, and he was kind enough to me, requiring nothing more than the ordinary duties at his breakfast and tea times, and dispensing even with my constant attendance on those occasions, as long as I and the other two who were with me could arrange among ourselves or with the maids that everything should be on his table, right and ready for him, as he required it.

“So with that great gulf between us which exists at Eton between an upper and a fourth-form boy, there was no reason there should ever have been any further communication between Gorles and myself.

“We never exchanged a word or were even in the same room together, except at dinner or supper, and on those occasions there was the whole length of a long table between our places; yet I somehow always felt and knew that he was constantly watching me.

He evidently was aware of and enjoyed the horror and terror he inspired. Without knowing the cause, I have again and again suddenly felt a cold shiver come over me, and, on looking round, have caught the glance of his sinister grey eyes, as he would turn from me with a Satanical grin; and resist it as I often tried and determined to do, and although, as I have just said, we next to never exchanged a word, I have felt myself compelled involuntarily to follow him, ay, even on occasions to fag for him, in such a way, for instance, as in securing a five's wall after chapel, which he has immediately come upon, and by superior right taken from me; carrying a wrong bat down to the playing fields by mistake for some other fellow's, and then find that Gorles had just been wishing for it; and so on many other like occasions, accidentally, as it were, serving him without his ever having had the trouble even of sending me, or telling me his wants.

“On more than one occasion, incredible as it must seem, and though I was never, as a child, before that time, addicted to somnambulism, I have awakened suddenly, finding that I had in my sleep actually walked into Gorles's room, at three or four o'clock in the morning, having only recovered myself in time to escape, as I have thought, before he should recognise

me : and afterwards heard that he has casually stated that if he had not accidentally been roused at some particularly early hour he should never have got through his verses or other school work which he had left to the chance of waking early enough in the morning to finish. Specially antipathic as he and I were, if I may say so with this strange unaccountable *support* thus existing between us, Gorles was generally disliked by all the rest of my tutor's fellows.

“ All had a kind of dread and seemed afraid of personally offending him. Among the upper boys of his own standing he had no real friends, and but little association. While as to the lower boys, he bullied, fagged them about right and left, and licked all those he could without mercy. As I myself in the course of time worked my way up to the higher forms in the school, and out of the regions of fagging, I always kept entirely aloof from him, except sometimes when I could not help interfering on behalf of some little wretch whom he was more than ordinarily tormenting.

“ But for that I was sure to pay the penalty, somehow or other ; for the mysterious influence was always over me, and I may safely say that of all the hundreds of scrapes I was in, and in every single row, I could always trace the immediate cause to Gorles,

more or less, though very often quite apparently indirectly, and as if by mere accidental coincidence.

“Twice, as you may have heard, I was as near as possible drowned; the first time I was learning to scull, before I could swim—‘passing’ was not instituted in those days, you know, before that poor fellow was run down by the bargeman; my boat was all of a sudden caught and capsized by the rope of an empty punt, left swinging to an osier stump by Gorles, who had gone to bathe further up the river. Again, after that, when I had acquired that necessary art, I was suddenly seized with the cramp while swimming at the weir, and fished up insensible, not apparently worth picking out—as near a shave that time as anything, except an unowned cat, ever lived through to look back upon.

“It is true I had no business to be at that place at all, but there would have been no danger if the proper waterman had been at his post; but I am hanged if it was not Gorles again who had called him away to hunt for crayfish, out of sight and ear-shot till almost too late.

“As soon as I was well again, I was complained of and flogged for bathing where I had no right to go; not, as the Doctor explained to my remonstrances, for having the cramp, but for an example.

“Nor was that the only time by many, more often than I can now count up, that I caught it through Gorles, but without exception always somehow or other connected with him.

“Then, one race-week, when a lot of us ran right against my tutor as we were coming out of the theatre, all bolted and escaped except myself, who, rushing up a passage tumbled clean over something, which at the moment came bowling out against me, and so I was nailed. I at first fancied it was a big dog, and began to look out for my legs; but when I had picked myself up, what should it be sprawling under me, and crushed out of all shape, but my ‘*bête noire*,’ positively spitting with rage; though as I got another rattling switching, I thought I was the most aggrieved in the collision of the two.

“Accused through him of talking in chapel, both times unjustly,—I was merely asking some question about the anthem, or what the day of the month was for the psalms,—as bad luck would have it, Billy Carter, who was the Master ‘in Desk,’ had his eye right on me, attracted by a demoniacal noise like an engine signal: Gorles again, who sat on the high seats behind me, blowing that abominable turn-up nose of his! And another time dropping his book with a bang, and so bringing the atten-

tion of the whole chapel upon our quarter just exactly at the only moment I happened to open my lips.

“It was always the same; so that I had quite come to regard it as my destiny, and to make up my mind to bear it philosophically.

“Even after he had left Eton—you were fresh up at that time, you know, Little one, but may perhaps remember how Snaffles and I caught it so again, and were as near as possible expelled for driving the ‘bus’ from Slough to Fifteen-arch Bridge, when we had the misfortune to upset it.

“When the passengers, who were so absurdly indignant, because we raced the rival ‘bus,’ and so in our anxiety ran bang into the ditch, were all bundling out from behind, I really could hardly believe my own eyes when out came Gorles, if you please, whom I had never noticed get in.

“What on earth he could have come down for, I cannot think, as I am quite sure he had left no friends behind who would have cared to see his ugly little face again.

“And how any of the fellows ever could have thought of allowing him to be a sitter to a boat on the 4th of June, I cannot imagine; but they did. I was then rowing six in the ‘Thetis,’ and, to my disgust, just as we were starting, who should I see but himself

squatting up like an ape, in the stern of our boat, his little eyes twinkling with malice, as he wagged his head at me, and asked if it was not an unexpected pleasure to see him there ?

“ It was too late for me to get out of it, which was my first idea ; but I knew we should come to some grief : and so we did.

“ My oar snapped short off, for no manner of apparent reason, as we were going into the locks ; and at night, the second time we were going down, ‘ hard all,’ among a blaze of fireworks, we ran plump on to Windsor Bridge, smashing our boat all to smithereens, and so had to swim for it in all our fine uniforms and toggery : and in consequence of the howling, shouting, and terrible bad language (which was entirely our sitter, who was as drunk as Bacchus), all as bad luck, or rather I should say, Gorles’ malign influence, would have it, taking place close under where the present Head Master, with a large party of ladies, had secured an excellent place for the show, the whole boat’s crew were next morning sent up, and severely dealt with as having been guilty of most unseemly language, and of gross intoxication on that festive occasion.

“ A nice bill we had to pay amongst us for the smashed boat into the bargain, to which Master Gorles

who, our coxswain always swore, had in his drunken frenzy pulled the rudder lines out of his hand, and steered right on to the bridge wilfully, when applied to for a subscription, entirely declined even noticing the respectful invitation. That incident, however, had the beneficial effect of preventing a recurrence of his visits to Eton or its neighbourhood, at least while I remained there, and I fancy ever since.

“Bless you, I could go on to fill whole encyclopædias with the wrongs he has occasioned me.

“Did not his evil eye kill my favourite terrier? or, as I shall always believe, he poisoned it; any how, he saw it one day at Fisher’s yard and wanted to buy it; he said nothing when he was told that it was not for sale, but was my property. The dog was perfectly well that afternoon, but sickened and died that very night!

## CHAPTER IV.

QUID QUID ID EST TIMEO DANAOS ET DONA  
FERENTES.

“BUT before he left, there was one special occurrence which, though I left it out of its proper place, I may as well tell you, for of course as it was only just before you yourself came up, you may have heard some of the sensation and row it made in my tutor's house. I can hardly even now bear to think of, or mention it; it makes my blood tingle to remember that for a single moment, false as it proved, such a suspicion should ever have been connected with my name. But if that ‘plant’ had succeeded, as it was intended to do, in branding me with the character of ‘a Thief,’ I should have just blown my own brains out—I mean: (he, as it were, almost jerked out, as if, for very shame at such an idea, it still stuck hard in his throat), I mean, about that five-pound note that young Ordwell lost.

And in that most flagrant instance of all, though I have told you that it was indirectly, and as if acciden-

tally, that Gorles exerted his strange influence against me, the more I think of it, the more I shall always believe that that was as infernal a plot as ever was concocted by one fellow to ruin another in this world.

The fact is, I was at that time awfully hard up for money:—I always was, you know, some how or other; it was, you might say, my normal condition so to be: my means, though I must in justice to my parents acknowledge, rather above than below the average, were in no sort of way proportionate to my wants. I had asked two or three of my more intimate friends if they could lend me a few pounds. I knew they would have done so if they could, but they were quite as badly off as myself.

It happened to be just the time that I was crazy to be elected stroke of the "Victory," the very height of my ambition; but I had received a hint that I must pay up my subscription and arrears at once, or the oar would be given over to some one else. Gorles knew all this; how, I don't exactly know, except that he always intuitively had a perfect acquaintance with all about me, and all my concerns, avoid him as I made a point of doing.

Now some two or three weeks before the time I speak of, there had been some ugly rumours at my tutor's about money missing. Little Ordwell had lost

a five-pound note out of his bureau. This, of course, caused a miserably uncomfortable feeling through the house. We had, for our public character's sake, kept it hushed up as much as possible; and, nothing having turned up to throw suspicion on any one individual more than another, no one had taken upon himself to mention the matter to the authorities.

Young Ordwell himself, who owned to having saved it up, out of what he had brought back with him, and his weekly allowance, and having just before he lost it changed his savings from coin into paper, received more than one kick and licking, for presuming to have so much to lose, at the end of the half as it was, instead of having spent it like a gentleman; indeed, some boys chose to doubt and disbelieve the fact as improbable, amounting almost to an impossibility.

Well, as I say, this had occurred, and naturally tended to throw a cloud over us all. Some little time before my dilemma about my boat subscription I was regularly down in the mouth; and having passed a wretched night, at the prospect of losing the much-coveted oar, and the position it would have given me in the school, as well as at my own tutor's, I had just come out from eight o'clock school with the usual "write out and translate" injunction for not having known a single word of my "long Horace," when, on

entering my own room, I found two letters on my table.

One, I saw at a glance, was from home, which in consequence of my last communication from that quarter, I am now ashamed to say, I did not somehow feel in any very particular hurry to open; that was, I suppose, the reason of my tearing the other envelope first without looking or thinking about where it may have come from. But what do you think were my feelings when there fell out a five-pound note, crisp and clean?—folded in a sheet of note paper, on which was written in a strange hand:—

“This from a friend, who knows how much you want it, who will declare himself when you can pay, as he knows you will: pay up your dues to the boat, and ask no questions; only on your honour, as a gentleman, you must feel bound to mention this to nobody, but promise to burn the letter and envelope immediately when read.”

Signed “N. M.”

Who on earth N. M. could be I could not imagine, except the party in the Catechism; but, whoever he was, what a real trump! and what a real Godsend this at first sight seemed to be.

Such were my first feelings of wonder, mixed with

those of relief and gratitude. The condition was easily complied with, by throwing the letter behind the fire without a second thought.

In another minute I was rushing off, forthwith to pay up and settle all claims upon me, when, as I flung out of my door, I tumbled right over Gorles, who seemed very much taken aback, as well he might be, for he was in the very act of leaning forward, as if he had been thinking of peeping through my key-hole, though, by my sudden rush, arrested in the accomplishment of his desire.

He muttered something indistinctly, whether of abuse or apology I could hardly say; but something about wishing only to know whether I had received my letters safely; which, considering the terms we were always on, struck me as being somewhat impertinent.

But it was not until, having bowled down stairs, three steps at a time, I had arrived at the bottom, that the sudden thought flashed through my mind that there had been something about my evil genius's expression, even more than usual, peculiarly sinister, which thought made me pull up in my impetuosity to have a think; and to assist that mental operation, I naturally plunged my hands into the depths of my breeches-pockets.

My thoughts were so decidedly unpleasant, that it

was quite a relief to find the other letter, which had been driven out of my mind, but which I now opened as I walked along more slowly.

Well! if I never thought much about a special Providence before that time, I did so then, and have often since felt grateful for the same! A cheque from my dear mother for five pounds, which she said she could well afford from her private purse, was there enclosed with eight closely crossed sides of prayers and hopes, and gentle lecture about extravagance, and so on.

I had, you see, written to my father in despair, for I had, I must confess, been rather "going it" that half, and had from him two days before received a similar effusion, only of a more masculine character, and omitting the accompanying *mollifier*, which he had begged entirely to decline, and that was, you see, what had caused me to be so specially out of sorts about the business.

Well, thus reinforced in means as well as spirits, that passing trouble was not very long about being satisfactorily settled, and with the mysterious fiver still unchanged in my pocket, I returned to my breakfast, revolving many queer thoughts and suspicions in my mind; thoughts which, I think, physiologically speaking, must have somewhat interfered with the

proper digestion of that meal, which was no sooner hastily despatched, than quite forgetting, or rather as I did not now mean to avail myself of it, not feeling bound by its accompanying conditions, I went off to Old Wysore's room—Socrates, don't you remember, we used to call him?—and a good name too, for he was as full of knowledge and sound sense as that, or any other philosopher you would like to name.

Though, of course, such a regular old sap as he was, and myself, were not exactly companions, or much thrown together in our ways and amusements, yet we were always fast friends, and I believe few fellows mutually liked each other more than we did, as total opposites often do.

When I went up to his room he had just finished devouring his morning's allowance of jam. Those reading fellows always do devour such a lot of jam and marmalade, and he was, I well remember, for it struck me so particularly, turning "Old Mother Hubbard" into Greek iambs. For fun! he told me. Fancy any one seeing any fun in such an awful idea!

He listened patiently while I told him all my story, and showed him the bank-note I had received. I was quite furious with myself for having been such an idiot as to burn the letter and cover in which it had come. I omitted no details, even to the tumbling

over Gorles, as I was rushing out of my own door, and the extraordinary good luck by which legitimate means had so opportunely turned up by the very same post, and so saved me from paying away the note, which I certainly should otherwise have done.

I do not think I set forth in so many words all the suspicions that had occurred to me, but naturally I wound up with an extra stress on how something peculiar in Gorles' manner and look had made me glad—I could not say how glad—that I had not in my haste made use of the mysterious gift.

“Rum,” slowly and oracularly pronounced Socrates, when he had heard my narrative all through to the end, and then he made a quotation, which I dare say you would know if I could only say it right; something about finking the Danes, when they are ‘*dona ferentes!*’ anyhow, it was very appropriate, and he wound it up by declaring it again to be most decidedly rum. “But,” continued he, “being, as I am, aware of your inveterate prejudice and feeling against that particular party, I should not, perhaps, think it so very rum as I do, if it did not happen to coincide in a very remarkable manner with a very remarkable speech made by Gorles the other morning, from which, connected with what you now tell me, it requires no great stretch of imagination to fancy that he may have had some

such idea in his head ; still, I could scarcely have thought that any fellow could have ever had the fiend-like malice in him to have gone such lengths for the sake of revenge ; but, as I say, it certainly is a strange coincidence that, some days ago, Gorles was abusing and inveighing most bitterly against you, for interfering between himself and some small boy he had been bullying ; and he then declared, before a lot of us who were standing round, that he hated you to that degree that he was determined to make the house too hot to hold you, and that he would willingly give five or even ten pounds to do so. It was a rum idea, which I remarked particularly, because Jemmy Ryler, who was there, said he thought my tutor would expect more than that, if his intention was to offer to bribe him to expel you ; and went on to ask him whether he fancied he was in Italy or Spain, and intended hiring a bravo to stick you through the back with a stiletto ; and so they were going on chaffing him."

"And, to tell you the truth, he certainly has more than once, not in so many words exactly, seemed to insinuate and make sort of indirect inuendos against yourself in regard to young Ordwell's money.

"There, don't flare up!" old Wysore said, complacently, as he saw me naturally bristling up at

this announcement. "No single fellow would, for an instant, allow the idea; which Gorles had, as I tell you, barely suggested before he was regularly groaned down; but, be calm, and let us call in two or three of the leading fellows of the house as witnesses, for, "in the multitude of councillors, is there not wisdom?"—and then I should advise, if they, when they have heard the whole case, agree in thinking of it as I do that you should go boldly to my tutor and lay the whole matter before him."

So Ryler, Maine, and Sandy Kannietry were summoned to a solemn consultation, and their general verdict was fully in accordance with the sound advice of Socrates.

Except Sandy, who, though he said he quite agreed with the rest, would continue to desire us to 'Bide a wee, bide a wee; ye may, ye know, have grave suspicions which are no facts: so just bide a wee, while I will keep my weather-eye open, and maybe proofs will crop out.' But as it turned out, it was truly lucky that I had thus at once consulted those fellows, and so established them as witnesses to back me, and prove that it was my own wish and intention of at once inviting investigation on the subject.

That very same day, after dinner, my tutor called us all back to stay, and, with evidently deep feeling and

distress of mind, inquired if any boy had, during the half, lost any money, or if we had heard of any unpleasant rumours of money having been missing in his house, for,—he went on to say, and I suppose it was my consciousness, not I mean of guilt, but of the shame of knowing that I had been indirectly hinted at, that made me feel his eyes resting particularly on myself—averse as he now felt, and as every one of course would feel, to take notice of any anonymous accusations; yet, in regard to so serious a charge, which affected even himself, as well as all who were under his roof, he wished to inquire first, as to the fact of money having thus been lost, and if so, had there arisen any reason to attach suspicion to any particular individual. He was only too grieved to say, that a letter he had received by post that morning tended to convey to him that there was one amongst us (here he looked very hard at myself) who could be satisfactorily proved to have been unable to pay his boat subscription over night, and somehow to have found means to do so in the morning. And then, suddenly turning upon me in a sharp tone, he asked: “Lambard, have you anything to say, or explanation to give, in this matter?”

My blood was, as you may suppose, well up; so, feeling that I had the game on my side, I spoke out

pretty plainly, without taking much thought as to either my manners or my words. "In the first place, Sir," I asked, "does this anonymous letter you allude to dare to mention me by name? if not, by what right do you try to turn these suspicions so immediately and specially against me, more than any other boy in the house? and then may I beg leave to examine carefully the handwriting of the said letter, to see how far it will agree with one I myself received by the earlier post, but have like a fool destroyed; and thirdly, was the number of the note lost by Ordwell, 79264? for if so, here it is."

And with what must have appeared to those who had not been behind the scenes, the most astounding effrontery (for all the house knew how "hard up" I had been only the day before), I produced the above numbered note from my pocket and laid it upon the table.

"And now, Sir," I continued, "in regard to that same anonymous letter, on the strength of which you have so publicly, I might almost venture to say, so unjustly, thought fit to throw upon me the suspicion of this disgrace, allow me respectfully to say that I think the call rests with me; and as publicly I beg leave to express my suspicion, and firm conviction, that the author of that accusation, as well as of the trap

laid for me this morning, is no other than the person now standing at your own right hand. Look at him," I cried, turning round, "look at him, how he winces before my accusation, all of you fellows, and say which of us looks most like a thief and a cowardly villain: myself or that fellow Gorles!——"

The little wretch was perfectly livid, and seemed crumpled up into half his even natural dwarfish size. He stammered out something about not standing there to be thus insulted, and rushed out of the room, followed by almost the whole concourse in one universal groan and hoot of shame.

When Ordwell was called back and examined as to the number of the note which he had lost, the young muff had no idea whether the number was 79264, (how well I remember the order of those figures to this day) or not: he had never noticed, he said; so the perfect *dénouement* of the domestic drama failed, you see, to turn out as artistically as it ought to have done.

As to the mysterious note, as, of course, Gorles, having had time to recover his self-possession, utterly denied any knowledge and claim to it, it was unanimously voted to be given over to Ordwell in the place of the one he had lost; but with a public and strict injunction to spend it like a gentleman, and not dare to bottle it as he had done.

Out of that loop-hole, my tutor, who, though a good fellow in the main, I shall always think, in that affair, behaved most weakly and unjustly, was too happy, of course, to escape from the scandal of bringing home so atrocious a piece of villany to the head boy of his own house.

He also laid great stress on the fact of the handwriting of the anonymous letter not being that of Gorles. As to that, it was like no one's, being evidently disguised and unnatural, but, as I could swear, precisely the same as that which I had received, and so unfortunately destroyed in compliance with the strict injunction, for which I now, though too late, saw the reason.

But wasn't it lucky now, that by consulting those other fellows immediately, I was thus saved? for you see that if I had kept it to myself for only half a day, I must have been irrevocably done for.

It riled me not a little that, convinced as I was, am, and ever shall be, of Gorles' guilt, we could bring no actual proof or evidence for conviction home to him.

And that point, as I say, my tutor perceived and held on to; for after the abrupt departure of the little brute, as I have described, with the whole ruck halloaing at his heels, we, that is Wysore and the other three

and myself, had stayed behind to tell my story plainly and quietly.

It is fair to say that my tutor in those fellows' presence tendered me an ample apology, shaking me condescendingly by the hand.

But when I went on to lay before him my own strong convictions, and equally strong grounds for them, founded upon the unwarrantable threats to which these others could bear witness, he immediately turned upon me with a burst of got-up indignation.

“Lambard,” he said, quite fiercely, “you know that original prejudice and illusion have now for more than three years existed and become a species of monomania with you : on that point you really are not quite”—— and he hesitated (though I suppose he was going to say sane) ; “and I cannot for a moment listen to you ; but I am only too glad that you have thus satisfactorily cleared yourself of this unpleasant suspicion, without the least,” so he was pleased to say, “implicating any one else.”

So, pig-headed, as you know he could be if he liked, he let the matter drop, I believe congratulating himself on so easily seeing his way out of an ugly business. That was the half, you know, Gorles was leaving, and though for the remainder of his time the majority of our house were more shy of him than ever,

yet, what with my tutor's example of wilfully blinding himself to such clear, though circumstantial evidence, and to Kannietry's reiterated nonsense of its being a case of "Not proven," there were a good many fellows who chose to disbelieve, or at least to say that they doubted his guilt in this matter.

So far, on the pure motive of judging others from themselves, perhaps after all those were not to blame who stuck to the charitable opinion that, disagreeable and generally odious as he was acknowledged to be, no fellow could really be so diabolically wicked as thus deliberately to try to ruin a school-fellow's character and whole look-out for life.

But then I say to that, that Gorles was not to be judged by the ordinary rules of human nature; imp of evil, and positively and actually possessed as he is by a devil, as you should hear, if I only had time to tell you all that I have subsequently known and suffered from his supernatural and diabolical acts.

Ugly big words, you say, and I see you opening the eyes of astonishment, but I do not mean one jot less than I say, *supernatural* and *diabolical*.

Wait till you have heard all, for you must not imagine that my feelings of detestation, and, I will not deny, dread of that little fiend incarnate, are only founded on what I have now been telling you, about

our old school-days. Why, as far as that goes, many of those schoolboy adventures and reminiscences, though true every one of them, and more or less connected with Gorles, had clean gone out of my head for years past; but I suppose seeing once more your old familiar phiz, my dear fellow, brought back old Eton and those scenes uppermost, as well as dozens of others not worth telling, which might as well be forgotten, except, of course, that rascally trick against me, which I have just kept to the last, but which if I lived to a hundred I should never forget, and yet all I have been telling you is merely a preface or introduction to what is to come.

But, see, we have no time for more, for here we are at the Kingston Station, and, by Jove, there goes the signal for the up-train. We must make a rush for it. I feel cooler now, morally I mean, if not physically. My walk and talk with you have done me good, and have let off some of the steam; so for the present I will try to dismiss this fit of the dismals and be myself again. I think I could even be jolly, if we are only lucky enough to find some good party to chaff on our way up, and have some fun with. I feel I shall be all right again by the time we get to town."

## CHAPTER V.

## UNEXPECTED RECOGNITIONS.

By the time we were settled in our places, and had had our first look round at the other occupants of the railway compartment into which the guard had thrust us, as the train was actually on the move, Lambard really seemed to have recovered himself, and to be ready for indulging his previously announced humour for chaffing any fair object for such sport with whom we might chance to fall in.

The further opposite corner was occupied by a stout lady, evidently of quality, rather past the middle age, I should say, though still fat, fair, and very blooming. "Blooming" was just what she was all over. Magnificent flowers, intermingled with clusters of fruit, bloomed in her bonnet, inside and out, while rich and bright coloured representatives of every variety of (I should say) a tropical vegetation meandered in a striking though pleasing confusion over the ample breadths of her rich silk dress.

I felt sure, as I looked at her in respectful admiration, that in her own immediate circle, and towards all her fellow creatures who had ever had the privilege of being properly introduced to that grand lady, she probably was a very model of radiant geniality and beaming good nature; but upon us unfortunate strangers of another and an outer world her looks were, I must confess, stern and anything but amiable.

She seemed amazed at our impertinence in venturing to intrude ourselves into that carriage, and thus deranging her many shawls, air-cushions, hand-bags, and other paraphernalia with which the seats opposite and beside her were profusely covered. I could not help thinking, with a feeling of awe, of Lambard's proposed "chaff" as I caught that vacant blue eye; deigning for an instant to take a view of us over the top of the *Morning Post*, which was held up as a sort of screen against the common world, thus displaying, though not that I mean with the slightest idea of any vulgar ostentation, a round arm loaded with quite a collection of cables, shackles, chains, lockets, bangles, and a general miscellany of gimcracks which might have gone far towards stocking a respectable Bond-street shop window.

There was a something in that eye which, letting alone natural good breeding, should have at once

settled any question of "chaff" with the most audacious and reckless of mortals.

But as I glanced round at Lambard, I saw that he was not even looking at her.

He was staring with both his eyes open at their widest at his *vis-à-vis*, who was either the humble companion, or rather stuck-up maid of the grand lady, I could not quite make up my mind which.

She had a bonnet even more brilliant and variegated in its many colours than that of her superior, stuck on the top of a cluster of little corkscrew curls, which hung down over her forehead and cheeks.

If the extreme tip of her rather sharp nose had not been of the same bright carmine tint as those cheeks, I should, I think, have been uncharitable enough to have decided in my own mind that she certainly rouged.

Lambard sat staring at her in so marked a manner that the old lady was perhaps not altogether without some just grounds for her manifest indignation.

"Ursulina," she said, in a very dry voice, "you had better come over here opposite to me; never mind my inconvenience, I think you will be more comfortable. So, in spite of all protest on her part, Ursulina had to move across, and squeeze herself, by

way of being more comfortable, into as much space as was left by a tolerably-sized dressing-case, a pair of goloshes, and other *et ceteras*, in the seat to which she was directed. It struck me, that though Lam-bard's manner had been remarkable, not to say rude, she personally had no objection to his decided attention, for as she passed me I heard her utter, in soft accents, to herself—

“Well! Did I ever? Does he know me?”

My companion, roused from his stare by the movement, began to scratch his ear, evidently in deep consideration, from which process, however, by the expression of his face, he had not arrived at any very satisfactory result, when, happening to look up into the face of the only remaining occupant of our carriage, he gave vent to a sort of exclamation of surprise, as if in him also he had recognised an acquaintance, and then checked himself.

This third person was a very freckle-faced young gentleman, arrayed in an exceedingly loud check suit, with a gorgeous shirt-front, in which glittered a set of studs in the shape of enamelled green beetles, nearly the size of life.

He was so good as to commence conversation by informing us that it was the Derby-Day, and that just at that exact moment, as indicated by an absurdity

of a small watch, of which he was evidently immensely proud, and which he kept dangling on his finger, that that exciting event was taking place at Epsom.

He went on to tell us how much he regretted having been prevented by important, I am not quite sure he did not say political, business from having honoured the Course by his own presence, for that he, or at least a most particular friend and connexion of his—correcting himself as he happened to catch the old lady's glance—a most particular friend of his had many thousands depending on the race.

We had not felt quite sure whether this pleasing specimen of the rising generation belonged to the grand old dame or not; but when he went further to give us to understand that he himself was, or at least on some contingency depending on some other particular friend, that he probably might be the owner of two if not three of the best favourites for the next year, it was more than she could stand; and with majestic and overwhelming indignation did she speak out:—

“Oh, Ferdinand, can this be so?”

“How long have you entered upon this road to ruin?”

“Little does your dear papa imagine, I am sure, that his only son is an abandoned better and gambler;

but know it he shall, for I will write to him this very night, you may rely upon it."

"You are quite right, ma'am; nothing can be possibly worse than a better," rejoined Lambard with a most respectful bow, as he ventured on that atrocious pun, which I suppose he found irresistible.

"Sir, I am not in the habit of entering into conversation with unknown strangers," was her stately reply.

Ferdinand, thus solemnly adjured, did not seem to make much of his grandmamma's—or whatever she really was to him—remarks or threats.

Indeed I am afraid he only laughed, and bade her mind her own business.

Lambard went on drawing him out to any extent, pretending to be glad of such an opportunity for deriving so much and such valuable information on the subject of horses, training-stables, jockeys, handicaps, and other turf matters, over and over again appealing to me, whether it was not great luck to have fallen in with so excellent a guide on sporting matters, and evidently so much enjoying the idea, that he appeared, as he had said he would, to have driven all his own troubles and late violent feelings clean away.

Indeed, when reminded of them by the ticket-collector, who, upon opening our carriage at Vauxhall, civilly touched his cap with the information that

“Caractacus” had won the Derby, it was only with something between a grunt and a sigh that he replied, “Thank ye kindly, all the same, but we could have told you that three hours ago, we saw it run,” to the no small surprise and confusion of the young turfite in the green beetles, who, encouraged as he had been, had the very moment before been offering, in so many words, to put us up to a specially good thing or two.

“Never mind, Ferdy, my boy,” cried out my companion, to my no small consternation at his rudeness, as with a loud laugh he jumped out of the carriage. “You seem quite to have forgotten me, though I remembered you. It was only a case of instructing your cousin instead of your grandmother, in the sublime art of sucking eggs, you know. Don’t you know me now?”

The bumptious youth stared hard, and then as a recollection of Lambard’s identity seemed to dawn upon him, became as red as a turkey-cock, and stammered out some mild expressions of delight at the unexpected recognition.

“Never mind, old fellow,” cried Frank, with a hearty slap on the back; “I’m glad to see you. How’s your father, the old colonel? Give my remembrances to him.”

“I say, Ferdy!” he ran back after we had moved some way down the platform, as if struck with some

sudden motive ; " I say, Ferdy, who was that old girl with you—not your new stepmother, the Blobb, is it ?"

" Yes, the very same—the Blobb—confound her !" answered Ferdy, very sulkily, as he stood there still gaping like a stuffed pig.

" And is the other her old maid, Madam Croskanski, *née* Sniggers ? I couldn't imagine where I had seen that woman's face before."

" Yes, you are right again," said the youth ; " confound her too. Where did you know them ?"

But Lambard had gone tearing off to the other end of the station, exclaiming that, by Jove, he must have another good look at " the Blobb," as he called that great lady, in a most disrespectful manner. But they were gone, and he came back presently disappointed.

" Who are they ?" I asked.

" I may, perhaps, tell you all in good time, my dear little 'un," he said, with a very deep sigh, and as if now again going to have a reaction in his spirits. " What do you intend to do with yourself this evening ?" he inquired, as we walked down the steps together from the station.

" I don't seem to care, somehow, about dining at my club, as I meant to have done with two or three other fellows, and afterwards going to some theatre,

to wind up with Vauxhall or Cremorne, by way of a finish ; in short, what I am told is the regular every Derby-Day mill-track. It will be such a bore having to go through with all the congratulations, and then explanations, about that confounded winning ticket. What a lot of chaff, or, still worse, condolence, I shall have to stand for having spilt that money as I have ; for, of course, I must shell it all over as soon as it is paid to me.

“No, that will all keep very well till to-morrow ; but, to-night, if you will let me, my dear fellow, I will come and pick a bit quietly with you in your own rooms, and afterwards, if you're agreeable, over a tranquillizing pipe of peace, will go on with the rest of my story in connexion with that veritable limb of Satan, Master Gorles. Somehow, I feel specially in the humour this evening, and having now once got my start it will do me good, and be a real relief to my mind to unbosom myself and at last uncork, so to speak, some strange matters which have long been bottled up, and I have never yet told to any living soul as I feel inclined to tell them to you this evening. That is, if you will not be bored, and will have patience to hear me slick through to the end. I think you will then be ready to agree that it is from no mere imaginary or exaggerated prejudice, but a

well-founded conviction, and to repeat advisedly the strong expression I before made use of, a sense of something actually supernatural, or, as the Scotch say, 'uncanny,' on which my antipathies are founded."

## CHAPTER VI.

## SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI!

THERE are, indeed, many worse ways of enjoying a really genuine soft summer's evening, particularly after a broiling and exciting day, such as ours had been, than that hit upon by Frank Lambard and myself.

We leisurely disposed of as tolerable a dinner, in a very small way, as my very plain cook could on so short a notice manage; and now, our arm-chairs drawn forward to either side of the wide-open window, a brimming claret-jug of Badminton, fresh iced, on a small table between us, while the lights of our cigars began to twinkle like bright stars, in contrast to the deepening shades of the twilight, calmly puffing, we sat for some little time, enjoying, in that contemplative silence which truly bespeaks the spirit of passive contentment, the bustle, life, and motion going on below us, watching, as we were, the return stream of carriages from Epsom.

Have I, by the way, yet mentioned that the cham-

bers which I occupy are situated, as it so happens, in one of the principal thoroughfares of the south-western district of the town?

What "morals might he pointed and tales adorned," by any poet, philosopher, or other general dealer in sentimental views on humanity, who, like us, that pleasant June evening, might have been reclining at his ease, contemplating the straggling line of vehicles of all sorts, classes, and descriptions, now making their way as best they could up that same road down which, within so few hours ago, in how different a condition, alas, how many had passed, "on pleasure bent," that very morning!

Think of all those glorious—no, tiptop (that's the right word)—"four in hands," which rattled by so gaily, while I was still at breakfast, "all tooled by noble whips," as described in the advertisements; and really, I believe, popularly and sincerely supposed to be Right Honourable members of the Upper House, or, at least, genuine scions of the proudest aristocracy, whose affability and easy condescension of manners, combined with their skill in "handling the ribbons," give a tone, not to say éclat, to the company, and contribute not a little to the, at least, temporary social position and consequently happiness, of the aspiring City clerks or West-end counter-jumpers,

who, for five-and-twenty shillings a head, have fairly entitled themselves to a holiday's enjoyment, *bon ton* and refreshments included. And small blame, too, to these honest gents, if, perched, as they were, on the top of "their drag," they may have cast the looks of scorn and pity upon the envious, but admiring world below. Who shall say that any one of them, in his faultless "get up" of new white hat and gauze veil, his graceful dust-coat, that indispensable desideratum for the Course (I am again quoting from the advertisement sheet) fluttering in the breeze; his tight kid gloves, grey, or even primrose colour, just seen peeping from his arms, rigidly folded across his manly breast, did not, as much as any duke or lord, ay, millionaire, or any guardsman on earth, or on horse either, for the matter of that, look every inch "the thing"?

Let those, then, who thus saw, envied, and admired bear well in mind that "'tis but once a year" when they shall recognise, if recognise they can, those same disdainful, would-be swells transformed as in a pantomime into the shouting noisy crew now passing below. All those who still have hats, with the brims of them stuck round with miniature lay figures in the nude; some perched aloft on hampers piled on high a-top of the coach; some lying full-length along the

cushions; others hanging on promiscuously to the steps or flying straps behind; some pelting the cheering crowd with snuff-boxes and pin-cushions, while, perhaps, one behind is at intervals enlivening them with most eccentric variations of popular airs on a cornet-à-piston, which has been handed to him by general vote as the most intoxicated and noisiest of the lot, "by way of keeping the fellow quiet." Oh, how their poor heads will crack and burn to-morrow from the effects of the villanous stuff they have been imbibing by the bucketful, which they insist upon, and rejoice in supposing to be champagne.

Why is it that to that particular genus, the City gent, and so many of the vulgar, not lower classes in general, the *summum bonum* of happiness and enjoyment, the highest refinement of all luxury, seems to be represented by, and connected in their minds with the prevailing idea of "Lots of champagne"? Well, well, if all cannot understand it, it has been real enjoyment to them, and though they will suffer for it to-morrow, by Friday next, let us hope, they will be all right again.

It would be well if their poor, jaded, over-strained horses, whose wretched flanks begrimed with dust and sweat, and whose staggering steps afford, if not as striking, a far more painful contrast to their gingery

splendour of the morning, could hope as easily to recover themselves. Poor beasts! the best look-out in store for them would be to fall down in the road and die at once, as has been the fate of probably not a few by this time. If they only knew it, how much to be envied by their less fortunate because tougher brethren!

Though whilst thus sympathizing with the beast, what Christian of common charity will not also drop a tear of pity for the sufferings of his fellow-man! as next appears a lately "noble whip," who, oh, bitter ignominy! has to bring back his once glad company, dragged only by a tottering pair! shorn of their leaders, who have either dropped on the road from sheer exhaustion, or perhaps even worse, turned restive, kicked, or gibbed, and to the disgrace of all concerned, unavoidably sent back under the care of the ostler.

Well may he hold down the head of shame, and let his double thong, now but a mockery and derision of his former greatness, trail like a drooping banner over his shoulder!

Some may be even worse off still, if that is possible, than having to come back thus shorn of half their glory, and never come back at all! Horses, vehicle, "noble whip," with all those gallant souls who trusted

to his skill, gone none know's where ; reduced into their primitive atoms, having been violently run into indorsely or collaterally by some heavier and more potent vehicle. How many have thus been compelled to leave their wrecked and scattered remains by the way-side, shunted off into ditches, to become the prey of gipseys or other freebooting wanderers, who will have carried all off piece-meal before morning.

Happy, indeed, if some, at least, of those whose absence is already, or very soon will be, causing no small trepidation in their respective domestic circles, and as the hours grow later, giving rise to the most direful speculations and anxieties, not to speak of hysteric palpitations in the tender bosoms of their watching and expectant wives and families. Happy, indeed, if they have not some of them fallen into the hands of the stern myrmidons of the law, and are this night expiating their offences in some one of her Majesty's metropolitan or suburban police stations—some trifling difference of opinion having perhaps unhappily arisen between some of their jovial party and the officials, which may have led to an exasperated "noble" cutting the latter over the ears with his whip ; or his companions, if not strictly in arms, certainly in liquor, having perhaps pelted them with wine bottles, whistling shells, or other playful missiles nearest at

hand; which indiscretion has resulted in the whole set of them having been led away by overwhelming forces to the

“Drear depths of dungeons deep,”

while their equipage has become the spoil of the avenger.

Who can, or indeed does any one, care to tell for certain what becomes of all the victims of all those casualties familiarly known as “smashes,” caused by wheels coming off, splinter bars and poles breaking, flies overturning, donkey carts upsetting, in short, the thousand and one accidents which on every recurring Derby-day are wont to strew the roads with broken bones, broken necks, broken heads, and broken-up people of all sorts and sizes, giving the neighbourhood of—let us take for instance as a central spot the Cock at Sutton—more the appearance of a battle field than of a peaceful house of entertainment? Do the parish registers of that, at other times, retired village exhibit any particular increase of average in their burial records at this particular season of the year? Or have they perhaps a large grave prepared beforehand in the garden behind that famous hostelry, where the corpses are buried at once as they are brought in, and no more said about them?

Out upon such ghastly thoughts, and change the

theme, for—look below and see—barouches full of beautiful ladies; bless their pretty bonnets! for we cannot see their faces from up here where we are, all white muslin and blue ribbons, and for all we can make out to the contrary by this light, all as fresh and beautiful as when they started.

Mark those great flapping hampers, insecurely hanging on behind; how suggestive of Belshazzeric banquets on the Course? and who does not envy those happy fellows with them, who have been brought back occupying the privileged place of bodkin though nearly smothered in the midst of their furbelows, while two more perhaps who, we may be certain, never were allowed to go down like that, return seated in the folds of the carriage hood behind.

Their postilions may well be, as they seem, proud of such a freight, cracking their whips and shouting as they dash quite regardless of consequences amongst the great elephantine vans full of jolly holiday folk, gorgeous with bright colours, green branches and brilliant handkerchiefs displayed on sticks, like flags of victory.

Bang they go, now on this, now on the other side, against reckless Hansoms, whose drivers always will insist upon their right of cutting in first everywhere, over the kerb-stone or even the foot pavement. They

would drive up door-steps if they happened to come in their way, it is all the same to them.

More barouches, more four-in-hands, more vans, tax carts, gigs, and phaetons; and then comes a lot who really ought to know better, than to have allowed their livery servants on the box to sit with paste-board noses and sham moustaches, and those indecent dolls again, stuck round their cockades; and their postilions with dilapidated hats, and faces the same colour as their scarlet jackets were before they rolled in the dusty road, as they evidently have done, both as drunk as fiddlers, or lords, or any other individual characters usually supposed to be in that reprehensible condition.

And so they go on; the whole hubbub of shouting, whip cracking, panel smashing, laughing, chaffing, swearing, and horn-blowing, toned together as it were' and harmonized by the treble accompaniment of cheers and yells of the little bare-footed boys, who feel it to be their special duty to run and halloo, and tumble head over heels, at the risk of their lives among the crowded horses and carriages, for apparently no earthly object or reason, except the natural exuberance of over-bursting spirits, and to show that even they claim some share in the general enjoyment of the great saturnalia of the British public.

“Hang me,” said Lambard, all of a sudden, “if this

is not enough to make a man a poet! The sort of mental effervescence and succession of changing impressions which go on inside one, *spiritually* I mean, when looking down upon a bewildering scrimmage like this, are, I believe, the workings of the genuine poetic faculties of our nature, if one only knew how to set about realizing them on to paper; or even a slate would do perhaps better, as more easy to correct. Good, first-rate rattling epics I mean. Would not old Homer have set all the fun and row, mixed with trouble and sorrows, now going on below, into longs and shorts—no, by the way, he wrote only in hexameters—and described every feeling and character of the crowd, just as one could do it one's self if one could only find the words. Not that I can pretend to have much cultivated that gentleman's acquaintance since I left school; but I have often thought I should have better appreciated those great rolling verses of his, if it had not been for the way they tried to inculcate his beauties into one's head by the longest way round, as they did. Anyhow, from what I do remember of him, his was more my notion of real life and energy, and struggling spirits too big for their mortal bodies, and in fact general "go," than all that namby-pamby stuff written now-a-days by fellows who get away into retired holes in the lake countries, or up trees, I should

say, or mountains in Wales, more I believe because milk and eggs are cheaper there than from any other particular love of nature, which is what they always try to gain the credit for. The fact is, I sometimes cannot help thinking that if I did not happen to have grown into such a great hulking strong animal as I am, and so have been obliged to work off my over-charged animal spirits by rowing, mountain climbing, lion shooting, and plenty of hard exercise, I should not have minded taking up the poetic line of business myself. Well, sir, what is there to grin at? But you are just as you always were at school, an impudent little beggar." He went on half-laughing, as I could tell by his voice, half-inclined to be angry—"Well, you may snigger, but I feel something within me, quite an indefinite sort of feeling, you know, that sometimes tells me that if I could by practice only get over the difficulties of the metre, and manage the rhymes a bit better than I know I as yet can, I often catch floating in my mind lots of stunning ideas which some of your regular verse-mongers would be glad to give their ears for; and as to metre and rhyme, why some of the crack poets of the present day do not feel themselves the least bound by such old-fashioned notions, nor are over particular as to sense or matter either, if you come to that; though I must confess that

that is a school which I do not feel myself worthy of understanding, nor therefore capable of appreciating.

“ But I never should be surprised if I some fine day got up, like, who was it ? and found myself a famous poet, without knowing it.”

It was too dark to see by Lambard's face whether he was really in earnest or not in this quite unexpected and bold assertion ; to tell the truth, I do not think he would have been quite able to settle that point himself. But after having thus confidently announced these certainly rather bombastic anticipations of future literary fame, he remained for another ten minutes or so silently ruminating thereon and then, rather abruptly, delivered himself of, as I suppose, the result of his own reflections, in the simple, but very expressive dissyllable of “ Bunkum !”

“ Come,” he broke out, “ I thought you wanted to know the rest of my story about Gorles, or what is all to the same purpose, I want, and have made up my mind to tell you ; so here goes !——”

Before my friend again takes up the thread of this (to himself at least) very interesting, though as it proceeds occasionally almost incredible narrative, I think that I may as well here (*par parenthèse*) remark, that although I received from him the main and general outline of his story that night, as we sat

smoking together till all sorts of hours into next morning, yet it must not be supposed that I can pretend to have heard the whole of the facts as I shall endeavour to narrate them—to use one of his own poetic expressions, “Slick-on-end off,” at that one time.

On many subsequent occasions, for we were during the rest of that summer thrown much more together than we had ever been since our school-days, and finding in me, I fancy, a listener worthy of the subject, I had full opportunity of fitting in and filling out many details and minor combinations of circumstances which he would add from one time to another, sometimes telling me something quite fresh, sometimes going over

ain what he might have told me before, not unfrequently in a somewhat new light, or form; then, again, he would sometimes bring in selections from notes, or scattered fragments from an irregular sort of diary he had been by way of keeping, and insist upon my arranging them into some corrected form.

I wish, by this sort of preface, out of place, to explain that I have done my best to tell Frank Lambert’s “round, unvarnished tale,” such as it is, as much as possible in his own style and words, without again having to break off, with the many interruptions and interpolations, as they really occurred, thus

avoiding the very tiresome example of that eloquent lady, the Princess—— wasn't she? or Sultana for the time being, Scheherazade, in the Arabian Nights, who, by the way, must have been quite as strong-minded a specimen of woman-kind as she was beautiful, self-devoting, and loquacious. A most rare combination of qualities!

Think what her feelings must have been when, finding herself well into the full swing of one of her very best stories, she saw the first gleam of morning light insinuating itself through the shutter cracks; and had to pull up short!

In these days could there be found one of her lovely sex who, with so much to tell and such natural gifts for telling it, could even under the same circumstances (which in her case were certainly unusually pressing) possibly, think you, be willing or able to exercise a like control over her tongue? or let us rather express it as her brilliant powers of narration; it must have been indeed a trial, and so far all the more worthy of our sincere admiration; and in her particular case the practice may therefore perhaps be deemed excusable, though tiresome to a degree, and certainly not to be followed as an example.

## CHAPTER VII.

“SHOULD OLD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT?”

“So here goes!”—was Lambard’s re-introduction of the subject; the first fytte, if I may so call it, he had brought to a close on our arrival at the Kingston Station in the morning.

“With the exception of the twice I have mentioned of Gorles, mine enemy, turning up again at Eton, which two occasions were indeed within a very short time of each other, I was no more haunted by the influence of the little wretch during my stay at that ‘Seminary of useful learning,’ as the old Provost used to call it; don’t you remember, in that long palaver before giving out the text of his sermon?—nor, indeed, for two or three years did we at all run against one another.

For by my going up to Cambridge, whereas the “opposition shop” had the honour of conferring a degree upon Gorles, our starts in life seemed, as I am sure I was only too glad to think, destined to branch

off into separate directions, without much chance of crossing.

I have though, by the way, a vague idea that he had something to do with that wherry which, perhaps you, if you were there that day, may remember, contrived so nearly to get in the way of our boat, and as close as a toucher lost us the University race at Mortlake, the year I pulled in that eight.

It may have been only imagination, for I didn't see him, it is true; I was too excited to see anything; but I certainly had the shrill pipe of his cracked voice in my ears at that moment, cheering on the Oxford men; that, of course, he was quite right to do, if he had only minded his rudder, instead of allowing the boat he was steering to drift out from the bank almost under our very bows.

It may have been so, or was perhaps only my fancy; but bar that, I was quite free of him, and for four or five years had, I may say, nearly forgotten the existence of my abhorrence until having, with every satisfaction and credit, to myself at least (though, perhaps, I says it as shouldn't), pulled successfully through a *Poll*-degree at Cambridge, I went in the course of the following year to settle for a few months at Dresden, by way of acquiring the specially throat excoriating language in which the natives in

those parts convey their muddle-headed ideas to one another.

It makes the back of my mouth feel sore and rough now, while I think of it.

I had at that time some relations living there: a step-sister of my own mother's, who was married to a colonel, a widower, with one daughter by his previous marriage, besides whom there was also one child, a boy, of her own. I knew so much, but had never seen them since I was quite a child, as ever since my Uncle Delorme had retired on half-pay, soon after his second marriage, they had, like many other English, settled abroad, partly from motives of economy, as well as for the education of their children.

Nothing could have been kinder than the warm and affectionate greeting which I received, immediately on my presenting myself with letters and full credentials from my mother, who had previously communicated my intention of turning up in that direction some day.

"Oh! we are so sorry you did not come here last week," said my aunt; "was it not too provoking, Katie, that Frank did not come? An old school-fellow, and such a great friend of yours, was staying here; indeed, it was through your name that we made his acquaintance."

"Or, rather, he made ours, mamma," said Miss Katie, rather demurely.

"Well, no matter; we were in the royal picture-gallery one morning, when he offered us the use of his catalogue, and then asked, most politely, whether we had lately heard anything of you or your family, as, being such an intimate friend, and anxious to hear of you, he could not resist venturing on the liberty, as he called it of addressing us. And so, having thus begun an acquaintance, we saw a great deal of him; indeed, if he had not been such a very old friend of yours, and therefore feeling bound to welcome him, we might have perhaps almost begun to think too much:—but there, he seemed to have such domestic and affectionate dispositions; and then, being here, you see, all alone, he used to come in and see us at all hours of the day, particularly at meal-times, because then, poor fellow, he was sure to find us at home; but he would sit on so late of an evening, that your uncle, who is, you know, rather an invalid, and fond of early hours, began, perhaps, sometimes to get just a little tired of him; but then, he used to talk so much and so constantly about you, and all your doings and sayings, that we did not like to be cold or uncivil to him. The provoking thing was, that the day after we had received your dear mother's

letter, announcing your intention of coming out to this place, he came to tell us that, deeply as he regretted, and felt the great disappointment of missing you, he had just received a letter which would oblige him instantly to set out on most particular business, for somewhere or other, Vienna I think it was he said, or perhaps it was Venice; and so, to tell the truth, he entirely spoilt a little scheme Katie and I had begun to arrange, of bringing you together quite unexpectedly, and so witnessing and enjoying the delightful surprise it would have been for you to discover so old and dear a friend. It would have been quite the subject for a tableau, or the crowning incident of a magazine story."

"But what was his name?" I very naturally inquired, when I at last could manage to get in a word edgeways, for to tell the truth, my dear aunt, though the best of women—at least, at that time I thought her so—was a regular 'oner' to talk when she once got off with a fair start. 'But what was the name of this dearest friend of mine?' And in my mind I began to run over a list of all my old friends, of all times and places; amongst others your own occurred to me, my dear little 'un, though, believe me, I gave you instantly credit for too much tact to have bored them with your company, sir, which any one could see had

been the case with this dear friend, whoever he might be, in spite of my aunt's good-natured way of putting it.

But then, on the other hand, my uncle's pretty daughter, the plump, bright-eyed little Katie, regular little screamer as she was, then just turned eighteen, and who valed like an angel, would have been a fair excuse for any man for rather trespassing on their kindness, in doing his best to get as much of the tame cat's place in the chimney-corner, and of her merry company, as he could contrive to secure for himself.

"But who on earth, then," I asked, "could this dearest friend of mine be?"

"Guess, now," says my aunt; "we will give you three guesses," she went on, in that very provoking way that womankind often have of delighting in any trumpery mystification.

"Katie, try to describe him!" but I noticed that Katie did not at all seem to enter into the spirit of her step-mother's jokes, who, heaven forgive me for my impatience, I could not help thinking at the time was quite old enough to have known better. But Katie, strongly urged, undertook to give me a clue.

"Tall, broad shouldered, very fair, frank, open countenance, loud, deeply-toned voice, blunt, and free

spoken—there, now cannot you guess? or, perhaps, it may be easier if I tell you to treat my accurate description like a dream, and take it just exactly by contraries.”

Even then it did not dawn upon me; but when, at that moment, my uncle, who had come in, began to say something about my ill luck in missing my friend Gorles, you may, I am sure, quite imagine that, as our old school saying was, the ‘fat was in the fire,’ and no mistake!

Only think of the creature introducing and insinuating himself into the family circle of my relatives, who were, at that time, the very centre of the pleasantest small society of the English in Dresden, on the strength of his love and long-standing intimacy with myself, of all people in the world!

And what, if possible, provoked me even more specially was, that never having, as I have told you, seen or known me personally, my belongings had rather begun to draw an imaginary portrait of myself, their unsuspecting kinsman, judging of what my opinions, general views, and dispositions would be likely to be, from those of my supposed most intimate friend.

But when enlightened as to the plain truth, and they came fairly to speak out their real feelings, I

soon began to perceive that, although he certainly had, in spite of themselves, almost established an intimacy with them, yet the more they had come to know the less they had grown to like him.

It was in the course of subsequent confidential conversations that Katie herself confessed to me that she had not looked forward with much pleasure to my arrival, because, to say the truth, she had thought I should be like my best friend, Mr. Gorles ; and to him, for certain reasons, which I did not fully learn till some time later, she had, from the very first, taken a most mortal aversion.

Indeed, having made me promise not to tell my uncle or aunt, she went on so far as to own that she was absolutely afraid of him, and though she had always constrained herself to appear civil and friendly towards him, yet in her heart she quite dreaded the very sight of him.

And at last, by Jove ! she one day let out, not without much hesitation and beating about the bush, that her little brother Ferdy, a speckle-faced, most impudent young jackanapes of about twelve—you have seen him, by the way, our young sporting companion in the railway-carriage—had teased and tormented her to let him have a lock of her hair, to put into a locket which his mother had bought for him,

which same lock, as she had discovered, he had sold to Gorles for a thaler.

The poor girl had been afraid, she declared—that she could not tell exactly why—but that a sort of terror of some invisible danger restrained her from telling her parents, as of course she ought to have done immediately, and so the opportunity had passed by.

But ever since he had thus obtained that hair, she could not help fancying that he held a special power over her, and she shrunk from and dreaded him accordingly.

He had had the impudence to show her a large jewelled locket, in which he had invested, slung to his watch chain, containing hair, which, though morally convinced as she was that it was some of her own, she of course could not condescend to acknowledge, but was disgusted beyond measure to hear him declare that it was dearer and more valuable to him than his life, and boast how it would always give him an unbounded influence over the mind, and thoughts, and even actions of the person to whom it had originally belonged.

“And then,” she innocently added, “he stared up so hard, right into my eyes, as he was always doing, you know; and whenever he shook hands with

me, he would hold mine so tightly in his nasty, little hot grasp for ever so long, and always contrive to take a place close to me, even following me about the room, if I tried to move away from him."

"And over poor Ferdy too, of whom he, for some time after making our acquaintance, took immense notice, he seemed somehow to have gained the same strange sort of power. You can have no notion how altered and changed that boy has become from what he was—moping about and miserable, he seems at times as if he had something quite dreadful on his conscience; it really makes me glad when, as if by fits, he recovers his own character for mischief and impudent tricks; and though I was, of course, dreadfully angry with him for his wickedness, in making over that piece of my hair, which he had obtained so silyly, yet I cannot help believing his solemn assertion, that though he could give no reason, yet that he was obliged and bound to do what Mr. Gorles ordered, and that he really could not help himself: in short," she continued, "the very thoughts of him terrify me, and I perfectly hate him, and had quite made up my mind to hate you too, you dearest old Frank"—at least (correcting himself), perhaps she may not have said quite that exactly, you know—not that there would have been any harm if she had, though; for,

although we were not actually first cousins, we had from the first agreed to consider each other in that relationship, which soon placed us on the same footing as though we had really been so in fact.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS.

It was not, you must understand, all at once that I received these and similar confidences from dear little Katie, but bit by bit at different times.

Allowed as I was to spend as much of my time as I liked in my uncle's house, she and I soon became as intimate and friendly towards one another as cousins should be.

We had agreed to read a portion of Schiller or Göethe together every morning, and there was a strict rule that Katie was to talk to me in nothing but German, which rule was observed for perhaps an average of five minutes per diem. There was also, I remember, a very tough exercise of Ollendorff's, which alone took an average of a couple of hours every morning, for at least a week, in correcting; so anxious and earnest was my pretty instructress in thoroughly grounding me in the language.

When I first heard from her of that interesting

episode of the lock, not "raped" exactly, like Pope's, but sneakingly obtained under false pretences, I was eager and ready to start off that instant for Vienna, or wherever I could catch the little wretch, to take the precious locket from his hateful possession, and wring his villanous little neck for him into the bargain.

But poor Katie begged and prayed, and cried so touchingly, that I would take no steps of the sort, evidently under a feeling of more than common excitement and fears of the strange and supernatural powers of ill which she fully believed that Gorles held over her, and would certainly exercise in the event of such an attack upon him as I proposed, that I was forced to yield; and though I tried my best to combat these ideas in her, remembering as I did my own old school-boy feelings and terrors, I could not but be conscious of sympathizing in them, more than I at all allowed my fair confidante to suspect.

I told her what was the right thing to do, most strongly urging her to confide in, and seek counsel from, her parents, and to tell them fairly all that she had thus told me.

But nothing I had to say or urge could induce her to do so, for besides the sort of fearful spell to which she confessed herself subject, she also argued, not

perhaps without reason, that they would only laugh at or scold her as absurd, and call her romantic or fantastical; and, though she had almost from the very first felt an unaccountable antipathy for Gorles, that with her father and step-mother he was really rather a favourite than not.

In that opinion my own observations afterwards rather led me to think that Katie was mistaken, though, no doubt, he had, cunning as he was, for a time at least, contrived to what you may call "get round t'other side of both of them."

My aunt, you see, for whom I then, until I knew her better, cherished a great respect, had, as I think I have before hinted, more than usually gifted powers of the "Gab;" I beg her pardon, I ought, I suppose, more dutifully to express it as a redundant volubility of conversation.

Well, it all means the same; but with the well-established law of nature which abhors a vacuum, it is not to be wondered at, that to be able as she was to talk sixteen to the dozen on any conceivable subject which might happen to be uppermost in her active mind, she must needs have a corresponding aptitude, not to say necessity, for taking in, and from all sorts of sources increasing her store of ideas, combining facts with fancies, and sometimes fictions, about

people, places, and things in general, to keep up the supply of material which the unwearied activity of her tongue was perpetually exhausting. In short, to express it in plain prose, Mrs. Delorme, like a good many gentlewomen of her time of life, did dearly love gossip, in the full indulgence of which propensity there is always, of course, the double gratification of receiving as well as imparting.

Now of gossip, not to say scandal occasionally, which, like so many other little things in this world, is none the less pleasant for being wrong, Gorles, it seems, having very soon discovered her weak side, contrived to have plenty at her service, not only about the concerns of people in the world whom he did happen to know, but also including a larger class of those he did not know, but about whom he was, nevertheless, always ready with a great deal of second-hand information.

When folks have happened to live abroad for any time, you may perhaps yourself have observed, how greedy they will become of what they call "news" of their English friends, and what immense interest they will seem to take in the private affairs of former neighbours and acquaintances, sometimes to the most absurdly minute details.

The Colonel, too, for his part, had likewise, I per-

ceived, for some time at least, looked with favour upon this supposed friend of mine, perhaps a little influenced, I suspect, by the fact of no one else happening to be in the way just at that time who could play so good a hand at picquet in the evenings, at which, and indeed, almost all other games of cards, Gorles had from his youth up been always a particularly artful dodger.

And so for a certain time, as I say, he had rather encouraged and appreciated the little sinner's company, though latterly, just before he had departed, my uncle had begun to grumble, and grown somewhat tired of his constant appearance, which he was beginning to find rather too much of a good thing. Although matters might not perhaps have come to an upshot, unless, as it happened one day quite incidentally, the little fiend had actually gone so far as to assert that the affection and close friendship which he always persisted in as existing between himself and me, had originally commenced at Eton in consequence of his, Gorles's—oh, ye gods above, around, and below! fancy such barefaced audacity! Gorles's having been mainly instrumental in getting me out of an ugly scrape about some money that had been missed, and that but for his special intervention, he declared I must certainly have been expelled.

That most audacious and unwarrantable assertion, though my uncle could of course at the time have no idea of its peculiar atrocity, had, as far as I could make out, given the finishing turn to the old gentleman's feelings in regard to him, and he had plainly spoken out his mind to the effect that if there was the slightest foundation for such a story, which nothing should ever make him believe of the son of his old friend and comrade, Lambard, whom he had known and loved like a brother all his life, but even if it were not a scandalous lie, as he felt quite certain it was, that he could only remark, that after that the less Gorles had to say on the subject of his intimate friendship with his nephew the better it would be—if that was his way of speaking of his friends, and raking up old school stories and lies of that sort against them.

Angry enough my uncle must have been, as I could see, when, as you may suppose, on hearing this repeated, I enlightened him as to the real truth, telling him as I did the whole facts, chapter and verse, on hearing which his rage exceeded all ordinary bounds ; to that degree that when I went on to tell him about the diabolical influence to which I had been subject, and, in short, all I have told you, he seemed entirely to lose all discrimination in his wrath—so stern, and quite fierce were his tones and manner, when he abruptly

desired me to "stop that," and never, as I valued my own happiness, to tell, or even think of repeating that story again to anybody, or on any occasion. Nor have I ever done so until now—that is with the exception of on an occasion which I shall tell you presently.

And then, as the old gentleman cooled down, he, I remember, looked at me so very oddly, with a half-searching, half-pitying expression, and apropos to nothing, except maybe to change the subject of conversation entirely, asked me "whether I ever remembered seeing, or anybody had ever mentioned my grandfather to me?"

I really began to think that the burning indignation of his wrath had suddenly been too much for his brain, and that he was going daft on the spot.

Of Gorles's tricks, or audacious pretensions in regard to his daughter Katie, I am sure the peppery old fellow never had the slightest idea, or he would have probably put a summary and effectual bar to any further games of that sort, by pitching him straight out of the nearest window then and there.

As to myself, he presently apologized for his warmth; but again most solemnly warned me against ever repeating the strange story which had made him so angry. He over and over again inquired earnestly

whether I had ever spoken on that subject to his daughter, which, as it happened, I never had, though more than once it had been on the very tip of my tongue. He then put it to me, upon my sacred honour, as a gentleman, never to mention, or even allude to the matter directly or indirectly to either of his children, but more especially to Katie herself.

I willingly enough gave him my promise, and the old gentleman, who, though he pretended so thoroughly to pooh-pooh the whole idea, had, as I could see, in his heart not thought so lightly of it, seemed satisfied and relieved in his mind.

His manner became cordial as ever, and he took that opportunity of confidentially acknowledging to me that he also, just as Katie had done, had preconceived rather a prejudice against me before my arrival, and had wondered how any son of his old friend "Bullfinch" Lambard, as they used to call my poor father in the regiment, could possibly be such a chum, and on such thick terms of intimacy, with that half-bred little whipper-snapper Gorles.

## CHAPTER IX.

## TOO GOOD TO LAST LONG.

You were pleased, I think, my young friend, to grin somewhat sarcastically (to give no stronger term to that breach of manners on your part) upon my just now mentioning to you my earnest conviction—that, if it were not for the length of my limbs, and the strength of my muscular development, and if, perhaps, a rather more assiduous cultivation of the *Gradus ad Parnassum*, or whatever the English equivalent to that most useful work may be, could have been managed in the days of my youth, Nature had originally three-quarters of a mind to make a poet of me.

What will you say then, if, overlooking your disrespectful incredulity on that score, I now inform you confidentially, that although I never set up to be, as of course I know I never was, much of a scholar, yet that if I, or rather my pastors and masters, whose duty it was to have discovered the natural bias of my mind,

and to have trained it accordingly when young and ductile, had only luckily hit upon the right clue, I feel convinced that my best chance of an illustrious career would have been to have devoted myself to the abstruser studies of psychology, and the general philosophies of human nature; who knows, but I might have attained rank among some of the greatest theoretical, if not practical, philosophers of these philosophic times.

What, are you at it again? It is no use pretending to drink, for there is nothing left in your tumbler, and I can hear the edge of the glass jingling against your teeth. Well, laugh and snigger if you must, but don't choke yourself, that's not worth while.

Yes, though perhaps if never destined to be a poet, I sometimes feel that the other chance of becoming illustrious is not altogether out of the question.

Though by no means habitually, yet occasionally, I indulge in profound reflections on profound subjects; and sitting down late one night to my writing table, determined before I retired to rest to embody and arrange in some tangible form some ideas of things in general, which had in the course of the day been floating through my mind, suddenly—more, I own, by chance or instinct than by any progressive train of

thought—I in a moment hit upon, and found myself to be the accidental discoverer of one of those great secrets of nature's laws which, with proper elucidation by any one who was used to that sort of thing, would, I feel convinced, prove of the greatest value to science, and will hereafter be generally acknowledged and become reduced to a recognised system, just as the discovery of the centre of gravity was by Newton himself.

Now, while mentioning that most eminent name, I cannot refrain from remarking between ourselves that, whatever he may have deserved on all other points, I never can help thinking that he gained a great deal more κῦδος than he had any right to on the score of that tumbling apple.

If it was ripe, as I suppose it must have been, when the stalk could hold it no longer, why, of course, it gave way and down it fell. Any one else but such a dunder-headed old Don as he must have been would have picked it up and ate it, and thought no more about it, unless it had happened to disagree with him afterwards; but at any rate he should have known that it was nothing new for apples to tumble when their stalk ceases to be strong enough to hold them, instead of flying up into the air like a soap bubble, as he certainly seemed to have expected; and there, I grant,

if it had done so, might have been something to speculate and wonder about.

But as it turned out that upon the observation of that simple and most common place incident one of the most important principles of creation was discovered by the great Sir Isaac, so it was that I, by a rather slovenly trick I have, when in deep thought, as suddenly hit upon the secret on which, quite equally to that of gravity in the physical world, the whole spiritual economy of human nature centres and depends—namely, the as yet, that is, till as I tell you, it was revealed to myself, undiscovered Principle of Contraries.

Why is it, I, all of a moment, asked myself, an undoubted and immutable fact, that when I kick my slippers off under the table, and then try to fish them back again with my toes, that my left toe invariably finds its way into the right foot slipper, and the right toe *vice versa*?

Is it not always so? In every common act and incident of life does not that principle of contraries apply? Is it not universally allowed to be the exception, if it does not rain when any particularly pleasant picnic or out-door party has been arranged, or any review or public holiday for the enjoyment of which fine weather is essential?

Did you or anybody ever want to buy a horse, a yacht, or first-rate dog, or in short anything of that sort for which you may have been on the look for weeks in vain, and having at last paid more than you meant to do for probably even then not quite the thing you wanted, is it not by an invariable law of circumstances that you, within two or three days after your unsatisfactory purchase, meet with exactly the very animal, or whatever the object in request may happen to be, at half the price?

Is that chance? Bah! Is it not always so? Quite as immutable a certainty as that an apple will always tumble down when it cannot stay up any longer. I could furnish you with a thousand more familiar instances of the same principle from simple every-day incidents of life.

Working out, then, this great theory with all its ramifications and consequences in my mind, I have been brought to observe one special rule and axiom, which is, that if in the course of this life, as it is at present constituted, we poor mortals at any particular moment become—(unhappily for ourselves, though of course at the time it seems precisely the reverse)—conscious of present perfect enjoyment and contentment; either in, let us say, the attainment of any long-desired object; the opening of any new career which promises

certain success; the riddance or escape from any particular annoyance or trial of life; the reciprocal affection and attachment to some other being, which is no doubt the most delicious feeling of which the human mind is capable, or, in short, any other of the undoubted sources of human happiness, I do not say, mind, but that the pleasure may endure for some time unrecognised, and that when it is past and gone, one may on looking back feel satisfied at having experienced comparatively lasting periods of great enjoyment and bliss; but by the strict rule of contraries, the instant the consciousness of such satisfaction, being actually present, becomes quickened within us, and one's soul is, so to speak, indiscreet enough to congratulate its owner on its then enviable lot—presto!—it is gone—I do not pretend to explain where or wherefore, I only stick to the fact that it is invariably the case.

The same instant that happiness in any human being has arrived at the point of being felt and recognised, while it is actually being enjoyed, so sure may the adverse turn be known to be close at hand.

An immediate re-action of proportionate unhappiness and disappointment is inevitable, by just as cer-

tain a law of nature as that night will succeed day, or that the tide will begin to ebb as soon as the last point of high water-mark has been reached.

Now the particular application of these undoubted scientific truths to my own story is, that if I had only known, in those days, all that by my own thought and experience I have since discovered and digested, I should probably not have enjoyed those thrice happy days at Dresden as I did. No, no, my dear fellow, I should have known, from the very fact of being jolly as I was, that breakers were close a-head, and so, instead of entirely enjoying myself, been keeping one eye "looking out for squalls."

Jolly I certainly was while it lasted; "jolly as a sand-boy," as the saying is, though, by the way, why a sand-boy's lot should thus proverbially typify the height of human joy, I do not know. I don't, indeed, know that I ever met a sand-boy personally; and the untimely fate of the only one I can remember to have heard of, in that imperishable romaunt of real life familiar to us all—

"Who went and cut his throat with a little piece of glass,  
All for love of the Ratcatcher's daughter,"

would rather seem to tell the other way.

Indeed how could I but be happy as the day was

long? I should have liked those days to have stood still, and remained for ever always just the same—the most fatal of all symptoms! and so, as you shall hear, I found it.

## CHAPTER X.

## HAPPY DAYS AT DRESDEN.

WELL then, not to pursue further those abstruse subjects, which, as I perceive, you think tiresome, being, I suppose, beyond the depth of your unphilosophical brain, let me briefly wind up the description of those happy days, passed as I have already mentioned almost entirely in the society of the bewitching little Katie, who had adopted me, as I had her, into the closest relationship of first cousin-hood.

Thoroughly established in my uncle's family as "*enfant de maison*," although I continued my original separate lodgings, I went in and out just as I liked, always sure of a warm welcome when I made my appearance; and what is the real secret of making one feel at home, they none of them ever pretended to put themselves out in the slightest way for me, or to make the least difference in their daily occupations or amusements in consequence either of my presence or my absence.

I began after a bit to find that I was picking up a

little of the language, to a certain amount at least, and generally after passing my mornings at a fencing-school, which I and some other fellows at a tutor's there had instituted, or else pulling in an out-rigger on the Elbe, to the great amazement of the natives, my afternoons, or I might more properly say after-early-dinners, were devoted to family excursions, down to Saxon Switzerland, or Moritzberg, or Meissen, or some of the many outlying places which have been set down by the omniscient and despotic Murray in his *Handbook* as "things to be done."

When not so far, what jolly walks and strolls I used to have with my relatives under the avenues of the Grosse Garten, or on the Brühl'sche Terrasse, enjoying the really pretty scenery, and the bands of music, and the groups of happy folk sitting out under the trees, with their children playing around them, as they imbibed their *al fresco* refreshments; all the while growing as I was every day more and more fond and attached to — my uncle and aunt, and all of them.

Katie and I had, as time ran on, gradually fallen into the recognised habit of getting off for these delightful walks and evening strolls together alone, without any opposition, or indeed, as far as we knew, any remark on the part of the old birds.

I believe it had at first been supposed the correct thing to send the small brother Ferdy out with us, by way of chaperon (or what is familiarly known by "missy" young ladies as "daisypicker"), in compliance with some not quite effaced compunctions and notions of British propriety floating through my aunt's matronly brain.

Master Ferdy was, as I think I have already told you, a queer looking young animal, with a face covered with freckles, as if an over-ripe gooseberry had been skilfully aimed at the centre of his pug-nose, and the seeds squashed all over his expressive countenance; by no means agreeable to look at, and particularly disagreeable in his manners and customs, as his species at that period of their existence are too apt to be.

You never exactly knew where to have the creature, alternating as he at different times seemed to do, in temper and character from the most audacious vivacity and impudence, which I must say appeared to be his normal state, to occasional fits of the lowest and most morbid dismals, just as his sister had one day described to me, as if he were quite overwhelmed by the consciousness of some tremendous crime or secret.

I do not know that I should have particularly noticed, or at least given a second thought to the fickle

eccentricities of that infant mind, beyond perhaps thinking it odd that one of his tender years should have so precociously fallen out with and succumbed to his own liver, as I supposed was the case, were it not from Katie's having remarked it to me, as she had, as something new and unusual, as well as having it afterwards recalled to my mind, when, as I shall tell you, I came to hear the fibbertygibbet's own account of the cause of his griefs and remorseful pangs.

At that time, however, whether vivacious or in the dumps, we of course voted him a nuisance and a bore, so I used to dismiss him to his own devices with a friendly application of my toe; and I may say that he, on his part, seemed quite as little to care for or appreciate the pleasure of our company as we did his, and so it came to pass, that though, for some time, it was a sort of understood thing that we did not go beyond the public walks of the Grosse Garten, or the Terrasse, as the authorities had never, in so many words said anything to the contrary, and, somehow, neither of us had thought it worth while mentioning, we, on one particularly beautiful afternoon, agreed to carry out an expedition we had for some time before talked of between ourselves, of clambering up to the top of the Wolfshügel to see the sun set.

## CHAPTER XI.

## SUNSET FROM THE WOLFSHÜGEL.

THE Wolfshügel is an eminence, or, in plainer terms, a great high mound, whether natural or artificial I am not prepared to state, something between two and three miles outside Dresden, on the Pillnitz Road, on the other side of the river, from the city, having, I believe, like most of those outlying places, some cock-and-bull legend attached to it, which, if I ever heard, I have forgotten, but have no doubt it may be found in the pages of Murray's red-book, before alluded to.

Some hundred feet or so, more or less, high, its top is accessible by an irregular sort of half-pathway, half-rustic staircase. It is one of the favourite resorts, in the summer time, for Dresden cockneys, who go out there on fine Sunday afternoons, to enjoy themselves in the absorption of that muddy, nauseous compound which they, poor, ignorant souls, imagine to be, and call by the name of beer, while they contemplate the really fine panorama of their city below,

with the Elbe flowing beneath its handsome stone bridge for a foreground, and the well-shaped domes and quaint old spires thrown out into full relief by the sun setting behind them—as I daresay it was the particular evening I remember so well.

That evening there was, however, not another soul in the place—we had it all to ourselves. It is a stiffish pull up to the top, and I was obliged to hold Katie's hand very tight, to haul her up the scrambling way after me.

I have said we were quite alone, but so we had been many times before. It was a delicious evening, the most deliciously soft blowing air I think I ever experienced.

We, somehow, had not been talking much the latter part of our walk, though habitually, when we were together, we had so much to say to one another, that my aunt used to declare that she never could find a chance of getting in a single word when we two were there.

Did you ever, by chance, at any scientific lecture or institution, either from motives of curiosity, or in the pursuit of useful information, try the effect of a galvanic battery on your elbow-joints, or weakly dip your hand into the water inhabited by an electric eel?

Well, it is not pleasant, or a sensation which most people seem to care about trying more than once in their lives; and yet, if you have sufficient refinement of sensibility to take in and understand a comparison or simile, by which an idea can be conveyed of how two feelings can be precisely similar, and yet at the same time exactly the reverse, then, perhaps, you may form some notion of the exquisitely intense, though, at the same time delightful sensation which suddenly shot through, not only my elbow-joints, but my whole system, from the dear little soft hand of Katie, held, as it was, tightly in mine.

Gently, though intensely, and quite distinctly, I felt an electric shock, like a solid bubble, pass, as if from down through her arm and hand, into and up through my own. I seemed momentarily conscious of it in her before it had actually reached me, instantaneous as it was.

Why I felt that I did not dare look round at her till we reached the top, I do not know, but such was my thought, and I didn't.

It is only a great bare place, when you have got there, with a few straggling furze bushes, and sand, and an attempt at grass much trodden down by beer-soaking German Sunday-outers.

When we were fairly landed, I did look into her face;

Katie was blushing up to the very roots of her hair—perhaps it was only the exertion of clambering up—but she answered my look with a bright flash of light from her eyes, which I felt go through and through me like—like what, shall I say? It was piercing, and yet so soft and gentle, it was like a consolidated sunbeam wrapped in velvet.

I longed to speak, and say something, though I scarcely knew what, but it seemed beyond the power of utterance. Just as I was conscious of the electric vitality in her before it had reached me, so did she seem intuitively conscious of what was working in my brain, as if it had been her own. Before I could express or arrange my bubbling feelings into words, she whispered to me deprecatingly, though without seeming to move her lips, which were half open in a loving smile—"Don't say it, Frank; don't, please, tell me; let us go on as we have been; if you only speak, our happiness will vanish for ever."

And, by Jove, sir, she was right, for though so young and fresh to life, she seemed, by instinct, intuitively to feel that truth which it took ever so much experience, and no end of after reflection, to teach me.

I did speak, though I hardly knew at the time, and could not tell now what it was I said.

But I wish to heaven I had obeyed her, and had bitten my own tongue off at its root first.

But there, out it came in some sort of words or broken sentences, an incoherent rush of—not exactly sentimentality, for that is not in my line—but rhodomontade of some kind or another, having, perhaps, no very precise meaning or connection in particular—not that that mattered; there was no need of any explanation in the case. By that flash of our eyes, and that touch of our finger-ends, more than any words could ever convey was understood between us in an instant.

In how long, or why we started to come down again from the mound, I don't exactly know.

The sunset which we had climbed up on purpose to see, was, I dare say, and have no reason to doubt, that evening even more than usually magnificent; though, as it happens, I cannot call to mind its having made the slightest impression upon me; I rather think that we stood hand-in-hand with our faces turned towards the opposite side of the horizon.

That may be so; I cannot tell; I only do know that I neither dropped on one knee as a hero in a novel or a play does, and so I suppose I ought to have done, nor smote my breast, nor covered the fair hand I held with kisses. I was bending reverently towards her to catch her faint whisper, and could almost feel her soft

breath upon my cheek, when—blobb—came a great buzzing beetle, flying as those blundering beasts will do, you know, looking one way while steering the other, and, hitting me on the face with a slap which made me start again, bounded off so hard that it actually got itself entangled in Katie's hair, and there hung buzzing with its nasty hind legs scratching her darling little ear, until not without some difficulty managed to extricate it.

I was thinking more of not hurting her, than I was of the beetle, which, though as a rule I never can bear to injure the smallest insect, I wish now I had trod upon, and smashed upon the spot!

But no sooner had I loosened it, than it was gone, we could not tell where; neither of us saw it fly off, and the next instant, when we were looking everywhere about for it, on the ground and all around, it was nowhere to be seen; it was gone!

The same thought, ridiculous as I dare say you will think it, at the same moment flashed through the minds of both of us; Katie with a shudder uttered the name of Gorles! as I at that very same instant exclaimed, "The little devil himself."

This anyhow brought us to our senses, and having descended, we set out to make the best of our way home, walking rather faster than usual, for we felt

somehow it would not do to be late. Side by side we pushed along, hardly exchanging a word the whole way, except Katie once, with a very deep sigh, spoke more to herself than me, or perhaps seemed involuntarily to give utterance to her inward thoughts, as suddenly she exclaimed, though in a low voice, "Oh, I wish he had never spoken, for now something tells me, we shall never be the same again!" and again, simultaneously—though, in spite of myself—I could have almost felt angry with the poor little girl for uttering such an unlucky thought—I felt conscious of a similar presentiment of evil in my own heart as it shrunk up sensibly within me.

## CHAPTER XII.

## OUT OF TIME, ALL TOGETHER.

I DON'T think we exchanged another word until, upon the door step of her home, I took her hand again in mine, and said "Katie, am I to say anything to Uncle George?"

"Oh, Frank!" she answered, softly, "why couldn't we have gone on together as we have been? So very, very happy; and now it is all shattered like a broken glass! all changed and lost, and I know some great misfortune is going to happen to us!"

She spoke quite passionately, almost in bitter anger with myself I thought, and went in, and straight up to her own room.

I hesitated for a few minutes whether to walk in as usual to tea or not, but I thought it would seem strange if I didn't; so, not without having to fortify myself by counting ten slowly while twiddling with the door handle, I presented myself, as I felt painfully conscious, with an embarrassed and quite different air

from that with which I had ever before entered that same room. I was almost prepared to be cross-examined. I should not have been much surprised if I had been "blown up" for going so far, and keeping Katie out so late.

It was positively a relief when my uncle, waking up from his evening snooze with a grunt, only said in his usual kind, cheery tone of voice: "Halloa! Master Frank, is that you? Well, now, I suppose, Katie is come in, she will give us some tea."

But in a short time their maid or nurse, or whatever she called herself, came in to say that her young lady felt a little over-tired with her walk, and having a headache, would be glad if she might have her tea sent into her own room.

So my aunt had to take her place at the tea-table; and then how well I remember every trifling incident of that weary evening; my mind was on the stretch, and I was yearning for Katie to come down again, selfish beast as I felt I was, if it was only for me to see her again for two minutes before I went away.

But the clock on the mantelpiece struck three when it meant to say nine, which irregularity did not escape my aunt's observation, and away she went on a tangent, being quite convinced that it was the effect either of cockroaches, or else mice getting into the works, which

opinion she first propounded, and then argued on both sides, for and against, nobody contradicting her, in a discourse on clocks and their contingencies, which would, I should think, fill at least forty pages of very close print; and then, unfortunately, something had gone wrong with the cream, on which discovery, breaking off abruptly at the fortieth page, or thereabouts, of the by no means nearly concluded previous subject, after testing the faulty delicacy by sniffing at it, cautiously sipping, and then holding it up to the lamp for minute ocular inspection, the good lady again broke covert in full cry, favouring us with a most complete disquisition upon the management of a dairy, and all matters connected with its in-door, as well as out-door economy; ranging discursively over the various peculiarities of pastures, meadow lands, butter cups, sweet hay, oil cake, mangold-wurzel, and swedes; freely interspersing many self-answered doubts and enquiries, and propounding not a few, as I should think, entirely new and somewhat startling facts connected with the natural habits, tastes, sympathies, and antipathies of cattle in general, not forgetting the several diseases, complaints, and affections to which horned beasts are liable, with some most original suggestions of her own for special treatment in special cases; indeed she was just expressing her conviction that the cow which had

supplied that particular jug of cream was suffering from low spirits and dyspepsia, and only required change of scene, when she suddenly discovered that having given her husband his cup of tea she had utterly forgotten to pour out any either for herself or me, so entirely carried away had she been by the earnestness of her discourse, the telling points of which she had been impressively marking with raps upon the table with her tea-spoon. It is very odd that I should be able so distinctly to remember such stuff as I do, for though it all went into my ears, at the time my thoughts were occupied on a very different subject.

The tea was all stone cold, and the clock again striking four instead of ten, I rose to wish them good night, for they kept early hours, and I knew there was no chance after that of seeing Katie again that evening.

And so I went home and to bed, but not to make much of a sleep of it. Rapturously happy as some few minutes of that day had been to me, I tossed round and round all night with dreadfully dismal, though at the same time quite indefinite forebodings of evil close impending.

I felt that "I had put my foot in it," and dosing or waking that horrible beast of a beetle kept haunting

me—now dancing and whirling in all sorts of shapes and different colours before my eyes, now buzzing to all sorts of tunes round and round my ears, and then it grew larger and larger, until I recognised the grinning features of Gorles himself, whom you remember I had not then set eyes upon for five or six years, and he burst into a fit of laughing at me, and buzzed away.

Of course that may have been a dream, but my impression is that I had not been asleep—any how, after that I could stand it, or rather lie there no longer, so I jumped up and went for an early bathe.

## CHAPTER XIII.

INGENUI VULTUS PUER, INGENUI QUE PUDORIS !

IN spite of my early turn out, it was not until towards what seemed my usual hour, for fear of looking particular, that I found my way to Lüttichau Strasse, which was the name of the street where my relations lived, longing, yet half dreading all the while to see Katie, and wondering whether I should get her to come out with me the same as ever. As I sauntered, in spite of my eagerness, rather slowly up the opposite side of the way—whom should I see just hopping down the door steps but Master Ferdy, with his freckled face, even that off, rather more than usually indicative of toffy.

There was a most extraordinary compound of expression, a completely double expression, if I may so call it, of mischief and fright, both at the same time twinkling in his eyes and lurking about the corners of his mouth, as if, though dreading the consequences, he could not positively resist the malicious fun with which, in spite of himself, he addressed me when I came up to him.

With an indescribable wink of his eye, and a jerk of his thumb towards the interior of the house, he said —“ Oh my ! Cousin Frank, I've got something to tell you ! Here's such a lark ! Katie has had a letter this morning, a love-letter I expect, only our lady's-maid says it isn't the right time for valentines, you know, and even if it was, these louts of foreigners don't know what valentines are ; but this came under cover directed to me, and when I gave it to Katie you should have seen the colour she was, as red as a peony. Isn't it prime ? but don't you go and show me up now for having told you, because, perhaps, she would rather you didn't know.”

“ You confounded young scamp,” I said, as I bonnetted his hat down over his face.

“ Ah, ah ! I thought it would make somebody jolly jealous,” sung out the impudent young wretch, with a *snooks* at me, just as he wriggled himself out of reach of my toe, with which if I had caught him as I tried, it would have been well into the middle of the next week before he forgot it, I'll engage to say ; but fortunately for himself he escaped, and cut away with redoubled crows of defiance, while I ran up unannounced, as I always was accustomed to do, to the sitting-room on the first floor.

I found only my aunt there alone, well settled into

some new Tauchnitz novel, which must have been a real tackler, as, for the first time since my acquaintance had commenced, I found her disinclined to talk ; she just looked up from her book to tell me that poor Katie was suffering from a bad head-ache, and had not left her own room the whole morning, and that the colonel had said——and she stopped short ; as if, for once in a way, she had been going to rattle off, and had thought better of it ; then she relapsed so entirely into her absorbing romance, or whatever it was, that I found I only received rare and disjointed answers to my attempts at conversation : so after fidgetting a bit about the room, and asking my aunt if she felt inclined to come out for a walk, which she was not, I had nothing for it but to start out by myself, as the thought at the moment suddenly struck me, in pursuit of Master Ferdy, to whom I was just in the humour to administer a little serious counsel, or may be a little wholesome chastisement for his transgressions.

Pretty well knowing his haunts, I came suddenly upon my young friend in a corner of the Grosse Garten, where with two other little urchins, who went to the same day school as himself, he was partaking in the enjoyment of mud pies, and swimming walnut-shell boats in the boundary ditch of that Elysium.

Before he was even aware of the approach of the enemy I had clutched the young gentleman by the scruff of the neck, to the great and manifold amazement, not only of himself and his juvenile companions, who fled away howling, but also of two sky-blue dragoons in Minerva's shaped helmets, who, seated on one of the benches hard by, had sought that unfrequented spot to discuss together in retirement bonbons and other sweet stuff, in which delicacies it is the custom of those warlike youths of the Saxon army to expend the greater portion of their monthly pay.

At first, the hands of those sons of Mars instinctively flying to their sword hilts, they had seemed half inclined to interfere in aid of the victim of the sudden assault which they had witnessed ; but either perceiving my stout walking-cane, or very likely recognising all parties concerned as *Englishers*, and, therefore, incomprehensible and unaccountable, they shrugged their shoulders, and between them pulled a fresh bonbon with a crack which made their eyes sparkle with enthusiasm.

“ Now, young man,” I said, addressing Ferdy, who was wriggling in my grasp like a lively eel, “ I've got you ; listen to me quietly and I won't hurt you, and if, like that fellow I heard you spouting about from

your Virgil the other morning, you will come quietly, and 'sit down under yonder wide-spreading beech-tree;' I only want to talk to you very seriously, but if you attempt to escape, or kick up any row, I shall feel compelled to shake you till every bone in your skin has jumbled out of its right place: in the first place how dare you use such an expression as you did this morning, in regard to any feeling as existing between your sister and myself? which, young imp as you are, I suppose you have sense to know, would, if it came to your father or mother's ears, make all the difference in the world as regards the footing on which I am at present allowed to be in your family, and which I do not want to forfeit for the sake of your impudence and jabber; besides, your own good feeling ought to tell you that no English boy, however young, would ever couple such rude and vulgar ideas with his own sister's name as love-letters, valentines, and jealousy, or trash of that sort. Why, if you had been sent to school in England instead of this humbugging place," I slipped out, "the very first thing a school-boy learns at seven years old is, to keep secret from the others even his sisters' Christian names, or any sort of mention about them. At least it was always so in my day, at private schools as well as Eton.

"But far worse than your impudent chaff to me,

is your allowing yourself to be the bearer of letters to Katie, which the writer, whoever he may be, does not venture to send to her openly ; for you must have had some previous underhand instructions in that matter, to have been thus trusted with an enclosure of that sort ; perhaps," I added (though I was sorry the next minute that it thus escaped me), "you knew that it came from the same person to whom you were little rascal enough to sell a piece of your sister's hair for a thaler ?"

This idea had got into my head, and tormented me nearly to distraction since hearing of the letter which she had thus clandestinely received.

"Holloa ! Cousin Frank, who put you up to that ? though it's a regular crammer to say that I ever sold it, all the same ; but I don't quite see what odds it is to you exactly, if I did," replied the urchin, seeming to be partially recovering some of his natural audacity. "Has Miss Katie told you that ? I don't think she need have pretended to be so shocked and ashamed that she couldn't bear to think that anybody should know it, and made me promise not to say anything about it before Papa, or Mamma, or anybody ; but was it really her who told you ? for if she did, she is a regular sneak."

"Is it likely," I answered, rather jesuitically, with

another question, "that if she, as you tell me, was too much annoyed to wish anybody to know such a thing, even your papa and mamma, that she should tell a distant connexion, a comparative stranger like myself?—but I know it, and that is enough."

"Then you must have had a letter from your friend Mr. Gorles himself, and what a regular chouse of him to sneak of me, because I wouldn't have done such a thing, I am sure, if I could have helped myself, but I really couldn't. But he put me up to begging that lock of hair of Katie for myself, and then, for he was always very goodnatured to me, he offered to take it himself to Elimeyer's, the jeweller, to be plaited, and put into my new locket which mamma had given to me; but when he brought it back to me, I saw it was a piece of brown silk, not quite the same colour, and accused him of playing me the trick to tease me; at first he denied it, but afterwards he said he wanted to keep that hair, to have a bit of fun with it, and he made me a present of a thaler, not for the hair, because I wouldn't have done such a thing as sell it to him; of course, it wasn't likely; but if I would promise not to tell anybody, that he never would either, as long as he lived. But now he has broken his word, and told you, I suppose, it is no secret; and I was really ashamed, and sorry, when Katie found it out, and

spoke to me so seriously about it ; but, as I say, I couldn't help it."

" Couldn't help it, you young rascal !" and I suppose the grip in which I still held his collar involuntarily tightened a little.

" No ! but don't choke me, Cousin Frank, or shake me so, till I feel all limp. No more could any one else, not even you yourself couldn't help yourself, though you are ever so much bigger, if he had you in his power as he has me. Why,"—and here the boy's eyes distended themselves to twice their usual size—"do you know that if Mr. Gorles chooses, he knows a secret by which he could strike me down dead on the spot, though he might be miles and miles away somewhere else ? He told me so himself, and after what I have seen of him, and myself been through with him, I am quite positive, certain that he really can : he has got my soul in his power, I know ; and what is more, I think he has my sister Katie's too, though I don't think she knows it yet, but she will find it out some day. I have never told anybody yet what I am going now to tell you ; but as he broke my secret, I can't see why I shouldn't break his ; indeed, I cannot go on much longer without telling somebody,—and perhaps as you are his old schoolfellow and friend, as I heard my papa one day say you were, he

wont mind so much, and wont strike me down this time; but, anyhow, tell you I must, or I feel sometimes as if I should burst, and so I may as well die by one way as the other."

And so, whimpering, and occasionally stopping as if to listen, or looking round in a wild and terrified manner, as if he really thought the fatal moment for striking was at hand, he certainly gave me a most extraordinary though circumstantial account of what, as he expressed it, "he had been through," and why he was in the power of "my friend" Gorles, as he would persist in calling him. . . . .

Coupled with Lambard's own experience and similar early impressions in connexion with this person, it is not very strange that he should have been so much struck with his young cousin's wonderful story, as to have written it down while fresh in his memory, and having carefully read it over to the boy, made him sign his name at the bottom of it; which authentic document, nearly written in the boy's own words, I had in my own possession, and copied *verbatim*, as will be seen in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## MASTER FERDY'S EXPERIENCES.

“WELL, then, Cousin Frank”—after a renewed torrent of entreaties to stand by him, and save him from the consequences of his confessions, which I promised to do if he concealed nothing—“well, then,” commenced the conscience-stricken Ferdy, “when your ‘great friend’ Mr. Gorles first called and made the acquaintance of them at home, he was always very kind to, and took much notice of me, and didn’t snub me and seem glad when it was time for me to be off to school, as you always do, you know; and in short, despise my company. On the contrary, he was always giving me lots of toffy and sugar-balls, and kreutzers almost every day, and if he met me in the street he would stop and nod to me, and very often join, and walk home with me; and sometimes he took me out for walks all by ourselves, and always seemed so kind, and wanting to know so much about us all at home. He liked me to tell him everything; all about poor little

Cicely, our sister who died, and how old she was, and what she was like, which I could not tell him, because I was ever such a little chap, quite a baby, at that time ; and about myself, and what I should like to be when I grew up, and so on ; and all about Katie, how old she was exactly, and when was her birthday, and what she liked best, and if I thought she liked any one best ; and he told me to ask our old nurse Harrison, who you know has been with Papa long before he married my Mamma, and before Katie was born, if she could remember exactly what time, whether in the morning or the evening she was born ;—and so I did, and nurse told me at eight minutes past nine on the morning of the 3rd of February exactly, which, when I told him, he wrote down in a little red note-book, into which he was always putting notes about all sorts of things which he used to ask me, and I used to tell him.

“ One day he took me into the Royal Fabriken with him, and while he and the man had gone on to the further part of the show-rooms, I unluckily happened to tumble against—well—no, I promised to tell you the truth—I was making the sails of one of the China windmills go round when it flew right off, and besides breaking itself, pitched into a lot of China flowers, which it knocked over and smashed all to bits.

“ Mr. Gorles came running back with the man when

they heard the row, and at first seemed going to blow me up no end ; but then he stopped, because, as I say, he was always very kind to me, and said he supposed it was an accident, and that he would pay the man what he asked for the damage, which was eight or nine thalers, and I must pay him back by degrees when I got the money ; and he never told of me, and forbade me to say anything about it at home ; and so, of course, how could I feel anything but most grateful and ready to do anything in the world he asked me ? For if it had not been for him, he told me that for wilfully touching and damaging King John's property I might have been taken up and put in prison for many months, perhaps sent altogether out of the country, but that his interest, and paying on the spot, as he had done, had saved me.

“ It was about ten days or a fortnight after that he asked me when I thought I should be able to pay him, and I had to say I didn't know, but I only had fifteen kreutzers in the world. He told me that if I would promise and vow always to do implicitly all he wished, and keep his secrets, he would perhaps let me off at least part of the great sum he had so readily paid for me.

“ And that is why I complied, and did not tell till Katie found it out and taxed me with it, about her hair,

and other strange things he made me do for him, for I never, even if I had wished, dared to refuse him.

“But one night—it was the night of Katie’s first ball at the King’s palace, and she, with Papa and Mamma, had just gone off, about eight in the evening, I was going to bed—when who should come into the little sitting room out of which, as you know, my room opens, but Mr. Gorles.

“He had come up without any one seeing him, for nurse and Clotilde the lady’s-maid had both gone out the moment mamma’s back was turned, as they always do, you know.

“He seemed to know it at least, for he never asked for them or looked surprised; but he said if, instead of going to bed so early, I should like to come with him, that he would take me out for a pleasant evening, and if I never told it would be great fun, and no one would be one bit the wiser. So, to deceive the servants he put the linen bag into the bed, which looked just like me curled up, and left some of my things and a pair of boots outside the door.

“I was in an awful funk, and knew what a jolly row there would be if I was found out; and yet I felt I could not refuse. I never could. When he made me do anything particular like that, he would hold me by my thumbs and look so hard into my eyes he made

me tremble, though I liked him, too, all the time;—so I shut my door, with the things tumbled outside, and followed him.

“There was no one to see us go downstairs or out of the street door. Instead of taking the way, as I expected, to his own lodgings, where I had been with him before unbeknown, we set out in just the opposite direction through different streets, till I knew we were in the Alte Markt, in the further corner of which we passed through a low archway, right on to the end of a sort of passage or yard full of old tubs and broken boxes and lumber, and then up a very narrow winding staircase, up and up, and creaked it did at every step,—I began to think we never should get to the top.

“I had to stop two or three times to take breath; besides, I began to be frightened lest perhaps he was leading me up some dreadful place to murder me, as, when I stopped, he turned to speak quite crossly and impatiently, and not at all like he generally used to do.

“At last, when I thought we must be getting nearly up to the sky, we came to a door at which he knocked one, two, three times slowly and distinctly; and when that opened with a click, but we saw no one, we passed through a long dark passage to another door which

had a curtain or piece of carpet hung across it, shoving through which we found ourselves in a good sized room with a sloping ceiling running up to a point like the top of a tent.

“When I could begin a little to see about me, for the room was as full of thick smoke as any dense fog, I made out four people all smoking great pipes. Two of them were students, I knew, by their coloured caps and funny clothes ; then there was a Frenchman, for they always spoke to him in French, and I noticed that he didn't seem to understand them when the others talked German among themselves, and the other one had an awful lot of shaggy hair, like a regular mane, all over his shoulders, and he wore dark spectacles. Oh, but I forgot to tell you that once when I had stopped for breath upon the steep winding stairs, Mr. Gorles had particularly charged and warned me that when we got up among some friends of his, whom we should find where he was going to take me, I was to mind not to speak a word unless I was spoken to, to do just as I was told, and on no account to let them know that I understood German, but that he should tell them that I spoke and knew English only.

“Fancy what an awful crammer ! and that was not the only crammer he told, or made me tell for

him, which I could not somehow help, though I knew all the time how dreadfully wicked it was.

“When we had got into the room, ‘Hey, my friend,’ said the Frenchman, speaking what I suppose he would call English, ‘is it that you have with you there the infant of whom you have entertained us? Let us see him.’

“And they all shook me by the hand, and laughed, or rather grinned, like what our maid calls ‘Cheshire cats,’ at me, and slapped me on my back, and told me not to be afraid, though I held my tongue, and pretended not to understand what they said in German, just as Mr. Gorles had desired me.

“‘How old are you?’ they asked; but I didn’t answer, though of course I understood them well enough; which I could see, when they were talking quickly among themselves, Mr. Gorles could do but very little.

“There was one of the students who talked English quite perfectly, and I should have thought was an Englishman, if it had not been for his queer cut clothes and his long boots, and pointed beard and moustache; and besides he talked German amongst the others, quite as fast and as well as any of them; he asked me again—

“‘How old are you,’ he said, ‘my brave boy?’

“ ‘Twelve and three-quarters,’ I answered, for so I was then, though now I am regularly in my teens, you know.

“ ‘Oh, damn it!’ he said, in the very best English, quite naturally, just as Papa or you might, you know, ‘we don’t want a lad of twelve years old, we desire one entirely innocent, who knows nothing of guile or sin;’ and then, turning to his companions, he said in his own language, ‘Max, thinkest thou that at thirteen years, wanting three months, any innocency remained with thee? I wager not, nor yet with Monsieur Gustave, nor our revered friend the Professor, either at eleven, or ten, or even nine, was much innocency to be found;’ and they had a long talk, serious, and yet laughing among themselves, in which Mr. Gorles did his best to join, but the ‘mulls’ he made in the language were no end.

“ But as he seemed to keep on protesting and explaining, the one who spoke English, and whom they called Von Lion, turned and asked me some more questions, and spoke to me about things I could not make out the meaning of; and, seeming to make nothing of me, they then all said that they could but try, or something to that effect.

“ One of them then brought out of an old black-looking carved cabinet which stood back in a sort

of recess, what looked liked a great solid globe of glass, which he put in the middle of the table, which was in the centre of the room, and round which we were all standing, placing it very carefully upon a large block of wood or something square, covered over with a piece of black velvet, on the edges of which were all sorts of queer figures and topsy-turvy letters, like the things one sees on the big coloured bottles in doctors' shops.

“They then all put away their pipes, and turned down the lamp, which hung from the middle of the ceiling, and gave all the light there was, till, dark as it had been before, we could now only just make out each other, like so many shadows in the smoke, and there was a dead silence. After a little pause, they all knelt down most solemnly round the table. Mr. Gorles made me kneel down between himself and the other student (not the one who had been questioning me), who began, when we were all quite settled on our knees, to say, or rather sing out a droning sort of prayer, only it seemed to be in verse, very much like what I heard at the King's Catholic Kirche, when I went with mamma one day to hear the service there.

“At first I thought it was in German, but I couldn't make out any meaning in it, and afterwards began to

think it must be Latin, for some of the words were just like old Schultz, the usher at our school, pronounces Ovid and Virgil, which, when I repeat them at home, Papa always says are all wrong, and not a bit like what he ever learned for Latin.

“After this was over, they turned on a little more light, and, bringing me forward, spoke to me in a very solemn voice, desiring me to compose myself, and if I had any sort of wicked thoughts in my head,—which of course I had all the while, telling such a fib about not knowing German, besides being out from home at such a time without Papa or Mamma’s having an idea of it;—but what wicked thoughts I had I was to dismiss entirely, and to fix my eyes and my thoughts with all my mind on the glass ball, or crystal, I heard them say it was, and to tell them if I could see any things or persons in it.

“I looked ever so long, with all my might, but all I could see was the reflection of the lamp hanging over our heads, and my own and their faces topsy-turvy, and out of all shape, just as one does in a tablespoon, and that was all, though they all stood round quite still, and hardly breathing, seeming to expect that I should begin to see something else than what I have told you, but it was no use their expecting, as nothing came.

“ Mr. Gorles, who had been very cross and snappish towards me all the evening, got very impatient, and said I was a stupid little fool for my pains ; but Von Lion and the others, I suppose because they were strangers, were more civil, and told me not to mind, but that I should see beautiful things presently, if I wasn't afraid.

“ Then, after another earnest talk together, they set me up in an old-fashioned high-backed chair, and the one they called the Professor, with the shaggy head, took off his green spectacles, and took hold of me by my two thumbs, quite gently, and desired me to look with all my might into his eyes, and most wonderful eyes they certainly were—they sparkled like lucifer matches, or like our black cat's do in the dark.

“ He stared at me with these sparkling eyes, and I stared back with all my might at him.

“ Presently he let go my thumbs, and began pawing with his lanky sort of claws of fingers in front of my face, closer and closer without quite touching me, which made my eyes feel sore and heavy, and I remember trying to look away, but found I couldn't ; so there I had to sit staring at him, when I found my head begin to go round and round, and a noise of rushing in my ears, at first slow—whiz, whiz—and then gradually whiz, whiz-z-z-z-z, like a rail-

way train, rather a jolly sensation than not, and my eyes shut of their own accord, but the very instant they did so, the rummest thing was that I saw myself as if I was somebody else, looking on, distinctly in a bright flash of light. I could see the back of my own head, and all round the back of the big chair I was sitting in, and all the five others of them standing round, perfectly quiet, in the dim light, watching the strange man who was thus coming his dodges close to my nose. I could see my own face, and my own eyelids shut close, all in a single flash, as I say, as quick as thought, for I only shut my eyes for one minute, and opened them again directly; but when I did so it was as if I had awoke up from a deep sleep, and they had all moved and were gathered round me. The lamp was turned up, and the room was almost quite clear of smoke; some one had unfastened my collar, and they were fanning me with an atlas or some kind of large portfolio, and one was bathing my forehead and hands with cold water.

“I felt very queer, and inclined to be sick, which, however, soon went off; but what then astonished me most, though I have grown used to it since, was that the clock just opposite to me as I sat down in that chair pointed to nine exactly; and, just as one of them opened the window to let in some fresh air upon me, and I

was noticing the full moon shining brightly in over the roof of the houses and chimney pots, up amongst which we seemed to be, the great clock of the Frauen Kirche began booming out twelve, and then I heard the other bells in different directions strike the same ; and looking up to the clock in the room, sure enough, that had both hands at twelve also. I got up out of the big chair and went towards the open window, out of which while I was leaning, feeling very miserable and in an awful funk, thinking how I ever should get home again without being found out, and what a row there would be when I was missed, as I was sure I must have been long before this, I heard them in the room talking away again with all their might in German, whether or no I could ever have seen pictures of Frederic the Great, or Wallenstein, or Schiller, to have been able to describe them all so exactly as I had done : and two or three other names I had never mentioned and don't think I ever even heard of before.

“ This puzzled me, and I could not make out what they could be talking about exactly, because I had never tried even to describe anybody, or uttered a syllable about any of them.

“ Then they turned upon Mr. Gorles for saying I couldn't speak German, for that I had talked it the whole time as if I were a native.

“ But he stuck to it still that I knew nothing but English, and that he had been perfectly astonished to hear me himself, which was, you know, a regular banger; though, as to my having talked German, that was only another as big, as I tell you I had never opened my mouth except to say that I could see nothing in the glass.

“ But the shaggy-headed one, who had put on his spectacles again, made Mr. Gorles repeat his assertion, and seemed to think it very important, saying something about its being the proof of a certainly established though still disputed phenomenon (or some such stunning big word) in science.

“ Then Mr. Gorles came across to me at the window and threatened, and entreated me to stick to it that I could only speak English, and not German; and I knew very well that I had not done so.

“ When he joined them again, he seemed sulky and complaining about something they had refused, on which they turned upon him, and talked about debasing the noblest secrets of science to his trumpery views on a fräulein, on which he seemed to be very angry, and they only laughed and jeered at him.

“ I felt altogether bewildered and puzzled, and was longing to get back home to my own little room, and yet dreading the consequences of having come out as

I had ; and at last, when I had shaken hands with them all, and the shock-headed man had stared at me again through his spectacles, and asked me if I would come again and have another game of staring with him, we got downstairs and on our way home. It was a bright moonlight night and we kept along the shady dark sides of the streets till Mr. Gorles, who, I told you, had all along been very sharp and disagreeable to me, stopped at the corner of one of the empty streets. There was not a soul to be seen in them ; only in the distance we could hear the clatter of carriages, I suppose coming home from the king's ball at the Schloss, which made me think what should I do if Papa and Mamma were to have come home before we got back.

“ Mr. Gorles stopped suddenly and turned my face round to the moonlight, which I suppose showed what a funk I was in, and said that I should not leave that spot until I had solemnly promised never to tell a living soul that I had been out with him as I had, or anything about what I had seen or done, or where I had spent the evening, not even if my absence was found out when we got home ; but that if I should make the promise he would manage to find sufficient excuses for me and get me out of the scrape ; but that if ever I dared tell, he said in a most dreadful voice—

that is, you know, it would have been most dreadful if it had not been rather squeaky—that as sure as the words passed my lips I should be struck down dead the very same instant for breaking my solemn oath. Only I never took the oath, you see, though he wanted me to do so ; I said I wouldn't, because I knew it was a dreadful sin to take oaths or swear ; mamma had told me so ; and he didn't even get the promise out of me as he wished, though he kept threatening and declaring that he should have a secret power over my life even if he were not near me, that is not even here at Dresden, but away, even as far as Paris or in England itself, it would be all the same ; but whether he meant to be down upon me through telegraph or not I cannot say.

“ When we got to Lüttichau Strasse Mr. Gorles told me to wait at the corner while he went on to see if it was all right ; and there was I standing for ten or fifteen minutes all alone, and beginning to get dreadfully cold, and frightened too, at being left thus, at one o'clock in the morning, all by myself. I did not know but that there might be robbers, or even worse, perhaps ghosts, prowling about at that time.

“ I was just making up my mind to come on in spite of all risks when I saw his figure skulking along, just like a cat, on the dark shadowy side of the

Strasse. He whispered that it was all right, and that my people had not yet returned from the ball; and sure enough when we got to our own house they were not, and the street door was unfastened.

“The Bernstoffs, who lived in the same house at that time, were also gone I knew to the ball at the Schloss, which I suppose was the reason of the front door being left open.

“And there was the private entrance of our apartments also ajar, and Harrison and mamma’s maid both snoring fast asleep in their chairs, with the lamp on the table gone out, though it seemed only just to have done so, as it was still smoking and smelt like anything.

“I could see quite plainly, for the moon was shining right in at the staircase windows: no one had touched the things at my door, so I knew no one had been in there, and didn’t I turn out the clothes-bag and nip into bed in less than winking.

“I don’t think I could have been there five minutes before they all came home. Mamma came in to look at me, but I pretended to be fast asleep.

“I almost thought she would have twigged me when she leant down to give me a kiss. She cried out to nurse, who stood waiting at the door with a candle,

'Why, bless the child, how cold he is; how long has he been to bed?'

"I only gave a snort and a turn, without opening my eyes, as nurse answered, 'Oh, ever since nine o'clock, punctual, ma'am,' which she couldn't possibly have known, even if I had, as I knew very well that she and Clotilde had both gone across to old Mrs. Pidgers's over the way, to tea, at half-past eight, the moment mamma's back was turned.

"For though nurse Harrison is such a very faithful old servant, that mamma often says she may be trusted to any amount, she does tell most awful crammers sometimes.

"And so you see I never was found out; and not being questioned, run no risk of being struck dead for telling.

"When next day I met Mr. Gorles, he looked at me exactly as if nothing of all that I have been telling you had ever happened between us.

"As soon as I was alone with him, which, as I noticed, he seemed not to wish to be, I tried to say something confidential-like about our mysterious adventures together of the evening before.

"I had had time by then to think over, and consider that all I had been through had in it something

mysterious and wonderful ; it began to seem to be some unknown sort of awfully horrible wickedness.

“ But he only looked as if he could not the least understand what on earth I was talking about.

“ But when I persisted, and went on to speak about the garret, and the strange party we had met there, and the crystal, and the odd effect their tricks had had on myself (though there my ideas were the most confused), and also the dreadful threats he had held over me on our way home through the empty streets, he still kept up a look of astonishment, and seemed bewildered, and stoutly declared I must have dreamt every word of it ; and that I was going to have brain fever, and wanted some medicine.

“ Now though I may be young and green, I was not going to be done entirely in that way, so I said, ‘ Oh, very well, if it is only all a dream I shall go and tell it all to my Papa and my Mamma, and see what they think of it.’

“ Then you should just have seen his face, when I said that I should tell them how I had dreamt that he had threatened to strike me down dead.

“ He answered, that as for that, if I ever dared tell anybody that story, or even alluded to such a thing, that he had no doubt it would really happen to me ; and then he said I must remember about Joseph in

the book of Genesis, how he sometimes had queer dreams, which, though they were dreams, yet all meant something, and came to pass; and so in my case there was no reason that a special trial for my young soul might not have been sent from Heaven, and that after so solemn a warning as I described, that if I did dare to divulge all that appeared to have happened to me, I should more than probably be really struck down, and in his opinion served right too, for not taking proper warning.

“And his look at me, as he said this, was so dreadful that I feel quite sure that, though he might wish me to forget, and try to persuade me out of my own broad awake senses, he meant at the same time to impress his threats on my mind as deeply as he could. Since that, and at times pretending to put on his old kind manner, which, as I told you, he had entirely dropped that night, but still keeping up his humbug about knowing nothing about it, he talked me into describing what that shaggy-headed man did to me *in my dream*, as he would always call it, though, of course, he knew better: and made me tell him what my own feelings were under the strange treatment, and so gradually got on, to my letting him try the same dodges himself, just as he said at first, for fun, and to show me what fancy it all was; and so having once begun, he has often done

it since when we have been alone, and now he can put me sound to sleep, whenever he likes, in two minutes or less, merely by fixing his eyes upon me, and waving his hands half-a-dozen times over my face.

“On the whole, I have come to think it rather pleasant than not, except that when I wake I feel so dreadfully weary and tired, just as if I had been for a tremendous long run, instead of fast asleep on his sofa for ever so long, as I can tell by seeing how the clock has gone, though, like the first time on that strange night, I have only seemed to shut my eyes and open them again the same instant.

“Though I had left off liking and caring for Mr. Gorles as I used to do, I cannot tell you how strongly and how constantly I have caught myself longing to be with him, and have often seemed, without any one to tell me, to know when he was coming, and somehow, as if drawn towards him, and in spite of myself, obliged to obey and comply with him in everything.

“Indeed it is all very fine, cousin Frank,” concluded the poor lad, suddenly changing his note from the most plaintive depths to the highest indignation, “for you to pitch into me about that hair of Katie’s, or the giving her the letter, which I knew the moment I touched it must have come from him, but I should like to see even you, big as you are, try to disobey

him, if he had only once got the same wonderful power over you."

"Humph!" was all I said in reply to the boy, for I did not care to let him know exactly what my own private thoughts were upon all that he had been telling me.

## CHAPTER XV.

## COLONEL DE LORME FORBIDS HIS NEPHEW HIS HOUSE.

ON reaching the De Lormes' house I left the boy with a kinder shake of the hand than I think he had ever yet had from me, which seemed to gratify, though rather surprise the young beggar, whom I then for the first time, though he really was my own blood relation, found myself taking a sort of kindly interest in, and discovering to have perhaps a warm-hearted, excitable sort of nature, on which such deep impressions as he had been describing might be easily made. But how far had the same sort of impressions been tried or succeeded on his sister I thought with a chill, which seemed to make my very skin shrivel up too tight for me, as I turned away towards my own lodgings. I had inquired at the door, and hearing that Katie was still too unwell to appear in the drawing-room, like an idiot, as I thought myself afterwards, instead of going up as usual, to spend my evening with my uncle and aunt, walked home to the solitude of my own den,

which was what I had not done for many weeks past.

But I longed to get away alone, to turn well over in my mind the extraordinary account the boy had given me, and really consider whether I could not devise some way of thwarting and avoiding the influence, which, though in what exact manner I could hardly define, yet still I had a distinct presentiment, was closely hanging over Katie's and my own immediate destinies.

Yes, it certainly was idiotic and bad policy on my part to walk off as I did that evening, because Katie was not to be found sitting in the drawing-room, as she had always been accustomed to do when well and all right, because I have thought since it must have first given occasion to my uncle and aunt to take notice, and form certain conjectures which were, however, inevitable, and must have come sooner or later, though, of course, the longer a disagreeable crisis is postponed, the better one always fancies it to be.

The next day, and the day after that, I paid my usual visit at about my usual time in as natural and unconcerned a manner as I could assume.

Katie was still reported as unable to leave her room, though I could not elicit at all from what cause she was supposed to be suffering.

I did not like to appear too particular or urgent in my inquiries after her, though I think they must have themselves perceived the deep anxiety and mental distress I was enduring.

Though still kind and cordial when I went in to pass my evenings with them, as I have told you had become my recognised and established habit, there was something (though even to myself I could hardly define it) of change in the manner of both the Colonel and my aunt; they seemed as if they were almost more sorry than angry with me, but still there was a sort of chill about them both.

I did not care to show any difference in my manner in return, even if my heart, yearning as it was for some comfort, or the vaguest chance of seeing her, had not kept me hovering about the place, because I hoped it would all blow over, and I did not wish to appear a huffy fool and ungrateful after all the kindness I had received from them; but still though they, on their part, did not seem to like in plain terms to hint at such a thing, I began to be painfully aware that they would not be sorry if I did not pay my evening visit perhaps quite so regularly, and as a matter of course, as heretofore. In short, though I could not tell how or why exactly, I began to feel that the footing I was on with them was becoming uncomfortable: and so it

went on until one Sunday, when going down immediately after morning church to at least inquire, if not go in, which, goodness knows, except for the reasons I have just told you, was become anything but pleasant as it used to be, at the door I met Harrison, the nurse, with whom I had always been on rather cheery, nod-my-head sort of terms, as I was constantly going in and out.

That day she looked quite gloomily, I might almost say savagely at me, as she answered my eager inquiries after Katie.

“Miss De Lorme,” she told me, “was quite as bad as need’s be, and had been delirious and screaming frantic-like all night, if that was any gratification to them as has been the cause of all this to know.”

I could see, before I asked, the trouble, anxiety, and grief which were weighing down the Colonel, whom I found upstairs in the sitting-room alone, with no attempt at occupation besides his own sad thoughts.

Instead of the kindly smile and word of welcome, which I had always till lately received when I entered, he rose from his chair, and making me the stiffest of inclinations, begged me in formal terms to be so good as to take a seat, as he had to request the honour of a very serious conversation with me, at the same time laying some large sheets of paper and freshly prepared

pens on the table before him. He went on to say, that he thought it right to inform me that he felt it necessary to commit what might pass between us fully to writing for future reference, if required. His whole manner and deportment were so ultra-military and sublime, that I suppose, according to the old adage which you of course know, it must have been within a hair's breadth of bordering on that one step further. Anyhow, miserable, anxious, and if the truth must be told, half-frightened as for the moment I felt, yet it was all I could do to keep from bursting out into a laugh.

I fancy my sensations were very much in that indescribable sort of mixed-up state, which the women-kind are subject to when they enjoy themselves in a fit of "high strikes," as Mrs. Harrison, I remember, (not about me though) one day calling them.

I gulped down the rising inclination, however, and was glad I could do so, but thinking the wisest way was not to give in to such formal absurdities, but just to take the bull by the horns at once—"Come, my dear uncle," I said, "what is the matter? and why are you so put out and angry with me? It has added to the wretchedness which I have already suffered—which I am sure we have all cause enough to suffer—to see as I have for these last few days, that there is something ;

and I would much sooner have the row, if there is to be one, out at once, like a man, and know how I have offended you, than go on in this unsatisfactory, uncomfortable manner, for I am quite sure that if I have given you any just cause for offence, it has been totally unintentional on my part; so please let me know the worst, and at once plainly say on."

The old gentleman gave me a queer look, as if half inclined to resent my plain spoken way of disposing of what he had, I fancy, been all that morning, or perhaps longer, rehearsing in his own mind with all the preliminaries of a domestic court-martial; but his own good sense prevailed, and he was, after all, a sensible old buffer at bottom, though I had by that time found him out as apt to get crochets into his head now and then; so, changing to a more conventional every-day style of address than that in which he had begun, he said—"Well then, Frank, my boy, tell me at once, candidly, can you account for this strange and sudden illness of my dear daughter's? Have you been saying or telling her anything which can have caused her any shock, or sudden effect on her nerves? In short, in any way explain the distressing, even dangerous state she has been in ever since you and she returned home that Tuesday evening from a late walk?"

"She complained that evening, as soon as she came

in; but your aunt and myself thought no more of it at first, than that you had imprudently induced her to overtax her strength, and I told my wife at the time, that for that, as well as, perhaps, other reasons which had occurred to me, I had begun to think those very long walks had better, perhaps, be for the future discontinued, but trusting that by next morning, or at least in a day or two, Katie would be herself all right again.

“So far from that, however, I am sorry to say, and as you are, I suppose, aware, she has been growing worse and worse, until, last evening, from a state of partial stupor, she became positively light-headed, and has been screaming in delirium the whole night through; and as she cries out again and again, the poor child continues to couple your name in a most disagreeable, I may say a most horrible way with that of the little former comrade of yours, you know whom I mean; and from some of the broken exclamations and disjointed sentences, which betray the thoughts and ideas which are now boiling and seething through her poor wandering brain, I am only more sorry than I can express, that I have more than convincing proof that you, Frank Lambard, have broken your most solemn promise to me, and that your word of honour is worthless, and not to be trusted.”

I was perfectly staggered, and actually could not get out a syllable, before he went on again, solemnly.

“Frank Lambard, your father is the oldest and dearest friend I ever had in this world, although it is now some years since we have met; he was always the strictest lover of truth, and the most honourable man, the most scrupulous in small matters as well as great, that I ever knew or heard of; judging you—his son—as I thought you would be worthy to be, and could be judged, by his high standard, do you remember my telling you how indignant I had been at hearing a disgraceful story, which was told against your character, repeated in my presence, even before you yourself had had an opportunity of declaring it to be a false and wicked slander, as I *then* was convinced it was? I mention that, because it was at that very time that you made me the most solemn promise never to repeat to either of my children, but especially to my daughter, a most absurd and impossible romance to which you had, I grant you, quite seriously, and as if you yourself really believed it, tried to make me listen.

“It was not without very particular and most serious reasons of my own that I demanded that promise of you, though I felt that I was giving an undue importance to such rubbish as it was.

“And how have you kept that promise? I am sorry that I can now never again have the same confidence in you, and painful as it is to have to say such a thing to the son of my oldest friend and comrade, as well as my wife’s own nephew, I must henceforth beg to retract the general invitation we were so glad to offer you, to be constantly with us, and must beg for the future to forbid you from any further intimacy with our children while you remain in this place.

“Of course you can stay on here at Dresden as you may think fit, and as long as we thought, and had no reason for doubting, that we might thoroughly trust you, we were only too glad to see as much as possible of you. But that footing must now come to an end.”

This was really too much; in the most earnest terms I could command, I protested and swore to my uncle that I had kept my promise, and had been true to my word.

So earnestly that, as a gentleman, he professed himself bound to believe me, though I could see that, in spite of his professions, he was sorely perplexed as to what he was to make of, and how possibly to reconcile my strong and reiterated denial, with some equally convincing proof which he seemed to think that he had to the contrary.

It was while he still remained silent, as if trying to balance these totally adverse difficulties in his own mind, that, although the door was closed, and there was a tolerably-sized apartment intervening between that in which we were, and Katie's own room beyond, suddenly a piercing scream—a thrilling cry, as if of agony—reached us.

“Come as far as her door yourself, and then you may learn the grounds of my doubts and accusations,” said the Colonel, sternly; “and then, sir, let us see whether you can, with the same unblushing confidence, stick to your denial.”

The door of the inner room was ajar; as it had, I suppose, been left by my aunt, who had rushed in to Katie, on hearing the same loud cry with which we had been so greatly startled, so that, without quite seeing into the room itself, we could distinctly hear the voice of the poor girl, as her cries sometimes rose to an appalling height, and then again, in broken and disjointed sentences and articulations, became lowered to a moaning whisper.

“Save him! oh, save him! Oh, if you will only spare Frank, I will give my life, my soul, everything I have in the world to save him!”

And so she would go on, repeating over and over again; then of a sudden she changed to more inco-

herent ravings, though always harping on the same wild idea of some tremendous danger impending on me.

“Oh, Mr. Gorles! Mr. Gorles! Mr. Gorles! Spare him, oh, pray spare my poor Frank! I will serve you, I will slave for you, I will follow you wherever you wish, if you will only spare Frank, and not drag him down, down, down with you below there,” and then she would begin all over again.

“Yes, my very life, my soul, if you will not hurt him! But Frank and I shall never, never, never be the same with each other again!”

Then her voice gradually quieted off into a low, running moan of “Never, never, never again the same.”

It was the most awfully painful thing to hear, most perfectly heart-rending. Of course, I could not hope to be allowed to go in to see her, though how I longed and how much my very soul quite ached to be allowed to do so no one can tell.

All of a sudden, as I stood there overwhelmed with grief, and my head pressed tightly against the wall, I cannot tell why, but I felt an almost insuperable desire to turn round upon my uncle as he was leaning on the other side quite choking with sobs of agony, poor old fellow! to seize him by the throat and knock his head against the door-post; the longing to do so was so intense, that it required a positively strong mental

struggle and effort to subdue the feeling while it lasted.

When curiously enough pat to my very thoughts, wild and evil as they were, poor Katie again began from low moaning to rave at the top of her voice.

“No, no, no, you will never make him do that, wicked as you are, and great as your horrible power may be over him, you will never make him raise his hand against my father !”

Now, was not that a most wonderful coincidence ? it struck me all of a heap at the moment, and often and often have I thought of it ever since. However, instead of yielding to the devilish impulses I had felt working within me, I took upon myself gently to lead the poor old gentleman away, and we went and sat down in quite the farthest window of the farther room, having shut close all the doors behind us, as far as possible out of hearing of the sad and dreadful sound.

“Frank, my dear boy,” said he again after some minutes’ silence, “you have now heard for yourself, and your aunt tells me that all through last night, indeed I heard her myself while I was there, that our poor child’s thoughts were wandering, and that she was crying out in the same way that you have just now listened to, about a lock of hair she has parted with.

“ You must give me back that hair, for even if she recovers and is in mercy spared to us, anything of that sort ;—you know, of course, what I mean—any engagement between you and her is utterly and absolutely out of the question ; rather than that should happen I would see my child lying a corpse upon that bed on which she is now tossing.

“ You must give me up that piece of hair, if you please, here at once.”

“ Uncle, I have never asked for and never received anything of the sort from Katie, though if she had not been so suddenly taken ill that evening as she was, I might perhaps have hoped —— but I cannot give you up what I have never had.”

“ Sir,” he replied, “ it is too horrible thus to be obliged to doubt the word of anybody, but it is now a question between either your truth or my own senses.

“ Which am I to credit ? Do you think I am——” and he stopped himself ; “ do you think I am a downright fool ? What am I to believe and think from the way and wild words in which you yourself have just now heard that poor girl coupling your name with Gorles, dreaming, as she evidently is, and raving in her distracted fancies on the imaginary affinity between him and yourself ? From whom but yourself alone could that idea have ever entered her young

head?—you yourself told me that no one else ever knew it;—and now as to this lock of hair, which you in an equally barefaced manner deny.”

“Then call me a liar at once, sir!” I said, springing up. I was indignant at being thus disbelieved, and again I felt the awful inward impulse to rush at him with the chair in my hand, or any other heavy implement I could have laid hold of in my wrath, to crush him to the ground and there trample on him. I felt I should have liked to have sucked, yes, and licked up his very blood.

My own seemed on fire, as if in another minute it would boil and seethe over so as to pour out of my eyes and ears or come oozing out of my very finger ends. Thank heaven, the horrible feeling was but momentary!

Though a fine up-standing old fellow as he was, tall, hearty as myself, and a soldier every inch of him, I really think he was scared at my wild appearance, and hardly knew what to expect.

Though, as I say, thank heaven, I checked myself in time, perhaps it was because the thought then first struck me of his extraordinary likeness to his daughter Katie as she had looked when at the top of that Wolfshügel mount; so as he faced me, gazing sternly at me, holding himself proudly up to his full

height, I began to feel abashed and ashamed of myself.

“I beg your pardon, Uncle George, but from any other man in the world——” He held out his hand to me, and said quietly and kindly, “I must, and I will try to believe in your truth, my boy, and doubt my own senses, but God only knows how to account for it;” and I remarked the same strange, half-searching, half-pitying expression in his countenance I have mentioned once before, when he asked me that odd question about my grandfather.

“Uncle,” said I, “if in spite of yourself you cannot believe me, and though again I solemnly swear to you that I have told you nothing but the truth, I suppose you cannot, and there is no help for it; but depend upon it that although you before chose so utterly and entirely to scout the idea of influences, *supernatural and unaccountable influences*, which I could bear testimony to from my own painful experience, but of which you were so incredulous, and even quite angry with me for asserting,—though I have strictly kept my promise to you, and never once come near the subject to Katie—yet you may depend upon it that the same sort of power has been at work here, and is at work now, and so some day you will find it——”

“Silence, boy!” he cried, “silence, I command you!”

and again he glared with his stern look fully upon me, "and never dare mention such utter nonsense in my presence again."

Well, Uncle as he was (by marriage at least), and kind as he really had been to me, that was rather more than I was prepared to put up with ; so, taking up my hat, and with a sort of formal bow of adieu at the door, I just "made tracks;" my indignation determining me never to set foot within that house again, unless I received an ample apology for the insults I had undergone : yet all the while longing to lay myself down like a dog at the door where that poor child was raving on her sick bed within.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## TARAXACUM.

BLANK enough, as you may imagine, was the state of mind in which I started, I neither knew nor cared whither exactly, from the house in Lüttichau Strasse, after the scene I have described to you ; when whom should I run against, or rather be overtaken by, but that strange fellow Lyons, whom I daresay you may remember at Eton—Lyons, at Evans's—or *De Lyons* rather, he became by royal patent while he was there—(why on earth people should consider it a swell thing to stick on a little French part of speech, pronoun, preposition, which is it ? to their proper names, I cannot think)—but at school he more generally went by the name of "*Taraxacum*," which I have always looked upon as the best-originated nickname on record.

His sponsor at his baptism having bestowed upon him the name of Daniel, it was a matter of course that he should immediately, upon assuming the aforesaid aristocratic prefix to his name, be called *Dan-de-*

lion. The joke was too palpable to escape the most infantine capacity ; but when some fellow looking out some hard word in his lexicon, hit upon the Greek name for that humble weed, great was his triumph among jokers ; as, saluting our friend as *Taraxacum*, on the spot, the name clung to him from that moment, ever thereafter to be associated with his memory in the minds of his school contemporaries.

He was always one of the queerest, most original fellows I ever knew (one summer half he was in my boat, and so, though at different houses, and in different removes, he and I were thrown rather thickly together). He was as a boy a wild, restless, dare-devil sort of character, up to any sort of mischief, or any lark—but also devoted to experiments in natural philosophy, and those sort of games. He used to galvanize dead frogs and rats, and nearly killed one of the maids at his dame's by fixing an awfully over-charged electric wire to his door-handle ; indeed I am not sure that it was not for that very feat, or else for slaying and anatomizing his dame's favourite cat, in his zealous pursuit of science, that his Eton career came to an untimely end.

“ Both causes were, I remember, at the time alleged—anyhow he left suddenly under some difficulty of the sort, and when I met him again, I recalled the fact of

having heard that he had gone to Heidelberg, or Bonn, or one of those German universities.

When I first fell in with him at Dresden, it was at the fencing-school, which I have, as I think, already mentioned to you. I certainly should never have recognised my ancient friend, and did not, even when he rapturously hailed me by my name, until he told me himself that he was the original '*Taraxacum*' Lyons. He had so thoroughly contrived to transmogrify his essentially British countenance into the most ultra-German of German students, with his long pointed moustache and chin-piece, rum little coloured cap, coatee cut off short behind, like a singed cock-sparrow, and his nose stuck on with long straps of sticking-plaster, all complete.

"Holloa! Lambard!" he hailed me then, again on this occasion coming up from behind in Lüttichau Strasse, and hooking on to my arm. "Why, bless my stars! do you know the family who live in that house, out of which I saw you just now coming? Oh, most fortunate of youths! oh, you lucky dog! how did you manage it?—that is where the prettiest girl in all Dresden lives. I have myself been beating about the bush these months past to get an introduction there, but never could contrive it anyhow; but now at last will fortune favour the most patient of her hangers-on,

(I mean of fortune's, not the young lady's), inasmuch as she has thus put it into the power of you, my ancient school-fellow and friend, to serve your most obedient; and by a timely introduction to your respected acquaintance not only to allow him personally to establish a friendly footing where his heart has for some time prospectively settled itself; but also have yourself the happiness of feeling that you have rescued one of the once merry companions of your boyhood's joyous days from despair, the fatal consequences of which would, but for this your welcome aid, be hard-pressing and inevitable."

"You need not go on in that style," I said, quietly, but rather sternly; "I am myself not in the humour for it now; the young lady you allude to happens at this moment to be very dangerously ill; and even if that were not the case, her family are not particularly anxious to increase their acquaintance by receiving every fresh comer who may take it into his head to wish for an introduction to them."

"Well, there, don't cut up so rough, old fellow," he answered, quite imperturbably; "if you wont, you wont; but as to their being so inaccessible, I only know there was an audacious little vagabond here before you came, named Gorles—why, by-the-bye, you

knew him well enough yourself—of course you did, that little dwarf fellow who was at your own tutor's at Eton, and swamped our boat for us against Windsor Bridge that time he came down as sitter, and you and I were swished together next morning with the rest of the crew, for being drunk, which we were not;—why, of course you must remember him well enough: well, when he was here he managed to insinuate himself into an intimacy in that quarter: how he originally began I never could make out—by some fluke, I suppose; while (just like my luck) though I have continually planned all sorts of dodges, I never could get a chance.

“At one time I thought I was going to do it by making friends with the young one, the school-boy; but Gorles, who was always as jealous as a stoat, had him so thoroughly under his thumb, body and soul, I found that it was no go.

“Joking apart, I think you might take pity upon a poor fellow who has so long been desperately in love, as I have been, most honourably too,—all correct, you know, honour bright; and you need not be afraid of my disgracing your introduction, for when I am in decent society I can behave myself as well as anybody I know, at a pinch. Well, there, I wont ask any more; but, seriously, my dear Lambard, if you are

such a real friend of the family, you ought to keep a sharp look out on Master Gorles, going on as he does with that young boy; and though I say it, with all respect, on his pretty sister too, for now he is come back to Dresden——”

“Is Gorles now here in Dresden?” I cut in sharply, interrupting him; “by Jove, tell me where I can find him. But in the meantime allow me, De Lyons, to acquaint you with a fact of which you seem not to have the slightest idea, that the young lady you speak of so glibly, in fact the family from whose door you saw me coming out, are among the nearest relations I have; and *à propos* to your very unwelcome remarks, I think it fair to tell you that I have already received some intimation from that boy, who is my own first cousin, of some very strange scenes in which, as it now occurs to me from his description, you yourself, as well as Gorles, have taken a rather prominent part, and of which you can now, perhaps, give me some further explanation.”

“Your own first cousin! Oh, by the tombs of my forefathers, you don't mean it! Whew!” he whistled out a series of notes of admiration; “then I can tell you, my dear Lambard, that it is a devilish lucky thing you are here, just in time. Your own first cousins! And that beautiful girl, too!”

He very naturally jumped at that conclusion, on which, of course, it was no business of mine to undeceive him.

“Then I will just tell you what it is, Lambard: though you may, I daresay, think me rather a rum chap, I have liked you from the first day I knew you, and you elected me into your boat at Eton; and though it was for so long that we did not happen to run against one another, I was, upon my word, quite deuced glad to see you again, when we met so unexpectedly; in short, though you just now seemed disinclined to act like a man and a brother, that is, an old schoolfellow, to me when I suggested as much, I will yet return good for evil, and just give you a friendly hint.

“That Master Gorles has been trying it on pretty considerably in that quarter; and, indeed, I may tell you further, in confidence, has come back here to Dresden, only three or four days since, for the express purpose of even further trying on what, even before I knew that they were your relations, or that any friend of mine happened to have such special interest in the matter, had struck me as carrying things to much greater lengths than any circumstances can possibly justify.

“Indeed, I have already suffered no small trouble

from qualms of conscience on the subject, although we all know that in the deep researches of science one cannot afford to be too particular about the private feelings of the patients on whom we experimentalize, and establish our theories; but still when it comes to beguiling a young boy out at night from his parents' roof, or inducing by whatever means, whether scientific or otherwise, any well brought up young lady to come alone, and unprotected to the rooms of any single man, and that man a stranger—although not happening ever to have had a sister of my own, in which case I might, perhaps, have been a better judge in such matters than I can now pretend to be—still, I say that I think, even in the cause of science, it is carrying matters a little too far.”

“What do you mean?” I gasped. “What do you dare to insinuate?”—and I only wonder that I did not then and there knock him head over heels, without giving him time for any further explanation.

“Oh,” he said, “it has never yet happened—that is to the young lady, at least—though I know the idea has been discussed and intended; and the little boy, who seems to have let you into the secret—I wonder he dared—was not hurt or even frightened by the experiments we had with him—he is a plucky young beggar, and awful saucy, I suspect. Still, though I

myself was there, I am sure I felt all the time that it was not altogether quite right; and as to further lengths, I have even before, as I say, I knew that you, my friend, were so interested in the matter, made up my mind to take no active part, though I could hardly know how to prevent them. Besides, to tell the honest truth, even if I thought there was any use in my interfering—which there would not be—I do not want just at this particular time to quarrel with the parties concerned, who meet together in pursuit of science—as the Professor, who is our leading spirit, has promised us a *séance*, and actually a Personal interview with the—— Well, with a very great personage, whom it is as well perhaps not to name, but who, if he can really be induced to come, why, I should like of all things to be present at the interview. The Professor declares that it is possible, and that, with common prudence, there is nothing to fear in the experiment; and I can only say that, though very wonderful, he has always hitherto been as good as his word, and performed all that he has undertaken—though, as I have seen myself, there have been already some very strange and startling things occasionally amongst his undertakings.

“I do not know, but perhaps if you would like very much to see him too, I might get the Professor’s

leave to bring you with me. It will be an opportunity you may never have again, and an event you will probably remember for the rest of your life; the only thing is, as he tells us, to be very civil but firm—that is, to show no sort of fear or agitation during the necessary forms or ceremony of invitation, and while he is actually present—and I know you have pluck enough, if any one in this world has, to face him——We wont, as I said, mention names, but I suppose you can guess who I mean ?'

## CHAPTER XVII.

## DE LYONS AND HIS SCIENTIFIC FRIENDS.

STRUCK as I was with an evident vein of serious meaning beneath all this wild talk, coupled with and corroborative as it was to my mind of all that I had heard from young Ferdy; it occurred to me that by making up to this strange genius I might gain admittance for myself into the clique of these scientifics, spiritualists, or whatever they called themselves, and thus stand a better chance of confronting, if not defeating, little Gorles in his machinations, or at any rate, by my mere presence, of preventing his even attempting any of his tricks. Yet all the while I could not, as I have told you, have defined exactly in my own mind, what it was that I thus dreaded and expected.

Acting then on this idea, and having invited "*Taraxacum*" into my lodgings, at the door of which we had for some time been carrying on our interesting conversation; and finding my friend confidentially enough inclined, I took upon myself to inquire how

on earth he had originally contrived to get himself mixed up with such a queer set of fellows. Upon which he, without the slightest reserve, gave a full account of himself and his chosen companions.

“You see,” said he, “the fact is, that even as a boy I was always fond of experimental philosophy, chemistry, physical science, and addicted to dabbling to any extent in those sort of pursuits; and so having fallen in with a genial spirit or two among the students at our university, when I first joined that respectable institution, I brought letters of introduction last year when I visited Leipsic to Professor Zauber, who was then lecturing at that city. There is scarcely, I believe, a city or town in Europe in which he has not lectured and given public *séances*—from many of which, Rome, Naples, Petersburg, and I rather believe Paris, he has had short notice to quit in consequence;—and constant correspondents he has all over the world. Well, besides being, as I now tell you, myself really much interested in those deep sciences to which the Professor is specially devoted, it was chiefly through his recommendation that I became appointed foreign correspondent to those eminently spiritualistic journals, the ‘Penny Sunday Medium,’ and the ‘Biologist’s Weekly Magazine.’ Contributing besides occasionally to other

leading scientific papers and periodicals in London, I am obliged to keep myself constantly *au fait* upon all the most interesting metaphysical facts, which from my friendship with the Professor I enjoy constant opportunities of witnessing: the fact is that I originally began by supplying my weekly budget with many anecdotes and embellishments of my own invention; but as I seriously went into the matter I soon discovered that there was no need of any such dishonest demands upon my imagination, as the actual facts and results of experiments I have myself witnessed, and assisted in, far exceed in wonder any inventions I should ever have dared to venture upon, or until I really had myself seen them, ever had an idea of.

“A fellow must live, you know, and though it may perhaps seem rather a low form for an Etonian to become a ‘penny-a-liner’ before he is turned two-and-twenty, yet I have already met one or two of our old school-fellows lower down in their luck, even than myself. A stoker on a Belgian railway engine, and a marker at a Frankfort billiard-room, are, I flatter myself, a peg or two below contributing to the diffusion of great scientific truths, which may before long command the attention of the most learned and renowned societies in Europe, leading probably to

some of the deepest discoveries of Creation and Nature ever as yet unrolled."

" 'Hear! hear!' I cried, though I didn't laugh or sneer at him, as you, sir, do at me if a little extra enthusiastic.

"I have," he continued, "unfortunately come to a slight difference of opinion with my governor, a worthy man in his way, but not always reasonable, and, he having in a very mean way thought fit to stop the supplies, I am forced to the truly despicable condition of trying to earn my own living somehow. My temporary difficulty with the home department is the principal reason of my spending my vacation in this place instead of in the parsonage house of Bramton, in the county of Wilts, as I ought naturally to be doing, if the rector there was only a more dutiful parent.

"I find it more convenient to go about in this queer toggery, which I know you do not altogether admire, for I have before now noticed you eyeing me over; but I have three or four very good reasons for doing so, in which I think you will agree when you hear them.

"To begin with, I have just now, as it happens, got nothing to wear, and though the natives here are barbarians it is true, yet they would I fear hardly recognise the true primæval dignity of nature in its purity, more than would be the case even at home in

London, supposing the climate allowed of any such unpretending simplicity of costume.

“ Besides that, I have often found this style of ‘ get up’ to be an advantage in falling in with and making acquaintance with travelling compatriots, which I like doing sometimes, particularly if I happen to notice any nice-looking girls in the party, by stepping gracefully forward and volunteering my humble services as interpreter in any little difficulty they may have incurred from their deficiency in the language.

“ On such occasions, you see, the German student and romantic stranger is received with pleasure and gratitude ; when if they only suspected that he was only an Englishman out of luck, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he would be snubbed and looked upon with suspicion as an impudent intruder.

“ But passing as I do for a genuine native it is astonishing how my polite advances are received, and many a good dinner and pleasant evening have I enjoyed both here in Dresden and in other cities with charming people on whom I never set eyes before or since.

“ It is such fun to be complimented upon the astonishing correctness of one’s English, which I take care when I think of it, to intersperse with an occasional dash of German expressions or idiom ; and the warm

invitations I have received to various country houses, whenever I shall find my way to England, would I am sure if properly arranged keep me going on the fat of the land for a twelve month or two.

“I mean some day to pick up a travelling heiress, in return for whose consols or broad acres I can bestow my title and coronet, and so make the lucky fair one, whoever she may be, the proudest and happiest of women as Graffen, or I am not sure it shall not be Princess, von der Löwe.”

“Why don't you make it Von Taraxacum at once?”  
I could not resist saying.

“Well, that is not a bad idea. Der Graffe von Taraxacum, with my crest of a yawning lion over it, would look stunning on a glazed card, wouldn't it?”

“But to return to our select little society, or rather clique, now that I have given you this full account of my most humble self. Charlatans or humbugs you may, like many others who know nothing about the matter, consider us; but I am very sure that if once you come to see and take an interest in the marvellous secrets and facts of nature which are the result of our studies and practical experiments, I defy you to leave off, even though you may, as I have, occasional qualms as to whether it is all right and lawful, or not perhaps running a trifling risk of putting yourself immediately

into the power of a certain person, of whom the less we talk the better; but once fairly launched in these marvellous pursuits of science, even such qualms (which I find lessen a good deal as one becomes more used to them), will not stop one from eagerly seeking to learn more and more of the vast powers and strange truths thus revealed to those who boldly go in for them. Then there is the Professor who, for one half he knows and can do, would a hundred years since in the days of ignorance, have been tortured and burnt for a wizard.

“The next is a Frenchman, one Gustave Kanard, who by the same token knows you, and swears you once saved his life for him at Cambridge. How very oddly things come round! He was talking about you, and quoting you as an extraordinary specimen of animal strength and courage, only last night, and just the very fellow we wanted for a certain extraordinary purpose; when Gorles, who, as it now strikes me, seemed very much put out at hearing you were still here, chose to pooh-pooh Frenchy, and even hinting that you were no better than a coward, said that as to your strength he had the best of reasons for knowing all about that, and that he had himself once fought and licked you at school; at which we all laughed most awfully, as well me might, till the little dwarf became

as savage as a cat in a coal-hole. Besides these, there is a fellow student of mine, Max Sniffel, who like myself, goes in for any sort of science, though alchemy is what his notions chiefly run upon.

“ We five are all that are here in Dresden at present, though there are three or four others who keep up a correspondence with us, and occasionally attend our meetings if they happen to be passing through, or staying here for a short time as they sometimes may chance to be.

“ As to Gorles, whom I can see by your face when I mentioned his name, you do not love much more than we do ;—he is still just as bumptious and disagreeable as he always was when an Eton fellow, and therefore we would just as soon he kept himself away from our little meetings, were it not that the Professor declares that, though like every one else, he personally dislikes him, his presence and help are of great value to us, as he is more naturally endowed with unusually vast powers of the *odyle* and magnetic forces than anybody he has ever yet met with. He tells us that to his own personal knowledge, Gorles’s mother, who was well known in her day to the then very few followers of Mesmer and M. Cazotte, the famous Parisian clairvoyant, as an extraordinary spiritual medium, ran away from her lawful husband, who

was an honest, unsuspecting conveyancer—or in some such line of business—with a Polish refugee, a very queer character, who was at one time a good deal received in society in London, although he was commonly reported to be a ‘Vampire.’ Of that *faux pas* our little friend was the result—such may or may not be really the case, but the Professor, though he sometimes announces the most extraordinary facts, generally knows what he is talking about. Anyhow he cultivates Gorles, and hopes through him to bring about that friendly, therefore quite harmless, interview with the great and terrible personage *in propria persona* whom I have already hinted at. Indeed, if you must know, it was while discussing that very matter, that your own name and character came upon the *tapis* as having it in your power, if you would only consent, to be of most immense assistance to us.”

“Thank you very much for the association,” I replied; “but in what way, may I ask, am I likely to contribute to the success of your satanic *r union*?”

“Hush!” said *Taraxacum*, glancing round him with a scared look, “never mention names! How can you be so dreadfully indiscreet?”

“Why, the way we came to be talking about you was in this wise: the Professor, whether out of some

of those old worm-eaten manuscripts and black-letter folios he is always pouring over, or whether he may have hit upon it by his own wonderfully acute powers of thought and reasoning, I am not sure, but somehow or other he has arrived at a conclusion satisfactory to his own mind, on which he has founded a, as I believe, hitherto undiscovered or certainly long-forgotten theory—not wholly dissimilar, but going far beyond the doctrines of Salverte, and other writers on psychology. Those professed phrenologists, shallow fellows as they often are, can after all undoubtedly to a great extent judge of and individualize characters by the cranial developments, or, in plain language, ‘bumps,’ and indentations of the heads of mankind. Now upon that science our Professor has advanced by long chalks—having hit upon the means of defining and even exactly weighing the quantity as well as quality of each feeling, disposition, propensity, or other trait of any individual character, of the interior working of which the external developments, or say bumps are the result. He can actually gauge your self-reliance, for instance, or your veneration, or destructiveness, or any other peculiar characteristic, just as an exciseman will gauge the spirit of gin or whisky. You can accurately measure air, you know; or the weight, strength, or quantity of steam.

“The Professor is now trying experiments founded this upon theory, from which he looks forward to becoming the happy author of enormous benefit to his fellow-creatures, which is really more reward to him than all the glory and pride of philosophical discovery and power, vast as that is, to the few who are fortunate enough to reap it deservedly; but he is, I must also tell you, in all he does one of the most benevolent and philanthropic of men.

“The benefit he looks forward to is, when once this theory is thoroughly established, simple, though perhaps from its novelty, a little startling; for he looks forward to immensely improving the general average of human nature, and bringing to almost absolute perfection the characters and dispositions of mankind in general; for instance, according to this most wonderful discovery, half a dozen friends, we will say, may agree together to amalgamate, and by carefully comparing their individual superfluities or deficiencies of temper or propensities, may interchange and transfer from one to another such characteristics as they may have to spare, in return for proportions of others they may happen to require. Thus the timid man may receive a portion of the exuberance of spirit from the over-rash, to the mutual improvement of both parties; or a stingy fellow impart some of his over-

carefulness to the spendthrift, receiving in exchange some of the other's superabundant generosity.

“It is not at all a bad idea, is it? But the Professor hopes to go even a step further still, that is to be able to borrow and return certain quantities of character, of course with the consent of the original possessor. The great difficulty will be the immense amount of confidence and trust it will require between man and man; but only conceive what an advantage it would be, if lazy or not inclined to go yourself, you could lend a friend, less fortunately endowed by nature, your own good ear and musical taste, for the night at the opera, just as you might your opera-glasses, to be returned when done with; or could add your amount of physical pluck to his own allowance, for a hard day with the hounds!

“It was on the question of that very quality of ‘pluck’ that the Frenchman mentioned you. He happened to see you one day coming away from the fencing school, and instantly was for rushing after his noble champion and deliverer, as he called you, in some civil war or revolution, according to his account, in which he seems to have embroiled himself at Cambridge; but as if he *had* overtaken and kissed you in the street, as he certainly would have done, you would probably have knocked his head off, and so debarred yourself from

ever recognising his identity, we restrained his ardour, and you went on out of sight."

I did call to mind when *Taraxacum* thus mentioned the fact, a foreigner who was hanging about one hunting term up at Cambridge, though I never knew much of him, but remembered meeting him once or twice out at supper, and seeing him make a most extraordinary exhibition out with the Drag. Some of the men used to keep him up there chiefly, I believe, for the fun of chaffing him, and giving him mounts on the most unruly brutes of horses they could find, with the hounds or the "herring-dogs;" and in one of the annual November Town and Gown rows, I one night found the unfortunate "*Mossoo*," as they used to call him, mistaken for a University man, sitting in the gutter in front of Trinity-gate, which had been shut against him, and surrounded by a whole *levée* of infuriated cads, pelting him with dirt and stones. I really almost think they would have killed him in a few minutes, if I and some others had not happened to come up All Saints'-passage at the nick of time, and rescued him from the Philistines.

"Yes, that's it," answered *Taraxacum*; "that rescue, and your rowing, and your hard riding, are subjects on which it is a caution to listen to him. You are, according to him, a demi-god, a regular

Hercules ; and when the Professor was seriously lamenting that the one thing needful in the careful preparations for the remarkable *séance* he has promised us, was, if possible, the infusion of more animal courage amongst us, to carry us well and safely through the ordeal, as I suppose it may without any disrespect be truly called, then it was that Frenchy proposed to put the Professor's own system in force, and either get you to assist, or, if you objected to that, to kindly lend us the use of your courage for the evening, which, as it will probably be late, and I know you keep regular hours, you really wont want while you are in bed and asleep, and you shall have it back all right again and unimpaired in the morning."

The favour he asked was really so unusual, not to say astonishing, especially considering at that time our very slight acquaintance, that I could only say that I must take time to consider of it. It was not until after my friend had taken himself off, and I had turned into bed, that it occurred to me, that I had never after all elicited from him the exact sort or nature of the schemes which Gorles was trying on against Katie's peace and welfare. But I really had been so carried away with his extraordinary account of the Professor and his supernatural powers ; besides, even while he so briefly alluded to her, friendly as he expressed him-

self, I could hardly bear to hear her name, or at least the mention of her in his unhallowed mouth ; and as we had strayed off further and further, felt a repugnance to returning to the original subject of our conversation.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## WOE TO THE HOUSE OF DE LORME !

THE next day, and the next, I called more than once at the door of Lüttichau Strasse to make inquiries after Katie; the accounts were always the same,—bad as bad could be.

I did not like to go in, after the scene I had had with my uncle; I did not seem to care about seeing him, only perhaps, as it would have been, to increase his troubles and add to his bitter distress. And as to my aunt, she was all day and night in the poor girl's room, for having married the Colonel when Katie was still quite a little child, she was, I will so far say for her, every bit as fond of, and wrapt up in her, as if she had been her own daughter.

Only at last, on the second afternoon, she came out to the sick chamber door and sent for me to come up, when I had almost insisted upon hearing from herself how Katie was going on.

She could hardly at first speak to me, and looked

so wretchedly sad, and, as I could not help feeling, reproachfully at me, that even in my grief I felt selfishly hurt, and said: "No one can be more miserably cast down than I am, at this dreadful trial which is sent upon——let me say, *us*, dear aunt, and include myself, as if I were even a closer relation than I actually am, for indeed I love her as much or more than a cousin or even any brother could. I feel it, I say, as deeply and anxiously as any of you; but you don't think that I have been the cause of this dreadful illness?"

"We are all in God's hands, Frank," she said; "but Katie left this house perfectly well, in full health and spirits; and you must know best, if any one can, why she came back to us in the evening in the state she did.

"Both Dr. Snezzer and Dr. Todleben agree that it is the poor darling child's brain that has been affected, and that she must have received some severe mental shock. What is it that you have told her? Your uncle seems to have some idea; but is more furiously angry on the subject, even in spite of his natural anxiety and distress, than I have ever known him to be during all the years I have been married to him. He wont tell me, or even let me allude to it, though I am sure, and know that he knows something too dreadful perhaps for me even to know. And how

could you, Frank, so abuse our confidence in you as to dare to even breathe anything so very dreadful as this, whatever it is, must be to an innocent young girl like Katie? Oh, Frank, Frank, I never would have thought it of you!" and she fell back on to the sofa, crying like—like a "regular good one," you know—was the best simile which my friend Lambard could find after a slight hesitation; the poetical, for this time at least, seeming to have failed him.

But he continued: "Indeed, my dear aunt," I replied most earnestly, "I am quite aware what my uncle suspects and thinks; and as to anything being very dreadful, that there are some things very unaccountable in this matter, I will grant you; but to me, were it not that poor Katie's illness and danger entirely prevented any other thought or feeling (of myself particularly), at this present moment, the most dreadful part to me would be, that an Uncle who has been so kind, and to whom I had really become so fondly attached, should doubt my solemn word and truth, and deliberately brand me as a liar—that is something dreadful, if you like. (I know, and felt while I was speaking, what a selfish beggar I was at the time, but of the amount of pain and bitterness which that scene had caused me, you can perhaps have no idea.)

"But come now," I went on, "to clear myself at least

in your opinion ; and though I cannot but feel how out of place, and almost sacrilegious it seems even to speak on such a subject at this awful moment, when that poor girl is lying on the other side of that wall struggling between life and death—still cannot you, my dearest aunt, as a kind and sensible woman of the world, knowing what young people's thoughts and feelings are, guess and imagine what a young fellow of one-and-twenty might be likely to say to a beautiful and charming girl of eighteen in whose company he had the happiness and good luck to find himself constantly thrown ? Though for the matter of that, the very first time I ever saw Katie was enough for me. But all I really did say, aunt, was to tell her how dearly and fondly I loved her, with all a heart's fresh force that had never till then felt or known what love was, and how with your and Uncle George's kind consent——”

“Never, my dear boy ; my poor, dearest Frank, it never, never can be !” And again she set to work to howl and cry like—“another regular good one,” only even worse than before—again at a loss for an adequate simile.

“Believe me,” she went on, “that never, never can be, Frank. Oh, these dreadful family secrets ! One knows how it is hard and painful enough to

have to keep any secret of any sort, but these important family ones are I am sure the worst of all. My dear nephew, this misfortune is, as I now feel, our own fault. We ourselves are most to blame; I see it all now; indeed, I may say, that I saw it before it occurred; but when I spoke to and warned your uncle, he only said I was a fool, and that there was no chance of anything of the sort; that it was, in short, so entirely out of the question, that he never would admit the very thought even of a marriage between his child and yourself.

“Frank, you may hope to marry many and many as nice a girl (that is, of course I mean to say, one of them), as our darling Katie, who are to be found in the world. Katie herself may, perhaps, be a happy wife to some lucky man, if, when the time comes, and the secret is fairly told to himself and his family, they do not fear the risk, as some people do not; though I have heard that his first wife’s relatives never told the Colonel beforehand. But secret or no secret, this much you shall know, my poor wretched boy, to reconcile you with what seems now so hard to bear, and yet what will, please God, as you may live on to become older and wiser, cause you hereafter to be thankful that your affections should have been so cruelly disappointed. Well, then, for I think under the cir-

cumstances that it would be positively wrong not to tell you,—you must know that Katie's poor mother, who as you may have heard died when that poor child was born, had had two female keepers holding her down, night and day—and it was in a private lunatic asylum, where she had been for nearly the whole of the three previous months——

“From Katie's earliest childhood this secret has always been rigidly kept from the poor girl herself, so as to avoid all chance or fear of affecting or influencing her own mind. The greatest care and every precaution have likewise been taken against exciting her in any way; and so she has happily hitherto grown up perfectly free from the least suspicion or taint of her unfortunate poor mother's malady.

“Your poor uncle for years had hoped and flattered himself that the malady was not hereditary; and so her family, when upbraided with disguising the truth from him at the time of his marriage, always persisted in asserting; but he never could be satisfied to leave well alone, and be contented with thinking that, ‘Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof,’ but having by some means scented out and established further conclusive evidence, was then almost driven crazy himself by discovering that there is no doubt that an uncle of hers, and other near relations, had been lunatics, and that

her people knew it well enough, but had most carefully always kept the truth hushed up, and even denied the fact altogether.

“ You, Frank, had not been here ten days or a fortnight before I began to see and notice how much you were evidently attracted by our child Katie ; and I then ventured, though I do not often trouble him with all I think and hear, to mention the subject to your uncle, who, as I tell you, snubbed me flatly ; I might, indeed, with truth say, rudely.

“ He said that he knew the world, and what young people were, better than I did ; that if left alone, and even encouraged to be much together, such a thing would never enter into either of your heads ; but if there should appear any restriction or interference in your constant companionship and intimacy with one another, he could assure me that it would be the very way to bring about what was to be so much dreaded. I thought, I must confess, that it was a strange view to take at the time, but your dear uncle, like all other men, always thinks he knows best about everything ; so having fairly said my say, I could only fold my hands submissively, and hold my tongue as I had been bid, and secretly pray that my worst fears might never turn out to be too well founded, as now they have done.

“Frank, your uncle loves you, believe me, almost, if not quite as much as his own children ; but he at that time solemnly said, what he has since more than once repeated, that he could rather endure to see you both lying dead before him, than that a marriage between you and Katie should ever take place.

“I may add that he did so far condescend to act upon my suggestions, as to speak quietly and indirectly to Katie herself upon the subject ; and though of course he could not even breathe a hint of the real true cause, and took occasion to praise you personally very highly, and to say how pleased he was to see you and herself so much enjoying each other’s society, yet that there were strong family reasons—I rather think he gave her to understand that some old family feud, or something of that sort, existed—why a marriage between you could never even be dreamt of for an instant. Though having chosen his opportunity of thus speaking to her—as if casually—he at the same time sufficiently showed that he was strongly in earnest ; for Katie replied, half laughingly, half seriously, that he might assure himself there was not the slightest chance of either of you ever thinking even of anything of the kind ; for that you were both much too happy together as first cousins, or even brother and sister, to think of any such nonsense, as she called

it. Then he looked across at me, I remember, as much as to say how right he was, and how much cleverer in his management—just like a true ‘lord of the creation,’ as you men like to consider yourselves.”

“But, my dear aunt,” I said, “even with the full knowledge of this great secret into which you have now let me, if it is, as you have implied, not out of the question that Kate is some day or other to marry, why should not I, who I am sure love her as much—ay, far more intensely than any other man in the world ever could do, not be allowed to take that risk as well myself? If I do it with my eyes open, willing and rejoicing as I should to do so, and with the consent of my own parents, who——”

“You!” quite screamed my aunt—“is it likely? Is it possible, I ask you, that they would consent to anything so dreadful, so certainly horrible?—or even if they could be by any infatuation induced to such a step, can you think that we—consider, my poor dear boy—or is it possible that you are not yourself aware——”

At that very minute she was interrupted in what she was going on to say by a loud cry of grief, so sudden, such a thrilling wail from the sick room, that we were rushing towards the door just as Harrison

came bursting out, and, staggering towards my aunt, fell sobbing with her face in her lap.

“Oh, madam! madam!” she shrieked, “it is dead she is. She is taken; the darling angel is taken from us!” and she filled the whole house with her violent sobs and cries.

Unbidden, I ventured to follow my aunt into the inner room, and there lay back upon her pillow the lifeless form of the poor girl, white as the purest marble, but so lovely—I really think she seemed more lovely in my eyes than ever—though there could be no doubt that life was gone. She looked more as if she had fallen back into a deep sound sleep—her eyes were closed, and her lips just wide enough apart to show where her pure spirit had escaped, in one very deep-drawn sigh—as her nurse, who had been sitting by her side, described—till then having been breathing placidly and regularly, only disturbed by occasional mumbling, or a sort of low moaning in her sleep; but with that deep sigh the breathing had suddenly and altogether ceased.

The last expression left upon her face was indescribably beautiful, and yet I could not help fancying, as I stood by her, gazing intently upon those features, which as I then felt I should never see again, that they betrayed a something of defiance, or of earnest

appeal, such as they wore that last evening we were out together, when she was trying to stop me from uttering those burning words which, Heaven forgive me! would come out.

I could now more easily understand her scruples and reasons, which at the time I thought so strange.

Though from the first moment we had passed into the room we had no doubt or hope left, yet until the medical men, summoned in all haste, as of course they had been, had shaken their heads, and announced the fatal truth, we, at least I know I had, felt that there was yet something to cling to.

While they seemed to seek for any sign of pulsation, or anxiously to listen at the parted lips for the faintest indication of a breath, we ourselves remained almost as motionless and breathless as the poor darling child herself, in our suspense as to the result; and knowing too well all the while what the truth must be, still refused credit to our own senses.

The surface of the small hand-glass which had been held to her mouth, more, as I could see, to satisfy and convince her parents than the Doctors themselves, remained undimmed, and confirmed only too truly that she was gone,—taken from us for ever.

But I need not, cannot, even now, attempt to describe further that melancholy scene. I was roused

from my own intense agony of grief, in which, having fallen upon my knees at the bed-side, I was sobbing like a three-year old—that is, of course, I mean, my dear fellow, like a young child, not a horse; I was roused, I was going to say, by being very sternly requested to retire by the Colonel. Even in my wretchedness I think that I felt amazed at the peremptory tone and manner in which, as if himself intent upon struggling against, and choking down his own sorrow by extra harshness towards myself, he spoke, and actually repulsed the hand which I had almost unconsciously held out to him.

“Go!” he said, “pray go—at least at present,” and his voice sunk into a hard unnatural whisper. “You had better go, sir; and pray do not come here again:”—and then, as if correcting himself, added, “until your aunt or I feel equal to sending to let you know that we again wish to receive you.”

## CHAPTER XIX.

## RUMPLE STILSKINS' SERVICES ARE REQUIRED.

How I found my way home that evening to my lodgings I can now hardly tell you. I have a vague recollection that upon reaching the open air I felt myself reeling about as if I were drunk; staggering down the door steps and along the street, clutching by the houses and walls as I went; the whole place was whirling round me; until I believe I took refuge, but I cannot at all say for how long, in the recess of an open doorway, and there stayed until found and assisted home by one of those public chairmen in bright yellow liveries who frequent the streets and public places of Dresden as the sworn-in porters and *commissionnaires* of the city.

As it happened, the fellow having been frequently employed by me on divers errands and odd jobs, knew me well personally. We used to call him *Rumple Stilskins*; I don't know why exactly, except I rather think it means bandy-legs in his own crackjaw lingo,

and comes out of some well known fairy tale or other.

Any how, he was a long-armed, crooked-kneed individual, who having somehow picked up a few broken words and sentences of our language, was exceedingly proud of his accomplishment; and had I believe in consequence been specially told off by the police authorities to take care of and, if he could, keep out of mischief any drunken Englishmen whom he might meet about, or hear of as needing his assistance in returning to their respective hotels or lodgings, or anyhow likely to get themselves into any trouble with the appointed custodians of public morals and order, which by this timely prevention might be avoided.

Of course the honest *Stilskins*, by which abbreviation he was more generally recognised, at least by his English patrons, did not for a moment doubt that I was in what he, I fancy, considered to be the normal and natural condition of my countrymen, and proceeded with every possible care and tenderness to convoy me to my own quarters; and having seen me safely deposited, expressing by the way some amazement, not to say admiration at my having sense enough under the circumstances as he viewed them to be able to unlock my own door, he took a most respectful leave of me, expressing his kind intention of calling

early in the morning to inquire after my health, as well as to receive the small "Trinkgelt" over and above the pay for his special service to which, as he assured me, he was according to a regular official tariff justly entitled. Left to myself, stretched full length upon my bed just as I had tumbled on to it when I came in, there I lay overwhelmed, positively stunned, as if by a regular crack from some fellow's fist on my head, —not asleep, but in a kind of stupor without recognisable thought or feeling.

How long I thus remained I can scarcely tell, but it must have been for some hours, as, though neither shutters nor curtains had been closed, the room was in thick darkness, when I was partially roused by a tremendous row at the outer door of the house, a hammering and thumping which continued louder and louder, interspersed with very short and perceptibly decreasing intervals or pauses, as if whoever it might be was listening for some answer, or signs of recognition from within, and then after each short pause bang, bang, bang came the blows again with a heartier will than before.

I think it was just beginning to dawn upon my mind that there might perhaps be somebody wanting to come in, when I heard the patter of loosely-shod footsteps descending the stairs, the outer-door

opened, and there rose a loud altercation between my landlady—as I could tell by her shrill tones—and some man—as far as I could make out by the depth of the voice, though I did not recognise it at first as one which I ought to know.

I soon began to think that I heard my own name several times repeated, and, with that clue, could pretty well make out that whoever it might be, was eagerly inquiring after and desiring instantly to see me.

“My knowledge of German by that time, though still limited, was enough to serve me in all my common wants of life, inquiries, and such like; and it is wonderful how sharp one’s ears and intellects become if you find out that you yourself are the subject under discussion.

Now, as it so chanced, none of the people of the house had happened to have seen me come home—the door of my private room being the first close upon the top of the stairs. My old landlady, who was a queer tempered female when fairly roused, was not therefore perhaps on the whole so much to blame in asserting, and pertinaciously sticking to her assertion, as she did (not without many extra shrill yells and adjurations upon the irregular ways and habits of all English lodgers in general, and of myself, that night at least in particular);

that Herr von Lambard had not come home ; that his door was locked up ; and that moreover he had, as he always would do, carried off the key with him, instead of leaving it in her charge, as, according to her private views and regulations, it ought to have been left. In confirmation of her statement, I heard her call special attention to the lamp at the foot of the stairs, and my particular taper still waiting my return beside it.

Though now tolerably aroused, and perfectly taking in the fact that it was no other individual than myself who was thus inquired after, I still felt a strange indifference on the subject, and disinclination to stir or show any signs of life. I have a sort of idea that if I felt at all concerned in the matter, it was with a vague feeling of curiosity and wonder, as to where Frank Lambard really could be, and whether they would find him anywhere else—as I heard the inquiry continued whether he was likely to have gone to any party, or to be at the *Ressource*, as they call the club there, or whether his friends in Lüttichau Strasse would be likely to know, or even whether he might not possibly be still there, though it was much later than he usually stayed. To that last suggestion I distinctly remember giving mentally a decided support, as not at all unlikely, or at any

rate thinking that it might be well worth going so far to see; and I sat up upon my bed half-inclined to holloa out, and offer to go myself, as knowing the way better, and being perhaps less likely to frighten or disturb the De Lormes in case that I should not be still there, than if a stranger should go knocking them up with inquiries which, at that time of night, might appear ill-timed and irregular.

I was still debating whether I had better or not do so, when my landlady, as I suppose only too happy to jump at that, or any other conclusion likely to rid her of her troublesome disturber, and allow her to retire again to the depths of her own virtuous feather-bed, seemed much to favour that idea; for she immediately took upon herself to state that no doubt Lüttichau Strasse was where I should be found; and shutting to the door with a slam, I could hear her clump up the stairs, grumbling at every step at all Englanders, as more troublesome and incomprehensible than any other nation, Christian or pagan, under the sun.

It could barely have been a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes later, when yielding again to the feeling of lethargy, heavier and different somehow from natural drowsiness—having only just roused myself sufficiently to throw off my coat and neckcloth, and then lying down as before on the outside, or rather

on the top of the upper feather-bed which they give you in that country by way of a covering,—without further undressing, I had fallen off into a kind of doze, when I was once more startled by the row at the door beginning again ; whoever it was, pounding as if they were going to break it in, and then came a clatter of small stones or gravel against my window, and a loud voice—the same voice, I could recognise, as before, only this time in plain English.

“Lambard!—I say, Frank Lambard, are you within there?—if so, I must see you this moment!—Come down directly, and let me speak to you—a most important matter—a matter of life and death, or I wouldn't come at such an hour. I know you are in there, for *Stilskins*, whom I met and have brought back here with me, says so.”

And then began again a thundering and rattling at the street door, which made the old house echo again.

It was De Lyons' voice, and I was fairly roused, and sufficiently myself by this time to think that something really must be the matter, so I groped about for a match and struck a light. Again the indignant landlady had gone down, and was again solemnly protesting that I was still not yet returned.

Almost again apparently convinced, De Lyons seemed to be leaving the door in despair, as I could

hear by his voice, when as I suppose stepping back into the street, he looked up and saw the light I had struck, in my window; and then of course, satisfied that I really was there, he slipped by the irate old Mrs. Slanngartz, who, putting her head out of the open door, began to yell for the "*Polizei*" with all her might and main; while he having tumbled over and extinguished the afore-mentioned lamp in his violent haste, was kicking at the panels of my door, and shouting for me to let him in, as if the house was on fire, which I really began to think must be the case.

"For heaven's sake, my dear fellow," he cried, bursting in in a state of the most panting excitement as soon as I had unbolted the door, "jump up at once! You have not a moment to lose. Here, dip your head into this tub of cold water; or twist a wet towel round your temples:—that is right; dip it again; let me pour some down the back of your neck, that will set you right in a moment—get your things on—what, you are dressed? Oh, to be sure; *Stilskins*, whom I luckily met as I was cutting along to Lüttichau Strasse, told me how he had brought you home: and that made me come back again, certain that you must be in, in spite of that old she-dragon's confounded lies and protestations.

## CHAPTER XX.

## FRANK LAMBARD TO THE RESCUE.

WE were soon out in the dark street, and De Lyons was lugging me along with all his might by the arm.

“Now then, old fellow, hold up; gather your senses together—you are all right, ain’t you? So, now let us be off, and not lose a minute in getting down to their house. I told you that I would prevent it if I could, but I was afraid I might be sold after all; but now the Professor has told me how to go to work, and I knew old Zauber would do anything in the world for me; and so I hope we have saved her, and shall beat the little rascal with his own weapons yet. Though it is a matter of life and death, I tell you; for if decay, however slight, once began, we should be too late.”

“Where are we to go to? what are you talking about?” I said. I began to think, raving as he was, almost incoherent in his excitement, that De Lyons was really drunk.

“Where to? To Lüttichau Strasse, of course—to

your friends—your relations you told me they were. Have you heard whether anything has happened to that jolly pretty girl—young lady—your cousin, you know?”

Then the whole truth, and all that had occurred that afternoon, which seemed to me like months ago, suddenly rushed back to my mind. It was till then as if it had gone completely and entirely out of my head; the memory of it all came back like a fresh and crushing blow upon my mind.

“Lüttichau Strasse!” I said, resisting him; “I can’t. We must not go there—we must not, indeed. Have you not heard what has happened?—there is death in the house there. Katie, my cousin, the beautiful girl you speak of, is dead: she died this evening.”

“What time?” he inquired, “what time was it? Collect yourself; try to think, my dear fellow, if you can remember the exact time. Was it six or seven, or after seven? Try to think; for it is really important.”

I knew it was after seven, I said, in a sort of dreamy way; but in spite of my confusion, could not help thinking that, even though he did not know her, it was strange that he should not be more surprised or shocked, but ask such minute particulars as to details.

“It was striking seven, I know, as I went upstairs

to see my aunt; and I suppose it must have been almost half-past when we heard the nurse cry out that she was dead."

"Half-past seven, you say? and it is now just one; then we are in time yet to save her, if you will only do as I tell you, and firmly believe in the success of what you are going about, without any doubts or hesitation. Do you hear me?"

I could hear what he said; but felt the sensation of drowsiness again coming over me so strongly that if De Lyons had not caught hold of me in his arms, and supported me with his whole strength, I felt that I must have sunk down then and there—I could not have moved another step.

Very luckily we were close by a great fountain, or rather cistern of water there is at the corner of one of the avenues—*allées* they call them—into which my friend dipped his handkerchief, and most liberally besprinkled or, I might say, deluged my face, chest, and hands, till I was wringing wet all over; and then fixing me upon one of the benches with my back up against a tree, began a series of manœuvres which, that being the first time I had ever seen anything of the sort, stupid and bewildered as I still felt, I think had as much the effect of concentrating my attention and so tending to recover the proper action of my mind, as from any

particularly magnetic or physical powers in his manipulations. Anyhow, he set to work, making upward passes with his hands, not as I have since seen mesmerists do when they are putting a patient off to sleep, but just t'other way up, exactly the reverse, beginning quite low down almost at my toes, then up my legs and knees, and so gradually passing up my whole body to my face, and the top of my head.

His queer dodges certainly had the effect of making me feel better and more myself, though heartily uncomfortable, for I was seized with a violent fit of shivering; though that, perhaps, might have been caused (by the way) by the two duckings I had undergone.

All of a sudden a fresh thought seemed forcibly to have struck De Lyons in the midst of his operations.

“By gum!” he exclaimed, speaking to himself, “I should not be surprised if it were so! I can but try it on, at least. Here, Lambard, old fellow, pick up a bit, man, and tell me whether this article came from or has ever belonged to you?”

He dived into his pocket and lugged out an old kid glove all shrivelled up and dirty, which he thrust into my unresisting hand.

The immediate effect was marvellous, perfectly incredible.

No sooner had I clutched that glove than in that instant I was completely myself again, broad awake, and ready to act as ever I felt in my life.

“Hurrah! right, by jingo!” said *Taraxacum*. “Of course it was,” still talking to himself more than to me: “what a fool I was not to think of it at once, and how lucky that I grabbed it with the other ramshackle as I did; very odd it did not occur to me before, when I saw the state you were in, but I suppose that sinner *Rumple Stilskins’s* jabber put me off the right scent. But now, Frank Lambard, you really are all right and your own proper self again;” and he gave me a rough shake by way of settling that point, or perhaps of convincing himself satisfactorily; “listen to me attentively, and, as I have already told you, if you will follow my directions, though you have no time to spare, you may yet save your cousin, even though she may have seemed to you dead and gone. By looking sharp and acting like yourself with full pluck, you may still bring her back to herself and her parents.

“Don’t stop to ask questions, because every moment is precious. I will give you any explanations you like afterwards—to-morrow will do well enough for that—if you like; but now make haste; let us get to the house, and you must find your way in, by fair means, if you can, but if not, by force even, if we are

put to it ; but at any rate before another half-hour is over our heads, you must go in straight on end to where the young lady is lying in a trance, for it is no more, and on the truth of that fact I will lay my life itself. I speak as knowing what I am about, you see, and not on mere guess or conjecture. I have every reason for knowing that what I tell you is nothing but fact : you must insist upon being admitted to the very room where your cousin is lying, as you and her relations, I have no doubt, suppose dead, and lost to you all for ever. Stick to your point, mind—take no refusal ; and then having gained admission, place this that I now give you in her hand if you can, but anywhere actually touching her will do. Do it, or at least see it done yourself, trust no one else, and to the best of your power try yourself to believe with all your might in the happy fulfilment of your purpose while doing as I tell you.

“I suppose you are aware, that by the police regulations of this country, she will have to be removed from the house the very first thing in the morning, and within twenty-four hours of her supposed death must be buried ?—That is why there is no time to be lost ; it might be too late. This, I tell you, brought into her presence, and put actually in or on her hand, may, and I firmly believe will, save her.”

He held out to me a gold locket, which at the first glance I could see had undergone some rough usage ; the cover of it seemed to have been wrenched back, and the glass inside was broken right across. Together with the locket, though now detached from it, he also handed me a long dark glossy lock of hair, which smelt of burning, as if it had been singed or perhaps acted upon by some strong chemical.

“I could not get hold of these articles by fair means,” De Lyons explained, as he saw me looking up from them to himself with amazement. “I had no chance of doing so but by main force, and had, as you may see, a hardish tussle for them with the little rascal.

“But never mind all that now !—only don't lose one moment more than you can help in doing all I have told you ;” and he began bustling me along again.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE REVIVAL.

WE had arrived in the very street, and in front of my uncle's house, before I had at all realized my situation or my strange errand, or indeed made up my mind how to attempt even to gain admittance at such an unwarrantable hour, more particularly under the sad existing circumstances.

A very feeble light showed a glimmer through a partly open shutter. It was in the very room in which, as I in an instant recognised, with a cold feeling of pain, which seemed to freeze up my very brain within my skull, all that remained of the poor darling girl was lying; and I felt sure that by that feeble light Harrison probably, or one of the female servants, must be sitting up watching.

All the rest of the house was shut up entirely, and seemed, perhaps from the contrast of that single light, all the more profoundly wrapped in profound quiet and stillness.

I at first hoped and endeavoured to attract the atten-

tion of whoever it might be who was watching within that awful room, by calling the name of Harrison three or four times, but at the same time knowing how nervous and liable to terror she would most likely be, I was afraid to raise my voice much above a loud whisper.

“ Oh, this wont do at all !” cried De Lyons, losing all patience ; “ confound it, man ! can’t you understand or believe what I tell you, that it is a matter of life and death ?” and again working himself up into a state of excitement, he seized hold of the bell handle, and began to tug at it with all his might and main, and then to rattle and kick at the street door, as he had before done at my own, when determined to rouse me.

“ Never mind the consequences ! This is no time for mincing matters or humbugging about ceremony. I tell you that we, or rather you, must make them let you in, Lambard, or you will be too late—too late to save her from a horrible death, or even the more horrible fate of living without a soul. Such things have happened before now ; so here goes again, till I make the whole street hear us.’

“ *Wer ist ?*” cried a woman’s voice from the window, which was opened a little way.

Perfectly aghast as I was at my companion’s reck-

less assault upon the door, and judging, as I well could, of what must be its effects, and the feeling of those within, sorrow-stricken, and weighed down with grief as they of course were, my first impulse was to rush away anywhere to hide myself out of sight for ever, rather than be discovered as participating in what I felt conscious must appear such an outrage upon all common decency, or even humanity. I think I must have yielded to that impulse, only that I felt afraid of being recognised in the light of one of the few and far between street lamps which happened to be almost directly opposite the door.

I instinctively shrunk myself up into the recess of the entrance, where I could not be seen from the windows above.

“*Wer ist?*” again asked the person at the window, and then another voice added an earnest entreaty (of course in German) that, whoever we might be, we would kindly depart quietly and not disturb the house of mourning, “for we are visited at this moment with a most grievous affliction, and death is now in this house, in this very chamber,” it added, bursting into a violent sob. “Whoever you are, as Christians we entreat you to desist and leave us undisturbed in our deep grief to mourn in quiet over the loss of our poor child, who has this night been taken from us.”

It was my poor aunt herself. I knew the tones of her sad voice, and I stepped out of my hiding-place in the door-way into the street.

“Mrs. De Lorme, it is only me,” I cried. “My dearest aunt, do not be frightened, but for heaven’s sake come or send down to the front door, and let me come in. I must come in this very instant—it is a matter of life and death; and though it was not me kicking up that tremendous noise with the bell, or knocking at the door in that awful way, yet come in I must, I tell you; and if you will believe in me, and only trust me, I can and will save dearest Katie, and restore her alive to you yet.”

I then was standing out right under the full lamp light, such as it was, in order that she might see and recognise me, and so not be alarmed, or think that robbers or assassins were come to attack the house.

It had never occurred to me that I was all this time wearing the soaked towel bound tight round my temples, just as *Taraxacum* had tied it, to bring me to my proper senses; and thus arrayed had come out of my lodgings without a hat, or any other covering to my head: my coat was flung loosely over my shoulders with the sleeves tied round my neck, instead of my absent neckcloth; and what with my several immersions, first in the tub and subsequently in the fountain-

place, it is no great wonder that I presented a somewhat dilapidated, not to say ghastly appearance.

“You must indeed let me come in,” I again vociferated. “For Heaven’s sake, let me in before it is too late, and while there is time to save her, as indeed I can if you will only let me. Don’t you know me? Dear aunt, it is me, Frank Lambard, your nephew.”

“Lor’, tip me topsy-turvy!” exclaimed Mrs. Harrison, somewhat profanely (but she was always a privileged character in the establishment, and rather given to the use of strange modes of expression), as she shoved her head violently out over my aunt’s shoulder—“If it isn’t your very own nevy, ma’am, that ere Mr. Lambard hisself! in company, too, with one of them rumbustical studentses, and both of ’em, s’ help me seraphims, seeming to my senses h’as tipsey h’as h’owls!”

“Harrison!” I cried, “come down directly and let me in! Do you hear me? I say, for Heaven’s sake, come down and open the door to me!”

She drew her head in again without vouchsafing me any sort of answer to my most earnest appeal; but as she did so, I could hear her say to my aunt, “Now, ma’am, had I best go for to rouser up the Colonel, ma’am, or do you seem to think we had better both skreak out for the police?”

I was becoming desperate, but once again I appealed

to them ; and that they might understand me, I spoke with a forced distinctness and precision : “ Harrison, confound your stupid tongue ! Aunt, indeed, I am perfectly master of myself, and all right, but I do, and must insist upon coming in ; and if you are not going to allow me to do so by the proper way immediately and quietly, I must do my best to gain an entrance as I can ; but to come in somehow I am quite determined.”

The window from which this parley was taking place was no height from the ground level, and as I, in my anxiety, mounted up upon the top door-step, I saw that it would require no very great effort of activity to have caught hold of the window-sill in a spring from where I was standing, and to have clambered in.

It did cross my mind to make the attempt, and so carry the fortress fairly by assault ; but unless absolutely driven to that resource by a direct refusal of admittance, I should have been sorry to have desecrated that awful chamber where poor Katie's remains were resting, by what I felt must, at any rate at the time, have appeared a most unbecoming, not to say disgraceful act of violence, against two women, whom probably it would have frightened out of their very wits.

I went so far as to threaten it, however, and I heard a fierce parley going on inside between the mistress and maid, both talking hard at once, and I rather fancy, under the erroneous impression that it was in a whisper.

Whilst again almost considering whether I should not, as time grew short, be driven to extremes, I found that the two had come down together to the other side of the street-door, for I could hear them still cackling through the key-hole; presently the lock turned, the chain inside clanked, and the door, though I was expecting it to do so, opened so suddenly that I was inside, and it was sharply shut to again before I knew where I was. It was pitch dark, they had not brought a light down with them, and before I had recovered my surprise I felt myself violently seized hold upon on each side; my aunt on one arm, and her abigail on the other, hanging on like grim death with their whole weight upon me; and dash me! if I didn't feel that wretch Harrison, for though I could not see, I knew which was her by the extra tenacity of her claws which were digging into the muscle of my arm through my shirt-sleeve. Dash me, I say, if she wasn't fumbling with her garter, or stay-lace it may have been, trying her very best to tie my hands behind my back.

“There now, Franky, dearest,” said my aunt in a soft soothing, coaxing sort of voice, as if she were speaking to a child; “I am sure you wouldn’t wish to wake your poor uncle, would you, dear? who has only just got off at last into his first sleep; and surely, Franky, you cannot have forgotten all that we have been through this dreadful, dreadful day? Then he shall come, the dear boy, with his own aunt who loves him and will take care of him. He shall have the spare room, and go to bed there till the morning, and have a good night’s rest, and stay with us quietly till he is better, and quite recovered, and perhaps in time we may all hope to get through our dreadful loss, our bitter, bitter sorrow for that poor darling child, lying dead upstairs.”

“She is not lying dead,” I said very earnestly, “she is nothing of the sort, I will convince you. I do assure you, aunt, if you will only let me go up to the room quietly—come up with me yourself—she shall wake up from the trance in which she has been laid, for that is what she is in, and can and shall be restored to you; I wish I could make you believe me, when I tell you that I have been through nearly the same myself, though it had less effect upon me—I have, indeed, my dear aunt—since I parted with you this very evening.

"I am not intoxicated; I have not touched food, let alone wine or any sort of liquor since two o'clock to-day, and then my dinner was scarcely more than nominal.

"Come, Harrison," I said, "none of that nonsense, if you please," as I demoralized her ligatures with a snap; "but now just let me go upstairs, and, quickly, and look upon her once more; and then, if I am not as good as my word, I will submit to any condition or do anything you tell me. I solemnly promise you."

I do not know whether they would have accepted. They were still clinging on to me with all the weight they could raise of themselves, and I could hear Eustace grinding her very teeth, in her anxiety to keep me fast, when just at that moment a door opened at the end of the passage, going off as it did, from the top of the first flight of stairs, by which we had gradually all worked along together, in a kind of stinging scuffle; and, behold, my uncle, the Colonel, appeared with a light in his hand.

"Hullo! what on earth is the matter now?" I heard his gruff voice demanding. "Who the devil have you got there? Is there any one wounded, or breaking into the house?"

Both my assailants turned round as he spoke, and in an instant I jumped clear of them. I was not very

sorry to see Mrs. Harrison spinning on her own axis, on the mat at the foot of the flight of half-a-dozen steps up which we had been struggling. They had not shut the door of the room when they had come down to let me in; I could see the light burning there; I did not stop to think of propriety, or ceremony, perhaps I should rather say, of anything of the sort, but ran quickly up, and in another moment was by the bedside where poor Katie lay, moved and arranged since I had seen her, as I had then thought, for the last time for ever.

The lamplight shone full upon her face, calm, and more beautiful than ever. An instantaneous, though most fervent prayer rose from my heart to my lips, that De Lyons' strong convictions and promises might prove true.

The strange effects which I had myself experienced, naturally, I suppose, tended to confirm my own belief and confidence more than would perhaps otherwise have been the case——

I felt that I prayed for faith, and with full faith at the moment did I gently lay the lock of hair and the jewel with it, though separate, upon her white delicate hands, which were now placed crossed upon her bosom. As I did so, my eye was caught by a tumbler nearly full of water in which a few fresh-gathered flowers had

been placed upon the table by the bedside ; taking out the flowers, I dashed the water all over her face and neck.

At that very moment I felt myself violently seized and pinioned from behind. It was the Colonel who, as soon as he heard who it was, had hurried up after me, and now was holding me in the gripe of a lion.

“ Pray, oh, pray be very gentle with him, dearest George. Command yourself, and only be gentle !” I heard my aunt cry, who had bustled up after her husband, to the door. Pray don't hurt him, poor fellow ! You know it is not his fault. For your poor child's sake, and memory, be very gentle with him.”

I did not attempt to resist. I had carried through my intention, and done what I wanted, so did not care any longer to struggle, even if it would have been any use, holding me at an advantage as the old soldier was, with all his force.

He had turned me round and was walking me quite unresistingly to the door ; we were just leaving the room, actually in the very doorway, when, by Heaven ! we all turned round with a start.

A sudden start, indeed, and not without reason for it too.

It was dear Katie's voice, very gentle, and as if not half awake—

“Harrison,” she called lowly, though quite distinctly, “Harrison—mamma dear, are you there too? Oh, I am so glad that I am here, so glad to have come back again to you! I thought I should never, never have been allowed to see any of you again!”

I felt my heart give such a bound within me, it seemed like the snap of some spring. I only wonder now that it did not kill me on the spot.

The Colonel stood for an instant also, as if paralyzed, then dropped his hold of my arms, and in another instant was on his knees by his daughter's bedside.

As to old Harrison, before I knew what she was at, she had wound her skinny old arms round my neck from behind, in a hug nearly as tight as the Colonel's had been, and set to to kiss and slobber all down my cheeks and neck, so that, if I could have only got round at her, I should like to have tweaked her stupid old nose for her; as it was, I had to kick up pretty sharply behind, before I could get her off.

Well, explain it as you like, or think you can, it is all positive fact that I have been telling you, impossible or incredible as you may think it or not. As long as I live it is not very likely that I shall ever

forget that extraordinary scene, though of course there are particulars which I may not now have told you quite exactly.

I went down to the front door and there found *Taraxacum*, who had faithfully been waiting all the time. When I told him the result and fulfilment of his prognostications—instantly nailing me on the spot for the promise of an introduction the very first opportunity, which, under the peculiar circumstances, I do not exactly see how I could have refused—betook himself off to some favourite *Keller* or haunt, alleging that it was too late by that time to be worth going to bed; and, as I heard afterwards, celebrated his joy and self-contentment for having taken part in so very successful and praiseworthy an action, by getting so awfully drunk that it required the whole energies of *Rumple Stilskins* and no less than four of his canary-coloured comrades to carry him home to his own quarters, at some advanced hour of the morning.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## NOTICE OF REMOVAL.

You may well understand that after all I had gone through mentally, as well as physically, my desperate tussle with, and then the hugging I had undergone from Harrison, by no means to be considered as the least of my trials—when I did get back to my own lodgings, I was in no particular humour for either explanations or recriminations with old Mother Slanngärtz, my landlady, whom, notwithstanding her nocturnal disturbances, I found up, and evidently lying in wait for me.

It was by the time I turned into my own street, broad daylight, a fresh and beautiful summer morning. There was no avoiding her, for there she stood exactly in the centre of the open doorway.

To my courteous salutation of "Guten Morgen, Frau Slanngärtz," she only vouchsafed a sort of husky grunt by way of response, and followed up what might be considered as the opening gun of a battery, with a

volley of musketry in the shape of invectives and reproaches, interspersed with occasional flights of rockets or shells, as far as I could judge of them by the tone of voice in which they were launched at me, in the form of sarcasms so stunning, that they seemed almost to take her own breath away.

Not only did the old dragon go in at me personally on the score of inebriety, irregularity of hours, and morality, or rather every sort of immorality which could be laid to any individual's charge, but also upon the iniquities of my friends in particular, and even my compatriots in general, for whom I felt it utterly useless even to attempt to make her understand that I could not pretend to hold myself responsible.

Fortunately it was of course entirely in her native vernacular, and delivered as it was with an unparalleled volubility, much that I have no doubt was impressive, if not valuable, as reflection and advice, was lost upon my untutored ears.

So, watching my opportunity, and dodging beneath her swinging arms, which, with the full force of natural eloquence were marking the emphasis of her discourse, I slipped into my own room, and, as we used to call it at college, sported my door before she could well turn upon me, so that the remainder of her observations, even, if possible, increased in intensity,

were delivered through the keyhole at me, as I tumbled out of my clothes and into my bed, and in less than two minutes was fast asleep; though, for all I know to the contrary, the old shrew may have been jawing at me for another hour or more.

It was, I know, getting on into the afternoon before I awoke, refreshed and peckish enough, and I was just giving myself a preliminary stretch and roll over in my bed, before taking that important step which one always—or I will speak for myself, at least—hates so much, from my warm bed into my cold slippers, when my eye was caught by a piece of paper on the floor, which had evidently been thrust in at the bottom of the door.

No less did it prove than a formally drawn up document, commencing with a closely written epitome of the lecture I had undergone in the early morning, and terminating with a notice to quit forthwith, and to carry myself, and my goods and chattels elsewhere.

Trusting that the storm would blow over, I thought the best way would be to ignore and take no notice of the matter, so refolding it I just chucked it back to the spot from which I had picked it up.

And later, when the deeply-injured and irascible old lady brought me in my breakfast, and having carefully picked up the cartel had laid it upon the

tray before me ; I then, without pretending to be aware of the action, thanked her, and tearing it across proceeded to light my cigarette with it.

She snorted and her eyes distended. I thought she was going to break out again, but she seemed taken aback, and I had somehow got her out of my room again before she could find utterance to her wrath. Perhaps she had entirely exhausted her magazine of ideas and indignant objurgations at her previous attack: anyhow she was round, and outside, and the door between us, without having again had time to open fire, and I flattered myself that if she had proper time to cool, we should go on again all right, and that I should hear no more about it ; but there I reckoned without mine host, or I should rather say mine hostess ; but those Germans when they do get an idea into their most obtuse heads, are a pig-headed and very stiff-necked style of animal.

In the meantime, however, my predominant idea, even I think before that of going down to Lüttichau Strasse to inquire after, or perhaps, as I dared to hope, even see Katie, and under the strange concatenation of circumstances, make out how matters were likely to be going on there ; my first idea, I say, was to lose no time in finding out that little arch-fiend Gorles,

and bringing him to a reckoning for his sins and iniquities.

I had fully made up my mind, as soon as I had caught him, to smash, crush, and utterly demolish him, like any other venomous nauseous insect or reptile, then and there.

I did not look for any explanation, or intend entering into any argument with him. I felt that I should probably be baffled, or that by some of his tricks or jugglery he might escape me. I was conscious that I could bring no exactly definite proof or evidence against him. I had formed no plan of how I should begin, as to what I should say, or even do exactly, when I should, as I was resolved, have got hold of him, beyond his immediate annihilation.

I have since, upon looking back to my then feelings and intentions, had good reason to consider it just as well as not, that circumstances at the time prevented the carrying out of my immediate views.

Yes,—it undoubtedly was, as most things are somehow, for the best, that I had not the slightest idea where he lived, or where I should be likely to find him.

*Taraxacum*, to whom I naturally looked for certain information in that respect, was, when I called upon

him (as I think I have already incidentally mentioned), far too much overpowered by his joyous feelings, to say nothing of the glorious celebration of the said feelings, which did his heart, if not his head, so much credit ;—the state he was in being, as he afterwards explained, entirely on my account, and in the cause of real sympathy and friendship ; but he was far too heavily asleep to have the slightest chance of being fit to come out with or in any way be of any use to me.

Later I sent up a note by *Rumple Stilskins*, who had faithfully to his promise called early, and had been hanging about the door the whole morning till I could admit him—it was from him I learnt the particulars about De Lyons. I had also inquired the abode, or most usual haunts of Gorles, but he was, or professed himself ignorant on the point ; though promising to lose no time in finding out for me.

On this special errand I despatched him, giving him at the same time a note, which I meant by way of an ice-breaker for Lüttichau Strasse, announcing my intention, with the sanction of the Colonel and my aunt, to whom it was addressed, of looking in there in the evening.

In less than twenty minutes the trusty *Stilskins* was back again, bringing my own undelivered note in

his hand, and with the astounding information that the De Lormes, with their whole family and establishment, were gone, and that the house, or at least the part of it which they had occupied, was all closed and empty.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

TO LET: A FIRST FLOOR IN LÜTTICHAU STRASSE.

QUITE unable to believe the fellow's story, I hurried off immediately to Lüttichau Strasse to satisfy myself of a fact which, though my fears foreboded only to be too true, my senses almost refused to take in.

There was no doubt about it. The house was all shut up and empty, sure enough.

I pealed at the door bell, I shouted for the woman of the house.

I could only learn from her, when she at last condescended to make her appearance with her mouth full, wiping crumbs and relics of the repast from which she had been interrupted, with the back of her great greasy hand, before she could find breath, or I suppose it might be space inside to reply, which she did after sundry leisurely puffs, that she could only suppose that the Herr *Oberste* (which being translated means Colonel), and his *gnädige Frau*, must have that morning received some sudden and most imperative

news from England which could thus have caused them to depart at a moment's notice.

That at only eight o'clock that morning had she, and they at the same time themselves apparently, had an idea of their departure, that all then had been in a state of confusion and hurry, everything packed up, their passports procured by special favour from the Minister with whom they were intimate; their accounts settled; her own among them, with three months' rent over and above what was owing, (she could not help showing her own intense appreciation of that part of the arrangements); and all had departed—all, the dead young fraulein, and all—by the two o'clock train from the Newstadt station.

“The dead young fraulein and all,” she repeated; as I suppose, staggered as I already was, I had not exhibited a sufficient increase of astonishment at that last announcement; that the beautiful fraulein had died last night; that she herself had been into the room to see her, and indeed had herself assisted the nurse at the last arrangements of the body, and had then gone out, by the express desire of the Colonel, to give the requisite notification to the police authorities; and also, that while she was about it, though the Colonel, perhaps not aware of the customs of her country, or very likely forgetful from his heavy griefs, had not

desired her to do so, that she had gone a little way further on to an excellent *leichen-besorger* (which is their name for undertakers), in the same neighbourhood; and ordered a handsome and serviceable coffin, to be decorated and furnished suitable to the station and means of a noble Englander's family.

But that she had been so entirely upset and flabbergasted by the announcement of their sudden departure that morning, that she had utterly forgotten to mention the fact of her having given this most requisite order; and that now they were all gone, particularly the young lady herself, what she should do about the coffin when it came; or what she must say to the man when he brought it, she could not even think."

Nor was that all of the strange and wonderful that she, a poor, though honest woman, who had hitherto, she blessed her angels, led a quiet life, undisturbed by any incident since her marriage thirty-two years before, until the last twenty-four hours had if not to endure, to experience.

Not only had the fair fraulein died, as she had related, and the whole house, herself included, been plunged in grief; but also a desperate gang of burglars, *räuber* brigands had attacked, and actually succeeded in breaking into the house; that the Colonel, brave man, although, as she had previously described, borne down and

bewildered with his loss, had resisted with the courage of a lion, and had alone sustained a hand-to-hand conflict with the assailants ; that she herself had distinctly witnessed, no, not witnessed, but listened to the struggle ; but that she and her good husband, who in his time had proved that he was brave enough by having served his time in the Landwehr, and so there was no need now of any further risks, since his courage was established, and he was no longer paid for it ; so that he and herself had hid their heads under their bed clothes, repeating the hymn to Vaterland, what they could remember of the ten commandments, and other prayers, feeling sure that their tenants on the first floor were being murdered, and that their own last hour was come ; but that, after all, the burglars had been foiled in their attempt, their real object having been, so far as she could gather from the report of the servant maid in the morning, not plate or money,—but being either English painters, or perhaps students of medicine in one of the neighbouring Universities, they were trying to seize and carry away the body of the young lady ; attracted by the report of the extraordinary beauty and grace of her form when alive, they probably wished to secure it, to embalm either as a model of art or for the further advancement of physical science, she could not quite say which ; but that the

same maid, having been some years in England, had given her to understand that the stealing, or even taking by force of dead bodies for the afore-mentioned purposes, was quite a common and established practice in that country.

That might, she went on to remark, have had something to do with the reason of the Colonel's sudden resolution of leaving her house, and indeed Dresden, on such extraordinary short notice, paying as he had (she again repeated with the same evidently intense satisfaction as before) the full rent for three months with a permission to take in another family even tomorrow, if she were lucky enough to catch one; and that all letters, bills, accounts, or claims against them which might be sent in—though as to the latter she was ready to testify on oath that they had always paid for everything by the week—but should any arise, the Colonel had left orders that they were to be sent in to his agent, Herr Fusser, in Weisseritz Strasse.

“But the young lady, the fraulein,” I inquired, “what has become of her, then?”

“Bless your stars,” rejoined the old dame, “what I have to tell you of her you will find to be the strangest and most difficult to believe of all this most strange story, although it may perhaps be after all

only in accordance with their other strange island customs, or religious ceremonies.

“I, Gretchen Speiser, with my own eyes witnessed the frau Harrison taking in a basin of hot *consommé* to the dead young lady; and was actually inviting her to rise and try to take some of it; when turning, she perceived that I had ventured to follow her into the apartment, meaning, as I did, to offer my services if I could in any way be of any assistance to them in their distress, she without ceremony pushed me out and slammed the door rudely upon me.

“She was always most haughty and of impulsive passions, was the Frau Harrison.

“But, *gnädiger Herr!* I almost fear to be suspected of presuming too much upon your credulity when I inform you that, as I afterwards heard from my hausesmädchen, whose help for cording up and carrying down their thousand of boxes and packages they were obliged to call in, they actually dressed the poor child's corpse, and laying her upon the mattress belonging to that narrow and most uncomfortable campsofa, on which the Colonel, who was an excellent man, but full of very strange whims, would always insist upon sleeping in preference to any other bed, however luxuriously prepared; they carried her down upon that

mattress and took her away with them in the droshky to the railway station.

“What the inspector of the polizei will think or say of this strange affair when, in accordance with my official invitation, he arrives, I am at a loss to imagine, or indeed the worthy maker of coffins; they will, I fear, accuse me wrongfully of having deceived and wished to make fools of them.

“But lo! as I speak the very words, *the leichenbesorgers are here!*”

Sure enough at that very moment two fellows carrying between them a lightly-built inner coffin, or shell, I think, one calls it in this country, appeared round the corner of the street.

Why is it, I often wonder, that one's natural sense of the ridiculous always seems most keenly alive in the very presence of any peculiarly solemn object, or at the moment of any special grief or great trouble; that such is the case has not every one experienced? On such occasions as a squeaking baby, or a chirping bird, or more especially a Sunday-school boy “whacked” over the head, in a country church: how such small matters will set a whole congregation giggling, particularly if the sermon happens to be above average dismal; not an individual of which would any-

where else have, perhaps, noticed the incident, or if at all, only as a nuisance.

A *lapsus lingue* of the parson at a funeral, or the chief mourner sitting himself down on his own hat, will often set people off in a roar; a mere blunder on the part of a blockheaded witness in the most serious trial for murder will produce what the papers parenthesize as "roars of laughter," of which the involuntary perpetrators are themselves ashamed before it is actually over.

Is it not so? and does not universal experience in this respect again confirm my views on the great natural law of contraries to which I have before alluded as one of the existing, but little understood principles of natural science?

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## A GRAVE ORDER ENDS IN GRAVER CONSEQUENCES.

I WAS led to diverge slightly into certain by-the-bye observations in the end of the last chapter by the recollection of my own internal sensations as I stood by, witnessing the arrival of the two undertakers' satellites with their dismal burden between them, their faces professionally drawn down into an exaggerated lugubriousness of expression, as they halted, and proceeded to unwrap the black cloth in which the shell was enveloped; while there, speechless on the top step stood the landlady watching their operations with an air of helpless and mystified bewilderment, as though voluble as had been the first outburst of her narrative of wonder to myself, who happened to have been the first comer, now that she should have again to explain, account for, and as perhaps she felt, be held personally responsible for all that had so strangely come to pass, fairly overpowered by so much to tell, her ideas seemed to have clubbed themselves in all trying

to find vent at once ; and in sheer despair she gave up the attempt as a bad job, and stood gasping with her great mouth wide open like a fresh-landed salmon, as she stared at the undertakers, and they stood and stared back at her.

One often hears of "dying of laughing," without attaching much literal meaning to the expression ; but at that scene I really laughed to that degree that I thought I must have expired from utter exhaustion ; I laughed myself quite sore, inside and out.

I am sure my very ribs ached with the pain for two or three days after it.

And to bring the whole thing to a climax, while they were still standing staring, and I was stamping about the dusty pavement doubled up with laughter, up came the police official in cocked hat and full uniform, attended in due state by two myrmidons, to take the proper notifications of the death, of which he had received notice, as having occurred on the previous evening.

To attempt to describe the astonishment, incredulity, and other gradual feelings up to unwilling admission of the fact at least of there being no young lady to register as dead, or to bury, would be beyond my humble powers.

There they were all round the coffin, now laid upon

the steps, sputtering, shrugging, and all croaking with their hideous guttural jargon at once. One of the police seemed inclined to vent his outraged feelings by an assault upon me for my unseemly merriment, against which I had given up all attempts of struggling ; and he had even made a fierce stride or two towards me, till I heard his superior remind him that I was evidently an Englishman, and, therefore, better left alone ; so they returned to their confabulation, and ended in going inside to draw up an official account of many pages of the whole transaction, to be signed, and sworn to by the landlady, and her husband, for which they charged them at the rate of half a thaler a page on the spot.

As for the undertakers, who evidently considered themselves to have been shamefully bilked and ill-used by the defunct, they were for some time inclined to take their coffin upstairs, and, their right customer having escaped them, to insist upon the landlady herself, who, so far, according to her own account, had ordered it, paying for it, and putting it away until, as they tried to convince her, she would be sure to find she wanted it some time or other ; but as they would not abate a kreutzer from the full price, it not being, as they argued, second-hand, the old lady stoutly resisted their proposal ; to which, perhaps,

if it had been a decided bargain, she might have been more inclined to listen.

The cocked-hatted official seemed half disposed to see the justice of the undertakers' claim, and to back them in it; when luckily remembering the written order which had been left with her by my uncle, for all accounts, claims, or correspondence to be forwarded to Herr Fusser, and producing the same to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, it was decided *nem. con.* that, under the circumstances, they could not do better than deliver their goods, as per order, forthwith at the house of that respected agent and accountant, and would, no doubt, be fully reimbursed for the same, as well as for their extra trouble.

So, winding-up with another unanimously voted resolution, loudly and most distinctly enunciated, as I flattered myself, for my special behoof, standing by as I still was, determined to see the absurd business out to its very end, to the effect that of all strange and incomprehensible people, Englanders were, as a nation, the most strange and incomprehensible, they adjourned accordingly.

If I could only have had an idea of what the real end was to be of the affair, the ludicrous commencement of which it had thus been my luck to witness, I would not have missed it for worlds: though the

consequences to which it ultimately led were dire in the extreme, and resulted in a tremendous trial for damages, and whole months of fierce litigation.

It seems the worthy Herr Fusser, whom I myself knew slightly, having cashed bills through his office, and so on, was on that very same day celebrating with open house the marriage of his only daughter, which had come off that morning, with a prosperous though rather elderly advocate of Dresden, of considerable wealth and position in his profession.

I use the term of "open house" on this occasion, as the story was told to me, advisedly, for whether intentionally, because of the heat of the summer afternoon, or may be from the negligence of the servants, whose attention was distracted by the unusual numbers of friends and relations assembled as they were in the great entrance hall of the old-fashioned mansion, to celebrate the joyful event. Anyhow the double doors of this said hall were left wide open; and right into the midst of the festivity, and circle of said rejoicing friends, and relatives, the two undertakers made their way; and, excited I suppose, partly by the heat, through which they had carried their burden so far, partly perhaps by the sense of having been hoaxed and disappointed,—feeling that they had right on their side, and were acting under the immediate counte-

nance and advice of the police ;—depositing the ghastly object on a great table in the centre with a bang, before any one could recover from their astonishment and horror, had there left it without one word more of explanation than that they had brought it according to orders, and would call next day for their money.

You may I daresay picture to yourself as well as I can the scene which arose upon this most unlooked-for apparition.

The ladies, of course, as they would have done in all countries, set to work fainting ; the lovely bride went off into screeching hysterics, and was taken so seriously ill on the spot, that they said,—well, never mind what they said, for I abhor scandal, and it has nothing to do with the story.

But in her ravings she frequently reiterated the name of an unfortunate lover, a very handsome, but as I was informed, very good-for-nothing young scamp of a student in the medical line, who had, it seems, publicly vowed dire vengeance against the false and fickle damsel herself, her father, and his more successful rival, her present respectable bridegroom.

On hearing these ejaculations, Herr Fusser, boiling over with the natural feelings of an indignant parent, without any further thought or inquiry, immediately

jumped at a not improbable conclusion, in which indeed he was unanimously supported by the opinion of the whole of his guests to a man, to the effect that this unlooked-for apparition must be an infamous practical joke and plot on the part of the discarded rival: he accordingly rushed out of his house blind with fury, and intent on all manner of mischief should he meet with the author of so audacious an insult and outrage as that which had been offered him.

As his evil destiny would have it, whom should he run right against, within a hundred yards of his own door, but the wretched lover himself in the lowest depths of despair; still, in spite of himself, hanging about the scenes of his once looked-for happiness, now blighted by disappointment and misery.

Some people indeed averred that he was only looking for a good deep place in the Weisseritz canal to drown himself, and his sorrows, at the very threshold of the false one, when, without one word of explanation or notice, Herr Fusser, usually the most peaceful and well-ordered of men, flew upon him, slapped, scratched, and spat in his face; and then, as they rolled together in the dust, in a desperate struggle, using the sharp end of a shoeing-horn, which he had caught up as the nearest weapon at hand, when rushing out through his hall, he then and there gouged a most frightful gash

across the cheek of his most innocent and undeserving victim.

There was of course the very deuce to pay. The police were brought up to the row, and it ended in all the parties concerned, bride and bridegroom included, being carried off to prison, and there having to pass many months of incarceration before the affair was finally expiated, and the damages arranged.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## TROUBLES NEVER COME ALONE.

ALTHOUGH, as I tell you, I did not actually witness the tragico-comic *dénouement* to the episode of the repudiated coffin, yet almost directly after they had occurred the whole particulars came to my knowledge under rather unlooked-for circumstances.

Having as I fancied seen the whole fun through to its end, little dreaming of course how much more was still fated to ensue, I had gone to the hotel for my dinner, and from thence returned leisurely to my lodgings, still over and over again bursting into such fits of laughter as to make many of the worthy Dresdenites turn their heads round to look after me, every time the absurdity of the scene I had witnessed, again and again tickled my inward gizzard, or whatever the anatomical contrivance within me is which produces that particular demonstration of hilarity.

I stood for a minute or two to have a good laugh well out at the door step of my own lodgings, but no

sooner, having given that really last necessary vent to my highly titillated feelings, had I mounted the flight of stairs leading up to my own room, than I and my laughter too, were brought up short by the sight of what at that moment met my astonished gaze upon the landing-place.

I had left the key in the door when I went out that afternoon, so that old Mother Slanngärtz might get in to put the place to rights.

There, I say, piled up outside, first struck my astonished view, my own portmanteaus, bag, and boxes, which, upon closer investigation I found to have been packed, that is, at least, filled with all my clothes, which had been pulled out of the wardrobe and the drawers in my bedroom, and all bundled in anyhow, all higgledy-piggledy. There were various other of my goods and chattels, including sundry choice little pieces of Dresden china, which I had from time to time picked up, German drinking tankards, foils, fencing masks, boots of all sorts and sizes, books, portfolios, my most precious travelling clock, my dressing case, all heaped up, one thing atop of another, the whole being crowned by my portable bath, still wringing wet; in short, all my worldly possessions turned out as if for sale by auction, before there had been time to ticket and arrange them.

I was yet standing quite aghast with wrath and astonishment, when my landlady, who had evidently been waiting in ambush behind this miscellaneous outwork of her own construction, stepped forth, and without vouchsafing one word of preface or explanation, handed me a rewritten edition of the notice to quit which I had treated so unceremoniously while at breakfast.

Having exactly deducted the rent of one week from the sum total due to her, which she seemed to consider, and for all I know, she may have been all right according to the law in that country, as equivalent to giving me notice for that same period, as covenanted between us, the amount of her demands came to about a *pony* or thereabouts, calculating in round numbers.

I suppose you know enough of sporting slang to understand that, or say, then, five-and-twenty pounds, if you would rather; though a hundred and sixty-eight thalers seven and a half groschen makes a deal more noise for the money, doesn't it?

That was the exact sum, I remember, due for several weeks' rent, besides breakfasts, postage, and many other sundries. And the spiteful old wretch demanded instant payment, and that I should then take myself and my goods, all of which she had, as I have de-

scribed, turned out of my room, off to some other quarters.

She had me, you see, in a regular corner there, confound her; and I think she was fully aware of it too, always poking her nose, as she was, whenever she found a chance, into all my drawers and places; for the unlucky fact was, that I had not many days before changed my last ten-pound circular note, and at the time had not three blessed thalers left to my name.

I had been daily intending to write home for reinforcements, but had been so much occupied by all I have been telling you, that I had not found time to do so; so there I found myself in a regular fix.

I tried at first what soft sawder would do, and began attempting to coax the old toad, but that was no go; her back was too much up at the way in which I had treated her former notice with contempt. The injured tone, and even spice of bullying I next resorted to were equally inefficacious.

She and her dunderheaded numskull of a husband, whom she had summoned up from the realms below, only stuck doggedly to their demand for payment, and then instant quittance; for that as to allowing me to sleep another night under that roof, after the disturbances, hardships, and insults they had undergone from

myself and my ill chosen friends, they were determined that no mortal persuasion should induce them to consent to anything of the sort. As to my plea of impecuniosity, that, they declared, they had nothing to do with, and did not believe in; or anyhow, if I had no money in my purse, I could go to my banker and get some.

I doubted very much in my own mind whether the banker would be willing to advance me the required sum upon the strength of my bare word as to an expected remittance. The continental bankers have been, I am sorry to say, so often let in, that their former unbounded confidence in the honesty of the British tourist has, not without reason, been considerably shaken; besides, I knew well that by that hour all the bureaux were long since closed, and that it would be hopeless to look for any of their occupants, had I even had any claim upon them for money in the regular way, let alone going to ask for an advance as a favour.

However, driven into such a fix as I was, I wrote a note upon the chance to Herr Fusser, who being, I knew, the agent, as well as personal friend of my uncle the Colonel, I thought more likely to assist me in my dilemma than any one else; and never, of course, guessing all that had happened to the poor man, sent it

off by a messenger, and made up my mind to wait where I was, upon the landing, until I should receive an answer, or, as I had politely ventured to intimate in my note, perhaps even he might himself come personally to see and advise me under my present adverse circumstances.

I did not exactly fancy leaving all my private property, loose and unprotected as it was, to the mercy or forbearance of the whole household, or, indeed, of anybody who might choose to walk in at the open front door.

I had given up, as a bad job, any further hopes of prevailing upon the people of the house to let me go back into my room, even for that night; and was attempting to put some of my stray articles a little into order, when happening to look round, I caught the villain Slanngärtz coolly occupied with my writing case, with his great stupid face peering into the inner compartments, which he had opened, I suppose, really to satisfy himself whether I had any money there or not.

I was quite glad that it was the man, and not his wife, for to tell the truth, I was just ready for some vent for the anger which I daresay you can give me full credit for feeling, at the pleasant little surprise which had thus been got up to meet me on my return home.

Before he was aware, I had caught the fellow by one of his huge lop ears, and sent him flying down the stairs, with a well-directed application of my toe, faster than I suppose my friend had ever found himself moving in his whole life before, right into the arms of a police officer who at that very instant, as if by magic, appeared in the doorway.

I recognised him in an instant as one of the identical cocked-hatted swells who had been in Lüttichau Strasse—the very one who had taken such offence at me for my disrespectful laughter.

Why he should have jumped up there like a jack-in-the-box, at that particular moment, I cannot say. Whether he had been quietly dogging my steps ever since, having marked something suspicious in my demeanour or appearance; or whether, as I am rather inclined to think, the fact of his being the same individual was a mere coincidence, and that he was only in collusion with the landlady; who, perhaps, anticipating a row, in consequence of her summary mode of ejection, had taken the precautionary measure of having a guardian of the peace near at hand; and he being, as I have already stated, in full fig for his other official visit, his superiors had not thought it worth while to dress out another for the occasion.

However it came to pass, there he was ; and drawing his long sword, like a hero, as soon as he had recovered from the shock of old Slanngärtz, who rebounded from off his manly chest just like an india-rubber ball, he rushed clattering up the stairs, and, waving his glittering blade within an inch of my nose, as I discreetly drew back, hemmed me into a corner in no time.

While still in that ignominious position, I confess I thought myself well off to be allowed to come to a parley with the enemy ; the result of which was, my promising that if he would put up his weapon, really dangerous as I felt it to be in the hands of an uneducated rascal, and in the gross misuse of which the authorities are always ready enough to back their myrmidons, except luckily for me at that time there existed amongst them a proper respect for *Milord Palmerstone* before their eyes. I agreed with him then, if he would put up his sword, to be taken quietly whithersoever he might feel it his duty to conduct me ; only further stipulating that we should first return all my things into the room, and, having locked the door, that I should keep possession of the key until I knew what was to be my fate.

This proposal of mine, after no end of loud talk and wrangling, ended in a compromise, by having the

key delivered up to the custody of the police himself, as a neutral party; and that matter being settled, for the time at least, I had nothing for it but to surrender, and be taken under the conduct of the stern official, to answer for my transgressions, to wit, a violent personal assault and battery upon my landlord, at the principal police station.

I must tell you that, just as we were starting, my messenger to Herr Fusser had returned with my note unopened, and his face distorted with astonishment and dismay, as he gasped out a most confused account of all that had happened in the establishment of that respected citizen.

That he had found the whole house and neighbourhood in an uproar—that Herr Fusser's *Fräulein* had been married only that very morning—that she had run away directly after the ceremony with the old medical attendant of the family; that the deserted bridegroom had turned upon, and denounced the wretched father for treachery, and connivance in the elopement; that they, but whether the doctor or the bridegroom, he was not sure, but stated both or either of them indiscriminately, had fought a duel with Herr Fusser in front of his own door; and that one, or both, or all of them had been slain on the spot (in that part he was again in much mental obfuscation); as to precisely

which of them was the dead one, he was not certain, but for one he could vouch on oath, having with his own eyes seen him in his coffin, that was, he had seen the coffin, which must have had somebody in it, on the great table in the middle of the hall.

Upon being cross and recross-examined, the poor boy,—he was only a street *gamin* promiscuously picked up,—became so hopelessly involved in contradictions and palpable inventions in his account of what really had happened, that the grim policeman, losing all patience, had felt it to be his duty to take him also into custody ; I suppose as an accessory after the fact, whatever the foundation of his strange tale might eventually turn out to be ; or, more likely, only too glad of a chance of an official excuse for putting his finger in the pie of, what seemed by all accounts to be, a criminal affair of unusual importance.

So the bewildered street boy and myself were marched off together, companions in misfortune, with Mother Slanngärtz in her state bonnet and shawl, for which we had had to wait while she retired to bedeck herself, and her in every way inferior half, who came as prosecutors and plaintiffs bringing up the rear.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## CIVIS ROMANUS SUM!

THROUGH the gloom of the descending shades of evening, the wistful eye of the closely guarded prisoner in vain sought the beetling heights of the ponderous, and awe-inspiring portal; as the late highly respected Mr. G. P. R. James would have described the entrance to the common prison; that is if, like myself up to that time, he had never happened to have seen them.

Had he done so, truth would have compelled him to describe the gates, or rather large door which we entered, as a very commonplace, unnoticeable entrance, dingy enough, and suggesting to the senses an atmosphere of bad smells and frowsiness.

And such a discordant clatter and croaking, and cawing, for all the world like a disturbed rookery, as we found going on in the court or rather open yard into which we passed from a long dimly-lighted passage, would, I think, have puzzled even

that most voluminous of novelists to have found words adequately to describe.

The unfortunate Herr Fusser, and his still more unfortunate victim of mistaken vengeance, with as many others of their party and family circle as they seemed to have indiscriminately laid hold of, had only just before been brought in; and were then awaiting the arrival of some of the judges or higher magisterial authorities, who had been specially summoned for a case of such important and aggravated disorder.

Thus it was that I so thoroughly picked up the full and true particulars of the whole story, as I have related them to you.

It was very late before that matter was heard through, and the whole lot of them remanded, and ordered to be shut up, and put on prisoners' treatment, without the slightest knowledge or certainty of when their trial might come on; which, far as I could make out, on inquiry, might be three days thence, or not till the next year, just as chance or other circumstances over which nobody seemed to have any control, might rule the matter; in this case, as it eventually turned out, it was, as I subsequently saw in the papers, ever so many months before all, more or less concerned, were well out of the business.

When my turn at last came on, I was, I must con-

fess, not a little taken aback when my particular gendarme, or *Polizeidiener*, which is, I believe, the correct Saxon title by which those official and officious geniuses call themselves, stood forth and brought his charge against me ; not, as I expected, for a summary assault upon a peaceful citizen, which, though I could not attempt to deny, I had been mentally preparing, in my best German, to justify, or at least extenuate by describing the extreme provocation I had received.

Not a bit of it. Utterly omitting, or, I suppose, having in the interval of time forgotten the actual affair for which, as I fancied, I had mainly rendered myself liable to the powers of the law, with a profusion of gesticulations and guggling rhetoric he based his accusation against me ; first, for petty treason, and a wilful insult towards the dignity and honour of the sovereign, and whole governing powers of the realm, inasmuch as I had dared in the open streets to jeeringly laugh at, and treat with ridicule, himself and his companions in arms, although dressed in their full municipal uniform, and at the time engaged in the discharge of one of the most solemn functions of their official duties.

Secondly, that being already marked by the police as addicted to irregular and intemperate habits, I, with

other evil associates on whom the authorities had also an eye, had within the last few nights been guilty of battering in doors, and forcibly breaking into unprotected houses; disturbing his Majesty King John's liege subjects from their peaceful beds.

And thirdly, that when in consequence of my gross misconduct and immoral habits, I had been warned by my landlady, a most respectable and loyal citizen of moderate competence, to leave her lodgings, I had treated her with familiarity and insult; and upon the most frivolous and groundless excuses had refused to pay her one groschen of the large sum of money due to her for rent, alleging that I had no money or means of liquidating her just claims; thereby confessing and proving myself, in addition to my other enormities, to be no better than a common cheat and swindler.

And so the rascal was allowed by the functionary at the desk to run on, warming in his eloquence, and, as I verily believe, carried on to say much more than he had himself intended, or even thought of when he first started.

It proved to me, as I had suspected, that it was a regular "plant;" that is, that there had been a previous understanding between him and Frau Slanngärtz, and that finding me to be the same party who

had dared to laugh at him, he was only too glad of the chance of so soon avenging his own offended dignity.

But, as I have said, the worthy citizen Slanngärtz's flying kick downstairs was utterly forgotten ; whether it was, as only a lesser offence, merged in the greater crime of having been wanting in respect to his own uniform, or whether my prosecutor had been so interested in the *dénouement* of Herr Fusser, and the coffin catastrophe, that that incident had the effect of driving the particulars of his own story out of his mind ; or whether, (the scandalous thought would obtrude itself into my mind), next to his own he took more interest in Madame Slanngärtz's wrongs than an impartial guardian of the peace ought to do, and was not altogether sorry to see her lawful husband getting his deserts, I cannot presume to give as a precise reason.

Perhaps, after all, the poor man's memory was naturally and constitutionally imperfect : I had rather begun to think so when he stood there so quietly, as a simple spectator, or rather listener, to the whole charge in Herr Fusser's case. I had at first fully expected to see him step forward officiously, only too delighted to be able to give an explanation of the previous chapter in the history of that coffin ; but he did not

seem to think it necessary to appear to know anything about the matter, and cast a significant glance at me, which I perfectly understood, to convey that by keeping our own counsel and holding our tongues, we should both save ourselves from a deal of trouble and complicated explanation.

It was too base of the ruffian after that familiar glance and secret passage of confidence between us to pitch it in so hot and strong against me, as he subsequently did; but he was carried perhaps further than he himself intended by the torrent of his eloquence, to say nothing of other potent feelings; and indeed would, I am sure, have gone on much longer if he had not been cut short by the presiding official, who, without asking for, or listening to any defence on my part, summarily inflicted a fine upon me of ten thalers, that is just thirty "bob," for insulting a government officer in his uniform, and while in execution of his duty, which I must pay instantly, or be locked up for the night.

As to the claim of the large sum (a few pounds always do look such a frightful lot either in specie or on paper, when translated into thalers or florins), for so many weeks' rent, the "Beamte," *i.e.*, Beak, who was not quite such a fool as he looked, pronounced it to be no fraud or matter for the police court, but a simple

debt ; still, as I was there, and had not the means, or refused to pay the demand, which could be sworn to as a just one, I might as well be detained in the other part of the prison as a debtor, and there kept until I could either shell out, or get somebody to give security for me. It was not the slightest use on my part trying to expostulate or explain.

I could not pay the fine, because I had not above half a dozen ten-groschen pieces in the world. I tried to make them understand that, under the circumstances, I might have procured the money, even at that late hour, if it had not been for the misfortunes of my respected friend Herr Fusser.

That assertion they looked upon as a most impudent and desperate *ruse* to serve my immediate purpose ; in short, a barefaced invention of the moment.

In vain I begged to be put to the very easy test of confronting the said unfortunate gentleman, within their very walls as he was. With their most obtuse and pig-headed views of justice, I could only receive as a reply to my most common-sense suggestion, that so far from Herr Fusser being able to help me, or say anything in my favour, I ought rather to be ashamed of claiming an acquaintance with a man who was now a convicted felon (he had not yet been tried), and a wilful murderer, and that the fact of his knowing me,

which they did not for a moment believe, only corroborated the court's previously formed bad opinion of me.

Finding fair words of no avail, I tried on the deep indignation tone, and even with threats took to the "*Civis Romanus sum*" dodge, and thundered the dreaded name of the noble Viscount then at the head of the Foreign Office in their ears.

That seemed to stagger them a bit ; but on examining my passport, which by chance I happened to have with me in my pocket-book, the name of that widely-reputed nobleman was not to be found in the document ; either Lord C——, or Lord M—— I think it was, had been at the Foreign Office when I had taken out that passport for a vacation trip a year or two before. So the great sprawling coat of arms and supporters at the bottom of the document, with the signature, of course, utterly illegible, were somehow different from what they seemed accustomed to. They next became convinced that I was not an Englishman at all ; and one particularly sagacious looking wiseacre, having made out that my residence was described as being in the Isle of Wight, which, as you know, is the case, actually took upon himself to declare that the said island was off the coast of Denmark, and that I was in reality a Danish subject, having the impudence to pass

myself off and to try to frighten them by pretending to be an Englishman. Well, it was getting very late, and the officials very tired, so, after some more altercation, they agreed among themselves that the best way to make sure of me would be to shut me up till the morning; which, even supposing it should all prove a mistake, could not make much difference to me as a private individual.

The long and the short of it all was that I was taken round to the debtors' side of the public prison; and there, not, however, without having knocked over two or three of them, for, finding them alike deaf to any arguments or reason, I lost all command of my temper, and declared that nothing but main force should compel me to undergo such rank injustice, it took no less than four of them to carry me by main force into one of their cells, which was about the size of a respectable dog kennel; and then the door was locked upon me, and I was left to my reflections.

There was not even a chair or stool to sit down upon; nothing but a table or rather hanging shelf attached to the wall by hinges, one of which was broken, and a narrow truckle bed, on which was a very filthy straw palliasse, covered by a more filthy blanket or rug of some description.

As far as I could make out by the light of a lamp

which shone through a small opening over the door, the place itself was not quite so beastly as perhaps I had expected to find it, but the closeness and fusty sensation were almost intolerable.

The only pretence of ventilation, as far as I could make out, was through the hole I have mentioned above the doorway, and a grating of half a foot square made in the door itself.

Through that same grating, for some time after the door had been locked upon me, I could hear a discussion going on, as well as I could make out, at the further end of the corridor, as to my real nationality. I rather fancy my last struggle, and stout resistance to authority, may have done more to convince them than all my arguments and asseverations, though I could not make out all they were cawing about, like rooks at hatching time (to which, by the way, I think I have before compared them), still I could distinguish something of doubts or contrariwise opinions among themselves in the tones of their voices: it ended in one who seemed to have succeeded in out-talking, if not convincing his jabbering companions, coming back to my door, and suggesting that if I really were an Englishman, as I alleged, materials would, if I wished it, be provided to write a note to the British Minister, which should, together with my doubtful passport, be at

once forwarded by a messenger whom they would procure for me.

This offer was made, I suspect, as a deep and subtle test; but of course I was too glad to jump at it, and should myself have suggested the idea, had I not thought that it would have been refused.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

“A FRIEND IN NEED” NOT ALWAYS APPRECIATED.

THE note, stating my predicament and the sum for which I was arrested, was soon written and despatched to our Minister's house in Waisen-Haus Strasse—with my usual ill luck, the secretary, my most intimate friend, was, I knew, away on a few days' visit in the country: old F——, the Minister himself, had gone off to some baths or other for the benefit of the health of one of his precious little black Pomeranian dogs, to whom he was most specially devoted: the only person left to take charge of the affairs and interests of H.B.M. and her travelling subjects, was a harum-scarum young scamp of an attaché, of whom I had but a very slight personal acquaintance, but happened to have heard enough of his habits, to be pretty sure that by that time of night, or indeed since the opera was over, he would be nobody knew where, unless the crafty *Stilskins* could be put upon his track.

*Rumple Stilskins* himself happened to be the very

first fellow hit upon as a messenger when my letter was taken out to the gate.

He was not allowed, as he greatly desired to do, to come in to see me, but sent in a message to say that he had been to my lodgings, and there hearing of my arrest, had come down after me to the prison.

He had something very particular to tell me, and I, quite forgetting that I had sent him on the special errand of finding out Gorles for me, could not at the time imagine what it could be that he thus wanted.

Not much reckoning upon any answer to my despatch before the morning, I had nothing for it but to make up my mind to bear my fate as philosophically as I could ; and so, carefully eschewing the bed, I curled myself up in a corner, and I suppose must have dozed off in a sort of dog's snooze for some little time.

I was quite surprised to find it was so late when roused up, as I suddenly was by a great clatter of bolts and clanking chains, for all the world like the entry of a "ruthless castellan" and his "murderous myrmidons" in a play. I was surprised, I say, to hear a great clock ring out one. My door was thrown open, and with a great blaze of light, which at first quite bedazzled and struck me stupid, an old white-moustached swell, whom I took to be the head of the whole concern, I mean the police establishment, came

in to tell me that I was free, and at liberty to walk out when I liked.

"Is any one from the British Chancellerie come, then, or waiting to see me?" I inquired. It was not so. "His Excellency the Minister was away from Dresden"—that I knew; "the honourable the secretary was also absent"—of that, as I have said before, I was also aware; "the honourable attaché could nowhere be found"—that I had expected.

"The messenger, therefore, with that natural sagacity for which the sworn chairmen were always so conspicuous, had carried my note and passport to a noble compatriot of mine, whom he knew to be an intimate friend of my own, as indeed he reported that he had, by my own special directions, been employed the greater part of the day in seeking the same gentleman out. That he, although gone to bed, had instantly, like a noble Englander as he was, taken steps for assisting his compatriot in distress; against whom, but for the unfounded assertions and misrepresentations of the infatuated underling, who had so solemnly declared my Excellency to have been only a Dane, nothing would have induced them to proceed to the extreme measures, for which they now begged me to accept their excuses," and so on.

I fancy they had begun to feel they had rather

put their foot in it, though for my part, I rather wondered that they had not increased the fine for punching their thick heads, in the way I had done, for some of them while lugging me all along the corridor into my cell.

However, having satisfactorily ascertained that I really was an Englishman, I suppose *Stilskins's* testimony had convinced them of that fact; and what was more, having received the amount of the debt and the fine for which I was most illegally held in durance, they only seemed now too anxious to get me clear off the premises at once before morning, "now that all had been paid and so satisfactorily settled by a noble English milord," as the functionary pompously expressed it.

"All paid and settled by a noble English milord?" I said; "but who and where is he?" and I certainly began to wonder whether it was some good fellow, perhaps an old Eton friend, who might remember my name, and staying at one of the hotels on his way through Dresden, had accidentally heard of my detention; or even a stranger taking pity on a compatriot in such a scrape might have generously done the handsome though imprudent thing, in the shape of helping me with a temporary loan.

I was informed that my friend-in-need having sent

back the messenger to ascertain the exact liabilities—those yellow-jacket fellows are all well known, and are sworn in to honesty and secrecy, and may be, and often are trusted with untold value in specie, to say nothing of reputations—had remitted the required sum, a hundred and seventy-eight thalers, odd groschen, which included the fine for insulting the official dignity, by the same hand; begging that the receipt and full discharge for the same might be handed to myself, together with a note which he then presented to me.

Actuated, I think, more by curiosity to know who on earth my generous friend could possibly be than with any another feeling at the moment, though, of course, not slightly grateful and pleased at the same time, I tore open the envelope; and just picture to yourself my astonishment and overwhelming indignation when turning, as I naturally did, to the further end of the last page first, I recognised the signature of —— who do you think? MELCHIOR GORLES!

“MY DEAR LAMBARD (the note ran),—

“I have but this moment heard of your disagreeable position. Your messenger, who can find nobody in at the Chancellerie, very sensibly brought your note on to me, which, taking the liberty of an old friend, I

opened, and am too happy to be able to assist you in your temporary difficulty. I am sorry that I am not able to come myself to you to-night, but am suffering from a severely sprained ankle, which, however, will not, I hope, prevent my starting from Dresden as I intend to do by the 5 a.m. train to-morrow, on most important affairs, which, unluckily for my poor leg, admit of no delay; I am so very sorry thus to be prevented from this chance of personally renewing our old acquaintance. Whenever convenient, as my address may for some time be doubtful, let your London banker pay the trifle, with which I have so luckily been able to accommodate you, into Coutts's to the account of

“Your old friend, and ever most sincerely,

“MELCHIOR GORLES.

“P.S.—Though it is now many years since we have met, I have, you see, taken it for granted that the Mr. Frank Lambard whose note, under the peculiar circumstances as told me by the messenger, I have ventured upon opening, is the same F. Lambard who will remember the above signature as an old Eton schoolfellow; if not, I am only too happy as an Englishman, to be the means of serving any one who bears a once so familiar name.”

I had to read this letter right through and over

again a second time before I seemed to be able to take it in, I was so positively staggered, morally wound-up, so to speak. Then just rolling myself back into my corner, and quite choking as I was with rage and disgust, and a sort of indefinite terror such as one sometimes feels in a nightmare, I regularly set to to blubber, as I had never done since I was a lower boy at school of twelve years old.

The police stood at first gaping at me with astonishment; and then themselves, for there were three or four of them standing in the doorway, seemed suddenly seized with a strong sympathy for what they, I suppose, took for my finely-wrought feelings; and hang me, if the lot of them didn't cast up their eyes to heaven, and with a sort of crooning chorus actually begin to howl and weep in concert with me!

The absurdity, though at the time it only exasperated me more, brought me back into some sort of recollection of myself. Springing up, I ordered them to be gone, and to leave me to myself to get through the night in peace.

"But, pardon; I was free; all demands had been fully settled and satisfied, nothing remained to them but the pleasing duty of ushering me to the outer door."

"Get out!" I said. "You do not suppose I am going

to accept a favour, a token of personal friendship, from the Devil, do you?"

They all shrugged their shoulders and rolled the yellows of their eyes at me. "Do you think that, even to escape the discomfort of passing a night in this filthy dog-hole, I am going to owe my freedom to a little imp of Satan, whose neck I have every intention of wringing the first time I fall in with him?—whom I should probably have got hold of and murdered by this time, if you rascals hadn't got hold of me."

Now, perhaps, considering that the parties thus strongly addressed had not been behind the scenes, and could not have had an idea of the real circumstances, it is not much to be wondered at, now I can calmly look back to that time, that they should seem to think my sentiments or declarations a little strange. But I was far too enraged and disgusted to consider, or care a rap what they thought.

"But, mein herr," said the white-muzzled official, "your liabilities and fine are paid; we have no longer any legal cause or pretence, and therefore no power to detain you here, and our orders are to conduct you at once to the outer gates; the governor, who has been expressly roused and referred to in this matter, himself desired me to see these orders immediately carried into effect."

"Then my orders are, you old fool, to get out of this, and go back to your governor and tell him from me that I do not choose to accept the assistance or to acknowledge the payments made on my behalf from a stranger, and a person who, so far from being any friend of mine, I have not even seen for years and never wish to see again, though I have been on the look-out for him, and mean to break every bone in his skin, if not kill him outright, whenever I do find him."

That may, by the way, as it now strikes me, have seemed a scarcely consistent statement.

But never mind ; I would not accept, I would not touch the receipt and release which was offered to me. I vowed I would not go out. Losing again all patience as the puzzled old fellow stood there shrugging and gesticulating, I made such a sudden run at him, that beating a hasty retreat, and stumbling backwards over his subordinates behind, they almost rolled over together in a heap against the opposite wall of the passage. I slammed to the door of my cell upon them, but unfortunately all the bolts and means of fastening being on the wrong side, I was at last overpowered by the united weight of the lot of them outside, and positively (would you believe me ?) having called up further assistance, it took the same four to escort and carry me all the way downstairs, that it had

before required to bring me up ; and having forced me across the court to the gates, we had there a considerable tussle before they succeeded in shoving me bodily out, tossing, as they did, my rejected receipt out after me.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## A MORNING CALL RETURNED.

THUS set free in spite of myself, and literally finding myself with what, as the slang goes, is called the "key of the street," that is, locked out everywhere, and no place I could call my own to go to, my first thought was to knock up Gorles, and so catching him before he could make his escape from Dresden to have it out with him without further delay. But when I came to consider, I still did not know where he lived; his letter, which by-the-bye I had torn into a thousand pieces in my wrath, had, I was sure, no address or date to it.

Besides, as I certainly had in spite of myself accepted the loan of his money, and though I did not wish it, got out of limbo at his expense, there might have been a little awkwardness in forcing a hostile entry upon him that night, without having the where-with about me at once to fling back at him, repudiating his alleged friendship and assistance, and then

if I could have been free from all obligations, denouncing him for his atrociously malicious designs and diabolical machinations against myself personally, and my relations.

But how could I, you see, not having a blessed stiver? So I went to De Lyons' lodgings, and returned the compliment of the previous night to his landlady and himself, by knocking him up, and making him take me in.

I found my worthy friend "*Taraxacum*" tolerably right again, and fairly recovering from his debauch, and, having been in bed all day, declaring himself to feel, as he really seemed, as fresh as a lark.

He would insist upon my occupying his own bed, having no further need of it for himself; but if I would only turn in and make myself comfortable, declared that he meant to start for an early swim as soon as it was light, which it would be in another half hour, or thereabouts.

But I was in little humour for sleep, having my adventures to relate and discuss with my friend, to whom I gave a full and particular account of all, just as I now have done to yourself; not, you may be sure, omitting the extent to which I felt aggrieved and insulted by the way in which the hateful Gorles had forced his unlooked-for and most unwelcome

obligation upon me, and how much I longed, yet felt myself baffled in my longings, for some means of punishing and revenging myself upon him.

“As to where he hangs out,” De Lyons replied, “I could take you there in a brace of shakes, as it is in Moritz Strasse, not a stone’s throw from round the next corner; but at this time of night, or rather to-morrow morning as it is, we should not, I guess, have much chance of gaining admittance without forcing our way in upon him, which feat would probably result in a re-introduction to your *polizei* friends. I quite wondered they did not interfere with us last night, considering the row that was needful under the circumstances both at your own place, as well as Lüttichau Strasse; but those sort of games, you may take your oath, are not to be played two nights running with impunity.

“But as you do not seem to care about bed, why not sit up here through the next three hours, and be up at the railway station in time for the train by which he told you he was to be starting? There you would be sure to nail the little sinner.”

I had despondently to remind my friend of my utter inability to relieve myself of the odious debt, and the scruples I could not help entertaining upon the propriety of thrashing a fellow, as I felt he ought

to be thrashed, until I was free from what I felt to be the disgrace of being under such an obligation to him.

There was no chance, you see, of borrowing or getting the money, in the meantime. I am sure I would gladly have paid cent. per cent. for the hundred and seventy odd thalers, if I could have only got them anyhow before five o'clock. I should like to have been able to have shied them at him in a rattling shower of thaler pieces about his ears, or caught him over the head or shoulders with a good heavy bag full of them.

“Oh! as to that, if you look upon them for that purpose,” *Taraxacum* cut in, “I think I might, perhaps, muster ten or a dozen knobbly coins, with a few five-franc pieces, or, at least, lead medals amongst them, which, though perhaps not all of them of much use as currency in these parts, would do well enough to pelt him with. They might answer your purpose if you could manage to pick them up and fling them over and over again, as he cuts along, as he would be sure to do. He might think there was the whole sum there, after the opening volley or two; besides, you see, he would not have much time or, as I calculate, inclination either to stop to count them.”

There was something in the suggestion; still, on the whole, we did not think that it would exactly do.

“And what is more, my dear fellow,” De Lyons added solemnly, “with the great, the very great power which, as you yourself must be conscious, he certainly has by some means or other acquired over you, there is no saying whether he might not put a spoke in your wheel, either by throwing you then and there into a state of torpor, or so affecting your mind or memory for the time being, that you should lose all control over yourself, and not know what you were about, or whether you were on your head or your heels.

“That power, the magnetic fluid, in fact, or *odyle*, as it is technically called, strong as I know it must be, by what I myself saw of the state you were in last evening, may be increased to an almost inconceivable intensity, by cultivation, and a concentration of volition on the part of Gorles, who thoroughly understands his own powers, and what he is about in these matters.

“It seems strange, when one compares the relative strength and physical build of you two fellows as individuals: but he must certainly at some time or another have contrived to have established a strong *rapport* between your and his own spiritual systems, in which he must have gained a most wonderful pull over you, and no mistake.

“That same pull may, to be sure, be counteracted

by any one knowing, as I happened to do in your case, exactly how the land lay, and so setting to work as I did immediately, to undo the party thus acted upon. But with most folks, who have no notion of even the existence of such strange dodges,—and how few there are who have, or even care to know anything about the simplest outlines of these stunning scientific truths!—there you might be, struck stupid and helpless as if you were blind drunk, until the *odylic* force, unless of course it is renewed, has, so to speak, evaporated of itself.

“Now, Gorles, I remember already telling you, has from his very birth been naturally endowed with a double extra allowance of the said magnetic power; and constantly cultivating and increasing that power as he has all his life been doing, not even sticking at—unless he is much belied—to ‘buckle up’ to and avail himself of the personal assistance, and the good will of ——, a powerful Personage I have before alluded to; there is no knowing the depths to which he has not fathomed, or how far, if his fancy or malice should require it, he can not and would not willingly indulge the abuse of the said tremendous secrets of nature which he has thus mastered.

“The professor himself,” De Lyons then went on

to tell me, "looked upon Gorles as quite an equal, if not even almost his superior in magnetic power.

"There was not much love lost between the two, though the former genius wished to keep on terms with the little wretch, as requiring his assistance for the great experiment with the spirit world, in preparation for which the learned man was mainly devoting his whole study and attention, and so they kept up an association, although there was a wide difference which had at one time amounted to a quarrel between them, in regard to the use and ultimate object of their scientific investigations and rather questionable dabbings in the black art.

"The professor, as his faithful disciple had before declared, and I have since had every reason sincerely to believe, was solely influenced by good and the most genuine philanthropic motives, while Gorles, on the contrary, only looked upon the mysterious secrets which were in his keeping as means for securing his own personal malicious, and even more atrocious ends."

*Taraxacum* had, on the former occasion when he first opened upon this same subject to me, mentioned with a warning the name of Katie De Lorme, in connexion with a discussion which had arisen as to the proper use or abuse of the powers they had acquired,

but he had wandered off on another tack, and I, disgusted at the very idea of having even her dear name brought up among such a set of unscrupulous fellows, had not cared to bring him back again to the unwelcome subject.

But, curious to hear exactly how he had come possessed of that locket, as well as the whole particulars of his extraordinary, though, as it had turned out, entirely successful adventure of the previous night, I let him run on without any interruption, and as far as I could follow all the ups and downs of his story, it was somehow to the following effect:—

## CHAPTER XXIX.

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

*Hamlet*, act i. sc. 5.

It is perhaps, you may not be aware, an established fact in the science of mesmerism or magnetism, whichever you choose to call it, that is, according to De Lyons, whom you must bear in mind to be himself a firm believer in all these matters, that as soon as, or even within a considerable time after the proper state of *rapport* has been established between the magnetizer and any other person, although separated by any amount of space, even though they may be in different and distant countries from one another, the influence and magnetic power may still be kept going and continue active between the two thus spiritually connected, by the operator having in his possession anything which has belonged to or come immediately from the other, whom you may call the patient.

As, for instance, a lock of hair, or sometimes a phial of blood, or even some such simple object as a trinket, a glove, or a slipper, has been found by experiments

to answer the purpose. One individual may thus actually obtain a complete knowledge of all that others with whom he is in relation are not only doing but even thinking, or almost going to do or think at a future time; nay, more, can even exercise a control and direction over those thoughts and acts, and that, as I said, without the slightest reference to distance greater or less. Thus much, I say, seemed to be no more than an old and well-known truth confirmed by many instances, but, as De Lyons went on to inform me, according to more recent discoveries and experiments in their most wonderful, not to say most dangerous powers, the science had progressed, and at last been brought to such an awful pitch, that by the sole exercise of an intense volition on the part of some of the more advanced and enthusiastic performers, patients had been thrown into a state of *coma* and deep trance; and while thus rendered to all external appearance quite lifeless, their souls or spirits had been separated from their bodies, and actually caused to appear visibly, though De Lyons believed not tangibly, in the presence of those, by the strength of whose irresistible will they had been summoned.

“Stuff!” I said, “nothing should ever make me believe anything half so impossible or incredible.”

“That you should have thought and said so forty-

eight hours ago, I should not have been surprised," De Lyons remarked very quietly; "but after what you have yourself experienced, and witnessing as you did the state your own cousin was in, you are a one-er to convince that there are—as Shakspeare, isn't it, says?—'more rum things in this queer world than ever were dreamt of in your philosophy,' and no mistake. Still, without meaning to convey anything uncivil, the fact of your not being able to believe, does not make them less true as physical facts, you know." So he went on with his strange story.

It was to this particular branch of *diablerie*, for I can call it no less, that Gorles, it seems, had been devoting his whole time and energies, just about the time that he was so very intimate with the De Lormes; and having, according to De Lyons, from the very first day he had ever seen poor Katie, done her the honour of fixing upon her as the object of his infernal little affections; and also very soon finding her to be naturally a highly sensitive and predisposed subject, too delighted at the prospect of gaining a complete and easy influence over her, he had set deliberately to work to put in practice upon her the fearful powers which he was cultivating, and felt increasing within himself.

Professor Zauber, and all the others of the clique,

even I believe the Frenchman, had, with proper good feeling, entirely refused to have anything to do with, or at all countenance the little wretch's proposals, which actually went the length of wishing to cause that young girl to appear in spirit in spite of herself at one of their usual evening meetings, and having thus gained absolute power over her soul, and—Heaven help me when I think of it!—I believe, fiend incarnate as he is, he even dared to hint, having thus got her reputation at his mercy, his unparalleled scheme was to allow her body to be buried as dead, which by the law of that country must be within twenty-four hours after death, and by stealth or bribery recovering her body from the cemetery, and so restoring her soul and spirit of life to her, she would belong entirely to him, and owe her very existence to his powers.

Whether this scheme, utterly wild and impossible as of course it seems, were feasible or not, matters not in judging of the atrocious infamy of him who himself entirely believed in its being so, while concerting and doing his best to induce others to aid him in carrying it out.

*Taraxacum* also thoroughly believed in its possibility, I am sure, and indeed declared that the very same thing had been tried not long before by one of the principal disciples of the famous Baron von

Reichenbach, and successfully, upon a lady who, being supposed to be really dead, had been buried and rescued from her very grave in the manner described; and whom now they say he has in his power, living nominally as his wife, but in the most abject state of mental, moral, and physical subjection to her resuscitator's will, serving him in the capacity of *clairvoyante*, adviser, and oracle, as well as being the perpetual victim of all his phenomena and scientific experiments.

“It was to this very individual, that when refused and scouted by his usual associates Gorles had gone down for assistance and further instruction to Vienna; and I knew precious well,” continued De Lyons, to go on with the story in his own words, “what he had been after; though when he turned up again here at Dresden he kept as much as he could out of our way, and when that wouldn't do, was quite mum upon the subject, as if he had entirely given up or forgotten the very idea. But I was not going to be humbugged quite so easy as all that, and made up my mind to thwart him, as you know I succeeded in doing.

“Don't you remember my warning you some days ago? but as you seemed to be inclined to cut up rather rough on the subject, and some other matter turning up, I said no more.

“I never dreamt of his having the power he evi-

dently can exercise over yourself ; however and whenever he can have managed to acquire it."

It was then I told De Lyons of my own old Eton adventure with Gorles, of which I have already given you an account.

"Oh, thus and thus is the milk in the cocoa-nut fully accounted for," was his allegorical reply, "which I must confess had, until you now tell me all this, been a very hard nut to crack, and had puzzled me not a little to conceive how on earth, looking at your relative strengths and proportions, the pigmy had contrived to circumvent the giant, as he evidently had, as far as spiritual powers were concerned ; but now I understand it all plainly enough.

"So that knotty point being settled, let me go on.

"Our little friend I am sure had not intended that I, or any of us should even know of his return from Vienna, but I chanced to come across him by accident the very evening of his arrival.

"It was, by-the-bye, on my way home from your own door that very evening on which, as you may remember, I met you coming out of the house in Lüttichau Strasse, and first learned from you your relationship with the fair young lady in question.

"For the sake of something to say, and having you fresh in my mind, I suppose, I mentioned your name,

reminding him that you had both been at the same house at Eton, and telling him of the fact of your having come to make some stay in Dresden. He at first stuck to it that he knew nothing about you, and remembered no such name; but, as the saying is, liars should have patent memories, for almost directly afterwards, upon my going on to remark casually that I had just seen you, and to advise him in a friendly way to mind his eye, if he was still thinking of trying on any of his little games with that interesting young gentleman Ferdy or his pretty sister, I noted a peculiarly nasty twinkle of malice in his queer little eyes, as he wagged his head, saying that he knew nothing and cared less about either the young lady or yourself; but that if you fancied you were to get her all to yourself, that you were very much mistaken; and that no doubt sentimental walks to the Wolfshügel and such places might be very pleasant, but that you might take your oaths that you would never be out together, or have any more of your delightful *têtes-à-têtes* again for the rest of your lives.

“It struck me that was not so bad, considering that he had, within barely five minutes before, utterly disclaimed all knowledge or remembrance of you, but I was puzzled to make out how the deuce the little toad could have known so well where you had been

and what you had been doing; as I was sure that he had only just turned up again in this city. Of course, if I had been up to all as I am now, of his having those articles in his possession, it would have been all plain enough, your walks to the Wolfshügel or anything else. He is an awful artful dodger, I know; but even he has not yet, I believe, arrived at the power of being in two places at once, though even that I should be sorry to take upon myself to pronounce to be impossible, as I have no doubt there is a way, if one could only hit upon the secret.

“Well, in consequence of my conversation with you, for your sake, and, pardon me for venturing to add respectfully, for that of the young lady herself, I determined to keep my eye upon our interesting but dwarfish philosopher.

“I had a conviction that he had not abandoned his long-cherished scheme, and patiently I watched his goings out and comings in, until, having reason to think that the long-expected moment for the great experiment was at hand, I that evening contrived, never mind how, to gain admittance to his private diggings, while he was gone out, and hid myself in a huge old-fashioned closet, or rather wardrobe, which forms part of the furniture of his room, quite big enough to take me in comfortably, and through the

gaping chinks of whose carved panels I could see well enough all that was going on in the room.

“Gorles and his lately enlisted friend and ally, whom he had brought back with him from Vienna, came in very shortly quite unsuspecting, and, locking themselves in, set to work at their grossly misapplied scientific operations.

“Having, as you know, been a good deal mixed up in that sort of business myself, I of course understood, and was not so much excited by curiosity as probably you, or any one else who were not accustomed to the kind of thing, might have been ; but I kept my wits sharp about me, though for a long time their preliminaries were dull and commonplace enough : Plüffer, which was, as far as I could make out, the colleague's name, constantly consulting a ragged old manuscript, as black nearly as my hat with age and dust, as well as a large note-book he held in his hand, kept prompting and instructing Gorles in their proceedings, and from time to time repeating sentences of an incantation, which, though I had some notion of their nature from having heard them so frequently discussed, made even me open my eyes a trifle. I don't care to go into particulars, but, though much was entirely new to me, I knew, as I have said, perfectly well what they were about and preparing to go through with.

“Between them, on a sort of tripod, was a curiously fashioned old concern like a chafing-pot, or rather dish, with a lamp under it, in which, though I could not from my hiding-place at the time exactly make out what it was, that gold trinket had been immersed in some strong chemical stuff, which was burning and threw up a pale blue flame. For five days I overheard one of them mention, as he stirred it, it had been thus soaking.

“They had for some time continued their operations and low mumbled repetitions, when, all of a sudden, Gorles, who now he was in for it seemed thoroughly frightened at the undertaking (for his face was as pale as ashes, and he was visibly shaking all over), caught his accomplice by the arm, and pointing to the other side of the room, stammered out in a whisper, ‘It works, it works! She is here! Don’t you see her?’

“The other fellow, who was as cool as possible the whole time, looked across and bowed courteously, but distantly, just as he would have done to any one whom he did not know, or with whom he had only a very slight acquaintance; and then, turning to the crystal dish, fished out its contents with the hook or some such instrument with which he had previously been stirring up the flame, and putting it, all wet as

it was, on the edge of the table in front of him, began diligently making rapid magnetic passes all over and around it.

“Now, not being myself in a state of *rapport* with either of the parties, though, of course, I was staring with all my might in the direction as indicated by little Gorles, I could not myself see anybody or form whatsoever, though I was sure by their manner and words that they both had the power of doing so; but I felt quite certain that the spirit of—you may guess who—having left her body, was then present in that very room.

“I could see nothing, I say, but I could distinctly hear a clear, low voice, as of a young girl, just like the tone of a very softly-stirred silver bell, at some tremendous distance, say across the sea.

“I do not mean to say that there was any actual sound striking upon the drums of my ears in the ordinary way of nature—it was more, perhaps, like the sensation of when one sometimes hears one’s own name called in a familiar voice, and turns round to find nobody near; or have you never had some particular sentence, or, more commonly, an air of music repeated as if close to one’s ears?

“The voice, though gentle as could be when I first became conscious of it, was reproaching Gorles—

upbraiding him for cruelty—and then seemed to change to entreaties, begging him to have pity, and not to exercise his fearful powers over her.

“Gorles, backed up as he seemed to be by the other’s perfectly collected demeanour, and having somewhat recovered his usual audacity of manner, was speaking in a low tone, as if trying to coax and assure her; but as he went on, finding his soft tones of persuasion unappreciated, the little beast, growing more familiar, and, as I could see, egged on by the presence and, indeed, winks and nods of the other Devil, worse than himself, began to mock at her prayers and entreaties, and even to tell her that he now held her, as he had the atrocity to say, absolutely in his power.

“I fancy, though I was not quite sure at the time, that the voice uttered your own name, crying bitterly, as it then seemed to be, either begging for you or threatening your resentment and vengeance for their iniquitous treatment of her. The stranger looked inquiringly across at Gorles.

“‘Oh! we can soon settle him,’ he said, with a gnash of his teeth, as if he would like to have bitten you; ‘wherever he may just at this moment happen to be;’ and taking up that old kid-glove from the mantle-piece — you must have dropped it some-

where, or could that little whipper-snapper of a school-boy, Ferdy, have got it secretly for him ?

“Anyhow, he took it; and having first breathed heavily upon it proceeded to make several careful magnetic passes over it—that, of course, must have been at exactly the very time at which you describe yourself as so singularly overcome on your way home from Lüttichau Strasse.

“‘Now then,’ said Gorles, again turning to his victim, ‘unless you swear to renounce all thoughts of that fellow it will be the worse for——’

“I heard, or rather was conscious of the voice, crying out in the most violent distress, but still as if at the same distance from us.

“I could just stand it no longer, but with a sudden shout which made even Herr Plüffer jump round as if he had been shot, I burst in upon them from my hiding-place, made a grab at the glove with one hand and the trinket with the other, which in my swoop I knocked under the table: crash went over the simmering chafing-dish, making an awful smash as it and the lamp together came to grief in the struggle which ensued.

Profiting by the light of the flaming stream which was running along upon the ground, Gorles made a dash down after the locket, and was making off with it to the door, but having had to unlock

it, I was round, and close after him as he rushed up some stairs which were just outside. I caught fast hold of the little beggar by the leg and pulled him downstairs again with a jerk enough to have dislocated his limb for life, and rolling him right over wrenched the locket from between his fingers, but not before it was quite broken and strained in the scuffle ; I fancy myself he was trying to extricate the hair from it as he rushed along. He bit and spit at me with furious rage, for all the world like a mad cat ; but as long as I had got what I wanted I did not care. Now, although I understood and had witnessed enough of their proceedings to feel sure that I had spoilt their game, I had not sufficient confidence in myself to know exactly how to act, or what steps would be necessary to counteract and stop the serious mischief and dreadful effects of the rascal's misdoings. What became of the confederate, by-the-way, in the tussle I do not know.

“ Finding my way down into the open street below with the spoils of victory safe in my possession, I luckily bethought me of my dear friend, the Professor, and went straight off to him for his advice and directions in the matter ; he was, of course, the man of all others to tell me what to do, if I could only find him ; but that was no very easy matter.

“It must have been a couple of hours or so before I run him down in one of his less accustomed haunts, and had told him my business.

“Though expressing the greatest disgust and indignation at Gorles’s conduct in regard to an innocent and helpless young lady, I could see that in spite of those better feelings he immediately took the most immense interest in the result of the experiment, for he made me repeat all over again most minutely every detail and particular of all I had seen and observed ; and as I told him all as closely and accurately as I could, his queer eyes quite glistened and flashed through the glasses of his spectacles with excitement.

“Having at last heard and digested all I had to tell him, upon my again urgently pressing him for advice in the matter, for the young lady’s sake, he desired me to lose no time in finding you out, and procuring your special assistance for the recovery of your fair cousin, as, judging from all I had told him (we had talked you and your affairs over amongst ourselves at other times, if you must know), there would probably exist a more active sympathetic *rapport* between her and yourself—next, of course, to the evil-working influences of Gorles—than with any one else in the world.

“He moreover not a little staggered me by, after keeping me certainly upwards of an hour thus dis-

cussing the subject, impressing upon me that there was no time to be lost ; for though he knew that the same phenomenon had been on other occasions successfully carried out, when the spirits of patients thrown into a magnetic slumber had been caused to leave their bodies, and to return again even after the lapse of some days, yet in more than one recorded instance, it had unfortunately happened, that not having been separated even more than six or eight hours, mortification had commenced before the renewal of the electric principle of life, thus artificially suspended ; and that the spirit, as if unable or unwilling to resume its functions in a frame on which decay had set in, had, as it were, evaporated, and thus actual death had been the result."

With this piece of information from his scientific friend, it is not much wonder that De Lyons experienced, as he declared to me, a feeling of intense anxiety, and did his very best to get me up and to the rescue in time. After his first unsuccessful attempt upon my rooms, he described himself as at his wit's end to know what to be at ; he felt that it would be useless and hopeless for him to attempt by any means, fair or foul, to gain admission to the supposed death-chamber of poor Katie ; for that there was no chance of their even listening to his wild story.

I was not a little touched at the joy and real unselfish satisfaction evinced by the worthy fellow, proportionate as it was to the anxieties he had gone through at the eventual success and reward of all his troubles, after having acted implicitly in obedience to the directions of his friend, the Professor.

And so, after a considerable pause for reflection, when he had thus brought his story to an end, *Taraxacum* added, "You say that Gorles is off again by this morning's train, and, I suppose, his worthy familiar with him? I wonder whether he is aware of the De Lormes' sudden departure which you tell me of?"

"He cannot, think you, be following them with any intention of again trying on any of his tricks in that quarter?" I exclaimed, almost involuntarily, as a disagreeable thought just flashed through my mind.

"More likely," replied De Lyons, "to get clear out of your way, as he must guess that I should tell you all, and naturally would be on the look out for your heavy resentment. I certainly give him no small credit for his deep cunning in jumping at the chance as he has done, of paying that money to get you out of limbo, and thus, just as, of course, he must have had the wit to foresee, effectually putting a stopper upon any violent measures which you may have conceived against him, but which you could hardly in common decency

carry out as long as you are under pecuniary obligations to him.

“ Now, a commonplace, every-day fellow, under the same circumstances, would have thought himself safe and all right in leaving you where you were, without reflecting that you would have been sure to have regained your liberty in the morning, and have had plenty of time, and no moral impediment, such as you now labour under, of following him up and smashing him into small pieces the same afternoon. To give the little Devil only his due, he is a proper deep one : it was a first-rate card, and a thoroughly good finesse, playing it just as he has done.

“ However, by this time he is clear off and away, for I declare there is six o'clock striking, and it is such a glorious bright morning that I shall go out, and I advise you to come with me, instead of going to bed, for which you do not seem much more inclined than myself, and a jolly good swim will do us both all the good in the world.”

END OF VOL. I.

# MELCHIOR GORLES.

A Tale

OF MODERN MESMERISM.

BY

HENRY AITCHENBIE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, PICCADILLY.

1867.

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# MELCHIOR GORLES.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE COLONEL SENDS HIS COMPLIMENTS, AND REGRETS.

IN the same house in which De Lyons lived, there just then happened to be vacant a snug little pair of furnished rooms upon the ground floor, opening into a jolly little garden ; and as I found the rent was very moderate, and I certainly might have had to go a good deal further and fared much worse, I decided upon there settling myself for the time ; so sent and rescued my portmanteaus and household gods from the clutches of the Frau Slanngärtz, not without some demur, however, on the part of that injured dame ; as I heard from Stilskins, who went for them, that having made sure of my being incarcerated for probably some months to come, she had quite settled that all my property must become hers, if not by legal confiscation, at any rate for their own value, which must accrue to her for warehousing them all the length of time, to which she looked forward as elapsing, before I should be at liberty again to go and claim them.

However, my faithful messenger, I suppose, convinced her of the futility of her views, and brought away all my goods and chattels triumphantly: so I shook down into my new place in a day or two, and finding myself pretty comfortably established, gave myself up to an inert feeling of languor, which I had never remembered before experiencing,—a kind of vacant longing for repose, the natural reaction, which perhaps I was bound to expect and go through after all my late excitement, and as I may almost call them, adventures.

In spite of my friend De Lyons' rattling company, for he was always rushing in and out of my room at all hours, with every sort of kind intention of rallying or serving me in any way in his power, I somehow felt myself daily falling into a more depressed and morbid state of listlessness, awaking late every morning with most awful *active*, not *passive* headaches (if you are unfortunate enough to know the difference), and they, by the way, were about all that was left active about me, for, quite contrary to my usual habits and inclinations, I didn't care to stir out, or to take up with any of my old pursuits, either rowing or at the fencing school.

Reading at home, even novels, which many fellows can set to work at when they are seedy, was never much in my line; my head wouldn't stand it at all. I

did not seem to care for anything I had to eat; in short, I was all nohow and out of sorts altogether.

I felt bothered and anxious to know what had become of the De Lormes. Well, the Colonel and my aunt, I mean; or if you must snigger in that foolish way you have, I may as well own that, I kept wondering from morning to night, and so on again through my blunder-about dreams till next morning again, how things had turned out with poor Katie, and what state she was in after all she had gone through.

When I looked back to all that had happened, though, as you may see, not much more than ten days or a fortnight had altogether elapsed since I had been in such happiness and enjoyment, and since that fatal walk to the Wolfshügel had taken place, it really seemed to my mind like whole months, I might say, as if a year, at least, had elapsed. Cast down and unhappy as I was, I could not help appreciating the real kindness of *Taraxacum*, who though such a queer animal, certainly did his best in his own way to cheer me up and arouse me. He was constantly, amongst other means for regaining my lost health and spirits, urging me strongly to allow him to bring in and introduce to me his friend the Professor, whom he confidently pronounced to be quite, independently of his scientific and spiritual talents and capabilities, out and

out the cleverest physician in that capital, particularly in cases like mine, which he, and there I myself think he was right, attributed much more to mental than bodily causes. But I did not feel that I required the advice of any doctor, however talented, and was not at all in the humour for making any new acquaintances, or in fact doing anything, or seeing anybody.

I thus went on for some days, growing, I think, rather worse than better, when one morning, or rather noon, though I was not yet turned up out of my bed, *Taraxacum* came bouncing into my room in a high state of excitement. A warm friend he was, indeed, but a very noisy one, impetuous, or I should say impulsive, in every feeling and movement.

He held a whole budget of letters in his hand, which he flung in a shower on my quilt.

“Here you are, old fellow!” he cried, “here is some medicine of the right sort for you at last, and I hope and expect it will agree with you.

“I happened to be stepping up the *Strasse* in which were your old diggings, when, just as I passed the very door, thinking about you as I was, and wishing I could hit on some way to perk you up a bit, I happened to see the postman stop, and grubbing in that little black box which he wears stuck on to his stomach, produce a letter, which he offered to that bottle-nosed

old cod-fish Slanngürtz, your late landlord, who was lounging at the door-post, warming himself in the morning sun.

“ I noticed him study the direction of the letter thus offered to him slowly through, shake his head, and then return it to the man’s box.

“ The real fact then first occurred to me at the moment. I stepped up exactly in time to hear him take your name in vain, and tell the postman that he didn’t know where you were, only that you had left his lodgings, and, as far as he believed, Dresden without paying him or any of your bills; on hearing which, I just caught the old rascal a rattling crack on his bottle nose for his gratuitous lie, and before he had recovered either his surprise or his equilibrium, I followed the postman down the street to make further enquiries. From him I learnt that no end of letters addressed to you had, day after day, been repudiated by your old landlady or the slavey, and that, if I liked to go to the bureau, I should find a whole handful waiting for you there; and, behold, if the lips of that worthy, though humble servant of an ill-regulated government have not in this instance uttered the gracious words of truth! So now, let us see if any among this lot will do you any good, and revive you a little.

“ Perhaps there might be one.”

As I sorted them like a hand at whist I saw there were two or three from home, which I dutifully opened and skimmed through first. The latest by date from my dear old father, advising me of a remittance, and also that he had, as I requested him, paid the sum I had named into Coutts's to Mr. Gorles's account.

“So that fellow is turned up again, is he?” he wrote, “and, I suppose, by your borrowing money when you found yourself run into the corner, whatever it was, to which you allude, you and he must be on better terms than you used to be at Eton. And so you found the De Lormes had left too, at a moment's notice? Old George was always one of the best fellows breathing, but that was a regular habit of his, suddenly taking it into his head to start off here, there, or anywhere for a change, at the whim of the instant. When you next write let your mother know where they have pitched their tent for the present, until his wandering spirit shall have urged him to be off again,” and so on.

There were eight or nine business or promiscuous correspondence, but the trump card I had shuffled to the bottom and bottled till the last.

It took my breath away; I had recognised the crest on the seal at once, a five-branched elm tree, *proper*, over the initials G. D. L., and the postmark, to which

I eagerly turned, was stamped Innsbruck. They had gone southwards, then, through the Tyrol.

*Taraxacum* stood at the foot of my bed, watching me, and he nodded his head with a wink full of meaning and approval when I took up that last letter. It was really too absurd why *I* should feel as if I did not dare open it, though I was all the time longing to know its contents.

“I wonder what it will say inside?” I remarked. “I would give anything to know.”

“My friend the Professor would, if you liked, bring you a lad here who could read every word of it for you out of the back of his head, and without breaking the seal,” said *Taraxacum*, quite seriously; “though I cannot help thinking,” he added, rather sententiously, “that it might be an easier and simpler process if you were only to refer to the inside yourself, instead of trying to sniffle the sense out of the unbroken seal and postmarks. But I see how nervous you are, my dear fellow, while I am watching you, so I shall just take myself off and leave you to enjoy it all alone.

He was right, I was awfully nervous. I got out of bed and locked the door before I had the courage to begin. I quite remember feeling that unless the usual laws of creation had not unluckily been against me, I should like to have been in total darkness when I read it.

To the Professor probably, according to *Taraxacum*, there would not have been the slightest difficulty in such an arrangement.

“Oestreichs Hof, Innsbruck.

“My dear Frank,

“I sit down to write to you; it is my duty to do so without longer delay, though I find it a very difficult task. I am conscious of a violent struggle between many various feelings all working within me at once; gratitude, deep and sincere; regret, sympathy for your own bitter disappointment, and, believe me, my dearest boy, an earnest friendship and affection for yourself. But to begin with my gratitude: all that I, as a father, rescued from the deepest misery and mourning, would try to convey to you, no pen, no words could ever be found sufficient to express. Regret and sorrow I cannot help feeling when I call to mind my own violence and unkindness, and for unjustly accusing you, and refusing to listen to you when you spoke of causes and strange secrets of nature, in regard to which even now, I know not what, or what not, to believe; yet not the less do I feel bound to apologize and heartily beg your forgiveness. I only wish that you could forgive me, in the good old English way of shaking hands, and that circumstances could have allowed me personally

to give you assurances of all I feel towards you ; but no : dear Frank, for your own sake as well as that of my darling child, even doubly dear since thus restored to me, we,—or at least as long as Katie is alive or with me, must never meet again ; it is the only bitter chance of future happiness for you both. Is it not, then, for the best to resign ourselves to a stern necessity at once ? I felt so strongly, that after all that your aunt and I, and darling Katie owed you, that if we had again allowed a meeting at even a single interview, which you, no doubt, had every right to expect, we, by yielding to our natural inclinations of affection, might have been induced to concede to what we should have only had bitterly to repent of for the rest of our lives, and that our only course was to get away at once and for ever. Your aunt informs me that she told you enough of the family secret, I mean the fearful curse hanging, as by a thread, over poor Katie's head, to let you judge for yourself, that though hard to bear, it is for her happiness as well as your own, that you should never meet again. Do not, I implore you, think of, or attempt to follow us, nor at any future time, or under any circumstances, ever even hope to break through this positive, because necessary interdict. Far be it from me, in my present state of kindly feelings to you, to wish to threaten or dictate, but be

assured that any such attempt must, from the steps I should in such a case feel myself justified in taking, end in failure and great trouble, if not disgrace to yourself. No, Frank, I will not think it of you; but if you will take an old stager's advice, start off also somewhere; do not stay brooding over old thoughts and associations at Dresden. If not inclined yet to go back home to England, try change of scene, constant change with some cheery young fellow of your own age for a companion, whom you may easily find. Europe is surely big enough for us both.

“And now before I conclude I must give you the last accounts, for which I know how anxious you will be, of my poor child. We sincerely hope that by perfect rest and quiet amidst this lovely scenery, to which we have succeeded in moving her down by easy stages, she really may, and indeed is recovering her health and spirits, both of which, as you may well imagine, have been in a most critical state from the reaction which was to be expected after all she had been through. Of the extreme state she was really in, and how far we had every reason to believe her lost to us for ever, we do not think she is herself fully aware: from herself we have had no description of what her own feelings may have been; indeed she seems to avoid speaking of, or in any way alluding to

them. Katie has more than once earnestly expressed a wish herself to write to you her thanks for all that she feels she owes to you ; but though, believe me, it grieved us much to refuse her, on what she evidently had so strongly set her heart, we thought it better for you both, from the first to be firm in our refusal ; indeed, in her present weak state, all mental exertion must be forbidden, even reading to herself ; and except one letter which she has been allowed to send to her brother, to console the poor boy for being left so suddenly as he was at his school, all correspondence is entirely interdicted. Have you seen anything of our Ferdy since we left ? if so, we know that you will be kind to him. And, now, my dear boy, I must close this very long, and, I fear, rambling letter ; in which, long as it is, I feel that I have not said one tenth of all that I have, or ought to say. But once again, with every expression of gratitude, love, and affectionate good wishes for your welfare through life, in which I am joined by your aunt, and if I told her to whom I was now writing, should, I well know, by Katie also,

“ Believe me, ever, my dearest Frank,

“ Your most affectionate and grateful uncle,

“ GEORGE DELAWARR DE LORME.”

“And a great deal of use all such heaps of professions of gratitude and affection are likely to be to me,” I said to myself, with a bitter feeling in my heart, and an inward groan, “when the only one thing I should be likely to wish, or ask for in return for having been the chance instrument, as I was, for restoring her to them alive, he starts by pointing out to be impossible.

“Confound all such palaver, and humbug!” I ejaculated, as I plunged my head into my washing basin, and set to work to get myself dressed and ready to go out, as fast as I could.

## CHAPTER II.

“WHAT IS SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE IS SAUCE FOR THE  
GANDER.”

SANCHO PANZA.

I HAD so entirely given up even stirring out of my rooms for some days past, that when *Taraxacum* met me at the foot of the stairs down from his own regions, he seemed quite pleased, and congratulated me upon that symptom at least of physical improvement; and took advantage of the opportunity to ask me whether I would mind meeting his particular friend the Professor that very evening in his room upstairs, for if not, he would invite him to coffee and a smoke. I could only reply that, of course, he could ask whom he liked to his own rooms, but that I could not promise until the time came, whether or not I should feel in the humour for the introduction.

To tell the truth I was not so very particularly keen about getting in with *Taraxacum's* queer lot, much as my liking for himself had strengthened and increased.

Although, upon the whole, I think that I cer-

tainly had reason to be dissatisfied, not to say rather disgusted with the contents of the colonel's long letter, yet somehow I did feel better and lighter hearted ; at any rate the communication, unsatisfactory as it was, had at least done something to dispel the wearing suspense, and utter ignorance of what had become of her, which had up to that time been worrying me.

Yes, I certainly felt better and more like myself, as I made up my mind to walk down to the school to find out Ferdy, of whom I had never once thought ; nor had the possibility of the precious boy being left behind ever even occurred to me.

It must have been a presentiment, or I don't know why exactly I should feel my heart begin to yearn as it did towards the speckle-faced youngster. But is it not marvellous how, under change of circumstances, we are apt to find our feelings also so entirely changing from one time to another ?

Just as I arrived at the place a whole shoal of scholastics, a miscellaneous lot of English, Saxon, and other nations, came tumbling out of a side-door into a sort of dusty enclosure, which I suppose they dignified by the name of their playing field.

There was a sufficient leaven amongst them of the British element, for the youngsters to show signs of some sort of noise and fun in their escape from con-

finement, instead of the usual sweet-stuff-absorbing, slouchy, do-nothing occupations of the genuine continental youth in his play hours.

Almost the very last of the lot turned out master Ferdy himself ; certainly when I first caught sight of him, by no means so miserable and depressed in spirit, in appearance at least, as he declared himself to be ; and I will so far give him credit, as to allow that, before I had talked to him for many minutes, he really seemed to become, while dilating to me upon the ill usage and shock his feelings had undergone in being cast out as he had been, from a happy home, and from his beloved mamma's apron strings, at less than a moment's notice, to be sent to dwell in the house of the stranger without any preparation or previous intimation.

“But they are not all strangers, as they might have been,” I reasoned with him ; “you knew them all, masters and schoolfellows, for months before. Immediate change of scene was, you know, necessary for your dear sister's health ; and ought not the great happiness of her recovery and most unlooked-for restoration, snatched as she had been from the very jaws of death, to much more than compensate you for any temporary inconvenience which the sudden turn of circumstances may have caused yourself?”

“Ah, but that is just the worst of it,” replied the

desponding youth ; “ for knowing me before, the other boys have done nothing but tease and torment me ever since I [have been sent here. So that if it wasn't wicked, I think I could almost, for some reasons, wish that Katie had not got well, or at least not quite so suddenly,” the abominable young scoundrel went on to say, with an artless though cold-blooded candour, for which at the moment I felt inclined to strangle him :—“ For that is just the worst of it for poor me ; as long as they thought that I had lost my dear sister, which was the first report, the boys pitied me, and gave me lots of lollipops and other good things, in kindly trying to comfort me ; but when they found out that Katie was not really dead after all, but had gone away in the railway train with all the rest of them, they all began to kick me as an impostor, and have bullied me awfully ever since.

“ Some of them have got up all sorts of stories, that papa and mamma have run away because they could not pay their debts ; and left me here in pawn with old Strenglitz for what is owing to him for my schooling ; and they declare that Katie's illness was all sham, just to deceive and put the tradespeople off their guard. It is really too bad, isn't it, now, cousin Frank ?”

“ Well, you know,” I replied with words of philosophical comfort, “ that it is not true ; so what can it

matter what such young idiots say? But tell me, have you heard at all from home, how your sister is going on? or have you had a letter from Katie yourself, by chance?"

The creature's eyes brightened up and began to twinkle with an expression of that innate mischief which, I think, I have before mentioned as an occasional characteristic of that ingenuous youth.

I think I had never before so much perceived how handsome those great eyes of his were, and they laughed just like his sister's. I felt myself, as I looked at them, inclined to forgive his late atrociously selfish sentiments all for the sake of those eyes.

"Yes; I have had a letter myself," he said grinning, "which if you like I will lend you to read, cousin Frank; and besides that there was another letter enclosed in a cover directed to me, which I was not sure whether I was right in receiving, after the thrashing you threatened me with, and the promise I had made to you of never again being the means of any correspondence passing between sister Katie and anybody as long as I lived.

"But you may look at the direction if you like:" and he produced it from his pocket, grinning like a young hyena.

"And so you have been troubled with conscientious scruples as to the propriety of delivering this

letter all this time, for fear of my punishment, have you ?” I enquired, snatching it out of his hand. “ Don’t you know, you young rascal, that to all good rules there are always exceptions ?”

“ Well, if you must know, it was partly that reason, and partly because, now I am here at this horrid place as a boarder, I cannot get out and about the streets as I could when I lived at home.” Here he was on the point of relapsing into a fit of the dismals, if I had not roused him with a friendly shake. “ Here we have to ask leave to go out, and no end of botheration ; and when I did, on a half-holiday three or four days ago, call at your lodgings just to ask your advice, you see, about this letter, whether it would not be the right thing to send it back at once under cover to my papa”——

Young Impudence stood there, leering out of the corners of his eyes, and grinning again enough to split his mouth at both ends——

“ The woman at your house told me that you had gone away, they didn’t know where, but without paying your debts, and that they thought you had left Dresden altogether, though some people said that you had been caught and shut up in the public gaol for your crimes.”

“ The devil they did !” I shot out in a fury.

“Well, you know, cousin, that is not true, so what can it matter what such old idiots say?” he said, quite demurely. The natural impudence of that young imp at thirteen certainly beat anything I ever met with at his time of life, or even a good deal older.

“Anyhow,” he continued, “she swore that she did not know where you could be found ; so I brought the letter back again home, or at least to this horrid place, with me ; and not feeling quite sure that you would consider me bound by my promise to send it back to papa, or even to Katie herself, I have kept it up to this time for consideration.”

Too delighted, and eager to get away home with my letter, promising to see Ferdy again in a day or two, when I should hope to find him in a happier frame of mind, I dismissed the young cub with a *tip*, which, in those weight-carrying thalers, and being fully commensurate with the ecstatic state of my own feelings,—having, you see, myself received a more than respectable remittance,—made both his round eyes stretch wider than ever ; my generosity on this occasion having evidently far exceeded his wildest calculations.

I really felt jolly myself and gratified to see the urchin run off crowing to his playmates, any or all of whom I had also pledged myself to separately thrash for him, in case of their ever again venturing to repeat

or circulate the groundless and defamatory reports against his, and my relations.

“For they are your near relations as well as mine, except Katie, you know, ain’t they, cousin Frank?” put in Ferdy, adroitly bringing up that further inducement for me to feel a personal interest in his quarrels.

## CHAPTER III.

“Patience herself would startle at this letter.”

*As You Like It.* Act iv.

A DOZEN or even more sides of closely-interwoven running hand, crossed, and in some parts re-crossed again, did that most dear and welcome letter contain.

I cannot make up my mind to let you see it all, as I have done the colonel’s and others, though I still have it by me.

There are, you see, my dear fellow, perhaps some things in it that nobody else but myself, for whom it was intended, ever ought to see, at any rate they never shall. But I don’t mind so much giving you some extracts from it, or rather allowing you to write down from my dictation the main bulk of its contents, just as they came from poor Katie herself, only omitting or reserving to myself some of the few private passages to which I have alluded.

[The young lady’s letter itself, of the exterior of which I casually obtained sight, was itself a perfect curiosity as a specimen of epistolary literature ; but voluminous

as it was, when I came to listen to the length and detail of what my friend accorded to me as *extracts* from it, I could, in truth, only marvel how so much could be contained in these pages, numerous even as they were.]

So then, [started Lambard] there is no need to give you at length the poor girl's preface of fears, protestations, and reiterated self-reproaches for venturing to write to me unbeknown, and without her parents' sanction; that she felt sure, she said, even then that we should never meet, or, under any circumstances, be ever allowed to see each other again: that, miserable as that certainty made her, she could only hope and trust that in this, our last communication for ever, she should not fall in my estimation and regard for such an avowal; still, that it was more especially for my own sake, and to save me from a secret and fearful danger hanging over me, that she so longed to have been permitted, if only in one last interview, to have had an opportunity of personally warning me; and had now in despair, determined to run the risk of writing on a matter which, though she felt nobody else in the world would understand or even listen to, she yet felt, that if conveyed in time to myself, might be of the most vital importance in securing the future happiness of my life, perhaps even my life itself.

“Do you remember,” the letter went on to say, “that I once told you how I feared and held in positive terror that dreadful little Mr. G——, and, in spite of myself, what a fearful power he seemed to exercise over me?”

“You seemed annoyed and answered me shortly. I did not know you so well then, and feared that you were very cross with me for speaking on such a subject. I tried to act upon the advice you gave me, though, which I felt was right, and to speak to papa upon the subject; but when I thought I had really summoned up courage to do so,—you know, though always so fond and kind to me, how hasty and stern dear papa can at times be,—he stopped me so peremptorily, and with such a dreadful expression of annoyance, almost agony, in his look and manner, that I felt quite confused and overwhelmed. I feared I must have said something dreadfully wicked, perhaps, without meaning or knowing it.

“If I ever thought I should see you again, dear Frank, I could not have brought myself thus plainly to set down these thoughts and feelings.

“I felt that perhaps I had been so wicked that papa could never forgive me or love me again. Oh, I was very miserable. But that same evening he called me to him, and nothing could have been kinder

and more confidential than his manner was to me ; but he desired me never to mention that subject again, nor let my thoughts run astray upon such superstitious follies, as he called them ; and then, Frank, he went on to speak about you, and that I must always look upon you as a cousin and a brother, but never"—then came three or four lines entirely scratched out—"and I promised him to do so, and I tried, you know, to keep that promise faithfully, and to stop you in time, for I had by that time stronger reasons even than my promise to papa ; but you would go on, you know, in spite of me.

"You will of course remember that lock of hair which had been so cunningly obtained through Ferdy ; I told you of the strange influence which he almost directly avowed, and I felt that he had gained over me by that possession.

"You would not listen, and seemed to disbelieve me. I would have then told you more of the persecutions, and obtrusive annoyances I had undergone, if you had allowed me, and not stopped me so short ; but feeling the shame and doubts which I have now confessed to you, I did not like to come upon the subject again.

"I was at times dreadfully unhappy, but then he went, as we all thought at least, entirely away, and

you had come to Dresden, you know ; and for a time I was at peace again in my mind, and began to look upon my past fears and feelings as bygone dreams and illusions, just as one wakes of a morning with a feeling of having been in great trouble or sorrow in one's dreams, without being able to recall the cause.

“ I might have come to look upon it all as entirely the effect of my own imagination and fancy, had I not found out that my brother Ferdy also was subject to exactly the same indescribable sensations of attraction and yet terror in regard to that dreadful person (I cannot bear to name him, even to myself, somehow). He, Ferdy, told me of a strange scene he had actually himself been through under that wicked creature's influence.

“ He said that at the risk, as he declared, of his very life, he had confessed the same to you—this he told me whilst I was so ill since that last day I saw you—but that you had only pooh-poohed and disbelieved him.

“ You will perhaps still disbelieve me now ; but at that risk, at the risk of you considering me foolish, fanciful, a wicked story-teller, if you must, I will now confide in you a fearful secret, to which I have never yet alluded to a living soul ; and which I myself, while I tell it as a fact, and the truth, cannot pretend

to understand or account for, or even myself hardly believe.

“I have said before, on the other page of this letter, that we *thought* he had left Dresden, and that I was happier and more at peace in consequence. I was very, very happy when with you, my dear Frank—those were the happiest days I ever enjoyed in my life. One afternoon I was at home in our apartments by myself. I was in that soft easy-chair of mamma’s with a book in my hand, but I was not reading. I was just thinking how really happy your arrival and pleasant companionship had made me : all of a sudden I looked up, and there was *He* standing by me, with that locket which I told you of, you know, open in his hand.

“I was so surprised that I could not find words to utter; but he seemed not to expect me to do so, at any rate he went on exactly as if it had been the most natural thing in the world that he should find himself there alone with me. Papa and mamma were out; and when I had sufficiently recovered myself to hear what he was saying, in the most soft and earnest tones he was entreating me to promise to try to become fond of him, and never to care for any one else.

“I do not know now what I said in answer to him, or whether I said anything at all, I am not sure; but

in the same sudden way in which he had appeared, he was gone, vanished; and I found myself again alone.

“The second time that exactly the same thing happened, was within a week or so of the other. He was again most kind and gentle in his manner, but spoke even more persuasively to the same purpose. That time, directly he was gone I rushed out and asked Harrison and our other maid-servant, whom I found in the outer room, if they had seen him. Both of them positively denied that any one had or could have been there. I am positively certain that I had not on either occasion been asleep, or that what I now write to you was a delusion; though how to account for it, I know not.

“The third time was on a Sunday afternoon in the *allée* on the way to the English church. I had been to the afternoon service alone, as mamma was unwell, and as it was getting dusk, I was walking as fast as I could, when all at once I perceived him at my side.

“Instead of his soft and gentle tones and manner, as on the former occasions, he at once, as he kept up with me, began to speak furiously, and to use the most dreadful threats. He brought up your name, and with the most dreadful words declared that if I ever thought of, or cared for you, he had power to destroy you body and soul.

“He went on to tell me something about you, and of your future happiness, which I will not, cannot believe; that it should depend entirely upon my consenting to listen to him, whether the strong power that he held over you should be exerted for your good or evil. I somehow collected myself enough to speak up, and to defy his power over you, whatever he might pretend to over myself.

“He said, with a horrible sneer, that you yourself knew whether he had not acquired unbounded power over you, when very young; and that once acquired it could never be lost. He appealed to my own experience whether he was boasting beyond his powers, in being able to make me think of him, dream of him, follow him even if he pleased, and then again, when it suited his purpose, even to forget him entirely, and be at times unable to recall his very name to my lips.

“I had made up my mind not to answer him any more, or to appear conscious of his presence, but I felt my strength failing me with fright, and I could not stir another step; and feeling desperate, I gasped out that whatever his boasted power over me might be, he could never make me like him or care for him, or regard him with any other feeling than dread and hatred unutterable.

“He quite gnashed his teeth, and seemed beside

himself with rage and fury. He almost seemed to choke with the dreadful words and threats which he repeated, that if I ever dared to care for you, or if ever you should express anything of that sort to me, that from that moment every sort of calamity and misery should be in store for you ; and that for myself, though it might, and probably would, cost him his very soul,—such was his own terrible expression—he would so humiliate and have his revenge upon me, that I should be torn from my home, my friends, and everything I held dear in this world ; and if he pleased he could make me too glad to be allowed to follow and serve him as his slave.

“ He had just pronounced that last dreadful threat when Harrison came up, having been sent out to meet me, and asked me what I was doing there, sitting on the bench where she found me, all by myself ; and when I asked her, was quite certain that no one else had, or could have been there, as she must either have passed them, or have seen them going on down towards the other end of the wide avenue.

“ That was on the very Sunday before our long-talked of walk to the Wolfshügel together. When I arrived at home with Harrison, who scolded me all the way along, you had already come in, and were sitting with papa.

“I wondered that nobody seemed to perceive the state of fright and agitation I had been in; but though you may find it difficult to credit, by the time the lights were brought in, I had not only quite recovered myself, but actually, for the time, forgotten the whole of that strange and terrific interview.

“That was not the first time that, under the same mysterious and special influence to which I had in other ways been subjected, the memory of that person, and his threats, and evil words, had entirely passed out of my mind.

“I think, on looking back, that I may have had some sort of vague idea, as of some horrid dream—long, long before—though retaining none of the particulars or details which have since come back, and remain in all their terrible reality.

“I tell you this particularly, lest you should look upon me as a hypocrite and deceitful, in seeming so quiet and as usual that same evening; or blame me for appearing to be so happy and light-hearted—as I really was—when we were setting out for that walk, that lovely afternoon, to the Wolfshügel. It was not until we had climbed up to the top of that high place, and—you know what you were speaking about, that it all rushed back into my memory. I saw him suddenly close by—almost between us—as if in a

flash of lightning. Did he strike you in the face?—for that was my impression of the moment. Whether you saw him as well as myself, I cannot feel sure, though you certainly uttered the name at the same instant. How we got home that evening I cannot now the least remember.

“ I remember nothing more distinctly until the next morning, when Ferdy came into my room with a letter, which he had just received enclosed under cover to himself, and which, as he assured me—and I really believe—he felt compelled, though in spite of himself, to bring to me as he was desired immediately.

“ He seemed in a strange state of mind himself—half terrified, and yet half laughing at me at the same time. Do you remember that I on a former occasion remarked to you how very odd the poor boy’s character had lately become?—so suddenly changeable at times, and so unlike his former self?

“ That dreadful letter had neither date nor signature, but beginning abruptly, with a repetition of the fearful threats and denunciations which he had already used against me in that last interview in the *allée*, it went on to accuse me of having broken my solemn promises—which, before Heaven, I never made!—and that having thus forfeited my soul by my falsehoods and wicked deceit, I should within ten

days, or even less, become wholly within his power, as he had told me ; that I should be yielded up to him as his slave, and owe even my very existence to his will.

“ My reason and thoughts then became all confusion, as soon as I had read through that letter. I have no idea whether it was for hours only, or for whole days and nights, that I lay without sensation or remembrance. Those who were about me would know, but I have never liked to ask mamma ; and Harrison, when I try to question her, pretends to misunderstand me, and not know what I am talking about.

“ But though I was really quite insensible for some while, I was not in that state—as they evidently imagined—the whole time. I became sensible and broad awake ; I knew that I was in my room, in my own bed, but so entirely under the influence of that awful will, that I had no power either to speak or even move of my own accord. If it were not for the former scenes I had been through, and when I am as certain that I was awake, as I am at this very moment I write, I might have persuaded myself that all I felt and went through were only dreams and the fancies of nightmare ; but so vivid and real were the impressions left upon my mind, that nothing shall ever make me doubt, or persuade me that all did not actually happen as I remember and can describe.

“I was lying perfectly still, quite sensible, but motionless—I was thinking of Mr. G——’s dreadful threats, and whether he really could have any influence or effect over your happiness.

“All of a sudden, (I can hardly bear the horrible shame of the thought, as it now recurs to me) he was there, standing by my bedside, just as he had suddenly appeared on the former occasions. I only wish that I could believe, and console myself with the idea, that it was only a dream and my imagination!

“He again began his entreaties, but soon passed on to his former threats, and worse. Again working himself into such a passion, that he almost screamed as he told me that now I should see what his power really was.

“I felt a cold shuddering come right over me, and the whole room seemed suddenly full of living beings, though I can now convey no very definite description of them, or compare them to any particular form or shape—perhaps the nearest idea I can give of them would be as large bubbles, or wreaths of smoke, now distinct, now merging one into another, but all surrounding me, and struggling to seize me, and lift me up, as I lay there without power to move upon my bed.

“That dreadful creature was all the while gesticu-

lating in the midst of them, as they rolled and floated around him, seeming to command, and urging them in the fiercest tones to obey him.

“But every time they had just raised me and seemed about to bear me away, I could feel that they were driven off, and kept at bay by some other being or spirit, who seemed to be on my side, and to have come to protect me.

“No more definite than the others, I sometimes fancied that I caught a glimpse of a bright floating body of light, and as it passed and repassed over me I could feel a soft breath, or as it were the gentlest touch of some warm smooth surface, smooth as silk or ivory, against my cheek or my hand.

“He appeared to be able to see the spirits or whatever they were, more distinctly than I could do, and to shrink back out of reach from the bright form which was thus defending me, but in his rage more than once even ventured to address it defiantly.

“‘I can call up stronger powers yet!’ he cried vehemently, ‘which even you cannot prevail against; and as to her——or that fellow Lambard, whom I hate, I have power enough to make him raise his hand against her own father, ay, even rouse him to murder him, if I choose; and we shall see whether she will cling to him after that;’ at that most horrible threat, with a

tremendous effort I regained the power over my voice, and cried out against him, at the sound of which he and all immediately vanished; and I remember no more, for that time at least.

“ I have no idea how long it may have been before I recovered consciousness enough to find myself lying all alone in profound darkness, without, as far as I could make out, anybody or any sound of life near me.

“ Had he then really found means of carrying out his dreadful threats, and had I been torn away from home and friends, and all belonging to me? Then came over me the horrible and freezing feeling that I had been thought dead, and was in my coffin, buried alive.

“ I do not know now whether even if I had wished I had power enough to try to move, or to stretch my hand to know by the touch whether my dreadful anticipations were too true; but I felt that I did not dare thus satisfy myself.

“ I closed my eyelids again in despair, never hoping or caring to try to open them again; but after a time I became aware of, rather I should say by feeling than hearing, a sensation of distant shrieks of laughter, and wild cries which seemed to come nearer and nearer, until they were close round me; and I felt myself surrounded by the same floating, gliding, but quite impalpable beings which I have before tried to describe.

“Without any power, or even as it seemed will to resist, I felt myself rising slowly, and very gently, and floating away in the midst, merged and mingling with myriads of light beings, into a great boundless expanse of air, and yet always preserving my separate individuality. I retained a quite distinct impression, as I felt myself thus moving upwards, of looking down upon my own form lying back as if asleep or fainted on the bed, but it was only just for an instant, quicker almost than a thought.

“I did not somehow feel afraid, nor to care even to know where I was floating off to; though at the same time I seemed conscious of some irresistible summons or order which, though none had been audibly given, I knew intuitively that all of us had received, and were now bound and obliged to obey.

“My next distinct sensation was that of finding myself in a large strange room, ordinarily furnished like most German rooms, except that at the further end stood a great old-fashioned wardrobe or press, made of some very dark wood, with carved figures and wreaths of flowers about it. I recognised it by description at once, and so knew in whose room I was, because it flashed through my mind, that when he used to come and see us so much, Mr. G. had told papa about that curious old piece of furniture, as he was

always very fond of those sort of things, and liked picking them up as bargains; and I remembered that he had promised to go and see this, if the landlord would be likely to have parted with it; but I don't know whether he ever had done so.

“By that I recognised that I must be in *his* room; and there sure enough I saw *Him* himself, standing by a sort of three-legged brazier in which there was fire, or at least smoke was coming out of it. He was not alone—there was with him a tall, cadaverous looking man, whose pale face bore the most dreadful expression of every sort of reckless wickedness I ever could imagine.

“At the very time I was conscious of a feeling of surprise of how it happened that I could even know of the sins and horrors which I saw expressed in those features; and then I suddenly perceived that in the state of existence in which I then was, I had the power of seeing and knowing all that was working and going on in his and his companion's minds and hearts; that of the former, in particular, appeared like a transparent bladder, or large globule, quite full of loathsome black worms, and slimy creeping things all twisted and struggling, and devouring one another, though all seemed immediately to come to life again, and to increase, as soon as destroyed—and I seemed

to have understanding given me to know that these were all the wickednesses, and most miserable sins that have ever existed since the world began ; they were falsehoods, and hatred, and despair ; and yet all intermingled and overwhelmed with contempt for his accomplice ; while at the same time he was quite enjoying a horrible pleasure in having thus tempted, and implicated the little wretch into the same crimes and horrors as himself.

“ I could read, that is, I knew it all as plainly as if it were written on a clear sheet of paper.

“ G—— appeared at first — when he became conscious of my presence before him — dreadfully frightened. I cannot tell whether he actually saw me in any form or not ; but after some hesitation, and seeming to collect himself, he and his wicked companion took something out of the brazier, and then I recognised the locket which contained my own hair, and something told me that I must submit entirely to his powerful will, and could only throw myself upon his mercy.

“ All this time the whole room was full of the beings like bubbles or wreaths of smoke, who were continually flitting and floating in the air all round me. I still occasionally seemed to know of the wild

cries and screams of laughter, which seemed to be off far away.

“When they had taken the locket out and laid it on the table before them, G—— seemed to have become more composed, and addressed me. I felt constrained to answer him, whether I would or not; and I did so meekly and submissively, as I felt obliged to do. He began to taunt me with having defied him, and asked if I now doubted the extent of his powers. He told me that he had loved me, but that was now past, and that it was now too late—that having despised his good will, I should learn what his ill will could do for me. I began to beg and pray him to let me go back home, if only to take leave of my parents, before being taken from them for ever.

“He scoffed at me in reply, and said—‘And your dear cousin Frank, I suppose, you would like to see again?’ and then he and his companion laughed together, and he said, ‘we will bring him here to see you.’ But the other said—‘Don’t try too much, or don’t go too far at once.’ ‘At any rate, I can settle him,’ he replied; and he took down a glove, which I knew at once—as I knew everything else intuitively—to be one of yours, which you had dropped that very

day we were on the Wolfshügel. He stretched his hands, and breathed and muttered over it—as I had seen them do over the locket before. ‘Now,’ said he, ‘he is in my power; and it depends upon yourself whether he escapes scot free, or is condemned to the most miserable fate that any man can endure in this life, and worse hereafter.’

“Horror-stricken and desperate, I just remember uttering a loud cry; when the wardrobe I have mentioned suddenly burst open, and some person, whether mortal or supernatural I could not tell—rushed out and overturned the table and the light—and I remember no more, except a dim vague sensation of being borne away with a rapid motion, and without the slightest personal effort or exertion on my own part, wafted hither and thither, as it were, through incalculable space, upon the softest of soft warm summer-breezes, bearing sweet scents of the most delicious flowers—while all around and within me seemed to reign the most perfect sense of absolute calm and repose. But of these latter impressions I have a very vague, and different remembrance from all those which I have so minutely described and detailed to you.

“My next distinct recollection is when I found myself back again, lying in my own bed, with papa, mamma, and all around me; and I even fancied you,

for a moment, dear Frank, were near me—or was that only a happy fancy?

“You will think, I know—and I should have fancied myself—that all this was only a dreadful dream while I was so ill.

“To no one else have I ever even mentioned all that I have now—having once begun—told you, at such length; but had I done so, all would have told me the same—that it was a nightmare and delusion. I should, as I say, have thought so myself—but, Frank, in my own hand I found, when I came to myself, clasped tightly, that locket and hair—frizzled and singed by the fire through which it had been. That must have been reality—and I could not have got possession of that in my dream; though how I did get it, I have no remembrance or idea.

“The broken locket itself I managed, unperceived, to throw under the wheels of the railway on our journey down here; what remains of the hair, I now enclose to you, my dearest Frank, as a last remembrance of your once dear Katie. And now”——

Well, never mind the rest. She goes on to allude to her astonishment and feelings at their sudden removal, describes their journey southwards, and then finishing with more self-reproaches and deprecations for having thus written to tell me this strange un-

accountable story—which, if it had not been for De Lyons' perfectly distinct corroboration, I should not have known what to think of—not that it isn't a regular puzzler, take it which way you will;—but that she felt that she could never rest, day or night, until she had thus relieved herself of the fearful secret which she felt weighing down her senses, her life, her very soul: and so winding up with a most emphatic, most touching warning to myself, to beware of the little fiend who—as she had too much reason to fear—could exercise such a terrible power over me and my future destinies.

## CHAPTER IV.

## EXPERTO CREDE.

AMIDST a tumult of conflicting feelings and resolutions, two special objects seemed to raise themselves predominant over all others in my mind.

You may easily conceive them. Increased interest—well, yearning love, if you must have it spoken plainly, for poor Katie; and vengeance, signal and condign, upon that little miscreant Gorles, let the consequences or risks to myself be what they might.

I felt, however, altogether lighter at heart, and more myself again now that I had a settled, I might say, these two settled purposes of life before me.

I would start at once. In pursuit of which, though, first?

Now that I knew where to find them, should I boldly follow the De Lormes, and try another urgent appeal to my uncle's feelings? It seemed to me at one time—as his own letter had almost admitted—as if only in common gratitude for having been the means

of rescuing her as I had,—from affection for his own recovered child, he could not have the heart to refuse me; and then, again, I had a strong inward conviction that any such attempt would be hopeless. Would it not be cruel to her thus to resuscitate quenched feelings? For by her letter—which I might betray, too, by my indiscretion—she seemed to have become convinced that we should not—must not hope ever to meet again, and to have already submitted and reconciled herself to that fiat. Should I leave that question unsettled until I had followed up and done for Gorles? But, then, see her again, if only once more, to bid her farewell for ever, I felt I must.

In my perplexity I had no one to consult, or to whom I could unbosom myself, save my worthy friend De Lyons, to whom, indeed, thrown together as we had lately been under such very peculiar circumstances, I had naturally imparted much of my confidence.

Though decidedly a “rum 'un” in his way, *Taraxacum* was a thoroughly good-hearted fellow at bottom, mixing with his speculative and sometimes rather high-flown imaginative flights a fair average of worldly wisdom or common sense, as I think he in the main showed in the plain-spoken advice which he offered me; although at the time I found the same

difficult to reconcile with my then excited feelings, and only submitted to be led by it rather from not knowing what else to do, than from any conviction of its truth.

“Drop them, my dear old fellow,” he said; “drop them both,—both love and revenge: take my advice, and drop them. The one will wear your poor heart into fiddle-strings, all to no purpose; while with the other,—in that particular quarter, you will, I fear, burn your fingers most infernally.

“What can be the use of your running your own head a regular mucker against a wall? suffering as you are from the combined effects of the two most ghastly symptoms of moral blindness to which poor rotten human nature can be subject to, ‘*Spooniness*’—excuse my thus familiarly calling that most delusive and painful disorder, a temporary derangement as it in fact is of the *Odyle*, or electric principle of vitality—and Spite, which is a short and comprehensive way of expressing the wrath of your righteous indignation, if you thus prefer to express it.

“As to the first of your schemes, or fixed purposes of life, as you have just called them, take my word for it—the word of very likely a much bigger fool than yourself—I will grant that, if you like, as to things in general, but in this case I am not, you know, in the

same predicament as yourself, my poor fellow, blinded and groping in darkness.

“Your love is hopeless. There must be some very strong and quite unsurmountable reasons for the ‘stern Parent’ taking the decided part he has done, though we may not perhaps be able to guess or fathom them; even if we tried; but don’t let us try, and there is an end of it. Perhaps, for all parties, it is better that we shouldn’t.”

My Mentor here assumed a knowing expression of face, just as if he might know, and even did know, a great deal more than he chose to say. Whenever he got upon his mysterious metaphysical tack, he was apt to put on that wise conceited look and manner.

“Now,” he continued, “if you will only trust to me, as after what we have been through together, you may perhaps be more inclined to do than you otherwise might have been, I will see you through this trouble, and show you how you may in no time be cured, and relieved of all the inconvenience and heart-soreness of a hopeless attachment; not that it really is the heart, after all, that suffers, but your spleen which gets out of order.

“Ah, you may sigh and groan internally, and feel, as I know you do now, not only that you never can recover or forget, but even have the thought that it

would be a sort of sacrilege and wrong even to wish to do so ; and from a sort of morbid respect for the object of your *tendresse* convince yourself that it is only your melancholy duty to hug and cherish the memories which are now gnawing at, and torturing your very vitals.

“Believe me, that is a wrong view altogether. Having fairly satisfied yourself as you, as a man of the world, must, and as I can thought-read enough to feel certain that in your inmost self you already do feel satisfied, that any attempts or efforts on your part are utterly and entirely hopeless ; nay, more, if it will be any comfort, though a cruel one, perhaps, now to know a certainty, I may as well tell you that, interested as I am on your behalf, I have within a day or two consulted a *clairvoyante* friend of mine, a patient of the Professor’s, who has over and over again been proved to be right and utterly infallible ; and from her I ascertained enough, without going into any details, to feel perfectly certain that all your fondest hopes and longings in that track are destined to come to nothing. Were I not quite as positive that her prescience of the future is as true and trustworthy, or even more so, than my own or anybody else’s memory of any event which is past, I would not thus strongly urge and persuade you ; but under the circumstances, for the young

lady's sake, if not for your own, I again repeat, drop the whole idea; and then for your own peace and comfort get your foot out of it, and let it be to you only like a page torn out of a book."

"That is easier said than done," I answered, sadly enough, "even if I wished to do so. An attachment such as mine——"

"Gammon and spinach," interrupted my friend, most irreverently. "Once make up your mind that you would wish to do so, and I, or rather my excellent friend, the Professor, will set you all right again in one leetle '*zen minuten*,' as he will say, if you will only come up this evening, as you have already half promised to do, to my rooms to meet him.

"*Experto crede!* I too have also suffered," and here the sinner actually tried to get up a sort of snivel, while I could hardly make out, as he affected to dash away a tear from the back of his hand, whether he was in earnest or only making fun of me.

But he went on quite in a serious tone: "Do you think that I, too, have not known all the feelings and pangs under which you at this moment internally writhe? Have I not, too, passed sleepless nights, loathed my meals, in vain sought consolation in my pipe and the strongest tobacco?"

"Have I not, too, suffered all the qualms, the

restlessness, and miseries of a desperate attachment? Wandered I cared not whither, with my head on one side, my eyes turned up, and the corners of my mouth drawn down, slippers down at heel, and my fists plunged into the depths of my breeches pockets; for all the world like a moulting blackbird with the pip,—which is, excuse me, my dear fellow, exactly what you have been reminding me of for the last fortnight; and you don't know, having gone through it all myself, how really I have felt for you.

“The usual run of that state of things is, if left to time only to wear itself out, a matter of three, six, or nine months, or, in very bad cases, even a year or eighteen months may elapse before all traces of the malady are completely effaced. That is a long time to look forward to, particularly when spent in pain and discomfort all to no purpose: so do as I did, get the Professor to help you, and have done with it at once.

“The sensation of relief, immediate as it is, is alone worth experiencing for the exquisite pleasure of the contrast, just like the first night of rest after having a three-fanged back tooth out which has been racking you for weeks past. As to my own experience in that line, to which I have already alluded, I ought to know something about the matter, having myself caught it as hard over the head and ears as most

people of my weight and inches: I was most awfully bad, just as I had been when I went through the measles and hooping-cough: I always do things in extremes, somehow—that's the nature of the beast, you see.

“ I was regularly floored, down on my back with all the same aches and grinding pains of hopes, and fears, and doubts, and despair, just for all the world as you are yourself now suffering.

“ And I had also to bear in addition what you may thank your lucky stars you have been spared; I mean the worst of all damnable feelings—jealousy to wit—a-top of all the rest, you know. There was not only a ‘ stern relentless Parient’ in my case, but the dove-eyed Rosina herself, that was the name of my paragon, was playing me off the whole while, a shabby shilly-shally sort of game, against another fellow.

“ It was actually only on the Sunday evening that we had been swearing eternal constancy upon the tiles of her father's back premises, up which I had climbed at the risk of my neck, for a stolen interview at her chamber window,—only on one Sunday, I tell you, and dash my button-holes! if she did not go and marry the eldest son of the Court Chiropodist, or to give him his rightful title and dignities in full German, *der Konigliche-oberhof-leichdorn schneider* to his

Saxon Majesty and all his royal family, on the very next Thursday of the same week !

“I really thought I should have died of it; and certainly never hoped to care for life, or any of its pleasures or interests again.

“I took to my bed, and my heart refused to be comforted; and I had next door to made up my mind to blow my brains out, or cut my jugular vein, when the Professor, whom I did not know so well in those days, came to see me, and kindly took me in hand, in spite of my half remonstrances, and feeling as you do now, that there was something unfeeling and inconsistent in wishing to be freed from one's own crushed and maimed affections.

“However, I consented. He put me off quietly to sleep, simply to sleep, and when I awoke in the morning your humble servant was himself again. I looked back upon the whole of that interesting little episode of my life as if it had happened and been finished years and years ago, and that all my old feelings had had time to die out and change, as would of course be the effect of time, instead of their being, as was really the case, ‘*heigh presto*’ all changed and gone in a single moment.

“I can only tell you that I was so thoroughly cured, that within a week after, I had torn up the

last of my lost one's sweet-scented notes to light my pipe with.

“ I have met her constantly since with the greatest serenity, without a check to my breath, or a flutter in my pulse; yet, bless your heart, my dear fellow, I remember when only to see that girl come into the room, nay, I call to mind one occasion when even the very sight of her pork-feeding old father's greasy hat upon a hall table would set every individual nerve and fibre in my whole system in one everlasting tingle; and now—I can go perfectly unmoved, and with unimpaired appetite, to dine at the very table, which I have been asked to do more than once, of that lady's rather under-bred, though well-to-do chiropedical husband; and have been actually received on those occasions by Rosina herself as hostess, without, as I tell you, a twinge, or the consciousness of any unpleasant feeling—except perhaps hunger.

“ Deuced good dinners they gave, too; and the only thoughts of vengeance I have ever entertained towards him, honest man that he is, are when I have felt myself more than ordinarily walking into his victuals, or punishing his liquors. That must be a proof of the genuineness of my complete cure, you see; for no bravado or self-assurance could force an appetite if there were a spark of the old love left in me, though

injured pride, or a strong self-control might choke down other indications even enough to cheat one's self, perhaps."

Such were some of *Taraxacum's* simple and perhaps not wholly ineffectual arguments by which he urged me to meet and make the acquaintance of his learned friend the Professor.

I promised to consider the matter, though I claimed the right of remaining undecided as to whether I should put myself in the strange man's hands or not : but before the evening arrived I was actually anxious and nervously impatient for the interview.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE PROFESSOR.

“Est-ce la physique que vous voulez apprendre ?”—MOLIÈRE.

THE Professor, although fairly enough described by young Ferdy as to his personal appearance, was not exactly what I had expected to see him.

I had, I almost believe, pictured him to myself with perhaps rather too lively an imagination, as likely to enter the room in a high-peaked cap, and wearing a black velvet robe, embroidered with skulls and cross-bones, and other symbolical phylacteries ; instead of which, when I walked into De Lyons' room, I only saw a rather common-place looking gentleman, apparently between five-and-thirty and forty ; my first impression being, I think, that he seemed rather cleaner as to his fingers and linen than the average of his compatriots.

I remembered Ferdy's comparison of his awful head of hair to a regular mane, which is exactly what it was like, and upon his removing his dark spectacles for the purpose of wiping them, I was struck

with the extraordinary brilliancy, amounting to quite a scintillating glow, of his perfectly round eyes.

He rose courteously as De Lyons went through the ceremony of introduction ; and as I grasped the hand which was cordially, and yet with a well-bred hesitation, offered, it may have been fancy, but I certainly felt—though there was no particular pressure on his part—a distinct thrill rush through my whole frame.

I have at other times experienced the same sort of feeling upon suddenly meeting any old and dear friend, or upon grasping the hand of any one I have been very fond of, or even been interested in ; but never, I think, as on that occasion, with a perfect stranger.

His voice was peculiarly pleasant, soothing, and harmonious, like some well-tuned instrument, so that I then, for the first time in my life, began to think German not quite such a barbarous, hopelessly crack-jaw lingo as I had always done.

I certainly was from the first moment conscious of a strong attraction towards the strange man, as we sat there opposite to one another, and starting as we did with a sort of desultory conversation, upon various common-place topics, between the puffs of our well-filled meerschaums.

My German was but limited, that is, as soon as I

attempted to plunge into anything beyond the shallowest levels of conversation; and as the Professor's English seemed to be just about on the same par, though he perhaps understood it better than I did his language, we set out at first with a sort of mutual compromise in regard to that difficulty, each keeping to his own vernacular.

It was not till later in the evening, when, as I shall have to tell you, the Professor became more animated, and warmed up in the discussion and explanation of the interesting subjects to which our conversation eventually drifted; and perceiving, I suppose, that I could not always quite follow him, nor perfectly convey my own meaning to his mind, that he brought into use a practical instance of his amazing powers, which, going far beyond any ordinarily recognised bounds of human capability, effectually simplified our means of colloquial intercourse in a manner which made an indelible impression on my mind.

Our conversation began, as I say, upon the most everyday common-place matters; I think it was upon different places which our friend had seen, and persons whom he had known, during a short visit to England.

I was so far glad to find that the Professor had not come from London with the impression that Leicester

Square was the chief centre, or Regent Street the most fashionable *quartier* of that metropolis.

Nor did he make tender enquiries after the illustrious Mr. Smith, of London, with whom enlightened foreigners will, as a rule, insist upon your being on the most intimate terms, as being one of the best known and most influential of its inhabitants, whether in aristocratic or commercial circles; whether it is that great "Meester Smith" who had relations of untold wealth in India, or his namesake who possesses a chateau at Bayswater or Camberwell hardly inferior in size or splendour to Windsor or Versailles themselves.

The Professor, I thought, did not himself seem anxious to come upon those more profound subjects, which I, now I had made up my mind to at least hear, or learn something of the wonders on which *Taraxacum* had so fully enlarged, was rather looking forward to with a certain degree of curiosity, although at the same time feeling a little shy about starting the subject on my own account.

De Lyons, however, in his usual harum-scarum manner soon brought up the question by abruptly breaking in upon a pause which had occurred, with—

"Well, but look here, Professor, I didn't bring you

two fellows together here to prose over your 'baccy' and talk nothing but humdrums ; it is for something more than that, that I have been at the pains of making you and Lambard here acquainted, and I hope before long to see you great chums.

“ He is an awful unbeliever, and I know in his heart looks upon you, and all your science as a regular humbug—don't you, now, Lambard ? ” addressing me ; “ confess, like a man. And I want the Professor just to show you a little of what's what, and make a convert and a true believer of you.”

I observed a shade of annoyance, which I did not wonder at, pass over the countenance of the learned man, at this, to say the least of it, out-of-taste speech, though his manner was still as courteous, to myself particularly, as he replied—

“ My dear young friend, I am afraid I shall never convince you that I have no object in, or the least desire even to exhibit what you are pleased sometimes to call my wonders and powers for the sake of eliciting either the surprise or applause of the public, far less for the mere gratification of curiosity, or the natural love of the marvellous in every one to whom you may have been vaunting,—very probably exaggerating their extent. As to your friend here—*our* friend, if he will allow me to call him so (bowing

most deferentially towards myself)—if he as yet knows little or nothing of the philosophical and abstruse sciences to which I, by a combination of circumstances, have been led to devote the best years of my life, secrets of nature on which, although I may happen to have concentrated such faculties and talents as I may possess, and which, perhaps, after all, might have served me better if turned in some other direction—I am not sure whether, all engrossing and wonderful as they are, it would not be yet wiser and more for his happiness to pause and turn away, though at the very threshold of such knowledge, without venturing one step further.

“ ‘ Knowledge is power,’ it is true ; but whether great power, either moral or physical, really conduces so much as is generally supposed to the happiness of its possessor, I am inclined rather to doubt.

“ The acquisition of such power itself is so unsatisfactory, the craving and desire for more so insatiable, that the more you acquire, and have perhaps the credit of possessing, which, after all, is but a shallow, worthless reputation to any intellect which becomes every day more aware of how little, and how paltry all that the human mind can arrive at or comprehend is in comparison to what is beyond its own limited power to grasp : the more you learn, I

say, the more you come to know of how much there is that never can be learned. There is no rest in these physical sciences, no goal, no end but hopeless vexation and disappointment."

There was a tone of deep melancholy and kindly feeling in his tones, as he gave vent to these sentiments, which was quite touching. I felt myself becoming still more irresistibly drawn towards and interested in the mysterious man.

"You also, De Lyons," he continued, "superficially as you have at times, off and on, turned your attention to these matters, and occasionally taken part in our *séances* and physical experiments, must have seen and learnt enough to bear me out as to the truth of what I now declare.

"Strange and wonderful as what little we do profess to know, and can perform, may seem to the uninitiated, is it not even doubly unsatisfactory to reflect that it is not only as nothing to what may and must be known hereafter, but that all these secrets and doctrines have undoubtedly been already known and even practised in bygone times, and then again entirely lost and buried with those who during their life had discovered and possessed them? The amount of invaluable treasure, in the form of physical science and knowledge, thus buried with the

dead is wonderful and heartbreaking to think upon ; but enough of this for the present. If I can be of any real assistance in removing any ailment, or even solving any difficulty by which you or any friend should find himself inconvenienced, I would gladly put in use any means within my powers—such as they are ; but as to making a convert, as I think you expressed it, or simply making an exhibition of any practical science which I may have acquired, pray disabuse yourself of the erroneous notion that there is either any pleasure, or gratification to me in any such display.”

The Professor gave Master De Lyons this snub with so very marked a manner, though not at all viciously—I rather fancy that all the while he had a strong liking for his eccentric pupil, and looked upon his impudence with the indulgence which a superior genius often feels for a character exactly the opposite to its own—I am sure I quite winced and felt for my companion.

But not so that undaunted youth himself. “ Well, governor,” he answered, pertly, “ don’t begin to pitch into me. I am indiscreet, I know ; always was from the day I was foaled, so it cannot be helped ; but you see in the course of your jaw you happen to have yourself hit upon exactly what we want you to do for us :

your strict rule of life is, I am well aware, that all knowledge and superiority of science should be exerted only for the good and benefit of our fellow-creatures.

“Well, here, I guess, is a fine specimen of a fellow-creature in the shape of our friend Frank Lambard, who has, as we say in English, put his foot in it, that is, tumbled head and ears in love with a charming lady, (excuse my plain way of putting it, Lambard, and smother your blushes in redoubled clouds of smoke); and, worse than that, by some unlucky destiny has got himself embroiled, and subject to the animosity of that venomous little miscreant, Melchior Gorles, whom you know even better than I do, to possess such stunning powers, beyond all reckoning dangerous and terrible towards those who stand in his way, or attempt to run counter to him, as this hot-headed fellow declares his full intention of doing.

“Now, dear Professor, first eradicate the one hopeless passion from his system, as you kindly did for me, at once and for ever; and then give him some good advice, or at any rate a warning, a moral antidote, if you can, against the mischievous influence of that mongrel little son of a vampire, as he really is.”

“Indeed, then,” replied the Professor, gravely, “you do not speak without reason; for the power of evil against his enemies, or indeed any one against whom

he may wish to injure, possessed by that most singular little compatriot of yours is not to be despised. In intensity of natural malice I have never met his equal ; I should even myself be very sorry to offend him, for he would, I know, be perfectly reckless as to what means or what powers he might have recourse to in carrying out his bad ends.

“But tell me,” he said, “if I may be allowed to ask, when and in what manner have you encountered, or have had reason to feel this enmity against this really dangerous character ?”

I was just considering how much I should tell, or rather, by telling how little I should be able to convey a sufficient explanation, when De Lyons cut in sharp, and, before I could collect myself, then and there before my very face gave the Professor the whole account of me, and all I had been doing since I had been at Dresden, chapter and verse, as he expressed it, interspersed with divers illustrations and explanations in his own peculiar style of language, which was at times more forcible perhaps, than elegant. Touching, I must so far give him credit, upon the young lady, and my relations in that quarter delicately enough, he wound up with a most detailed description of the machinations and evil designs of Gorles against poor Katie and myself.

The Professor certainly appeared much interested in all the latter part of the adventure, and in that scene particularly in which De Lyons had himself taken part, or rather witnessed through the chinks of the armoire ; although, as I knew very well, remembering that the latter had gone straight to him for advice, the whole story, at least in its principal details, could not have been new to him.

Finding myself thus lugged, whether I would or no, into this unlimited confidence, and somehow, entire stranger as he was, I did not feel that reluctance or reserve which, I think, I should have done with any one else under similar circumstances, I still had much to add when De Lyons had done, of particulars which I myself had only learnt that very morning from Katie's letter, then still in my pocket ; and what seemed to strike the Professor above all, was the fact of my never having personally met, not even having set eyes upon Gorles, as I declared, and as indeed was the case, since I had been at Eton six years before ; and this led back to those times.

I then told them all about my old school-days, my former abhorrence of the little wretch, and the strange influence to which I had always felt myself subjected in regard to him.

“ And that was when he was, as you say, but four-

teen or fifteen years of age?" cried the Professor, quite excitedly, as he sprang up from his seat, his strange mane almost bristling up, and those tremendous eyes of his looking as if they would burst out of their sockets.

"Mein Gott! mein Gott! can it be possible that he at fourteen should have known, by mere instinct, as much, or perhaps more than what it has taken me whole years of deep study and experiment to acquire? And even then it was almost by mere accident—if verily there is such a thing as mere accident in the system of nature and the consequences of human events—that I was fortunate enough to hit upon the clue of that great secret at last."

He began to pace up and down to the end of the room and back, like some wild animal. His gentle manners and even appearance were entirely changed. Suddenly he made a rush at me, and before I was aware of his aim and could duck out of harm's way, he had caught hold of me tight by the head, which he began fingering gingerly all round, while he glared into my eyes, just as if they were windows through which he could see inside to my brain.

"Pardon the liberty," he said, after having continued his manipulations (as when he had quite done with me I ventured to express a hope) entirely to his own satisfaction, for some ten minutes or so.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ ‘One good turn deserves another,’ quoth the *Kabob*, when it burnt the cook’s mouth.”—OLD ARABIC PROVERB.

“PARDON, I entreat, Mein Heer, the slight liberty which I have been taking with your head, of which allow me to remark that you have reason to be very proud ; but I have just now from the account you have given me, and from the phrenological examination which you have so kindly permitted, at last discovered the cause and solution of a curious physical problem which has for some time greatly puzzled me.

“It must be now four or five months since I took an opportunity—indeed it was at his own particular request—of examining and analysing the phrenological organization of that very strange character of whom we have been speaking, Herr Gorles. Never in my experience have I before met with so singular a case where as exhibited from their original natural formation (much increased, of course, by their unrestricted exercise and indulgence as he has advanced in years),

the vicious propensities, such as *hatred, spiteful malice, dishonesty, innate love of lying*, and in short every other kind of wickedness to which humanity is most prone, so vastly preponderated; indeed I may say that, with one most unlooked-for exception, entirely monopolized the whole cerebral system.

“As to the better qualifications, the virtues (if you so like to designate them) which are usually to be found developed in such proportions as to counteract, if not entirely to control their antagonistic evil principles, they were, I declare to you, absolutely nil; but had dwindled away and perished entirely, if indeed they had ever existed; positively into nothing, with the sole exception to which I have alluded.

“I was, indeed, amazed to find the weight and intrinsic purity of genuine animal courage and daring, which I could at once without hesitation, from the very difference in its nature and kind, detect as an exotic which had evidently, though at that time to me quite unaccountably, become engrafted in a portion of the brain, as it were upon a nerve or root, to which it bore no natural affinity; but grown and spreading as it was, out of all proportion to the space in which it found itself, had in some of its ramifications so forced its way through some of the adjacent channels or organs, that, almost choking them up, it was

itself become distorted, and so affected those vicious propensities which I have described, as to render them tenfold worse than they had ever been originally.

“It is only now, in my examination of your mental development, that I discover from whence that extraneous quality in the brain of Gorles has been derived. Here I at once recognise the original root of that graft which had so much puzzled me, obtained, as you now inform me, by subtilty and stealth, which, having increased in scale and vigour proportionately to yourself, its original rightful possessor, has far outgrown the diminished space to which it had been thus unnaturally transferred.

“It will in the end probably bring about its own fearful retribution; either leading its unlawful possessor to his own destruction, in some reckless attempt of violence against antagonists whose superior physical size and strength are beyond any comparison with his own, or even into presumptuous intercourse with, or perhaps defiance of, more than mortal powers, which are, I need not tell you, not to be trifled with with impunity; or at any-rate, should he escape those dangers, as the whole of his cerebral system must in time become absorbed by that one preponderating principle, his intellectual and sensual organization thus unnaturally monopolized, will in time become

degenerated to exactly the state of any violent raving wild beast.

“Do not imagine that I am now wishing to offer you any mere common-place flattery (which, if you only knew me better, or as Von Lyons here will tell you, is not my usual wont), when I congratulate you, as, indeed, *Mein Heer*, I can most conscientiously do, upon having received from nature an extraordinary endowment of such courage, as neither in quality nor quantity (notwithstanding even the abstraction you have suffered) have I ever yet, in all my experience, seen anything like equalled, or even at all approached in any one individual.

“Pure courage is evidently your principal characteristic, moral as well as physical; but at the same time nature, ever provident, has given you not only a muscular frame, with bone and sinews all in full proportion, but, above all, she has not omitted a full balance of the necessary counteracting principles, *generosity, benevolence, good temper*, consideration for those who are weaker and smaller than yourself, though the latter may be perhaps alloyed with a little *disdain*; in short, your phrenological organization might in the aggregate be defined as very closely resembling, in all its finest qualities, that most noble specimen of creation, the pure Newfoundland dog, or

one of the mastiffs of the real Mount St. Bernard breed (excuse the comparison). I was just going to say the lion of the desert, which is, I know, more generally recognised as the most noble of animals, but undeservedly so; for though brave and sometimes generous, he still has enough of the feline taint about him to be often both cunning and ungrateful. In the otherwise almost perfect balance and formation of your natural mental development, I can discover only one symptom of unhealthy, not to say serious"—

What the Professor might have been going on to say, I cannot tell; for Master *Taraxacum*, who, notwithstanding his professed love of science and philosophy, had as I had observed been growing fidgetty, and was evidently tired of this analytical discourse, suddenly jumping up, gave that learned gentleman such an astounding slap on the back that it sent his spectacles and his pipe flying all across the room, and himself too, half way after them.

"Just missed him, by Jingo!" cried De Lyons, "such a banging great brute of a wasp—hornet, I should rather say—crawling up your back, my dear Professor! In another minute he would have been on to the nape of your neck."

"Verily," replied the Professor, "had he even arrived there I am not sure that it would have been

worse for me than your most thundering blow. A thousand thunders ! I say, but you have nearly knocked all the breath out of my body."

"Now, that is what I call a real development of base ingratitude. Next time I will be hanged if I won't let you be stung. They say that it only takes three brutes of that size to kill a horse."

"But have you killed it?"

"No," answered De Lyons, looking curiously into the palm of his hand, just as if he really expected to find a squashed hornet there ; "the beast must have got away : flown out of the window, I dare say. Ah, there it is, I think, upon the vine on that opposite wall. Look here, Professor, can't you see it?" and he pointed with the stem of the Professor's own pipe, as he picked it up for him from off the floor, and with it beckoned his friend to the recess of the window.

I was not going to trouble myself to move out of my comfortable seat to look after hornets, in whose existence I never much believed, except in *Taraxacum's* own lively imagination. He must have suddenly remembered something very particular which he must have had to say to the Professor ; for as they remained there, with their two heads together stretched out of the window, they were jabbering away together "hard all" in their High Dutch, far too fast for me to keep up

with or understand. I was sure there was something more than a hornet, either real or apocryphal, which could require so much earnest discussion and argument. By-and-bye De Lyons drew in his head, and as he turned round, said—

“Well, at any-rate, we can but ask him. Let us just put what we want fairly to himself, and so leave it to him to oblige us or not as he shall think best.”

“Well, then, old fellow, just the long and the short of our palaver comes to this : the Professor says, and I, for the reasons I have already given you, can corroborate him fully, that if you really wish, as, of course, being a sensible fellow you do wish, to find yourself set all right again at once, and to be spared all the wear and tear of your own disappointed and damaged, or if you would rather, injured feelings, he’s your man ; so don’t let them bother you any longer, which they will do, as he declares, for no end of a time unless you trust him to rid you of them ; and far worse, too, than the ordinary average of men, because he says that your natural *fidelity* and tenacity of attachment are so extra superfine and strong that in this respect also he compares you to the most faithful of big dogs ; I am not sure whether you will take that exactly as a compliment ; but I know he really means it as such. Now just take my disinterested advice, jump at the

offer, and let him take it all right out of you. All he asks of you is for one very simple favour in return.

“You must remember of course my telling you some time since of a certain interview,—a most wonderful and interesting interview, which our learned friend here, having by a course of the most intense study and thought discovered the means of bringing about, has at last completed every requisite preparation, except for the want of one necessary principle.

“In that one respect he feels confident that it is in your power, if you only choose to do so, greatly to assist him.

“In short will you in return for his kindness oblige him by just sparing him, for a short time only, a portion of that courage and enormous strength of nerve of which, as he affirms, you have received from nature a supply sufficient for five or six ordinary individuals at least?”

I certainly now wonder that I did not feel more amazement, or at any rate disbelief, at this very extraordinary proposition thus plainly put.

The Professor had in the meantime sat himself down close by my side, without my much noticing him at first, until he laid his hand, as if accidentally, and very gently, upon the back of mine as it rested upon the arm of my chair. Then again I felt the

same strange sensation or thrill which I have before described run through me, not unpleasant, but much more distinctly than before.

Quite conscious that he was, by means of this pressure, soft as it was, exercising a powerful and direct influence over me, I yet felt neither fear nor doubt of his powers; on the contrary, now that the question had been thus fairly put to me, I at once determined to oblige them. Indeed I may say that an enthusiastic interest and a strong desire to participate in any risk which there might be in their intended scheme, took possession of my mind; and I expressed myself perfectly ready to afford every aid in my power by sharing such gifts as I might be blessed with in the way of extra nerves with these two queer geniuses.

Without yet fully making up my mind as to whether I would avail myself of the Professor's kind assistance in relieving me of my feelings of affection towards poor dear Katie, I only required to be satisfied on these two points: "In the first place, let me understand exactly what is your end and object in bringing about this interview, supposing that your anticipations in this respect are fully realized? and then I should also like to know, in regard to the spiritual operation which you propose to perform upon myself, what actual means do you put in force, or

what will be the immediate effect of those means in case of my consenting to submit myself to them?"

"One thing at a time," exclaimed the Professor, springing up in a state of delighted excitement. "I find then that you really know our object, and are willing to aid, and even wish to join us? You do not quail? Stop, let me lay my hand upon the pulsations of your heart. Bravo! my young friend; you shall indeed be with us in this affair, as you so much wish to be, if I can possibly manage it. As to our purpose and object in this great undertaking, believe me that they are indeed based upon none but the best and highest motives. But that I may be able more fully to satisfy your mind, and more perfectly explain myself, and at the same time, as it may tend to strengthen your attention and faith, which latter is a most essential requisite in all the abstruse and scientific studies of this nature, I will now, with the kind permission of our friend here, just avail myself, as a temporary loan only, of Von Lyons' faculty of speaking in his and your own native language, as there may be many intricacies and details which you will naturally be better able to take in if conveyed in plain English than in my own German tongue, with which I perceive that, although you tolerably understand it, you are not yet quite thoroughly conversant."

That was true enough ; I could not always quite follow him when talking at his regular pace, though I could make out a good deal of it. Besides I was anxious to witness so strange a proof of his powers.

“ Oh, bother ! ” cried De Lyons, rather unwillingly assenting to the proposed arrangement ; “ if you really want it, I suppose you must have your own way ; but don't you go playing a fellow any of your tricks, and forget to return my ‘ gift of the gab ’ to me when you have done with it. It would be such an awful sell to have to set to work to learn one's own lingo all from the beginning again at my time of life ; the hardest to pick up of all the tongues in Christendom, if one is to judge from the hash you *Mein Heers* and *Mossoos* make of it. However, if you will promise, honour bright and bar all tricks, I don't mind accommodating you for half an hour or so, as a special favour.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## A STRANGE USE OF A STRANGE TONGUE.

THE Professor and De Lyons without further preliminary, took their places opposite to one another, and holding by both their hands, stood for some seconds staring fixedly into each other's eyes. Their faces drew closer and closer, until I really thought that they were going to kiss, (those German beggars think nothing, as of course you know, of kissing one another); but instead of that, the former distinctly inhaled a deep breath from the other's nostrils, and then *Taraxacum* fell back as if sound asleep upon the couch behind him.

When the Professor turned round and addressed me I positively thought that it was *Taraxacum* who spoke: the very voice, the manner, the familiar slang expressions, were all his exactly, coming forth from those revered lips as naturally as if they had prattled in pure English from the cradle. It had the most absurd effect conceivable. I was amused, but not surprised. I had

been so strongly imbued with the influence of the Professor, that I much doubt whether anything would have surprised me.

“Now, then,” he said, sharply, “fire away, old chap; and anything you want to know, out with it, and depend upon it I will put you up to the dodge, if I can. You seem already to have had the office as to what we are up to, and who it is whom we want to pay us a visit. That chattering fellow, Von Lyons there, who is a deuced good young fellow, but with no more discretion than an ape, has, I see, let you into so much of the secret; for secret it really is, and ought to be, from the generality of the world;—these are not matters, you twig, to be bandied about by everybody.”

“But must there not be,” I inquired, “considerable danger and risk in this undertaking, even supposing that you have, as you seem so confidently to feel, really discovered the means and power of carrying out your intention?”

“Deuce a bit!” he replied, just in De Lyons’ own off-hand tone, “provided the two essential necessities don’t fail us: *Faith* in the means we are going to use, and *Pluck* to go through with them as soon as we see those same means beginning to work successfully.

“Does your faith waver?” He took me again by

the hand, and there was an earnest almost sublime expression in his anything but handsome countenance which, as I looked at him, made me feel, I know not why, that I could trust and believe in the truth and powers of that strange man to any length, far beyond any limits of ordinary common sense or reason.

“All right, old fellow,” he said, after a pause; “and as to your pluck and nerve, you have, as I have told you, enough and to spare for all three of us put together.”

“But granted that we have the requisite supply of faith and nerve, you have not yet told me what is the advantage to be gained; I should certainly like to be satisfied as to the exact use, the end, the object you have in view, which you have pronounced to be so great and so good.

“Object, indeed! object enough I should think,” testily replied the Professor, “if we, through means, which only are to be attained by whole years of deep study and scientific preparation, can summon before us one of the most potent spirits of another sphere of the creation to come at our bidding: and thus being under our orders, to be brought to an equality, or even under subjection to ourselves; do you call that nothing? That first step once accomplished, as it certainly can, and shortly shall be, to what results

may it not lead : from equality, as I say, may we not look to advancing to superiority ? And then what unbounded advantages for the good of mankind may we not attain to if we can only control, perhaps altogether subdue and crush down the power which since the beginning of the world has played such mischief and brought so much misery on mankind ?

“ And why has he been able to do so ? Because mankind has always feared him, yielded unresistingly to him, and never had the pluck to meet him face to face, and go boldly in at him.

“ If, as I verily believe, I have really got hold of the right secret for bringing old——(it is not lucky or polite always to mention names)—to the front, face to face, as long as our motives are all right—and what can be better than the universal benefit of our fellow-creatures ?—what have we to fear, or where is the risk ? Like all other unknown and untried sources of terror, as any fellows of our time of life must have found to be more or less the case in all supposed dangers, when actually faced, this undertaking will not prove half so great or so hard as one would have anticipated. Then consider the intense pleasure and value of the actual possession of such a secret, unknown as I believe it to be to any other living mortal ! Not that I mean to say it has never been known before ; for the same

secret has been discovered and put into practice by various learned old codgers—(that epithet for individuals of a certain age and respectability was rather a favourite one of De Lyons, and fell pat from the Professor, without his appearing to be the least aware of its absurd incongruity with the subject of his discourse)—the same secret has been put in practice, I tell you, over and over again, through successive ages, from the very earliest times. Bless your heart! you may read all about it, if you only know how, in the most ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, long before the times of even Moses himself, or even Joseph. It was certainly known among the Jews, though it was but rarely that any of them dared put their knowledge in practice, strictly forbidden as anything of the sort was by their laws, and with the danger of being pelted to death with brickbats for their pains, if caught at any such little games.

“What was really, do you suppose, the nature of the famous oracles of Delphi, in the palmy days of the Greeks?—or whence came the prophetic powers of the augurs or sybils among the Romans? It is all very well for the shallow-headed, self-satisfied wise-aces of these days to put them all down as humbugs and impostors; but how was it that the Greeks, who, ancient as well as modern, have always been the

keenest, most quickwitted rascals on the face of the earth, or those stern, soundly sensible old Romans, were such fools and childish idiots as to put their trust in, and on the most important occasions constantly act, as they undoubtedly did, upon the counsels and supernatural warnings which they received from the sources to which I have alluded, if they were in fact only the miserable quibbles and shuffling *doubles entendres* which our modern numskull historians would try to make us believe ?

“From the earliest ages the secret of holding personal communication with beings of another world has never been entirely lost. The fact of such a power existing has of course always remained the same, and always will to the end of time, though there has not always been a succession of persons who have possessed the secret of making use of that power. I myself believe in the theory, which I received from a learned old Egyptian named Bunc Fossletif, under whom I once studied science on the banks of the Nile. He held that by some special though natural organization of the human mind, this secret was always prevented from being imparted from one individual to another. He did not pretend to explain why or how it should be so ; but his experience had certainly taught him that such was the case, and consequently that

every individual was obliged in successive generations to seek out and acquire the knowledge of these mysteries fresh for himself, though, of course, any one who is up to the fact of the existence of such secrets, or whose mind has been at all trained or biased in that direction, is more likely to hit upon them than any chance guesser would be. Do you not in England respect the memory and renown of your own great English *savant*, of whom we think a good deal here in Germany, the celebrated Friar Bacon? In his own day he was accused of practising magic and consorting with supernatural associates from another world. Well, perhaps he did. There is no denying that he was some centuries ahead of his age in chemical and other philosophical science and knowledge.

“The story of Faust is perhaps not altogether quite such a myth as the self-satisfied literary swells of now-a-days will tell you. To come down much later—what think you of the powers of the famous Cagliostro in France? and he was but one of the many deep thinkers and extraordinary geniuses of that age of extraordinary geniuses who devoted themselves to the pursuit of the great truths and powers we have been discussing. The pursuit and indeed the possession of those great powers were becoming indeed too common and generally diffused; they were in fact most fearfully

abused and misused; and such tremendous powers when misused are apt to produce consequences which are, and were at that time, awful in the extreme.

“I refer, of course, to the great French Revolution, when so many strange spirits and powers had been wantonly summoned, and let go free to spread themselves abroad—but that is too deep a subject for us to go into now. Who and what these spirits, and what the secret means of controlling and summoning them, actually may be, I am not at liberty to tell you; I could not do so, as I have just said, even if I wished.

“But if in spite of disinterested advice you are really, as you say, still so very desirous of assisting at the personal interview which I am contemplating—as your presence will be of the greatest advantage in carrying us through with it—join us by all means.”

“I say!” grumbled out De Lyons, in German—rolling up from the sofa on which he had been sprawling at full length—“haven’t you two worthy gentlemen nearly finished your discourse? I daresay you think I have been sound asleep all this time; but I have been only lying quiet—trying to make out what you have been talking about with such amazing volubility—without, however, being able to understand two words consecutively. I assure you, my respected friends, that you both—but Mynheer Pro-

fessor particularly—have been discoursing at that astounding pace, that my very ears tingle again with the vibration they have undergone—but now, if it is all the same to you, I will trouble you to return me my faculty for speaking and understanding my native English. I had no idea what a bore it was to have to be so long in company without being able to put in a word: the fact is, it is quite a new sensation to me, and a very unpleasant one.”

“Pray be so obliging as to grant us only another five minutes, dear friend,” the Professor pleaded in his own language, and with his own courteous manner, “and I will lose no time in serving this gentleman—if he really wishes me to do so—by relieving him of those feelings and passions which are now affecting and inconveniencing his peace of mind.”

“Well, just let me fairly know what you are going at,” I said; “and tell me, are these faculties in any way palpable to the senses—or how shall I know whether they are actually removed or not?”

“Oh, Jupiter! what an unbelieving sinner you must be!” broke out the Professor, in the purest *Taraxaconian* idiom—“and that, too, after what I have just done with that other fellow’s ‘gift of the gab,’ before your very nose!”

“It is not that I disbelieve or doubt you,” I replied,

“but I want to know beforehand what the immediate effect will be upon myself. Is it only upon my fancy, or mind, that you act?—so that I shall no longer dwell upon or care for the same subjects which are now harassing me; or do you verily and indeed remove any palpable material or essence which, like air or gas, can be made amenable to any of our senses? Can one smell it, like gas?—or hear and feel it, like the wind?—or taste it, like an essence?”

The Professor stooped down, and impatiently tugging out his boot-lace, lighted one end of it at his pipe.

“Look here,” he said, “at this spark! if let alone it would burn slowly for hours—for days, if there were length enough—till the whole shoe-lace was consumed. I wet my finger and thumb thus (perhaps there may have been a time in past ages of the world, before general experience had shown that fire could thus easily be annihilated, when the first discoverers of so simple a fact were denounced as impious, and presuming against Providence, who had made the element with all the tremendous power which it has; but never mind that now)—I pinch the spark with my moistened fingers, and where is it? The shoe-lace is no longer consumed; but as to the spark itself, we only know that it is no longer in

existence. If by means which are in my power, I can thus extinguish ("cure you of," is the commonly received term) a fever—you cannot see, or smell, or touch a fever—but you very soon know, without there being any fancy about it, whether the disease has left you or not: one day it is racking and burning through your limbs, your nerves, and your whole system; the very next it may be subdued, eradicated, and all those racking pains and symptoms have ceased; and just what fever is to the body, so is what is vulgarly called love to the mind—indeed, the one by sympathy not unfrequently produces the other, for that matter.

“There is one peculiarity, however, in this particular affection (there is the very identical right term for you, and in its true and original sense)—what men call love is indeed an affection, that is, a species of disease or development, which affects the human species in a manner to which no other vital principle that I am aware of bears any analogy.

“The peculiarity of this affection is, that to be developed in perfection it must be shared and divided between two individuals, of the opposite sexes of course, though somehow it is hardly ever distributed exactly equally between the two; but always seems by some special provision of nature to be so arranged

that as it increases in the one person it decreases exactly in proportion in the other counterpart, and so *vice versâ*.

“ That there is something in this theory though it may seem strange and unaccountable, every one who has ever seen any couple in the state which is known as being in love, or has himself suffered under that tiresome disorder, must have observed or experienced. As one cares more and becomes more ardent in displaying the symptoms of affection, the other cares less, and grows cooler in reciprocating those feelings. The more steady, that is the less fluctuating affections, produce the greatest degree of happiness ; but if from caprice, or whim, or any other cause they are tossed about from one to another, and end in all preponderating on one side, the greatest mental wretchedness is the consequence. What is more miserable and deplorable than when the affections become, as the story-books call them, hopelessly unrequited, that is when either man or woman have to bear the whole allotment by themselves alone ? The simple physical reason of which suffering is, that it is contrary to one of the first principles of nature, that that which ought, if acting properly, to sympathetically affect two persons at once, should entirely accrue to, and overwhelm any single individual.

“But in your own particular case, my dear Mr. Lambard, were I to undertake to relieve you at once and entirely from the effects of your affections in their present active state, I should of course only have the power of doing so over whatever quantity of affections may just now happen to lie to your own share—that I should soon ascertain by examining that particular organ in your head; but I must at the same time fairly warn you what the consequences may be to the fair lady who shares those affections.

“As I could only control that moiety which I find in yourself, just as much as I should be able to remove from your system, would by the force of magnetic attraction immediately reunite itself with its corresponding portion in your counterpart; and thus of whatever amount of pain or inconvenience I may have relieved you, just so much would accrue to her: so that the young lady would have to bear not only her own share of troubles and feelings, of longing and suspense, but all yours on the top of them into the bargain.”

Could he imagine that any fellow could for a moment be so grossly selfish as to thus escape from pain, however wearing, at the expense of her whom I really cared for so tenderly and sincerely? Why, I would have sacrificed myself, body and soul, to have

saved the darling girl from an ache in her little finger. Of course I most emphatically declined his assistance on those terms, though I thanked him for his kind intentions towards myself individually all the same.

“Now, then!” sung out De Lyons, impatiently, “time is fairly up. Come, Professor, render back my knowledge of English to me without further delay, or my tongue will soon grow dry in my mouth.” And by exactly the same process as he had used in borrowing it, the Professor thus adjured returned our friend the full and perfect possession of his mother tongue.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## IN FOR IT.

“Do you know what time it is? Within a few minutes of to-morrow, I can tell you,” said *Taraxacum* in his own vernacular, “and I’m blessed if my tongue doesn’t feel quite stiff for want of exercise, and my poor ears quite ache with trying to make out what you two fellows have been jabbering about all this time.”

“Why didn’t you ask us in German?” said the Professor; “your tongue runs equally glibly in that.”

“What was the use of that? While you two kept up that rattle, one couldn’t distinguish between the words even, they all seemed to run so one into the other. But now, are you going to help Frank here, and set his shattered feelings all straight again for him?”

“He wishes to postpone it,” replied the Professor, evasively, “until after the more important business for which he is so kind as to place his superior gifts of nature at our service. It may be that in the course of that very experiment we may obtain some valuable

hints or suggestions in regard to those matters which more particularly interest your friend as an individual.

“But for our main object, why not try it now? I have long had all my preparations made; everything has been ready and arranged with the one exception of a sufficient supply of the requisite strength of nerve,—courage, if you will, to feel that we could confidently rely upon going boldly through with it. Now, however, we have but to put ourselves *en rapport* with this noble heart, and with such a quality diffused and shared for the time equally among our three systems blended in unison, there is no power we shall not dare face, no danger we need fear.”

“No time like the present; but where is it to be, then?” replied De Lyons. “You don’t want to have him here in my room, do you? It is scarcely a fit place for a stranger.”

“A stranger, indeed! Do you suppose that he is a stranger, or not equally quite at home anywhere?”

“Ah, but shall not you want your things, some of your paraphernalia to be at hand; your crystal, for instance, some of your phials, perhaps, or mystical preparations? And it will be scarcely safe without having your own notes and manuscripts by you, to consult in case of your memory slipping you, or any form going wrong.”

“We can anyhow commence some of the preliminaries here, and afterwards, if it is necessary, adjourn home to my own chamber, when we ourselves are quite prepared.”

I fancied I saw a lurking grin on the Professor's face, as he evidently read De Lyons' thoughts, who now the moment was actually come seemed waxing slightly nervous at the idea of his own room being made the scene of the promised interview. The Professor certainly smiled grimly as his eye caught mine; but then changing to the most solemn demeanour, in a low but very earnest voice he asked me, “Do you then really of your own free will, desire to join and aid us in summoning, and obtaining a personal interview with one of the most powerful denizens of the spirit world? Do you feel that you can dare to stand face to face, without showing any signs of fear, before one of the chief princes of the air, if he should be brought before us in a visible form? And have you faith enough in my science, and powers thereby acquired, to believe without doubting that I can bring about this interview? And, finally, will you allow your friend Von Lyons and myself to partake in, and for a time absorb from your system into ours a certain share of your strength of nerves, in order that we thus may conjointly and unitedly have, and be able to show

courage sufficient to carry us through our undertaking without the chance of any fear, or weak faltering in our purpose ?”

I placed my hand firmly in his, and declared myself, as I sincerely felt, fully prepared to go through anything with him. The Professor stood for some minutes looking steadfastly, as I might I am sure describe it, right through and through me—seemed satisfied, and signed to me to take my seat in a chair he had placed in the middle of the room ; then placing himself in front of me, he held me by my two thumbs, gently pressed together in his left hand—while with the right, with only the first and little finger sticking out straight, he began making slow passes, now nearer, and then again further from my eyes ; all the while with his own two protruding goggles fixed with a steady glare upon mine. As he thus held me, I could distinctly feel, as it were, a thin stream of liquid fire pouring up my two arms, and diffusing itself through my whole body : it was not an unpleasant sensation by any means.

He then, without moving his eyes from mine, spoke in an undertone to De Lyons, and desired him to come and place his thumb upon a particular spot on my head ; he himself, at the same time, doing likewise with his disengaged hand. I could instantly

feel the same warm fluctuating stream—or, perhaps, thread would convey the idea better—as if it were pouring out of the organ to which they both thus held their thumbs steadily but gently pressed.

I think that perhaps—for only just one moment—a half-formed thought passed through my mind, whether it was not foolhardy and rash of me thus, unsupported and alone, to have put myself in the power of these two queer characters, and ever to have assented to join them in their supernatural or, for all I knew, desperately wicked undertakings.

However, that it was too late now to go back was my almost last distinct idea—though I fancy that I felt my heart quail within me—as the Professor, having disengaged both his hands, was passing them at a much quicker rate up and down in front of my face, and then gradually down almost to my very feet.

All this while I had, as he had desired me before he began, kept my eyes wide open, steadily staring into his; but my efforts were now in vain, my eyelids would close—I could hold them open no longer—and I dropped off, as I should have said, for perhaps a minute, certainly not two—but when I opened them again, I did not know where I was—the whole scene was entirely changed.

I suppose it may have taken me a few minutes

to recover my surprise, and to collect my scattered thoughts—just as it does if one is awakened suddenly from a very deep sleep; but as soon as I was come again fully to my senses, I found that my two companions—the Professor and De Lyons—were still with me, but that I had moved, and so had they, to opposite sides of the room. But what room could it be?—where on earth had we got to? I could not make out. I was certain of one thing, that it was nowhere that I had ever been before.

De Lyons' lodging, in which we had been spending the evening, was a rather lofty square room, with a bay-window at the end, looking into a back court, with no special attempt at ornament, or distinction of any sort about it from any other German room, except, I remember, a kind of mahogany shelf or rack, on which was arranged a long row of china pipe-bowls, decorated with the portraits of lovely and highly-coloured damsels, each in a more or less state of *déshabille*. But now, on looking round, I found myself in a low though well-sized garret, as I could see that it must be, by the sloping form of the ceiling and the chimney pots and roof tiles, which were all round on the level with the uncurtained window, close to which I was standing.

It was a gloriously bright midsummer night, with a full moon shining nearly as clear as day, and it was by that view outside that I suddenly recognised where I really was. Yes, I felt that of course it must be so : why hadn't I known it instantly ?

The place I thus found myself in answered in every respect to the vivid description given to me by the boy Ferdy : those young ones always see things and can somehow describe them more accurately than one does as one grows older.

Of course, I say, there hung the piece of handsome old tapestry which he, by the way, described as a carpet, stretched over the door ; the curious dark old cabinet, the old-fashioned armed chair, the lamp hanging in the centre ; and, sure enough, in the middle of the table stood the large globe of pure crystal.

We had come—how I cannot pretend to say, nor at the time seemed to care, or wonder—to the sanctum, the private retreat of the mysterious Professor.

De Lyons was certainly quite right in asserting that this quaintly furnished chamber was much better adapted for an interview with a stranger from below, than his own would have been.

## CHAPTER IX.

## A QUESTIONABLE STRANGER.

THE Professor was by this time bending at times earnestly over the crystal, as if in its depths he could discover and read the queer characters which he, from time to time, turned to write down on a long slip of parchment, spread all across the table, at his right hand. What he was writing seemed to be more like hieroglyphics rather than the letters of any recognised language. All of a sudden it struck me as remarkable, that though I was right away in the further corner of the room, I could see and read those same figures distinctly, and understand them too, at the instant as I did so, though the meaning seemed to pass away from my mind, as the lines passed away from my vision: my eye-sight is naturally strong, but I certainly never was able to see clearly at that same distance either before or since.

De Lyons stood by, occasionally helping to shift the parchment, all his nervousness seeming entirely to

have left him ; he appeared as cool and interested as possible.

“ Now, then, all is ready,” said the Professor in a low suppressed tone of voice, having at length come to the end of his writing, and turning his spectacles upon De Lyons. “ We must now all three unite in pronouncing the solemn invocation distinctly and without mistake or hesitation.”

“ How can we ? I, for my part, have not the least idea what to say, or even how to begin,” replied his companion, though he too spoke in a much quieter tone and manner than usual.

“ Take this hand firmly in thine own,” said the Professor severely, and making a gesture towards me to approach, he held out his other to myself. I moved towards him ; but in doing so I felt as if I were floating instead of walking as I meant to do ; there was not the slightest sound of my step, or any movement, though I seemed to go straight without displacing or in any way touching a large heavy chair which was standing right in the way between us.

The Professor placed himself in the middle between us, holding me tightly by the hand on one side and De Lyons on the other ; we each rested our other unoccupied hand, by his desire, upon the crystal ball which stood on a block or low pedestal covered with

black velvet on the table before us. We then all three at once, without the slightest intimation or word between ourselves on the subject, spontaneously broke out with a solemn form of adjuration and invocation in Latin pronounced in a slow solemn tone. The words came perfectly naturally and glibly to my lips without the slightest mental effort on my own part, just as if I had repeated them all my life, and at the same time I was conscious of my understanding it all as I sung it out ; but the instant I let go of the Professor's hand it all passed out of my memory completely.

We felt—I say *we*, because I knew exactly what De Lyons was feeling and thinking just as well as I did myself—we felt and knew, though the Professor had made no sign nor told us so, that at the third time of chaunting through the Latin invocation the spirit would be bound to appear before us ; but the Professor himself, and consequently we, could form no exact idea how and in what shape he would make his entry. As we uttered the last syllable of the sentence for the third time a brilliant flash of lightning made us all shut our eyes involuntarily, and when we opened them again there in the old oak chair sat a most pleasant gentlemanly looking person, smiling as somehow people with such beautifully regular white teeth as he had, always do manage to smile.

So far from there being anything repulsive or terrible in the outward appearance of the—what shall I call him?—Personage who thus appeared in answer to our solemn invocation, there was something peculiarly attractive and taking about him. His light hair was in short crispy curls all over the top of his head, his smiling eyes were decidedly at first a bright blue, but they, like the rest of his features, which were wonderfully regular, were continually and totally changing, but always handsome, and preserving, through all these changes, the purest types of classical beauty. At each fresh change I felt sure that I had often seen the same face before, either in some club window in London, or in the streets, or at some theatre it may, perhaps, have been, or on a race course, I could not pretend to say where exactly, but the features were certainly quite familiar to my mind.

It is difficult to describe how he was dressed. A sort of long garment of some soft flexible material, light silk or nankeen, almost flesh-coloured, it seemed not so much to be thrown over as to grow from and be part of his well-shaped shoulders, covering him in graceful folds quite down to the ancles. He smiled most affably upon us each, and gently bowed his head with an air of quiet encouragement.

Notwithstanding the supply of courage upon

which they had been flattering me in such strong terms, I must confess I felt a qualm come over me, and I knew that my companions shared this as well as all other feelings in common.

The Professor's voice trembled so that he could hardly articulate, and it required a strong mental effort to keep our pluck up to the mark.

But it was only for a minute: collecting himself, he went on with a form of address which he had written in preparation on the parchment before him, and in a firm solemn voice thus opened his address:

“O Spirituum potentissime! omnium scientiarum hujus mundi parens ter inclytissime, æris Princeps schemis infinitis profundissime!”——

“Ah! thank you—that will do,” said the Stranger, cutting short this ceremonious commencement with a slightly satirical smile, but a well-bred waive of the hand. “You will excuse me, gentlemen, I am sure, but I have very little time to spare. I happen to have a great deal on hand just at present; so having thus summoned me, if you will only kindly tell me, in as few words as possible, what it is that I can specially do for you, I am sure I shall be only too happy to serve you in any way reasonably within my powers: so, pray tell me; what is it?”

The Professor had dropped his grasp on our hands, and we were no longer touching the crystal, so that, left to myself, I for my part had no idea, now that he had thus succeeded in his ardent desire of summoning this spirit of darkness to appear before us *in propria personâ*, what the Professor did want with him, though I naturally supposed it must be something very particular. As for myself, I was perfectly satisfied with having actually seen *Him* whom one has from one's earliest days always so much and so often talked about. My only wish was now that he would take himself off again as quickly as possible, without doing us any personal mischief. Not that I felt a bit afraid, except perhaps just at the first shock; after that, all feelings seemed deadened and numbed within me.

Nobody answered a word.

After a pause the Stranger—whom, as you may perceive, I even now particularly avoid calling by the name more familiar to all of us, having been specially warned by the Professor on that subject; although I suppose, if not actually that great person himself, it was one of the principal members of his family—the Stranger repeated his inquiry.

“Well, my masters,” he said, “I suppose you can inform me, now that you have thus sum-

moned me, what it is that you want me to do for you?"

We only looked hopelessly at one another. I began to think that neither of my companions had the least made up their minds as to what they actually wanted and would ask for, a bit more than I had myself.

"Well, my dear sirs, this is trifling with me—this is insulting!" and the charming countenance began to change to a very different expression. "Do you think that in these busy times, I have nothing better to do than to be at the beck and call of three idle *gobemouches* like yourselves? Ah! I see you tremble," he said, suddenly, "and you shall have some reason to do so, at the lesson I will now give you for your impudent presumption!" He had risen from his seat, and was advancing towards us quite noiselessly, with exactly the motion of a cat about to spring. In less than the wink of an eye we all three had each other by the hands again, and were grasping the crystal ball.

"You lie, you rascal!" we all shouted at him, simultaneously; "we do not tremble, and we defy you!"

His manner was changed instantly.

"Bravo, bravo!" he cried, in his original concili-

ating voice ; " I did but try you, and you have all stood it nobly."

" Go back to your place," we all shouted again ; " we tell you we defy you !"

There certainly was for a moment a hang-dog look about our visitor as, like a thwarted bully, he seemed bound to obey our orders : and, though evidently unwillingly, he took a backward stride to his chair.

" Well, what do you want with me ?—what can I do for you ?" he asked in a more subdued voice returning to his first conciliatory tone. " You have the command of me—for the time at least," he added, with a significant stress. " I am, I suppose, bound to do anything for you which lies in my power ; and it would puzzle cleverer fellows than you are, I flatter myself, to hit upon anything that is not."

" You lie again !" we all answered together ; " there is one thing, at any rate, we know you cannot do."

" What may that be, pray ?"

" Speak a word of truth if you try."

He grinned as if rather flattered ; certainly he seemed amused, as if acknowledging that we had him there.

" Well, there is no use being personal," he answered ; " but it was not to tell me that, that you

have been at such pains to get me here, I suppose? But as, perhaps, you are prepared to believe nothing that I may tell you, would either one of you like a peep into the future? You will trust your own eyes, at any rate. Only let me know what, or who it shall be? And, pray, remember that I have no time to lose."

"Show us," said the Professor, in a firm voice, "the persons who are destined to influence each of us most in this life—our counterparts, sympathetic and antipathic; and then we shall also desire to see each his last closing scene in this world; the exact manner of his own death, whenever it may be fated to come, in fact."

"One thing at a time, my friends. As to the first part of your request, you have, I perceive, adopted that theory of all living beings having been sent into the world in pairs; and you are not far wrong either, though it really is notable how very often it happens that the sympathetic and antipathic never even once encounter each other, or are even aware of the other's existence in the course of their careers.

"But look, Professor, look!"

## CHAPTER X.

“Oh wonderful, when devils tell the truth.”

*Richard III.*, Act i., Scene 2.

THE room had until now, as I think I have mentioned, been lighted by a shaded lamp hung from the centre of the ceiling. The Stranger, as he spoke, made a flap at it with one of the long folds of his skin cloak, and without touching it caused the flame to flicker up, and then go out entirely with a smell.

The moon was, however, shining full into the room right upon a large blank space of the wall beyond where he was standing, so that it was bright and clear as a looking-glass. An ordinary person would have thrown a strong shadow upon the place, but of this extraordinary one there was not the slightest trace of anything of the sort. That fact, however, I do not think, struck us; or, at any rate, did not surprise us at all at the time.

“Look, my friend,” said the Party, in an affected, half-mocking drawl, as with a waive of his hand he drew the special attention of the Professor to the

bright place on the wall; and there, as he spoke, appeared in bold relief the figure of a tall, very dark, handsome, voluptuous-looking female, gorgeously dressed, perhaps rather past the best prime of her beauty. She was laughing to herself fiercely, as she seemed to utter some hasty words, though there was no sound, as she finished reading a letter she had in her hand, and then tore it into a thousand pieces, and stamped them under her foot.

“Have you ever known a Signora at all resembling this?” inquired our visitor, with a mocking bow.

The Professor's and all of our hearts beat, not with trepidation, but roused anger, as we felt that he recognised one whom he loathed to bitterness; though at the same time the attraction towards her always had been, and would be again, should he ever meet her, irresistible in spite of himself. To her, and to her treatment of him, he felt—we all felt—that he owed all the misery of many past years of his life.

*Taraxacum*, I was at the same time conscious, was, as an individual, so surprised, not at the apparition, but at thus discovering this hitherto unsuspected episode in the Professor's private history, that with his usual familiarity and impudence he burst into loud guffaw of laughter, and was as near as possible

breaking our magnetic chain of hands in an almost uncontrollable impulse to nudge the Professor himself, or else me, if he could have got round to do so, facetiously in the ribs.

The Professor, of course, was aware of the same strong impulse, for he tightened his grip upon our hands, and in a stern voice said—

“Enough ! let me now see where, and under what circumstances, death will overtake me !”

The handsome apartment in which we had seen the gay lady changed in an instant to a plain white-washed, small chamber, or rather cell, the only furniture of which seemed to be a clumsy wooden bedstead, covered by a miserable half-worn straw palliasse ; on the palliasse lay stretched an emaciated figure in the coarse brown dress of a monk, with a rope round his waist. He was to all appearance quite like a regular monk, for we could see the shaven top of his head, and he seemed to be in either great mental or bodily agony ; and as he writhed and turned upon his wretched bed, we recognised his face distinctly.

It was the Professor himself, there could be no doubt about it ; for though the thick locks were gone, and the matted remains of hair at the back of the poll were grizzly and grey, there was no mistaking

those fiery eyes ; and his other features, though now wrinkled and emaciated, were the same.

Although we could hear nothing, we could evidently see that he was calling out, and then in vain listening for the footsteps of some one who might come to help him. Having thus called again and again, we saw that he tried to raise himself from his couch, but had not the strength to do so ; with one last desperate effort he put his feet upon the ground, and for one moment stood erect. But it was only for one moment ; the effort had been too much for him—he staggered and fell back apparently lifeless across the couch, knocking down the solitary lamp, with which the cell was dimly lighted, in his fall. It was an awfully impressive scene ; and while we stood looking at it aghast, even the Stranger seemed struck seriously by it, for he shook his head slowly as he contemplated it ; and then turned to the Professor to see how he seemed to like the peep into futurity.

“A very likely fate, indeed,” was the defiant thought which shot through the mind of the Professor ; “not much fear of that for me. The lying demon is trying to frighten me.”

“Now,” said De Lyons, “show us if you can who it is that I love best in the world ?”

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when

there appeared an exact representation of himself, with his favourite china pipe in his mouth—the identical one, as we could see by the picture on it, which he had been smoking that very evening in his own room.

“You be blistered!” said *Taraxacum*, boldly, “and don’t let us have any of your impudence.”

Our visitor laughed uproariously, and looked quite benignly upon the forward youth, with the same kind expression in his eyes towards him as I have already mentioned as noticing in the Professor, when *Taraxacum* treated him sometimes with his cool familiarity.

“But now,” said the latter, “let us see my greatest enemy. I should like to know who he is.”

The last vision was flapped out as he spoke; but lo! there was *Taraxacum* himself again, only not in quite the same costume as before. Half undressed, he was reclining with one leg thrown over the arm of his chair, and, to judge by his general appearance, rather more than less in a state of liquor.

De Lyons was furious, and the Party laughed again with the most thorough good humour, as if he enjoyed the joke intensely.

“Gammon!” said De Lyons, sulkily. “But now let us see in what manner my death is to be.”

The scene that now rose before us was totally different from what had gone before. We seemed to be on some great height, from which a vast panorama of a wild and very beautiful country stretched away to an infinite distance below us. Thousands of figures, indistinct at first, were flitting and stirring in all directions; guns were flashing—though there was not the least sound—riderless horses rushing madly about, trampling over the carcasses of men, which we now saw were strewed in all directions. It was some tremendous battle; there could be no doubt about that—a siege—a regular assault; line after line working their way up against huge earthworks. See how they are repulsed and beaten back, falling by thousands, but as they fall their places are filled by others, who rush on unflinchingly to the same fate. Bravo, how glorious to witness! But of what nation are those men? They are not Germans—at least, there are neither the white coats of the Austrians, nor the blue of the Prussians—they are not the soldiers of this country of Saxony; no fear of them marching up thus manfully to be ploughed down by whole lines and columns at a time; there are no red-coated English, or plaided Highlanders amongst them; the uniforms are more like the French, but the men themselves have not much of that type about them,

they seemed tall, gaunt-limbed, with yellow hair and beards. Now again more regiments come pouring on, but only to be beaten back again as those before them have been. Now see, they are turning; in another moment their ranks will be broken in confusion—no, no! look at that gallant young fellow, cap in hand; how he cheers them to the advance! He has snatched the colours from a staggering sergeant's hand; he waves them as he rallies his men in front. What colours are they?—surely not—white with red stripes, and a lot of stars on a blue ground in one corner—yes, it must be so; the Yankees, by all that is wonderful! But who can they be fighting against? why they have not as many men in their whole army, militia included, as there are regiments here. And where can this awful war be going on? Are the Americans about to invade any of the old-established countries of Europe? or has Europe combined to send so many thousands over to America? These are but lying visions of what is never to be, and utter impossibilities!

The Party, who all this time seemed himself even more interested than we were, and in a state of the most intense enjoyment at the scene before us, rubbing his hands, and grinning with delight, suddenly pointed with his finger to the gallant fellow we

had already noticed with the colours. A bullet had evidently struck him in the breast just as the Party points exultingly at him. He sprang upwards, and, flinging out his arms, fell with the colours, which he kept still convulsively clutched in his grasp.

As he went down, we knew intuitively that the gallant hero was De Lyons himself, in another minute to be trampled out of all further recognition under the heels of friends and foes, as they in turn held or lost the hardly-contested ground.

“If I am to live till I am killed fighting battles among the most peaceable and most money-loving republicans in the world, there is not much fear for me just yet,” was the thought that passed through De Lyons’, and so all of our minds. “Why he loves lies so much, he goes out of his way to find them, and invent facts which never can come to pass.”

“And now will the other gentleman, whose acquaintance I am proud to make,” said the strange Party, turning with a low bow towards myself, still with the same exceeding politeness, but perhaps just a slight dash of satirical malice in his tone and manner, “have a peep at the last page beforehand? Or is there by chance any person, any charming young lady, for instance, whom he might like to see, or to

ascertain what she was doing, or thinking about at this moment?"

I should have liked to have had a glimpse, if only for a bare instant, of my poor dear Katie, but the very wish, under such circumstances, seemed downright profanation. "Show me the little wretch," I said, "who has wronged me, and done me evil since my earliest days; and if I can see a vision of myself in future wreaking my utter vengeance upon him, I shall be all the better pleased; and firmly trust that you have shown us the truth, at least for once in a way."

He had put his head on one side as I spoke, as if not quite for the moment understanding me.

"Ah, to be sure," seeming to recollect suddenly. "What was I thinking of? Of course you shall. Would you like him to come in himself *in propria persona*? The fact is, I have been expecting him here the whole of this time."

As he spoke, we heard footsteps outside, the tapestry over the door was pushed back, and in walked Gorles himself. I had never set eyes upon him, you remember, since that 4th of June, when he had come down again to Eton after having left just six years before. He was hardly, if at all, altered; his face was perhaps a little browner, and he had a few sprouting

hairs upon his chin, and an apology for a moustache on his upper lip, very much like a worn-down tooth-brush : that was *Taraxacum's* mental simile.

The Professor, I suppose, was instantly aware of my desire to rush at and throttle him, for he gripped me more tightly than ever by the hand ; and then the more prudent second thought shot through my mind of waiting to see what would turn up.

Gorles stopped short at the door, and looked astonished, thunderstruck ; but whether at thus finding himself face to face with me, or that seeing us standing, as we were, in the bright moonlight, he at a glance divined what we were about, I cannot say.

That probably was it, though ; for he turned sharp round as if he quite expected to see our visitor, who was standing there bowing, smirking, and looking quite pleased and fondly upon him, just as I have seen a father do when he has presented himself suddenly to his little child, who takes a moment or so before he recognises and rushes to him.

Hate the little brute as I did, I couldn't help admiring his perfect *sang froid* and pluck. I felt my own—our own, as we shared it amongst us—vibrate again in unison with what, after all, was of course part and parcel of itself.

“ We are delighted to see you,” said the mysterious

Party ; “ the fact is, we were just speaking of you. But here is a very angry violent gentleman, threatening and vowing all manner of dreadful things against you ; and I was just on the point of telling him when you came in so unexpectedly ”—(there was another lie, by-the-bye, but we didn't think it worth while interrupting him)—“ that you were much too dear and faithful a friend of mine for me to think of allowing any such language or sentiments in my presence. But, now you are here yourself, let me tell him fairly and openly before you, and in the presence of these his comrades and own friends, that any attack now or hereafter upon you I shall consider as against myself. Those who serve me faithfully I will serve ; and I have no notion of allowing such audacity and defiance ! ” he said, changing suddenly from his bantering, easy manner, to a most contemptuous, sneering, confidential aside, as he drew close to and feigned to whisper into Gorles' private ear, though he kept his eyes fixed over his shoulder upon me.

“ Let him attack you ; tempt him to do it, my dear young friend. Don't avoid him—lay yourself in his way ; every time you meet him shall bring a curse upon him—your gains shall be his losses—your good luck shall be at his expense. Let him but once be induced to lay the weight of only his little finger

upon you to do you harm—coax him, bribe him, taunt him, I say, into doing so, and from that moment he himself and all he cares for shall be completely under your power.”

“May God forbid!” burst from me involuntarily, as I threw up from mine the hand of the Professor.

As that holy name passed my lips all vanished in an instant. The Stranger, Gorles, my companions, and the whole room seemed to have been swept away in one blow—that is, I suppose that it was I myself was carried away from them.

## CHAPTER XI.

'TIS A STUPID KID WHO KNOWS NOT HIS OWN DAM.

*Old Proverb.*

WHEN I opened my eyes I couldn't the least make out where I was. I put my hand up to scratch my head, I suppose—as I have, I know, rather a trick of doing when wanting particularly to consider any matter. To my surprise, there was not a hair upon it—I was as bald as a basin. I was in bed, but not my own, as I saw by the texture and pattern of the furniture. I put back the curtain, and noticing several bottles and gallipots on the table by my bedside, and a large arm-chair with a distinctly defined impression left in the soft cushion, showing that some one had not long since been sitting there, it began to dawn upon me that I may have been lying seriously ill—taken suddenly, I supposed, over-night in the Professor's rooms.

But who could have been taking care of me? I sniffed strongly, as I wondered whether it could have been that good fellow *Taraxacum*, for I knew he

would have been sure to have left a strong fume of tobacco behind him. No; I could only recognise lavender and fresh-cut flowers: a large bouquet was standing in a glass upon a table in the window, which was wide open. The window was new to me, and exactly on the opposite side of the room to which I at first turned my eyes, expecting to find it.

I had no idea where I could be; it was certainly some room I had never even seen before. The ceiling and walls were painted in bright colours with garlands of flowers upon them, and butterflies, and here and there a plump little cupid, sticking about in various topsy-turvey attitudes. While I was yet wondering, the stentorian voice of some man yelling in the street below shook the very room, like the bellowing of all the bulls in Bashan; it was to my ears an unknown tongue. That it wasn't German I was certain, but what on earth "*Cocomero!*" might be I could not guess; so I thought I would just hop out of bed and have a look.

Easier thought than done, though. By Jove! I found I could hardly lift hand or foot; it was just as much as I could do to raise myself up a bit on my pillow. I looked at my hands, I felt my arms; they were more like cricket-stumps than the limbs I had last gone to bed with. "Here's a go!" I thought to

myself; "those swindling beggars have helped themselves to all my nerve and pluck; and I suppose all my natural strength has gone with them, and they have forgotten to return them to me, as they promised to do."

That reflection brought back the whole of the overnight scene distinctly to my mind.

I supposed that either one or the other of them would have the grace to look in before very long; so I shut my eyes, that I might quietly think the better, and resigned myself patiently to wait.

Presently there came a light footstep to the door, the rustle of a female dress; quickly as I opened my eyes again, I only just caught a glimpse of the tail of a gown, as if whoever it might be had just looked in and whisked quickly out again.

"Now for it," I thought; "I am quite prepared for what must in the proper course of things be going to happen." I felt myself to be exactly in the enviable position of one of the regular heroes, in those jolly Irish novels which were the delight of our youth.

I had certainly last night got myself into what might have proved a considerably awkward scrape—that there was no denying,—but, most luckily, have got out of it just as those rattling fellows always did.

"All had suddenly passed before me as a dream."

Yes, so far all was right, sure enough. And now when I should open my eyes, which I had shut again, by-the-bye, so that it should all happen regular, I should of course find the heroine—the long and deeply loved object of my affections—“who would have been nursing and watching over me; and whom I should only just have time to recognise, as with an arch look and a light step her lovely form would in a most provoking manner vanish from my apartment.”

But, of course, as soon as I was up again and decently dressed in my clothes—of which articles, by the way, I could see no signs about the room—“we should meet; everything would be arranged all right, and we should live very happy ever afterwards.”

I felt for the moment quite convinced that I had been brought somehow into my kind uncle's house; and my heart began to bump fit to knock its way through, as I pictured to myself quite vividly dear little Katie and the relenting colonel, even then whispering and smiling to one another on the other side of the door, and in another instant coming in to declare themselves.

“Here she is,” I thought, “I hear the sweep of her dress again, slowly peeping in.” I had actually made sure that it must be Katie, fresh-looking and blooming as ever.

Not a bit of it—but who do you think instead? Why, my own dearest old mother!

An exclamation of surprise and—well, I honestly think it was—delight rose to my lips; but I actually hadn't strength enough to make more than a shrill sort of noise, as I uttered the word "Mother!" in a high treble squeak like a rusty door hinge.

Hang it! those rascals must have borrowed my voice as well as my strength for some of their mysterious games. It was too bad; and I said so, as my mother, rushing to my bedside, threw herself down with her face laid against mine upon the pillow, kissing and fondling, and then stopping for a minute to look at me with her eyes running over with tears and smiles, and then falling to kiss my face, my hands, and even the bald top of my head.

"That's too much of a good thing, and a mean advantage they have taken, is it not, mother dear?" I said; "and so I shall tell the Professor and Master *Taraxacum* when they come in, as I suppose they will do. Haven't either of them been down here this morning? But how on earth did you turn up here in Dresden?"

My mother looked at me with a scared expression, and then said: "You must not attempt to talk, dearest, or exert yourself. But you do know me,

dear Frank, don't you now? Don't speak, but nod your head ever so little, if you do."

"Know you, dear mother?" I whispered; "of course I do. But why couldn't you write to say you were coming? And now tell me, where am I?" I had forgotten that I had found out I was in some strange lodgings for a minute or so, but was now beginning to put two and two together. "Have I been very ill? and, if so, how long? How did I get out of the Professor's rooms last night? And did you hear how they got rid of the —— Party—you know who I mean—when they had grown tired of his company?"

"Hush, my darling; you really must not even try to talk, or I shall be obliged to go away again, and leave you."

## CHAPTER XII.

## UNDER THE CARE OF DR. ZANZANI.

I COULDN'T get my mother to answer any sort of questions, for what seemed to me—though I cannot be sure of that—ever so many days; so there I just had to lie on my back and wonder.

There used to come every day, sometimes twice, a funny-looking old fellow of a doctor, who on the morning on which, as I have described, I first came to myself, walked into my room more like King Bombastes in the play than anything I ever saw before in real life. With his nose stuck straight up in the air, and his toes turned out, he solemnly advanced about half-a-dozen paces, made a very low bow with a grand sweep of his hat to my mother, then marched up to my bedside, and made another low bow to myself: as he took hold of my pulse he perked up his lips and his eyebrows into such an absurdly comical expression that I, really thinking that he was a funny character, making a buffoon of himself purposely to

divert me, burst into a fit of laughter, which made my poor weak ribs and sides smart again.

“ This is Doctor Zanzani, my dear,” said my mother, with an uneasy, imploring look directed towards me.

“ Of Européan réputation,” chimed in the doctor, quite solemnly, but with such a serio-comic face, that in spite of myself, and the pain it gave me, I broke out into another laugh, which shook and put me to worse torture than before.

It occurred to me that I must have been ill of some disease, quinsy perhaps, which can only be cured by laughing (I am sure I have heard of such cases), and that this eminent doctor was not above calling in the functions of nature in aid of art. I wondered whether this irresistible drollery of manner was his own happy invention, or acquired by diligent study and rehearsal.

Dr. Zanzani did not seem exactly to know what to make of me. He gave two or three great gulps, like a stranded fish, and then turned round and solemnly addressed my mother as “ Signora,” though they carried on the conversation in French. English he professed to know, as I afterwards discovered, but beyond those three words which he had uttered, and, as it appeared, never omitted to utter whenever presented

by name to any British or American citizen, his acquaintance with that tongue was limited. He did not appear particularly handy with his French either; nor, for the matter of that, was my dear mother as good as I dare say she had been when some twenty years or so younger; but they managed to get along somehow.

“A trifle better, perhaps, but still wandering in his mind, as this wild laughter without cause betokens. We must not yet be too sanguine, Signora,” he pronounced, pompously, in reply to my mother’s eager report, that I had that morning known her, and called her by name. It was amazing what a point she seemed to make of that very simple ebullition of natural affection on my part, and how intensely it seemed to delight her.

As far as I could make out, he said that if I made fair progress, in three or four days’ time he should hope to bleed me again.

Confound him! then that was what had made me so awfully weak, was it? and getting my hand up to my arm, sure enough I found it all bandaged up, which I had never noticed till then. My mother seemed to demur rather at that idea, and so they fell out, and I fell off to sleep again, I suppose; for I have a very dim, if any, recollection of the rest of

that day, or indeed for ever so many days after, except that I was continually being crammed at all sorts of hours—sometimes daylight, sometimes lamplight—with basins of beef tea and strong soups, and I found myself gradually growing stronger.

And all that time, as I have said, my mother would never let me speak, or, what was even more aggravating, answer any questions when I asked them in spite of her admonitions, or give any explanations, which at times I longed for intensely, and then again I would feel that I didn't care a rap whether I knew or not.

Old Pomposity Zany, as I christened him, used to come regularly; but he didn't get his own way about bleeding me again. I quite looked forward to his visits, they amused me so awfully; but I never laughed outright at his antics again, though I used to chaff and draw him out quietly sometimes, to my dear mother's constant mental trepidation. I often complimented him upon his knowledge of English, and tried to make him talk in it; but he said that though he knew it thoroughly theoretically, he somehow never could acquire the art of either reading or speaking it practically.

At last, one day I was allowed to be moved on to a sofa near the window, and have my first wing of

chicken for dinner; I never shall forget the effect of that first gaze out of the window on to a well-built terrace or wide quay, below which ran a rapid river.

There were handsome carriages, really first-rate turns-out, with splendid horses and well got-up liveries, and smart ladies inside, pretty girls with great big straw hats and whole baskets full of most lovely flowers, the strong scent of which quite perfumed the air and reached me where I lay: lots of children and nurses, soldiers—a regular busy throng. It must evidently be some considerable city we were in, but still I had not an idea where.

It was a lovely afternoon, or rather evening it must be by the setting sun, which was just lighting up the bright roofs of some buildings and the tops of some beautiful mountains which I could catch glimpses of between the houses and a church on the opposite side of the river, with dyes of gold, and blue, and violet. I suppose, after having kept to my dull bed so long, I appreciated it all the more; but I do not know that I ever felt touched as with the quiet indescribable beauty of that evening.

“Here is a letter from your father, Frank,” said my mother; “would you like to read it? You have positively never once asked after him;” and she looked quite reproachfully at me for a minute, for though the

best and kindest of mothers, she could look reproachfully when she liked, I can tell you.

“That is too bad,” I answered, “for how could I, when you never even let me get through one question to ask where I am all this time. Well, but how is this? This is an old letter—why, it was written last year, my dear mother. Look, it is dated September.”

“Well, my dear, this is only the 2nd, and it is six days’ post from England, though now very shortly they say that, when the railroads are open, it will be reduced to four, or even three.”

“Second!” I cried; “second of what? Why, we have not got through the middle of June yet, have we?”

My mother looked at me aghast, and said, “Why, Frank, to-day is the 2nd of October.”

I really thought she was making game of me. “Come,” I said, “dear mother, that won’t quite do. People do not lie in sick beds with windows wide open in October, nor do such flowers as these, or those baskets full in the street there, blow in October.” We always had a lovely bouquet fresh every morning set upon the table, made up of carnations, jessamines, tuberoses, and every sort of delicious smelling flower.

I turned the letter round before I opened it, to have a look at the direction :—

“À Madame,

“ Madame Lambard,

“ Casa Lippini,

“ Firenze.”

“ I am none the wiser now,” I said ; “ I never heard of such a city as Casa Lippini, and have no idea in even what quarter of the globe a country called Firenze may happen to be, unless,”—I don't know why, I had a vague idea of some such name in my old geography books,—“ connected with the northern regions of Africa. But niggers don't drive in such stunning turns-out as those below us ; besides, the people in them are white, and some of them, as far as I can judge at this distance, uncommonly beautiful.”

“ Did you ever happen to learn in your geography books of a capital called Florence ?” my mother asked, smiling.

“ You don't mean to say we are in Florence now ? of all others in the world, the place I have always most wished to come to, to see the picture galleries, which I have heard are the first and the finest on the whole continent.”

“ Well, make haste and get well, and your love

for pictures will be fully gratified, you may rely upon it."

"Have you, then, been to them yet, mother?"

"Not I, my dear Frank; I have never been a whole hour from your bedside since we arrived at this place, which will be five weeks exactly to-morrow. Your father went three or four times while he was here, and his accounts of what he had seen were marvellous."

"My father! has my father actually been here, too, and I have never seen him, or, at least, known him, if I have done so?"

"Your father only left this place a fortnight since. That letter, as you may see, announces his safe arrival at home. He stayed on in hopes of some change in you for the better, up to the last moment; but he was obliged to return to England upon some important business, as well as some very troublesome law matters about a will; and as the doctors declared that you might go on for weeks, or perhaps months, without recovering, he determined, though most reluctantly, to set off, and come out again to join us, in hopes of then finding you better, as soon as he could possibly get away."

"It begins to strike me, my dear mother, rather forcibly that I have been rather seriously ill. What

has been the matter with me? How came you to come out to me at Dresden? And how did you manage to bring me, in the state I must have been, all the way down here? And, in short, please to tell me, mamma, all about everything, beginning quite at the beginning, and going all the way down to the end."

Well, it seemed that not having heard from me for some considerable time—I never was a good hand at letter writing—the parents had been growing very fidgetty, particularly as I had never acknowledged a remittance of money which had been sent to me; that two letters, and a telegram desiring me to send back a notification of my existence immediately by the same conveyance, had received not the slightest acknowledgment.

But some three or four days later a telegraphic dispatch had roused them up at three o'clock in the morning, urging some one to come, or be sent out to me immediately from home, for that I had for some days been lying seriously, and was now dangerously, ill. They had, of course, started off by the earliest train, travelling night and day.

It was the English clergyman who had thus telegraphed for them. I had never known him personally, but he had seen me going in and out at the De Lormes'

I suppose, and, perhaps, noticed me at church. Anyhow, he had heard from a doctor, who, it seems, had been called in by the landlady of my lodgings, after, as he had been given to understand, I had been lying for three or four days in a state of complete stupor, and having no one near me, or appearing to belong, or to take any interest in me, except two casual acquaintances, in the rooms of one of whom, I had been originally taken ill, and had passed the first night on the sofa upstairs—godless medical students, or some such sort of people, whom he hinted were by no means reputable, or very desirable acquaintances.

“I wish the parson wouldn’t be quite so officious with his opinion, but would learn to mind his own business,” I said. “What was the fellow’s name?” I let slip.

“Oh, Frank!” exclaimed my mother, as if quite horrified, “do you mean to say you can have been living more than four months in a place, and not know the English clergyman’s name? I am really afraid you must have become little better than an atheist and a heathen!”

“Well, that is coming it a little too strong, mother dear. I do not see that it can make much difference in my religious tenets, or duties, whether the parson of the place be the Reverend Mr. Jones or the

Reverend Mr. Robinson. I suppose I never thought of asking because I never cared to know. I am not sure that I much care now. I dare say he may have been a very good fellow in his way, slightly addicted, as they are all of them often apt to be, to rather illiberal opinions in regard to their neighbours, but, otherwise, harmless; though, as a rule, many of the divines one meets with settled in foreign parts are uncommon queer fishes, I can tell you."

"Oh! pray do not, my dear boy, speak in that dreadfully profane way of things which are holy."

"Do you consider parsons to be 'things,' mother?" I asked innocently; but there I saw she was vexed, so I changed the topic. "But did you then see nothing of those two fellows, either the Professor or *Taraxacum*, my friend De Lyons, I should say? Did they never come to see after or give you any account of me? I wish, by the way, the former had remembered to return what he had borrowed of me," I added, half to myself.

"There was a strange-looking person in your room when we first arrived, but he was in a great state of excitement, quarrelling with the doctor who had been called in to you, an excellent man, and, I have no doubt, very clever, as he could talk English with scarcely the least accent. There was a terrible battle

going on over you, but your father very soon bowed the long-haired gentleman out of the door; and the doctor gave us an awful account of the ways and character of that dreadful man. Even before he told us, I was sure he was a dreadful man by the very look of him. I rather think that he did attempt once or twice to come again, but we entirely declined to see him. The other person you mention, Mr. Lyons, do you say his name was? came to ask very civilly whether he could in any way be useful to us; and, now you allude to it, I remember that he did ask that the Professor, by whom I suppose he meant that horrid man, might be allowed a private interview with you, if only for a quarter of an hour, and he said that it had to do with returning something very particular which he had borrowed of you. The idea of a private interview with anybody lying perfectly senseless as you were at the time, with but barely the signs of actual life in you! a strange idea, indeed! Your father would not hear of it, of course, though Mr. Lyons urged it very persistently, and even wrote to the same effect. But we answered, begging to decline any sort of communication with that horrid person, either on your part (which was out of the question) or on our own; but that if there were anything of real value which he might have to

return it might be sent by messenger ; but should it be only in the shape of a pecuniary obligation, and the least inconvenient, we should be most happy either to forward a receipt as if repaid, or leave it entirely to the gentleman's own time and convenience."

"Oh, mother!" I cried out, "you didn't know what you were doing. In consequence of that rash refusal, I shall never now probably get back——that is, as long as I live, I shall never be the same man again. And here have I been accusing these poor fellows of dishonestly possessing themselves of one of my principal qualities."

"Hush! my dear Frank," said my mother, looking alarmed, "you are over-exciting yourself ; you must get back to your bed again at once ; you are still weak as can be. I shall not talk to you any more, as you are beginning again to ramble ; that will never do, you know."

"Well just tell me, shortly, how you managed to bring me all this way down here, and then I will be a good boy, and not speak another word."

"Well, let me see, it must have been the Sunday morning after we arrived ; I know it was Sunday, for I was reading the second lesson of the day, when that odd Mr. Lyons—well, *De* Lyons, then, it's all the

same—came knocking at the door, and begged very civilly and humbly to know whether, as we would not allow either him or his horrid friend to come in to see you, I should mind letting him have a lock of your hair to keep for your sake. Your father was for refusing, and not giving in to such romantic foreign sentimental stuff, as he called it ; but I thought, though rather ridiculous, yet still it showed a nice and affectionate feeling for you, and, as there could be no harm in it, I complied with the request ; and it was that very same afternoon, a little later, that a decided change came over you, and you seemed all at once to shake off the state of stupor you had been lying in, and to change from passive into a state of active insensibility. I mean, that you began to talk and shout and tumble yourself about ; but you never recognised us, but rambled and ran on incoherently sometimes for hours together ; and so you continued, sometimes worse and sometimes better, only quiet at times as if from sheer exhaustion, and thus recruiting your strength for a few days only to begin again. As soon as you could be moved, entire change of air and scene was recommended for you, and we set out, to bring you with us down southwards by easy stages, stopping more or less time, according to the state you

were in, or as we thought the physicians at the various places seemed to understand your case.

“At Prague, Vienna, Gratz, we stayed for many days, it was at the latter we began to hope that we saw some slight amendment. While there we met an English family, who strongly recommended us to come on at once to Florence, to put you under the care of Dr. Zanzani, and they told us of two precisely similar cases to your own, in which he had been entirely successful, after all others had failed, and pronounced them hopeless.

“So that, and some further inquiries which your father instituted, decided us to come on without more delay. And on we came, accordingly, by Trieste, Venice, Padua, and from thence across the country, by Bologna, as fast as a *veturino* could bring us.

“And a most truly fortunate thing it has been for us thus to have met those kind people, and heard of this doctor, who, if he is not quite, really ought to be, as he flatters himself, of European reputation, for within a very short time there certainly was a manifest change for the better. He reduced the violence of your *delirium*, though, I confess, at the time, I was sometimes alarmed at the way in which he also reduced your strength by frequent bleedings; however,

it shows he was right in his treatment, and that he is indeed a very clever man, in spite of his being pompous and ridiculous in his manner."

"Mother!" I said, when she had got me safe back again into bed, and made me—fancy a great, I was going to say hulking, though, at that time, lanky fellow of six feet odd—actually say my prayers out loud to her, just as—God bless her, dear old mother!—I used to do when I was a little child,—  
"Mother, dear," I asked, "what did I talk about whilst I was so bad and delirious: did I seem to stick to any one particular subject?"

I longed, and yet almost dreaded to hear her answer.

"Subject!" said my mother; "oh, every sort of imaginable subject; wild nonsense, of course. There was a good deal, though, about a certain young lady."

She looked rather serious as she mentioned this; but patted the back of my hand very gently as it lay outside the quilt. "Indeed that topic recurred so often, that it rather distressed me, and your father still more so; but there, there, it is all over now, and we must wait till you get quite well again, and strong enough to be properly scolded, you bad boy. Sometimes you evidently fancied that you were a boy back again at Eton, for you kept calling out after that schoolfellow whom you always suspected of behaving

so infamously to you. Bless my heart, how time does go! it really seems like only last year or so that you were at school, writing home those earnest, vehement letters about your enemy, Pauls, Smalls, Gorles—what was that wicked school-fellow's name? I think that although you did not understand what we said to you, your ear must have taken in the sound of his name, when your father happened to speak of him to me while sitting at your bedside; for it was curious that you should have been specially affected by the memory of him the very day we had met him at the *table d'hôte* of the Hotel New York, where we were staying before we moved into this private house. Mr. Gorles introduced himself, and thanked your father for the repayment of that money you had borrowed of him, into his London bankers': that reminds me that we have never yet heard the particulars of that scrape, or how it could be that you should contract a debt with that young man of all people in the world. Your father said at the time that it seemed very odd, considering how much you have disliked, and have always since spoken of him; but I suppose you have made it all up and are really great friends now; at least he seemed very fond of you, for upon my mentioning that you had been so bad that even all your hair had had to be shaved off, he directly asked

me to let him have a piece, in remembrance of old times. Your father became angry, and was quite rude to the poor little man, and said that among Germans such romantic sentimentality was ridiculous enough : but for an Englishman to make such a request was absolutely sickening. He looked rather disappointed, but he did not seem to take offence."

" Oh, mother ! is that abominable little wretch here again to torment me ?" I cried. " Oh, for my sake, for all our sakes, keep him away from me !" for I felt sure that he must have followed me down to carry out the advice of that awful Party, and by tempting me to attack him, get me thoroughly in his power. The very thought of him threw me back into a fearful state of excitement. " But tell me truly, you surely did not let him have a single hair of my head ? what have you done with it ? For mercy's sake, mother, have it all burnt, have it destroyed ; have it put out of the way !" and I rolled upon my pillow in an agony of helpless terror. I was very weak, you know, and had no control over my feelings.

Dr. Zanzani came that evening, expecting to find me twenty-four hours better than over night, and had been talking about my getting out in a carriage next day. He took my mother into the next room, and through the open door I heard him giving her a good blowing up—poor dear old mother !

## CHAPTER XIII.

## FIRENZE LA BELLA!

THERE are few sensations of pleasure and real happiness in this life equal to those of recovering from a severe illness. Every morning one rises, feeling day by day that one's strength is increasing, and energies, mental and physical, expanding; and then what an appetite one has, and how sweet and refreshing is one's sleep! It is always delightful anywhere, even if you happen to be in a place where there is nothing particular to do with yourself but get well, without any extra enjoyments; but when you happen, as in my case, to have the luck to find yourself in the most charming, the most interesting, and one of the loveliest spots in the world, the pleasure and gratification is of course tenfold more delicious in proportion. The only sort of drawback to my otherwise perfect happiness of that time was, that since I had heard of the presence of my "*bête noire*" in Florence, I for some time felt a repugnance—a kind of timidity at first going out, lest I should meet him anywhere.

All the time I despised myself for the feeling, and

felt ashamed of being such a chicken-hearted coward ; but the remembrance of why I was so, having, as I had, you know, so unfortunately made over a great portion of my natural courage, did not conduce to my comfort ; not to speak of the dire threats of that awful Being in relation to myself and Gorles, which had made a deep and lasting impression upon my mind. However, as the hair upon my head began to grow, and I became more presentable in appearance, and less like a singed skeleton, and my bodily strength daily increased, as Dr. Zanzani, to the great disturbance of my mamma's notions of propriety declared, like Samson's in proportion to my locks, I struggled against my nervousness ; and as we never happened to encounter the enemy anywhere in the streets or surrounding drives, the feeling gradually wore off ; and after the first few days I broke myself of the habit of coming out of our front door to the carriage head first, and looking all up the street, and then down the street, both ways ; as we always used to do, don't you remember, at Eton when we had gone through that absurd ceremony of " shirking " a master into a shop ? I do not think as long as I live that I shall ever lose the memory of my intense enjoyment of those drives which my mother and I used to take every day after our early dinner.

Oh, if I were only happily a poet in the power of language! which, as I have already told you, I am convinced I am so far as feelings go, and that, after all, is the main part of the business. I wish I could convey to you the beauties of that jolly old "Cascini," with its long avenues of its thickly-leaved trees hanging right over the drives, and the large circular square (well, what do you call it?) place in the middle, where all the carriages full of the most excruciatingly beautiful ladies draw up together to gossip; and the loveliest flower-girls come and smile at you, and stick the freshest flowers in your button-holes, and if you wont take them fling them at you, and never ask for and wont even take payment; that is until you are going to leave the place, when I believe they always happen to be in the way, and expect a napoleon or two as a parting compliment.

But the beauty of the scenery is the real thing, after all: there is the race-course in the foreground, those lovely green meadows—though there were no races while we were there, not that I meant to mention them—but the view of the mountains beyond them, golden, purple, ultramarine, lapis lazuli, all mingled together, with an occasional dash of lake and rich orange, powdered over with hundreds of little white villas, just like sugar plums as they glisten in the

glorious sunset. Oh, that I could only find words and adjectives of admiration in the superlative degree enough only to describe the loveliness of that always changing, always improving scenery ! How our spirits (my dear mother's and mine I mean, you know,) used silently to revel in those beauties with our eyes filled with tears, and our mouths full of ices, which more lovely maidens used to bring round among the carriages in large green cans. Then sometimes we would drive up to the overhanging heights of ancient Fiesole, and what a scene then lay at our feet as we gazed down upon the matchless Val d'Arno, in the centre of which lies spread that grand old city Florence, with its quaint old towers, so grand and so irregular, clustering round the famous cupola of the Duomo.

Every day a fresh drive in a different direction, every day fresh views, from Pratolino, Bello Squardo, St. Miniato, Villa Salviati, and hundreds of other places whose names I have forgotten, are to be enjoyed and impressed upon one's fondest recollections for ever.

You have seen Florence yourself, you say, and were disappointed. How long were you there ? I know exactly—four days for Florence is, I believe, the allowance, and eight to do Rome.

What with excursion trains and season tickets now-

a-days, every Cockney may see all Italy, Malta, the Pyramids, and Jerusalem in one month for twelve pounds ten a-head, *commissionnaires* included; soap, bougies, and more than two shirts washing a week charged extra.

And those are the sort of gentry who, having run up for five hours with a return ticket from Leghorn, and having perhaps heard or read something of the gay and beautiful Florence, have, I suppose, pictured to themselves a Place de la Concorde, or a flaunting Boulevard, as at Paris; or even shop windows and flaring gas lamps, like their own beloved Regent Street; and not finding it exactly to their own vulgar tastes or powers of appreciation, go home to write articles for magazines and weekly periodicals, in which they take upon themselves to state that all former accounts of the beautiful city are exaggerated, and only imaginary.

I remember, at the very time I am speaking of, one day taking up a number of a magazine, in which one of these fellows had favoured the public with a description of Florentine society. It seemed he had been invited to an evening reception at his banker's, on the strength of a letter of credit addressed to that worthy gentleman, who, as I happened to know, with his most respectable but rather limited financial trans-

actions, used to combine a retail business in tea and other groceries, besides being agent for Galignani's newspaper.

It was in the house of this most unexceptionable character that the lively contributor actually described, and I suppose believed, that he had been mixing with the very *crème de la crème* of Florentine society. The great point and special delight of that *réunion* seemed to have been that Mario, the celebrated tenor, was expected, but did *not* come, which unfortunate circumstance did not, however, prevent him giving an exact description, on hearsay, of Signor Mario's private life, as well as his villa which he had then lately purchased, and which, I suppose, the writer had had an opportunity of visiting, as may any other stranger, for a matter of half a scudo—two and twopence—presented to the porter.

Bah! such scribbling idiots sicken me! Beautiful and rich in nature's gifts, Florence is even tenfold richer in art. You may stay there for months, and every day have something fresh to see, something new to enjoy and wonder at. In the very streets and large irregular squares are to be seen the handiworks of the greatest artists the world has ever known; every doorway, every second pillar is a study: then, turn inside their

public buildings—in what other city in the world can you see such glorious collections of pictures, whole rooms full of works, every single one of which would, if distributed, raise any collection it might find its way into to the highest rank?

Where else in the whole world can one see under one roof the finest works of antiquity—the Venus, the Faun, the Wrestlers?—and actually have to back against such treasures of art, that you may surfeit your eye with such pictures as the “Youthful St. John,” or the more charming “Cardalino” of Raffaele, the “Madonna del Francesco” of Andrea del Sarto, or the incomparable “Adoration” of Correggio.

I said surfeit, and surfeit is the right word. There is too much to enjoy at once, one feels overwhelmed by it; and then to stand, as I did one day, and see three gaping fellows, take one cast of their eyes round the tribune, and then one, with Murray tucked up close under his arm, proclaim aloud, that “the frames are certainly not half so stunning as those in the *other shop*; (the Pitti Palace was, of course, what he meant by that, to him, probably, most familiar term), and now we have done this place, the Uffizi, they call it, don't they? we shall only have the Academy, and that Church up on the hill outside, the book says

we must do, and by then it will be pretty well dinner time."

I would have paid a five-pound note to have knocked those wretches' heads against the door-post; but, as the Custode happened to be there, and from my entire ignorance of the language, I may have found a difficulty in explaining the awful provocation, which, humbly-bred officer as he was, I feel sure he would have appreciated and sympathised in, if he could only have understood me; so I so far restrained myself as to rush off into the next apartment, where that glorious work of Albertinelli, which, if, as you say, you have been to Florence, you must of course remember, occupies, as it ought to do, the central place of honour on the walls of the room exclusively dedicated to the Tuscan school.

Now that is a picture that every time I went to the Uffizi I found myself again and again, and each time more attracted by. There may be many others of equal, or even higher, merit in that same collection; there are, I know, several which rank before it in the general estimation of the artistic, not to speak of the gaping world; but as we stood for the twentieth time gazing at that "*Salutazione*," I felt, and I frightened the dear old mother out of her wits as I confessed to her that I felt, that I should just like to roll myself before it, and howl. I have been conscious of the same pro-

found feeling in the presence of other astounding works of art, but of that above all others.

Oh! what would I give to get some of those idiots of the pre-Raphaelite persuasion before that wondrous picture; to hold them by the scruff of their necks and shake them till their eyes shoot out, and then make them kneel in the dust before it, and cry "Peccavimus." If it were not for the picture's sake, which God forbid I should ever injure, I should like to rub their noses against it, and let them learn and confess the difference between that glorious specimen of cinque-cento art, which is what they pretend to have reproduced, and their own ridiculous caricatures, which they flatter themselves to be true fidelity of representation. Let them stand within a foot of that canvass, and they may then see every blade of grass, every daisy separately and distinctly delineated; yes, they may distinguish the very texture of the garments, the difference between the threads of the old woman's coarse petticoat and the woollen kerchief, which is thrown over her shoulders:—"precisely what is found fault with in our works by the uneducated public:" they will be ready to say, with a self-satisfied snigger. Not a bit of it: how much of the principal figures can you see or pretend to admire while close enough to distinguish these details?

Step back, my friends, to where your eye can take

in the whole composition, the old woman tenderly, reverentially, inclining forward towards the younger, so divinely beautiful, with her expression of modesty without embarrassment, of consciousness without shame; has any painter, greater and more renowned though he may be for other works, ever excelled that one for expression, simplicity, and harmony of colour and sentiment? But, now, as you look, where are the blades of grass, and variegated leaves of the herbage at their feet? do the coarse threads or texture of the vestments catch your eye, or for an instant distract your thoughts from the main beauty and holiness of the subject?

Out, I say, upon these wretched pretenders, with their brick-dust complexioned staring lay figures, clothed in garments of brilliant purple and scarlet, with thick folds which look as if they were stiffened with tin or sheet iron, as they sit in orchards where the apple blossoms are, in proportion to the human figures, as big as cauliflowers, and while the trees themselves are the size of gooseberry bushes, and each blade of long grass stands up stiff like an asparagus sprout. Which do you see first, when half across the room, the blossoms or the grass blades? certainly not the brick-dust coloured specimens of humanity—bah!

## CHAPTER XIV.

## LA CONTESSA SOTTONEBBIA.

“A young gentlewoman here in Florence, of a most chaste renown.”

*All's Well that Ends Well*, act iv., sc. 3.

WELL, driven as I was from the tribune by the Goths and Visigoths whom I have described, I had turned naturally to compose my ruffled feelings before my favourite “*Salutazione*,” when, as I entered the doorway, I started back so suddenly that I nearly overturned my mother, who was quietly following, head and ears well into her Murray, close behind me. There stood straight opposite to me, in exactly, or nearly exactly the same rich dark dress and showy jewelry that I had seen her in before, that haughty-looking but beautiful lady whom the strange Party had shown us that night in the Professor’s room.

I should have known her anywhere—I could have sworn to her, if I had met her in the thickest crowd in the world, say on a Derby-day, or all alone on the

top of Mont Blanc—it was she herself and no other. Her eye just caught mine with a glance of half astonishment and, as I for a moment thought, recognition, for she certainly made a sort of start, and then a flush and half-smile passed across her face as she turned away, pretending to be interested in one of those fine Guirlandajo's which hang on the wall opposite to the Albertinelli I have been describing.

My mother, who is sharp enough with her eyes, looked for a moment at the grandly-dressed lady, and then hard at me. "Frank," she said, in a low voice, "do you know—where have you ever met that ——?" she seemed to hang fire at the word "lady," and changed it to "*person*," which was always her epithet for any one, male or female, whom she doesn't happen to take a fancy to.

"Met that lady?" I replied. "Yes, mother, once before; and in a place and under circumstances I do not suppose I should ever forget, if I live to be a hundred; though don't ask me where, for you would not believe me, I know, if I were to tell you."

I had, I must tell you, once begun to relate that extraordinary interview and adventure at Dresden, but before I had even got half way into it, my mother had stopped me, and so completely shut me up, desiring me never even to allude to such a subject,

that I had made up my mind never to mention it again in her presence, which determination I must of course have broken, had I attempted to explain where and when I had before seen that dashing dame.

“I give you my honour that I never have exchanged a word with her in my life,” I went on, as I saw an expression of distress and virtuous indignation rising on the maternal countenance; “but, by Jove! I must confess that I should like of all things just to get an introduction to her, enough to be able to ask whether she really was actually in person in that room—well, never mind where, the night I did see her——”

“For shame, Frank! for shame!” to dare even to make such an avowal before your own mother’s face in regard to a creature who is notorious for her open profligacy even in this wicked, profligate place.”

“Well, mother, you certainly seem to know all about her at any rate;” and I turned round, before following my mother, who, full of indignation, had walked off in the opposite direction without another word, just to have at least one more peep at the naughty lady.

She had evidently been watching, probably had overheard and understood what had passed, for she seemed highly amused; and, in rather a marked manner, looking back into the further doorway, beckoned up somebody from within the next apartment.

An irresistible sort of presentiment made me stop feeling perfectly certain that it would be the Professor who would come in ; I am sure that I would have bet a hundred, yes, a hundred thousand to one that it was him.

When, in answer to the familiar summons, in walked—Gorles ; yes, Gorles himself was the companion of that lady gay !

I do not think that I was at the moment so staggered, as if I had had time to think, I should have expected to have been. I suppose the fact is, that I had been so astonished just before at encountering the lady, that my feelings had not had time to recover their equilibrium, or perhaps the two astonishments counteracted each other, on the principle of two affirmatives which make a negative, you know ; or, at least, t'other way up, two negatives, which is it ? Well, anyhow, it's all the same for the use of a comparison.

I rather wonder now, that, weak and nervous as I still was from my illness, I did not just cut and run ; I rather think that such was my first impulse, but pride prevented me. I stood where I was, and stared at him, with my eyes wide open, fascinated, as a bird is said sometimes to be by a cat.

Gorles's attention was directed towards me by his

gay companion. As she took the catalogue of pictures out of his hand, I remarked that she said something to him in a low voice.

He gave a decided jump, upon recognising me, as I saw he did at once, and then came hurrying across the room with his odious little hand stretched out.

I was not going to shake hands with the little brute—it wasn't likely—so I kept my fists deep down in my front pockets, making believe not to see his outstretched paw: but he did not choose to notice my rebuff, for grinning at me with fiendish malice, he shook me by the elbow; squeaking at the top of his horrid shrill voice: "How d'ye do, my dear fellow! I am so glad to see you, and to find that you are well enough to get about again after your serious illness, which I was so sorry to hear of. I had no idea that you were still in Florence; I should certainly have called to inquire after you, but meeting your people no longer at the hotel, I fancied you had all moved on somewhere. Your father and mother were so kind as to allow me to make their acquaintance; and that is how I knew of your illness."

I only grunted at him, in reply to his obliging inquiries. I felt that I did not dare trust my voice to articulate even the simplest words. I was longing to throttle him, and crush him under my feet; but I

remembered what a warning I had received, and what the consequences would be if I were tempted to lay violent hands upon him. I nodded my head, and mumbled something about having my mother waiting for me, and was turning off on my heel to rejoin her. But he wasn't going to let me escape him so easy as all that; and so I suppose it did not suit him to observe my repugnance, which must have been pretty obvious, too, for I made no attempt to conceal it.

"Bless me!" the horrid little monster went on in the coolest and most affable tone possible, "what a treat it is thus to run against an old friend and school-fellow unexpectedly! how it calls up old times, and bygone scenes, doesn't it? What a time it is since we have had the pleasure of seeing one another."

"Speak for yourself," I said, "if you please, as to such treats and pleasures. Schoolfellows we were, unfortunately: but there was not much friendship lost between us; and as to the time since we last met, it is not so very long ago that we were at Dresden."

"Ah," said he, "just the same, I see, as ever, Frank by name, and frank by nature, the original Lambard still all over, rough, or I suppose I must say, plain-spoken, and ready as ever. But though we were at Dresden together, I am quite right all the same, for I said it was so long since we had seen anything of

each other, going on for six or even seven years. Just think of that!—heigh ho! how time does whisk along!”

I felt my blood boiling up fast to bursting point, but I kept my fists well dug down into my trouser pockets, and I was determined that nothing should bring them out; besides, against such a pigmy, such an earwig! I had no idea how really small he was, or how big I had myself grown, until I now looked down upon him as he stood close opposite to me. I might have taken him up by the nape of his neck, and pitched him flying out of the window, or into the river; but as to striking or even kicking such a contemptible little beast, it was almost out of the question.

I don't think he can have had much idea of what was passing through my mind, for, assuming a would-be facetious tone, he actually poked with his forefinger at the lower button of my waistcoat, as he cried, as if suddenly recollecting himself—“Dresden! Ha! ha! to be sure—true enough! I heard of you at Dresden the very night before I left that place, though I never saw you, you know.”

“All the better for you, perhaps, that you didn't,” I could not resist answering.

“Well, perhaps it was, considering where your

letter was dated from that night ; but that reminds me that leaving Dresden, as I was obliged to do that very next morning, I never heard how that escapade of yours with the police was settled. I was so glad to be able to be of use to you, as I hope I really was ; and was much obliged to you for the cheque which was so promptly repaid in to my bankers' in London. I would have written to have acknowledged it if I had known where ; but I think, my dear fellow, you might as well have sent me one line to have let me know how the matter ended, if not to have thanked one for a favour."

"I did not consider that a favour," I replied, every moment getting more angry at the creature's bump-tiousness, "when it has been thrust upon one, not only entirely unasked for, but unwished for and unwelcome. It was deuced lucky for you that I could not find any one else to lend me the money that same night in time to have met you with it at the railway station the next morning on which you left. I would gladly have paid cent. per cent. to have been able to have paid you back at once, and if I had caught you at that time would have settled another score which I owed you, and then had every intention of paying to the full. But you are safe from my revenge now, and you know why ; and though no power shall induce

me to touch you, let me tell you in the plainest English that you *lie*, like your particular friend and backer the dev—, the strange spirit. I tell you that you *lie*! The evening you allude to was not the last that you were at Dresden, as you know well enough, for it was at least a fortnight or three weeks later that we met there face to face. I saw you, and you saw me; so do not like a little liar as you are attempt to deny it.”

The feigned expression of astonishment, mingled with indignant innocence, which the little hypocrite assumed, both in his countenance and voice, would have made his fortune as an actor, as he shook his head, and with a smile, or rather ghastly grin, said, “I assure you, my dear fellow, I do not understand what you are talking about, or what you are driving at. Do you wish to quarrel with me?” and as if accidentally, in the earnestness of his inquiry, though of course I knew well enough what his object was, he stuck his nose up at an angle in the most tempting manner exactly within reach of my fist, if I had only just drawn it out of my pocket; but there I kept it fixed tight, as if rooted like a tree in the earth.

“Quarrel with you!” I said; “no, thank you. As I have already told you, no provocation you may give

shall induce me to touch you. I defy you to make me do so."

He bit his lips, and pretended to look puzzled; and then, after a pause, with an air of mock dignity, just like a bantam cock going to crow, he made a sort of pirouette on his heels, and as he turned round I experienced an acute itching in my toe, which required an almost superhuman effort to control. "At least, my dear fellow," he said, as he brought himself round on his pivot again, facing me.

"I am not your dear fellow," I cut him short, "and I beg that you will not call me so."

"Well there, my dear sir, or Mr. Lambard, if you prefer it. I do not at all understand your motives or your manner; but at least I think it due to myself to convince you that I am correct, and that you have been mistaken; for I can, as it happens, prove to you on the spot that I have not been at Dresden since the night which I have stated, in consequence of a particular event the exact date of which I happen to be able to speak to with accuracy.

"Though you do not seem anxious to renew our acquaintance, I should like, for my own credit's sake, since you have thought fit thus brusquely, to say the least of it, to impugn my veracity, to cause you to regret your hastiness, as I am sure you will before we

part. If you will, therefore, allow me to introduce you to the lady whom I have had the honour to accompany to this gallery this morning, she will be able, as it fortunately happens, easily to corroborate the accuracy of my statement.

The lady, pretending to be entirely occupied with a close scrutiny of the pictures, but, as I could see, all the while watching us out of the corner of her eye, had gradually come round the room close upon where we were standing.

Before I knew what he was at, the impudent little rascal was introducing me.

“Madame la Contessa di Sottonebbia,” he began, with an evident unction, as he elevated himself on his tip-toes, and mouthed out the fine-sounding title of the magnificent signora, “*permettez-moi l’honneur de vous presenter mon ami, Monsieur Lambard.*”

Riled as I was with him, what could I do? I was obliged to bow, finding myself thus brought face to face with a lady, whoever she was, though entirely unprepared for this unsought-for introduction. I was accordingly in the actual performance of that usual ceremony of bringing my nose down to the regulation propinquity to my toes, when I found myself, if not roughly, very tightly seized by the arm, which nipping

my gracefully commenced proclination in the bud, brought me upright again with a sudden and, I am afraid, not very dignified exclamation of pain and surprise ; and before I could recover my breath, or, I might say, wink my eyes, I found myself half-way down the corridor, marched off in the custody and under the firm and unrelenting grasp of an indignant and, as she fully believed herself, grossly outraged mother.

## CHAPTER XV.

“Very hard lines are sometimes ruled for us by those  
we’ve loved the best.”

W. FRASER’S Essay on *The Sex*.

NOT a single word passed between us as we descended those many flights of steps, and sternly pushing me into the carriage before herself—as though I should try to escape and bolt back to the dreadful syren from whose thralls she had so boldly rescued me, and in the same spirit of grave precaution even pulling up all the glasses and lowering the blinds—I was conducted, with all the solemnity of a state prisoner, and in perfect silence, back to our apartments.

But bless the dear lady! when she had got me safe home, and had actually ordered me to go up to my own room, and there pray on my bended knees for forgiveness and repentance, it was, I thought, carrying matters a little too far. “Come, mother dear,” I said, attempting to pacify her, “a joke is a joke, but this is downright absurd and ridiculous.” Then didn’t she just about pitch into me!

It was almost more than I could stand, but I tried

my best not to lose my temper, but to laugh it off and to turn the whole matter into a joke. I thought at the time it was the best way; but as bad luck would have it, it proved instead of the best, to be the very worst line I could possibly have hit upon.

I ought not to have answered at all; it was wrong of me, I know, particularly in the light and chaffing tone I did, though it was most ridiculous, you know; still it was not dutiful plainly to say so, and perhaps it is not very dutiful of me thus now to allude to it. Indeed, I should not do so to any one else; but having already told you so much, and so many regular details of the secret feelings and motives of my life, I don't mind you as I should another person. The fact is, it does me good somehow thus to make a clean breast of it; so I tell it all straight on just as it comes, good and bad. I don't want to make myself out any better than I really am, and if you think the worse of me—why there, I can't help it. I am one of those who think that women ought always to be spoken to and spoken of respectfully and tenderly. They ought to be treated by us men, of whatever rank in life or age we may be, with the greatest consideration for their weaknesses; for any one who has had anything to do with the gentler sex, in the shape of female relations, and most men have in some shape or another, you

know. Even if not blessed with sisters or cousins, let alone wives, all of us, or at least almost all of us, must have had a mother of some sort, and at some time or another, I suppose; and so everybody, I may say, as a general rule must have had more or less opportunities of observing what very queer animals womenkind in many of their ways are—charming, affectionate, long-suffering, and all the rest of it, no doubt, as the poet—what's his name?—has so beautifully described them—

O Woman! in our hours of ease  
 While things go straight, not hard to please;  
 But when the other way they go,  
 The very deuce it is, you know.

Which you will find to be true enough, if you only happen, by any bad luck, to set going their prejudices or suspicions of propriety and virtue in regard to any other of their own sex.

Let them only take a notion of that sort into their heads, and then, oh deliver us! nothing short of hydraulic pressure will ever smooth things down again. Steam power is a joke to the force and resistance of their awful obstinacy in such cases; even the gentlest, the weakest, the most confiding of their species will become transformed into the most obstinate, irrational, unjust, bitter, aggravating, uncon-

vincible creatures, in every respect exactly the opposite to one's own *beau idéal*, or what poets and other polite writers have described them to be.

There, then, was my dear mother, who was naturally the kindest, the softest-hearted, the most charitable of beings, having taken up that absurd prejudice, as far as I was concerned, but as I in vain tried to convince her, perfectly unfounded, abusing me worse than a pickpocket : there was no crime in the calendar which, in her bitter and unjust indignation she stuck at imputing to me. And what is more, she not only laid every sort of iniquity to my charge, but fully believed it too.

That was what made me so angry. May I be forgiven ! I have often been sorry for that day since ; for though the provocation was sore, I ought, I know, to have remembered, how kind, how good she had been to me from my childhood up, through all my school and college days, many and many a time standing between me and my poor father's just wrath when I had been getting into some of my usual scrapes and troubles ; often, I know, denying herself so as to be able to assist me when run short, as I so often was ; but at the time it seemed all the harder that she, whom I could not remember up to that unlucky day ever having spoken a harsh word, or given

me an angry look, should be now prepared to consider me, her only son, in the light of a scoundrel, liar, and debauched profligate, and in short everything infamous (though perhaps not conveyed in quite such plain English) that her distorted imagination could suggest as most hopelessly evil. There was no use in even attempting to reason with her; she would not listen to or believe one syllable I had to say, as she herself told me in so many words.

As far as I could make out, she must have seen that grand lady for some time previously going about the place at the Cascini, I suppose; or somewhere and from some one—that old gossip, Zanzani, very likely—heard some startling particulars, I fear not altogether to that said lady's credit or renown. Indeed, there was no doubt that she was infamous, glorying and loudly ostentatious in her public shame; and having covered with every possible disgrace some two, three, or even four husbands, all living, was reported to have ruined some dozen or two of reckless youths into the bargain. "And it was for such a creature that I had actually left her, my own mother's side, or what was the same, lingered purposely behind, in a public place, openly to renew my acquaintance with her." Again and again I protested that so far from renewing or even seeking an acquaintance, I had never exchanged

a single word with the wicked lady in my life; that, as I have just told you now, the introduction was unexpected, and entirely unsought for on my part. I might have talked on for a week, or till now: I should never have persuaded my mother to listen to simple reason.

“Don’t tell me such nonsense,” was all the rejoinder I received; “and add to your insult towards myself and to your already grievous sin by falsehood and perjury, sir. You seem to forget that you yourself told me that you had lately met the —— ‘person’ somewhere else, and even that you had something particular to say to her.”

“If so,” I replied, “what need could I have to be introduced to her, then, as a perfect stranger? as you yourself came back just in time to see. That must prove to you, dear mother, if you will only consider fairly for one moment, that there was no previous acquaintance between us.”

“Oh, I cannot pretend to explain all your in-and-out motives, and wheels within wheels, as I have no doubt there are. I do not even wish to try to understand them; but do not suppose that I am to be deceived by such shallow devices.”

“But surely, mother,” I said, earnestly, “you will believe my solemn word of honour ——”

“Wheels within wheels,” was all she would reply.

“You would not even allow me to explain under what circumstances I fancied I had once before met, that is, seen that lady, although I again repeat that I have never exchanged even a single word with her.”

“Wheels within wheels. Now, at last, I understand for whom that lock of hair of yours was wanted——”

It was, indeed, really more than I could bear; I was afraid of entirely losing all control over my temper. I felt that the only thing I could do was to get away or to escape, before I should be driven to say something which I ought not.

Snatching up my hat, I was making for the door, when my mother, who by this time had worked herself into such a state as I had never seen her, or, at that time, any other woman in before—a sort of hysterical frenzy, sprung from her chair so as to get between me and the door, crying out, “You shall not go; you shall not leave me. You are going to see her now, you know you are. You have made an appointment with that dreadful creature for this evening I know you have!” She made a convulsive clutch at me, as I stepped back perfectly aghast and bewildered with my struggling feelings of stifled anger

and astonishment, and actually tore away a great piece out of my cambric shirt front in her hand.

I was aghast, I say ; and scarcely knowing what to do, my prominent idea being only the necessity of escape, for my own temper was now over-boiling : my mother's maid, I suppose hearing her scream out, opened the door on the other side of the room ; I bolted round the table, and so slipped out through the bedroom, and down the stairs, into the open street, but not before I had heard a wild cry—a threat so dreadful—well, never mind—it was totally unlike and foreign to her own kind loving self—but, strange to say, it did not affect me at the moment so much as it has since, when it has again and again recurred to my mind most bitterly. We have, of course, long since been reconciled, and might seem to any common observers all that a fond mother and a dutiful son should be to one another ; but from the day of that unhappy misunderstanding there has always been between us a silence on that subject—an estrangement. We have never since been quite the same as we had been up to that time ; and to all that misery and misfortune am I not entirely indebted to the baneful influence of that wretched Gorles ?—so far, I will allow, as often before, quite accidentally, and even without his own cognizance, acting upon my

destiny. If I had not met him and that accursed Contessa of his in the gallery that day, that dreadful scene, that painful estrangement, founded on an unjust suspicion on my mother's part, would never have come to pass.

“Unlucky chance,” do you say? Don't tell me of chances!

## CHAPTER XVI.

“ Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast.”

CONGREVE.

WHEN I had escaped from that sad and painful scene which I have described, I must have walked up and down and round the streets of Florence for some two or three hours, at least, without caring, thinking, or even knowing where I was, or what I was doing.

It was already quite dark, when my grief, or, I suppose I may as well say more truly, my anger, began to cool down from its high-pressure state sufficiently for my mind again to take cognizance of ordinary impressions by the straggling street lamps which were dimly lighted. Presently a few slaps of large rain-drops on my hat and coat sleeves, accompanied by a distant rumble of thunder, suggested to my natural instinct of self-preservation that, besides the fact of it getting very late, a heavy storm was working up overhead; and that having come out as I had without any overcoat or protection against such a contingency as a ducking, perhaps the sooner I found

some place of shelter from the threatening downpour the better it would be, particularly in the quasi invalid state of health in which I was still supposed to be.

I was not far, as I discovered upon looking round, from the centre of the Ponte Vecchio, where there is a space left open between the rows of little jewellers' shops which line each side of that quaint old bridge, covered overhead, however, by a long narrow passage, or "bolt-hole" of communication, between the Pitti Palace and the Uffizi; especially constructed for the use of the Grand Dukes or other powers that be, as a way of escape, whenever their misfortunes or misgovernment may, as periodically occurs, have made the place too hot to hold them, and it may be necessary, as it so often has been, to cut and run from their beloved subjects.

The said passage is carried over at the place I mention on three narrow arches, which afforded me perfect shelter from the now fast-dropping rain.

There, then, I leaned over the parapet of the bridge, watching the river, rushing as it was with tremendous force against the piers beneath me; and as I watched I felt more thoroughly miserable and low-spirited than up to that time I think I had ever felt in my life. I could not help contrasting my mother's strange and

unjust suspicions and treatment of me, with the uniform love and kindness I had up to that time always received from her—and all owing to Gorles, without hope of vengeance or redress against that arch-enemy! What had I ever done? Why should I ever have been born? By what combination of chances, or for what special end could it be, that my whole fate and destiny should at every turn be thus subjected to this hateful antagonistic influence? Why should that little monster have been sent into this world purposely, as it seemed, to cross and torment me at every turn? And so I felt it would ever be to the end. A thought of hopelessness, of desperation, came over me. Why not give it up, as a bad job, and put an end to the whole bother?—finish the struggle, in fact, with one good header into those rushing gurgling waters below? One hearty jump with a will, and it would all be over for ever!

I involuntarily looked round, to make quite sure that I was alone, and there, close at my elbow, stood a figure, who looked as if he had but that moment arrived, seeking shelter, as I myself had done, from the rain, under the arches.

He made me start, because I had no idea of any one being so near me. I had not heard the slightest sound of his approach; but the river was roaring

loudly through the bridge, and there had been, just as I turned, a tremendous roll of thunder overhead.

“Pray don't be alarmed,” said the stranger, in English, “I beg you. Am I not right in supposing that I am addressing a fellow-countryman? How one always recognises an Englishman immediately, all over the world! We may indeed reckon ourselves lucky to have found this place of shelter; in a few minutes the storm will be coming down like blue blazes.”

The voice, which had a would-be fashionable drawl in it, seemed familiar to me; and, just at that moment, there was a vivid flash of lightning, by which the face and figure of the speaker were rendered as visible as if it had been in broad daylight. I felt sure that I knew him perfectly, but for the life of me I couldn't put a name to him; though so certain was I that it must soon recur to me, that I avoided the *gaucherie*, which one always feels on such occasions, of confessing my stupidity.

He evidently did not perceive the real fact, as he went on talking in a familiar know-you-at-home sort of style:

“When I first saw your back there, stretching over the parapet as you were, just as I gained this shelter, I half thought it was some poor fellow, down on his

luck, meditating a bold jump, and an end to all his earthly troubles ; not a bad opportunity for that little game, either, to-night. The Arno is not often so full or so rapid as it has been these last few days. As a general rule, there would be more chance of bungling your brains out, in a slovenly, unsatisfactory manner, against the gravelly bottom, than mingling your last bubbling sigh of life with the rushing current, and so, with one splash and a gurgle, whirling away into eternity."

What on earth was the fellow's name ? His peculiar expression as he gave vent to this half-satirical sentiment, the drawing tones of his voice, were so familiar to me, I was quite angry with myself for my own thick-headedness.

"It is not as high as the parapet of Windsor Bridge, from which, I dare say, you have taken many a header, when you were an Eton boy," he said, looking carelessly over, down into the water.

"That is exactly what I was thinking myself," I answered, involuntarily. "I know I should strike out instinctively, and couldn't help swimming ; so I should only get a ducking for nothing, and perhaps catch a deuce of a cold into the bargain."

"Oh ! you were seriously thinking of it, then ?"

Then I saw what a slip I had made.

"Not yet, not yet !" he cried, showing his teeth as

he laughed ; “ you must not allow such thoughts to get the better of you. It would be no use, only a disagreeable ducking, as you say ; for you have a deal to go through, before things come to that pass. Ah ! the storm is over ! Good evening ;” and he was gone.

Then it suddenly flashed through my mind who it must be—the identical Party himself whom the Professor had conjured up at Dresden ! I felt rather flabbergasted, I confess ; but it gave me a new train to my thoughts. But not caring for the chance of running against the gentleman again, I made up my mind to leave the bridge by the opposite end to that by which he seemed to have gone, and so make a “ *gyro* ” home, by making my way along the paved quay which they call the Lung d’Arno, and so cross the river again by the next bridge, some few hundred yards below ; and thus, having reached the house where we lodged, manage, if I could, to get quietly up to my own room, without meeting my mother again that night.

I did not wish, I did not dare to meet her again till both of us should have had a night’s rest to cool, and reflect upon the unfortunate misunderstanding, as it literally was, which had risen between us. Though the storm, heavy as it was, had only after all

lasted but a very few minutes, it had been sufficient to drive all the natives, who hate wet like cats, into their houses, and the streets were unusually empty and deserted.

When arrived at the nearest bridge, the Ponte Sta. Trinita, I think they call it, I could perceive a single figure loitering in the middle. Fancying it might be the same "Party" again, or at any rate actuated by a sort of nervous disinclination to meet any other mysterious individuals that evening, I turned off and kept on by the quay to the next bridge again further on below. Just as I was passing beneath the windows of one of the smaller private houses close to the great Corsini palace, I heard the notes of a piano beautifully played, and accompanying a rich contralto voice to one of the merriest rollicking airs I ever listened to in all my life. My senses were not, as you may easily judge, much in tone for those sort of feelings just at that moment; but there was something so heart-stirring, so wickedly bewitching in that *Barcarolle* as it suddenly burst out clearly over the silent street, that then and there I found every pulse in my body beating, and my feet quite going of their own accord pat to the lively music. I had never heard that tune before, and never except once again, and that was on a very remarkable occasion,

and at the very last place in the world one would have expected to do so ; but it made such a vivid impression upon me that I could whistle every note of it from that time to this, and in my sleep have often and often set the jolliest songs imaginable of my own to it, and sung them too ; but when the mornings come have invariably forgotten them again entirely ; and what a regular nuisance that is, you know !

I was so intensely delighted and attracted by this song that I could not resist clambering up on a big stone post there was just beneath the window to catch a glimpse of the charming singer, whose voice itself was quite worthy of the song. The window was wide open, so that catching hold of the bars of the sort of cage by which all the lower casements of Italian houses are invariably defended, I balanced myself on the top of my post of observation, and could see perfectly into the room, which was one blaze of light from many candles. And there at the piano on the other side of the apartment I instantly recognised — whom do you think ? La Contessa Sottonebbia herself, in magnificent full evening costume, surrounded by a large and brilliant company of many well-dressed gentlemen ; but not another lady besides herself was to be seen. There was a sprinkling of white Austrian uniforms amongst them ; but most

conspicuous of all, because perched upon the high centre cushions of an ottoman in the midst, was Master Gorles himself, vociferously leading the applause as the Contessa finished the rollicking song with a bang and a flourish, and then turned herself round on the pivot of her music-stool to face her justly delighted audience. Gorles was in a screaming state of ecstasy. "Brava! brava!" he yelled again and again. "Ancora! mi bella Contessa! Ancora! brava!"

"Brava!" I cried suddenly, at the top of my voice through the window bars, right into the room. It was an irresistible impulse of genuine admiration and delight, which I could not have helped, if I had known that anyone would have cut my tongue out the next minute for my rudeness.

"Brava, Contessa! pray let's have it again! By all means, I say, encore!"

Up they all jumped, as if a lighted cracker had bounced in amongst them. It was unwarrantable on my part, I cannot but own; and so I felt it to be at the time, almost even before the last words were hardly out of my mouth.

There was a momentary pause of astonishment; then some of the party rushed to the window-bars, while two or three of the white-coated swells made a

plunge at a chair in the corner, on which they had deposited their shakos and swords.

I do not think that I am boasting when I say, that if they and their weapons had been the only consideration, my pride would not have let me run away as I did, but I should have stayed to have explained and apologized, or to have taken the consequences of my unjustifiable conduct; but when I saw little Gorles spring from his high perch and make at once for the door of the apartment, that quite unnerved me. I jumped down from my post, and was off like a shot; and, as I tell you, took to a most ignominious flight. I feel ashamed, as I ought to be, while I thus make this confession of my weakness; but I know that I should do just the same if it were all to happen over again; simply because I couldn't help myself.

I was down to the corner and right across to the other side of the bridge in less than three winks, and then, being pretty well out of breath, I stopped for a minute to recover myself; when—to my horror, I discovered that I had lost one of my gloves in my flight. I had them both, I knew, when I elambered up on that post, and must have dropped it jumping down. Of course I had—and Gorles must have run out after me, and picking it up, felt that it was un-

necessary to follow in pursuit, for that he could have whoever was the delinquent entirely in his power without further trouble. Of course he had!—and then the terrible thought struck me, of how long it would be before I should again feel his infernal influence working over me!

I almost made up my mind to go back at once boldly to the house, and demand the restitution of my property, or, regardless of consequences, attempt to recover it by force. It required no little resolution to come to that point, but it was my only chance, and must be done without further delay. I had turned to recross the bridge, when I became suddenly conscious that it was already too late. It was the old feeling I had before experienced under similar circumstances at Dresden. I was trembling violently all over, and my head was beginning to whirl. It was barely three hundred yards, along the side of the river, to our own house; I might yet manage to get home. I made a strong effort to collect myself, and set off to run. For fifty paces or so I staggered along, my legs giving way under me at every step; and I was sliding along on the splashy, slippery pavement, which seemed to roll under me like a stormy sea—up again, and with a firm determination not to give in to the power which I felt more and more strongly growing over me. With

a desperate struggle and a cry for help, as of one suffocating, I fell against the door-step of our own house; and was carried up to my bed by our courier, and some native friend of his, whom I suppose he had been entertaining, and was most providentially, at that very moment, coming to let out surreptitiously from the front door.

It was two or three days before I was all right again, under the auspices of the learned Dr. Zanzani, who though an old gossip and pompous humbug knew what he was about in my case, and I have no doubt secretly demagnetized me, in the same regular manner that the Dresden Professor or *Taraxacum* would have done; though he did not choose to avow it, and indeed always pretended entirely to ignore everything of the sort.

What I rather liked in old 'Zani was, that when I got him quietly to myself he was amenable to reason, and would always listen to me. I told him exactly all that had really happened to me, and besought him to go to the house, which I described to him, and there obtain from Gorles, either by persuasion or force, that glove of mine, through means of which the little wretch would I feared be again constantly exercising his hateful influence over me.

He promised to do all he could, but told me that

now understanding the exact state of the case, if I would put entire confidence in him, he could always thwart at once any such attempts, and that I should soon grow strong and well again as ever.

As to my poor dear mother—well, these are only distressing, miserable memories; and though I have said I will tell you all, there is no use in dilating on them,—nothing would ever persuade her but that I went off from her that night to some carouse, jovial party, or, even worse, that I spent the evening with that confounded Contessa, and had returned home in a state of gross and wilful intoxication; whereas, as I have just told you, I had been mooning about the streets and bridges, without having touched anything, or spoken to a single soul, with the one exception of the Stranger on the Ponte Vecchio. Appearances were certainly most unfortunately against me, rather strong circumstantial evidence, I own; for as I gathered from old 'Zani, who told me that he had almost to force my mother to come in to see me, as I lay under the influence of Gorles's tricks that night; that when she had with evident reluctance consented to do so, no sooner had she approached my bedside, than, whether awake or in my sleep, he could hardly say, I had suddenly burst out with a wild incoherent song, following it up with expressions

of the most unbounded praise and admiration of some lady, upon whom I continued again and again to call for a repetition of her delicious and exquisite music.

From that time to this my mother has never allowed me to explain the real truth to her; even now, after this long interval of time, if I were ever to attempt to get near that unhappy subject; for I for some time afterwards laid all sorts of schemes and manœuvres so that she might be induced quietly to listen to me, and allow me to clear myself—but all in vain! I have failed again and again, for as soon as she perceives my drift and what I am at, no matter where we may happen to be, she will rise at once, and leave the room.

I tried the simple dodge of writing to her on the subject fully and explicitly; but I only received my own letter back, with a large broad ink mark right across it, about half a dozen lines down the first page, with this chilling annotation scrawled across my writing below:

“Unread, further than this mark, as soon as the unhappy subject was ascertained. Why persist in these dreadful falsehoods? See Acts,” such and such a chapter and verse. I forget the number exactly, but I know they referred to the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

Yes, it is a miserable thought, but it is a fact, that it was a foolish thoughtless speech of my own, of course acting involuntarily under the same infernal influence, which gave what I may call its final hopeless clencher to that unlucky and most mistaken view of my dear mother's.

You see old 'Zany certainly behaved like a trump in the matter. As he would always listen to me freely, I easily convinced him of the real state of the case.

He really did his best to act as ambassador and peacemaker between us; but my mother never would allow even him to enter into details or particulars of explanation, until the old fellow, really from pure good nature, hit upon what must of course have seemed a very simple, but, as it turned out, most unfortunate scheme for satisfactorily proving my innocence.

He had talked to her, he told me, so seriously, and so far impressed her with his own firm conviction that I could satisfactorily clear myself, that she had at last owned that she should only be too delighted if she could herself be convinced of the same; and he had thought of a scheme, and engaged that she should be quite satisfied. With which little preface, he produced a formal declaration, written out on a sheet of paper in my mother's own hand, to this effect:

“ I, Francis Lambard, do hereby declare upon my sacred oath and word, as a Christian hoping for mercy hereafter as I shall now speak the truth before my God, that on the night of Tuesday, October (whatever it was), I did not while I was out from home either see the Countess Sottonebbia in her own home, or hear her sing, or in any other way hold any communication with her.”

(To be signed.)

“ Well, but, doctor,” I said, just for the sake of something to say, “ I cannot sign that, you know ; because, as I have told you, I not only did see the counfounded woman in what, I suppose, was her own house, but did hear her sing that particular song, which, as you tell me, I have been singing ever since ; and *elle chantait à ravir, il n’y a point de doute.*”

I had not time to say more, or of course I should have gone on to explain how, in the true spirit of the declaration, I could conscientiously put my name to it like a man, though not as it happened in the letter ; but with that foolish quibble in my mind, no sooner were those unlucky words out of my lips, than with a frightful scream my poor mother rushed out from behind the curtain, and dropped in a swoon upon the floor as flat as a flounder.

As bad luck would have it, you see, she, woman-like, had in her impatience followed the doctor into the room without his knowing it ; being, as he said, already half convinced, hoping to be satisfied and ready to rush upon me, her boy, and inundate my neck and shoulders with tears of reconciliation, and contrition for her injustice.

But that was all up now ; and though I nursed her and watched over her, and did everything I could think of by dutiful attention and care to repay in part, at least, the kindness and affection with which she had tended me through my illness, and to win back her love and confidence, which up to that time had always been so strong, it has never been the same thing again. As time has gone on we are now, thank Heaven, always cordial, and generally on fond terms, as a mother and son should be ; but never, as I have told you, quite the same.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## LETTERS OFFICIALLY AND OFFICIOUSLY DELAYED.

You may well imagine that under such circumstances my days at Florence, and I am afraid those of my dear mother also (but still that was not my fault) were not of the happiest or most comfortable. For my part, I should have been glad of a change anywhere, but circumstances constrained us to remain on where we were.

In the first place, it was considered advisable, if not absolutely necessary, for me to remain under the immediate care of Dr. Zanzani, who had so wonderfully brought me through my illness, though I now began to feel myself well and strong again almost as ever. I could never prevail on the doctor, by the way, to tell me what my illness had really been. He always looked very mysterious, and evaded my questions by cautions for the future.

Besides that reason against our moving, there was the perhaps equally good, or even better one, if the

whole truth must be told, that our finances had run rather low ; and though I suppose my mother could easily have procured an advance from the bankers, yet my father had made no arrangements for her doing so, as, when he had been obliged to start off so suddenly for England upon family business, he had not expected to have been detained beyond a fortnight or so at the utmost ; though it was now going on nearly seven weeks, and my mother had not even received a letter from him for some time. My father was by habit anything but a regular correspondent ; but as each morning arrived, and no letter, I saw that my mother was growing more fidgetty about him.

I could not get from her even a hint of what all this important family business was about ; indeed, she would not be confidential about anything. She had to a certain degree resumed her naturally polite and gentle manner towards me ; but not more so than it would have been with any other person in whose society she might have been living ; so I on my part drew in my horns like the long-suffering snail ; and having experienced one or two quiet, but very chilling rebuffs, took care not to lay myself open to more of that sort of thing than I could help.

It was certainly a weary time, and I was very unhappy. I did not care now to go out anywhere ; I

lost all pleasure in seeing or doing anything. I hardly stirred outside the house; the old dread of meeting Gorles again in the streets, or anywhere about, and of his bringing fresh miseries upon me, again overshadowed me even with redoubled force.

But I determined to bear my lot as quietly and patiently as I could, though at times it was hard enough to do so; but I tried not to put myself in the wrong. Sometimes I was almost inclined to pack up my traps and be off, I didn't seem to care where, if I could only get away somewhere for a change. But I hadn't a stiver of money in my pocket; and besides, I could not, you know, unkindly and unjustly as she was treating me, quite make up my mind to leave my mother all by herself in a strange city, with no one to take care of her. So our days dragged on, slowly and miserably enough, and still no letters, and my mother was growing more and more uneasy.

It was on a Saturday, I remember, that, looking up suddenly across the breakfast table at which we were sitting moodily, as was now our general wont, only rather later that morning even than usual, "Frank," said my mother, "I wish to goodness you would go yourself for me to the post-office, and see whether there is really no letter from your father. Furfanti (that was our courier's name) has just come

back, and declares that there is nothing again ; but those servants are so careless. I wish, my dear boy, you would just go and inquire for me yourself." There was a tone of warmth and loving earnestness in my mother's voice, which was more like her own dear self than there had been since our row, which touched me to the heart.

"Yes, dearest mother," I cried, quite cheerily ; "I will be off directly, of course. There is nothing I wont do to please you if you will only give me one of your old loving kisses, and tell me that you don't really believe me to be the profligate and story-teller you have been making me out to be." I saw in an instant what a fool I had been thus to presume upon what I had fancied was a change of feeling. It was an involuntary slip on her part of natural affection, but not for me, though ; and the hardness of her eye, and extreme coldness of her next words, told me at once what a mistake I had made. I ought to have had the tact not to have pretended to have noticed that momentary weakness. She might herself not have perceived it, and checked it as she did immediately in the bud. "For your father's sake," she said, with a special stress, "I shall feel much obliged if you will take that trouble for me, for I am becoming really very anxious."

I am not sure that it was not for a moment a hard matter to choke down the ugly word that rose in my throat as, ramming my hat down over my eyes, I hastened out of the room ; and scarcely allowing myself even to think, was soon across the Ponte Vecchio, and turning into that irregular great space known as the Piazza Gran Duca, on the sunny side of which is, or was in those days, situated the post-office.

As I came nearer, I was a little surprised to perceive that the small orifice or trap door in the grated window through which communications are, or then used to be, made with the official within, and which at the outside might have measured about a foot square, was entirely blocked up by the body of some youth of the upper class, as far as one could judge from a pair of well-dressed and well-booted legs and feet, the violent kickings and contortions of which said extremities betokened a desperate struggle, in which the remaining and invisible portion of the said person was evidently engaged with some antagonist, probably, and as it proved to be, the lawful denizen of the public bureau within.

I was just in time, as, wondering what was up, I ran to the spot, to witness the whole body come bundling out in a heap on to the pavement below, bringing with him a perfect avalanche of letters, which

fell round him in all directions ; then came flying out a small hat, but nearly battered out of all shape or recognition, close after which appeared a very flushed and furious countenance, uttering the most frightful volley of oaths and maledictions. This was no other than the outraged official himself, who, stretching his head suddenly through his little portal at the imminent risk of excoriating his own ears, in his vehemence, anathematized the defeated Gorles as he lay wriggling on the stones beneath him.

For Gorles himself it was, in a most dilapidated condition. The collar of his coat seemed to have changed places with the tails, which were twisted somehow round his neck, his shirt front and handkerchief were torn to ribbons, and large tufts of his ruffled hair appeared to have been tugged out by the roots ; even his bitterest enemy could hardly have wished to see him under more grievous circumstances. There were not above half-a-dozen witnesses to this extraordinary scene besides myself ; but amongst them a middle-aged gentleman of transatlantic origin, as I guessed by his twang and very forcible mode of expressing himself, who appeared diverted beyond all measure, and informed me that there had been an almost regular daily contest between that phosphorical little Britisher and the functionary for some time past, from

the former always insisting upon being allowed to look over the whole of the letters addressed to the *Poste-restante* himself; but that he calculated that upon this particular morning matters had reached a climax; and, rot his old grandmother! (who for the matter of that had been dead and buried these ten years in Kentucky, but had lived to ninety, and was tough as an old hoss,) but dang his vitals! if in all that time he had ever seen anything to whip that, which he would not have missed, he guessed, no—not for whole boots full of dollars.

Thus was the delighted Yankee giving vent to his feelings when Gorles, gathering himself up from off the pile of letters which he had brought out with him in his ignominious descent, turned with a malicious snarl upon him, apostrophizing him as a giggling hyena, and asking what the deuce he meant by insulting him.

Just as he was thus picking himself up, my eye suddenly caught the direction of one of the covers in the heap lying uppermost on the ground, addressed to my mother, and almost close by it another to myself. I was in the very act of stooping for them, when my arm was suddenly seized by the official, who had banged-to his little port-hole and rushed round to the front to secure his scattered letters.

In an instant he had gathered them all up from under my very nose, and giving Gorles's hat, which still lay temptingly within reach, an extra scrunch with his heel, was back again round in his office before I had recovered my surprise.

It was in vain that the American and I applied for our letters ; declaring that we were both accomplices of that diabolino Inglese, as he called him, the enraged official utterly declined even to listen to our demands, and when we persisted, only threatened to send for the police.

Naturally we stormed and protested, and then tried persuasion ; but all means were equally without effect.

We tried the dodge of going away for a while and then coming back in half an hour, to knock again respectfully, as if entirely fresh and unimplicated strangers. It was not the least use. He knew us at once, and slammed the little door against our noses, which he opened again in an instant, only, however, to derisively inform us that it had just struck twelve o'clock, and happening to be a *mezza festa*, or half-holiday, the post-office was now closed according to custom, and so would continue to be, not only over the next day, Sunday, but through the Monday also, being a *festa* or saint's day ; and therefore that our earliest possible chance, if even then, upon due con-

sideration he might think fit to let us have our letters, would not certainly be till the next morning after; and so saying he barred up the window, came out and locked the door, and walked off deliberately with the key in his pocket.

My newly-made Yankee friend was perfectly rampant in his wrath. Again and again in loud tones did he *dang* not only many of his ancestral and collateral relatives, quick, and dead likewise, as far as I could judge by some of his allusions to them, but himself especially, for having been so thoughtless and unlucky as to have come out that morning without either his *ree-vol-verre* or his blessed bowie knife, by a judicious use of either of which, he calculated that official might have been induced to hear reason. But go he would, slick up to the Pitti Palace, and jist ask to see the Grand Duke himself on the subject; and by hookey, he guessed he would jist let that old hoss know what sort of a tarnation son of a stock-dollager he had got in his post-office.

It was a most annoying thing, certainly, thus to know that there really was a letter for my mother, anxiously waiting as she was for one, and yet be thus prevented from getting possession of it; all through the fault and folly of another person, too. And that other person was, of course, always the same; the

same—not luck or chance, as I was going to say,—but the same inevitable fate haunting me over again and again.

Now that Gorles was mixed up in the matter, simple as it might be, I felt certain that something dreadful was going to happen to me. For I have not told you all yet of this letter adventure. I had tried to keep quite clear of, and while I was arguing with the postman had pretended not even to notice Gorles as he picked himself up, and slunk off, exchanging anything but compliments with the American, who certainly returned him as good as he gave, till he vanished round the corner.

What, then, was my astonishment when I at last returned home, unable to gain my object, as I have described, and proportionately riled and disappointed, to find Gorles on his tiptoes, in the act of trying to reach the bell-pull at the door of our lodgings!

“Oh,” said he, as I came up, “is that you? I have got something here for you—a letter for your mother, Mrs. Lambard. I have had it in my pocket these four or five days, and had quite forgotten it; but seeing you this morning at the post-office reminded me of it. The fact is, you see, I caught sight of it among a lot of others at the post-office a few minutes after your servant had gone the other day, and I myself had

heard that rascally fellow tell him there was nothing for his lady, or for you ; but you never can trust the scoundrels, and ought always to insist upon seeing for yourself—that was what all that scrimmage was about this morning.”

“I am obliged to you,” I answered as civilly as I could manage to do, “but, all the same, I wish you had left it alone ; my mother has suffered much from anxiety which this might have spared her.”

“Well, but that is the very point: I meant her to have got it sooner, you see ; and as I had had the honour of making her acquaintance, I thought it would be only a polite opportunity to come and call, so I put it in my pocket, meaning to bring it at once, but, unluckily, it went quite out of my head ; and then we went for a little excursion down to Lucca, with the Contessa di Sottonebbia and some other charming friends, and the fact is, only returned late last evening ; but better late than never, you know. But is madame your lady mother at home? for I should like to have the honour of presenting it, and apologizing to her in person.”

The cool impudence of the animal positively took my breath away.

“No,” I said ; “she is not at home ; never is ; but give me the letter, if you please.” And without

another word I walked in and straight upstairs with it to my mother, leaving him to digest my rudeness as he liked upon the door-step.

Four or five days he said he had had it; it must have been more.

It was from my poor father, written in high spirits, particularly at having received such a good account of myself and my steady recovery of health. Indeed it was, as I could perceive, an answer to one despatched by my mother, on the very morning of that unlucky rencontre at the Uffizi; and what an unhappy change had come over the whole spirit of our life since!

“The family business,” his letter went on to say, “would all end right, and be brought to a satisfactory arrangement. That he hoped to be able to start the next day from London, and to arrive at Florence (not intending to stop for a single hour *en route*) almost at the same time with or within a very few hours after this letter itself.”

There was a postscript which specially concerned myself.

“I am quite delighted at your excellent account of Frank, and am glad that he seems to take the great interest which you describe in all the pictures, frescoes, sculptures, and other works of art. I wish you would desire him to write me a good long letter himself, on

that or any other subject which may especially occur to him : but as I shall not be sure of my whereabouts, he had better put his letter under cover, marked *private*, to Mr. Wyley, my lawyer. It will please and gratify me, and may prove of great importance to himself. I will explain this when we meet."

It was a very queer fancy, and to this day I never can quite make out what it meant, unless he had been backing my orthographical powers, and had a bet with his solicitor, who was, I knew, a very intimate friend, upon the subject.

But I do not think it puzzled me so much at the time as it might have done, for when we came to consider the date of the letter, there was something else to think about. My heart instantly misgave me : the date was October the 19th, and this was the 30th.

If he had started as he intended, and come express, even allowing for the delay occasioned by the steamer not suiting exactly, he ought to have arrived here three days since at the very latest.

Perhaps those other letters which I had caught sight of, but which had been confiscated, might explain the cause of his delay, or change in his plans ; but though my glimpse at them had been hasty, I felt sure that neither of them were directed in my father's handwriting.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“Bad news is better than no news, though no news is better than good news.”—*Old saying.*

I DID not like to communicate my half-conceived misgivings to my mother; and though I noticed the colour on her cheek blanche, perhaps being conscious of her chilling injustice towards myself, she could not quite bring herself to confide her secret terrors to me.

Calling to mind the thousand and one hindrances which may always arise and cause delay in an intended journey, I do not think I should at once have felt so uneasy, if it had not been for the fact of Gorles being again mixed up with the matter. It was entirely his confounded officiousness which had intercepted that letter; though of course, upon reflection, I had to own that that fact could have nothing in the world to do with my father's non-arrival.

I made up my mind that I must somehow get those letters from the *Poste-restante*, in spite of the outraged official, or the absurd regulations in regard to

the *fiesta* of which he had so unluckily availed himself, to punish me, as I suppose he really believed, deservedly, for aiding and abetting in the attack upon him in his own fastness.

So I started off for the Chancellerie of our English minister, to see if I could get any help in that quarter.

We had met the minister once or twice; and his Excellency had been particularly civil to my mother and myself; besides, one of the younger attachés, Tripper, was an old friend of mine, having been, as I dare say you remember, at my tutor's at Eton—about your standing, wasn't he?

When I walked in I found them all busy, as usual, reading the English papers, and discussing the last-arrived news, as is of course the duty of well-regulated diplomatists to do.

“Halloa, I say!” broke out young Tripper, all at once, after civilly pointing with his toe to his own vacant chair, he himself being seated in the middle of a blotting-book, on the table, gracefully swinging his legs; “here is something like a smash on one of the French railways—the Boulogne and Paris line—with I don't know how many, killed, wounded, and broken into little pieces. It is not often that the French try to rival us in a good out-and-out

catastrophic of this sort, but here they have quite succeeded. The old story, of course—delay of steamers, making up lost time, mistaken signals, inefficient pointsmen; two opposite trains, both express, on the same line of rails, going “hard-all” into one another, with a frightful loss of life, which is only worthy of, and makes my poor exiled heart yearn with the memories of my beloved native land. But they have rivalled us this time, and no mistake; between fifty and sixty passengers, several English amongst them, all first-class—of course they were,—eleven taken out lifeless, from fifteen to twenty more or less severely wounded, five not expected to survive! There is not even mention of it in the French papers, by which we might and ought to have known all this at least three days ago.”

“Oh!” said one of the other fellows (the secretary I think he was), “I remember now there was a paragraph, mentioning the vague report of some tremendous accident, in the *Times* which arrived the day before yesterday. What day was it? Yes, to be sure, the 21st it must have been, and was in the Saturday’s paper. I don’t suppose we should have heard anything more about it, if it had not been for the number of English among the killed and wounded. Good heavens, sir! what is the matter?”

Tripper, quick there, confound you! Look to your friend!"

\* \* \* \* \*

When I came to myself they were pouring cold water over my face and down my throat, while the secretary, who was a thick-set fellow, was holding me up on the chair. Tripper and the other attaché had pulled off the buttons of my shirt collar, and the former was fanning my face violently with the blotting book on which he had been sitting.

There were only half-a-dozen or so names given of those who had been as yet recognised among the killed, and my father's name was not amongst that list; but the account went on to state that there were many whose identity had not yet been ascertained, and it was quite evident that the account itself had been sent second-hand by some correspondent in Paris, and not from any one who had himself witnessed or even knew any particulars of the catastrophe.

It was on the strength of this that my friends tried kindly to reassure me, and to give me hopes that after all my father had not been perhaps even in that particular train; or at any rate may have been amongst those who had escaped unhurt; and though perhaps shaken, and delayed on his journey, would arrive safe after all.

But I had an internal conviction from the first that all such hopes were unfounded, and that he was amongst those who were injured, perhaps killed on the spot.

Those two letters of which I had caught a glimpse, addressed to my mother and myself in a strange hand, were now explained, and I never for an instant doubted would confirm our most fearful anticipations. I implored them to lose no time in aiding me by an official application through their chief himself to the Minister of the Postes, to procure them for me at once; and in the meantime making a strong effort to rouse and control my own feelings, I set off home, to get back at once to my poor mother, knowing, of course, that the dreadful news must be broken to her; though dreading and hardly knowing how to set about that painful task.

My heart had utterly refused to entertain the faintest shadow of hope while at the Chancellerie; but as I returned home, and was almost approaching our own door, it occurred to me that perhaps after all he might not have been there, or might have escaped; and until I was sure beyond all doubt, would it not be cruel to overwhelm, to crush down my poor mother, as of course I knew I should, with the same alarm and forebodings which I myself was

struggling against, perhaps after all, without cause. "No news, you know, is good news," the voungest attaché had suggested, as I was leaving their room; meaning, as I knew, with that trite old proverb to offer the best comfort he could.

But then those letters at the post-office! at any rate, I thought, I would return and wait till I could see what they would bring: after all, they might not confirm, or perhaps even dispel, my worst fears.

So back I went all the way to the Chancellerie; and was rather disgusted, I remember, at finding them discussing some other topic of interest which had also occupied a prominent column in the papers, and I can tell you even now what the subject of their discussion was: it was the public reception of Kosuth, the great Hungarian demagogue, on his arrival at Southampton, and again in London.

They seemed to me to be a set of heartless hypocrites, for I thought they really had sympathized and entered into my own fearful anxiety and grief; but I suppose I did them wrong: as long as I was with them they really had felt kindly and sorrowfully with me; but when I was gone, why should they care more than any other people who were not personally interested in the calamity? But at the time it hurt me sorely; and merely asking permis-

sion to sit down and wait till an answer could be received to the official application for my letters, I did not care to speak a single word, or pay the least attention to them, each advocating his own special opinion as they were, at the top of their voices, and all talking at once.

It seemed to me like hours and hours, four or five, or even six I should have said; but it really was a considerable time, and with no small trouble, and sending backwards and forwards no end of correspondence, before I at length gained possession of the recovered letters.

They were both from the same person, signing himself Sam Harriton, or some such name; the one which was addressed to my mother merely briefly stating that my father had been severely injured in a railway collision near Abbeville, but not dangerously so, and had been taken in, with some others rescued from the same catastrophe, to a private house, not far from the railway; that the writer having happily escaped entirely unhurt, had been able to give some assistance to those who were less fortunate than himself; and as soon as General Lambard had sufficiently recovered to be able to say who he was, and to what friends or relatives he might wish to announce the mischance which had befallen him, had lost no time

in communicating at once according to his desire to our address at Florence.

The second letter, which had evidently started by a day's post later, though they seemed only to have arrived together, was to me, and I was happy to see written from the dictation of my father himself, merely telling the fact of the accident, without any particulars, beyond that he had badly fractured one arm, and had received, he had reason to fear, some serious internal injury, besides suffering severely from the shock; and that it would be a great comfort to him, if both my mother and myself would set out at once, and go to him with as little delay as possible.

Now knowing the worst, as I made all possible haste home, I was trying in my mind to arrange how I should break the awful news; for, as I have already said, manage it as I might, I knew what a fearful blow it must be to her who was there waiting anxiously for me.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES.

Welcome the coming, speed the parting, guest.

ON opening the outer door of our apartments, I was surprised to find the whole of the vestibule, or small entrance, occupied by a huge box, on which was seated a female figure, muffled up and swathed in many shawls and coverings; while the battered form of her headgear, from which some straggling locks hung down in anything but graceful tresses, betokened unmistakably all the many discomforts and disarrangements of a voyage.

“Holloa!” I cried, “who have we here? Who may you please to be waiting for, ma’am?”

She turned to reply. To my immense astonishment I recognised Harrison, my aunt Mrs. De Lorme’s maid.

“Why, where on earth have you turned up from?” I inquired, as soon as I had recovered my surprise, which almost took my breath away. “Is your young lady—is Miss Katie come to Florence?”

Why is it, I again repeat, that when our feelings have been most shocked and strained with any real grief, they are at the same time always so keenly susceptible to a sense of the ridiculous ?

I was really ashamed of being such an unfeeling brute, as I caught myself going off into one of my screams of laughter as Mrs. Harrison, in the most dismal tones, answered—

“Ah, Mr. Frank, you may well say turned up, indeed!—turned inside out from my very knee-pans, for all the world like an old kid-glove, would be no more than the truth, after the awful night I’ve passed on them tempestuous ocean waves between Ginever, where we come from last night, to what’s the name of the place, where all them best English straw bonnets and hats are made:—turned up, indeed, I have been, and no mistake! Why, if some one had just took and tossed me over the steam-packet’s side, I think I should have been ready to thank him on my bended knees for his kindness in putting me out of my misery. Miss Katie!—oh, she ain’t here, bless your heart—but missus only, come all alone, leastways bringing me for my sins with her; and come too seemingly not before she is really wanted. But Lor’, dear Mr. Frank, this is awful news indeed which we have brought along with us! and for goodness gracious’s sake make

haste to go in, for I have heard your poor dear mamma through the wall, not the keyhole, a crying out for you between her sobs again and again."

Mrs. De Lorme had arrived sure enough, and so saved me from the painful duty which I had been so much dreading. She and her husband, the colonel, with their family, had, as it seemed, after trying one place and another in the north of Italy, finally settled themselves at Genoa. Quite by chance the colonel had met with some old acquaintance who had himself been in the accident, but had escaped scot free, and so continued his route for Italy with not more than a few hours delay. He had given an account of having seen, amongst other people, my poor father, whom he knew by sight, but not personally, taken out from beneath the broken carriages, and laid on one side amongst the dead. No sooner had my uncle brought home this dreadful news, than his wife, like an affectionate and impulsive creature, as, to give her her due, she certainly was, insisted upon setting off immediately, and coming on under the convoy of the gentleman who had brought the news, to comfort and support her sister in her terrible affliction. It was she, who thus bursting in upon my mother unexpectedly, and of course making sure that the bad news had already reached us, bad as they were, actually brought

a much worse account of the sad affair than really was the case.

It nearly killed my poor mother on the spot—but there I must pass over that dreadful time; I never can bear to think of it. The two letters which I had brought with me, so far from dealing the heavy blow I had been anticipating, were now, of course in comparison, almost an alleviation, and source of fresh hope to us. But I must tell you how my aunt treated me.

It struck me when upon finding her by my mother's bedside, as of course I did, that she received my greeting and thanks for her prompt arrival rather coldly; but we were all in such a state of excitement, and confubuscation of grief and fright, that I did not take so much notice of her manner towards me at first, until having come out into the other room, I did not think it would have been out of place, even under the circumstances, to grasp her two hands, which, in the warmth of my gratitude and joy at seeing her again, I was endeavouring to kiss.

I had been really fond of her, though she used sometimes to bore me, and cause me to laugh at her in my sleeve; still we had always been on the best of terms, which made it all the harder to bear and even understand, when, drawing herself up very

stiffly, and in a tone of the most freezing dignity, she said—

“No thank you, sir; keep your distance, if you please. I only wonder that, after your conduct towards your poor mother, of which I have received a full account, coupled with the protestations and pretensions of only a few months since, you can even dare to look me, or any of my family, in the face. Brought hither as I have been by my affectionate solicitude for my unfortunate sister, I had almost hoped to find you keeping out of the way altogether, as indeed you were when I arrived, and have been for so many hours since the morning, with some of your evil chosen associates, no doubt, whose company is more lively and more suited to your degraded tastes, than what you find in this house of mourning. With me, at least, pray never expect to be admitted on our old terms of intimacy.”

I was perfectly thunderstruck. It really was a very good thing for me that there was so much to be done, and settled, and thought about, or I really think I should have been driven by their injustice to have done something desperate.

I had been longing in my heart to hear some tidings of Katie; I had hoped that at least she would have told me how she was going on, and whether she

was well and happy again. The presence of one who had so lately come from the dear girl's society, had, in spite of all other overwhelming feelings, rekindled in an instant all my love and yearning for their old object, which had never for a moment ceased or changed, but as my mother, even when we had been fast friends, never would allow me to get upon that one subject with her, I had been obliged to keep them bottled up to myself.

There was Harrison,—unfeeling as it seemed, and as I was conscious it was, towards my own father in his peril; selfish as it was, I could not help it; the chance of just hearing something of her from anyone who had so lately been with her, was not to be resisted.

I found that faithful abigail still sitting on the big box. Whether she felt it to be her stern duty to stick to that post, as finding herself cast among strangers of suspicious character, or whether she did not consider that she had as yet been officially invited to enter within by our domestics, with sufficient ceremony, I know not, but there she was still sitting.

“Harrison,” I began, without any preface or circumlocution, “for Heaven's sake do tell me directly something about your young lady, Miss Katie. Is she all well again, and quite recovered her spirits and

beauty, after that strange and terrible illness she went through? Come, tell me all about her."

Harrison looked hard at me for several seconds, without uttering a word, and then gave one of her great sniffs.

How well I remembered those abominable sniffs of hers, at Dresden; and how merrily poor Katie used to laugh at me when I complained of that propensity, or used to attempt to imitate it myself. I cannot help suspecting that Mrs. Harrison had taken the cue for her behaviour towards me, from having listened to—no, overheard—her mistress, through the wall, which, like many of those old Italian houses, was not an inch under a foot and a half solid stone;—"not the keyhole," as I think I have already mentioned, she had taken the trouble to explain with special emphasis.

"Come, Mrs. Harrison," I said, coaxingly; "I thought you and I had parted the best friends at any rate; don't you remember how fondly you hugged me for being the means of restoring the dar—— your dear young lady to life again?"

She perpetrated another formidable sniff before she replied.

"Ho! Mr. Frank, you will have much to answer for. How can you really abear to be thinking about

anythink at this here 'awful season, excepts of the accident of your poor unfortunate pa?"

And not another word could I get out of her. She would only sniff at me. Her rebuke was not undeserved; she was right, no doubt. It was too awful to allow any other thought but that one of my poor father's danger to occupy a place in my mind. I felt very guilty, and reproached myself, while I at the very time could only plead in self excuse,—How could I help it?

But in the meantime there was much to be done, what with passports, money, (the Colonel had been thoughtful enough to provide for that emergency, and had sent us letters of credit on his own bankers,) and but short time for doing it all.

It was arranged that I should set out at once for Leghorn by that night's train, so as to catch a steamer which we found would be leaving that port the next morning at eight o'clock for Genoa and Marseilles; and I was to go on, night and day without stopping, to Abbeville, in hopes of finding my poor father still alive. We clung to the hope of finding him by that time, perhaps, recovered, and after all not so severely injured as had at first been supposed.

My mother, it was decided, should go by Spezzia, and the land route to Genoa, with her sister, and there

remain with the De Lormes until she should receive further accounts, either by letter or telegraph, from me.

Poor thing! She was quite wild to come off at once with me; but in the state she was, it would have been utterly impossible for her to have endured the journey to its end. That year the route over Mont Cenis was already reported to be stopped earlier than usual by the snow, and the railway in those days was opened no further southwards from Paris than to Chalons. It was all diligence work from Marseilles, and at that season of the year terribly rough work that was.

The earnest and affectionate persuasions of my aunt, whose kindness, even in spite of her unfair treatment of myself I could not but so far appreciate, at length had prevailed, representing, as she plainly did to my poor mother, that she would too probably break down, and have to stop upon the road, and thus only add to the miseries and embarrassments of our already existing misfortunes.

## CHAPTER XX.

## AN OLD FRIEND IN A NEW GUISE.

HAVING been through it yourself, you of course remember all the bustle, and hurry, and confusion, which one has to struggle through in embarking by small boats on board a steamer, from any of those Italian ports. It is bad enough even nowadays, but nothing to what it used to be a few years ago under the Austrian *régime* in Italy, when there was the gauntlet to be run of gendarmerie, port-officials, health-officials, and all the rest of them; with your passports and certificates to be viséd and counter-viséd, and all their botherations, not to speak of legions of unlicensed porters howling over, and fighting for, every separate article of your luggage; the exorbitance of whose threatened demands were only equalled by those of the rascally boatman, into whose mercies they delivered you, upon whose will it entirely depended whether the victims of their extortion should, or should not, reach the steamer before it started.

I was in a fierce altercation with the scoundrel who had brought me out, with a boat full of other travelers, and had now followed me up on deck, fiercely demanding exactly four times the sum which he had, just before my very eyes, received with thanks from three Italian gentlemen, who had each brought with him a load of baggage weighing two or three times as much as my single, partly-packed portmanteau.

I had offered him the same, which was rejected with scorn, and was in all the hubbub of resisting the bare-faced insult, as I felt it to be, as well to my sense as nationality, when I received a heavy slap on the back, and heard myself heartily saluted by name.

Turning round, I saw my old friend De Lyons—“*Taraxacum*”—himself, in *propria personá*. Without another word he took the money from my hand, and holding it out to the boatman, opened upon him a volley of the most awful sounding and incomprehensible jargon, in some unknown tongue. I don't think it was German, and I am quite sure it was neither French nor Italian. It sounded, perhaps, more than anything else, like a string of hard geographical names. Whatever it was, it came forth in such an uninterrupted torrent, accompanied by the most hideous grimaces and gesticulations, while his arms were whirling round with the violence of a windmill,

that the man, accepting the proffered pauls, vanished down the side of the steamer in dismay.

“Well this is of all rum goes the chief of *rum-muns*,” he cried, having achieved this signal victory. “Who in life would ever have dreamt of falling in with you again thus unexpectedly! But where do you now tumble from, and what has brought you down to these parts of the world? But bless me, old fellow, you have become as thin as a marrow-spoon, and you don’t seem to have altogether been enjoying rude health lately. But, to be sure, of course you were most awfully ill, and nearly a case of croaker, when you were taken away from Dresden, and I had heard that you had gone down southwards for your health; but seeing you so suddenly, drove it all out of my head.”

I told him that I, on my part, had, I thought, more right to be astonished, and certainly should never have thought of meeting him down there; but I hardly know why not.

“Oh, as to that, you need never take the trouble to be astonished at meeting me anywhere; particularly in my new line of life.”

“What may that be?” I asked.

*Taraxacum*’s countenance assumed a most serio-comic expression. He looked round as if afraid of

being overheard, drew close to me, and whispered mysteriously in my ear, '*ein Reisende,*' *un commis-voyageur*; 'a commercial gent,' if you must have it in plain English. Yes, sir," he went on, drawing himself up to his full height, and smiting his breast; "I who can count crowned heads among my ancestors, nursed in the lap of luxury, educated at Eton, where among the young lordlings and millionaires of the proudest aristocracy of Europe, I held my own with the best of them, have not been too proud to turn my attention and great talents to the development of commerce; and beg leave in my new capacity, to present you, as an old and valued friend, with one of the cards of the much-respected firm of Weichkopf, Zehewaklen, and Company. But, seriously, the place was offered me most disinterestedly by a man who has always been most civil and kind to me. The salary is very fair, the trouble next to nothing, and all my expenses paid: travelling about from one country to another suits me exactly; so I think you will agree with me that I should have been a great fool if I had not, as I did, put my pride in my pocket, and accepted the chance with thanks.

"You remember my Rosina at Dresden; to be sure, I myself told you all about it. Well, when I say *my* Rosina, I ought, perhaps, to have rather called her,

Rosina, who ought to have been mine, but through untoward circumstances became Rosina Weichkopf, the wife of that eminent citizen, who, besides performing the arduous duties of chiropodist, or, as I think I remember telling you on a former occasion, of '*konigliche-oberhof-leichdorn-schneider*,' to the court at Dresden, also does a considerable business in gloves, Naples soap, and general perfumery; besides the humbler branches of *bijouterie*. It was to use my natural and refined taste in the selection of a consignment of coral ornaments, that I have been sent expressly all the way down to Naples, from whence I am now returning, and am on my way up to Paris.

“After you left Dresden, I was, you see, a good deal thrown with, and became extremely intimate with, the worthy man Weichkopf, quite the received *enfant de maison*. I gradually got into the habit of dining at their plain but hospitable table, without even going through what would have been, indeed, the mere empty form of waiting for an invitation; and I had less compunction in finding myself on that footing, and thus waving all ceremony with them, because—though of course never mentioned in so many words—there was very soon established between us a tacit system of reciprocity, of which the advantages

by no means, if closely considered, would be found preponderating altogether on my side.

“Weichkopf, you see, though a most worthy fellow, is, unfortunately, in regard to his manners, appearance, and general range of ideas, *bourgeois* in extreme. He is sadly lacking in refinement, and has just honest sense enough to be aware of his deficiency. I think and feel sure that very soon after making my acquaintance, he perceived and appreciated the natural superiority that birth and education had given me, and determined, by close association and example, to improve and raise himself if he could nearer to the level of his own wife; for he must from the very first have perceived that he was no fit equal, or companion to Rosina. Though, of course, still very short of the mark, I flatter myself that he decidedly improved under my constant companionship, and occasional friendly hints; and having undertaken the task, I really became interested in its development, and so—although at times bored by the man himself, yet his dinners were good, and his house comfortable; besides, for the sake of my old feeling for Rosina herself—I was not unwilling to sacrifice some part at least of my time for her, whose life, poor girl! must otherwise have been intolerable if left solely to the society of so vulgar and uncongenial a companion, as the husband

whom her ill-judging parents had inflicted upon the poor creature.

“I was perfectly happy, and should have gone on contentedly with the same state of things till the end of time, or, what was much the same thing, until I had fulfilled my object to my own satisfaction, of making a gentleman of the well-meaning Weichkopf. But some of his relations, jealous, I suppose, of his close friendship with anyone so superior to themselves, or else fearing my growing influence in his establishment, did their best to poison his mind against me. There was an old she-cat of a mother of his, who was always particularly spiteful, and she made herself so very disagreeable, that I told Rosina fairly that either that old termagant must be forbid the house, or I must cease to be expected there. Then in short there was a regular row and disturbance, and the whole place turned topsy-turvy, which is exactly what those old she-cats delight in doing.

“And so, just at that time a vacancy among the travellers for their business happening to occur, Weichkopf—not, as you may imagine, without some hesitation and beating about the bush—ventured to offer me the post. I was not sorry for an excuse thus to get clear out of the discomfort and shindy. I wished to show Weichkopf himself that I bore no

malice against him personally, for it was not his fault, I knew ; but, besides that, I happened to know, through Rosina, that the old mother had been trying all she could to get the very appointment for a young scamp of a nephew of her own, so the pleasure of selling her decided me, and I accepted it off-hand, and I find it suits me admirably. The fact is, the house which I thus honour by serving, have, I believe, already found out that in this, like in everything else—to make a good commercial gent, I mean, which is in plain English what I really am—there is nothing like a thoroughbred one after all.”

## CHAPTER XXI.

## A MODERN ÆNEAS.

“Now then, the anchor’s up, the steam is on, and off she goes,” said *Taraxacum*, as our vessel began to move slowly. “Look! there’s a lark; two more shore boats coming off with passengers at the last moment. They will have a tough pull for it; see how the little chap is gesticulating, and the boat behind has a woman in it; and her luggage must be left behind her, for she has got none. What dawdling sinners all these Italians are! Now then; go it ye cripples! Which will win the race? The small party, though he has a portmanteau with him, has weight in his favour still, though it is almost even betting now which will reach us first. It’s awfully lucky for them that those two cocked-hatted official swells have not left for the shore yet, or by jingo they would have had their race for nothing; now there, it’s neck and neck. Well, if that don’t beat Banagher out of all reckoning! dub me a double-distilled Dutchman!

Do you see who the excited little cove is? Our old friend Gorles! or I'm a ring-tailed Christian." And so it was.

Like a hunted rat he had clambered up on to the deck of our steamer before the boat had scarcely touched her side; his luggage was heaved up after him. He had flung down some money to the boatmen, at which, to my surprise, they seemed for once satisfied, if not grateful, and in a most desperate hurry was evidently making for the under-deck, when he was pulled up short by one of the officers, who demanded his passport. The sudden change from almost terror to relief which his hideous little countenance exhibited was most remarkable when he turned and saw who it was who had thus seized him from behind. His papers were ready and all right, and he was allowed to escape into the depths below—for that escape was his immediate object was evident enough.

Who, then, was pursuing? I looked down over the side, and there in the other boat, now rocking below, was the grand Contessa, attempting also to come on board our vessel. But her way was barred by the other officer, who was standing relentless demanding the Signora's papers—her "*Lascia passare.*" Alas! they were not forthcoming. It was in vain that with the usual noise and wild gesticulations of

her nation she tried every sort of argument, entreaty, and persuasion. We saw her even offer gold to her stern opponent. He visibly wavered; but no, it was done too openly. He shook his head with a deeply-drawn sigh, and, as his comrade now had joined him, he ordered the lady's boatmen to leave their hold. Their own did the same, and in another minute the two boats were left behind tossing wildly in the swell caused by our revolving paddles.

No sooner were we fairly off than Gorles, emerging from his hiding-place below, ran to the stern, jumped up upon the steerage platform, and began bowing, waving his hat, and kissing his hand with the most insulting burlesque of an adieu. He likewise then and there performed a wild dance of defiance and triumph for the express edification, or rather exasperation, of his Dido, from whom, like Pious Æneas, he had thus made his escape.

You may easily imagine my disgust; my first impulse on seeing the little wretch come on board was to get out of the steamer as fast as I could. The very thought of having to sail in the same vessel almost made my heart stop short, and all my blood run the wrong way backwards through my arteries; but I called to mind how essential it was to get on as soon as possible to my poor father, not to mention

the fact of my passport being in the hands of the captain, and not to be recovered until the other end of our passage, and my luggage already at the bottom of the hold. Besides, there was no time for more than the actual thought, for we were then off and away.

But as the little brute jumped and shouted with derisive laughter, I could hardly restrain the intense desire I felt to catch him by his hind legs and pitch him overboard, either to sink to the bottom, from which he should return no more to torment me, or to be rescued and delivered again to the arms—or claws—of his contessa, which, if we might judge by what we could see of her highly-coloured countenance, as long as she remained in sight, would have been anything but an enviable fate.

“Nonsense! Now, my dear fellow,” said De Lyons, walking me almost by force off to the further end of the deck, “why should you put yourself out one way or the other about him at all? Take no notice, as if you did not even know he was on board. He came up in such an awful bustle; he has not seen, or at least recognised, either you or me as yet: perhaps he wont at all. But who is the lady—do you know anything about her? She seems a deuced fine-looking woman, whoever she is.”

“Why, don’t you remember where you and I saw her before?” I asked, as it suddenly flashed through my mind that he and I had never met—for me to recognise him, at least—since that night in the Professor’s rooms. “You surely cannot have forgotten where it was; I knew her again the instant I set eyes upon her.”

*Taraxacum* looked, or pretended to look quite puzzled.

“Why,” I went on, “that is the identical lady who was shown to us as having brought your old Dresden friend Professor Zauber to grief. One would hardly have given him credit for any such *bonne fortune* either.”

“How can you know anything of the Professor’s past history?” he asked, looking at me very curiously.

“How? Why I knew that much by the same way as yourself; though, perhaps, you may have learnt more particulars from him since; but I will take my oath that that is the same identical woman, now in that boat astern of us, who was brought up to appear before us by the dev—, the Party, that night the Professor introduced us—I mean you and myself—to him in his own rooms; though, by the way, how we managed to get there from yours is what I have never, often as I have thought the matter over, yet been able to fathom.”

De Lyons' face assumed a strange, and quite melancholy expression, as, totally unlike himself, he spoke softly and in the most earnest tones:—"My dear Lambard, let me entreat you never to allude to that evening; I have again and again reproached myself with it, and been wretched at the thoughts of what the consequences might have been, and nearly were, to you—well, to us all—from my rashness and thoughtlessness in allowing, or rather persuading, you to submit yourself to so awful a risk. As you value your own happiness, and all you hold dear in this world, never speak of, or even allow your thoughts to dwell upon, that subject. I should never forgive myself the serious wrong that I unwittingly may have done you, or the consequences of my own folly. It has indeed been a most fearful escape, and you can have no conception what a relief to my mind, what an intense pleasure, it has been to me to meet you thus recovered and all well again. Yes; thank God, all well again."

I looked with surprise at my volatile friend; this deep-drawn sentimentality was quite a new phase in his character. He had seized my hand, and stood silent for some two or three minutes holding it tightly in his grasp. Then all of a sudden, in direct answer to my inward thoughts, for I had not uttered them, and

in just his usual voice, he cried, "Ah! by Jove, he has twigged us, and here he comes; but don't let him see that you mind him. Why condescend thus to show your antipathy; he sha'n't bother you: I'll tackle the little beggar myself."

"Holloa, Gorles! How d'ye-do, where have you dropped from? and who was that interesting female you had such a narrow escape from? Your washer-woman, I suppose: couldn't pay your bill, so had to cut for it; ay? But that was rather a dirty trick, too; for soapsuds must be dear in these parts, if one may judge from the way in which that article is economized among the natives."

Gorles's malignant eyes quite scintillated with rage at this familiar greeting. He had come across the deck swaggering towards us, through the little knots of passengers whom his extraordinary behaviour had attracted round him, with a sort of triumphant grin, and a sneer on the angle of his cocked-up nose, as if rather pleased with his own performance, and conscious of having excited a certain amount of curiosity, if not of mysterious interest, among all of those who had witnessed his escape from the unknown lady. There was a general laugh among some of our own countrymen, and others who understood English sufficiently, at De Lyons' impudent inquiry, which made the little

beggar all the more angry, and look as if almost ready to foam at the mouth.

He sputtered out something about carrying such gross impertinence too far, and that it would be well to remember that the name and fair fame of any lady of the highest rank and position in good society were not to be lightly spoken of.

“Highest rank and position,” answered the incorrigible *Taraxacum*; “I am sure I beg her ladyship’s pardon, but I never should have thought it; she must, I am afraid, have been desperately hard up—that is, terribly in love with you, to have chivied you in the way she did to the very ladder of the steamer. Oh, Gorles! you are a desperate Don Juan—you always were, you know.”

By that equivocal compliment Gorles seemed somewhat appeased, and changing to a sort of grin, said, “You are as fond of chaff as ever, I see, De Lyons. I suppose you will never leave off—ah, and Lambard, too—*Mister* Lambard—I beg pardon.” (I had enlarged the eyes of wonder on him, at his thus impudently daring to address himself to me, but he was, if at all, very slightly abashed.) “How do you do?” he went on. “Are you two travelling together? I had no idea that you and my friend De Lyons here were even acquainted.”

I have a vague notion that he actually offered his hand to me, but I pretended to be very much interested in the vane, or whatever the correct nautical term may be for the little weathercock affair stuck on the top of the main-mast, so without condescending to lower my eyes down from that level, and only responding to this very pointed address with a mild grunt and an apology for a nod, I answered shortly that De Lyons and I had been thrown a great deal together at Dresden, as he knew very well, though it might not suit him now to remember it.

Then turning off, "De Lyons," I said, "I shall be reading in the saloon, if you care to join me presently."

## CHAPTER XXII.

“A more sweet-spoken little gentleman, I never wish to listen to.”  
“*Who's your Friend,*” *Old Comedy.*

It was getting on late, and nearly dinner-time, when De Lyons came to the corner sofa, on which I had been snoozing more or less through the morning over a stupid French novel.

“Why, my dear fellow,” he asked, “do you stop down in this stuffy hole, while it is so beautiful and fresh up on deck? I have been smoking many pipes of peace, this last three hours, with that queer genius, Gorles. To hear that creature talk is a caution; and he is all the while so awfully plausible, too.

“He has been making his confessions; and with hardly any pumping, seemed quite ready to give me the whole chapter and verse about his lovely contessa. I am sure he went on for a full hour, at least, describing her many charms and perfections.

“By the way, you were quite right about the Professor; he did know that stunning dame, and was once deeply in love with her. For her sake he had

quarrelled with all his own belongings, thrown up some appointment they had procured for him, squandered his last shilling upon her, and then, as our friend Gorles remarks, she had very naturally and sensibly turned him over, and given him his *cong e* for his pains."

"But how did you know all about that episode of the Professor's early life? I thought you had never met him, except that evening in my room; and, for my part, intimate as I was with him, I certainly never even ever heard him allude to anything of the sort."

"Why, you saw her as well as myself, that very evening," I replied, "and had exactly the same means of guessing that there must be some such story, as I had."

De Lyons put on that most exasperating puzzled look which he always chose to assume whenever I alluded to that subject. It was his regular game to pretend not to understand me; but it was no use arguing or allowing myself to be angry with him, so I let him run on as he liked.

"Gorles," he continued, "of course makes out that the lady, so treacherous to others, was desperately in love with himself; but that he by no means reciprocated the feeling to the same lengths; and though willing to avail himself of what his *bonne fortune* had thrown in his way, had been much too wary to

either ruin or commit himself, as the Professor, whom he affects to sneer at, and others have done before him.

“He tells me that his uncle, an eminent lawyer, as he describes him, though he must be some rascally pettifogging attorney, I guess, has summoned him to come home to England at once, to be married out of hand to some lovely young lady with an enormous fortune, or, at least, expectances.

“The very idea! It set me off laughing in his face, at which ‘the crittur’s dander rose,’ and I had to pacify him.

“I was glad I succeeded, or I should have lost the amusing account of his escape and flight from his lady love, who, as we ourselves witnessed, pursued him down to Leghorn, and into the very sea.

“I remarked to him that I thought that, under the circumstances, the way in which he had publicly insulted that lady was scarcely called for, or justifiable; but he defended his unseemly conduct by alleging that he had been exasperated by her having personally assaulted him, as he slipped not from her arms exactly, but her hands, into the boat which saved him, and, besides, purely from motives of a most disinterested kindness, he had felt it right and necessary to establish for ever an irreparable gulf

between them, and thus entirely extinguish every last spark and hope of future reconciliation.

“The fortunate young heiress, to whose feet he is even now flying on the wings of love, is, he informs me, a near connexion of your own. No, my dear fellow, you need not be alarmed; it is not *Her*.”—I naturally had the same thought, and asked him the question point-blank.

“No; this young lady he has never yet seen, and he does not think that you, or any of your family have either. She has only just arrived, or, may be, is yet expected, from Barbadoes or Jamaica, or some of those West Indian diggings; I am not sure he did not say New Zealand, though—but she is not a niggeress, for I ventured also to make that delicate inquiry—though, on reflection, I will not swear that it was not from the Scilly Islands or the Isle of Man from which she hailed. But I must tell you that it was on the strength of that approaching connexion, that he seemed especially to found the deep regret he expressed at your evident disinclination to fraternize with him.”

“The deuce he did! I suppose he pretended not to be able to account for it.”

“Well, to tell the truth, you have exactly hit it. I do assure you that that little gentleman’s amiable

sentiments towards yourself, expressed as they were to me this day in the tenderest language, would have done credit to the best penny tract ever published by the Propagation Society. It would have brought the tears even to your eyes to have listened to him, as he lamented your unkind treatment of his friendly advances. He could not, he declared, suppose that old schoolboy quarrels still rankled in your mind through the years which have elapsed since you were at Eton together; and yet that since those days, he had never once met, or even heard of you, except when he happened quite accidentally to have been the means of helping you, when you had fallen among thieves at Dresden; but that when you did at last do so, although he had established a friendship with, and, as he flatters himself, been of great use and service to your respected parents, when, upon their arrival at Florence, they were but strangers in the land, you on the very first occasion, and, without the slightest apparent cause, were most pointedly and offensively rude to him."

"And you, *Taraxacum*, knowing, as you happen to do better than anyone else living, all that Gorles has done and carried on against myself and those I care for most in this world, positively could listen to, and, what is more, seem to have received for gospel, and

to have been persuaded by a rodomontade of lies out of your own memory and your own senses—you, who must remember the machinations and supernatural peril from which you yourself were the means of rescuing that poor girl—you, who yourself found me in the strange state I was on that awful night, under the influence of that little demon's will—I am only astonished at your even owning to being so easily made a fool of.”

“That is just exactly it,” replied De Lyons, quite imperturbably; “I am just as much astonished as yourself. I know it all, as you say, and at the time perfectly remembered all that you and I in those days have again and again talked over; but, in spite of all that—in spite of myself, bless your heart!—he somehow talked me round, and I engage to say he would talk you also, or anybody else off their hind legs in no time, so that they shall feel entirely for him, and with him, just as I own that I do at this moment, though all the while knowing what a subtle little rascal it is.”

“Do you, then, mean to say that you did not, when he was pretending to wonder at, and regret my antipathy to him, allude to, or remind him of, the decided part that you yourself had taken in thwarting the very climax of his Dresden atrocities?”

“Of course I did, trust me for that, and for a minute or so I really fancied that he seemed somewhat taken aback. But there, he explained it all away, upon my word I can now hardly tell you how, but somehow so plausibly and almost satisfactorily that I felt quite convinced, while he was talking to me at least, that we must have taken a wrong view of those matters. But, whether or no, it is, you must acknowledge, perfectly true that you and he never did actually meet—no, not even once personally—during all that time. He has that in his favour when he denies having given you just cause for offence. He has no reason to know, or, at any rate, every reason to pretend ignorance, of your connexion, or any special right to interfere with what he alleges to have been his fair and honourable attentions to Miss De Lorme, at Dresden.”

“Don’t speak of her,” I cried, “for Heaven’s sake; pray don’t pollute her name, by raking up those abominable memories, or I shall fall upon, and throttle you in another minute. I tell you I cannot bear it—and as to Gorles and I never having met, why do you insist upon pretending to forget the strange interview which you yourself witnessed, and took part in, in the Professor’s rooms? Now, don’t shake your head and put on that cursed look of misapprehension which I

have noticed on your face whenever I allude to that evening's adventure. For some motive or feeling of cowardice, on your own account you may try to banish it entirely from your own mind, but that will not make me forget, and risk or no risk, you will not persuade me ever to discredit the evidence of my own senses."

I spoke, as I felt, very bitterly and fiercely; but quickly recovering myself, I added, in a more gentle tone, "Confound the fellow, I wish he had never come near this steamer; see how his infernal influence is already over me again, stirring me up thus to quarrel with you, whom only this morning I was so delighted at our meeting. But there, surely the vessel is large enough for Gorles and myself to keep out of one another's way for the next twenty-four hours, or whatever time it may take to reach Marseilles." I turned over to my stupid book again, as a strong hint to De Lyons that I did not care to argue the matter further

But he would not leave me alone; whether as I at one time half suspected, urged by his love of mischief, and in hopes of a scene, or whether having taken the idea into his obstinate head, or from natural good nature, he was so bent on making us friends.

"Well, what am I to say to him?" he persisted; "he is so very anxious, you see; and if you could only get

over your prejudice ; it is always more jolly to be on speaking terms, at least, if not bosom friends with every one. See how he is watching us now. Do, like a good fellow, let me beckon him here to join us."

"I can only wonder," I remarked, "that after the treatment he complains of, he should wish to be on any other terms with me but those of perfect estrangement."

"That is the very thing I said to him myself," rejoined *Taraxacum* ; "and he even owned that it was rather strange and unaccountable, but that in spite of himself, in spite of your repulsive manner, that he was never near you, without being conscious of a strong and irresistible attraction towards you. He declared plainly, that he would rather gain you as a friend and constant companion, than any other individual he had ever known ; that something told him that it was to be his destiny, if he could be happy enough once to establish a reconciliation and reciprocity of feeling with you, to serve you, to fight for you, and that he could imagine no happier end than to even die in some mortal struggle for your sake."

"Fiddle-de-dee," I cried, scornfully ; "I wonder what next indeed ; though if he were not such a thundering liar, as I believe him to be, and such an attraction really did exist in his composition, it might

be accounted for by the natural working of that portion of my cerebral organization of which he became dishonestly possessed, in *rapport* with its own original root, which still remains with me. You remember, perhaps, the Professor's theory on that point, at any rate."

"Perhaps so," answered De Lyons, with a long peculiar whistle; "that idea never struck me; though, by Jove, now you mention it, I think you may be right. But in that case, why not cultivate him? It may be really to your own advantage; anyhow, if I do bring Gorles up to you, you will not go and knock a fellow on the head who entertains such friendly sentiments towards yourself, or try to pitch the temporary possessor of part of your own mental powers overboard, or any games of that sort, will you?"

"God forbid!" I answered, with a shudder. "You know full as well as I do, De Lyons, what would be the consequences to myself were I even to lay a finger upon him—though to serve the evil ends of himself and his special patron I dare say he will try his best to make me do so. Well there, as you insist upon it, if your dearly-beloved friend, as he seems to have become, chooses to come this way, and speak to me, I will answer him, and do my best to keep my tongue within the bounds of bare politeness; but pray don't

bring him up with any special explanation, or palaver of reconciliation."

Thus the pertinacious fellow carried his point, and invited Gorles to come and sit down next on the other side of himself at dinner, so that afterwards, while drinking our coffee upon deck, we found ourselves thrown, as it were, naturally together. Towards myself the little wretch lost no opportunity of being civil enough—indeed, obtrusively so—for more than once he pointedly appealed to me for an opinion in some of his arguments with De Lyons; but he only got very short answers out of me, for I was not paying much attention to either of them, as the two sat jabbering there, discussing all manner of subjects. One remark, however, of Master Gorles I did think worth noting as peculiarly characteristic. De Lyons had mentioned the name of some man he had met somewhere, asking Gorles whether he happened to know him?

No. He never had heard of him; why?

"Oh; I was only calling to mind rather a queer trick he was said to have played about some money which he won from a poor young fellow who was more than half an idiot; but as you don't know any of the parties concerned, of course the story can have no interest to you."

“I don’t see that,” cried Gorles, quite eagerly, and pulling a great note-book out of his pocket. “I never miss the chance of getting a story against anyone, whether I know him or not; one may perhaps meet with him hereafter, you see, and then who knows but what that story may turn up useful some day or the other.”

De Lyons and I merely exchanged one glance of our eyes, and Gorles saw that glance distinctly; but so far from appearing to be at least disconcerted by the disgust therein conveyed, he positively stuck up the nose of pride, and his face wrinkled into a smile, or rather grin, of self-satisfaction, as if he had uttered a sentiment of which he had every reason to be proud. I also did really almost feel a spurious admiration for such audacious effrontery.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## A COLD RECEPTION, BUT A WARM FAREWELL.

It was quite dark by the time we steamed into the harbour at Genoa, so that we could scarcely distinguish the crowd of clumsy shore boats which almost before our anchor had run out were swarming round both sides of the vessel, clashing against one another, while their owners clamoured and fought among themselves for the possession of those passengers whose voyage was come to an end; or for those who, like De Lyons and myself, though bound for *Marseilles*, had taken the precaution to have our passports viséd, so as to allow us to go on shore to that proud City of Palaces, whose thousands of lights, rising in tier above tier like a vast amphitheatre around us, were brilliantly reflected in the dark water below.

Three hours only the steamer was to remain in port, as we were emphatically warned by the chief mate, as he examined and handed the passes to each individual as he descended the side ladder. Gorles,

who had expressed his gracious intention of accompanying us, had omitted to have his papers thus made out *en règle*. A terrible altercation ensued, in which his antagonist, whether rightfully or not I cannot say, for there was much confusion, and the light of the solitary lantern was none of the strongest, accused Gorles of spitting at him.

*Taraxacum* and I had taken our places, with some half-dozen others, in one of the boats below, rejoicing thus to have got rid of him. But our joy was premature. Just as we shoved off, and were almost perhaps a yard or thereabouts clear of the ship's side, something came bundling down the steps, and sprang after us. It was Gorles, who had taken advantage of his small size to slip between the legs of his opponent, and so escaped.

Though he managed to jump just hard enough to come with his knees and shins upon the sharp edge of our boat's stern, he must have tumbled backwards into the depths below if I had not instinctively made a clutch at him, and there contrived to hold him fast by one arm for what seemed like two or three minutes. I cannot exactly say how long it might have been that I held him thus poised between wind and water; but I had time distinctly to recognise and repel the temptation which rose strongly within me, to leave my hold

and let him drop, and so rid myself of him for ever.

But second and better thoughts instantly succeeded, and I lugged him in with such a hearty swing that he fell floundering in amongst all our legs in the bottom of the boat, from whence he had hardly recovered himself by the time we had arrived alongside the landing-place.

I should have reproached and loathed myself for the rest of my days if I had yielded to the horrible temptation of that momentary thought. Yet I was not the less irritated and vexed with myself for having missed such a chance; particularly when, having at last struggled on to his legs again, Gorles began to overwhelm me with thanks and protestations, which bored me exceedingly, so that I could not resist letting fling at him :

“I thought it was a great Newfoundland dog, who knew no better, jumping after us, or I shouldn't have stretched a finger out to help you, I promise you. It would have served you quite right if you had tumbled in head over ears, only we should have had to pull you all damp and slimy in amongst us. You must have caught your shin-bones a tolerable crack, which I hope you relished.”

Having no luggage with us, we were allowed to

pass easily through the custom-house gates, Gorles having his lie ready, to the effect that his name was included in the passport of one of us other Ingleses. He was intent upon doing the honours of the place to us, for it seemed that he had been there before, and was for taking De Lyons and myself to some grand café, on the splendours and attractions of which he largely dilated.

I managed, however, to give them the slip, and putting myself at once in the hands of one of those polyglot touters who are always hanging about the quays and landing-places in search of prey, started off directly for the Strada Cattarina, in which I had ascertained that the De Lormes were living. I had offered to bring a letter, or any message from my aunt, announcing my intention of landing, and paying the Colonel a passing visit, as I knew I should have the opportunity of doing.

But she had thrown cold water upon the idea, alleging that it was very doubtful whether the steamer would call in at Genoa at all, and if so, certainly not for anything like sufficient time to allow of any one landing. I saw what the old lady was at, so did not take the trouble to ask her even for the address, but made our courier find it out for me in casual conversation with Harrison.

We went straight up a very steep ascent, by narrow alleys and passages, dark and odoriferous, not the least according to my preconceived notions of the grand streets, lined by magnificent marble palaces, triumphs of engineering and architecture, as described in all the guide and hand books. But I had not much time to indulge in reflections of disappointed taste, for we very soon arrived at the house, or I suppose I must call it "palazzo," of which I was in search, and having been admitted by the porter, and mounting a splendid old white marble staircase wide enough for any two full-sized wagons to pass on, found ourselves at the door of Colonel De Lorme's apartments.

I had almost hoped to have dropped in upon them unannounced and unexpected, as a pleasant surprise, but that was not to be. Twice I had to ring the loud-sounding bell before the servant answered the summons, who having looked me well over by the light of a lamp which he had brought with him, rather suspiciously desired to know my business with the Colonello at that hour. At first he declared that he was engaged, then that he was asleep, which I had no doubt was true, and appealed from me, who did not understand him at the pace he went on chattering, to my attendant *commissionaire* to know

whether I could not come again in the morning. As he utterly refused to let me in without sending in my name, losing all patience I gave him a card, and desired him in my best Italian *prendere* that in to his padrone, and to *guardar acuto*, that is, “look sharp about it.” He took the precaution of shutting us carefully outside, but through a grating which he left open in the door, we could watch him and his lamp shuffling unsteadily along like a will-of-the-wisp, now on one side, now the other, of the whole length of a very long corridor or passage, round a corner at the end of which we could hear him open and close a door, and then all was silence and complete darkness. After a few minutes the door, which we could hear, but not see, opened again; there was a light step, and a whisk of petticoats. ‘Gad! how my heart beat at that sound! and then the door round the corner again sounded, and the will-of-the-wisp came flickering back towards us. I was admitted, and conducted to the presence of the colonel. He was alone when I entered, but there was another chair on the opposite side of the low reading-lamp, on the soft cushion of which I could feel a gentle warmth, as having greeted my uncle, I sat down in it. At the corner of the table lay a book, with a fresh sprig of jessamine placed as a mark between its still

open pages. I have that sprig of jessamine now in my possession.

My uncle had evidently been just roused from his evening snooze, from which he had scarcely collected himself sufficiently to bid me an ordinary welcome. He seemed embarrassed, and not to know what exactly to make of my unexpected visit.

I, of course, gave him the last news of my aunt, and announced her intended return, accompanied by my mother, from Florence.

“Oh! ah! very well; very much delighted, of course, to see you again, my dear boy; but ought not you to be pushing on, so as to reach your poor father, laid up there as he is all alone, as soon as possible? I suppose you wont be staying here at Genoa more than just to rest for the night.”

I informed him that no efforts or pushing forward on my part could possibly put me faster on my way than by going on as I intended by the *Messagerie* boat, which had brought me, and would be starting again for Marseilles in about three hours.”

“Oh, to be sure—oh! in three hours she leaves, does she?—very often gets clear and starts before the time they announce.”

Then ensued a long and awkward pause. After a bit, I screwed up courage to ask my uncle if he was all alone.

“Alone? yes to be sure I am. Your aunt, as you know, started off at a moment’s notice, and left me here by myself. I dine down at the restaurant: very sorry to have nothing to offer you: there is nothing in the house but a case of sardines, and that was finished last night.”

“Thank you, uncle, very much; but I dined before I came ashore capitally. How is Ferdy—have you heard from him lately from Dresden?”

“Ferdy is not at Dresden. We have nothing at all to do with Dresden now; wish we never had. Ferdy is gone to school in England. Idle young dog—never writes. When he does no one can read his scrawl. Now his mother is away, I shall make neither head nor tail of the boy’s letters.”

“Well, but you have Katie with you,” I said, with a catch in my throat. “I hope that she is by this time quite well and strong again. Am I not to have the pleasure of seeing her this evening?” I added, growing desperate.

“Seeing Katie? Miss De Lorme?—no; she is gone to bed, still very weak and ailing—cannot stand the least excitement—you must excuse her. The fact is, that we are obliged to treat her still quite as an invalid.”

Then the old gentleman yawned profoundly, pull-

ing out his watch three times, at least, within five minutes, and then-remarked, "It has been a great pleasure, of course, my dear Frank, to have caught this glimpse of you; very kind of you to have called and brought me tidings of your aunt, hurried and anxious to get on as you, of course, are. I don't wish to be inhospitable, but it takes a very long time to get down to the waterside from hence, and it would never do, you know, to miss your steamer. What! are you going? Well, you are right not to run it too close. Good-by, then, my dear boy—God bless you. Let us hope that you will find your father not so bad, after all, as we have feared. Mind you write, and give us full particulars. Good-by."

I shook his hand without another word. As I looked him straight in the face, I fancied I saw a shade of, perhaps, shame, perhaps remorse, as though, in spite of himself, he could not entirely forget that it was through my means that his darling child, whom he had but then refused to let me see, had been restored to him, and, in fact, saved from the grave, or even worse. I could not trust myself to speak, but slamming the door of the room violently after me, found myself in profound darkness. Luckily, in his agitation, the old fellow had omitted to ring or call to the servant for a light.

I was groping my way along by the wall, when a door softly opened; I felt a touch, and a soft voice whispered my name. I can hardly realize the thought, even now, as I look back, that it was indeed really her; that I actually held her tightly pressed against my own breast. As I felt her arms folded round my own neck, I could feel the darling child's little heart throbbing; and my cheek was wet with the moisture of her tears.

"Oh, Frank!" she whispered, with a suppressed sob, which I was half afraid would break out, and betray us, "Oh, Frank! is it indeed yourself, come back to me at last? I have felt sure the last three days that you were coming, but all to-day I have had a strange and nervous feeling that it might not be you, Frank, after all, but as if that dreadful Mr. Gorles was again coming within range of me."

"Hush, darling Katie," I said, "you must not give way to such fears and fancies; he shall never come near to harm you again." Heaven forgive me! The poor girl hardly suspected how truly her natural instincts of terror served her; but there was no use in my telling her, you know.

"But why," I asked, "did you run away out of the room when I was coming?"

"Papa did not let me see your card; but when he

had looked at the name himself, said it was a stranger coming to see him on business, and that I had better go to my own room; but I knew the sound of your step, and I heard your voice as you spoke to the servant at the door. It is much too bad. Papa, though he is always very, very kind and gentle, is not true, I should say, fair, to me. Hush! who is that? There is some one at the end of the passage. Good-by—God bless and keep you, dearest Frank.” Another close pressure, another last——well never mind, and she was gone.

What would I have given for only one minute’s sight of her bonny face, one deep look into her large brown eyes, before I thus lost her, as I felt, for ever? But it was so pitch dark, that when she had left me, I was not at all sure in which direction the outer door lay.

A shuffling of feet, and a sort of sound between a yawn and a snuffle convinced me that there was some person there sure enough, though I had imputed any such presence entirely to poor Katie’s excited imagination.

“Who’s that?” I asked, very softly, in the vernacular.

“C’est moi, signore, his excellenza’s commissionnaire, whom monsieur desired ici restare.”

Of course,—it was my polyglot conductor, whom

the servant had left to sit in a niche by the door, not even vouchsafing him the lamp for a companion.

I think he had sensibly passed that dreary time in gentle slumbers, or, at any rate, did not seem to have overheard, and certainly could not have seen anything of our hasty—I was going to say interview, but that is, sticking to exact truth as I wish to do, exactly what it wasn't.

If our whispers or any other gentle sounds had reached him, I can only say that the fellow's countenance, into which I stared most searchingly under the full glare of a street lamp as I tipped him for his services, did not in the least betray him.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

“I had a dream, which was not all a dream.”—BYRON.

NOTWITHSTANDING my worthy uncle's solicitude on the subject, I was back on board the steamer a full hour and more before I need have been, and long before any of the other passengers had returned.

When De Lyons and his friend Gorles did at last arrive, only just before we started, with two or three other kindred spirits, with whom they had fraternized from among our fellow passengers—a brace of Yankees, and a young fellow, who vaunted himself greatly as being traveller for some dry goods firm in the City—I suppose *Taraxacum* now felt that he had a right to be “Hail, fellow! well met” with any gent in that line of life.

This lively lot had been, by their own account, enjoying “no end of a lark” ashore—i.e., as far as I could make out, making considerable snobs of themselves. A heavy supper at the Café de la Concorde, a row in the public billiard-rooms belonging to that

establishment, and a fight between Gorles and the head *garçon*, seemed to have composed the principal features of their evening's adventures.

Gorles had brought back with him four bottles of Asti wine, and a huge box of preserved fruits and confections, almost the size of a moderate oyster-barrel, as a special thank-offering to myself, for having, as he declared, so nobly saved his precious life.

I wasn't going to accept the sticky nastiness, nor anything else from him. I told him plainly that I desired neither his thanks nor his presents; and as soon as we had steamed clear out of the harbour, and lost sight of the lights of Genoa, I turned into my berth in the small cabin which had been allotted to myself and De Lyons conjointly.

I had been asleep for some time—fast asleep and dreaming. I dreamt that I was in a great ship—which was just the real fact, you know—and that we were tossed in a most tremendous tempest—which was anything but the fact, for it was as calm as possible, and we were going along full steam as steadily as possible; but in my dream we couldn't make way at all, the more we steamed and crowded on sail, the more we only floated backwards stern first, and we rolled and pitched over and over in the most fearful manner; then all the passengers and all the ship's crew

gathered together for a consultation on the deck, the result of which was, that the mate who took the passports, went round to us all, and asked if there was any gentleman answering to the name of Jonah on board, for, if there were, that it had been decided that he must be chucked overboard to the whales, who were hanging about all round the steamer in immense numbers, bellowing impatiently for their expected prey; then it all of a sudden struck me that it must be Gorles who was the cause of our danger and detention, the special object of Divine wrath and vengeance; and I felt it to be my duty publicly to denounce him as such.

All agreed unanimously to my view, and there was a general rush to catch and cast him overboard into the boiling waters, all among the whales, without a moment's further delay; but he ran to me, and clinging round my knees, piteously entreated me to save him. He tried to bribe me with the promises of whole cart-loads full of dried fruits and sweetmeats, an hundreds of bottles of Asti wine; but I kicked him away ruthlessly, and told him that he must certainly die for his sins, and that I was glad to see him thus paid out, for Katie's sake. "Katie De Lorme shall be thus avenged: yes, Katie's sake!" I shouted at the top of my voice. "Ah, you vile little toad, you

never guessed that I was with Katie herself this very evening at Genoa, and I promised that you should never harm her again."

This last sentence still ran out its length upon my tongue after I was awake, having sprung up in the excitement of my dream, and knocked my head a most thundering crack against the top of my berth.

"The deuce you did!" uttered with a low chuckle, was the sound which struck my astonished ears before I had scarcely had time to recover the crack, or could realize where I was.

"The deuce you did! that's what you were after, when you gave us the slip this evening."

There was no light, but I knew the voice in a minute. I rolled myself out of my berth, stepping with my big toe right into *Taraxacum's* wide open mouth as he lay snoring below me. He woke up cursing horribly, and laid hold of me tight by the leg, but I made a grab at the little rascal, for it was Gorles himself sure enough, just as he was slipping through the door, and pinned him tight.

"What are you doing in here?" I asked.

"What's the row?" grumbled De Lyons, still only half awake. "What tricks have you been playing? You shouldn't shove things into a fellow's mouth; you might choke him, you know."

Gorles couldn't escape, so he determined to take the bull by the horns, and make the best of it.

"Why," he said, "I heard some one shouting and holloaing so loud through the partition that I thought I had better come to see what was the matter, and therefore I peeped into this door softly; you were talking away all manner of wild nonsense, so I thought the best way was to answer you as nearly as I could, which I have always been told is the right thing to pacify people, and soothe them down quietly."

"Confound him," said De Lyons. "Who is it? What is he after? Has he been rifling the pockets of our clothes, or come after our watches? Call the steward, and make him lock the thief up somewhere till morning, or just thump his head hard against the door-post, that we may have a mark to swear to when the light comes."

I was within an ace of acting upon this advice, when I luckily remembered the consequences, which, in the confusion of the moment, had almost escaped my mind, and, relaxing my hold, he scuttled off just like a rat into his own hole, which was in the next cabin to our own. I took uncommon good care to lock ourselves in for the rest of the night.

Next morning, that aggravating fellow De Lyons,

having first carefully counted over his money, his studs, watch-chain gimcracks in which he rejoiced, and other valuables, which, as I could not help remarking, betrayed his real opinion of the friend whose cause he chose so stoutly to advocate, positively began to take his part, and declared that, for the life of him, he could see nothing particularly strange, or unaccountable in Gorles having thus mysteriously turned up in our cabin, as it was only quite natural, on hearing a great row and shouting, that he should come in to ascertain—if it were from no higher motive than common curiosity—which of us two was murdering the other. And thus backed up, the little brute had the audacity to come up to me after breakfast to explain, and to laugh off, what he was pleased to call our “rather funny” night’s adventure, as a good joke. At the same time, offering to give me his honour—and you should just have seen the diabolical grin with which he alluded to that precious stake—that though he heard me calling out and talking, that it was all so incoherent and unconnected that he had not the slightest idea what it was all about, and that I had betrayed no secrets or confidences.

I could only long impatiently for our arrival at Marseilles, when I hoped to escape and be free from

his hateful presence, which oppressed me; and to make the time pass quicker, and to keep out of his way, I buried myself in my stupid French novel; it was one that I had snatched up haphazard from my mother's table just as I was starting — starchly proper, of course, and dreadfully sentimental. Why is it, I wonder, that all French novels, unless they are very improper or very immoral, should always be so abominably stupid?

## CHAPTER XXV.

“Summā diligentīā per Galliam viam prosecutus.”—*CÆS. Com.*

“Why am I to be persecuted by Gorles on the top of a diligence?”

PRINTER'S DEVIL.

ARRIVED at Marseilles, De Lyons and I had lost no time in landing, and getting ourselves and our traps cleared through the then unavoidable nuisances of those social purgatories, the passport offices and the Douane.

We had left Gorles behind us, again engaged in a hot contest, this time with the steward, to whom he refused to pay the usual fee, upon the plea that although he had engaged a berth, he had not taken anything like two francs' worth of sleep out of it. He declared that he had not, indeed, slept a wink. He did not say why, but I believe that he had been prowling about the steamer all night, like a cat, from cabin to cabin.

We went at once to the diligence-office to secure places. The Great Southern Railway of France was not at that time completed below Châlons, except for a few leagues just out of Marseilles. There was only

one diligence which started for Paris that afternoon, taking the rail as far as it went, and then going on through the night and next day as far as Lyons. Every place in the *coupé intérieur* and the *rotonde* was engaged, but the three places in the *banquette* on the top, were to be had.

“By all means let us take them all three,” I said directly, and paid down the money.

“Gorles will gladly take the odd one off our hands,” said De Lyons. “I know he intends to come on at once without stopping.”

“Does he?” I replied, “that is unlucky; for with the very stout *conducteur*, who will occupy more than twice his proper space, there will not be a bit more room than we two shall require to be comfortable, with only just space for our rugs and coats and paraphernalia between us.”

“Don’t let us tell Gorles,” said the perfidious *Taraxacum*, delighted at the idea. “I dare say he will never think of coming after a place until it is time to start, and it will be such a jolly sell for him.”

“I think we have dodged our worthy friend now,” I remarked, as we went on our way much rejoicing and contented in spirit; and refreshed, as I was, before long, corporeally, by a warm bath and a capital feed at the *Hôtel des Empereurs*, I was even more

effectually renovated mentally, by the thoughts of so soon leaving my *bête noire*, and his evil influences with a twelve hours' start at least, behind me.

He came in while we were still at our repast. We could not help his joining us there, because we were all at one public table in the *salle à manger*.

De Lyons by this time owned that he was an odious little beast, and that he had had enough of his company; but he sat himself down by us, and joined in our conversation. We did not, however, much mind him, consoling ourselves, as we were, with the thought of how soon we should be rid of his unwelcome company altogether.

Not a word did we volunteer about the diligence, but *Taraxacum* dug his elbow so smartly into my ribs that I nearly yelled out, when the obsequious *maitre d'hôtel* came in kindly to suggest that if any of *les messieurs Anglais* intended departing for Paris, it would be well to see about securing their places without delay.

Gorles started off at once, and we chuckled unrestrainedly to think of the disappointment in store for him.

He did not return; and by-and-by it was time for us to be off, and down we went in high glee to the diligence-office.

We had tossed for the corner seat, and I had won it; De Lyons, therefore, had to crawl up first, and had reached the lofty height, when he uttered a loud exclamation of astonishment. I was up in less than a moment behind him. I nearly fell back again on to the pavement below; there, snugly ensconced in the further corner of the *banquette*, reposed Gorles, grinning at us, and slowly wagging his head in solemn derision.

We were beaten, there was no mistake about it, though we loudly protested, and showing our tickets, proved that although only two persons, we had paid for, and were entitled to all three places for ourselves. That cunning imp had bargained with and paid the *conducteur* for his own special place, who, as he explained the arrangement, shrugged his shoulders over his ears, and declaimed against the selfishness and *exigence* of all English, declaring that we were only too fortunate in having *un gentil petit monsieur comme celui-là*, to share the space with us instead of himself, who was *gros*, and would have taken up double the room.

We were forced to submit; but so far revenged ourselves upon the *conducteur*, who once or twice in the course of that bitter night attempted to come in himself: that we stoutly resisted, he had sold his right,

and in vain appealed to our compassion ; so the wretched man had to stay out in the cold, either balancing himself on a moiety of the very small perch in front, alongside of the driver, or clinging on by stray straps to the steps or lamp-irons of the vehicle as best he could.

Gorles himself resisted all such attempts even more strenuously than ourselves, flying at him like a very fiend incarnate ; as, indeed, during that awful journey he did at every individual he came near.

Awful indeed, and ever memorable that journey certainly was ! I verily believe that if I were to live to be a hundred, the impressions that were vividly stamped upon my mind during those three days on the road between Marseilles and Paris will never be effaced. Though now some years have passed, and I have been to so many places, and done so many things which I have entirely forgotten, every scene, every little incident of that journey is as fresh in my memory, as if it had all happened yesterday.

The continual rows we had to go through, the perpetual squabbles, the evil blood that was stirred up by that vindictive little monster through the whole course of our route, and the way he involved us, against our wills, and yet without being able to help ourselves, in his quarrels, until matters were brought

to the tremendous climax which I shall have to tell you directly, were really what I never could have even imagined or believed, unless I had myself witnessed and suffered them.

Not that he attempted to quarrel with us; on the contrary, the more I snubbed Gorles, and plainly expressed my opinion as to his outrageous conduct, and the disgrace which he brought, not only on himself but upon us, his most unwilling companions—De Lyons even resorting to downright threats of thrashing him, unless he would shut up and behave himself more like a gentleman,—but all the more savage we became with him, the more obsequious and exaggerated were his reiterated protestations of attachment and gratitude towards us both, but myself particularly.

It was more often than not, by way of being on our behalf, that he deemed it necessary to fly at, fight with, and in the coarsest terms abuse every person he came across.

De Lyons declared that he really thought it must be the effect of my wrath and indignation acting on his brain, through the sympathy of the perverted supply of animal pluck which he had so long ago purloined from myself. For my part, I did not see but that there might be more truth than he per-

haps intended in the surmise, for I had the words of the old Professor in my mind, when he foreboded of Gorles, that he might probably become the victim of pugnacious impulses which would prove disproportioned to his size ; and if he was only obeying the impulses which he had described to *Taraxacum*, for “ serving, fighting for, and even falling in my defence,” I in return felt conscious of a rather ungrateful desire for seeing him fairly smashed, like a venomous little wasp as he was.

To begin with, then. We were settled in our places, and on the point of starting from Marseilles, when row number one came off with a poor fruit-seller in the street.

I had myself selected and paid—half-a-franc, I think it was—for a pomegranate. “ Bother the thing !” I said, as I tasted it, “ it is not ripe.” I had hardly made the remark when Gorles snatched the fruit from my very mouth, wriggled his little legs out without undoing the apron, which was by that time settled and strapped across us, jumped down almost upon the very head of the astonished fruit-seller, upsetting his pomegranates, regardless of which he loudly demanded another in exchange, and even two for the price which had been paid, and which, entirely upon his own authority, he declared to be ex-

orbitant. The poor man naturally resisted, the crowd took his part, and we should have probably run a chance of being pulled down amongst them, as deserving victims of public indignation, if the postilion had not at that moment luckily cracked his whip, and started his horses with a shout, while Gorles had to scramble up again as best he could.

De Lyons, by the way, had taken the advantage of slipping into his corner place, which nothing would induce him to give up again.

But thus it was that we set out on that inauspicious journey, among the execrations of the populace. Only a fitting prelude, as it proved, was that start to what we were to undergo. At each town we stopped at to change horses did Gorles somehow contrive to get up a quarrel; fighting with every post-master on the road, against all of whom he invariably swore to lodge detrimental complaints before the authorities, for the inferiority of their horses, the harness, the roads, or some fault or another.

It was the same with every single one among the other passengers in the diligence itself, all of whom, as far as we could make out, he had gratuitously insulted before we had arrived, by making faces at, and even offensive observations upon them, in at the windows of the several compartments of the vehicle.

One old French gentleman in the *coupé* he had rendered perfectly furious by crushing in the top of his hat as he was swinging himself down from above, just as the old gentleman had put his head out of the side window to make an observation ; and grinning with all his might, had offered him, instead of an apology, a sticky sweetmeat, and then a halfpenny cigarette, by way of compensation for his awkwardness.

So with every fresh postilion in succession, the rows and personal abuse that ensued, and in which we, of course, came in for our share, were something too awful to sit by and listen to.

The larger the man—and it has already been justly remarked by one of the very first among English authors, that among the French the smallest men appear to be always selected for soldiers, as the largest are, or rather were, by an equally invariable rule, taken for the postilions—the more gigantic the postilion, the more virulently did Gorles always seem impelled to attack, insult, and abuse him in proportion. “If the scoundrel had said another single word” he told us on more than one occasion, “I would have jumped down and pitched into him.”

“Do,” said De Lyons ; “I dare say he wouldn't dare really to ‘stick up’ to you ; you can skilfully catch

him a crack in the eye, you know, or double the fellow up when he leans down, as of course he must to reach you."

But though thus exhorted, as we hoped, to go in for his own inevitable annihilation, he never seemed inclined to actually carry his oft-repeated threats into execution, but contented himself with a more strategic species of revenge; for I perceived him, when he fancied that De Lyons and myself were both asleep in the middle of the night, quietly opening the little window pane of the glass front, and maliciously injuring his adversary on the driving perch in front by cutting sundry slits with his penknife in the skirts of the poor fellow's coat behind, and then pouring the remnants of his wine-bottle, and putting cigar-ends and other filth, into his pockets. Still, all the while, as I have said, his attentions to myself were even more odious than his enmity against all the rest of the world.

He had stowed away his box of sweetmeats somewhere under our legs, and at intervals during the night he would insist upon producing them.

"Would I condescend to accept one, only one? They were so excellent he was sure I should like them. Would I, to oblige him, only just try one small one?"

“If you offer them to me again,” I said at last, utterly losing all patience, “I will pitch the whole lot of them out into the road.”

De Lyons also entirely refused them, alleging that it made him quite sick even to look at such things, “on a journey, too, of all occasions to think of,” as he added contemptuously: but when Gorles was asleep, I heard Master *Taraxacum* picking away and munching at them the whole night through.

The beastly things somehow got shaken out all over the place in the course of the night. I found myself sitting upon a great sticky preserved apricot; and when we at last arrived at that journey's end, two large pieces of candied orange-peel had insinuated themselves into my very boots, as I found when I came to draw them off.

Though all through the night I was constantly waking from uneasy snatches of sleep, feverish, and parched with thirst, and was glad to get a draught of water, or anything to drink at the post-houses when we stopped to change, I would rather have choked, than accept any of his Asti wine, which he would insist upon offering me, only to be disdainfully refused—I would have none of it. It was only by mere snatches during that weary night that I managed to get any sleep at all. Once I woke up to

find Gorles's heels actually resting upon my shoulder, while his head was comfortably pillowed in De Lyons' lap, as he had stretched himself lengthways in the space between us. Another time, having wriggled and curled himself up like a hedgehog, you may guess my indignation when I found my hat, which had slipped from the strap above us, squashed out of all recognizable form completely under him.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## A FRENCH FIRE-BRAND.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock on the second evening that we arrived, at last, lumbering into Lyons ; and all turned out, or rather in, for supper.

There Gorles thought fit to crown all his iniquities, and to bring shame upon us and our country, by deliberately sitting down in the public *salle-à-manger*, pulling off his boots, and then his stockings, which latter he proceeded to hang upon the fender bars to warm, while he positively came, and sat down bare-footed at the table, to join ourselves and the rest of the diligence passengers at supper.

Two French ladies, who were evidently of a certain position in good society, showed their unmistakable disgust, by at once rising and leaving the room.

Their companion, the elderly French gentleman, whom Gorles had already insulted, also rose, and calling in the *maitre d'hotel*, sternly insisted that all of us three Englishmen should be at once compelled to quit the table.

It was in vain that De Lyons and I attempted to explain, and to repudiate all connexion with our disgraceful little brute of a fellow-countryman.

The whole company were against us, and declared that we were three travelling companions and friends, all equally implicated in the continual squabbles, which had been going on the whole way up, and now equally responsible for the last indecent outrage to their feelings as a body.

We did remonstrate with Gorles in no very measured terms; but he, more than three-parts screwed by his repeated potations of Asti wine, which he had been tipping at during the whole journey, besides sundry reinforcements of cognac at the places where we had stopped for our breakfast and dinner, sat stolidly defiant.

At last, he declared that, to oblige us, he would put on his stockings, and try to behave himself more decently; but that he would see the whole lot of beastly foreigners "blowed" for all that he cared, as to what they might think, or say of him.

But just as he had uttered this sentiment, four or five of the company gathering round together, suddenly laid hands upon him, and in spite of his kicking, scratching, and even biting, like a cat in a trap, he was in no time fairly bundled out of the room, and

his filthy stockings and boots, taken up with the tongs, flung out after him.

They then requested us to follow him, but as we stood up together prepared for an assault, they seemed to think better of it; but resorted to the meaner expedient of requesting the *maitre d'hotel* not to allow us to be served with supper or any other refreshment, although we might insist upon keeping our places at the table.

I was already angry and sore enough in my temper without this additional bother and aggravation; but I tried hard to keep some command over myself, as I again in the plainest and most explicit terms asserted that we had nothing to do with, nor were in the least degree responsible for, the conduct of the disgusting little wretch.

That though we begged entirely to repudiate all connexion with him, yet, as Englishmen, we had no hesitation in owning that we were ashamed, and would even go so far as to offer an apology and expression of regret to the present company, that they should have been thus annoyed and insulted, by any one calling himself our countryman; though as individuals, we could not allow ourselves to be implicated in the disgrace.

De Lyons, by the way, I fancy as a clencher to the

truthfulness of this protest, added: "Can anybody suppose that if we had really been the fellow's friends, that we should have stood by so quietly to see you, messieurs, shove him out of the room as you did (and serve him right, too)? Why, double the whole lot of you together would not have been able to do it. The very fact of our not standing by him ought, and must be proof enough that we certainly did not consider that we had anything more to do with him than yourselves."

To this, I must own, rather unnecessarily defiant speech, the old gentleman, who though he had not been amongst those who were personally concerned in expelling Gorles, had all along taken the most vehement part against us, responded with a shrug, and in a tone of the most ineffable contempt:

"*Au contraire*, messieurs, the forbearance of which you vaunt yourselves would seem to prove rather that you are not only liars, but poltroons and blustering cowards also, as all you Englishmen really are."

This was too much. I snatched up a heavy plate which lay near me to fling across the table at his head; —but he was old and unwieldy, and I had just presence of mind enough to stay my hand in time.

Every man round the table sprung up in general confusion.

“Monsieur,” I said, with as much calmness as I could assume, “your advanced years and grey hairs give you the advantage of being able to offer gross insults, which a younger man would not dare to venture upon.”

“Ha! ha!” he laughed, tauntingly. “What would you? I know the real worth of your courage, and that of all your countrymen, better than you perhaps imagine. All Englishmen, though like yourself loud in threats, will excuse themselves from fighting, because when the moment of danger arrives they remember that it is ‘unchristian’ to do so. Let us prove your big words: for example, my nephew, the captain here, will, I am sure, on my part as well as his own, repeat my opinion of you, and stand fully answerable for any consequences.”

Among the passengers there was a military-looking fellow belonging to some dragoon regiment, as I knew by his uniform, in which, like all Frenchmen, he thought fit to travel. He had hitherto been rather a quiet looker-on without taking any prominent part in the shindy; but upon being thus invoked, he deliberately came round from his place at the further end of the table, walked close up to me, all the while twirling his long moustaches, and making a sort of half-salute, thus delivered himself slowly and very

distinctly: "Messieurs, upon the part of my un<sup>c</sup>le, M. le Viscomte de Tison (that was the old gentleman's name) I have the honour to record his opinion that you are liars, and, like all your countrymen, poltroons and boasting cowards; and also upon my own part," he added, changing his language into very tolerable English, "I pronounce you to be no more nor less than what one would call, in your own tongue, three all-the-fact British snobses."

I had remained standing to receive him, and when he had thus finished his little compliment, without vouchsafing one single word in reply, before he knew what I was at, I had the hero fast by the lobe of his ear, and just marching him down to the end of the room, passed him out into the hall by a very gentle application of my toe, and quietly shut the door upon him.

It was by no means a hard or malicious kick which I administered, but rather a courteous and formal kick of ceremony, if I may so describe it. "Now," I said, turning to the remaining company, "if there is any other gentleman present who cares to come within reach of my fist, and repeat the sentiment of M. le viscomte, or M. le capitaine his nephew, I give him notice that I shall not trouble myself to treat him with the same tender consideration, but simply

knock him down at once." Then, after a pause, during which nobody seemed willing to embrace the opportunity thus offered, De Lyons and I made each a low bow to the whole party, who sat staring at us in solemn silence, and wishing them collectively a very good evening, requested to be accommodated with a private room, where the *maitre d'hotel*, who after the scene I have been describing seemed inclined to treat us with more respect, sent us up our supper which we had been refused below, and to which we were by that time fully prepared, even under the circumstances, to do full justice.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS.

SIR L. O'TRIGGER: "There's nothing like being used to a thing."  
—*The Rivals*.

"OF course you will have to fight him," said De Lyons; "and the worst of it is, though I know you could not help yourself, by treating the fellow as you did, it is now for our side to offer satisfaction, and thus leave the choice of weapons, time, place, and every other advantage to the adversary. I wonder who he will fix upon as his friend to arrange matters?—that sarcastic old rhinoceros of an uncle of his, I shouldn't wonder, who originated the row and forced this quarrel upon us.

"But while I am thus talking, my dear fellow, I forget that I must be off and find out what has become of the captain, and to whom he will refer us as his second. It never does, you know, to put oneself in the wrong on these occasions, I mean in regard to matters of strict etiquette, and particularly after the insulting remarks that old buffer made in regard to the views of Englishmen in general upon duelling."

I could perceive that, in spite of himself, the German-student blood of my friend *Taraxacum* was warming up ; and I do not really think that I do him much injustice, when I say, that he evidently quite enjoyed the serious scrape in which we found ourselves entangled, though by no fault or intention of our own.

A serious scrape indeed I felt it to be when left to my own reflections.

I cannot describe to you the bitterness and utter helplessness of my feelings when I began to look the facts of the last few hours in the face ; I was not conscious of any feeling of fear exactly, and I do not think that I am boasting, when I say, that at that time I did not feel a bit more nervous than I should if I had been going to start in a steeple-chase, or row in a boat-race, against any well-matched rivals:

I had not to reproach myself for my own conduct in this matter, for I felt that I had been left no possible alternative for acting otherwise than I had done ; but when I pictured to myself the state of danger in which my poor father was lying in a strange place, probably at the mercy of complete strangers, who, for all I knew, might be not even pretending to pay him either common care or attention, anxiously expecting and fretting himself at the non-arrival of either my mother or myself, who, if the letter had not been

delayed, ought and might have been with him long before this time ; when I thought of all this, and that perhaps even an hour might make all the difference between my arriving in time to cheer and console him, or finding that I was too late, I did indeed feel miserable and wretched in the extreme.

Here, at Lyons, must I now remain, certainly for the next day, instead of pushing on as I had intended by four o'clock in the morning, with the pleasing alternative of being either left myself,—dead, or seriously wounded—where no one would know what had become of me ; or even should the other event happen, and I were to kill my antagonist—a man whose very existence had been unknown to me two hours since—I might have to fly from justice, with all the probable chances of being caught, subjected to a criminal trial, and perhaps a long imprisonment, if no worse ; and all this for no fault or folly of my own, but entirely in consequence of the disgusting tricks of the creature who, of all others upon earth, I most dreaded and detested.

A thick cloud of despair seemed to come over me, even harder than ever to be borne, as I reflected upon the destinies of my life in this instance again thus unaccountably affected and overshadowed by the ever pernicious influence of that little fiend Melchior Gorles.

“All right!” cried De Lyons, bursting into the room in a high state of delight, with a couple of small swords wrapped up in a cloak, and tucked under his arm. “I was only just in time to meet Captain Tison’s friend coming up to look after us—a most gentlemanly fellow and quite up to his business; not the ancient rhinosceros, I am glad to say, for I know we should have had no end of a bother with him. But the *Capitaine*, when he left the room, as you so delicately expressed it, very wisely went straight off to the barracks close by, and engaged the friendly services of the Major of the regiment which is quartered here. I will say that for them, French officers are always the readiest and most obliging fellows in these matters in the world. Nothing could be more gentlemanly and accommodating in every way than the Major—a fine soldierly-looking fellow, though just now with his right arm in a sling, hurt by a fall from his horse, he tells me. I have been round with him to his quarters to borrow this pair of ticklers, which he kindly allowed me to choose from a lot of beauties he has there, a regular choice collection which quite made my mouth water to look at. And there is, he says, a quiet and convenient place, where we can have it out, without a chance of being disturbed, as soon as it is light enough in the morning; and the surgeon of the

regiment, a stout little fellow who, the major tells me, can sing a first-rate song, is to be there; and, in short, we have arranged it all as jollily and comfortable as possible."

"It is wonderful how differently the principals and seconds are apt to see things in regard to their comfort and jollity," I remarked, rather angrily; for in the gloomy state of mind, in which my half-hour's solitary reflections had left me, I was feeling rather disgusted at De Lyons' exuberant high spirits and levity; to tell the truth, I am afraid that I rather imputed them to the intense appreciation of his own cleverness, in having, by his extra zeal as second, managed to have shifted the whole honour of the principal's part upon my shoulders; but I wronged him, and I only hope that he did not discover my unworthy suspicion of him, but really misunderstood my meaning, as he seemed to do.

"Why, my dear fellow," he replied, "there is no use being dismal that I see, and as to principals or seconds, it seems to me just as broad as it is long—we shall only be serving each other turn about. You lead off the game with the Captain, and I stand by as your second. When you have polished him off, as you must do your best to do, then you will act as my second with my man."

“Your man?” I said. “Who are you going to fight with then? The Major?”

“The Major, no; he has lost the use of his arm, I tell you; but he has promised to bring a friend with him, the most slashing *sous-lieutenant* in his regiment, he says. The fact is, that as the quarrel can scarcely be said to be his own, though you made it rather more personal, by-the-bye, it occurred to me as rather hard upon the Captain to have to fight twice over on the same question, when another fellow could answer the purpose quite as well; besides, if you pink him, I should be left without any satisfaction, and he called me a liar and an ‘all-the-fact snob,’ just as much as he did you, and I must have my change out of that insult from somebody. So I put the case exactly as it stands to the major as we were going along together, who agreed at once that the easiest way to solve the difficulty will be to bring with him the subaltern, as I tell you.

“He need not be required to use the same offensive words, but it will be sufficient if he merely states ‘that he feels sure that the Captain said no more than he was justified in saying.’ He need not even know what that was. But you must be my second when your own affair is disposed of, or if you unfortunately get prodded through, then the Major will

be at leisure, and has most kindly volunteered to act for me."

"Why are we not to fight with pistols?" I inquired.

"Well, the only little difficulty that at all arose in arranging matters, was as to which side had the choice of weapons, and as they were strong for swords, and I remembered how handy you used to be with the foils in the fencing-school at Dresden, and at the same time thought of the difference between your great six-foot odd carcass, or shall I say, portly form, and the Frenchman's thread-paper figure, I gave in, particularly when the major offered to lend me that pair of beauties. Just try them only. Look here, it wouldn't be a bad idea to fix half this claret cork on the point of each of them and have a ten minutes practice. There is an artful dodge in engaging in tierce with an under turn of the wrist, which I can teach you in five minutes. I learnt it from a crafty old Pole last year, and I have never yet seen a Frenchman whom it did not puzzle. Do you see? one—two—there—yes, that is it; now try it again. Once more. Bravo! now don't forget it, you may find it useful tomorrow. The French, as a nation, are undoubtedly the finest fencers and best swordsmen in the world, as long as they are pitted against those who have been

taught in the same school, and exactly the same style as themselves; but if they happen to be encountered by an irregular assault, or any fancy dodge, I have over and over again seen them done in no time. I have seen too much of this fun at Leipsic and Heidelberg to think much of it. Fancy you are standing up against old Spritz, the fencing master, the only difference is, that you must remember that there are no buttons on the foils on this occasion, and that unless you do your best to stick the Captain, you may take your oath that he will stick you if he can. Come, let us get to bed; we must be on the spot by seven, though that seems a reprieve from half-past three, which is the hour at which we should have had to have turned out, to have been in time, if, as we intended, we could have gone on by the first boat up the river for Châlons."

Expecting thus to have had to turn<sup>e</sup> up early, we had on our arrival agreed to take a double-bedded room, in order that we might thus have a better chance of waking each other, and so have been more sure of being off in time.

Going up to the bed, on to which, when we had chosen the room, I had chucked my rugs and travelling-bag, by way of settling which I should prefer, lo and behold! there, tumbling in the midst of my

things, lay Gorles, fast asleep, with all his clothes on, in a topsy-turvy position, that is, not only with his face downwards, but with his head towards the foot of the bed, and his boots—actually his filthy boots! which he must have even taken the trouble to put on, preparatory to thus turning-in for the night, upon the identical clean pillow, on which I had been intending to rest my own weary head.

I was already so thoroughly dead beaten, and overtired by the journey, to say nothing of the disgust and confusion of feelings which were the result of the evening's adventure and its consequences, that when I thus again unexpectedly came upon the little brute, the origin of all the troubles which I had already been through, besides what were yet in store for me, I could not find words to utter. I felt that I did not dare trust myself to remain even in the room; but hastily gathering my things together, followed the *garçon*, who was in attendance, on to another small room on a higher story, and there, tumbling out of my clothes and into the very small crib of a bed in less than no time, buried my head in the blankets, with a hope of getting to sleep as soon as possible, not only with a view to the early work that was cut out for me in the morning, but also to shut out, though maybe only for a few hours, the con-

fusion of disgust, anxiety, and dark forebodings with which my mind was filled and overwhelmed. Before, however, I had succeeded in thus giving myself the slip, *Taraxacum* came in to look after me, and impress a last warning against being too late for our engagement in the morning. He was still as full of his high spirits and tricks as if he were a schoolboy going home next day for his holidays, instead of having to take part in a mortal duel with the most slashing subaltern, as he had himself described his proposed antagonist, in a French dragoon regiment.

“Did you hear that little beggar Gorles holloaing?” he inquired. “I first woke him up by setting fire to his hair, and then when he turned round, shoved the end of the lighted candle into his mouth; and then didn’t he just begin to splutter, and kick up no end of a row! I asked him what the deuce he meant by appropriating your bed, and sleeping on it as he was, in his clothes and boots, too? He replied that he turned-in to the first empty room he came to, and hadn’t thought it worth while to undress, as we should have to start again by the river-boat so early in the morning. Then I just about pitched into him well for his conduct in the supper-room, at which at first he appeared inclined to grin, and consider as rather funny than not; but when I went on to enlighten our

interesting young friend as to the sequel, and maybe, serious consequences of his funny games, he began to look rather queer ; not only surprised, but to give the little beggar his due, sorry and annoyed. I do not really believe that he was humbugging, when, upon my pointing out to him the awful inconvenience and anxiety which this unlooked-for delay must be to you, without reckoning the odds that may turn up, unfortunately, to keep you altogether from the bedside of your father, to reach whom, as he well knew, you had been counting the very hours which must intervene ;—I don't believe that it was all humbug, I say, when he declared that he would not for worlds have caused you this annoyance, and that he would gladly do anything in his power to get you out of this scrape, and allow you to go on at once, as you intended, to Paris, or wherever it is you want to be.

Indeed he even proposed to go at once and knock up the Captain, and either take the challenge on himself or offer any apology, however humble, for his conduct, and thus settle the matter. But I knew that you of course would not consent to that ; it would look like shuffling out of the affair in a way which would give that old cockatoo of a *Vicomte* something really to crow about. And as to Gorles apologizing, though it was his folly which brought us into the

row, it was not actually for his sake, but our own personal honour and that of our nation, which was insulted, you know. Oh no, it would never do to let Gorles put his foot in it; so I plainly told him, that nothing he could possibly do, could help matters. He put on a very mysterious and important look, and said he was not quite so sure of that matter; and as he insisted upon knowing the number of the Captain's room, and he went on bothering, I at last told him No. 56, which, as it happens, is where the old uncle, M. le Vicomte, roosts. It will be such a stunning sell for him, and at the same time partly pay out the old rhinosceros for his iniquities, to be roused up out of his best sleep at some unconscionable hour in the morning, by little Gorles looming in upon him, to offer an explanation of the circumstances in that villanous French of his: I would give a trifle to witness the scene, and hear the row that is sure to ensue between them——

“Well, then, good night, and mind that we must be stirring by not one minute later than half-past six to-morrow morning.”

# MELCHIOR GORLES.

A Tale

OF MODERN MESMERISM.

BY

HENRY AITCHENBIE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# MELCHIOR GORLES.

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## CHAPTER I.

“Awake—awake ! arise ! or be for ever fallen.”

MILTON.

I THINK that I must have fallen off asleep before *Taraxacum* had even left the room ; and soundly I must have slept for four or five hours ; but I am sure that it did not seem more than ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour at the outside, before my friend had come in again, standing over me with a flaring candle ; as he drew back the window-curtains—though there was as yet no daylight to let in—he begged me to look sharp, and tumble up as soon as possible. Whether he had been to bed at all himself I cannot say, but he looked just as fresh and full of spirits as ever.

He had already been downstairs, and kindly managed to procure for me a steaming cup of coffee, just to warm up “the cockles of my heart,” as he expressed it, which, to tell the truth, in the state I was then, I not a little required.

As I sat up on the side of my bed I was seized with such a violent fit of shivering, and felt myself suddenly to be so completely unnerved and downhearted, that I positively declared that nothing should induce me to go to the place of meeting ; and, in spite of all sense of shame or fear of disgrace, I really felt that I was morally and physically unable to face the danger, which now appeared before my dejected mind in all its most horrible reality.

You may imagine what a state I must have been in, when I did not feel even ashamed to confess as much to De Lyons. "You may go," I said, "if you please, but I have made up my mind that nothing shall induce me to do so ; I have no excuse to offer, and don't care to make one, and I don't care a rap what either the French officers, or any one else may say, or think of me. But I am not going to be such a fool as to go out to be killed, as I am quite sure I should be, as long as I can possibly help it by keeping out of the way of danger." De Lyons stood staring at me with his eyes and mouth wide open as I thus shamelessly treated him to these ignoble sentiments. The words seemed to come out of my mouth in spite of myself, though they were precisely what I felt ; and though I was not ashamed, I had a dim consciousness of being angry at thus exposing myself.

“This will never do,” exclaimed De Lyons, still staring at me. “Pluck up, my dear fellow; just consider that the honour of your name, your family, even our country, as Englishmen, is at stake, that we should get through this affair creditably.”

“Honour be rotted,” I answered. “I tell you that I don’t care a rap for the lot of it.”

“Why, Frank Lambard, is this the way you are going to show the pluck, the bull-dog courage, for which, ever since you were a boy, you have always had the credit!”

“It is all very fine,” I said, gloomily; “but, since that strange illness of mine, I have been a totally changed being. What pluck I may have had originally by nature has been crippled and tampered with by Gorles: not to speak of what was borrowed and never returned by your friend the Professor; and you yourself, Master De Lyons, managed to absorb a share of it at that same time, you know.”

I thought I saw a smile play over his impudent face, but I should not have cared even if he had laughed right out, and mocked at me. But he was serious again in an instant.

“By Jove,” he said, “I wonder if that is so!”

“Have you learnt to disbelieve your own theories, and the result of your own experiences?” I asked.

“No; though I have given up that sort of thing lately,” he replied, thoughtfully. “Yet there may be really something in what you say: but, as far as I am concerned, you can have back my share returned to you in a brace of shakes; and, what is more, I will force Gorles to disgorge too. He would be the one to put you in the right state, if you would not mind allowing him to operate. I can do it, you know; but he has ten times the power that I have.”

“Heaven forbid it!” I cried. “I would rather lie down and die like a dog in a hole, than consent to put myself more under the influence and power of that infernal little fiend, than I am already.”

De Lyons stood for some minutes looking at me strangely, as if in deep consideration, and then muttered to himself, “Well, anything better than remain in the state of mind and feeling you seem to be at present; I must risk the consequences.”

I knew what he was about, but did not attempt or even wish to resist him. I quietly placed my hands in his, without a word passing between us, felt my gaze fixing, was just conscious of his making the slow magnetic passes, as my eyelids dropped heavily, only to open again, as it seemed to me, immediately. Another shuddering fit passed all over me, but it was

not this time from any oppression of spirits, or other internal affection, but from the effect of a jug of cold water which De Lyons was pouring in a slow stream down the nape of my neck. The candle was gone; and through the window, which was quite open, I could perceive that the morning light had dawned. The first words which struck my ears, though I did not remember, or put any meaning to them until some time afterwards, were—"It will satisfy him, at any rate, and perhaps make a better man of him, and more like himself; but now cut it, before he sees you." And I turned round just in time to catch sight of some one slipping out of the door, whom I felt sure was Gorles.

De Lyons at first tried to shuffle out of the truth, but then confessed that he had called in Gorles's assistance, and that, having put him "*en rapport*" with myself, while he himself acted as the immediate medium, had insisted upon his restoring some portion at least, of that quality, of which he had become dishonestly possessed.

"In consequence of which," to use his own words, "so far from his acquiring a stronger influence, as you say you dread, there is now a much weaker community of feeling existing between you."

"How long have I been off?" I asked.

“A little more than half-an hour. But see, the day is breaking ; we shall have no time to lose. Do not you feel yourself to be a different man already ?”

It is a positive fact that I did. I rose up and stretched myself vigorously, feeling indeed a totally different and better man than I had been, I might say, for the last four or five months.

Cool and refreshed in spirit, with my nerves properly braced up, I now felt myself as firm and ready to hold my own in a good cause against any man in the world, as ever I was in my life:

When De Lyons, delighted at the success of his experiment, had left me alone to dress, I leant for some minutes out of the open window, inhaling the sharp and frosty morning air, with the keenest sense of exhilaration.

A regular course of good training could not have procured me the same consciousness of returning health and strength. I felt exactly as if I had received a new principle of life into my soul, and had just entered upon a new state of existence.

I was not long before I was ready ; De Lyons coming in with the swords, and the corks still on them, as he said, just for five minutes more practice, to see that I had quite caught the dodge of the under-twist of the wrist, which he had tried to teach

me, and when I now took that well-balanced weapon in my hand, how different the grasp I had upon it felt from what it had been overnight!

As I parried *Taraxacum's* assaults in tierce and quart, I felt sure that all my old skill and confidence of the fencing school was once more revived in me. And as to the cunning twist, indeed, it consisted more in sheer strength of wrist than anything else.

“That is about the dodge, I think,” I said, as I whipped *Taraxacum's* sword out of his hand, so that its hilt came with a bang upon the floor almost hard enough to shiver the delicate blade into a dozen pieces.

“This wont do though, exactly,” I exclaimed, when I had done laughing at *Taraxacum's* absurd face of astonishment at being thus shown the merit of his own lesson. “We must not kick up this infernal noise, or we shall have the whole house about our ears.”

“All right,” said De Lyons; “never mind the noise, the room under this is No. 56, where the venerable Viscomte is in bed, and it will do him good to have his rest disturbed again. By the way, I am afraid that my little scheme for sending Gorles in to rouse him up was a failure. I was in great hopes, for he was out of the room when I woke up about four o'clock, and I thought that he had gone off

to invade the old buffer's diggings, as I had directed him ; but if he did, he must have twigged the sell, and sneaked away quietly again without waking him. At any rate, there was no explosion, which I lay listening for, and Gorles came back presently looking even more sly than usual, and turned on to his bed again."

## CHAPTER II.

## SETTLED BY DEATH !

“ Only one course remains, the world declares,  
And death alone can settle such affairs.”

“ *Satisfaction,*” *Unpublished Poem by C. D. C.*

THERE were only one or two drowsy-looking waiters about the entrance of the hotel as we passed out into the yet perfectly quiet and empty street, each with our swords tucked up under our cloak, and our best chimney-pot hats upon our heads, which De Lyons had insisted upon our wearing, in preference to the more unpretending billy-cock of travelling order, as a mark of courtesy to our antagonists ; though mine, kicked and flattened as it had been out of all recognised form, by Gorles having been rolling upon it through the whole of our night’s journey, could, I fear, scarcely be considered to contribute much to the dignity of my personal appearance.

Though the sun was not yet risen, the morning air, clear and sharp with frost, was so invigorating to the spirits that, with the exception of a qualm, which for a moment or so came over me as I thought of my poor father, who would be now anxiously and vainly

expecting my arrival, I felt comfortable enough and quite ready for my work, or, as *Taraxacum* expressed himself, "fit all over, and right as a rivet."

On the very doorsteps we met an officer in a long military cloak and *kepi*, whom De Lyons immediately saluted and introduced to me as the Major. He was coming, as of course we guessed, to look after and conduct his principal, the Capitaine Tison, with proper ceremony to the place of meeting.

He had very thoughtfully brought a soldier-servant with him to show us the way, as it had occurred to him, he said, that it might perhaps be an embarrassment for us all to have had to go together under his own guidance to the place of meeting. So with another most courteous salute, and having mentioned that we should probably find the surgeon, and his friend, the accommodating *sous-lieutenant*, already arrived, the Major passed into the hotel.

Our guide without uttering a word, but having respectfully taken the swords to carry for us, led the way across a large square, or *place d'armes*, on to a very fine *quai*, which, with its immensely high and overtopping buildings, seemed to stretch away to an interminable length in both directions; over a handsome bridge, on which, besides only about half-a-dozen or so stray people, who seemed to be coming in from the

country, we met with a *sergent-de-ville* in undress uniform, who looked very hard at, and then stopped, our conductor. "Now we are in for it," we said; but no, our soldier seemed very easily to satisfy him, though by his looks and gestures, we could see that he was evidently explaining the connexion between ourselves and the swords, which he was carrying openly in his hand. And as we came up, instead of addressing, or, at any rate, scrutinizing us, as we fully expected the Gendarme to do, that discreet official was leaning over the parapet of the bridge, gazing very intently upon some object of much greater interest than ourselves, which seemed to have attracted his special notice in the rushing waters of the Rhone below.

"See, now, how much better they manage things here in France," remarked De Lyons. "Why in England, under less suspicious appearances, we should have had a dozen blunder-headed policemen at our heels by this time. And yet we are always crowing and cock-a-hooping about our boasted land of liberty!"

Having crossed the bridge, we shortly found ourselves in a suburb, and there our guide—thinking, I suppose, that as strangers we might find some interest in the fact—stopped to inform us that it was known as "*Le quartier de la Guillotière.*"

Having halted just long enough to convey this topographical announcement, he continued his course, skirting the high wall of what seemed like some ancient castle or fortification, at the back of which, having arrived at a low archway, which disclosed a passage under what seemed to be a deserted chapel, or perhaps convent, he drew himself up, and presenting us with our swords, made a sign for us to pass on; then, with a military salute, took a silent but respectful leave of us.

We heard the clocks and bells of the city chiming out half-past seven just as, emerging from the passage, we found ourselves in a small paddock or field, which, although there were no traces of gravestones or monuments in it, may probably have been the burial-ground attached to the sacred edifice under which we had entered.

Surrounded on all sides by a high wall, and not overlooked even by any window in the building I have mentioned, no place could have been imagined, or even made expressly, more exactly suited to the purpose for which we had been brought to it.

The ground was already occupied by two persons, the one very short and round, wearing a double eye-glass, which stuck by compression upon a most

comical red lump of a nose, just like a piece of beet-root.

“The jovial doctor, of course,” whispered *Taraxacum*. “Don’t he look a regular jolly fellow, now, all over?”

The other, a bright-eyed, active, well-made little man, who instantly suggested the idea of a fancy black-and-tan terrier. I caught the glance of my companion as he was not unnaturally taking a mental measure of his destined antagonist, and I rather inferred from his expression that he would not altogether mind making an exchange of him with me for the Captain. The two officers drew themselves up, and saluted us ceremoniously as we approached, to which we replied equally respectfully, by removing our chimney-pot hats and bowing to each separately.

“Ought we to introduce each other, or go up to speak to those swells?” I said, *sotto voce*, to De Lyons, on whom I entirely relied for guidance in all the proper forms and regulations of etiquette.

“I am not sure,” replied he. “It might look like trying to make up to them: one never can be too particular in keeping to the strictest formalities.”

They did not seem quite sure either, for they had advanced at first, and then stopped short and stood

staring at us: So we stood also and stared back at them; but, being in doubt, did not somehow like or care to be the first to attempt conversation. They also, I fancy, had come to precisely the same resolution.

“Your man must be here directly,” said *Taraxacum*, “that will settle the difficulty; but I wish he would come; it’s plaguey cold here on this frosty grass.”

Still we waited.

“Have you got a bit of smoke about you?” presently inquired *Taraxacum*.

“No; I have come out without my case—besides it wouldn’t do, I think. Those swells threw away their cigars when we came on to the ground.”

“Ah! strict etiquette, I daresay. It wont do to show ourselves ignorant in such matters; it is always the best to keep on the strict side—but bother it! how cold my poor toes are getting.”

So were mine, and my fingers too, so that I could scarcely hold my sword-hilt. “How would it do,” I suggested, “to have a practice?”

“Not at all. We have got no corks; besides, it would look so funny, not to speak of letting that sharp-looking subaltern, who I am sure knows quite enough already, twig the trick of my pet undertwist.”

We heard the clocks striking another quarter.

“Confound them! this is too bad of your man,” said De Lyons, quite indignantly, as if it was my fault. “What do you mean by engaging with such a lazy beggar?—you, or at least he, ought really to be ashamed of himself: my feet are frozen, I tell you. I must jump, or run, or dance, or do something.”

De Lyons’ patience was fast evaporating, and so was his strict attention to etiquette; for giving me his sword to hold for him, he first began to throw up his best hat, and try to catch it on his head, and then to the violent performance of a double shuffle, or nigger-dance, accompanying himself by slapping his hands together, and singing—

“Oh, Susannah!  
Don’t you cry for me,  
I am going to Alabama  
On the borders of the sea.”

“Don’t,” I said: “remember where you are, my dear fellow. Do have some regard to decency and etiquette.”

“Oh, bother!” he replied. “Those Frenchy’s didn’t see me—they had their backs to us.”

That was luckily the fact at the moment, for they were turned away, talking together earnestly, and looking towards the place by which we had entered. Still there we were waiting. In about two minutes, *Taraxacum* began again, at first only with a subdued

stamp, gradually, however, increasing into the recognised heel-and-toe performance, with "Oh, Susannah," louder than before.

"Don't," I said, "make such a fool of yourself. The Frenchmen are looking; they are laughing at you!"

"The deuce they are!" said *Taraxacum*. "Chuck me my sword—I'll give the gentlemen something to laugh at!"

As he turned, the Major appeared at the entrance, alone, just as all the clocks in the city were booming out "eight." But, the Major only. He appeared to have been running,—that is, as fast as any Frenchman, with his tittuppy little steps, can be said to run. We could see in his face, even before he had recovered breath enough to speak, that something strange had occurred.

"Messieurs," he panted, "my friend Captain Tison would not thus have kept you waiting, but a terrible event has overtaken him. On entering his uncle's room to receive his last instructions before attending upon you, gentlemen, at this rendezvous, figure to yourselves his emotions of horror at finding that venerable relative fallen in a fit—if not even already dead—rigid and unconscious. Doctor, there is no time to lose; but, gentlemen, under circumstances so

astounding, you can hardly have expected the Captain to have quitted the bedside of the nearest relation he has in the world, while there is a shade of hope left to him. He has commissioned me to tender any apology which may be required, for thus having needlessly troubled you, besides a complete retraction of his words of last night; leaving it to yourselves, gentlemen, whether you shall in return think fit to offer any expressions of regret for any measures which you may have, at the time, thought necessary to put in force."

Of course I immediately made the requisite pretty speech, at the same time returning our weapons, with thanks, to their courteous owner. We hastened back with all speed to the hotel, utterly forgetting even to look for the slashing young hero by the way, until pushing our way, with the rest of the world, into No. 56, we found that the sharp-eyed terrier was the doctor, who was in the act of trying the poor Vicomte's arm with his lancet; my attention was specially called to that fact by De Lyons' sudden exclamation of—

"By jingo! the jolly-nosed chap in spectacles was my man then. I think I could have spitted his *fois gras* for him without much trouble."

I could not help giving *Taraxacum* a rattling side-

kick for this brutal insensibility in the very presence of the poor dead old man. It gave me a turn as I looked upon his straggling white locks, and the ghastly paleness of those features which last night had been so hot and fiery with rage. His eyes were still wide open, and there was an expression about them, and in the deep lines of the fallen jaw, indicative of the most intense horror and fear, as if some dreadful person or object had been present to his last fixed gaze. The little doctor was wiping the blade of his lancet, and shook his head slowly to the Captain, who was still supporting his uncle's body on the opposite side of the bed. Suddenly a thought seemed to strike De Lyons, who, since my very pointed rebuke, had been standing as quietly and reverently as anybody.

“Where is Gorles?” he suddenly exclaimed. “*Où est le petit Monsieur Anglais ?*” turning to inquire of some of the *garçons*. Then he went up to the side of the bed—no one interfered with him—and gently lifting the eyelid of the already open eye, peered closely and curiously into the unnaturally dilated pupil.

“That is it sure enough,” he muttered, as if having gathered some assurance from his scrutiny; “I believe he might be revived yet. Is Monsieur Gorles

still in the house—*le petit Monsieur Anglais?*” he again inquired.

“Was he then a doctor?” asked many voices—“*ce petit nain original?*”

He had paid his bill and left for Chalons by the second boat, which departed at half-past seven precisely.

“This is Gorles’s work, as sure as I am alive;” whispered De Lyons, very quietly to me as he withdrew from the bedside. “He might perhaps have been able to have undone what I have no doubt is his doing!”

What would I have given never to have heard those dreadful words!

If he had not suggested the terrible idea, I am certain that it would never have even occurred to me. But now I was indeed struck down and almost stunned with the tremendous heinousness of so atrocious a deed, in which I could not but feel that I was myself not slightly implicated as an accessory.

With just presence of mind remaining to prevent betraying myself upon the spot by some rash word or expression of self-inculpation, I rushed off to my own room, in a perfect agony of grief and horror; and from the actual scene which I had just witnessed, my mind naturally turned from the picture of that poor

old man, whom I had just seen lying there fixed in death before my eyes, to that of my own dear Father, who might perhaps at that very moment be like him stretched lifeless on a bed, surrounded by a similar group of strangers, gazing and wondering at him.

That fearful idea once conceived, became more and more distinct before me, haunting me to that degree that, as I rolled upon my bed, I almost cried aloud in the agony of my spirit.

De Lyons came after a time to my door ; he entered very gently, and seemed amazed at the extent to which he found me affected. He seemed to be himself vexed and rather flustered, and he no longer kept up that cold-blooded irreverence of manner which had so much disgusted me.

But he told me, that finding Gorles was really gone—who he really thought might have been able to restore the old man to animation—that he himself had boldly announced his own experience in similar cases, and had offered, if the room was cleared, to try his skill ; but that neither the nephew or the doctors—for a second had been called in—would listen to him, or even appear to understand what he was talking about.

Both the medical men concurred, and stuck to the opinion that the immediate cause of death was in the heart; and of course it would never have done to have let out that he had any reason to suppose Gorles could have been exercising his magnetic influence upon the old man, or had ever been near his room; the only effect of which would have been, as De Lyons very truly remarked, that we should have been pretty sure of being hauled up for accomplices.

He had, he told me, even slipped back into the room afterwards, when all had left it, and having put a jug of cold water ready, was actually beginning with some upward passes to disperse the magnetic forces, but the police authorities had come in to take official possession of the body, and turned him out again.

“Well, it cannot be helped,” he went on to philosophize; “he couldn’t have lasted long anyhow in the course of nature—past seventy-four, as they tell me, is above any Frenchman’s average; and he was even now on his way to Paris for medical advice. So all we have to do is to hold our tongues, and keep our own counsel, and get on our own way as fast as possible. I have taken care to make a great point to my

friend the Major and the rest of them of your natural anxiety to get on to your poor father without a moment's delay, and as they tell me the *malle-poste* starts at noon for Chalons, I sent to secure the two places at once. In the meantime the Major has asked us to come and breakfast with him at the *restaurant*, where we are to meet that varmint-looking little surgeon, and the ruby-nosed subaltern, and a lot of them. I can't at all get over his not being the jovial doctor: he looked the part so thoroughly,—didn't he, now?"

I utterly declined the invitation. I had not heart for it; and so I begged him to make any excuses on my part he liked.

"Ah well," said De Lyons, trying his best to look sympathizing, "I agree with you, and quite understand your feelings, my dear fellow; but though, like you, I should have preferred to have declined, it struck me, you see, that it might disarm suspicion and throw them off the scent, if there should arise any idea of—well—not foul play exactly, but science carried accidentally just a little too far; so I made up my mind to hide my shocked feelings beneath a mask of hollow gaiety, and accepted the invitation. They seem right good-hearted fellows: and be-

sides, what on earth is one to do with oneself in this strange place till twelve o'clock? Now you wont change your mind, and come?—*Au revoir* then— at twelve.”

## CHAPTER III.

“Conscius audacis facti, caudanque reflectens.”—VIRG. *Æn.*, xi.

“Conscious of an audacious fact, which sets him reflecting on a cord.”

PRINTER'S DEVIL.

WHEN *Taraxacum* returned from his entertainment, only just time enough to get our things together for a start, he seemed so entirely to have succeeded in assuming the mask of gaiety, that I verily believe, until he saw me again, he had clean forgotten the whole of the morning's dreadful business; he was in the most uproarious spirits at having chaffed them all—meaning the whole mess of his new friends the dragoons—as he declared, clean off their legs.

After a tremendous feed at the *restaurant* they had all adjourned to the friendly Major's own quarters, where the varmint doctor had sung his best songs, which De Lyons had responded to by some of his most rattling German drinking-choruses, in which he had made them all join.

Then they had had a turn-up with the foils, with which he had made such good use of his pet under-

twist that he had gained a signal victory, not only over the slashing subaltern—who knew well what he was about too, though he was so round, and had pinched his waist all up into the tip of his nose—but had even puzzled the regimental *Maitre d'armes* himself, into the bargain.

And he now seemed to have brought the whole regiment, all the officers at least, at his heels, who attended us in a body to the *bureau des postes*, to see us off, and to drink *bon voyage* to us both—for I was included in the compliment—in bottles of champagne, which they had brought with them for the purpose.

“I really wonder that you have not more good feeling, my dear fellow,” I said, remonstrating, as soon as we were clear off the rattling stones, and could hear one another speak.

“Oh, what’s the odds! There can be no use in making ourselves miserable about what cannot be helped; it wont stick the poor old gentleman up again you know; and for that matter they wouldn’t let me try when I wanted to do so. Besides, he was no friend of ours—quite the reverse, in fact; and it was by no fault of his that we are not both of us at this moment lying stiff, and stuck through the gizzard, in the nasty cold damp grass behind that chapel-place, or in the public *morgue*—if there is such an insti-

tution at Lyons—with our clothes hanging upon a peg above us, and a stream of cold water dripping on to our noses, which actually gives me the creeping shivers even to think of, in this beastly cold weather. Considering the circumstances, I really think that so far from making ourselves miserable, we ought to feel particularly jolly—as I must confess I do—at getting uncommonly well out of what might have turned out an ugly scrape enough for one or other of us, or perhaps both, take it which way you will.”

We were rattling over the ground at a tremendous pace, and though I could not help feeling so far invigorated, and the better for the motion, I again and again found myself brooding and, as it were, almost fretting over my own thoughts in the corner.

“That wretched Gorles,” I said, at last, breaking a long silence, “has already, either directly or indirectly, been the cause of every misfortune I have met with in my life ; but——”

“Well, at any rate,” cut in De Lyons, “if he did indirectly let you and me into this scrape this time, you cannot deny that he has managed to get us out of it again, in about the only way that could have happened, without causing the delay and detention which would have been so important to you ; and your poor father’s accident is a misfortune with which you can-

not certainly in any way connect any agency of his directly or indirectly."

"Perhaps not," I replied; "though even in that, I should not be surprised to find that he was somehow at the bottom of it." I can hardly tell now under what convictions I spoke, as you shall hear presently, thus prophetically; "but if it had not been for Gorles, the letters would not have been delayed, and I might have been with my poor father by this time. As to his having brought us out of this last scrape, has it not been by a mean and cowardly use of his strange and unhallowed powers for evil?—and have we not too much reason to feel disgraced in having forfeited our characters as gentlemen and men of honour, in having by such means escaped from the consequences of our own challenges. I, for my part, feel that in my own conscience I can never hold up my head fairly again."

"Oh, bother what one's own private conscience may think about the matter! as long as we came off with flying colours in the eyes of the other party. And it strikes me (if you will only excuse my plain speaking) that you had not so much to say about disgrace, or were quite so punctilious about your honour, this morning when I first woke you up. In the strange state of spirits in which I then

found you, there was nothing small you would not have said or submitted to, to have got off, no matter how, from facing your man: and I could not have strung your nerves up into the order I did, without Gorles' assistance. I think you owe him a good turn for that anyhow; for the restitution was, after all, entirely his doing, though I persuaded and forced him into it, and I think you ought to feel obliged to him. For my part, I really believe in his professions of good-will and attachment to yourself notwithstanding your suspicions and accusations against him. He certainly meant what he was saying, when he expressed such regret and anxiety on your behalf, and declared that he would gladly do anything in his power to help you through that trouble, and prevent your risking your life for what was his own fault. And for that matter, he has been as good as his word, with a vengeance—having gone, I guess, a trifle further than he himself intended or reckoned on; but still you know he did intend it all for the best all the time."

"And do you really mean to argue," I asked, angrily, "that I ought to feel grateful and indebted to a little monster who has thus degraded me in my own estimation, by implicating me in a crime for which every one, even suspecting the fact, would look

upon me with shame and horror? I certainly never thought that even his influence over me, powerful and evil as it was, could ever have caused me to become an accomplice, as I now feel myself to be, in a cowardly and cold-blooded murder."

"Hush! for goodness' sake don't talk so loud!—the guard-fellow in front there may overhear us. Half those fellows understand more English than you give them credit for, particularly such startling nouns and adjectives as you are now using:" and he drew up the window between our compartment and that of the courier in front.

A needless precaution, however, for I relapsed into moody silence, and I do not think that we exchanged another dozen words during the remainder of our six hours' journey.

We arrived at Chalons in good time, and took our places in the railroad at once for Paris.

## CHAPTER IV.

## E C C E I T E R U M !

“Look alive! this way!” cried De Lyons, “there’s a *coupé* on the train. Let us bag it by all means. There is something extra to pay, but as we shall secure the two corners we are pretty sure to keep it alone to ourselves, and shall sleep all night as soundly as if we were in our own beds.”

“And what a blessing to think,” I added, “that we have got free of that horrible little brute Gorles: at any rate we shall not have a row to go through at every station. I suppose that he is by this time pretty well arrived at his journey’s end?”

“Not till three A.M. to-morrow morning,” replied *Taraxacum*, who was studying the *Indicateur*: “and we get in soon after four, as this train is an express, you see.”

So we made ourselves as comfortable as we could for the night; my companion ingeniously building up a pile of bags and cloaks in the vacant seat, with a

billy cock hat stuck on the top, so as to deceive any designing intruder. We were not long before we were both fast asleep, and I had just a dim consciousness of stopping at one or two stations, and then whirling along again at express speed; sometimes screaming through tunnels, sometimes rushing over bridges, which seemed to shake and tremble under us; until the pace sensibly slackening, with more wild screaming of the steam-whistle, then the shrill groaning of the breaks, and the tooting of the *conducteur's* horn, we rumbled into a huge building, jolting over the points, and bang, bang, bang over the turning-tables; while the flashing of lights, and voices of guards bellowing out the name of "Dinon! Dinon!" woke us up sufficiently to become aware that we had arrived as far as that provincial city, upon our journey.

That is an abominable trick they have on the French and other continental lines, of suddenly throwing open all the carriage-doors as they come past into the station, disturbing one, if asleep, and anyhow letting in a gust of cold wind sharp enough to cut one's legs off.

"Confound their officiousness!" growled De Lyons. "What do they want to do that for? I almost wish little Gorles was here for the moment—wouldn't he just have flown at them for their stupidity!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when, as he leant forward to get hold of the swinging-door, a small figure skipped nimbly in, passed him, and in less than a twinkling, was squatting upon the top of the pile of bags and cloaks, grinning down upon us from that eminence.

Surprise, mingled with horror, positively took my breath away. I rubbed my eyes, and sat bolt-upright, staring at this apparition without uttering even a sound.

*Taraxacum*, for the space of some seconds, seemed as much aghast and taken back as I was, till at last he found words enough to ask in a sort of hollow whisper—

“Why, Gorles, where in the name of the devil himself do you come from?”

Before he had time to answer this solemn adjuration, a porter came to the carriage-door with a parcel in his hand.

“*Ah! say sar maircy bieng, sait ar-moi too-drau-er,*” he said, in his peculiar French, as reaching across De Lyons, he took possession of the original sweet-meat barrel.

“The fact is,” he explained, “I had come quite to the end of those excellent *bong-bongs*, and on arriving here by the last train, had run in to the

*buffey* to have it replenished. There were positively so many good things to choose from, I found it quite difficult to make up my mind : and so, though I sung out to them to wait only a moment, and that I should be ready in another minute, the train went on without me—and all my luggage, and the rest of my things with it. I will complain to the Directors, and have that rascally *conducteur* dismissed, as soon as I arrive in Paris, as sure as I am alive ; or I will bring an action against them, if it costs me a hundred pounds ! I pitched into the station-master here, I can tell you, pretty freely, but the impudent rascal only shrugged his shoulders, and slammed his door in my face ; I will have him dismissed, too, or I will know the reason why. However, I guessed you fellows might be in time for this next train, so I kept a look-out for you : and now here we are again together, you see, all right,” and he grinned down upon us benignly, right and left, from his seat aloft, on which he was still perched.

Not one single word did I vouchsafe to answer him. I had turned round into my own corner with a shudder of horror and disgust, and pretended to be asleep, but I could not help hearing all he had to say for himself, as he and De Lyons kept up a continual chatter.

“Well,” I heard him say as soon as we were again started; “so you must have got through that little affair in good time, and without any real fighting after all; the gallant captain not come to the scratch, and rather drowsy and hard to wake up, ay? If they got him down to the ground at all, I will be bound to say he was not good for much; I flatter myself I had effectually bound him over to keep the peace, for the next twelve hours at least, and I suppose he may be just about this time waking up comfortably. Of course it all went off as I expected—it takes two to carry out a duel satisfactorily; and so I suppose you waited at the place of assignation for a certain time, and finding that the other side didn’t show, naturally came on your way rejoicing.”

He paused, and I suppose looked carefully round to assure himself that I was fast asleep, for he then went on in a much lower voice, but I heard him.

“Our friend here didn’t spring another leak in his courage pumps, did he? What a queer turn that was for him to take this morning; such a fine plucky fellow as he has always seemed naturally to be. But I suppose you brought him round all right, and up to the mark, by giving into that strange fancy of his, as to how much my help could do for him. I do wonder

why he so persists in cherishing that intense feeling against me always."

"There never was any love lost between you as boys," answered *Taraxacum*. "And then the way you carried on with that pretty cousin of his at Dresden."

"Well, I didn't know that he had ever seen her; besides, I had as much right to admire and try to win her affections as he had, if you come to that; and all is fair in love."

"Not to the extreme lengths you tried on, and in which I am always so glad to think I effectually sold you. But he knows more of that matter than you think—but never mind all that now."

I fancy that De Lyons noticed a movement of struggling wrath and fury as I lay trying, and pretending to be asleep; and he thought it might be as well to change the conversation.

"Never mind that," he said; "but just tell me shortly what you did, or rather fancy you did, with the captain this morning. What room had you gone creeping into, when I woke and missed you?"

"Why, the Captain's—as you yourself told me, *numero sankaut siz*."

De Lyons immediately went off into a roar of laughter, as if it was really the very best joke in the world, and then exclaimed—

“The Captain’s indeed ! ha, ha, ha ! not a bit of it : *numero sankaupt siz*, as you call it, was where the old fellow slept, the peppery old Vicomte, and when they went into his room in the morning, there he lay as dead as a door-nail. You have put your foot into it this time, my interesting young friend, and no mistake.” And then he went on with a full and particular account, embellished with his usual style of slang and irreverent illustrations, of the whole morning’s scene and incident of horror.

I must so far give Gorles the credit to say that by the tone of his voice he did seem for the moment rather staggered at the news. “Dead !” he said with a long whistle ; “you are joking, surely ; trying to cram me, ain’t you, now ?”

“Not a bit of it : we left the poor old codger there in his bed, as dead as Nebuchadnezzar ; and so under the circumstances, as I tell you, the captain sent to cry off, and thus the matter was settled without any fight. It was stopped, you see, but not as you intended to manage it, ’cute as you are. But now make a clean breast of it, and tell me exactly, without any of your lies or prevarications, what was your real share in this unlucky business.”

“Oh,” replied Gorles, after a pause, “all I know

about it, is, that I went very softly into the room, which you told me was the captain's, meaning, as I now imagine, just to sell me. There was a night-lamp burning, but so dimly that I could only just make out a figure, almost sitting up, he was so propped up by pillows in bed. I had him fast by the thumbs before he was well awake, and in my hurry I passed such a strong shock on to him, that I sensibly felt the difference in my own system. I calculated that upon a man in his full prime and vigour, which was what I supposed my patient to be, the effect would last for about ten or twelve hours—that is, that he would have been up waking just about now, at this hour of the evening, and have been by this time none the worse for his long sleep.”

“But the old fellow must have seen you pretty plainly, too,” answered De Lyons, in the most practical tone; “for there was your image fixed in the pupils of his filmy old eyes as distinctly as in any photograph, for any one to see and recognise, if they had only thought of looking, as I did.”

“Yes, that may be true, for just before he fell back, and as I was making the last settling passes over him, a sudden light flashed out of his eyes, as bright as any lightning.”

“That must have been the vital spark leaving him, under your very hands, depend upon it. Your extra strong shock must have produced a sudden seizure of the heart, for which very complaint they told us that he was on his way to Paris for medical advice.”

“Ah, well then,” said Gorles, quite coolly, “it was his own fault; he ought to have said so. How was I to know that? And after all, he may have been just going to die of heart complaint, anyhow, even if I had not interfered with him. But I hope nobody else seemed to suspect, did they? Our friend here, for instance (meaning myself)—what did he seem to think about it?”

“Cut up dreadful rough, I can tell you. It is just the sort of thing that he would be apt to take strong views about; he is so fearfully sensitive. I was really almost afraid that he would have let the cat out of the bag; I mean, by letting them see that we knew more than we ought about the business. I was only too glad to see him clear off to his own room without compromising us. I fancy that you will find his tick against yourself stronger than ever, in consequence of this little misadventure—if that is possible.”

And thus the two went on, calmly discussing that old man’s awfully sudden death, which one of them

had, whether intentionally or not, most undoubtedly caused, with no more sense of guilt or remorse about them, than if it had been a dog. And there was I, shut up in the same carriage with two cold-blooded assassins, being myself almost an accessory, not to say actual accomplice, in the dreadful crime.

The very thought was becoming too horrible; it occurred to me, that if I really fell off to sleep, as I had been all the while feigning to be, it might suit their views to treat me in the same way, and I began to fall under the influence of a sort of waking nightmare, and to fancy that they had already done for me, and that I could even hear them discussing and joking over the fact, as they had just before been doing with their previous victim.

I could hardly refrain from actually screaming out for help, but I roused myself, and sat upright watching them.

They both of them addressed me, but I would not, could not, answer. I began to feel almost the same horror and loathing for De Lyons as for the other, though I soon had reason again to acknowledge his personal kindness and friendship for me, where such sentiments were of real value.

When they saw that I was awake, by way of changing their topic, they fell to discussing, and soon

squabbling over that odious sweet-meat barrel again ; but it was now full of cold cutlets, meat pies, and such-like comestibles, which De Lyons fell upon with such remarkable avidity, that Gorles had to remonstrate, and shut up his store and put it underneath him.

Then having sufficiently gorged themselves, they became silent, and seemed to have dropped off to sleep, but for some time I solemnly believe that Gorles slept with only one eye at a time. Twice, if not three times, I sat up and stretched forward to look at him, and though he was snoring loudly, one of his eyes was wide open, and fixed upon myself with a stony glare.

I became so nervous, and, as it were, terror-stricken, that I could bear it no longer ; but at the next station at which we stopped, I jumped out, and ran along the train in hopes of finding room in some other carriage to which I might change. There was not a single vacant place, so I was forced to return to the purgatory, or even worse, from which I had sought to escape. Then I must have fallen asleep again for some time, though I dreaded the very thought of doing so ; but I was awoke by a strong smell of fire—burnt cork, as it afterwards proved to be. De Lyons was smoking at the time, and I sup-

posed that a spark from his pipe must have fallen upon the lining or mat of the carriage. By-and-by he was cautiously attempting another attack upon the provision barrel, but Gorles, though up to that very moment soundly snoring, was awake, and down upon him like a shot.

## CHAPTER V.

“Coming events cast their shadows before.”—CAMPBELL.

THUS another night's journey wearily wore on. At Tonnerre we stopped, and all turned out for supper—or early breakfast I suppose it might rather be considered. The platform was on my side as I got out, and De Lyons followed me. Though much disgusted with him, I did not mind speaking to him when alone; but when that fellow Gorles was there, I was determined that nothing should induce me thus to compromise myself.

*Taraxacum* was looking as full of mischief as any ape. He told me that Gorles was now really left sound asleep in the *coupé*, and that he had slipped past without waking him. I saw that he was quite bursting to tell me something more, but I would not condescend to ask what it might be.

Just as everyone had finished, and the bell was ringing to warn us all back to our carriages, in rushed Gorles, looking more like his real character of a fiend

incarnate than ever. His nose was jet black, he had a deep ring of black round each eye, and his apology for a moustache and his eyebrows were also embellished with the same coal-black dye. De Lyons had been amusing himself at his chosen friend and accomplice's expense with a burnt cork.

Could anyone for a moment have imagined that either one of that couple had the crime of murder, and that of not twenty hours' standing, on their conscience! There was a pause of blank astonishment, and then a roar of laughter rang through the whole refreshment-hall, in which even all the *garçons* of the buffet and officials of the train joined.

Gorles himself, not the least aware of the real cause, but imputing it only to the fact of his having overslept himself, and arrived just in time to meet everybody scrambling back to their places, waxed furious. He caught up a huge roll of bread, which he shied at the nearest grinning *garçon's* head, with an imprecation at his impudence, and throwing down the money for a bottle of cognac, took it off with him back to his place in the train without having the least discovered the real cause of the general merriment.

All the rest of our way up, at every station at which we stopped, the *conducteurs*, the porters, the very

engineers and travellers, hopping out expressly from their own places, came crowding round our carriage to gaze in at Gorles, and then go off into shouts of laughter. He grew perfectly wild with rage; he rushed at the window, cursing, swearing, threatening, and even bringing into use his old trick of spitting out at them, until I could bear it in silence no longer. I was in no humour to find myself again embroiled in another serious quarrel, so, in spite of my resolution against speaking, I desired De Lyons rather sharply to drop that game, and explain to his friend the real cause of the public wonder and merriment.

Thus enlightened, Gorles proceeded to wash or rather smear his face all round and round with his handkerchief, which he dipped into his brandy-bottle, the effect of which was, that having spread the dingy smudge pretty equally over all, he looked for all the world like one of those singing niggers who go about the streets and race-courses; and having thus completed his toilet to his own satisfaction, the little beast presently fell asleep again, and rolled down on to the mat, and under the seat, where he lay snuffling and snorting for the rest of the journey.

I had almost made up my mind to have dropped Master De Lyons' company, for, as I have said, I felt disgusted and horrified towards him as being no

better than a cold-blooded brute and murderer, but I saw that he was deep in the *Indicateur* again, and as I wanted information, I asked him to see by what train I could get on to Abbeville with as little delay as possible, and how long I should have to stop in Paris?

“Not till the eight o'clock morning train,” he replied; and then went on to study the time-table. “If we had gone on to Paris by the mid-day train, which we should of course have done had we not been delayed as we were at Lyons, you could have got on by the Nord Railway by the last train, and you ought to have been at Abbeville—let me see—one—two—two forty-seven, you would have been with your father almost exactly by this time—that is, allowing a full half-hour or three-quarters to have cleared your luggage, and found out wherever he may have been taken, and so on. Yes, if we had not unluckily lost that time, I calculate that you ought to have arrived just about as near this exact present moment as possible.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” shrieked Gorles from beneath the seat, “actually dead. Well, no one can say that it was my doing!”

“He is talking in his sleep,” said De Lyons, administering a kick with his heel below; “and

laughing, too, the awful little sinner. Only hark to him !”

I pulled my cap tightly down over my face, and shrank into the corner of my seat terror-stricken ; a shock almost as though of paralysis seemed to shrivel up every nerve in my body ; for even while that sudden and revolting peel of demoniacal laughter was still ringing in my ears, I distinctly saw present before me a vision of my poor Father, just as if in a flash of lightning, for a single instant.

My eyes were covered and closed, but yet, as I say, I distinctly saw my poor father propped up on many pillows in a bed, exactly as I had seen the old Vicomte that morning.

There was a large clock in the room whose hands pointed exactly at twenty-three minutes to four. There seemed also to be two or three figures round the bedside whom I could not, or at least did not, distinguish. One of them had my father by the hand, or might have been holding his pulse ; another person seemed at that very moment to enter hastily, and all turned anxiously towards him.

Then I heard my poor father, in his own natural voice, but speaking very, very weakly, ask, “ Has anyone arrived ? ”

The person who had entered shook his head and answered, but I could distinguish no sound.

Then again my Father spoke distinctly in his own usual cheery voice, "Ah! my boy, here you are at last; but too late—too late! Why couldn't your mother come to me? God bless and keep you both. Good-by." And I saw him just as clearly as I see you now before me, fall back upon his pillow—dead!

Except as to the form and position on the mantel-piece of the clock which I have mentioned, I retained scarcely more than the vaguest idea, either as to the arrangement or the general appearance of the chamber itself in which that fatal scene took place; but I had not from the very first the slightest doubt of its actual reality, and there were only two points which at all puzzled me, or the least inclined me to explain what I had seen, by attributing it to the mere illusion of an ordinary dream.

I thought that it was strange and improbable that my poor father, being surrounded as I supposed him to be entirely by French people, should address them in such plain English as had distinctly sounded in my ears; and, in the next place, I did not understand how he should be aware, as by his last words he certainly seemed to be, that I only, was coming to him, alone,

without my Mother, whom he would naturally be expecting.

I suppose I must have given vent to my feelings by a deep groan or some other outward indication of my misery, for I found that De Lyons had shifted his seat to come close to my side, and guessing, I suppose, the train of my thoughts, was doing his best to cheer me, and keep up hope within me.

He volunteered to come on with me to Abbeville, if I would allow him, and, as we should have some three or four hours to spend in Paris, said he should insist upon my turning regularly into bed, at a very quiet and comparatively unknown hotel which he could highly recommend, and where, if I would come with him he could guarantee that I should be comfortable, and he would himself see to my being up, and ready to go on again by the early train.

“Anywhere you like,” I said, “if only we can escape from and get rid of the company of that dreadful little wretch.”

“All right ! It is a house of which he is not likely to think, and probably never even heard,” was De Lyons’ answer, as with a significant gesture he designated Gorles, who was still loudly snoring beneath the seat ; but he did not even mention the name or situation of the hotel.

At last we were at Paris. How thankful I felt ; but as we turned out into the cold raw drizzle of that dark morning, I caught myself quite staggering, thoroughly done up, and most thankful was I for the assistance of friendly De Lyons, who insisted upon my at once stowing myself into a *fiacre*, where I remained quietly, and partially recovered myself, while he, like a good fellow, bustled about after my luggage and things, as well as his own.

“What hotel are you fellows going to?” I heard Gorles ask him.

“Oh, don’t know!—haven’t made up our minds,” was the evasive reply, and De Lyons took the further precaution of not even telling the driver until we were clear of the station gates. “We are not going anywhere that you are likely to think of, and come to set the whole place by the ears, my amiable young friend ; and it will take you some time, I guess, to recover your lost luggage at this time of the morning, so we shall get a fair start of you that way, anyhow,” was De Lyons’ remark, just as, moving off, we saw Gorles flying venomously, first at a *facteur* on one side, and then on the other almost simultaneously abusing an official of the *octroi*, who had smelt out, and was demanding his dues upon, the contents of the still partially filled provision barrel.

L'Hôtel Rochfort was our destination; and it certainly seemed as if it were, indeed, not much known, insomuch that *Taraxacum* had some little difficulty in explaining its whereabouts to the *cocher*.

“Where the deuce is the fellow taking us to now?” he said, presently, as, turning out of a main thoroughfare, we plunged into a labyrinth of narrow little streets in the Faubourg St. Antoine. “These fellows are as fond of trying favourite short cuts as our own London cabbies. I hope he is not going to take us down any of these filthy places to cut our unfortunate wizens for us.”

We went rumbling on, till all at once we were brought up short by a great chasm in the road, and the paving-stones all up in heaps across the way.

“Holloa! here's a barricade,” exclaimed De Lyons. “Shouldn't much wonder if there were a lot of pleasant ruffians behind it, with red caps of liberty on their heads, and fire-arms loaded to the muzzle in their hands. I was told that that sort of amusement was again in the wind, and might be expected daily.”

For that time, however, it proved to be no worse than laying down the peaceful gas-pipe, or some such municipal undertaking, such as we are too well accustomed in our own metropolis; but we had a great job to

get the horse and vehicle turned round in that narrow street, and at least half an hour was lost—by no means an uncommon result of short cuts, especially, by the great “rule of Contraries,” when one happens to be in a very great hurry.

“All right; here we are at last. Why don’t the *cocher* take us up to the door, I wonder?” said De Lyons, as he poked his head impatiently out of the window.

He quickly drew it in again—with a queer expression on his face, of dismay and half ludicrous incredulity.

“Well, if this don’t beat Bannagher!” he exclaimed, as, letting himself out of the vehicle, he ran forward to inspect more closely a rather remarkable-looking valise, on the top of a *fiacre*, which must have arrived only the very instant before ourselves, and now stopped the way in front of the *porte cochère*. The small, low wicket in the great gates was open. We passed in, and found ourselves immediately in the midst of turmoil.

Gorles himself, from whom we had flattered ourselves on so successfully escaping, was raging furiously in the midst of the court of that retired little Hôtel Rochfort, being already engaged in war to the knife, not only with the driver of the *fiacre* which had brought him, but in the brief space of less than five

minutes that he had been there, he had contrived to insult and bring down upon himself the whole conclave of the establishment. Like a swarm of angry wasps, there surged around him a small crowd, who by their dishevelled and, more or less, deshabelle appearance, evidently betokened that they had only just rolled out of their several beds. The *maitre d'hôtel*, the landlady, the *garçon*, the cook, the scullion, the boots, all chattering, scolding, screaming at once, with every sort of shrugging, gesticulation, and grimace, such as can only be seen to perfection in a regular shindy among genuine Frenchmen in a rage; unless, perhaps, in the cage full of monkeys in the Zoological Gardens. How exactly he could have contrived in those few minutes thus to have set them all by the ears, I cannot imagine, and we did not stay to inquire; but making our way as quickly as we could through the scene of conflict, we fortunately met an individual upon the staircase, who, as he descended, was girding up his loins to rush into the battle-field below, but on seeing us he stopped, and conducted us civilly into two spare rooms.

We had hardly laid down our things, and were ordering some coffee, or something, when we heard Gorles come bounding up the stairs and along the passage, shouting De Lyons' name at the top of his

voice, followed by the whole pack of these freshly-roused enemies at his heels. De Lyons was only just in time to slam the door right in his face, and turn the key; then he heard a violent scuffle in the passage, and running to the window, which gave into the *rue* in which the Hôtel Rochfort is situated, were just in time to enjoy the intense satisfaction of seeing the little beast ignominiously thrust out of the small door by which he had come in.

Nor were we less gratified at witnessing the *cocher*, as if inspired by a sudden thought, spring upon the box of his *fiacre*, on which Gorles's valise was still remaining, and drive off at full speed, entirely deaf to the cries of the frantic owner, who ran down the middle of the street shouting and yelling after him in vain.

The rest which we attempted to snatch was hardly worth having after all; but somewhat refreshed with a strong basin of *consommé aux œufs*, which was expressly recommended and provided for us by the civillest of landladies, and a good cold bath, we were ready to start again by eight o'clock.

De Lyons had quite made up his mind, and insisted upon coming on with me, in spite of my remonstrances, or anything I could say. He assured me that in his new vocation as *commis voyageur*, he was left by his respectable employers very much to

his own discretion and judgment to decide as to what places he might visit or stay at, in trying to extend the commercial connexions of their firm. And that he had a great idea that at Abbeville he should find exactly the sort of demand he was anxious to hit upon ; there was nothing in business like occasionally breaking new ground, and dropping on to comparatively out of the way sort of places that would be overlooked by less assiduous rivals ; and besides, he added that it might perhaps be as well for him not to remain in Paris just for the present—in fact, until that poor old fellow, whom he had happened to hear was to be brought up from Lyons to be buried at Paris, was comfortably stowed away, and that little affair quite blown over, it might perhaps be more prudent not to be putting oneself too forward.

I really believe he made this excuse more to satisfy my mind at taking him so far out of his way than from any other motive, but I wished much that he had not again alluded to that painful subject. I had been trying to forget it, and drive it out of my mind ; and while I was receiving such proofs of friendship and disinterested kindness from him, I could not bear to think, at the same time, of the cold-blooded and careless indifference with which he had himself taken part in, and afterwards talked over, that awful affair.

## CHAPTER VI.

TROP TARD ! TROP TARD !

IT was just noon when we arrived by the morning express at Abbeville ; and then, although I had really been unwilling, in spite of his many reasons and assertions, to have trespassed so much upon my friend's good-nature, yet I really cannot think what I could have done, or how I should possibly have got on at all, without him. By the time we had at last reached our destination, my state of nervous excitement and anxiety had come up to that pitch that I should scarcely have been able to have made the necessary inquiries, or even have known where to go, or what to do next. De Lyons, always indefatigable, again took everything entirely upon himself.

There was nothing but one lumbering great omnibus waiting at the station, and therefore, under the impression that we should have to drive some little distance of perhaps a league or two beyond the town, he had at once sent off for a carriage.

But, in the meantime, by making inquiries, he had ascertained that my poor Father had been brought in from the house to which he had first been taken, to the private residence of a Doctor Pointose, which was in the Place d'Armes, in the city of Abbeville.

We drove there at once. Before our vehicle had even pulled up at the door, my eye had been caught instinctively by the two windows of a first-floor room in a particular house, one of which, although it was a biting cold day, was partly open, but the thick blinds therein were drawn closely across.

Although I may say that I had had no hope left since that awful vision of the early morning, yet the observation of that simple, though significant arrangement of those windows crushed the last lingering spark out of my heart with a dull thump, as though of a heavy hammer.

It was the worthy doctor himself who opened the door to us, and guessing at once who we must be, received us with a mournful shake of his head, repeating only two solemn words, "*Trop tard! trop tard!*" I made my way in at once, without any salutation or a single syllable passing between us. I could not have spoken, even if I had attempted to do so: but going on straight up the stairs into the room

above—I needed no direction—found myself immediately in the awful presence of DEATH.

Great God! I wonder now that the tension and strain of my over-excited feelings did not snap my very heart-strings, and that I did not myself fall dead at the foot of that bed on which he lay—the best and dearest of Fathers and truest of friends thus lost to me for ever!

But yet deep and sincere as was the agony of that dreadful moment, I think that the affectionate and sorrowful elements of my mental organization must have become, to a certain degree, numbed and stupified by the weight of their own inordinate pressure, for as I stood gazing earnestly upon those beloved features, I remember that the most distinct impression of which I was for some time really conscious, was that of a vague feeling of curious wonder at the strong and vivid likeness between my dearest Father, as he lay there before me stretched back upon his pillow, and that other poor old man, by whose lifeless corpse I had also within so few hours back been standing; yet, in life, except that their white hair and moustaches might have been perhaps nearly of the same shade, there could really not have been the very slightest resemblance, either of feature or expression,

between them. Yes, it was strange, but that kind of idle wonder was for some time the only feeling I could actually realize !

I cannot tell exactly how long I remained in that room, thus alone with him who was gone ; but after a time a kind and gentle lady came in—I hardly know how, for I did not hear or perceive that anyone was near me until she took me softly by the hand, and was kneeling by my side, as I now at last knelt at the bedside, sobbing unrestrainedly like a little child.

She was in the dress of a *sœur de charité*, somewhere between forty and fifty years of age, to judge by her rather plain but very pleasant features, and her voice was peculiarly sweet and low.

I was surprised to hear her address me in very tolerable English ; but I subsequently found that she had been for some years an inmate of a convent in this country—in Dorsetshire, I think she told me—and it was for that reason that she had been sent for expressly by Dr. Pontoise to come from Amiens, where she was then living, to wait upon and nurse my poor father.

As, after a time, I gradually became more calm, I received from her a full and detailed account of those most mournful last days which I naturally longed to

hear, although the sad recital again and again renewed the agonies of grief which nearly overpowered me.

She told me that from her first arrival, as soon as my father had discovered that she understood and spoke his own language, he could scarcely bear her to be for a moment out of his sight; that he seemed to have the greatest dread of being left alone with foreign strangers, with whom he could at best but very imperfectly hold any communication, although he frequently acknowledged with thanks the attention and kindness of all those who were around him; that his broken arm had seemed to be healing, and he himself in all respects going on so well that it had been considered quite safe and advisable to remove him from the humble farm-house to which he had at first been conveyed, to that of the excellent doctor who had all along been attending him.

That for two or three days he had certainly appeared to have been even much the better for the change, and there was every hope for his speedy and complete recovery.

On the Wednesday morning, however, he had seemed not so well, and there were certain symptoms about him which, though not absolutely serious, had caused his doctor some anxiety.

All through that night and the next morning he had been very feverish, and at times lightheaded. He was evidently rambling in his sleep, and beset with wild dreams and fancies, and more than once crying aloud in a plaintive voice that his son was stopping to fight a mortal duel, instead of hastening on to see him before he died; or, again, that he was implicated in a murder, and would have to be tried for his life and be executed.

You may imagine how much I was startled, and how I winced when the good sister came to this part of her simple account—the very time, too, so exactly corresponded—but I controlled myself with a strong effort, and let her go on to tell me, as she did, that on the Thursday morning another medical man had been called in for further advice. It was about noon on that day, she was reading to him, as he was constantly requesting her to do, and “as there was no priest of his own less enlightened faith to come to him, he always seemed to be,” she added, speaking very softly, and in the simplest manner, “much gratified and soothed in spirit by my own humble prayers, in which he would most fervently join.”

They were engaged in thus reading and praying together about midday, when a telegraphic message had arrived, announcing that his son Frank—that is,

of course, myself, you know—would certainly be with him that same night, or in the early morning, by the evening mail-train from Paris, at the latest.

For some hours he had appeared comforted by this news, and more easy, and lay quietly calculating as the time drew nearer, and constantly studying a book of the railways.

The lady showed me a “Bradshaw’s Continental Guide,” which was still lying on the little bedside table, and in it was the telegraphic dispatch, sent, as I saw, by my Mother herself, and dated from Spezzia.

But as the evening advanced, he had again become restless, and more frequently begged her to send out some one to ascertain whether the train had not yet arrived, and seemed to grow more and more anxious and weary after each fresh disappointment.

He again and again read over that telegram, which he kept in his hand almost to the last, and more than once expressed himself as very unhappy and surprised at the disappointment of his wife,—my Mother, you know—not coming on to him herself.

As the night gradually wore on, and the hour on which he had been all day reckoning at last arrived, and still no tidings, he had fallen into a state of the deepest despondency; and as he lay moaning sadly to

himself, the good sister had read to him some comforting passages from her Book of Devotions.

After a little while he had sent out again for the last time ; and she herself had brought in the answer with which the messenger had returned, that the express train from Paris had indeed come in to Abbeville, and gone on, but that there had been no arrival.

Deeply sorrowing to be able to bring him no better news, she was moving towards the bed with the intention of continuing her soothing words of consolation, when he seemed suddenly aroused by some imaginary sounds, which only he himself heard, for all around was still and quiet as the dead of night.

“Who was that laughed just now?” he asked.

No one in the room had heard anything ; and then, still rambling in his mind, he went on in a more cheerful tone—

“Hark ! hark ! I can hear the train which is bringing him along. Now it comes battering along through the silent night ;” and then turning round in his bed, with a sudden start that surprised her, as she could scarcely have believed him to have had sufficient strength left for such a movement, he raised himself quite up, and, in a totally different

voice, just as if the person for whom he had been so earnestly longing was standing by him, had cried out—

“Ah, my child, are you here at last? but too late—too late. Why has not your Mother also arrived? God bless you both. Adieu.”

And falling back upon his pillow, with one very deep-drawn sigh, had ceased to breathe for ever.

“Who else heard those sounds?” I asked her, eagerly. “Tell me, Madame, who else was in the room? Who was it holding his pulse?”

“Doctor Pontoise was also here besides myself, and Amélie, the housekeeper,” she answered.

“And I also,” I exclaimed; “I myself was present to receive those last sad words. You may not be able to comprehend me, Madame,” I went on to say, as I noticed the sad but incredulous expression of the gaze which she fixed upon me; “but I assure you that I speak nothing but the truth, and can even prove it to you, being able, as I am, to tell you the exact minute at which the facts of which you have been telling me took place, as I myself marked it by the timepiece in this room. At twenty-three minutes before four;—tell me, was not that the exact hour?” I cried, with a fresh burst of passionate grief.

The lady directed my attention to a large clock upon the mantel-piece, which, from the position I happened to have taken, had been hidden by the curtain at the head of the bed.

It was of a peculiar style and pattern, and I recognised it instantly as the identical clock by which I had noted the time when I had previously been in that room in spirit only.

The holy sister did not seem at all to meet my meaning, but informed me that, according to a not unusual custom of her country, she had herself stopped the pendulum of the clock within half a minute of my dear father's last sigh.

The whole sixty minutes were marked in numbers round the dial. The hour hand was at 18, the other long minute one pointed between 37 and 38, twenty-two minutes and a half to four exactly.

## CHAPTER VII.

## PRIVATE FAMILY AFFAIRS.

I HAVE but a confused and indistinct remembrance of how those four or five days passed away during which space of time it was necessary for us to stay on at Abbeville. There was much to be done, but De Lyons relieved me of all bother and difficulty; he seemed to think of everything, just as if he were quite accustomed to such responsibility, and acted accordingly, without even coming to trouble me about any of the minor details and arrangements.

He had telegraphed off at once to Genoa, to Colonel De Lorme, and also to my poor father's lawyers in London, Messrs. Wyley, McKraft and Co.

Upon my mentioning the names of that respected firm, *Taraxacum* pricked his ears and assumed a very knowing look, but I was so full of other thoughts at the time, that I did not ask whether he had ever happened to hear of them before.

The good sister Agatha had told us that, upon more

than one occasion my Father had expressed a wish, in case of his not recovering the effects of his accident, that he should not be taken home to England, but be laid in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, at Paris, in, or as near as possible to the same spot where his own mother and a beloved sister had been already buried—a fact, by-the-bye, of which I was not previously aware.

I found a faintly-scrawled pencil note, to the same effect, inserted between the leaves of his Bible.

Neither Mr. Wyley nor his partner were able to come out to Abbeville themselves; but they sent a junior representative of their firm, the most elaborately got up dandified specimen of an East-end gent, a Mr. Jacob Wrascall, towards whom at first sight even I took a most unmitigated dislike, in which my friend De Lyons, who had more personal communications with him than myself, fully participated.

I felt quite certain that I had seen that man somewhere before; his voice and peculiar would-be-fashionable drawl were somehow quite familiar to me; but for the life of me I could not remember when or where. I begged De Lyons to “pump” him on the subject, who accordingly found an opportunity of asking him, as if casually, whether he had ever met me before.

After a pause of consideration, rather longer even

than his usually infernal affectation required, he had answered, that he might have done so, in Italy, and seemed disinclined to be more communicative on the subject, so *Taraxacum*, of whom he was very jealous, and who detesting him as much as I did, had constantly snubbed him, had not cared to press the question further.

It was necessary to turn out my father's private writing-case, in which his lawyers suggested that we should probably find his will.

He had only finally signed it the very day before he had left England, and they fancied must have taken it with him. In making the search I came upon his pocket-book, still unclasped, in which was his diary, written up as it was to the very last moment before embarking on the steamer for Boulogne. It showed evidently that he had been beguiling the time at some hotel at Folkestone, for the small space allotted to that day was thus filled up:—

“Tuesday, 20th (October).—Up early, everything packed up and ready to start as I intended at 9.45 from London Bridge—cab at door, when delayed by message from W. and McK.'s (confound 'em)—they had let me forget to sign consent to C. M.'s marrying little G. the dwarf (no accounting for tastes, par-

ticularly young ladies')—for poor dear Carry's sake I should have liked to have seen the girl once—but thus delayed, just missed the morning train—came on by twelve o'clock slow—stopped kicking my heels here at Folkestone—bad dinner—wine worse—don't know what to do with myself till boat starts at half-past eleven P.M. to-night."

There was the lawyer's letter between the pages of the pocket-book in which the above entry was made.

"Sharper's Row, Red Lion Square, October 19th, 1851.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Upon entering a memorandum of the various papers which had been laid before you for your signature, when I had the honour of waiting upon you this afternoon, we are sorry to discover that among the great number of folios we had inadvertently passed over that on which your official consent had, according to your instructions, been notified, to the intended marriage of your ward Miss Caroline Duffa. Although the young lady is, as you observed, past her twenty-first year, it is necessary, according to the terms of her late mother's bequest, as well as her great uncle's will, that she should have the consent, in writing, of her trustees to any matrimonial engagement in which she may propose to enter, before any further steps can be taken for a resettlement of the sum of

8000*l.*, to the interest of which she is by those wills entitled.

“The alliance which she now contemplates, with the full sanction and advice of the lady by whom she has been brought up, Mrs. Muddelled, of St. Peter’s, Guernsey, is one that must be considered most eligible by all who have any interest in the young lady’s future happiness and welfare; we have given orders to our clerk to wait upon you at an early hour in the morning, and as he will not need to detain you for more than five minutes, we trust that he will not interfere with your arrangements for starting for the Continent.

“We remain, my dear sir,

“Your very obedient and obliged servants,

“For self and partner,

“C. WYLEY.”

“To Lt.-Gen. Lambard, C.B., &c.”

“And so, my dear fellow, you were quite right after all,” broke out De Lyons, when, having by that time pretty well taken him into my entire confidence, I had shown him that last entry in my father’s journal and the lawyer’s letter with it. “Had it not been for that delay,” I had just before been saying, “my dear father might have been alive with us in Florence now, well and happy.”

“Yes, and only to think that he should again have contrived to be at the bottom of it!” De Lyons went on, while I was still speaking; and he then stopped short, as if surprised that I did not seem immediately to have caught his meaning.

I begged him to explain himself; but he seemed unwilling to do so.

“You may as well tell me,” I said, “at least, to whom you are alluding”—and I pressed him to do so.

“Why, don’t you see, then,” he said, “to whom that unfortunate letter which—as ill luck would have it—made your poor father just miss the train by which he had originally arranged to come refers? If you put two and two together, cannot you make out who that eligible young party must be with whom the young lady in question is to be permitted to contract so desirable an alliance?”

I still stared at him.

“You seem, somehow, to know more of my family affairs than I do myself—how, I don’t know,” I remarked, rather testily; for I was for the moment mean and ungrateful enough to half suspect my friend of having been poking his nose into papers and matters in which he had no business.

“Oh!” continued *Taraxacum* (I trust not guessing

my unworthy suspicion), "perhaps I forget to mention that he had told me McKraft was the name of his uncle, who had written out for him in such a hurry to go home to be married."

"Uncle?—him?—he? Who are you talking about?" I asked.

*Taraxacum* uttered no sound in reply—but by the motion of his lips I read, as he spelt the letters of the name, G-O-R-L-E-S; for he perceived, which I did not, that Mr. Wrascall had at the very moment silently entered the room.

Yes, it was indeed too true—as from the bitterness of my soul I had cried out and given expression to the thought which had haunted me, and then strangely enough, had gone again out of my head. This, the heaviest calamity of all, had indeed been brought upon me again by the blighting influence of Gorles—again in addition to the fact of his having, still by the same indirect and apparently quite accidental effect upon my destinies, contrived my delay, and thus prevented my having been in time to have perhaps even revived my dear father by my presence, or, at any rate, to have consoled his last moments, and had the melancholy gratification of receiving his last sigh and blessing in person.

"I cannot quite make out now the great object in

that move of theirs," said De Lyons, that evening renewing the subject, when we were alone: "8000*l.*, though a very comfortable little sum in the abstract, is by no means such a tremendous fortune after all—though, I suppose as much as Master Gorles, or, at any rate, his pettifogging old uncle, who probably is nearer the mark in a correct estimation of his merits, might think him likely to get. Yet still there is the fact of sending for him express all that way, and the evident importance in obtaining your father's legal consent. There is something yet more at the bottom of that affair than we quite see, depend upon it. Our pocket-companion mentioned large expectations, I now remember—to be sure; and he said that the fortunate young lady was a connexion of yours. If it is not a very impertinent question, pray who is this Miss Duffa, who is about to make this most desirable alliance? I wonder whether she has ever seen her intended!"

I had at that time but a very vague idea myself in regard to the young lady. Every family, they say, has its own private *skeleton in the cupboard*; and that connexion was ours, or at least, one of our *skeletons*. She was, I believe, the daughter of a first cousin of my Father's, to whom he had in former days been devotedly attached, and for some time engaged

to be married. On the very eve of their marriage, Carry Fane—that was her name—(her mother, you see, was a Miss Lambard, my grandfather's only sister)—had been induced to run away with, and was married at Gretna Green to, a Major Duffa, who was in my father's own regiment, and whom, having always trusted as one of his best and most intimate friends, he had himself introduced to his affianced bride. The General, or Captain, as he then was, had called out Duffa, and had enjoyed the grim satisfaction of crippling him for life.

After some four or five years of misery and unhappiness, Duffa had drunk himself to death, and within about eighteen months after, his wife had died also—leaving one little girl, whom she had confided in a last letter to my father—having appointed him the sole guardian and trustee for the money which luckily had not fallen in to her until after her wretched husband's death.

My Father had wished to adopt the poor little orphan, but my Mother, to whom he had at that time been only married about two years, would never hear of it, and indeed had so worked upon him, as to make him promise never even to see the child. My dear Mother was always the most loving and devoted of wives, and the most virtuous of women, but, like the

dear creatures in general, rather too apt to carry everything, either for good or evil, into extremes: her love and devotion amounted to a very few degrees below monomaniacal jealousy, and her virtue especially developed itself in the most unforgiving, unmitigated severity for any of the weaknesses of her own sex, of whom, strange to say, being so very strait-laced herself, she had, as a general rule, the very worst possible opinion.

My poor Father (very unwillingly, I believe) gave the promise, but having done so, always stuck to his word; and so all necessary communication, or rather provision for education, and so on, had always been done through his lawyers, who had seen to appointing a proper governess and companion for the poor girl, who had been since brought up where her parents had died—not in the West Indies, as De Lyons had reported, but the Channel Islands.

In short, it was an unhappy story altogether, and a subject to which I never heard either my father or mother even allude in the most distant manner. Indeed, what I did at that time know about it, had been gathered from the gossip of our old family nurse, whom I overheard telling the tale to the lady's-maid over the nursery-fire one evening, when I was a little chap of about seven or eight years old, and supposed

to be safe asleep in my little bed at the end of the room. I had quite forgotten it for years, but the mention of the name of "poor Carry" in my father's diary brought it all back to me."

## CHAPTER VIII.

JACOB WRASCALL, GENT.

THERE was nothing worth recording in our melancholy journey up to Paris, whither we had dispatched Mr. Wrascall on before us, to make all the necessary arrangements.

We were only too glad to get rid of that very obnoxious snob ; while he, on his part, seemed equally pleased to have a chance of changing the dullness of Abbeville, of which he had more than once actually had the bad taste to complain, for the more genial excitements of the gay capital.

We even strongly suspected him of having purposely made himself all the more personally obnoxious, with the express view of being sent on earlier than he perhaps otherwise would have been ; for he was constantly boring me with his complaints as to the indifference of the living and accommodation at the hotel ; not to speak of his officiousness, and repeated endeavours to set De Lyons and myself

against one another by his abominable lies, and many underhand inuendoes.

When we ourselves arrived at Paris, we found my mother, her sister, and Colonel De Lorme already arrived, and pretty well recovered from the fatigues of their journey from Genoa.

They seemed at first disposed to meet me with greater cordiality and kindness than when I had parted from them; but, unfortunately, they took it into their heads to conceive a strong prejudice, and to refuse to show even common civility, to my friend De Lyons.

That I could not stand. I told them exactly what that kind fellow had really been to me, and all that he had done for me in my trouble.

My aunt, would you believe it, really had the face and bad feeling, in so many words to impute all his kindness to certain most interested motives. That was, however, too much to bear calmly; I was disgusted beyond measure, and I just told them as much in pretty plain terms.

*Taraxacum*, poor fellow, indeed expressed his wish to leave me, now, as he said, that he could be of no further use to me; but I would not hear of it, and went off to another hotel with him, where I could be free from the petty malice, and unfounded insinuations of my own relatives.

I went, however, in the course of the evening to the Hôtel Bristol, hoping for a quiet talk with my Mother, and to make her at least listen to reason, besides having to settle about the hour, and other necessary preliminaries, for the funeral next morning; and there, I could hardly believe my eyes on beholding that horrid "gent," Mr. Jacob Wrascall, sitting at the tea-table with them!

"Here, Frank," cried my aunt, immediately ready for a "turn up" at me, "you choose to treat our judgment and opinion with contempt, here is Mr. Rascally Jacobs, who, as a man of the world, knows everybody and everything about society, thinks just as we do of your ill-chosen, particular friend, Mr. Lyons—Mr. 'Jackall,' he was just saying, he thinks he ought rather to be called—and that he cannot conceive how any gentleman in your position can find pleasure in the low company of a travelling man, or a *comic voyager*, as he calls him."

Mr. J. Wrascall on seeing me walk deliberately round the table towards where he was seated, with his mouth half full of hot roll and butter, had suddenly turned very white about the gills, and shuffling up on to his legs, contrived nearly to tumble backwards over his own chair. I felt strongly tempted to just knock

him head over heels, or at least to catch hold of him by those exaggerated red whiskers he was so proud of, and shake him until some of those gleaming teeth of his were loose in his gums. But, thanks be! I remembered in time that I was in the presence of my own widowed Mother, who, half raised from her sofa, seemed struck speechless with fright and anticipation of a regular row.

“No Mother, I wont touch him,” I said, in answer to her mute appeal; “but at the same time an impudent attorney’s clerk is not fit company for you, particularly when he so far forgets his proper position as to presume to offer his opinions in regard to your son’s friends. Now then, be off,” I said, as, instead of assaulting him, I handed him his bran-new shiny hat, “and if ever I hear you daring to offer any opinion either about myself or my affairs again, I shall be apt to pay you the equivalent of your legal charge of six-and-eightpence in a shape you may perhaps not relish. Now, make yourself scarce.” And he vanished out of the room like a dog with his tail between his legs.

The old Colonel began at first to puff and bluster a bit at my treatment of his guest, but I offered no apology; and, to tell the truth, I believe the old gentleman had himself already protested against the

young jackanapes being invited ; but my aunt, who had been taken by his shiny appearance, and would-be fashionable slip-slop, had persisted in declaring that he ought to be asked.

## CHAPTER IX.

## PÈRE LA CHAISE.

I HAD tried very hard to persuade my poor Mother over-night, not to put so great a trial on her over-shaken nerves and feelings as to think of coming with us to the cemetery, to attend my poor Father's remains to the grave. But she would not be persuaded.

We had tried to compromise with her, by suggesting that she should accompany us as far as the Protestant church, and from thence coming back with my aunt, leave us men to go on alone through the last sad scene at the actual place of burial.

It was no use, she firmly insisted ; and so, although dreading the effect which the effort might have upon her, we were forced to yield. Everything had been arranged to be as simple and quiet as actual decorum would allow, our unpretending procession consisted of two plain mourning carriages, in the first of which were my mother, my aunt and myself ; in the other, the Colonel, De Lyons—upon whose invitation I had

stoutly insisted—the Clergyman and Mr. Wrascall. When we had at last reached the gates of Père la Chaise, there arrived almost at the very same moment another gorgeous funeral procession, which, by the number of the carriages and attendants on horse and foot, with all sorts of heraldic pomp, and the paraphernalia of the Catholic church, evidently betokened the last honours of some personage of considerable wealth and distinction.

There was an immense crowd gathered round, attracted by the splendour of this show, some of whom, as they were crushed back against our vehicle—which was drawn on one side to allow the other more pretentious line to pass in unbroken—looking in at us, began to indulge in low and brutal remarks upon the fact of our being English and heretics.

My poor Mother and her sister became, not wholly without cause, violently alarmed. I put my head out of the window, and beckoning to De Lyons to come to us from the other carriage behind, begged him to go forward and ascertain, if he could, for how long we should probably be thus detained, and also to get the assistance of a *gendarme* or two, some of whom we saw further on posted about the gates, in order that we might be protected from the annoyance and insults of the rabble. I apologized at the same time

for thus troubling him ; but that attorney fellow who, of course, ought to have seen to the management of everything, was worse than useless, from his extremely limited acquaintance with the language ; though, as I found afterwards, he especially prided himself upon being able to say off the whole manual of “ French and English Conversation made Easy ” by rote : but as the pronunciation was entirely according to his own conception of what it ought to be, he had not found the study of that valuable work of any great practical advantage to himself in his intercourse with those natives who did not “ *spik Inglis.* ”

De Lyons assured us that our detention would not be for much longer, as nothing but the hearse—or, rather, funeral car as it was—could be allowed to pass into the cemetery ; the carriages were setting down as fast as possible, and that in a very few minutes the other procession would be formed, and move on, leaving the way clear for us.

“ The two will not interfere with one another,” he continued, speaking softly, “ for I came up here myself last evening to ascertain the exact spot ; and as the English Protestants have a quarter specially set apart for themselves, the probability is that we shall find that the other ceremony will take place in some quite different direction.”

He kindly went on, however, to speak to the police authorities, and when in a few minutes our carriage moved slowly on, and he returned to the carriage-door, ready to offer my mother an arm to assist her in descending, I was struck with astonishment at his appearance.

His face was the colour of a sheet, he was so ghastly pale; and as he leant against the carriage-door for support, I saw that it was as much as he could do to hold himself up. My poor Mother, too much absorbed in her own grief, did not notice this extraordinary and sudden change. But my aunt, carefully abstaining from any sort of recognition of even poor De Lyons' presence, and gathering the flounces of her dress close round her, as if their very skirts might be contaminated by even touching him, swept by with a glance which spoke whole volumes; and as she seized upon her husband's arm, I distinctly heard the words, "shameful intoxication," emanate from those indignant lips.

As I gave my Mother my arm, and De Lyons passed close to me to take his place behind, he looked at me for an instant with a wild and hesitating glance, seemed half inclined to whisper something, and then, as if changing his mind, only stammered out—"Be prepared;" and then with a palpable stagger in his gait,

which really almost justified my aunt's uncharitable view of his strange behaviour, stepped back to the side of Mr. Wrascall in the rear.

As De Lyons had predicted, before he had been affected by the curious change which had come over him, we were, upon entering the cemetery, directed to a different avenue than that by which the other *cortège* had passed on ; but upon mounting the winding paths, we found, by a strange coincidence, that we were again brought to within a few paces of one another.

The vault which, as I think I have mentioned, was already occupied by some members of our family, happened to be situated at the very extreme end of the English quarter, and, although approached by a totally distinct route, was, if not quite exactly opposite, only just separated by the width of the main avenue from the corner which was occupied by the stately and imposing mausoleum which was the destination of the other funeral. So that had our party consisted of anything like the same numbers, it must have amalgamated with theirs, and have become all mingled together.

I tried my best to compose my thoughts, and to concentrate them wholly upon the solemn and affecting ritual in which we were ourselves engaged. Pay-

ing, as we were, the last sad token of respect to Him who had been cut off from us in so awfully sudden a manner, and whose memory, indeed, deserved all—and more than all—the deep affection and veneration which I had with all my heart entertained for it.

But still, in spite of myself, my eyes wandered across to the other side; my attention was distracted; and I could not help contrasting our quiet, but very solemn service, with all the pomp and outward ceremony which was there going on; when all of a sudden my sight was caught by the name which, emblazoned upon a scroll or escutcheon among the ponderous ornamentation which crowned the structure, told me to what family that stately mausoleum belonged.

Though the coronets and heraldic bearings had been knocked away and damaged, and the gilding of the inscription itself was tarnished and dim, yet the name itself appeared as if in letters of flame; and that name was DE TISON.

Now, then, I knew the cause of De Lyons' sudden paleness and agitation.

As the real truth thus struck me, like a sudden blow, before I had hardly time fairly to take it in as a fact, I at that very moment felt my arm violently clutched by De Lyons, who had been standing close behind me the whole time.

“Good Heavens! look there,” he whispered, as if involuntarily; and then with an expression of extreme agitation went on—“No, never mind, don’t—for your own sake, for Heaven’s sake, don’t turn round.”

I did look round, naturally, and guided by his transfixed gaze, I beheld—though scarcely able to trust my own senses—nothing less than Gorles himself sitting perched up on high, on the corner-stone of a lofty monument, which about equally commanded both the funerals, evidently enjoying the result of his own demoniacal powers and machinations with all the intense interest and exultation of a regular Mephistopheles.

“Well, at any rate, I am glad that he is in for it, too,” De Lyons muttered, between his clenched teeth. “If I could only give him the office to try to bolt, he might perhaps lead them off, and give us, or at least you, a chance of a start. But it’s no use, Frank; you must get your mother down to the carriage, and off at once, without alarming her,” he whispered; “but you yourself must stay behind. They have only allowed us to go through the ceremony undisturbed on that condition.”

He had no time to explain himself more clearly, but catching his meaning at once—just as one candle

takes a light from another—I instinctively divined all that was in his mind, and that he had to tell me, in an instant.

As I turned to support my poor mother down the steep pathway, I just caught a glimpse of two grim-looking *Gendarmes*, sauntering at a little distance behind us, but watching every motion; and within three minutes afterwards, as a lower turn in our circuitous descent again afforded a view of the spot we had been occupying, I perceived a commotion in the crowd, and Gorles, having evidently been summoned to descend from his elevated position by two of the myrmidons of the law, was dodging round and round the huge urn on the top of the monument, exactly like a hunted cat.

As he solemnly declared afterwards to De Lyons, it was perfectly accidental his happening to be at that place at all. He had been detained in Paris against his will, and prevented going on, as he had intended, at once home to England, by the loss of his portmanteau, which, as we had ourselves witnessed, had been stolen by the audacious driver of the *fiacre*, which had brought him from the railway station; and he was merely killing time by visiting the celebrated "Père la Chaise," when his attention had been particularly attracted by the two funerals, not having the

slightest idea with whom either one or the other of them were connected ; but, that his fancy had been tickled by the fact of the two ceremonies of the rival religions going on at the same time, so closely within hearing and sight of one another.

## CHAPTER X.

LE PROCÈS D'ACCUSATION — A COMPARATIVE RELIEF  
FROM POSITIVE FRIGHT.

I MANAGED to get my mother down to the entrance-gates without her having perceived or suspecting anything, and putting her into the carriage with my uncle and aunt, while I made some excuse for myself, with a half-muttered promise of following them immediately, gave orders to their coachman to drive them back to their hotel ; and then turning round, we found ourselves face to face with the police, who had quietly been following us down behind.

“ *Messieurs,*” said De Lyons, raising his hat with most uncommon politeness, but I suppose, thinking it wisest to propitiate the enemy to the best of our power, “ this gentleman, my friend here, and myself, have to acknowledge your great forbearance and courtesy, in allowing us to disembarrass ourselves of the presence of the ladies, without adding to their already overwhelming sorrows by further alarm. And

now perhaps you will explain what it is you require of us, for we are wholly unable to form even the least conception in this quite unexpected affair?"

De Lyons had by this time quite recovered his usual *sang froid*, and had indeed assumed a tone of almost exaggerated dignity, and high-flown style of injured innocence. The *gendarme* whom he thus specially addressed, only shrugged up his worsted epaulets, and twitching up his moustaches, intimated in rather a surly voice, that he knew no more than that he had orders to conduct us to the *Commissaire de police*, who had given permission to allow us to go through the funeral ceremony without disturbing us, as long as we made no attempt to escape, but was now awaiting us in the office of the intendant of the cemetery, to which he begged us to accompany himself and his comrade without more delay. To which very polite invitation, not being able very well to help ourselves, we acceded with the greatest apparent willingness.

"You, as Mr. Lambard's legal adviser, had better come with us," De Lyons suggested, with great presence of mind to Wrascall, who was standing all this time with his great dull eyes and mouth stretched open to their widest; "you may be of some use in conveying a message to the embassy, or to his friends,

if we find ourselves likely to be detained, as perhaps we shall be."

We had only a few yards to walk to the intendant's house, round which a considerable crowd was gathered, whose immediate object and attraction we soon perceived upon being ushered in; for there we found Gorles, who had just been brought in from the other side, while we had been occupied with seeing my Mother and the others into the carriage.

He was held in the powerful grasp of two stout gendarmes, struggling in the most violent way, all the while cursing and swearing, kicking, spitting and almost foaming at the mouth with impotent rage.

"Be quiet, can't you, you d——d little fool," roared *Taraxacum* at the top of his voice at him, losing all patience. "It is entirely through you that we are now brought into this hobble, and you will only get us and yourself worse in for it, by making such an egregious idiot of yourself."

The *Commissaire*, who was at a table in the corner of the room, writing away busily with all his might, without paying much heed to Gorles' obstreperous behaviour, as if he were quite used to such vagaries, cocked up his ears at this adjuration. I thought by the smirk on his face that he understood it, though it was spoken in English, but he continued to scribble

away again on a fresh folio-page more assiduously than before.

“*Monsieur Commissaire*,” said De Lyons, in a very respectful manner, “we are somewhat pressed for time, and, monsieur my friend here,” pointing to myself, “is especially anxious to rejoin his family at their hotel, who are, as perhaps you may be aware, at this present time mourning under afflictions of no common severity. We shall therefore feel much obliged if you would have the goodness to inform us upon what charge we have thus been arrested and brought before you, and in respect to which, even before we have heard its nature, we have no doubt that you will find you have been labouring under some entire misapprehension.”

The *Commissaire* looked up from his table, and glared at us fiercely for some seconds ; then without deigning a reply, finished the last few lines of his writing, signed it with a magnificent flourish, wiped his pen in the bristly hair at the back of his head, and then sucked it carefully, having finished which process to his entire satisfaction, he suddenly announced—

“Prisoners, the charge against you is—*Conspiration*—feel assured that there can be no sort of misapprehension in the matter.”

He stared at us keenly, as though clearly to observe the effect of this declaration, and then set to work again as if to make further notes of the result of his observation, which we felt no doubt would be brought up with the rest of the evidence against us.

I was myself too astonished to do more than gasp out the word after him—*Conspiration!* *Taraxacum* gave a start of surprise, and then, as if a visible burden had been removed from off his shoulders, his whole tone and manner changed immediately to that of the most free and easy chaff, and incredulous banter.

“So!” he ejaculated with a sort of whistle, “that’s all, is it?—*Est-il possible?* perhaps *Monsieur* will inform us upon what absurd pretence so grave a charge is brought against us, and when, where, and against whom, we can be suspected or accused of having conspired. My friend here, and myself,” he continued, in the same easy fashion, “you may perhaps not be aware, only arrived at Paris yesterday forenoon from Abbeville, as we can easily prove by incontestible evidence.”

“Silence, prisoner,” said the *Commissaire*, waxing very wroth; “this is neither the occasion nor the place for any irrelevant remarks on the part of criminals in your position.”

“In England,” answered De Lyons, “no person is considered——”

“Silence, instantly; there is no question here of England, we are at present in France.”

“*Tant pis pour nous,*” said *Taraxacum*, with his usual impudence.

The *Commissaire* looked as if he would like to annihilate him, though condescending to make no further answer than to mutter audibly to himself—

“*Parbleu, mes messieurs,* you have much of reason there.”

After another long pause of consideration, the “jack in office” thought fit to announce that as a special indulgence to our prejudices as Englishmen and foreigners, he would so far condescend as to read over to us without further delay the *procès d'accusation* against us, though at the same time impressing upon us that this was an act of gratuitous liberality on his part, being not the least obligatory or even usual to persons who like ourselves had been guilty of such heinous crimes.

My private impression was, that he was only too delighted to have the opportunity of reading out his own voluminous composition, which was as long as my arm.

So, without further preliminary, he set to work.

Now I have always rather piqued myself upon my familiarity with the French tongue—I ought to know it, for when a little child my mother had lived for four or five years at Versailles, while my father was with his regiment in India, so that I talked French with my *bonne* before I did English.

But, hang me! if I could understand one quarter of what it was all about—as the fellow sang it out in one monotonous note through his nose, running on without much apparent reference to stops, except when requiring to take in breath, or occasionally throwing back his head with a critical air, he would take his pen to improve some phrase, or give a happier turn to the end of a sentence—occasionally, also, looking up to watch the effect upon us culprits, when he arrived at any specially damning clause.

*Taraxacum* perceiving this, by way of assuring him of our entire innocence, so awfully overdid the part by his extravagant contortions of astonishment and indignation—skipping from one pantomimic attitude to another—that serious and sorrowful as I had so lately felt, and still had cause to feel, it was all I could do to keep myself from bursting out laughing at him.

The real fact is, we were comparatively jolly under the circumstances—the natural effect, no doubt, of the reaction, and intense relief to our minds at finding

that we had been only hauled up, after all, upon an unfounded accusation, and some total misapprehension, and not, as we had of course at first imagined and feared, on any suspicion connected with the death of the unfortunate Vicomte, whose funeral we had by so strange a coincidence been brought to witness, almost, you might say, attend at personally.

Though I could by no means follow the whole rigmarole closely, from the extraordinary reading of the *Commissaire*, yet I could make out just enough of what it was all about, to learn, that we stood accused of having arrived at Paris as secret emissaries, connected with the "Carbonari," or some of those ultra-revolutionary gentry in Italy—"on whom the authorities, whom nothing could escape, happily had their eyes"—to conspire and arrange revolutionary plots, with other "miserable malcontents" of our own supposed political views, now concealed in that capital, with the expressed purpose of attacking and upsetting the existing order of things, which at that time was recognised as the French Republic, one and indivisible; and then there occurred an interpolation of at least a page or two, folio, to the effect that the said institution—*i.e.*, the existing republic—"was surely destined to last and flourish to the end of all future ages, notwithstanding all such cowardly and dastardly attempts

on the part of those who, like the miscreants now before him (meaning ourselves), envied and crouched before her greatness, firmly grounded as she was upon the triple and imperishable foundations of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité!*" Here the *Commissaire* rolled about his words in his mouth, and his eyes in their sockets, quite carried away in the most intense admiration of his own transcendent powers of composition: I don't know whether those fellows are paid by the line or not.

Well, the long and the short of it all was, that the Government—"ever eagle-eyed and paternal," or maternal, I forget which, by-the-bye—had received certain information that three Englishmen had arrived in France, bringing with them treasonable correspondence and letters addressed to suspected parties from Florence and Leghorn.

Suspicious, it seems, had been directed against us, as we eventually, though not till afterwards, ascertained, through telegraph, which had been sent denouncing Gorles to the authorities, by his precious friend the Contessa, who turned out to be, amongst her other accomplishments, a spy in the pay of the French Government.

Further intimation had been forwarded from Marseilles and Lyons, that the said emissary had been

joined by two other Englishmen, who, by trying to represent themselves as entire strangers to one another, and a more than usual exaggeration of insular eccentricities, were no doubt seeking to delude and lull the vigilance of the police from the real object of their journey.

In consequence of the express denouncement of the principal agent in this plot, the valise—"which had quite providentially been stolen, and since fallen into the hands of the police"—had been examined, and no less than three letters, which he had been idiot enough to take charge of, had been found in Gorles's own writing-case contained therein.

"Out of the frying-pan into the fire!" said *Taraxacum* to me aside, in German, which evidently not a little puzzled the *Commissaire*, who, as I have said, I suspect understood English.

Gorles himself, all this while, stood apart, between two *gendarmes*, now tolerably quiet, but looking as glum as a muzzled bear.

It appeared that they had been dodging him day after day, feeling him quite safe in their power, and waiting for a chance of catching him in actual communication with his accomplices in treason, and so making a pounce upon all three of us together.

Notwithstanding all their boasted vigilance and

secret information, De Lyons and I, by passing through Paris, as we had done, at once to Abbeville, had quite unintentionally thrown them off our scent and puzzled them; and nothing we could protest or declare to the contrary, would persuade them that we had not been all that time concealed somewhere in Paris itself. I really believe that even if we, as we might easily have done, had proved by respectable witnesses the truth of our assertion, the *Commissaire*, and those of his satellites who had had our case in charge, would have rather believed that the Préfet of Abbeville, the doctor, and half a score more, were all guilty of perjury, than that they could possibly be wrong in the special report which they had drawn up, and would have felt bound to stick to.

The voluminous *procès* wound up by calling the attention of the Court—to whom, I suppose, it was intended to be eventually addressed, and the world in general—to the evidently special interposition of that Providence which, “on this as on all other occasions, had manifested its favours and entire appreciation of the French Republic in preference to all other forms of earthly government,” by bringing us, as it had, all three at the same time to that particular spot to which, as it happened, they had only followed one of us, so that we should all fall at one swoop into the clutches

of those authorities against whom we had been so iniquitously plotting and devising our infamous designs.

A postscript further directed particular official notice to be taken of the evident agitation of the conscience-stricken De Lyons upon being first accosted by the *gendarmes*; also his remark to Gorles had been duly noted down, as clearly establishing our criminal complicity, when confronted with that accomplice of our guilt in the presence of the *Commissaire*.

In short, as *Taraxacum* remarked, "they had succeeded in discovering a rare specimen of the *nidus equinus*, or mare's-nest, and now, had nothing to do but to hatch and then cook its contents to their own perfect satisfaction.

## CHAPTER XI.

## A FRIEND AT COURT.

“WHAT will all this end in?” I asked my companion in trouble, when, having without making any objection given all the required particulars as to our names, ages, parentage, means of living, and so on, we were handed over to the custody of a cocked-hatted official apiece; first, to be taken to our own hotel—which favour had not, however, been acceded to without some demur—there to have our personal luggage and effects overhauled and examined, to which process we had expressed ourselves perfectly willing to afford them every facility, as well as to find our passports; by which we were prepared to prove, at least the truth of our having been to Abbeville, which the *Commissaire* chose to dispute and deny.

“What will all this end in?” I asked, as we were driving along in the mourning carriage, which had been all the while waiting for us, an attendant *gendarme* having taken his place inside with us, whilst

another was perched outside upon the coach-box by the side of the driver.

“Why, very likely no end of bother and inconvenience,” replied De Lyons; “probably in the shape of a long confinement in some beastly prison before we are even brought to any trial, or given a chance of proving ourselves innocent, unless we can get the English minister to interfere.

“I gave Wrascall the office to start off at once, and see if he could get hold of Lightlocks, the *attaché*, who knew us both at Eton; which may give him a slightly additional interest in our misfortunes. And your old uncle, the Colonel, must also be prevailed upon to go personally to the embassy to let them know who you are, and what is the real state of the case.

“He is, luckily, of position enough to make them more likely attend to him; for, as a general rule, if they had to interfere in every case, in which Englishmen have got into scrapes, and been shut up in limbo, they would have enough to do; and even double their present staff would not be able to get through that daily branch of diplomatic business alone.

“But the fact is, as I was told only last evening by a man here, who knows always pretty well what is going on, that on all sides they are daily expecting an outbreak somewhere, another regular

turn-up and revolution, but from what quarter, or where the blow is to come from exactly, no one seems to know, or to be able to conjecture; that it is which makes the authorities of the present hour so suspicious and only too ready to pounce upon any one within their reach, friend or stranger, with or without any apparent reason——

“Holloa! by Jove, look there—it’s himself, old Zauber, the Professor—hi! stop, I tell you, *cocher! arrêtez donc,*” and before the *gendarme* could stop him, De Lyons had flung open the coach-door, and springing over the unfolded steps like a harlequin, was down on the pavement, nearly overthrowing the astonished Professor by the violence of his embrace. The *gendarme* by the time he had recovered himself, and his mouth was shut again, first seized me violently by the throat, and began to ram my head vehemently into the corner of the carriage.

I was so taken aback that I had not even presence of mind to hit out at him in return for this most unprovoked attack; but I of course expected a general row, a struggle, drawn-swords, handcuffs and all the rest of it, with the probability of a hooting mob of street ruffians to escort us to our hotel, and thence to our prison, instead of going on quietly and unremarked as we might have done.

“What a confounded reckless fool the fellow is, for we shall be sure to come off all the worse for this!” I ejaculated in my vexation; but there I was wrong altogether.

No sooner did the ferocious official, who, having left his hold on me, and clumsily extricating himself from the coach, was striding after his escaped prisoner, seem to recognise the person of the Professor, than his whole demeanour, as well as that of his companion in arms, who had in the meantime rolled himself and his huge boots and his clanking sword off the coach-box, instantly and entirely underwent a marked change.

“Halt, Sergeant Scarran!” cried the Professor, evidently recognising that official and addressing him by name, “this gentleman is one of my most intimate friends.”

The sergeant, to my immense astonishment, began to apologize, and with a most deferential manner to explain, that though he was bound to carry out his duty, and not to allow his prisoner to escape from his sight, yet that any person who had the great honour of being numbered among the personal friends of Monsieur le Docteur, might rely upon receiving every attention and complaisance, compatible with the circumstances, while in his custody, which, he now added with a sort of a bow and very meaning smile,

he hoped, and would venture to say, would not probably be for long.

Not being myself on the same terms of intimacy with the mysterious Professor—nor indeed, upon the whole, having overmuch reason to look back with any pleasure to our only strange evening spent together and its consequences—I remained where I was in the carriage; though I was civil enough, and made no hesitation about accepting his proffered hand, when after eight or ten minutes' earnest colloquy De Lyons brought him up to the carriage-door, grinning, and his strange eyes gleaming more brightly than ever through his spectacles.

“Rely upon it, all will end well, my dear friends—I can see to this mistake being rectified at once; as even now I am on the way to the Elysée,” he said, confidentially, as, De Lyons and our attendant having retaken their places, we were just moving on again.

It was a perfect caution to observe the change in the official's manner towards us—from being surly and short in his answers to the few remarks we had made to him, the rascal had become quite deferential, and seemed anxious to conciliate and impress us with his deep interest in our welfare.

“If Messieurs Anglais had only thought of men-

tioning that they were the friends of Monsieur le Docteur, or could have procured his attendance, or received a communication from himself to that effect, there could be no doubt that the *Commissaire* would have been at once fully satisfied, and have entirely respected any precautions which they might have considered necessary in reference to their arrival or object in visiting Paris."

It was no use our protesting that we had no need nor wish for any precaution or concealment in the matter. The sergeant only shrugged up his shoulders, and grinning incredulously, actually winked—or came as near that process as the innate self-consequence of a French official might be supposed to allow of. For form's sake merely, he said that he must execute his orders, and search our effects, and secure any papers we might happen to have in our possession; and so leaving his satellite in the outer-room, he just looked into our bags and trunks, to about the same extent as the nominal search of a custom-house official on a continental frontier; then glancing back to make sure that the door was closed, he drew mysteriously towards us, and, in almost a whisper, recommenced an apology for being compelled to conduct us to the prison of Mazas, according to his orders, but where he had no doubt that our detention would be short,

and that while there everything would be arranged for our comfort and accommodation.

“And, Messieurs,” he went on to say in the most conciliatory tones, “having yourselves the good fortune to command the friendship and interest of the most influential person in all France, let me venture to hope that when the great change—for which we are all looking—shall have brought itself about, you will not entirely forget the humble services of Sergeant Scarran, who has always tried to carry out his duties with no more than necessary severity, especially when finding himself in charge of gentlemen, whose position and connexions naturally command the respect of all lovers of order and legal authority.”

“What the very deuce is the fellow talking about?” I whispered to De Lyons: “and who can he take us for, do you think?”

“Don’t show any surprise, but ‘be fly,’” was his short reply, as, turning to the *gendarme*, with a twinkle in his eye of half-amusement, half-recognition of some secret understanding between themselves, he assured him, with much dignity, that he might rely upon a full appreciation of his services, when the right time should come, but must remember what dangers there were in any premature allusions to such topics. We

then declared ourselves ready, and having obtained full permission to take our portmanteaus with us, settled our bill with the astonished hotel people; for whose unappeased curiosity I really could not help feeling the greatest sympathy, as we gave them no sort of explanation of the reasons for our thus departing in custody. We were conveyed in a fresh carriage, under our now most amicable escort, to the new prison of Mazas. A great model place it is, close by the Lyons' railway terminus—just beyond the Place de Bastille—built on a patent plan, something on the principle of an overgrown cartwheel.

I supposed, at the time, that they had thought our arrest important enough for the commissary to have sent expressly to announce our arrival; at any rate, they were expecting us, for, as we passed through the wicket of the great gates, I heard the porter say, "*Comment, déjà, mais les autres, où sont-ils?*" At which our *gendarme*, who really seemed to be not a bad sort of fellow at all, seemed most amazingly amused, and went off into loud shouts of hearty laughter.

"*Tout au contraire, mon ami,*" he answered, as soon as he could find words to explain; "these Messieurs will not probably trouble you to entertain them for

more than an hour or two," and then he and two or three of the other officials who were gathered round, whispered, and wagged their heads together, and all seemed equally to enjoy the joke.

## CHAPTER XII.

"A prison is a house of care,  
 A place where none can thrive,  
 A touchstone true to try a friend,  
 A grave for one alive.  
 Sometimes a place of right,  
 Sometimes a place of wrong,  
 Sometimes a place of rogues and thieves,  
 And honest men among."

WALTER SCOTT.

"I ONLY wish I could understand all this, or even part of it," I exclaimed, as soon as De Lyons and I were shut up alone, "for, dash me, if I can make head or tail of the whole matter."

We had, at our own request, been shown with the greatest civility into a small apartment. It could hardly be called a cell, for, though very plain and simple, it was really comfortably furnished, and most scrupulously clean. I happened to notice such little extras as a coloured cloth to the deal table, and cushions to the chairs, which were evidently bran new, for the shop tickets were still upon them, and seemed, as I remember we flattered ourselves, freshly put in for our special accommodation.

“You seem to take it all very naturally,” I said to *Taraxacum*; “perhaps you will not mind letting me into the secret.”

“I know no more than yourself, my dear friend,” was De Lyons’ reply, “except from what I could gather, or rather guess at, in that short but very lucky meeting with our old friend, the Professor. But why were you so awfully cold in your manner to the poor old fellow, by the way? He never did you any harm—intentionally, at least.”

“I wish he would give me back what he borrowed from me,” I said.

De Lyons for a moment put on that provoking look of his—which made me at times almost positively hate him—just as if he was going to pretend not to understand me, but then, seeing, I suppose, that it wouldn’t do, said, “Oh, to be sure he will; he has never had an opportunity, you know. I will see that that shall be all right, you may depend upon it; but do not let us go off upon that subject now, for, serious as it may seem to you, and no doubt is, in its proper season, just now the Professor has matters still more serious and important to think about.

“That *gendarme* was not far wrong when he voted him to be, as he did, the greatest man at this moment in Paris, or in France; the highest trump-card, the main-

spring, the moving spirit, I should say, in suitable language, of the whole concern. And now I come to put this and that together, as the saying is, I begin to twig in which direction the little game of the day is going.

“The fact is, I happen to know, no matter how, that the Professor has for many years been the most intimate friend and adviser of the Prince—the ruling man, in short, of this country—names, you know, are dangerous to be repeated, even in stone walls;—he was thrown much with him when they were young men together in Italy, and afterwards in America and London.

“The Professor, indeed, told me as much one day, when he was lecturing me upon the folly of running one’s head against one’s own destiny—he gave me as an instance how he had foretold the failure, and done all in his power to dissuade from, and prevent, that rash and unlucky expedition to Boulogne. It was also through old Zauber’s immediate contrivance, being disguised as a common labouring-man, that the escape from Ham was so cleverly effected; which, however, could never have been managed had it not been for the extraordinary influence which he brought to bear upon the senses and vigilance of the guards and officials about the prison.

“I remember his telling me, when happening to be in

a confidential mood, that it took months before he had recovered the strain and exhaustion upon his own system, both in mind and body, in consequence of his taking solely upon himself to tackle the accumulated vital principle and *odylic* power of so many strong, full-grown men at one time.

“He was with his friend again in '48, when he came over here to be elected to the present position which he now holds; and, depend upon it, there must be some new great change on the cards close at hand; and now, by Hokey! I think of it, what is the day of the month and year, December 1st, 1851, is it not?—of course it is; and only think that it should not have struck me before! Well, as it is necessary for explanation, I do not mind owning, in strict confidence to you, my dear Lambard, that popping suddenly one morning into the Professor's room at Dresden,—the good man was out, but all his papers were left about on the table—from no mean motive of curiosity, but sheer idleness, I took up a paper at which he had been at work, and which was nothing more nor less than a scheme for the *horoscope* of the illustrious Character to whom I have been respectfully alluding.

“The Professor came in before many minutes, and being, or pretending to be, most seriously riled at my meddling with his private papers, violently snatched

the said document out of my hand, before I had made much out of it; but I recollect that my eye did catch a sort of index note in the margin, which specified that the 2nd of December, of—yes, this very year '51, and again next year, were destined to be of the utmost importance, the turning-point, in fact, in the career of that illustrious party; and that, by acting strictly according to certain rules, and if avoiding certain dangers, he might end eventually in re-establishing himself and his dynasty as—Well, never mind. But let us see what a day or two may bring forth.

“I can only say, that nothing in the whole world was at that time more improbable; so much so, that it rather shook my own faith in the Professor's veracity. Indeed, I chaffed him, and told him that I admired his cheek, in trying to come it thus a trifle too strong, and he grew quite savage and begged me to make myself scarce in consequence.

“He himself alluded to my incredulity in that short chat with him I had on the Boulevards; that shows things must be pretty near and sure, or he wouldn't have so far forgotten his habitual caution; and the strange, restless, expectant manner of these officials betray them as primed and on the look-out for some great changes which perhaps may turn up to-morrow, or even to-night.”

*Taraxacum's* interesting discourse was interrupted by the entrance of a most obsequious official—they had not omitted the ceremony of locking the door upon us, by the way, I suppose, from habit and mere form's sake—who, in the blandest tones, requested to know at what hour it would please *les Messieurs* to be served with dinner: he at the same time took occasion to apologize for being prevented, by his duty, from allowing our compatriot and companion in misfortune, as he was pleased delicately to express it, from joining us at that meal. But as he had so far forgotten himself as to become perfectly uncontrollable, and, in his spirit of insubordination, to be guilty of a personal attack and extreme violence against the officer in charge, he had been forced, *malgré lui*, he could assure us, to have him confined in one of the refractory cells, from which, according to the rules of the establishment, no one had power to release him, without a special order of the superior Commissary himself, who had not yet returned from waiting, by express command, upon his excellency the President.

It was Gorles he was talking about; we had actually forgotten all about him. It seemed that he had been brought straight to the prison, while we had been allowed first to go for our things to our hotel.

No sooner had he found himself within the walls than, according to our informant, he had run a regular muck, and exceeded his usual self in the ferocity and frantic spite of his attacks and resistance against all within his reach ; kicking, scratching, and otherwise conducting himself in his accustomed wild-beast fashion. He had at last been overpowered by numbers, and having been obliged to be actually handcuffed, had been conveyed ignominiously into the "*cachot*," as I think they call the black hole of their prisons, and there shut up in complete darkness, with no prospect but bread and water by way of refreshment, and the contemplation of his own iniquities for mental occupation and amusement for the next forty-eight hours or upwards, according to his behaviour.

So far from sympathizing, we really could not help laughing heartily, to the evident astonishment of our gaoler ; and I am almost ashamed to own, that I think that this additional misfortune of our compatriot certainly had the effect on both De Lyons and myself of considerably raising our spirits, and making us more contented with our own temporary loss of liberty. They served us with a plain but very decent meal, quite enough, and very fairly cooked ; and having made no difficulty in acceding to our request, that we

might be allowed to remain together through the night, brought in a second bed, and made everything as comfortable as possible for us. Glad enough we were indeed to turn in—pretty well tired out with all the excitement of the day—some half hour or so before the attendant had looked politely in upon us, to announce that by the regulations of the establishment, the lights must be turned off, precisely at,—whatever the particular hour might be.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## LE COUP D'ETAT.

It seemed to us about midnight, or not later than two or three in the morning—though, as it proved, it was nearer seven, but still pitch dark—that we were roused from our sleep by a most tremendous row going on in the large central hall, or body of the prison. As we listened, we could make out nothing distinctly but a confused hubbub of swearing, protesting voices, intermingled with the scuffling and stamping of many feet.

“By the living jingo, it’s begun then!” cried *Taraxacum*, springing off his bed. “I wonder whether an infuriated populace have broken into the prison, and taken possession of it, as they did the old Bastille? I hope they won’t be for voting us to be bloated aristocrats, and want to hang us up to lamp-posts, or stick our heads on to their pikes; for when these ‘Mossoos’ once begin their playful larks, there is no reckoning to what lengths their lively spirits may

not carry them. At any rate, there is evidently something serious going on, and we had better scramble into our clothes as quickly as we can in the dark."

That was not a bad suggestion; for in a few minutes our door was unlocked from the outside, and our friendly attendant, or turnkey as I suppose he really ought to be called, put his head in, with a civil apology for disturbing us so early, but a request that we would have the complaisance to get up and turn out of our cell as soon as possible, as the *Monsieur* for whom it had been previously engaged was arrived.

What was to become of us? we inquired. The man seemed puzzled, and saying something about having received no commands, hurried off, leaving our door open for us to walk out when we pleased.

As soon as we had huddled on our things, and had passed out unchallenged by anyone, into the great central hall, from which the whole plan of the building radiates, a most extraordinary scene met our view.

Dimly lighted as it was, by only a couple of gas-jets near the centre, the whole space seemed filled by confused groups of figures in every sort of deshabelle and incongruous costume, surrounded and intermingled with *sergents-de-ville*, in full uniform, and armed to the teeth.

There were some in long dressing-gowns, with their

trousers tied in knots round their necks, instead of being worn in the recognised mode, and cotton night-caps on their heads, on the top of which their hats seemed to have been jammed down with violence, hind part before, or otherwise, as chance may have directed ; some shuffling along in slippers ; some with one boot on a foot, and the other still under their arm ; others having apparently had a hard tussle for it when pulled by force out of their beds, as evidenced by the remnants of their night garments hanging in rags and tatters, with cloaks or great coats thrown hastily over them, while their stockings and nether garments, dragging about their heels, could have conduced but slightly to their personal comfort, and certainly nothing to their dignity.

But few of them were in a costume particularly adapted to the temperature of an early raw December morning ; were it not that, luckily for them, they, one and all, seemed too hot with boiling rage and indignation to think or care, at the time, for either scantiness of their garments, or the sharpness of the frost.

Such a regular Babel I never listened to in all my days ; the whole lot of them, amounting, as that first batch did, I believe, to a score or two, or more, all gesticulating, denouncing, protesting, and haranguing at once. .

One or two of them were handcuffed, but the majority seemed only to be subjected to a very gentle coercion from their conductors, who treated them with a certain degree of respect, but the most imperturbable serenity, as each was, in turn, gradually told off to a different apartment.

De Lyons and I stood there in the obscurity of the background all the while, quite unnoticed, witnessing this extraordinary scene, with no small interest and wonderment, of course not knowing what to make of it, or who, or even of what class of people this large haul of prisoners could consist, until my companion suddenly whispered to me—"Why, by the blessed blazes, this is a rum start, and no mistake. Why that obstreperous old party whom they have just shoved into that cell that we came out of, with the handcuffs on, is General Bedeau; and the next to him, though I forget his name, was also pointed out to me as a leading member of the National Assembly. I saw them both dining together at the *café* the night before last, when you had gone to spend the evening with your Mother; an old friend of mine whom I accidentally met there, and who knows everybody in this city, told me who they were."

When at last they were all disposed of, and each individual, still protesting and making more or less

show of indignation and resistance, had been told off into a separate cell, and the door locked upon him, the *gendarmes*, their conductors, who had evidently utterly forgotten, or had never been aware of our presence, gathered together round the unlighted stove in the middle of the hall, and administering sundry hearty slaps of congratulation on each other's broad backs, and facetious digs in their neighbour's ribs and sides, stood there and grinned and laughed together till their epaulets and accoutrements shook and rattled again like a forest in the wind.

“Bravo! *mes braves!* Hurrah for the winning side!” sung out *Taraxacum* suddenly, at the top of his voice—I really believe as much by way of a vent to his own feelings as a gentle hint of our presence, which had been so entirely overlooked by the officials, thus detected in the indulgence of their most unprofessional hilarity.

The whole group jumped round upon their heels, with every variety of amazement expressed in their gestures and countenances.

“Who are these ‘*importuns*’ here at large?” inquired the head-swell, fiercely, striding towards us.

Our special and obliging turnkey suddenly seemed to remember our existence, and rushed forward with an explanation to his superior officer.

“*Ah! parbleu, messieurs!*” he exclaimed; “a thousand times I entreat your pardons. I have had so much to occupy my thoughts, that I had—pray again forgive me—for the moment entirely forgotten you. But, what have we? Can I credit my senses? Is it then possible?—Yes—no! or is it that Gustave Kanard is so much changed in a few months by the cares and responsibilities of his office that he is not to be recognised by his former *camarade* and fellow-associate in physical sciences—M. De Lyons? or, *for example*, even more marvellous is it indeed that a kind Providence has thus placed it in my power to acknowledge the debt of gratitude which I owe to him who, on a former occasion, by his bravery and courage so chivalrously risked his own life in saving mine, when on the point of being torn to pieces by a furious and bloodthirsty *canaille* in the famous *T'on-and-Gon* revolution, in the capital of the province of Cambridge!”

It was indeed the original “Mossoo” Kanard, our former acquaintance, who perhaps by the interest of the Professor, though I don't know that I ever exactly ascertained that fact, now occupied the responsible situation of head-gaoler of the Mazas (perhaps he himself had some more euphonious title for the dignity, but that is what he really in fact was,

all the same). His arms were round De Lyons' neck, who, luckily for me, happened to be standing nearest, and he had kissed him with a hearty smack upon both cheeks before one could wink. *Taraxacum* was more used to that sort of thing, however, and though I think he was perhaps a little annoyed because I was there as a witness, did not after all seem so very much to mind the absurd salutation. For my part, I took care to grasp both of our enthusiastic friend's outstretched hands so tightly, though cordially, as I shook them with prolonged warmth and violence, at the same time keeping my head thrown well back, that I managed to escape that same demonstration of affection and gratitude.

The whole body of *sergents-de-ville* in the meantime drew up at "attention," in a respectful and admiring circle round us, and honoured their chief and his new-found friends with a general military salute, like a chorus in an opera.

"My very dear and excellent friends," M. Kanard went on, after this first burst of affectionate recognition had thus found vent and a little subsided—"though if I were to consult only my own feelings I would gladly detain you here with me as my guests, if not my prisoners, yet it is my duty and disinterested pleasure to have to announce to you, that you are both

at full liberty to depart hence, as soon as you will. I myself brought back with me the order for the release of two English gentlemen, arrested on suspicion, from the Elysée itself this morning, but having so much of importance upon my mind at the moment, the names, as written in the official document, did not strike my eye or mind as those of any persons with whom I had ever had any previous acquaintance."

I myself did not much wonder at that, as happening to glance at the said order, I perceived that our names were transmogrified into a form which I think would have puzzled ourselves to recognise, let alone any acquaintance, whether French or English. De Lyons was set down as "*Danield Leous*," and I as "*Monsieur Francland Barddi!*"

"From the Elysée you came then?" said *Taraxacum*. "So that is the winning side, is it? Well, I am glad to hear it; but I suppose it was about an equal toss-up which would cry heads and win, wasn't it?"

M. Commissaire Kanard only grinned very knowingly, and displayed the whole length of his very yellow teeth and gums, begging politely to know when it would suit us to have his gates thrown open for our much-to-be-regretted departure.

"We must have our things out first," answered De

Lyons, "which are locked-up in that cell there, where you have stowed away that old member of Parliament fellow, or whatever you call him in this country; luckily he was one of the handcuffed ones, or I shouldn't wonder if he had prigged some of them by this time."

*Taraxacum* had many virtues and excellent qualities, but veneration for his betters, or respect for greatness in adversity, were by no means to be reckoned amongst them.

I ventured to suggest that we should scarcely consider it either a compliment or a favour to be turned adrift into the streets at that hour of the morning, for, as I have I think said, we fancied that it was a great deal earlier than it really was, though it was by that time, in fact, past seven, and daylight was breaking. If we could be accommodated anywhere till a more reasonable hour without inconvenience, I said that we should feel grateful.

The *Commissaire* most politely invited us into his own quarters, where we found a good fire, and a cup of most excellent chocolate. Being either too much pre-occupied with the thoughts of his past night's work, or perhaps restrained by the habits and traditions of proper official caution, our entertainer did not seem much inclined to answer the thousand-and-one

questions with which we overwhelmed him ; though, by way of explanation, he handed to each of us a copy of a long printed manifesto, which, among other announcements, declared the National Assembly to be dissolved, a state of siege to have commenced, and a very pithy address to the people, all signed by M. de Maupas, le Préfet de Police—which document was, as the *Commissaire* informed us, by that time posted on every wall in Paris.

When we left the prison at our leisure, and drove down the Boulevards with a written pass, which had been made out for us, in case of our being stopped, we found all the principal streets entirely occupied by the military ; and, though scarcely a vehicle besides our own *fiacre* was to be seen, the whole populace were at that hour turned out upon the pavement, with the eyes and mouths of amazement stretched to their widest.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## AN EPISODE OF MODERN FRENCH HISTORY.

WELL, I need not pretend to give you a full and particular description of the famous *coup d'état* of '51, in which we thus found ourselves so strangely thrown, for I daresay you know much more now, and even at the very time, knew a great deal better all about it in its details, from the *Times*, and other English papers, than we ever had a chance of doing, though we happened to be on the very spot. When we arrived that morning at the Hôtel Bristol, we found my Mother and relatives sitting quietly at their ten-o'clock breakfast, without having heard a word, or having the slightest idea, of all that occurred during the last few hours, or that a great historical event was actually taking place, as might be said, within the length of their very noses.

“Bless me!” cried my aunt, “do you think, Frank, that all you tell us as having been happening will interfere at all with my going out, and about the streets

and places? there are so many things I particularly want to buy and see, now I am at Paris, it will be really too provoking to be prevented just because there has arisen a crisis or difficulty in these stupid French politics, which of course I, as an English lady and an individual, neither understand, nor take the slightest interest in. Your Uncle," she told me confidentially, drawing me aside out of my poor mother's hearing, "seemed to think that I ought not to go out on business; but it is not for pleasure, you know—which of course makes all the difference—so soon after the funeral and all that; but I had, after a little talking the matter over, convinced him, that being, as we are, perfect strangers here, actually knowing and known by nobody, it was not at all the same as if we were in England, or anywhere where we had been residing for any time, and I had quite brought him to see the thing in my own, that is the right, light; and now, after all, to be told that I must not go out because of this *coup d'état*—whatever that may mean exactly—is too ridiculous. But tell me, candidly, do you think it would be unsafe, or that any one would interfere with, or say or do anything rude to us?"

I did give her my opinion candidly, and succeeded in frightening her into being reasonable, and staying

tolerably patient and quietly at home for that day ; but the next morning she strongly importuned her husband to come out with her, or at any rate to allow her to go out, only to convince herself that there really was any danger, and she promised to be contented to stay shut up altogether, if she could see and satisfy herself of any need for doing so.

While my aunt was still arguing the point, all of a sudden we heard the booming of the big guns, which made the windows of the whole hotel shake and clatter again ; and the rattling fire of musketry in the streets, with the yells and screams of a mixed populace of men and women who came tearing across the Place Vendôme, tended, as you may think, to convince her a little more forcibly than she had reckoned on ; so that, jumping immediately from one extreme to the other, she fled screeching to an innermost apartment, and passed the best part of her next three or four days in the interior of a large linen-press, or even, for some time, I believe, between the mattress and bottom boards of her bed.

Mrs. Harrison, more enterprising, and with a supreme contempt for the French and their vagaries, as she called them, was deaf to all warnings, and would insist upon going out to make a few necessary purchases for her own and her mistress's attire. She

was intensely indignant at finding all the *magazins* in the neighbourhood closed and deserted; and still hoping that further on she might meet with the object of her wishes, was actually in the act of clambering over the remains of a deserted barricade, when she was caught, and carried to a guard-house, and there subjected to a most ignominious personal inquisition; or, as she expressed, entirely turned wrong side outmost, by a parcel of unshaved heathens, to discover whether she had any arms or cartridges concealed beneath the sacred folds of her crinoline, or whatever the equivalent to that superstructure was called in those days.

“As if it was likely,” she said, when indignantly recounting her wrongs, “that she was going to trappus about the streets and them Boulevardeses with squibs and crackers sewn up in her petticoats.”

*Taraxacum*, whose natural love of mischief and disorder had full scope during these eventful days, in spite of all advice, threats, or imploring, was out and about all day; quite sure to be wherever the fighting and row was thickest. How he escaped being picked over by one party or the other, while continually potting away as they were, was more than I could ever account for. A dozen or more shot down in the street close by the Porte St. Denis, fell, killed outright or

wounded, within two yards of him, just as he had come up to the spot, as he said, to see the fun; and he, as we may suppose, having seen enough to satisfy him, walked off unscathed, with his hands in his trousers' pockets.

Within a hundred paces further on he was stopped by, and at the very moment engaged in arguing with, an officer on the propriety of his continuing in the streets against orders, when a bullet from a window above, passing over his shoulder, then and there cut the other poor fellow's skull in two, who dropped without uttering another syllable across his feet. That was the very shot which set the Algerian regiments as if mad, and caused the murderous fire to be directed indiscriminately up to the balconies and windows the whole way along the Boulevard.

But De Lyons' great exploit was on the Thursday morning, the 4th of December, I mean. He came rushing into my room, and sat himself down on my bed, before I was up, in convulsions of laughter. He had, it seemed, been knocking about all night, having made great friends, and had a jollification with some of the French officers who were bivouacking with their troops, under arms, in the streets, and about six in the morning had found himself in the not very aristocratic quarter of St. Antoine. There he saw a

man in a forage-cap, with a drawn sword in his hand, riding like an idiot down the middle of the street, upon a great, raw-boned beast of a horse, shouting to the workmen and mechanics, who were just at that time all turning out to their work, "*Aux armes, citoyens! Aux armes! A bas les traîtres perfides! à bas l'usurpateur!*"

"These natives are such rum-uns," said De Lyons, as he graphically described the whole scene, "that it was just a toss-up whether they did not join the fellow who was thus making a ridiculous ass of himself, and take him for a leader, to be mowed down by thousands with the grape and canister which was ready for them. I saw some of their eyes flashing; and some of them, even flinging down their tool-baskets from their shoulders, were already beginning to shout '*Aux armes! Vive Baudin!*' which some one told me was the idiot's name, and that he was an ex-member of the defunct National Assembly. In another minute, the cry of *Vive Baudin!* would have been taken up and become general, and thousands would have joined themselves in ranks behind him. Of course it was no business of mine," continued *Taraxacum*, "but I should not have liked to have seen such folly rewarded even by the triumph of a quarter of an hour's popularity; so, in spite of myself, I could not resist taking

a pot-shot at him with a *hors d'œuvre*, in the shape of a radish as hard as a bullet, which I happened, without any special reason, to have pocketed from my dinner over-night, and which catching his horse on the crupper, set it kicking like fun ; and then breaking into a rattling gallop, away it went, tearing down the street, with Mons. Baudin clinging on like grim death, with his arms round its neck, the drawn sword flying one way, the laced forage-cap the other, and as he scattered the crowds of flying *ouvriers*, like a porpoise floundering through the waves of the sea, the cries of '*Vive Baudin !*' were changed to shouts of laughter and yells of derision, which only sent his frightened steed faster and further in its headlong course down the slippery and rough stones of the ill-paved Faubourg."

That skilfully-aimed *hors d'œuvre* may thus, perhaps, have changed whole volumes of French history. It ought to have been preserved and set in the crown of the new Imperial dynasty.

## CHAPTER XV.

## MORE FAMILY MYSTERIES.

As I see that you really take a certain amount of interest in this narrative of mine, as I thus run on—or being as you are, at any rate, a most patient and first-rate listener—you may perhaps be wondering all this time what had become of poor little Katie. I was, I know. You must not imagine that I had by any means forgotten her ; because I have had so much to tell you without having had occasion even to allude to her name. The fact is, I could make nothing of what had become of her all that while. I could obtain no sort of satisfactory answer on the subject either from my uncle or aunt, nor even from my own mother, to any questions I might put to them, direct or indirect. I tried hard one day to pump Harrison ; and even offered her a handsome bribe in the shape of a new silk-dress. The offering she accepted, and expressed herself grateful ; but when I put it plainly to her, how anxious I was to know truly what had become

of her young lady, she only sniffed hard at me, and solemnly swore that she did not know herself, any more than that Miss De Lorme was safe out of the reach of them, as she, Harrison, “ was quite sure would never do no good, either to her or themselves, by running after her.”

The Colonel and my aunt talked regularly every morning of leaving Paris, and returning to Italy the next day after to-morrow ; but they continued to hang on, deciding every afternoon that it would perhaps be more prudent to remain quietly where they were a little longer, until affairs had somewhat settled down again, and all rumours of more disturbances and dangers, of which there were no end, should have subsided.

De Lyons, as soon as all the fighting and excitement was over in Paris itself, was seized with a sudden recollection of his commercial engagements, and started off for either Antwerp or Amsterdam—I am not sure which, and I don't think he himself had quite made up his mind on the subject when he set out. After he was gone I must confess I began to find myself uncommonly dull, not to say bored, with the humdrum life of our little family circle—being almost obliged, of course, to conform to their hours and habits, which were more suited to their views than mine.

I had no object or amusement, and, bless their dear

hearts ! they would take such excessive care of me they would hardly even let me out of their sight. However, as soon as my poor Father's affairs were settled, I knew that I should happily have enough to give me just my independence, if no more, and of that I had made up my mind to avail myself. By the will, the main bulk of his property—which was not so much as I had always fancied it to have been—was left to my mother for her life, except a settlement on myself of 500*l.* a year, until I should arrive at the age of thirty-two, and then, as I on that occasion learnt for the first time, I was to inherit a considerable property in land and funds by my grandfather's will, but only upon some very strange conditions. The most unsatisfactory part of the matter is, that I have never been able to find out precisely what these same conditions are. There is some great mystery about them which I am not allowed to know—to tell the truth, my poor Father, and indeed our family in general, were always rather given to enjoy and cultivate mysteries.

Some time after the occasion I am speaking of, when I came back to England, I thought I would try to get at the bottom of this matter, so I went to the lawyers one day, Wyley, McCraft and Co., you know, and asking to see one of the head rascals, I insisted upon having a look at the will itself, or rather the

probate duplicate, and upon knowing the whole particulars.

McCraft himself at first had the impudence to pretend ignorance about the whole affair—said that he didn't remember, would refer to his partners, and so on. Then as he, I fancy, saw me beginning to get in a rage, and that I was not going to stand his nonsense, he rather changed his tack, and began in another but scarcely less offensive manner, to put me through a whole series of questions and cross-questions, as to how much or how little I on my part knew, or fancied that I ought to know, about my own affairs.

Aggravated as I was just becoming by his impertinence, I feel convinced that I should have very soon proceeded to kick the fellow down the stairs of his own office, had not his partner, Mr. Wyley, happened just then to come in, who soon shut him up, and apologizing to me for such rudeness, pitched into him as he deserved. I heard him in an under voice ask what he could mean by taking so extraordinary a line, and point out the impolicy, to say the least of it, of such behaviour towards the son of an old client of the firm.

But though Mr. Wyley did treat me like a gentleman, he could not, or would not, tell me any more than that the conditions of my grandfather's will,

although no doubt legal, were strange and eccentric; but that after some consideration he thought he might be justified in so far conceding to my wish as to let me know the first, and perhaps most important, condition on which all the others to a certain degree depended, which was no less than a strict injunction that if ever I inquired into, or could be proved to have ascertained, what the main conditions were before the time specified—namely, my attaining the age of thirty-two—I should in that case forfeit all title and claim upon the property, which would then pass on to—to, in fact, the next person named, in the event of my having broken that first unfair condition; and who that next person proved to be, I will tell you in due time. You will own that was a shutter up, and a quiet squencher to all future inquiry, and no mistake. It was, as it happened, only a piece of bare luck that I ascertained that fact, as I thus did, before I had acted upon the advice of a young lawyer friend of mine, little Bobby Sharp, of the Temple, which had been, to have gone straight to Doctors' Commons, and having paid a shilling for reading the old gentleman's will, just satisfied myself. I remembered afterwards that old McCraft had asked me point blank whether I had not been there, and, if so, why not? and even made some sort of offer to

accompany me, or to send some one from his office to show me the way, if I were really so very anxious to ascertain and act upon the conditions of the will; and of course, as I saw afterwards, if I had thus put it into the cunning rascal's power to have proved the fact against me, I may, as it seemed, have found it rather an expensive shilling's worth in reference to my expectations.

I do not remember my Grandfather, and never could from any one make out much about him. Where he had lived, or when he died, I never exactly knew. From what little I could guess, he seems to have been a very queer old fellow; but whether he was under some cloud himself, or whether there was some hitch in the pedigree, which, as I do not mind in strict confidence hinting to you, is what I have sometimes suspected, there most certainly was a screw loose somewhere.

But in this digression I have been anticipating and getting ahead out of the regular course of my story, and must hark back to the time I was staying on in Paris, after the *coup d'état*, as I have told you, considerably bored, and yet not having the energy to make up my mind for a move. One morning, just before Christmas it was, I remember, I took up *Galignani*, and there, among the list of those who

had lately committed matrimony, my eye caught the announcement in full and proper style of “Melchior Gorles, Esq., son of the late Benjamin Gorles, of Bloomsbury Square, to Caroline Emily, only daughter of the late Major Duffa.” And thus it was, you see—though it did not strike me at the time, nor, indeed, until that interview, and limited though very important information which I elicited from the lawyers, which, though I have described to you, did not, you understand, take place until many months later, when I turned up in England—thus it came about, I say, that the wretch Gorles again, of all people in the world, by marrying my nearest relation, as she certainly was—though unacknowledged, if not downright ignored, by my mother—became my next heir-at-law, having his own uncle, who had, of course, concocted the marriage, in the position of family solicitor to myself, as well as acting executor to my grandfather’s strange will, with a direct interest in watching and trying to catch me tripping in the fulfilment of, for all I know, some impossible conditions, with which I am not even allowed to become acquainted.

How Gorles had managed to get out of the scrape we left him in that morning in the prison of the Mazas I never exactly knew ; but he must have gone

straight over to London to carry out his precious uncle's scheme. *Taraxacum* had, as I think I have already told you, hit the right nail on the head ; but I had so much to think of that I had forgotten it, and was for the moment taken by surprise. I made no remark on the subject, however, to my relatives ; but in the course of that evening I heard my aunt chattering about it, with many comments and wonderments.

“Do you want the *Galignani* any more ?” I heard her inquire of the Colonel ; “for if not I should so like to send it on by post to Katie, with a cross marked against that Gorles' marriage ; I am sure it will amuse and interest her, as she always likes to see when any of her old friends, or people she has known about, go and get born, or are dead or married.”

All right, thought I to myself, I will watch for that interesting newspaper when it goes downstairs to the post-box, and find out Katie's whereabouts by that direction. I had, I must tell you, by my private observations, already made pretty sure that the young lady was not still staying on all that time at Genoa ; something my aunt had let slip one day when she did not perceive, or had forgotten my presence, and then the bungling way in which she tried to con-

tradict herself, confirmed me as to the correctness of at least so much of the information, at which I had been in vain trying to arrive.

I had more than once offered to post my aunt's letters for her, but without any further reward for my politeness than her thanks, and sometimes having had the privilege of prepaying them out of my own pocket, not having thought it worth while to remind the old lady, when oblivious, as she sometimes was, of such a trifle.

It seems now really almost too stupid to confess that at the time it never once struck me that the thick and constant double letters which I thus posted addressed to—

“ La Signorina Araminta Blobb,

“ La Casa Volpiani,

“ 131, Lung'arno, Pisa,”

might possibly contain enclosures to Katie, to whom I knew my aunt was quite as much attached as to her own child, and therefore had wondered all the more at her having, as far as I could ascertain, entirely suspended all correspondence with her. It was only when, having caught a glimpse of that interesting *Galignani*, directed to the same Signorina Blobb, that the very palpable fact dawned upon me that *mi bella* Katie might have been left in the care

of a governess or some respectable spinster of that rather unromantic name. And so for once in a way I felt that Gorles, having become my kinsman, had indirectly done me what I considered a good turn. But we shall see.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE TOWER OF ST. JAQUES.

I OFTEN have wished that I was the "Hero" of a three-volume novel, in one particular at least, which always seems to me the peculiar characteristic of that enviable lot—I mean the entire independence of money, with all its vulgar, matter-of-fact appliances.

Cash, or rather the absence of it, which in real life is the paradoxical way in which it interferes and embarrasses all human affairs, never seems to enter the calculations of those thrice happy "heroes and heroines" of the light literature of the day, except, of course, in those cases where destitution and the pangs of starvation may be necessary for the actual sensational crisis in the story; but with respect to any such trifles as travelling expenses, for instance, though we all know that railway-tickets and cab-hire are, by a stern and immutable law of nature, affairs of ready money only, they always manage to start off at any moment to any distance whenever it suits them; and

I have never yet read of any "hero" whose plans were interfered with, either by not having the wherewith to pay his washing-bill, or who was ever bothered by having to pack his portmanteau, or being obliged to pay for extra luggage when it was packed.

This now specially occurs to me, because, from the interest you have shown, and the care you have taken in jotting down and trying to arrange in some order these simple adventures of mine, I sometimes have suspected you of the intention of reproducing some of these notes among the sketches from real life to which I know you are addicted. But should such be the case, remember that I cannot possibly do for your "hero," even if I had any ambition for so great an honour, never having enjoyed the privilege of such financial immunities as I have mentioned. You certainly could never bring yourself to committing to print so despicable a reason as that which happened unfortunately to be the true one which prevented me at that time from starting immediately from Paris for Italy in hopes of finding out Katie now that I had discovered her address: for that real and true reason was no other than the contemptible one of Impecuniosity; that is the right polysyllable, is it not, to express why I could not at once pack up and start off? or as you would have to call it, I suppose, "fly on the

wings of love for the shores of the sunny south, eager to bask in the yet more brilliant sunshine of the smiles of my inamorata." Bah! what am I saying! What a heartless beast I am to couple even a passing thought of that poor girl with such light nonsense. I am ashamed of myself, as I ought to be, for such thoughtlessness.

As soon as I should be able to do so, I certainly made up my mind to start for Pisa; but that could not be anyhow until I should have received the first remittance of my newly-settled allowance, for which I should still have to wait for the next two or three weeks, until the turn of the new year, in fact. Then, too, I clearly foresaw difficulties in getting away without full explanation, and remonstrance from my respected relatives, who would insist upon taking so much care of me. Should they divine my special object and destination, I felt sure they would do their very best to put a spoke in my wheel. I had therefore to lull all suspicion as to the important but very simple discovery which I had made, while quietly arranging my preparations for giving them the slip some fine morning before they should have thought it worth while to take any extra precautions against my gaining another interview with Katie. Besides the immediate lack of funds, however,

I at times felt conscious of a want of energy and nervous distrust of my own powers, which seemed growing over me, a feeling entirely strange to my natural disposition. I had by the time I am speaking of pretty well recovered my health and muscular strength. I had now again a good appetite enough to face my dinner like a man, and I slept all night like a top, for I took plenty of strong exercise in one way or the other; but yet I was not my real old self, and the confidence that I used to have in my own weight and physical powers was gone, and no longer the same, and in consequence a morbid sense of despondency was preying on my spirits.

I was returning one evening from a constitutional walk, which had taken me out beyond the Porte St. Denis—when on my way home, I happened to find myself opposite a particular print-shop on the Boulevards, exactly on the very spot where we had pulled up so suddenly in the mourning coach the day that De Lyons sprang out to greet the Professor; then I suddenly bethought me of that mysterious character. He is the man to help me, of course, I said to myself, as the remembrance of that strange encounter and its consequences flashed through my mind. *Taraxacum* said he was an honest fellow, and only waiting for an opportunity to return it.

“Of course he will!” I exclaimed, and unconsciously spoke it out so loudly, though only giving vent to my own busy thoughts, that a polite old gentleman who happened to be passing thought I had addressed him, and stopping as he took off his hat to me, expressed the most profound regret that he “*n’entended pas Anglais*,” and was therefore not able to give me the information which he thought I had asked of him.

“I must lose no time in finding him,” I continued, in a more confidential tone to myself, at the same time returning the old gentleman’s salute with an extra polite bow, but no attempt at any explanation. “Of course I must find him at once, and demand the restitution from him at any rate. Great man as he is supposed to be now in this capital, there can be no difficulty in finding out his address, which any one will be sure to be able to give me.”

There I found, however, that I was quite out of my reckoning. Nobody that I applied to seemed to know, or even to have heard of, such a person. For more than a week I was making inquiries in every direction I could think of. I wished I had thought of asking De Lyons before he had left, for I knew that he had been constantly with the Professor. I tried at the Post-office. They had never heard the name, and knew nothing about him. The police, to whom

I next went, snubbed me ; I could not help fancying that they there knew more than they chose to tell. I went all the way up to the Mazas, and inquired for the Governor there ; he was away somewhere for a time. Then I tried to find Sergeant Scarran, who had informed us of the Professor's interest in the late movements ; the poor fellow had been shot dead from one of the barricades on the day of the street fighting. Our friend the turnkey was affable and accommodating as ever, but he could give me no information ; he had never even heard the proper name of Monsieur le Docteur, as he called him. He only knew that we had been specially recommended to his care by Sergeant Scarran, as being placed in confinement as a mere matter of form, and to keep us out of danger during the few hours of the crisis, but as really being the intimate friends of some personage very high in authority, whom he did not mind now saying he had supposed to be no less than *son Altesse le Président* himself ; and he would only venture to hope that we were satisfied, and would bear testimony to his assiduity in fully carrying out his instructions.

I was beginning to think that I must give up the idea in despair, and was sauntering home one evening, listlessly and disappointed, when at the corner of one of those streets just outside the Palais Royal, I ran

against a man who had stopped to speak to some friend under the lamp, whom in the full glare of the gaslight I recognised in an instant; it was He himself whom I had met that eventful night at Dresden in the Professor's rooms, and again on the Ponte Vecchio at Florence. He returned my hard stare with interest, but without the slightest token of recognition, either in his eye or by any gesture, and then, as he turned from me with a careless, supercilious sort of swing to his fashionably-dressed companion, he spoke distinctly in the identical voice and peculiar drawl which had been so deeply impressed upon my memory: so distinctly indeed that I felt convinced that I was fully meant to overhear, as I could not help doing, what he said—

“Rely upon it, *mon cher*, if you find yourself to-morrow morning, at noon, under the shadow of the old tower of St. Jaques, you will be sure to meet the Doctor there.”

And with that intimation he took leave of his friend, and passed hastily down the dark side of the street.

I was chiefly occupied that evening in studying a large map of Paris in which the Colonel had invested, in search of the tower, or church, as I

supposed it to be, of St. Jaques. Until that day I had never even heard of it, and having, of course, by the great *law of contraries*, carefully examined every square inch, above, below, and on each side of the precise locality, before I chanced to spot the right one, was quite surprised to find it at last within two hundred yards or so of the Louvre; whereas I had fancied, I do not know why, that it must be right away among the purlieus of what De Lyons used to call the Surrey side of the river. The tower stands alone; the body of the church to which it belonged was, I think I have heard, demolished at the time of the Revolution, and now that it has been beautifully restored, forms one of the chief features of the newly-built Rue de Rivoli; but in those days it was in the centre of a labyrinth of filthy little back streets and alleys inhabited by the very lowest class of population.

All through that night did the Tower of St. Jaques haunt and trouble me in my dreams. I first thought that the Professor and his mysterious familiar were with me on the leads of the said eminence, which appeared to be some most extravagant height, and that each taking me gently by an arm, they, in the most courteous tones, insisted upon my jumping over with them, assuring me that there was no danger, for

that I should find myself able to fly, if I would only make the first effort, and have full confidence in my own powers. Then, again, I was below, and the tower was leaning over, about to fall on me as I stood waiting under the shadow of it. The Professor was holding it up by keeping his back firm against one of the buttresses, while he begged and entreated me to take care of myself and get out of the way. But my feet seemed rooted to the spot so that I could not move.

Confound the Tower of St. Jaques! was my first awakening sentiment in the morning; but I determined nevertheless to find myself at the appointed spot beneath its shadow punctually at the time I had overheard mentioned.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## RESTORATION.

ALTHOUGH I had very carefully spotted it on the map over-night, I had some little bother in finding the Tower of St. Jacques exactly, having rather overshot my mark, and so losing my way in a narrow ill-paved street, down the middle of which the open kennel of nearly stagnant water carried its filthy freight of dead rats, rotten cabbages, and every other sort of abomination—an interesting relic of the good old days, which would have afforded unbounded gratification to a Tory vestryman, or a genuine old Legitimist—*La rue des Lavandières*, was, if I remember right, the title of that most unsavoury locality, leading into an even worse street than itself, dedicated, by name at least, specially to the butchers.

It was just booming twelve, however, on some neighbouring chimes, when, at the opening of a cross alley, I found myself close under the old black walls of the Gothic tower; as it happened, exactly on the con-

trary side to which I had been peering up all the courts and passages in expectation of finding it.

There was the tower, but where was the Professor? I felt so perfectly confident of seeing him, that I was quite prepared to resent it as an injury and breach of common courtesy, that he was not there, coming at once across to greet me.

There were some dozen or so of the aborigines of that neighbourhood hanging about the door-posts, or lounging out of the broken windows above, all in a more or less state of ragged deshabelle, watching with seeming interest, though anything but good favour on their scowling countenances, the movements of a stout, puffy-looking individual, who evidently, by his appearance and dress, was quite as great a stranger in that quarter as myself.

Having a long measuring-tape, or chain dragging after him, this person was, without appearing to notice, or even to be aware of the attention which he was exciting, very busily occupied in taking the width, length, breadth, &c., of the street, calculating, shaking his head, and then from time to time writing down the results of his calculations in a large note-book.

Thus making my observations, I had drawn close up to him, while his back was still turned towards me, when from exactly the opposite side another well-

dressed man came across, and at once addressing himself to the puffy individual, I overheard him say—

“ Ah, Doctor, I was told I should be sure to find you here at this hour ; and now tell me, what is the result of your investigations ? can it, think you, be managed that the fine old tower, after all, can be spared, without interfering with the proposed improvements ? ”

I could have flung my hat at his head in sheer disgust, when in this new comer I recognised the smartly dressed man whom I had noticed the night before, when—you know who I mean—well, the Devil then, stopped to speak to him at the street corner ; and while telling him where to find his friend, in an apparently ordinary manner, had, at the same time, so cunningly and correctly, as the event after all proved, conveyed to me the information for which I was at that time so anxious.

The ways and means of that Party are indeed inscrutable and beyond all calculation. There is no mistake about that, you may depend upon it.

I was utterly disgusted at being thus sold by such a very common-place *dénouement* to my expectations, and was turning away with a biggish word or two as a safety-vent to my injured feelings, which seemed to

rather increase the astonishment of the other two actors on the scene, whose looks had already expressed some wonder at my presence in so uninviting a neighbourhood, coming up close upon them as I had before I could recover myself, and then bouncing off with a sudden expletive like a cork out of a bottle; when, behold, as I turned myself round, there straight opposite to me across the narrow street stood the Professor himself, in the doorway of one of the very dingiest of all the very dingy houses.

I had only just before been sold, and almost surprised at not finding him, as I had quite made up my mind that I should do, waiting for me, and now when I did see him, it so startled me, that my heart nearly jumped out of its proper place with the shock.

He did not at first perceive me, but was occupied in arranging the heavy folds of his cloak, preparatory to stepping down into the sloshy street from a rather steep door-step, upon which eminence he was still poised, when I accosted him.

Without exhibiting, however, a bit more surprise, than if it had been the most natural thing in the world, that I should be where I was, and we were constantly meeting.—“*Ah, mon cher!*” he said, “I have been wishing much to see you; but have been

so entirely occupied that every day something has happened to prevent me.—

“But who then told you where I lived?” he continued. “Ah, our volatile friend, of course; he is departed: and so you have found your way down here by yourself to see your old friend.”

“You don’t mean that you really live down in this filthy place,” I was just going to say, but changed it to “retired spot—do you?”

The Professor seemed amused, and only nodded the head of assent.

He seemed to consider for an instant, and then fumbling in his pockets, from which he produced a key, invited me to come up. Perhaps he saw something of hesitation in my manner, for taking me again by the hand which he had just dropped, and looking me straight in the face, he said, earnestly, “*Est que c'est donc que vous vous méfiez de moi ?*”

“Lead the way,” I said, by way of reply, as a distinct tingling sensation ran through the hand which he held, and right up my arm, with such force as nearly to make me sing out; and without another word he turned in at the door again, and still keeping my hand in his, began the ascent of the dark winding staircase within. Dark, rotten, and filthy as those

stairs were by which we scrambled up to what must have been at least the fifth or sixth floor, I was, I suppose, all the more struck by the contrast when I found myself ushered into a large well-lighted apartment, plainly but very prettily furnished, and so scrupulously clean that the parquet floor and the old-fashioned marqueterie table which stood upon it shone almost like mirrors, with bright polish. On another table, which stood in the deep window, was spread out a large parchment, scrawled all over with signs and queer angles and triangles, like so many overgrown propositions of Euclid.

The Professor in one instant saw my eye rest upon the work, from which he had evidently only just risen to go out, and which at once brought to my mind *Taraxacum* and the indiscreet observations to which he had pleaded guilty. Perhaps the same thought occurred to the Professor, for with an assumed air of carelessness he threw over them a large portfolio, which he picked up out of an old-fashioned leather arm-chair, and motioning me to occupy the same, while he pitched an extra log of wood upon the fire, he sat himself down on the other side of the hearth opposite to me, and with his eyes gleaming like lightning through his spectacles, expressed himself as extremely gratified thus to see me as his guest.

“You have been, I assure you, Mons. Lambard, for some days greatly occupying my thoughts. I have felt that by the working of mutual attractions we were destined to meet each other very shortly. You have on your part also been seeking me, for a special purpose of which I am aware.” I had, by the way, never told him that I had been seeking him, though it was, as you know, certainly the fact.

“Our mutual friend, De Lyons,” I said, “probably informed you of the special purpose which made me desirous of intruding upon your valuable time.”

“Perhaps so,” he replied, with a nod; “though I should have known all about it equally well had I never seen De Lyons.”

“Who could have told you besides?” I asked.

“You have not yet informed me,” replied the Professor, “by whom you were directed to come into this quarter to find me.”

“The Devil himself, Mons. Professor,” I answered; and I felt that I spoke advisedly.

He stared and grinned at me benignly.

“Well, let us at least give him his due then, and own that he tells the truth sometimes,” he said.

“Well, you give me what I have come for,” I made up my mind to say, after a pause of some minutes. “You are not going to pretend that you

do not understand me," I added, rather sharply, as I saw the expression of his eyebrows elevating themselves. I have been so anxious to see you, that I might ask you honestly to restore that which you fairly borrowed of me, but have never returned."

"Certainly," he replied; "and I assure you that I only regret that I have not long since had an opportunity of doing so. You will find it unimpaired, and even to a certain degree improved and increased from having been associated during these months with a well-controlled temper and a healthy constitution; but do you think that, since your serious illness, and all that you have been through (I had never mentioned my illness to him), you are yet strong and well enough to stand the reaction of the complete restitution all at once, or had it not better, perhaps, be done gradually?"

The thought suddenly occurred to me, that should it be necessary for me to be put in the same state, and again to go through all, with, may be, the same consequences that I had gone through when the powers of which I was now seeking the restitution, were originally borrowed from me—that here I was all alone, without any of my belongings having even an idea of what had become of me, completely in the

hands and at the mercy of this mysterious man, who, for all I knew, might think fit to keep me here for months, or even altogether, for some of his strange experiments, or unhallowed doings. He touched me with one finger, and evidently read my thoughts as plainly as if I had given utterance to them in so many words. Shaking his head with a grave smile, he said—

“ You doubt my honour, then, and do not even reflect upon the immense debt of gratitude which I owe to you, and for which I shall ever feel bound to you for the great invaluable service that your generous trust, so confidingly accorded, has been to me. But let us wait for another opportunity, when you shall, if you please, have some third party present at our interview ; but remember, that to be certain of all going well, you must not bring as your friend any one who is disposed to disbelieve what he has never seen or inquired into, or who may mar the whole process by the baneful and adulterated presence of a spirit of scepticism.”

There was something very clear and truthful in those strange, gleaming eyes of his, which gave me full confidence in him, as he thus kindly responded to my thoughts.

“Must I be put to sleep for any length of time?” I inquired.

“Not necessarily, if you think you can bear it, as I have said, all at once.” As he spoke he felt my pulse, at the same time placing his other hand upon my heart. I was conscious of its beating vehemently, but he seemed satisfied.

“Do you desire it now particularly?” he asked, fixing his eyes straight into mine.

“I do.”

“Have you any mistrust or doubt in my powers or goodwill to act faithfully according to such desires?”

“None,” I replied, firmly.

“Do not flinch then—be prepared.”

He was standing in front of me, grasping each of my hands firmly in his own, and as he gave that word of warning, he leant forward and breathed suddenly upon me.

The effect was exactly what I should imagine to be the momentary sensation during annihilation by a stroke of lightning. I received a shock which positively made me reel again, and I felt the blood rush round and round through every vein of my body like scalding quicksilver, while my head seemed to whirl round as if I had drunk off a tumblerfull of blazing brandy.

When after a few minutes I began to recover my-

self a little, I saw the Professor himself fallen back into his large chair almost in a fainting state; the large drops of perspiration were pouring down in thick masses from his brow, and his whole frame was trembling and shaking like that of any very old man; giving myself a good shake, so as to bring my own senses back into order, I rushed across the room for a caraffe of cold-water which I perceived upon a shelf in the corner, and as I held a glass to his quivering lips, he looked up smilingly into my face, and grasped my offered hand with the greatest apparent warmth of affection and gratitude. As I thus stood over him, I was again conscious of a warm stream of some subtle fluid, or spirit gently flowing back from myself to him, through the medium of our grasped palms, which seemed to have the effect of gradually reviving him.

Presently he directed me to a particular drawer in an old-fashioned escritoire which stood on the other side of the room, from which I brought him a small phial containing a thick, dark purple liquid; of this he poured some eight or ten drops into the water, and drinking it off with a single gulp, expressed himself, though still in a low feeble voice, to be sure to be soon all right again.

As I stood by his chair watching him with some

anxiety, I became sensible of quite a strong interest coming over me for the strange man, as he lay back there with his eyes half closed, and gasping for breath. I even began to regret the benefit to myself, at the expense of such suffering in the poor old fellow ; and when he seemed to be becoming somewhat more tranquil and composed, I offered him some attempt of an apology to that effect. Although entirely deprecating anything of the sort, I think he was gratified at my expressions of condolence and self-reproach.

“It was my own fault,” he replied—“my own fault and imprudence entirely ; in thinking so much about your physical powers and capability of bearing the sudden exchange, I quite overlooked my own. As I have said before, however, I owe you much. Yes ! very much more than you are aware of, or can ever imagine ; and I am pleased and glad to have had this opportunity of thus making a full restitution of all, and perhaps even more than all, that I originally received from you ; do not however distress yourself any more about me, for I shall quite recover myself in a few hours ; but tell me, by the way, how has it affected yourself !”

I had been so taken up with my attentions and real anxiety for the Professor, that I had not found time

to think even of myself, but thus reminded, as I drew my figure up to my full height and stretched out my limbs, it was with an inward thrill of joy and pride that I felt that I really was once more my old self again entirely: yes, by Jove, sir, it was me myself there again all over, every inch of me.

“Bravo!” said the Professor, smiling kindly at me, as he read my unspoken thoughts. “Now I must ask you to leave me——No, nothing, I assure you, with a thousand times repeated thanks; there is nothing more that I require, except perfect quiet and repose for a few hours to recover myself.”

I begged him to let me come to see him again, and soon, for that I should be anxious to know how he was going on. I had, as I say, really grown quite fond of him. He smiled at my eagerness, and told me that he might be staying on in Paris for some time longer, or might be obliged to leave the next day, at any minute’s notice; that being mainly dependent upon the will of——others. I guessed whom he alluded to. “But whether we meet again shortly,” he continued, “or, perhaps, not for years, let us ever cherish the bond of mutual interest and sympathy which has existed between us; and, depend upon it, if ever hereafter you should really need a friend in any special trouble or adversity, that I may be

found nearer to you and appear more opportunely than you may perhaps expect. One piece of warning, I will more particularly give you, though you may not, I know, be able to carry it out entirely; yet there is one person in this world whom, amongst all others, you will find it to your advantage to avoid, shun, and, above all things, never bring yourself willingly in collision against; that person's destiny is, accidentally, but most strangely and undoubtedly, mixed up with your own. His name is——”

“Melchior Gorles!” I exclaimed, taking the name out of his very mouth; “you need not tell me.”

He nodded gravely, and the door was closed between us.

I came skittering down that rickety old staircase four steps at a time, with very different feelings, and in a very different style of stride, from that in which I had so lately mounted them.

As I made my way along through the crowded streets, I am almost afraid that there must have been an extra spice of devil-me-care-dom, and a swagger about my appearance loud enough to make several of the natives turn round and stare after me, with anything but either favour or respect expressed in some of their ugly mugs. Of course I feel ashamed of such a notion now, as I ought to do, but at the time I did

not trouble myself, or care one pin, for what they thought of me.

I had only one care—one thought—to occupy my mind, and that was, that I was all right, and once more my real self again.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## DOMESTIC TYRANNY.

“That part of tyranny, that I do bear,  
I can shake off at pleasure.”

*Julius Cæsar, act i. sc. 3.*

It was, I think, the very next evening that I overheard my Aunt noticing the great change which had come over me, both as to manner and appearance, to my poor Mother, imputing it entirely to the efficacious quality of some wonderful pills which she had been so good as to prescribe, and to pester me nearly out of my life about taking regularly, for the last fortnight.

“Frank has done wisely,” I heard her say, “in having taken my advice for once, and my pills twice a day, at eleven and three, precisely, three to the dose. Any one can see how much benefit he has derived already.”

It must have been the advice alone, however, which deserved all the credit; for the pills, I must confess, might have been found in undiminished numbers on my dressing-table, in their original box, which was nearly the size of an average fig-drum. Deuce a one

of them had ever found its way down my throat, although my aunt was always going on about them.

At such opportune moments as the middle of breakfast she would do her best to spoil my appetite, and my temper at the same time, with such oracular reminders as—"Frank, my dear boy, you will not forget eleven o'clock this morning;" or, if she heard me making any engagement it would be, "You must be at home at three, you know; as Dr. Anser says that the great essential, in you know what, is keeping the strictest punctuality of hours;—three at eleven, and again at three, you know." And so she would go on day after day aggravating me on the subject exceedingly; the fact is that Mrs. De Lorme, though a worthy good sort of lady in her way, had gradually been assuming a species of domestic tyranny over me, which at first, almost imperceptible, had, little by little, brought matters to a climax which was becoming a good deal too much to put up with. As women always will do if you let them, because I did not stick up to her at once, she began to fancy that I was completely under her thumb, and increased her encroachments accordingly; not only by bothering me continually about my health, with her recommendations of pills, tonics, and other doctor's stuffs, and interfering with the enjoyment of my very meals with

her tiresome lectures on wholesomes and unwholesomes, but even venturing to catechize me as to my goings out and comings in—Where had I been? what had I been doing? who had I been with? and such like impertinences. Things were coming to that pass that I was expected to be at her beck and call, to take her about with me, and run her messages, which, as long as such offices were regarded as a favour, though sometimes a bore, I had no objection to fulfilling occasionally; but now that they had become almost to be looked upon as a right and a duty, my proud spirit revolted from such oppression.

Even the Colonel, too, had more than once taken to grumbling audibly, if I were not down of a morning, or came in late for dinner, though I never asked them to wait for me.

In short it was high time for me to be off, and the welcome day having arrived on which my first remittance was paid into my bankers, I determined to announce my intention of what the Yankees call "*making tracks.*"

"Well, Frank, so it is all decided, and we are all to start the day after to-morrow for London, together. We four shall just fill a railway compartment, if we can make proper interest with the *conducteur*, and get

him not to put any other disagreeable people in with us."

Such was the opening greeting I received from my aunt the very morning that I had, before hopping out of bed, made up my mind to break the stern fact of my departure; not, I own, without a chilly qualm, something very like "funk," in doing so.

I cannot say what my countenance may have expressed, but I had no chance of getting in any verbal reply, as my aunt went rattling on with her usual rapidity—

"You see the Colonel has received a letter this morning, which makes it necessary for him to go over to London for a week or so, and I shall be too delighted to take the opportunity of accompanying him, as it will be quite a treat to see the old place again after so long an absence—so, as we know that your mother has been for some time anxious to get back home, we have settled that we shall all go together, and you, you know, will have to take special care of me; as I shall feel quite lost, and a stranger in the land, if it were not for having you to "beau" me about to all the sight-seeing, and shopping, and visiting which I shall have to do—which will be so nice, you know—and a fine use I shall have to make of you, I can promise you."

“The only drawback to that part of the scheme,” I replied, when she at last stopped from sheer want of breath, “will be, I am afraid, that I shall not be there to accompany you; as I have made up my plans and arrangements for a tour in exactly a contrary direction, and intend to pass the rest of this winter in the south.”

I really thought for a moment that my Aunt would have flown at me, so angry did she seem, and even astonished at my daring thus coolly to kick my foot through the cobweb which, I imagine, she had flattered herself that she had so artfully and successfully wound round me and the freedom of my actions.

“But you must come with us!” she gasped.

“I don’t see any must about it, my dear aunt—especially as it doesn’t happen to suit my book just now.”

“Book!—what book? You are not going to publish anything, are you?”

That made me laugh; at which she waxed more indignant.

“But you cannot think of going by yourself!” she exclaimed.

“Why not?—do you think anybody will run away with me? Surely I am big enough and ugly enough to take care of myself, aint I, anyhow.”

“I did not suppose anybody would elope with you for your beauty,” replied my aunt, who always would take my conventional modes of expression in their most literal meaning.

“There is your mother to be considered !” growled the Colonel.

My mother was not present at this agreeable breakfast discussion ; she generally had that meal sent up to her in her own room, and did not make her appearance until later.

“That is just the point that this new arrangement of yours has settled for me,” I answered ; “for now of course you can take charge of her, and see her settled down at Danesbury, where I do not suppose that either she or you expect, that under any circumstances, I am to remain tied to her apron-strings for the rest of my life ; therefore, as so good a chance offers, I may as well start now from Paris, as come back through it a month hence—thus saving time and distance, to say nothing of expense.”

“But where do you mean to go to ?” sung out the two, both at once, in a duet.

“Oh, I scarcely know ; perhaps to Geneva, and through Switzerland, and across the Alps, downwards to the south. This is, in my opinion, the right time to enjoy that style of scenery in its real grandeur—

there will be some excitement in working over the passes of the mountains through deep snows and hard frosts, rushing down the other side, as I have heard they do on sledges; then to Milan, Turin, and Genoa." I noticed a rapid glance pass between my uncle and aunt, as I mentioned the last city with purposely strong emphasis; and I laughed in my sleeve, as I knew that I was selling them, all the while that they were thinking that I should be myself sold. "The short lamp-light glimpse that I had of that latter city," I continued, in as nonchalant a tone as I could assume, "has given me the strongest desire to see more of it. I have been reading it all up in Murray; and the Vandyke portraits in some of those magnificent old family palaces must be alone worth a journey to the world's end. By the way, as you will not be going back so soon as you expected, can I take any message, or do anything for you in Genoa?"

"Thank you," replied my aunt, very drily, "we have no one there belonging to us to whom we could have any message to send. We have written some days since to break up our little establishment, and have given up the apartments we had there, so that we cannot offer you any accommodation, and at this time of year you will probably find all the hotels quite full."

“ Oh, don't mention it, pray !” I said, pretending not the least to take in her meaning ; “ I daresay I shall have as good a chance as anyone else of finding some sort of room or other, good enough for me.”

As they had chosen to avoid all mention even of Katie to me, though I had at first more than once naturally inquired after her, I now followed the same cue, leaving them to suppose, if they liked to do so, that I had given up all idea and interest even in her existence.

As soon as my back was turned, I knew they would be at my Mother urging her on to oppose my newly-formed plan, so I just forestalled them in that direction, by going up to see her, contrary to my usual wont, before she came down from her own room, and having it out with her privately. I told her plainly that it was high time for me to be off, as matters were really reaching that pitch, that nothing short of a regular row would, I was afraid, be the consequences, if I were to stay on. I had before this been grumbling and complaining to her of the audacious encroachments of my tyrannical would-be controllers. And indeed she herself had had the good sense to see, and quietly disapprove of, the same, though using all her best efforts to persuade me to submit to them for the short time that we should probably have to be together ;

and for her sake to avoid a family quarrel, and a regular split, which it might lead to, with her only sister.

“But if you must go, Frank, what is your special attraction to Genoa?” asked my mother, looking me very straight in the face. “If you suppose that the colonel’s daughter, Catherine De Lorme, is there, I can only tell you, that you are entirely mistaken.”

“My aunt implied as much. But do you then know, mother, where she is, and what they have done with her?”

A most plaintive expression of melancholy, and a slow shake of the head, was the only reply which I received.

“Very well then, as she is not there, I do not quite see what right my respected uncle and aunt can pretend to, in cutting up so rough as they seem to do, at my wishing to go to Genoa; it does not belong exclusively to them that I am aware of; and as for Katie, I must only hope patiently that she will turn up some day, somewhere, when she is of age as well as myself, and then we shall both be free to please ourselves in the most important matter of our lives, and best chance of future happiness. The De Lormes always seem to me utterly to have forgotten, that had it not been for me, they would not have had any daughter at all, to be the

subject of all these mysteries and manœuvres. She belongs to me, I say, by right, body and soul; she ought to be mine only, for was she not dead and lost for ever to them, when I recovered her?"

My mother uttered a scream, and jumping up from her sofa, stopped my mouth literally by covering it tightly with her hands.

"Oh, my poor boy! my poor boy!" she cried out, as if in real and intense agony; "every morning and night on my knees do I pray that you and poor Katie may never again meet; that for both your sakes your destinies may always keep you apart! You must, indeed, forget her, and drive away all such fatal hopes—all thoughts of her from your mind. If you ever by chance find yourself in the same city—in the same country, even—for your own happiness, as well as hers, fly,—never rest until there are hundreds of miles between you."

"Why?" I asked, after a pause, for I was half frightened by the poor *mater's* vehemence; "can you not, for mercy's sake, tell me the simple reason, why? If there really is some such good, some dreadful reason to be revealed, let the Colonel break it to me, if you cannot; then, perhaps, my own sense of right may help me to see in the same light as you do the propriety, the dreadful necessity, or whatever it may be,

of schooling my mind to what is inevitable ; anything, I am sure, however hard to bear, must be better than this mystery and horrible suspense."

"You cannot—you must not—at least for years to come—know the reason ; which, however, believe me, is, as you say, inevitable. Have you no faith, no trust in your own mother's love, and in those who are only acting for the good of yourself and that poor girl, whom I would to Heaven you had never seen ?"

"There does not seem to be much faith or trust in me," I said, rather bitterly ; "but, however, as she is certainly not now in Genoa, I suppose there can be no harm in my going there—and as nobody will tell me where she is gone, it is their fault, not mine, if the hundred miles you recommend does not always intervene between us."

It was on the whole rather lucky that our conversation took the drift it did ; for according to the usual rule of capacity of the feminine mind, which cannot generally entertain more than one distinct idea at a time, it entirely distracted my dear mother's attention from what might be called, in strict parliamentary terms, the "previous question"—that is to say, the original fact of my proposing to set off on "my own hook." I had rather looked forward to no end of objections and difficulties, before I should persuade "the

parent" to see the advantages of my intended start in the same way as I did myself—indeed, I fully expected that she would still have nourished some of her absurd suspicions, and fancied that I was only eager to throw myself once more into the entanglements of her original "*bête noire*"—the Florentine Contessa—with whom, as I have told you, I in actual fact never exchanged a single word in my life. But that notion seemed most happily to have entirely left her mind—occupied, as it now seemed to be, solely by my attraction for Katie—so that my trip to *somewhere* became a recognised plan without much further discussion; it was only in regard to my destination that she seemed to think it necessary to reason with me, and when she found me to be so specially bent upon Genoa, I fancy that, with the subtlety of the female nature, she imagined that when I had convinced myself that the object of my affections was really not there, and that my journey had been to no purpose, I might be inclined to give up all further search and hopes in that direction. It ended, therefore, in being all settled quite amicably, and I made my mother promise not to listen to, or side with my aunt and her husband in their ridiculous interference with my plans or concerns; and having once pledged herself, I knew she would stick to the very letter of her word.

## CHAPTER XIX.

“WHEN THE WILD GOOSE HAS GONE SOUTHWARD.”

LONGFELLOW'S *Hiawatha*, ii. 163.

DIDN'T I just hug myself with delight as on the next morning I found myself actually off by the six o'clock train from Paris, once more free, strong and well, and my own master again.

I had not felt so well, and hopeful, and cheery in spirits for months past. By the way, I must tell you that on the afternoon of my last day, I went again to look up the Professor, but he had gone—evaporated. Nobody of whom I made inquiries in the house could tell me where, and he had left no sort of traces behind him. He must have departed the next, if not the evening of the very same day that I had been with him.

I am not going to favour you with a full, true, and particular account of my travels and adventures, through the perils of the mountain passes, with their everlasting snow, and terrific avalanches!

I suppose, very much like every one else, I found

the further I passed on through Switzerland from Geneva, that the extortion increased at an exact rate of inverse proportion to the accommodation. I made my way safely over the Simplon into Italy without having been attacked by wolves or bears, or even pillaged by any banditti, except those that were licensed in the guise of landlords, and custom-house officials.

At Milan I stayed for two days, and gaped, like all the rest of the world, at the beauties and exquisite details of that outrageous sham, the Cathedral there, with its imitation groined roof, which is nothing in the world but painted plaster; and its glorious effect of light striking upon the high altar, produced by a piece of yellow calico, or paper strained across an upper window, in lieu of stained glass. Not to speak of its couple of thousand and odd white marble statues, a vast number of which are nothing but plaster of Paris—that is, up beyond a certain level of ordinary reach and touch. I scrambled up by some scaffolding there was against one of the pillars and convinced myself of that fact, which I dare say, like other enthusiastic tourists, you will be loth to believe.

From Milan I worked across to Turin, that populated chess-board as it is, except that the squares into which it is cut are all the same dingy whity-brown colour.

There was not much to see there, except a few fine pictures in the King of Sardinia's Palace, and the Armoury—where, by the way, I wish they would not show the suit of one of their most distinguished heroes, either Emmanuel Philibert, or else Prince Eugene, I am not prepared now to state on oath which of those two it is, but I know that it is one of them, in whose highly tempered back-piece appear the marks of two great bullets. It does not look respectable, whichever of them it was, that gave their enemy a chance of hitting them in that place, and, if genuine, had better have been suppressed.

Having polished off Turin easily in one long day, I made my way as far as the railway was in those days completed, and on by diligence through the wildest mountain scenery imaginable, to that justly called "City of Palaces"—Genoa.

I must own, that I should like to have stayed on a few days longer than I did at Genoa; some of those magnificent buildings, and the pictures which they contained, were far beyond what I had even anticipated, and that is saying a good deal. But I found that there was a steamer starting for Leghorn on the second night after I arrived there, and so I determined to push on without delay.

I ordered my letters to be forwarded after me from

the *Poste restante*, and then, although I knew that I had not the remotest chance of finding Katie, or anybody connected with her there, I felt myself strongly attracted to the house which had been occupied by the De Lormes.

Of course I only heard from the porter's wife, whom I found sitting on the great doorway, what I knew a great deal better than she did—namely, that they had all left some weeks since for Paris. The good woman seemed glad of some one to gossip with, and invited me to go up through the still vacant apartments. I dare say you will feel inclined to laugh at me as a sentimental ass, when I confess that there was nothing I longed for more. I felt that I should like to see what that long dark passage I remembered so well would look like by daylight.

I went into the room in which I had received that chilling welcome from the colonel, and it was not without a sensation of trespassing that I found myself in the little chamber, which, as I was informed, had been inhabited by "La Bella Signorina." On the window ledge I saw a little shoe-buckle, which, pretending greatly to admire for the simplicity of its pattern, I asked if I might take as a souvenir.

The portress instantly begged me to accept it, and assured me that she should be only too happy

to let me have the fellow to it, as her daughter, to whom they had belonged, had, she knew, started a new pair within the last day or two. Her daughter, she went on to explain, had been occupying that little room lately, so as to keep it aired until some new tenant should come into it.

“Confound her daughter, and her trumpery shoe-buckles!” thought I. “What did she mean by it?”

When we had again come down to the ground-floor, seeing, I suppose, that I somehow belonged to and took an interest in her late tenants, the honest woman produced a letter which her husband had received—it was some days since—from “La Signora;” but being in French, which language, though both he and herself could speak and understand tolerably, neither of them could make much out of when written. She therefore begged me to read and interpret it for her.

I was not a little amused to find that this letter, which was dated the very day after I had left them at Paris, was from my aunt herself, particularly charging the *concierge* that in case a certain tall English gentleman—of course meaning myself—should call to make any inquiries, that he was by no manner of means to be informed that the young lady had been sent down to Pisa; but that they—that is, the *con-*

*cierge* or his wife—were to be good enough to say that, to the best of their information, she was certainly gone either to Vienna, or Dresden, or somewhere northward in that direction.

Now that was not so bad from Mrs. De Lorme, whom I had heard so often finding fault with her neighbours and acquaintance for telling fibs and indulging in exaggeration. The sad fate of Ananias and Sapphira was one of her pet scripture applications to those whom she suspected, and not unfrequently accused, of aberration from the truth, and I am sure I had grown tired of hearing her oft-repeated vauntings of her own extreme love and strict adherence to truth, even, as she would say, in the simplest matters. The good lady so far overreached herself by this extra zeal and precaution of hers that her letter served of course to satisfactorily confirm me in what I had already ascertained to be nearly, though not till then quite, an absolute certainty.

I was off again that evening from Genoa by one of the French *messagerie* boats, and arriving after a very fair night's passage early at Leghorn, was up to Pisa by the first morning train. The only other occupant of the railway compartment in which I found myself was a sleek and healthy-looking priest, cleaner and better clothed than the usual specimens

of the ecclesiastical breed of bipeds which one generally meets on the highways and byeways of Italy. He made a great pretence of being deeply absorbed in his breviary all the way up during our half hour's journey; but more than once, when I happened to look suddenly across at him, I caught his eye peering at me slyly and suspiciously from beneath the broad brim of his great shovel-hat, which instantly reverted to the study of his, "very good book," as soon as he perceived that he was observed.

By the time I had made the most of the best apology for a bath which I could get, and a tolerable breakfast, thinking that it would be as yet too early for the visit which I meant at least to attempt, I made up my mind to stroll out, and first reconnoitre the exact whereabouts of La Casa Volpiani, the number of which upon the Lung'arno was too well imprinted upon my memory to make the search one of much difficulty.

Of course, according to the established *law of contraries*, I started, however, by turning to the left upon leaving the door of my hotel instead of the right, as it so happened that I ought to have done; and at the very first corner I turned, I ran bang against a man who, coming with his head down exactly in the opposite direction, nearly punched all the wind out of

my body by the violence of the collision. The monosyllabic expletive which naturally would have risen first to my lips in condemnation of the fellow's awkwardness was thus literally choked in its birth. But I was very much taken aback when as genuine a British "Damn it!" struck my astonished ears as I might perhaps have expected if I had been in Charing Cross, instead of within a stone's throw of the famous leaning tower of Pisa.

Why I should have been thus surprised, you may perhaps be inclined to ask, since that "Shibboleth" of our countrymen is as universally well-known and familiar in every port and city all over the world, as the British flag itself; and it was probably only into the arms, or rather on to the crown of some dunder-headed English sailor or, at any rate, traveller that I had thus blundered, who had naturally sworn at me in his native tongue.

A compatriot he certainly was, but not exactly in the shape that either you or I should have quite expected to tumble over.

Before I could even recover my breath I had recognised to my intense astonishment first the overgrown hat and black robes, and then, beneath the hat, the identical features of my priestly companion of the railway carriage.

“Hang it!” I cried, almost before I knew what I was saying, “you don’t mean to say that you are an Englishman after all, then, in that queer toggery? Let me tell you, sir, that you have a most infernally hard head of your own, sir, and no mistake.”

He looked at me, with his face as red as ten turkey-cocks; but whether at having made that unecclesiastical slip, or at my thus involuntarily and perhaps somewhat familiarly addressing him I cannot say, but he began gesticulating, bringing his shoulders and elbows well into play, while he jabbered at me in Italian, of which in those days I knew next to nothing.

“Come, that wont quite do, my reverend friend,” said I; “there was too genuine a ring in that simple British oath which escaped you. I don’t understand your Italian lingo, worse luck; but I am quite sure, shake your head as you may, that you can understand me well enough, though I stick to plain English.”

But, with a greater profusion of bows and gesticulations, he chose to play his part of ignorance, and so working his way past me, and addressing himself to a respectable-looking individual who was just crossing over to our side of the street, I heard him ask in Italian to be directed to the Casa Volpiani, on the Lung’arno.

The familiar name of course caught my ear directly, and, standing as I still was within a few yards distance, I likewise profited by the polite stranger's directions. I let the priest go on round the next street corner, and followed him at a respectful distance, warily.

It is a strange coincidence, certainly, I thought to myself, that we should thus have already encountered one another twice within this short morning, and now find that we are both in search of the same house, in a city in which we both seem equally to be strangers; perhaps, after all, though, he may be in quest of some other person or family living under that same roof quite different and unconnected from those in whom I am interested.

I had ascertained the right house at any rate, but as it was still too early to offer to make a first formal call upon (as I fondly hoped to find her) the *unsuspecting* Miss Blobb, I contented myself at that time by marking my bearings, and then went off to fill up the time by lionizing the celebrated tower, the Duomo, and the Campo Santo. In the latter I was immensely taken with those marvellous old frescoes, which were then perfectly new to me, for I had never even heard of them, though since that time it has become the fashion to as much overrate and cry up

their merits, as a few years ago they were depreciated, and suffered to decay and perish—in some instances having been actually cut away for the admission of modern monuments.

Though not prepared to go to the absurd lengths of admiration, which it is now a sign of the only true and correct taste to lavish on them, as being unequalled and unapproached by any subsequent works of art, I was so well occupied in studying and enjoying their real merits, that impatient as I had naturally been for the time to pay my visit where I might hope to be once more in the beloved presence of Katie De Lorme, I was quite astonished to discover how quickly and agreeably nearly three hours had slipped away before I found myself again on the Lung'arno, at the door of the Casa Volpiani.

## CHAPTER XX.

A VERY QUESTIONABLE STORY OF VERY QUESTIONABLE  
TRANSACTIONS.

I HAD prepared a very polite note for the virtuous Miss Blobb, requesting permission to wait upon her and Miss De Lorme with the last news, and—I am almost afraid my pen had so far availed itself of a poetic licence, as to write, “message” for the latter from her parents, whom I had left only quite recently at Paris. This I tendered with my card to the man who after some considerable delay answered my ring at the door. He seemed a surly sort of fellow, and having very deliberately and carefully spelt through the direction on my note and my name on my card, returned them to me, explaining in Italian that Signora Blobb, and the Signorina with her, had both departed from Pisa. He would have shut the door without further parley had I not luckily stuck my foot against it to prevent him.

“When had they gone?” I inquired, in the best apology of the language I could manage.

“Ten days since.”

“Where? Had they left any address?” were the next questions, which I did my best to convey to him. He only gave me to understand in reply that he either could not or would not tell me, with a shrug which made me almost wonder that he did not dislocate his collar bones. Then he turned and called to some one within. For a moment I fancied that it was for assistance in shutting the door against me, for I still kept my foot firmly against it; but it proved to be his wife, a very skinny, rather shrewish-looking Englishwoman. As soon as she recognised me as a compatriot, and heard for whom I was inquiring, she pushed the surly fellow on one side, who retired grumbling, and with quite a pleasant smile (at least though not very successful, I felt sure that it was meant to be very pleasant), she invited me in, to what I felt honoured in perceiving to be her own private apartment, a very small chamber under the stairs, heated to within a very few degrees of *asphyxiæ* point, by a brazier of charcoal burning in one corner.

Begging me to be seated upon the only available chair which appeared to be unencumbered by either some specimen of dress, furniture, or ornament, and which I contrived to edge as near the door as possible, with a feeble apology for the accommodation, by

way of preliminary, Madame Theodoro Croskanski (*née* Sniggers, as she took particular pains to impress upon me) proceeded forthwith to favour me with her own family history from its earliest dates. She had, as far as I could gather, served in the capacity of lady's-maid, and even confidential companion, in some of the first and highest of English families—two or three princesses at least, and sundry duchesses, marchionesses, and the inferior ranks of the peerage, had enjoyed the services, and owed much of, if not all the splendour and *éclat* with which they had held their places in society, to the care and special skill of their faithful Sniggers, both as a hairdresser and dress-maker; nor were these glorious reminiscences unmingled with regrets, which she laid before me in the shape of a perfect volley of startling questions, which, even if she had given me time, I fear that I should have been quite at a loss to answer.

“What could have induced her,” she asked me in the bitterness of her heart, “after having been the favourite of some of the noblest and beautifullest in the land, to condescend to take a situation with any person of such a name as Blobb?”

I could not pretend to assign any motive, not knowing the exact circumstances of the case; but while I was attempting to frame some fitting expres-

sion of condolence, she had passed on without waiting to her yet more startling series of interrogatories, which seemed to be her favourite and rather peculiar style of narrative.

“How could she ever have been such a born fool and idiot as to take up with such a Polar bear for a husband?”

“How long since has she taken that step?” I ventured to inquire.

“Why, wasn’t it only three weeks last Monday that she had been and got re-christened?—that is, I take it, had been received into the Roman Church—and hadn’t she married like a new christened gaby, as she now felt herself to be, the self-same morning? How could she ever have allowed herself, as she had done, to be persuaded into a change of her faith, as a preliminary step to matrimony, for the sake of saving expense and trouble? Had she not a right to imagine that because her husband’s name ended in *i*, that he must of course be an Italian, instead of, as he had turned out to her great disgust to be, a Pole, or a Polar as she called him? Wasn’t he just a Polar by birth, and a regular Polar bear by nature?”

I did not care to follow her in her evident confusion of ideas as to the regions inhabited by those rough and savage animals, but tried to draw her attention from the enumeration of her own misfor-

tunes and regrets—after a proper amount of sympathetic expressions—by begging her to favour me with more particulars about her late mistress, the chaste Miss Blobb, and her charge, Miss De Lorme, whom, feeling that there was no exact need of more detailed explanations, I ventured to describe as a near connexion of my own, in whom I was much interested.

Madame Croskanski sprang up from the foot of her unmade bed, upon which she had been all this time sitting, with that easy negligence which bespeaks familiarity with the best of good breeding, she slapped one clenched fist into the palm of her other hand, and with a most unmistakeable wink and a whistle, which were not quite so suggestive of the *haut ton*, “Drat it!” she cried, “you’re never Mr. Frank Lambard, sir, are you?”

I could of course but plead guilty to the impeachment, and ask her what she knew or had ever heard about me? She laughed a shrill laugh of derision at my simple question.

“Hadn’t she just heard about me? She should think she had, indeed. Hadn’t her late missus, Miss Blobb, received letter after letter, and warning after warning, from Miss De Lorme’s ma, that if ever Mr. Frank Lambard should by chance turn up, he was to be driven off and never admitted, even to set eyes upon Miss Catharine, not at no price—oh, no! Hadn’t Miss

Blobb received whole pages full of instructions of how Mr. Lambard was to be constantly runned down, and to be reported to be going to be married, and otherwise practically effaced from the memory and affections of the young lady? Leastways, wasn't them the chief tendencies of the letters, as repeated by Miss Blobb herself?"

The *ci-devant* Abigail had, I fancy, caught herself in a slip in owning her intimate acquaintance with the contents of my worthy aunt's letters, and tried to explain that her late mistress had been in the habit of requesting her to read her correspondence for her, her own eyesight failing her; and even confidentially inviting her comments and advice upon the same.

Miss Blobb was, as far as I could gather, a spinster of great zeal and experience in all matters of theological controversy. She seemed to have attached herself at different, though at no very distant periods, to the most extreme opinions at both ends of the doctrinal scale, dodging about occasionally, but by no means gradually, at various stages between the two. At one time a stout member of the Plymouth brother—or I suppose more correctly speaking, sisterhood—she had actually gone down to Rome with a full confidence in her own powers of converting the Pope himself; and indeed, had only failed in doing so in

consequence of evil counsellors, and those immediately about his Holiness refusing her an interview, and declining to allow her unrefutable arguments, when set out upon paper, to reach their destination.

My informant was, I must confess, almost ill-natured in her insinuations in regard to the arrangement of perfect community of goods into which Miss Blobb had, in full accordance with her then acknowledged creed, entered with two other ladies of the Plymouth persuasion: Miss Popper was the fortunate possessor of her own carriage and horses; Miss Scrunch owned a charming little villa in the neighbourhood of Lucca, in which for a time the happy trio established themselves, to dwell together in the full enjoyment of the most primitive innocence. Miss Blobb herself considering that she contributed more than an adequate share to the common lot, not in worldly goods indeed, for of those she had next to none, but in amenity of disposition, and natural talents and experience for agreeable society, which no right-minded person could deny were tenfold more valuable than the mere dross which so soon perishes and becomes lost. Which view, however, did not prevent Miss Blobb from occasionally seeking to carry out her doctrines of community of the said dross with so much zeal, that not only did her

personal expenses begin to exceed her full thirds, but she was more than suspected of having laid by certain sums, like a prudent woman as she was, against a doubtful future. The partnership had been in consequence dissolved, but perfectly amicably, as might be proved by the very satisfactory and even flattering encomiums which had been written by Miss Popper when applied to by her old friend and schoolfellow Mrs. De Lorme, in recommending Miss Blobb as a most fit and desirable temporary guardian for her favourite step-daughter.

Katie, as I was already aware, had only come under the worthy ladies' care about two months since: but in the meantime Miss Blobb had been actively employed in theological controversies: writing and distributing good little books of her own composing, and otherwise running the blessed risks of martyrdom—that is, so far as being ignominiously bundled out of the country by the ecclesiastical authorities—until at last boldly venturing to tackle no less an antagonist than an English Monsignore himself, instead of succeeding in converting him, she had somehow ended in becoming converted t'other way up herself, and had within the last few weeks been privately received into the Church of Rome.

“That's just how it was,” continued Madame Cros-

kanski, with a dismal sigh ; “ and wasn’t I just fool enough to let Miss Blobb convert me at the same time ; and then that Polar bear declaring that the only impediment between us was thus removed, without having time to think even what I was about, didn’t I consent, and so go and get christened over again by the name of Ursulina—and such a name too ; wasn’t it now ?—and married all of a heap like ? ‘ Bother Miss Blobb for her pains,’ says I, whenever I think what a real born fool she has made of me, or leastways made me make of myself, you see.”

Miss Blobb had said nothing about her change to the young lady, because she did not know how she might take it, and she couldn’t well afford to lose the salary she received with her charge, as it was just all she had to live on.

But one morning there had arrived by post a newspaper — she particularly remembered the occasion, because it was the first day, and happened to be the immediate cause, of her new husband showing what a Polar bear he really was, for upon opening the paper to iron it before it went upstairs, he had remarked most ill-naturedly upon a particular marriage in it, being underlined and marked out with a cross, which he declared to be illegal, and had seriously talked of denouncing to the police. “ Though he was her hus-

band, hadn't she therefore good private reasons for her belief that he was nothing more nor less than an Austrian spy?"

But to go on with her story about the said newspaper.

"Besides the announcement thus illegally marked out for special notice, was there not, to be sure, in the same journal a whole column devoted to the description of the ceremony, and full particulars of some English young lady who had been lately received into the church of Rome, and then taken the veil with all sorts of public pomp and fuss about it, that wasn't she, Mary Anne, or, as she was now, Ursulina Croskanski, satisfied in feeling certain that that was the actual turning point in Miss Katie's mind."

"Wasn't I, then, a standing behind her, a doing of her back hair, as Miss Blobb was a reading out to her from the sofa by the fire-side? and didn't I notice a bright flush of excitement and religious devotion come all of a sudden over her pretty face, which actually made me myself tingle all over with them religious feelings which are quite indescribable, though easily recognised when in play? As I stood there a watching her countenance in the

glass over the back of the head, couldn't I read as plainly all that was passing through her thoughts as if it had been printed there in letters of gold? 'Oh, Sniggers,' says she, 'don't pull my hair out by the roots;' and then a gentle sigh escaped her, and didn't she say, quite softly, to herself, 'Oh! that must be peace—that must be the only way to find true happiness in this world of trouble!' Miss Blobb wasn't the one to let such a chance go by, I promise you, and that very same day—I make no doubt, indeed I may confess that I know for certain that they came to a mutual confession of their religious sentiments, and an open understanding in the matter—was I therefore the least bit surprised when, within a week, Father Hommant, the English Monsignore, came by Miss Blobb's invitation—for didn't I happen to see the note!—to receive the dear young lady's first confession. Why, wasn't he himself an archdeacon, or a churchwarden, or some such high dignitary in our, that is, your, English Protestant church not very long ago as I have heard tell."

"Bless me!" said I, "is that the English priest who called here, and came into this house about ten o'clock this morning?"

The woman looked mystified, and declared that on

priest had been there to her knowledge; and that nobody could have come in unless admitted by her husband, or, what was more, without having been seen going upstairs by herself.

I knew better, for I had watched him in, and had seen the door closed again after his admittance; but I let the matter pass for the moment, while I inquired more particularly as to the exact time of departure and destination of Miss Blobb and her charge after the important step which she had thus taken.

“Wasn't it just ten days since?” was the question I received in reply. “Of course it was, the very next day after the arrival of that letter from Miss Catharine's mamma, announcing your Mr. Lambard's engagement and intended marriage to a lady of high rank and great wealth at Venice, I think she said. What! ain't you married then, or ain't you going to be? Well, for goodness gracious sake, sir, don't break my furniture!” she screamed out as, springing up violently, my chair fell back with a crash, and I brought my fist down upon her ricketty little table hard enough to shiver it into atoms. “Well, to be sure! Didn't we not only hear it, but didn't I see it with my own eyes? for I happened quite by accident to find the letter lying straight open before my very nose in one of my young lady's drawers when I was

a putting her things to rights, and hadn't my eyes actually taken it in, before my mind knew what they was about?—indeed, I may say that I had got over to the other side before I had made sure that it was not a washing-bill which Miss Blobb had desired me to look over. At any rate, there it was, and if I cannot tell you now the very words, I remember leastways the main sense of them, for they made, you see, a deep impression upon me.

“ ‘Our old acquaintance, Frank Lambard,’ it said, ‘is not turning out well (or something to that effect). He behaves undutifully and ungratefully to his poor widowed mother, and now insists upon going off, we have, alas! too much reason to fear, to carry out his unhappy engagement with an Italian countess at Venice (or Vienna was it, sir? I am not quite sure), who, though reported to be very rich and very beautiful, is not likely to have received that education, or to be imbued with those high and pure principles of morality which can, after all, alone conduce to an English husband's true happiness.’

“ Wasn't she already biassed, as I tell you before, by Miss Blobb? But wasn't that news—as I knew well, although she showed little or no sign—the real clencher? Wasn't their passports got for them by special interest that same Monday evening as was?

or how was it that the very next day, being Tuesday, they were able to set out straight away for Rome? Isn't it now my firm belief that the poor dear young young lady is gone to take the veil at once and for ever, as in course she'll find it to be; and didn't my late missus dismiss me at a moment's notice on the score of my having been and gone and got married, which wasn't it all her own doing quite as much as mine? and the only thing I want to know now is what that precious Miss Blobb and Father Hommant, besides the reward which a virtuous action always brings of itself, expects to make for themselves by the transaction?"

"I don't see exactly how they can hope to do that," I rejoined, almost mechanically, for I felt nearly stupified by the audacious iniquity of the intrigue of which poor darling Katie and I had been thus made victims. "Did you ever happen to overhear anything which could give rise to any such notion?"

Madame Croskanski shook her head slowly, but significantly. "Can you think it odd that I never happened to hear much myself?" she continued; "and because, why?—because didn't they always take such good care to talk together in nothing but Italian—which do I understand except when spoken

very slowly—whenever I was anywhere about? But when my precious husband, Croskanski, was on the box of the carriage in which they—that is, I mean, Miss Blobb and the Monsignore—used to drive out together sometimes, didn't they always talk in plain English, thinking him to be an Italian—just as wasn't I fool enough to believe?—and supposing that he talks nothing but Italian? But bless your heart! can't that man talk English just as well as you or I do? German, French, High Dutch or Low, it's all just the same to him? but isn't he too deep to let that gift of tongues of his be generally known? And didn't he, before I found out what a Polar bear he really was, repeat to me some of the plots and plans he had overheard, as to the prospects and property of the young lady, openly talked over and arranged between that precious pair, while he was perched up on the box there above them, as mum as a mouse, pretending to be quite unconscious, and wholly occupied in observing the manners and customs of them long-legged cameleopards, and other curious beasts of prey, which the Grand Duke has got there, in his farm at the end of the Cascini? Oh, he's a deep bear, I can tell you, sir, besides being a regular Polar one; and didn't he distinctly hear them discussing and

settling about what money and fortune Miss Catherine had of her own rights—leastways through her own mamma's rights, which was dead—and how she would have, whatever she was to have, entirely in her own power as soon as she comed of age."

## CHAPTER XXI.

“ON, ON TO ROME!”

THEY had not yet given up the occupation of the apartments, indeed had left much of their property there, which showed an intention at least of returning some time or another, though for her part Madame Croskanski was prepared not to be surprised should they never do so, having her own reasons for expecting the particular result, which she had mentioned, to their present expedition. This she told me confidentially, and then offered to show me the rooms if I pleased to look at them.

It was not so much sentiment on my part, this time, that induced me to avail myself of her offer, as a presentiment which had suggested itself to my mind that I should find that sleek-looking priest still up there. The key was not where it ought to be. The shrew began to rail at her lord and master, who all this time had made himself scarce, for having mislaid or concealed it.

“But I have my master-key,” she said, “which will do, even if we don’t find the regular one stuck in the door.”

“Why, isn’t there some one in here?” was her next shrill interrogative exclamation, as, leading the way, she had flung open the door of the inner room—  
“Pray, sir, who the dickens are you, then?”

There, sure enough, sat comfortably at the table facing her, my ecclesiastical fellow-traveller of the morning. With a large drawer full of letters and papers on a chair by his side, and a writing desk, which I instantly recognised as poor Katie’s private property, open before him, he was evidently occupied in making a regular inspection of its contents, which as far as one could judge in the hasty glance of the moment, he was systematically arranging, and docketing. He appeared, as well he might, somewhat startled by our abrupt entrance, and either not at first recognising me, as I stood behind in the shade of the doorway, or perhaps in the confusion of the first moment, forgetful of the *ruse* which he had tried on in our morning encounter of ignoring his own language, he spoke up with an assumed air of great dignity, but the most undoubted English:

“What do you want here? Pray what can you mean by this unwarrantable intrusion?”

"Not a bad accent that for a foreigner," said I, stepping forward, and the face of the fellow set me off laughing, for I saw that he felt guilty of having committed himself before he had even reached the end of his sentence. But my companion had in the meantime taken up the cudgels, as, screaming at the top of her shrillest voice, she went in at him with her questions tooth and nail.

"Intrusion, did you say? Who is intruding but yourself? How came you here, turning out all my missus's and young missus's boxes, and desks, and drawers in this audacious manner? Haven't all these things been left under my special care? But how did you get in? What is this but a regular case of downright burglary? And then do you dare try to face me and this gentleman, who is who? I should like to know, if he isn't the lady's own first cousin and nearest relation, with an impudent accusation of intrusion; why, who the dickens *are* you, I say?—and what do you mean by it?"

"Mr. Lambard is quite aware that he is not the cousin, or any relation to either of the ladies, late tenants of these apartments, and can have no manner of right or business here," replied the Priest, after a pause, and now trying to carry it off by speaking broken English. "I happen to know more about

that gentleman and his antecedents than he perhaps imagines," he added, looking anything but amiably at myself.

"Have you found any of his letters or correspondence among the lot you have been rummaging out there?" inquired the Abigail, rather sharply, having recovered her breath for more questions. "But how did you get in here? and how long have you been here? Isn't that what I have a right to know? as these apartments are left specially under my charge."

With a sort of insolent dignity he handed to us an open letter signed by Araminta Blobb, coming round from the other side of the table to do so. "Here is my written authority," he said; "these keys," rattling a small bunch, "have been entrusted to my care by the ladies to whom they belong, and who have commissioned me with the entire arrangement and packing up of their papers, valuables, and other property, as they probably will not be returning to Pisa. And by this key," to which he pointed, as it lay on the corner of the table, "I obtained my entrance, upon showing that letter which you have in your hand to the servant of the house, who admitted me this morning; if he did not remember or think it worth while to communicate these simple facts to his wife"——

“How do you know that?” she inquired.

——“Or to any stranger who may come here to pass himself off as a relation to the owner of this apartment, that is no business of mine. Good morning, sir; good morning, Madame Croskanski; I am, as you may perceive, very busy, and rather pressed for time.”

And I am hanged if the oily rascal did not bow us both out of the door, which he politely held open, and then we heard him lock it on the inside upon us, before we knew what to reply. He certainly so far had the advantage on his side, that I of course felt that I had no shadow of legal right to interfere.

“Well, did you ever?” was the last unanswerable question put to me by Madame Croskanski, as we descended the stairs together, looking perhaps rather foolish at one another. I left her without another word; but I trusted to her being too intent upon closely questioning and pitching into her husband for having, as there could be no doubt he had, admitted that ecclesiastic, without intending the wife of his bosom to know anything of the matter, to notice that breach of manners on my part.

Remembering that the same steamer from which I had landed that morning, would probably not start again from Leghorn until nightfall, I returned forth-

with to that port by the afternoon train in time to secure [my passage on to Civita Vecchia, and from thence arrived in due time—that is, not above six hours later than the hour advertised, at Rome.

During my most dreary journey in the *rotonde* of the very crazy diligence I had turned over and over in my mind a hundred different vague plans and schemes for following up poor Katie, and rescuing her, even by a *coup de main* if necessary, from the clutches of the perfidious Miss Blobb and those villains in league with her.

The very morning after my arrival I lost no time in prosecuting my inquiries in every direction I could think of. First of all I set to work and carefully examined all the lists at every hotel, and at all the agencies for the lodging-houses. Then I tried all the different bankers.

Nothing could have been more civil than they all were; but being Catholics themselves, as I think almost without exception, when they had heard such particulars of the object of my earnest search as I thought fit to give them, their sympathies visibly slackened. The Consul, too, belonging also to the same faith, a most gentlemanly man, when he heard that I was no actual relation of the young lady, and

that she had come down to Rome accompanied by her accredited *chaperone*, declined any official interference, even had I been able to suggest to him in what manner or direction he could hope to exercise it. Then I thought of the clergyman of the Protestant congregation, and calling upon him, told my story, and begged for his advice and assistance. But he had only to say that he was there himself but upon sufferance, and that it was as much as his place and his very livelihood were worth to meddle with any of the priests or communicants of the predominant church. By way of consolation, however, he was good enough to give me, or rather make me pay a scudo and a half for a sermon, which he had lately preached upon the occasion of some Countess, Italian,—though of English birth, I think he informed me, who,—having gone over, had returned again to the right faith, having been brutally treated, and her nose put of joint, physically as well as morally, by a barbarous husband. He pressed upon my notice also a list of the prices of the sittings in his place of worship, and kindly offered to put down my name for one of the best, and nearest the corner in which the stove was placed.

My inquiries were all in vain, I could find out nothing; I could hear no kind of tidings of either

Miss Blobb or her charge for nearly a month, and then, when I at last, quite by chance, did so, it was too late—yes, too late—altogether. Though even if it had been sooner I do not know that it would have made much difference.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## ECCLESIASTICAL INTELLIGENCE.

“That tale repeated, puts all hope to flight ;  
Nuns, Prelates, Cloisters, swim before my sight.”

*Abelard's answer to Eloise (unpublished).*

MISERABLE enough I was, I can assure you—all by myself in that great tumble-down city ; tormented with weary doubts and suspense. Restless and wandering from place to place all day, many a night did I return to my lodging, worn-out and disheartened with constant disappointment, and turn into my bed, only to lie there, kicking and tossing about in a half-dozing state till morning, with my eyes kept fast closed, in vain hope of rest and forgetfulness, while my mind went on weaving the most improbable and wonderful romances in my head ; romances such as you, perhaps, may have been half expecting me to have to recount, before all my hopes and best affections were doomed to be shattered for ever.

Either how, having strayed one evening to indulge my sorrows in the deepening gloom of some cloistered shrine, as the solemn vespers rose and fell in soft cadences, from that portion of the sacred edifice

screened off from the approach or gaze of the outer world, one young clear voice, most heavenly, most plaintive, as it rose above all the rest, struck my enthralled ear, which no sooner had I recognised than, knowing that all chance of happiness was torn from me for ever, I swooned, and remember no more until I found myself stuck out upon the cold church steps by the beadle—no, *sacristan* I believe is the correct title—to recover, just as a picturesque *contadino*, garbed in the graceful goatskin costume of his country, might be seen retreating with a bounding step, after having turned the last of my pockets inside out: or else, may be you have looked for a happier *dénouement* to my adventures, such as, for instance—

“How among the delicious fumes of costly frankincense, and the peals of the thrilling organ, just as the ancient prelate—a noble type of his noble race and country—was in the act of raising his eyes to Heaven, and the ruthless scissors were already inserted among the lovely tresses of the beautiful novice, fair as any angel: in another instant they would have fallen, when suddenly a wild hurrah was heard, which, ringing through the fretted arches of that ancient pile, caused all to spring from their seats, and thus involuntarily give room to our hero—(that would be

me, you know)—who, dashing into the midst, seized the lovely girl in his strong arms, and before any of that astonished assembly could recover themselves, had borne the helpless form, tresses and all, upon his shoulder away! away! far beyond pursuit, into the wildest depths of the pathless Apennines!”

Or it might have been more to the purpose had you imagined me to have been foiled in my audacious and sacrilegious attempt, and to have been held tightly bound by four swarthy ruffians, fit myrmidons of the Inquisition, and thus grinding my teeth, and uttering a thousand maledictions, compelled to witness the conclusion of the ceremony; while the fair bride of Heaven herself, wrapped in a celestial rhapsody of feeling—quite unconscious of her Francisco’s presence, as she was of all other worldly thoughts and associations—abjured her wealth, her rank, her beauty, and everything on earth, and so passed away from before his very eyes and those of the world—for ever!

There I am again, making grim jokes, and turning into ridicule the memories of the most miserable chapter of my life; which sometimes even now come back to me in my dreams, and at odd times with all the heart-wearing, stifling feelings of disappointment, and hopes cruelly blasted, still fresh and vivid as

ever. It so happened, however, in real fact to be in a most particularly *unromantic* way that I eventually did hear the details of the ceremony by which my last hopes and affections were finally doomed to be altogether extinguished.

I was dining at the *table d'hôte* of one of those great hotels in the Piazza di Spagna, when I happened to overhear an old lady telling her neighbours how she had been at great pains to gain admission to a ceremony which of all others she had most desired to see; that of a nun taking the veil, and had been so very fortunate as to have had that wish gratified, on only the very Sunday before, having by great favour, been allowed to be present at the consecration of a most lovely and charming English young lady, which had taken place in the convent church of Sta. Trinita di Monti; and then she went on to enlarge upon a full description of that young lady's private and family history, in the smallest details of which she seemed to have taken the greatest possible interest, while I actually sat there listening to her across the table as if I were spell-bound. The strange thing was, that in spite of all my most diligent inquiries and searchings after Miss Blobb and that poor girl, which had been so totally in vain, although I

could find nobody who had ever even heard of any such persons, now, at least half-a-dozen of these people promiscuously assembled together at a public table seemed to know, or at least pretended to know, all about them.

The great law of contraries again! But there I sat, as I say, listening like any other stranger to the discussion.

One gentleman took on himself, with all due politeness, to correct the lady who had originally started this most interesting topic, by asserting that she must be wrong, in describing the young lady, as she had done, as but only quite recently converted to the Romish faith, as she must necessarily have passed a whole year's noviciate before she could have been allowed to take the veil.

That thought had somehow never occurred to me in my distress and suspense, and for an instant, as I heard it, it even then struck a spark of hope.

“*Begging your pardon, sir,*” snapped the lady, who evidently did not like being interrupted, “*but in this particular case there was a special dispensation, personally obtained from the Pope by Monsignore Homant himself. You are perfectly right, sir, in regard to such being the usual rule, but you, Mr. Poser, are*

not, I suppose, going to dispute his Holiness's full power of dispensing with such rules whenever he may think fit to do so."

Mr. Poser had only just gone over within a few months himself, so he was shut up; and the lady went on with her account with increased confidence.

"I happen to have the very best authority for knowing all about it, as I do, probably better than anyone else in this company, or even in all Rome itself," she added, as she looked up and down the whole length of the table defiantly, to see if anyone was going to take up her challenge. "Miss Blobb, who was one of the oldest friends and the guardian of the young lady in question from her childhood, happens to be also one of my oldest and most intimate friends" (this was said in a very loud aside to her immediate neighbour).

Either she was inventing, or Miss Blobb must have lied most considerably to her oldest and most intimate friend; for she described poor Katie, whose name she had not even got right, but called it De Logne, as an orphan of great wealth and landed property, as having been the most fashionable beauty—or the *belle*, as the old cat in her own vulgar way expressed it—of the very cream of society for the

last two London seasons ; but having been engaged to, and cruelly turned over by a gentleman to whom she had been deeply attached, that she had wearied of the world and all its vanities, and as soon as she had heard of her false lover's marriage with some other lady of even greater wealth, and higher rank, had, in spite of all remonstrance and persuasion on the part of her friends, taken the decided step of entering a convent, for which ceremony she (the narrator) had, by the kind interest of her friend Miss Blobb, been fortunate enough to procure one of the very few tickets that were to be disposed of.

“What was the gentleman's name?” inquired a thin spinster next above me, who had taken breathless interest in the sad narrative.

The lady was not at liberty to state, but she did not mind mentioning so much, as that he was a member of a ducal house.

There was another pause, as each person mentally assigned to the perpetrator of this outrage the name of the ducal house most familiar to him.

Mr. Poser, with a look which showed that he knew something of, if not himself actually connected with, the peerage, went through the family names of all the ducal houses on his fingers.

“Who the deuce was it told her he was married?”

Was that on Miss Blobb's authority, pray?" I asked, suddenly, in a loud, hoarse tone, while I was really surprised to hear my own voice; it was as if some one else was speaking with it.

"Yes, sir, it was Miss Blobb, if you have no objection; but if that ain't sufficient for you, as you seem to take such an interest in this dishonourable person, who perhaps may be a friend of yours, I don't mind telling you that on the very Sunday before the ceremony I have been describing, I happened to be paying a visit to my dear friend Miss Blobb, when a gentleman, who was also another most intimate friend of hers of long standing, who had only just arrived from England, came in to introduce his newly-married bride—a most lovely creature with, as I was told, an enormous fortune. He fully confirmed the story which Miss Blobb had heard; indeed, I think he said he had been present at the marriage. At any rate, I am quite sure that he knew, and was intimately acquainted with, all the persons concerned."

"Was—*Katie*," I had almost slipped out, but caught myself in time—"was the young lady you mention, also present when the fellow was repeating his gossip?"

"Fellow, indeed, sir! No more a fellow than yourself," she screeched out, like an angry parrot. "Miss Blobb, let me tell you, is not a lady to consort with

fellows ; but as you seem to take so very warm an interest in the matter, I do not mind telling you that Miss Delogne, perhaps feeling naturally shy under the circumstances, had run hastily out of the room when the names of Mr. and Mrs. Gorles were announced."

"Gorles himself turned up again," I exclaimed, with an involuntary oath. "By G——, I expected it was him !"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## WANDERINGS, WONDERS, AND WARNINGS.

THERE was no use in my staying on at Rome, though I felt that I did not the least care where I went, or what might become of me. Before I set out, however, I took a spiteful pleasure in writing to the De Lormes a full and detailed account of all that I had heard and gathered of the fate of poor Katie. I congratulated them on the success of their schemes for keeping the poor girl and myself apart, as well as upon their choice of so trustworthy a guardian as the excellent and evangelical Miss Blobb.

Expecting, as of course I well might, that the news would bring them down to Rome without an hour's delay—but, as I afterwards heard, without any satisfactory result, for they could not even obtain permission to see, or for a very long time even find out where their unfortunate daughter had been moved off to—I made myself scarce out of the Holy City, without caring to leave behind me any directions even, for letters or parcels to be forwarded after me.

By the merest chance, on my way southwards, I fell in with a very good fellow. I never even knew his name, for I never happened to ask him what it was, while we were together; and though on parting we faithfully promised to write, it was fully a week after our separation that it occurred to me that he had never mentioned to me how to direct to him. I suppose, like most other individuals, he must have had a name; but as he was the only civilized being I saw, or with whom I was thrown, for that three or four months, I never found any necessity for using it.

He was a civil engineer, surveying for the railway then just projected from Naples. We fraternized and lived together on the most friendly terms, sometimes lodging in some out-of-the-way village or old forsaken city; sometimes, as the warm weather came on, under canvas, and we got far down among the very wildest parts of Calabria, and right away to the extreme southern shores of quite the toe of Italy, where we had no end of first-rate sport, shooting wild boars and all sorts of game, feathered as well as four-footed. Thence in the course of time I went across to Sicily, and having worked my way through some of the most unfrequented parts of that island, turned up next at Algiers: there, whom should I fall in with, but my old friend the Professor Zauber himself. He had

been sent from Paris on a special mission among the Arabs and Kabyles, to exercise some of his wonderful powers, and to try and meet the native prophets and magic seers (Aïssaoua they call themselves) upon their own ground.

For upwards of three years I was with him, off and on, regularly living among the wild tribes in the desert; and a gloriously happy life it was. I had fully recovered all my old strength, pluck, and sound health; and, determined to drive all my past bothers out of my mind, went regularly in for enjoyment.

Making our head quarters at a place which rejoiced in the lively name of *Titery-Tach*, and then afterwards farther south in the land of *Zab*, we dressed like the natives, lived like them, and shared their tents and their salt with them.

My own relations had no idea of what had become of me, though occasionally I contrived, without betraying my whereabouts, to convey an intimation to my Mother that I was still alive and well. I thus had nearly succeeded in banishing from my mind all memories and sorrows of my past life, though sometimes a heaviness, or a qualm of heart-sickness would come over me for a season, as, in spite of myself, I could not help thinking of Katie, and wondering

whether or not she repented the rash step she had been so basely persuaded and cheated into taking.

I was reviving from one of such occasional dismal fits, when it occurred to me to apply to the Professor to cure me of them effectually, as I remembered that he had done formerly for De Lyons, and had offered to do for me. I mean, by extracting the whole mental apparatus of disappointed love and affections, which, like addled eggs, had been spoilt by keeping, from my organization for ever. But now that I so much wished it, he somehow seemed chary about subjecting me to any of his scientific operations. He said something, I remember, about the over-excitability of my nature, and seemed to have scruples, which I appreciated, though I would not allow, in regard to the responsibility which he should feel from my being, as I was, so entirely alone with, and dependent upon, him. But I told him that I trusted him implicitly, and at last prevailed with him.

Strangely enough, I can no more tell you whether I remained in the state of sleep into which it was necessary for him to throw me, twenty minutes, or twenty hours, or even twenty days; as long as I woke up again, as I certainly did, perfectly well, and cured of the pain which had been so cruelly gnawing at my heart-strings, it did not much matter as to the time,

whether it was more or less ; for the fact is, that we kept no sort of count of time, and except by the changes of the moon, of which for my part I very soon lost the reckoning, days, weeks, and months rapidly passed by unmarked and unnoticed.

I should not have said that it had been above six or nine months at the outside, that we had been leading that free and unshackled life when it came to an end ; though the head Scheikh declared it to have been just two years, and, what was more, proved his statement, by the simple fact that a young Arab foal which had been born in the same tent in which I was sleeping, and had been presented to me soon after our first joining the tribe, had grown up strong enough to carry one of the youngsters, who had undertaken to break it in for me.

The Professor, who had thoroughly established his mission of rivalling, and thus lowering, the power of the native magicians in the eyes of their own people, had been, as I could perceive, for some time anxious to return to civilized life. And so, most reluctantly, I made up my mind to tear myself away from what I shall, I know, always look back to as the happiest days of my existence.

We got back to Algiers, and then coasted along eastward till we came to Egypt ; there the Professor

was quite in his element; and it was then only for the first time I thought him rather inclined to show off his scientific attainments and superior power; though small blame to him either, for it was indeed a perfect caution, as old *Taraxacum* would have said, only to see the old fellow among the sphinxes and hieroglyphics.

When we were working our way up the Nile, we used to land continually, and go down exploring into all sorts of holes and caverns, and subterraneous labyrinths, all choked up with rubbish, under some of those temples and ruins, and he always knew all about them, and could find his way in and out as if he had been brought up and lived all his life amongst them—as indeed I was aware that he had done, long ago in bygone days. He could read all those queer old hieroglyphics right off, just as I should read a hand-bill or royal proclamation.

As for the famous necromancers and magicians, he could, allegorically speaking, knock their very heads off at their own little games; so that, from at first despising and hating him, as I saw they did, they became afraid of, and positively worshipped, him.

He, however, was not above, as he himself told me, learning much from them, and adding greatly to his own scientific and supernatural powers.

Though nothing could have been nicer and kinder than the old fellow was to me—and thrown together as we were, I really became attached to him as a brother—yet I never could get him to give me much of his confidence in regard to those wonderful and mysterious pursuits of his. He always did his best to dissuade me, though in the kindest possible manner, from dabbling in anything of the sort; there were, he declared, some temperaments and natures to which such studies, and even the possession of such knowledge, were physically dangerous.

I had, as I declared, no fear of such consequences myself, and I urged him more than once to cast my horoscope for me, but he never would; and, though I pressed him strongly, he used to put me off with some evasive excuse, and it always seemed to make him sad thus to be pressed when he had once refused.

One evening when we were as near such subjects as he would ever allow me to bring him, I had been talking to him of Gorles and the strange influence which he certainly had so often exercised against me. He assented to there being no doubt great truth in the fact, though not easily to be accounted for; and, as he had on a former occasion done, advised me through life to keep out of his way as much as I possibly

could, and warned me most solemnly never, under any provocation, to run counter to, or to think of personally assaulting, him.

“Why, what would be the consequences?” I asked. “Could the little monster cause my death, do you mean to say?”

“Worse, perhaps,” he said. “He may cause that from which death itself would prove a happy release. Let us trust not, but beware of him;” and then the Professor seemed sorry for having said so much, and it was ever so long before I could get another word out of him.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

“Of this strange life, mark the yet stranger end—  
Thereby hangs a tale.”

*Old Comedy.*

## LIFE : CHANGES AND CHANCES.

THE more intimately I grew to know the Professor—and of course thrown so entirely together for all that time as we were, you might naturally expect that we should have become very intimate—the more puzzled I was, and seemed, even less than at first, to be able at all to make out or understand that strange, paradoxical character.

I was much surprised to discover, and from my description of him and his pursuits you will probably hardly anticipate, that there certainly was a deep vein of genuine and real religious feeling in that strange man's composition. Once when we were, I remember, lying stretched under our tent with our *narghiles* softly bubbling between us, our conversation turned upon the subject of the *beau ideal* of human happiness. The Professor said that if his life were to come over again he should choose that of a hermit, or, rather, a monk—that is, not an uneducated, superstitious,

guzzling, lazy, dirty vagabond as of the present day, but as monks were in the good old mediæval times, when societies of holy and learned men were formed to live together in friendship and brotherhood, without any need of thought or care about worldly matters; whose whole time was occupied in abstruse study and contemplation, and whose only recreation consisted in works of active charity and administering to the wants and relief of others.

Deep study, he said, was, perhaps, on the whole, the greatest pleasure which the human mind was capable of enjoying; and that if he had not from early education and association been turned to the pursuit of metaphysical science, he declared there was nothing in which he should have taken so much interest and delight as in the study of Theology!

I thought to myself of the glimpse of his destined end, which we had seen at that memorable *séance* in his chamber at Dresden, and wondered whether the Professor's views had always been the same, or that, now knowing his own fate, whether his feelings had not been since, though perhaps almost unconsciously, biassed, or even designedly trained into submission to what he believed to be inevitable.

I should probably have suggested some such idea, only I knew that upon the slightest allusion to that

night the Professor would have pretended complete ignorance of what I was talking about, and have shut up altogether, which I should have been sorry for, as I was interested in hearing his views upon so important a subject.

He told me that he had originally by birth and education belonged to the Romanist faith, but that in the course of his life he had made himself thoroughly acquainted with, if not actually embraced, the tenets of most of the existing forms of religion in turn, not choosing to take that in which he happened to be born as necessarily infallible, but having earnestly inquired and sought to decide by personal experience which was the best and really the true one.

Mahometanism, though of course fallacious, he considered to have many excellent points; the Brahmin, in some respects, to be even better, particularly as to the strict and constant discipline of the soul. The Buddhist he had tried, but could not make much of. He had then returned to Christianity, firmly convinced that it was the right and only true faith, and that the Protestant, except in the one matter of discipline, was undoubtedly, in his opinion, the most perfect and nearest the right of all.

I will say for the old fellow, that in practice, as well as theory, a kinder-hearted, more thoroughly chari-

table man I never saw. Among those poor Bedouins his liberality and untiring assiduity, if any of them were ill or in want, was beyond everything; and they all loved him in return like a father, and treated him with the respect, and almost the worship, which they pay to their own most holy men, or *Marabouts*, as they call them: and as for truth and strict honour, and upright, conscientious dealing, even in the smallest things, I always found the Professor more particular and scrupulous than almost any gentleman with whom I was ever thrown, in any country, or any position in life.

I gently ventured, upon the occasion I have been speaking of, just to express a hint, rather in the form of a doubtful inquiry, as to whether he did not ever find any difficulty in reconciling his religious scruples with his dabbings in what might be considered by some prejudiced people to be *diablerie* or the black art; such, for instance, as his transactions with, and personal communication with, that mysterious personage at Dresden. At first I really almost thought he was going to deny the fact altogether, as De Lyons had had the audacity to do, if you remember, for he paused and gave me one of his strange, fixed looks for some minutes.

I always fancy that those fellows had cunningly flattered themselves that my serious illness, which

had overtaken me that very same night, would have entirely driven that curious episode out of my head and memory.

But after a pause the Professor owned so far, that he certainly had conceived, and gone to certain lengths in carrying out that object, whether successfully, or not, he did not choose to admit; but that there was a vast difference between being the friend of, and putting oneself under terms of obligation with, powers of another sphere, or by dint of science and by a skilful use of some of the hidden spells and secrets, of what may be supposed by the ignorant to be supernatural knowledge, gaining a command over and subjecting such beings to one's will.

“Are we not,” he asked, earnestly, “expressly taught and encouraged to resist the great Prince of Evil with all our might? and if we can manage, not only to resist, but even to subjugate, him, is not that surely a still more glorious triumph? Those secrets of spiritual power are nothing new in themselves, they are facts which have always existed since the earliest commencement of creation, equally open to any one person to discover just as much as another, if he only chooses and cares to enter into and investigate those hidden depths of knowledge. It is true that very few, comparatively, do care to do so; but surely that rarity

of taste cannot, in itself, make it wrong or a sin for those who do happen to be so inclined."

Then he changed the subject, which he evidently did not quite like, and I only once again got him at all near it. It was when we were in Egypt, and, of all places in the world, on the very tip-top point of the highest of the Pyramids—not that it is exactly a point either, being a space of many feet square. We had taken our luncheon up with us, and having utterly discarded the assistance of all those howling ruffians of Arabs and donkey-boys who torment one like flies, were thoroughly enjoying the wide-spread prospect and deliciously fresh air that we found up at that elevated position.

It was the lightness and freshness of that air, I suppose, to say nothing of a bottle of Allsopp's pale ale which we had emptied and then hurled down into the plains below, which exhilarated my spirits so much, and made me feel so jolly and particularly light-hearted, that I burst out singing, "Rule, Britannia!" with a drum accompaniment on the top of my glazed sailor's hat, which I used to wear with about five fathoms of linen wound round it as a turban.

"That is a dreadfully mournful dirge which you are there performing," remarked the Professor, who was seated on the next step below me. "Have you no

merrier tune than that in which to give vent to your musical feelings?"

"Well, tune up yourself, Professor," I said, for the moment, rather hurt in my national feelings.

He grinned as he took my long sharp-bladed knife, with which I had been spreading potted *sooman* (Anglicè, quail) upon biscuit and butter, in his left hand, and holding his own stouter blade in the other, commenced a most skilfully-performed prelude, with base and treble all complete, upon the sharp edge of one of the well-worn steps on which he was sitting—and then broke forth with his voice into that identical rollicking *barcarole* which you may have often heard me whistle, when I happen to be considering anything very particularly—the one, in fact, which I heard that night performed by the Contessa Sottonebbia at Florence.

"Bravo! Mein Herr Professor!" I cried; and joined in the air so familiar to me, with all the best powers of my lungs.

"You have a good ear for music, at any rate, my friend," said the Professor, "thus to have picked up that air so quickly; for I know that you never could have heard it before, as I composed it originally myself, and it has never yet been put upon paper—even in manuscript."

“That may be,” I said, “but I have heard it long ago, sung by a lady——” For the moment, until I thus spoke, I had completely forgotten the connecting link between him and the said countess, but then as it suddenly flashed through my mind, I said, indiscreetly——“Why, to be sure, it was the lady whom we saw that night, that we had up the——your mysterious visitor, you know, in your own room at Dresden.”

If the Professor had unwittingly sat himself down upon the sharp point of my long-bladed knife, he would, I think, scarcely have jumped round with a greater start than he did at my words.

“*Hundert tausend donnernde Teufel!*” he cried. “What can you mean? What lady can you, or any one else, pretend ever to have met or heard sing that or any other tune in my room at Dresden, or anywhere else? I who for the last six years have never once exchanged a word with any one of that accursed sex!——having indeed too good cause to rue their existence even upon earth.”

He was prodigiously enraged, and his mane almost stood up on end, like the squills, as the poet says, of the peevish porcupine. I tried to soothe him by apologizing, and explaining as gently as I could, that I certainly had seen the lady, though only for a few seconds——and then perhaps only her spirit, and not

her body—in his apartments; but undoubtedly the same whom I had afterwards recognised at Florence some months later, and had there by chance overheard play and sing that identical tune. As to the first part of my allegation, he, as usual, chose to pretend to misunderstand, and even ignore the subject altogether; he had, I suppose, his own good reasons for doing so—at any rate, I had become so used to that fancy of his that I let it pass—but when I came to the fact of meeting the Contessa in company with Melchior Gorles, and went on to tell him all that I knew and heard about her subsequently, the strange old fellow—though almost as if in spite of himself—showed a deep interest, and was evidently greatly moved; for throwing up his arms wildly over his head, he suddenly cried out, as if in the agony of bygone bitter memories—

“ Oh, *Giuletta!* *Giuletta!* for your sake I have been ruined in this world and the next! Through you I have learned to shun and loathe, and even curse the sex to which my own sainted mother belonged!”

As we came down from our eminence jumping and dropping from step to step, and stopping to rest at intervals, the Professor, by hints and scraps, gave me a sort of outline of his early history—at least, so far as it was connected with the faithless *Giuletta*. It was very much the old story.

After a virtuous and well-regulated youth—having by his own talents and exertions made for himself an excellent start in life, and early obtained a distinguished appointment in the ancient University of Padua, he had in an evil hour met, and, for the first time in his life, fallen in love—madly in love—with that wretched woman, and, as I could see from his own confession, in no time regularly gone to the bad ;—quarrelled with his relations, broken an aged mother's heart—thrown up his appointment, lost his character, position, everything and every chance he had in the world ;—and when he was a beggar, and had no more to sacrifice for her sake, then she had sent him about his business, spurned him, and insulted him.

Stung with rage and bitter remorse, disgraced and humiliated, with ruin and positive starvation staring him in the face, he had fled away, he knew not and cared not whither ; and having worked his passage on board one of the steamers from Trieste down to Alexandria, had found his way up to Cairo, and there accidentally fallen in with an old Egyptian, who, as he declared, was in fact a priest of the still secretly existing worship of Isis ; with him he lived for some time, and then first acquired the rudiments of those deep and mysterious sciences to which he had since so closely devoted himself.

He had never told me so much about himself before; and we never again had another opportunity for such confidences, as within a few days we came away from the land of the Pharaohs, homeward bound.

The Professor and I parted company at last, with many mutual expressions of regret and affection, at Malta—though we occasionally heard from and of one another; and I have never met the strange old fellow since—that is, not to say met—though within the last few months since my return to England, I could almost swear positively that I had seen him under the most unlikely and, perhaps, unexpected circumstances.

I had not been long arrived, when I fell in with my old friend McTrigger, who took me down to the country-seat of a relation of his in the county of Norfolk, for two or three days' first-rate shooting; on my return, having unfortunately made a mistake about the time of the train, I found that I had to kick my heels for an hour or so in the highly respectable, though not very lively, city of Norwich; to kill the time I picked up a sharp street-boy, whom I saw loafing about the station, and chartered him to take me to see the principal objects of interest in that ancient place, such as the Cathedral, the outside of the county jail,

on the top of which, as he informed me, the celebrated Mr. Rush had a few years previously expiated his offences; the principal pump, the market-place, and so on. We had fully exhausted these several lions, when my ingenuous young conductor informed me confidentially that, in his private opinion, the finest sight of all was yet to be visited in the shape of the new monkery, as he called it, which he informed me had been lately set going, "the inmates of which shaved the tops of their heads, like barbarous apes, and dressed themselves, and even walked about the streets, in horse-cloths, with ropes round their waists, for all the world like regular guys."

"It is well worth walking a mile only to see such comical fellows," he said—"which we are pretty sure to do, if we keep a sharp look-out through these railings."

So, having nothing to do, I went with him, and sure enough, there were a couple of them, in the regular conventional monastic garb, shaved head, long sack-cloth garments, regular sandals on their feet, and all quite complete.

"Now ain't they a queer lot, and no mistake?" said my guide, clambering upon the railings and rattling with a stick, in order to make them turn round, as if they were some curious sort of animals in one of the paddocks of the Zoological Gardens. "They're Brother

Cyrænius and Brother Athanasius, they two are; I knows 'em pretty well all by their funny names by this time, for I have seen a deal of them lately, having been here to show them to a sight of gentlemen like yourself. Now look sharp, sir, for I'll just whistle to make them look round this way."

He so far succeeded in his intention, that they both suddenly raised their heads at the same time, and as I looked with some curiosity at them, it certainly struck me instantaneously that the elder of the two, in this strange disguise, was no other than our old friend the Professor himself: whether he also on his part recognised me at that distance, and through the railings, I cannot say, but on perceiving us staring in at them, they both retired very precipitately into their monastery, or whatever they call their institution, and I saw them no more. I think I should have been less positive of his identity, and more astounded than I was at seeing my old friend in that costume, had I not called to my recollection the vision I had formerly had of him, as determined to end his days in exactly that identical costume.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## AT HOME AND ABROAD.

“ Without a sigh he left to cross the brine,  
And traverse Paynim shores, and pass earth’s central line.”

*Childe Harold*, canto lxi.

THE summer of 1854 was drawing to a close. I having by that time some sort of compunctions at never having seen, or even heard of, my mother for so long, made up my mind to run back to England.

When one has been away for any time, what a lot of changes and events, great and small, have always somehow taken place in one’s family and home, which one fancies that if you had stayed quietly on, leading a humdrum life, would never have happened. The first piece of news which I received upon my arrival at home, or, rather, at my mother’s place, Danesbury, was, that my aunt Mrs. De Lorme was dead. I had been so long without seeing any English paper, or receiving any letter, that I had not a notion of the sad event. Though I cannot pretend to say that after her treatment of me, personal as well as general, in all those manœuvres of hers about poor Katie, I was

what *Taraxacum* would have called, “entirely wrapped up head and ears” in my love for the poor old lady, I was certainly shocked at her death; though, by the same token, it had happened so long ago, that her husband the Colonel had had time to bewail her loss quite decently for the orthodox year and a day, and had consoled himself again by venture number three.

He had indeed married again, or, rather, according to the severe view which my poor Mother took of it, had submitted to be married against his own will and inclination, by no less a person than Miss Blobb herself, who now ruled the poor man with a rod of iron.

Don't you remember my astonishment at finding that we had come up in the same carriage with her from the Kingston Station on that Derby day that you and I met? That was the veritable Araminta Blobb—now Mrs. De Lorme, number three—who had so much to do with my unhappy destinies, though till that day I had never set eyes on the woman. She herself it was, sure enough, accompanied by her stepson—my precious cousin Ferdy—to whom, if you recollect, I made myself known, after amusing ourselves by helping him to make such a ridiculous fool of himself; and her companion, too, don't you remember, whose face I knew all the time, but could not for the life of me remember where I had previously met her? Well,

since I have been telling you my story—and many things long forgotten have thus arisen in my mind—it has occurred to me that that oppressed female was no other than the virtuous Araminta's *quondam* maid—though, I suppose, now promoted to be companion—Madame Croskanski, *née* Sniggers, released, let us hope, from her Polar bear, either by his demise or desertion—or, perhaps, divorce; though I could not remember her at the time, that it was she herself, I now feel certain.

My Mother very kindly took much pains and circumlocution in breaking to me, as gradually as possible, her next piece of bad news. I had guessed what it was to be, long before she had, as she fondly imagined, even broken the preliminary ground. Poor Katie was gone for ever, also; she had been ailing and pining, as it seemed, almost from the very commencement of her convent life. Her relations had been allowed to see her occasionally—but never alone—and she had never complained to them. As to her last illness, they seemed to have received but very slight particulars—indeed, from what they could make out, the actual end appeared to have been almost quite sudden.

I perceived, as I say, that as my Mother broke this fact to me, she did so in much fear and trembling, as

to what the effect might be upon myself. She was evidently prepared for some strong demonstration of feeling on my part—and one would have thought that she would have been relieved, at least, at finding her expectations were wrong—but so oddly are women constituted, that she really seemed vexed, and to take it almost as a wrong when she found that I did not break out, or was not so much cut-up as she had anticipated. I do not mean to say that I was not really very sorry and much shocked at the unhappy death of the poor young girl—I was so; but I was not staggered and smitten down as I should have been two years before, or had I not, as at the very time I felt conscious, been relieved of my feelings by the scientific skill of the Professor.

Her death, by the way, must have been, as near as I could judge, precisely coincident in time with that event. I pitied and felt grieved for her fate, as an abstract cause for such natural feelings, but still quite entirely distinct from any selfish or personal interests of my own.

My Mother, I know, in her heart, thought me selfish and unfeeling; which is just exactly—from a combination of circumstances which she would not have listened to, even if I had tried to explain them to her—what I was not. My grief, though not so

deep as it would have been, was sincere enough, and perfectly disinterested, and solely for the poor girl's own sake, without a scrap of self in it.

My Mother did her best to persuade me to settle down, and live on with her quietly at Danesbury, and I fancied at first that it might have suited me, and had almost made up my mind to do so ; but unluckily she began to make me feel my complete dependence upon her too soon ; I couldn't stand it. I had never forgotten that miserable suspicion against my morality ; that, perhaps, one would not so much care about, though it is too bad to be accused and suspected when you haven't even had any change for the imputations cast upon you ; but my solemn word and honour as a gentleman, my oath and declaration, she had refused to receive, and had in so many words repudiated, and that still rankled in my mind, you see. And even now, after all that lapse of time, she would not own that she had done me wrong, or allow me to clear myself by a full explanation of the real facts.

We most unfortunately one evening got back—the deuce only knows how—to that unhappy delusion of hers, at Florence, and should have had all that old story, with its miserable bitterness, over again, as fresh as ever, if I had not jumped up and run off to bed. It did not occur again, but I saw that it would

never do. Then it was that I determined to find out exactly the real state of my prospects and worldly means, and paid that most unsatisfactory visit of which I have already given you an account, to those lawyer fellows in London.

I learnt enough from them to convince me that I must seek to know no more; and that the best chance of not infringing the unknown and eccentric conditions of my foolish old Grandfather's will, would decidedly be to get right out of the reach of all concerned, as entirely as possible. Indeed that was the advice of my old friend the Professor, to whom I had written very fully on the subject.

"Take yourself," he wrote, "to some other part of the world, completely out of the reach of all who are interested in your committing yourself; you know not who may be spies, or secret enemies, but if far away from all, should you even unwittingly transgress these mysterious conditions, it will not be easy for them to prove that you have done so, if unable to declare when and where you have been at the times alleged." As the sage's advice exactly suited my own ideas, I of course took it.

Just at that time, the news of the charge at Balaclava, in the Crimea, and, close upon it, Inkermann arrived to set every heart in England on fire. I

longed to get out, to find myself amongst those gallant glorious fellows. I went off to one of my poor Father's old military friends and comrades, who was then among the high authorities at the Horse Guards, and through his interest was appointed to the command of a troop of Bashi-Bazooks, on condition that I should be ready to start within three days by the next transport. Didn't I just jump at the offer. I rushed down to Danesbury to take leave of my Mother, who was so taken aback at my announcement that she had neither recovered her breath, nor any sort of arrangement of arguments to dissuade me from the idea, by the time I had given her my last farewell embrace and was off. But I had all my kit to prepare and no time to lose, as you may imagine. I wrote off to De Lyons, in the hopes of prevailing upon him to come out and join me as my subaltern. It would, I was sure, have suited him to a nicety ; but I suppose my letter never reached him.

The roughest lot of unmitigated ruffians my men certainly were, composed not only of genuine Turks, but Greeks, Smytches from Malta, Medes, Parthians, and Arabians ; the refuse and scum of every nation upon earth. My old friends of Algeria and the desert were positive swells and Pall Mall exquisites in comparison with most of them. But I managed to keep

the beggars in some sort of discipline, by personally punching some of their ugly heads for them, soundly, to begin with. Two of them I was obliged one evening to order to be shot, for an example, after an awful outbreak amongst them, and must have had it carried out, too, only was luckily saved from that disagreeable necessity, by their escaping in the night, and, of course, making themselves scarce; I saw no more of them; and deuced glad I was thus to get rid of the scoundrels.

When Sebastopol had been knocked inside out and demolished, and the war was over, and I saw everyone else—for I had fraternized and made friends with no end of fellows—many of them being old Eton chums of my own form and standing—when I saw them all, I say, so jolly as they were at the thoughts of getting home to England again, I, for a time, at least, had a qualm of home-sickness too. But it soon evaporated. I had made up my mind for a wild and wandering life, which, as I had already found in the deserts, suited me best both for bodily health and spirits; and remembering the resolution with which I had originally started, backed by the prudent advice of the Professor. So, sending home by a friend full and satisfactory tidings of myself, with a perfect cargo of trophies in the shape of dead Russians' helmets

and accoutrements, and all sorts of *curios* from the bazaars at Constantinople to my mother, I made up my mind to go down to India, and see something of those grand kingdoms of the world. If I had only carried out my intention, I should, as it happened, have just come in for the mutiny, and all the fighting and fun there — if I had only known it!

I had worked my way as far as Suez, and was on the very point of embarking to go down the Red Sea, when I happened to fall in with a first-rate fellow, one Captain McTrigger, who had just lost his companion, with whom he had planned an expedition into the innermost regions of Africa, but, unfortunately, had been prevented, by the said friend having died suddenly of a fever, or something of that sort. I accepted McTrigger's offer of filling the poor fellow's place; and taking his guns and rifles, and share of waggon, bullocks, and tents, at a fair price — indeed, I may say, a decided bargain, I changed the remainder of my ready money into glass beads, cowry shells, and coloured handkerchiefs, which pass as current coin in the realms which we proposed to visit, and within ten days from my first making up my mind to join the expedition we were well on our way for those inland countries as yet unexplored by any European.

We worked on from time to time, sometimes encamping for a week, sometimes a month, or more, in the same place, without any definite object, except hunting, or, rather, shooting, on the grandest and most varied scale, and of that, you may believe me, we got our hearts' content. It was magnificent! lions, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, and elephants. Ostriches and giraffes, we looked upon almost as small game to our bags, as one does at home upon snipe or landrail, in a highly-preserved pheasant country.

The beauty of it is, that my belief is, in the wide course of our wanderings we were in fact the first who actually found and came to the original source of the Nile, about which they have since been making such a deal of fuss, without thinking or knowing anything about it, or, what is more, even caring to have done so. All I do know is, that in our peregrinations we happened to discover a small but very deep pool—just exactly like what they call a *tarn* up in Cumberland—high up among the mountains, constantly supplied by strong springs, which we could see bubbling up with immense force in its centre. It was evidently the immediate drain of all the lofty mountains in the midst of which it was hidden, and through which it had in process of time gradually worked an outlet, by which its waters, falling over in

several small streams or cataracts, supplied a very large lake below. We never carried any charts or maps about with us, or any other impediments of civilized life of that sort; and our only guides as to our bearings or whereabouts were the stars at night. We knew just enough to be able to look out for the constellation of the Southern Cross, and that is to what we mainly trusted. The sun, on which we had naturally at first supposed that we should have to rely for our reckonings as to the direction we were taking, was no use to us, as it was always broiling right straight over the top of our heads.

By that said tarn, then, we established our headquarters for ever so long, encamped, or rather living under the shelter of a most commodious cavern which we discovered in the side of the rock just above, and had fortified for ourselves against the attacks of wild beasts.

It was a capital place; and when we were lazy and did not care, as sometimes happened, to go on long shooting expeditions further up into the mountains, we could lie at the mouth of our hole, and quietly pot lions, hyenas, and other such game who came at nightfall to the water below us to drink.

Before I came away, I remember I was going to cut my name in large letters over the en-

trance of our cave, and the date as near as we could guess it. I wish I had, now; because we should have seen whether any of those more recent discoverers would have had the honesty to own that they had found it there. But my companion McTrigger dissuaded me: he said it was such a regular snobbish trick, leaving one's name chalked up or cut about wherever Englishmen go. And I quite agree with him that, as a general rule, it decidedly is so; but now I am very sorry that we did not make that an exception.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## TRAVELLERS' TALES.

“Among the Anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders.”

*Othello*, act i. sc. 3.

WE found scarcely any difficulty or danger arising from the various nations and tribes of niggers amongst whom we fell, simply by following one plain rule of social tact and policy. That was by always immediately and at once adopting the costume and manners of the people themselves; and entirely dropping any ideas or preconceived prejudices of our own, never by word or look expressing any astonishment or other emotion, on finding that their manners and notions were not always precisely the same as our own might happen to be at home.

Where we found that the skins of beasts were the fashion, we appeared at once turned out in the same, as neatly as our invaluable treasure, a negro dragoon and interpreter, and indeed factotum, whom we had picked up just as we were starting, could manage to arrange for us.

It might be only an apron of bark, or of palm tree leaves, or perhaps a graceful head-dress of ostrich feathers ; it was all the same to us. If we saw it was the correct thing, we at once adopted it ; and it was always accepted at the various native courts, just as it was intended, as a mark of courtesy and compliment.

Then again, as to their national customs. One noble Sovereign, who was everything that could be kind and hospitable towards us, had a fancy for keeping his hand in by cutting off the heads of three of his subjects every morning before breakfast. We, instead of expressing any impertinent horror at what after all could be no possible concern of ours, as strangers and guests of his Majesty, when asked our opinions of this playful fancy, only conveyed through an interpreter a well-turned compliment on his forbearance in not cutting off six of the rascals' heads instead of three. I was sure, by their hideous faces, that they deserved it.

Or, again, when invited at another court—but that was right the other side across the continent—to assist at a grand parade of female troops, fat to obesity and swarthy they were, and their uniforms of the scantiest description ; still we felt that it was but polite to offer our own tribute of highly-flattering

admiration, as we should have done had the same special honour been paid to us by a review of the Cent-Gardes or Guides in the Champ de Mars, or the Czar's own Chevaliers de la Garde in the plains of Moscow.

I must, by the way, specially record the tact with which McTrigger, who was throughout one of the most gentlemanly men I was ever thrown with, avoided, without giving offence, partaking some stewed collops of an unfortunate missionary, who had made himself offensive to one Monarch of an inland kingdom—the King of the Ashongos I think it was, though I wont be quite sure—to whose royal table we had received the honour of an invitation.

Not, of course, having an idea what the dish was, for it is not yet the fashion to write a *ménu* in those countries, he had actually got his fork in the portion before him, when the King, at whose right hand he was sitting, recommended it particularly to his taste, at the same time informing him of the circumstances under which the unfortunate but imprudent divine had so offended, as to have been consigned to the royal larder.

McTrigger, without the slightest perceptible change of countenance, declared at once that it was *roondah* to him—that is, according to one of their native

superstitions, that that particular article of food was strictly forbidden to him and all his tribe and family—though others might eat the same with impunity, while to them, perhaps, some other kind of meat might be also *roondah*. As we had already informed his majesty that, although friends, we were not brothers or even of the same family, and therefore, of course, not likely to be amenable to the same *roondah*, I had to get off with the less satisfactory excuse of regretting much that my medical adviser had expressly forbidden my ever eating anything so rich, being unfortunately, as I was, acutely subject to dyspepsia.

We secretly secured the collop in a piece of paper, and by afterwards bribing the head cook, we obtained possession of the rest of the dish, or at least as much of it as had come down from table, besides the skull and some of the bones ; which remains we buried that same evening by moonlight, and committed decently to the ground in a secluded spot behind the straw hut which had been specially allotted to us.

Poor fellow ! I sincerely trust that if you do ever publish this, as you say is your intention, this may, perhaps, meet the eye, and prove a source of consolation to his sorrowing relatives.

But talking of publishing, I must cut these re-

miniscences of my travels and adventures short, or I fear that I shall not be acting quite fairly by the respectable firm with whom McTrigger and I have already entered into an agreement for the copyright of "From Tropic to Tropic ; or, Letters from the Interior of Africa ;" though deuce a letter had either of us ever written, nor one line of diary or memorandum had we to show between us, for the very simple reason that it had never occurred to either of us to take any stationery—either paper, sketch-book, pen, ink, or pencil, or anything of the sort in our stores. But that did not seem to matter much—those fellows who provide books for the reading public are such wonderfully clever geniuses, you know. I am sure they well deserve all the money they make.

Within a week of our return to England, one of their clerks, compositors, or whatever these gentlemen call themselves, had waited upon us with a handsome offer for any manuscripts, sketches, or notes which we may have brought home with us.

It was then for the first time that the idea even of such a thing entered our heads ; though we had some difficulty in persuading the literary man that such was really the fact, and that our sole object in making the expedition had been for sport, and because the wild life suited our fancies.

But as I say, he was a clever fellow, and not to be put off his project by trifles. So he set to work with a big atlas and a compendium of geography, and in a very few days had, with the most marvellous talent, produced a regular skeleton work, with a proper introduction, and whole chapters of interesting statistics, geological observations, refutations of the assertions of other travellers, and personal adventures, all complete. These he trusted to us to fill out, as upon reading out some of the names which we found in the latest published map, various reminiscences were suggested to our minds. It was quite wonderful how easily he strung them all together, as, sitting over our cigars, we told him some of our old stories. He would even, as we let him have them, touch them up, and sometimes swell them out with such outrageous exaggerations and aberrations from fact, that though we were prepared to allow him a considerable margin, we could not quite endorse some of the extraordinary *bangers* he would have tried to have imposed upon the enlightened British public.

McTrigger used to stretch a trifle occasionally, which I, as his friend and fellow traveller, did not think fair to correct, but his stretchers would have been doubled and trebled over and over again by our

literary friend's lively imagination, if we had allowed it its full scope on all occasions. .

I certainly look forward to reading the three volumes, post octavo, when they appear, as they now shortly will, with the most lively interest; for from what I could judge from some sheets of the manuscript which he let me look over, the greater part of their contents will be quite as new and startling to myself as to the rest of the world.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## THE "GULPER."

It would never do, you know, to infringe upon other persons' rights by allowing you in the same way as I have described of our publisher's agent to get hold of the materials for cooking up the same travels and adventures in another form. So I shall tell you no more details, excepting one of the most curious things of all which happened to us; but which wont matter, because, though it is perfectly true, and to my mind one of the best of the incidents, let alone jokes, in the whole of our expedition, that talented individual, however, felt obliged to pass it over and leave it entirely out; because, as he explained to me very fairly, it happens to clash most unfortunately with the works of another African traveller which had also not long before been published by his employer's firm, towards whom he therefore thought it would not be acting rightly.

It was about the end of the second, or may be the

third year of our wanderings—I cannot, as I have told you, pretend to be precise about time within ten or twelve months, or so ;—but Mc Trigger and I had been working diagonally across the very centre of the continent, pretty near, as well as we could judge, in a slantindicular direction athwart the line of the equator. We had long since left off almost all but a bare apology for clothes ; all those we had started with had worn out and disappeared ; but having adopted the native costume of a rather scanty kilt or tunic made of the skins of beasts, our own hides had in the meanwhile become tanned as black, and nearly as hard as leather. McTrigger was covered all over from head to foot with hair as thick and long as a Shetland pony, as I used to tell him ; and he always returned the compliment, so I suppose I was much the same in appearance, though not being encumbered with a looking-glass, I had no means of judging. Any pretence even of washing, I am almost ashamed to own, we had given up for months before ; for water was scarce, and had to be carried with us for weeks together in our drays, and sometimes on the backs of our niggers. Our supply was running short, and having made two or three days' forced marches—for we were in the further predicament of having exhausted all our powder, and consequently

reduced to living upon what fruit, vegetables, and sometimes even roots we could find, and instead of hunting for game, were trying to find water—when forcing our way through some frightfully thick scrub, to our great and immense astonishment, we all of a sudden found ourselves close upon an encampment of white men, or at least one white man we distinctly saw amongst them.

McTrigger, I must tell you, had as his own particular pet body servant a nigger boy, whom we used to call “The Gulper” (from a peculiar physical tendency he had in his throat). The Gulper was a parting present from his majesty the King of the Shillouks, a tribe inhabiting the southern part of Nubia. The poor little beggar’s tongue had been cut out when a child, but he was as sharp and active as a monkey, and just as full of tricks and mischief. He was a great favourite with us both, though we used to have to thrash him on an average of at least three times a day, which was necessary to keep him in any sort of order. Gulper had not long before the incident I am now going to tell you fallen in with, and to our most intense interest had a regular stand-up fight with a great ourang-outang half as big again as himself, and having vanquished and slain his foe, he within a few days contrived entirely to extract the flesh and bones

piecemeal, for all the world like the inside of a roasted potato ; and having thus completely cleaned out the brute's skin, ingeniously fitted himself into it, as into a garment.

In this fancy costume the "Gulper," when in a particularly facetious humour, used occasionally to perform a sort of pantomime for our amusement, indulging in all kinds of antics and absurdities. He also found it extremely efficacious when pushing through the thorns and thickets of the scrub, which he used to do, pioneering a way for us with most marvellous pluck and dexterity.

He was as usual leading the way in his favourite costume when, as I was going to tell you, we came so suddenly, and unexpectedly, upon the opposition encampment of another European traveller.

Gulper, with a wild scream of delight at the sight, jumped into the midst of them, and was making a hideous grimace, which had cost McTrigger no little trouble in instructing him as a reminiscence of the once famous clown, Joe Grimaldi. The whole circle had sprung up in amazement at this apparition, as well they might. In another instant, without even time for an exclamation, the man who seemed to be the leader amongst them had his rifle to his cheek, with its muzzle within two feet of poor Gulper's

head. McTrigger rushed forward, seized hold of the barrel, and after a very slight tussle wrested it from the fellow's grasp, and, by way of a lesson for his rash hastiness, caught his antagonist a smartish tap on the top of his head with the stock of his own rifle, immediately counteracting the effect of the same with a well-applied kick in an opposite direction, as he turned and fled with a howl of terror; in which example he was followed by the whole "boiling" of his companions and followers, who dispersed in every direction, without one of them stopping even to look behind him.

The whole thing passed in less than the twinkle of an eye—so quickly, indeed, that on neither side had we found time to utter a word. From the half inarticulate exclamation of the Leader, as he took to his heels, we fancied he must be a Frenchman, but were not sure. After in vain shouting to them to stop, we enjoyed a most hearty laugh at the absurdity of the adventure; and then, finding that they did not seem inclined to return, we sat down in their places and, ravenously hungry as we were, did full justice to some excellent wild-pork soup which we found boiling in their pot. It was, I own, not perhaps strictly honest; but if you had been, as we were, hard put to it for food and drink, I am sure that you,

or any one else in our place, would have done the same. Hunger, like necessity, has no law; but hunger hardly expresses what the niggers themselves call "*gouamba*"—it is, indeed, the most intense craving for animal food, amounting almost to absolute torment; and the *cassava*, and those villanous wild sweet potatoes, which was all we had been living upon for ever so many days—ever since, in fact, we had come to the end of our ammunition—though it may partially have appeased our appetites at the time, certainly only tended to increase the same awful craving again later. After we had thus regaled ourselves, we really did our best to follow and come up with the strangers; but though we beat the country all round for some considerable distance, until late that evening, not one of them could we find.

In the meantime, I am sorry to have to tell that the "Gulper" and our other niggers—who, taken all together, were the most faithful and honest of retainers to ourselves, their lawful masters—having but undefined ideas as to the rights of *meum* and *tuum* in regard to the rest of mankind, had helped themselves largely to the contents of the well-stored but deserted waggons. Ammunition, provisions, and other spoils we found carefully conveyed, and ostentatiously displayed as trophies in front of our tent,

when we returned to it that night; and great was the amazement of our suite, and not slight their indignation as far as they dared show it, when we thrashed them all round severely for their pains.

Our head-quarters were at that time some five or six miles from where we had thus unexpectedly lighted on these strangers. We agreed that the best way would be to allow them two or three days' quiet to recover themselves, and then, having pretty accurately marked their whereabouts, send them a message of amity and apology, with a full restitution of, or at least offer of compensation for, our followers' maraudings. It was on the third morning, accordingly, that our oldest and steadiest negro, who had picked up a considerable smattering of English, accompanied by the unfortunate (as he proved to be) "Gulper," as more talented in finding his way through the dense thickets, was despatched as an ambassador of peace.

We absolutely forbade them to carry their spears or arrows, but Tatoe-top, which was what we had named our majordomo, from the peculiar form of his head, would insist upon arraying himself like the Gulper (whose costume, as I have described it, was the object of the most intense envy to the whole of his fellows), in the skin of a large baboon which I had shot some time since, with the bristly mane of a wild boar,

another trophy of the chase, thrown gracefully over his head. They were particularly charged to be most respectful in their demeanour, and the Gulper more especially, to refrain from any sort of Grimaldian postures or grimaces. Alas, poor Gulper! it was a fatal expedition for him.

Tatoe-top returned to us after two days' absence in a grievous condition, himself wounded, having been shot, though not seriously, through what ought to have been the calf of his leg, only niggers, as you of course know, never have calves. Before they had expected to do so, they had fallen in with the caravan, which had reassembled again, as we thought they would. Immediately upon emerging from the thicket, they had approached with salaams and signs of respectful salutation, such as we had taken some pains to teach and make them thoroughly rehearse before they started; but no sooner had the strangers perceived them than they again scampered off in all directions, except one white man, who, stepping behind a big tree and taking deliberate aim, had shot poor Gulper through the head; at seeing which catastrophe Tatoe-top naturally turned and made a rush for the scrub, but had received, what must have been a very long shot, from another more distant rifle before he had effected his escape.

I myself was perfectly furious at first, and was for at once declaring a war of vengeance and extermination against these reckless cowards, as they evidently must have been. But my companion, who was a cooler-headed fellow—the coolest and bravest fellow in real danger, I certainly ever saw in my life—took, what I must now own to be, a more sensible view of the matter. He pointed out that a blood-thirsty retaliation, without explanation, as it would probably be, would be but a poor satisfaction after all, and might lead us into all kinds of trouble, and perhaps no end of remorse hereafter. He was a very strongly conscientious fellow was Ralph McTrigger. He was quite as sorry and indignant about poor Gulper, who was indeed his own particular property, as I was, but he argued very justly that killing a couple, or a dozen maybe, white men or black, wouldn't bring him to life again. That naturally riled at having their waggon pillaged, as they of course supposed, by wild savages out of the scrub, and then supposing, as they very well might, that they were coming again on the same errand, they had only acted as we ourselves should have done under the same circumstances, and indeed had been obliged to do, some time before, by way of example for marauders. And so he talked the words

of wisdom, which I received into the ears of understanding.

But under the circumstances we did not care to fraternize with the parties, and though we really had had the best and most honest intentions, now felt less compunction about keeping their stores, of which, as I have told you, we were in much want. And so we let them pass us quietly within a very short distance, without their probably having an idea of our being so near them. We heard their continual shots one whole day, but we let them alone.

Not so, however, our followers, who got away from us at night. Luckily for those fellows, it was always our custom to have all the arms deposited for security in our own tent every evening; but they so frightened and bewildered them by their wild shrieks and cries, and all sorts of strange noises all round them, from the tops of trees, and depths of brushwood, that they fairly drove them for miles out of their track, and indeed that part of the country, so that we heard or saw no more of them.

Since my return to England, I have been given to understand that the ourang-outang skin of poor Gulper has been exhibited, and is, I believe, now to be seen, artistically stuffed in a museum, having

been brought to England as a trophy of the prowess and bravery of the traveller—I never can remember the fellow's name, whose account, I have no doubt, for I have never yet had time to read it, differs somewhat in details from mine, which all the same is the true one. So much then for my tropical adventures! If you want to know the fuller particulars, you must, as I tell you, buy the volumes as soon as they come out, and having paid your money, take in just as much as you like, and no more, for gospel. Suffice it to say, that McTrigger and myself abstained from all wilful lies, though we cannot be responsible for the imagination and embellishments of the publisher's agent. But what cannot be disputed is, that it must have been our own fault, if we did not see something of these unknown territories, and kingdoms, and empires, of which I had never heard the name before; for we certainly traversed the whole lot of them—going in at the extreme north-east of the continent, we eventually came out again, one fine day, at the extreme south-western point, almost down at the Cape itself.

There making a stay of some weeks, in course of time we resumed the manners and customs of civilization, in regard to washing and combing ourselves; and, after undergoing a regular course of clipping and singeing, once more encloded our limbs

in the recognised fashions of Christians—shooting-jackets and overcoats—having passed just three years and nine months, as a comparison of calendars proved it to be, though it did not seem to me like more than half that time to look back upon, in our wanderings among the heathen.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ Art is long, and time is fleeting.”—LONGFELLOW.

It was in the spring of 1860 that we set out from Cape Town, where we had been most hospitably treated by the settlers and officers of the regiments quartered in those lively diggings ; and working our way in traders across to Madagascar, and then up along the eastern coast of the continent, came up the Red Sea, and across by the regular overland route from Suez.

As with the former companion of my sojourning in Africa, so was it again at Malta, that McTrigger and I parted in real sorrow ; thrown together as we had been so entirely, as we had not managed on any single occasion to quarrel, we were of course become like two brothers in our affection and regard for one another. But he was obliged to come on to England to take some regimental appointment, which the interest of his friends had procured for him, while I found myself once more in Italy.

On board the P. and O. steamer, which brought

us from Alexandria, I happened to fall in with an old Indian civilian, a judge, or a commissioner, or common councilman, or whatever those fellows are, coming home on three years' leave, with a dilapidated liver, and an enthusiastic devotion to the fine arts.

My new friend's name was Wrott, which he was very fiercely particular about having always correctly spelt with its W and two T's. Besides that pardonable weakness, his one sole idea was painting, though how he really could enjoy and appreciate the beauties of the colouring, and blended harmony, and contrasts of the *chiaro-oscuro*, in the grand works of art, as he professed to do, used somewhat to puzzle me, considering that he had, in moments of confidence, more than once lamented to me, that from the hopeless derangement of his digestive organs in the service of an ungrateful country, or rather Honourable Company, everything in the earth, air, or sea around him appeared to his eyes of the same rich golden hue, even yellow as the yolks of eggs.

I think I never met any one who was, theoretically, so well up in the subject ; and naturally fond as I had always been of the arts, I felt sensibly improved, and refined in my own tastes, while my knowledge and judgment were proportionately cultivated under such excellent guidance.

He always carried about with him a perfect library of handbooks, dictionaries, and every sort of standard work ever published upon art, all of which he informed me he had read through and through, over and again, while left to his own resources in the secluded retirement of Hundy-Bundy Bangdoor, which was, so far as I could make out, the post town of his Indian residence, until he knew every page of them all by heart, and was now enjoying to the full, the fruits of his study and acquired information.

We visited—"did," that is the correct enthusiastic traveller's term—not only the principal galleries and collections of Naples, Rome, Florence, and the other great capitals and cities, but all the out-of-the-way places where there were any fine frescoes or paintings to be seen, such as Orvieto, Assisi, Foligno; and then all the northern part, through Bologna, Ferrara, Padua, and Venice, where, by the way, I nearly most ungratefully repaid poor old Wrott for all the pains and patience he had shown in making a first-rate connoisseur of me, as, though I have to say so, that shouldn't, I now conscientiously feel myself to be. In<sup>n</sup> return for which I upset the poor old fellow out of a gondola, and as near as a toucher drowned him in the Adriatic, half way across to the Lido, by unfortunately "catching a crab" while taking

my first lesson in the style of rowing peculiar to that country from our "graceful gondolier."

I had only returned to England about five or six months when I met you as I did in the grand stand on the Derby day, for I had been in no particular hurry as long as I was jolly, and time passed happily from day to day in the way it was doing.

I had come of age—that is, was thirty-two the previous autumn;—but finding the accumulation of my allowance, which all the time I had been in Africa I had needed to take very little from, quite sufficient for all my wants, I had written to my man of business to see after my concerns, and take all the necessary steps for establishing me properly in my rights. I was dodging about from one place to another, so that letters miscarried, or from one cause or another, it was some months before I received an intimation that I had better come home at once, as there seemed some danger of a very troublesome hitch arising in my affairs.

I knew how apt those lawyer fellows often are to make a fuss about trifles, in order to display their own cleverness and energy in the interests of their clients, so that even when in due course of time those threatening intimations did reach me, I did not think much of them, but had so far allowed them to influence me as

to decide me in leisurely working my way homewards. I had arrived accordingly in Paris, where I happened to take up an old copy of the *Times*, in the second column of which, to my great surprise, my eye was caught by my own name in full, Francis Pelham Lambard, advertised in the plainest type.

**L**AST heard of by his sorrowing friends in 1856, as then serving in the Turkish Contingent before Sebastopol. Any person giving information as to the present address of the above gentleman, if still alive, or bringing satisfactory and legal evidence of the decease of the same F. P. Lambard, shall be handsomely rewarded for his trouble. Letters to be addressed to M. G., care of Messrs. McKraft and Wrascall, late Wyley, McKraft, and Co., Sharper's Row, W.C., London.

Wyley and McKraft had, I knew, split partnership some months since, and were now sworn enemies. I gave some credit to the former, who had been for the last few months in tolerably constant correspondence with myself, for his honesty in not coming down upon his former partners, or rather the mysterious M. G., for the handsome reward forthwith.

But as I have found out since it was upon my own individual affairs that the actual quarrel had arisen and the firm broken up, and that old Wyley, upon the appearance of that advertisement, had taken the trouble to go down personally to my Mother, to warn and

impress upon her on no account to give any information to anybody, as to where I was, or what I had been about, and even to be careful not to allow her own servants to gain a clue, which might be a temptation to them, by sending them to post any letters addressed to me abroad.

Of course you guess who the M. G. was who was taking this lively interest in my fate, dead or alive. Who but Melchior Gorles himself again? though, strange to say, the real truth did not occur to me so immediately as you would probably imagine. I had been so long away, and out of the reach, as I suppose, of the cycle of his influence, that I had almost left off thinking, or certainly worrying my mind as I had formerly done, about the little wretch. I had entirely forgotten that, having married my nearest of kin, the only daughter of my poor father's first cousin, in case of my dying unmarried or without children, his wife was in fact my heiress-at-law. That was the simple explanation with which old Wyley put me off, though I could see all the while by his shuffling manner that he was still keeping back something more important; for stirred up as I had been by seeing myself thus put in the "Hue and Cry," I had come over with a "whisko," and, within less than twenty hours of

taking up that paper, had found myself in old Wyley's new offices in Sutor's Inn.

My lawyer advised me to go down home to Hertfordshire, and at once assume all rights and possession of the property which I had come into by my grandfather's will, adding that it would be time enough to begin to bother myself about the "hitch," when it should arise, as probably none ever would; and which in fact he now declared that he had only alluded to, in order to bring me home to look after my own place and property as I ought to do.

I did not half believe the cunning old fox, as I say, while thus trying to throw me off the scent, but I could get nothing more out of him. As Gorles' name had been mentioned, by-the-bye, he cautioned me to be wary of him, and to keep as much as I could out of his way; indeed, the less I had to do with any of the firm—he alluded to his late partners—perhaps the better.

I did not need this advice in regard to Master Gorles, as you may imagine; but in spite of my hatred and determined avoidance of him, his baneful influence again began to circumvent and pursue my path. Having established myself in my new home, Kraxted Manor as it is called, and remaining there some six or

seven weeks, I began to find it rather dull. I knew none of the neighbours ; most of them, indeed, just as I first went down there, had moved up to London upon the opening of Parliament. The shooting was over, even if every head of game had not, as I found, been killed down.

Messrs. McKraft and Wrascall, on the strength of being my agents, before their partnership had been dissolved, had actually had the impudence to go down occasionally for a day in my preserves, and had even added to the insult by having sometimes taken Gorles with them, who, the old keeper informed me, had given himself no end of airs ; ordering the beaters and people about, and even more than intimating that he might probably before long come to live there as master and owner of the property.

The first mischief Gorles did me upon my return to town, was to get me black-balled for the Loungers, a club I was particularly anxious to get into, and for which McTrigger, when he returned to England the year before myself, had put down my name. I had lots of old school and college friends amongst the members, besides its having been my poor Father's club, so there were many of his old comrades who would have given me a welcome for his sake.

It is the custom at the Loungers for any number of personal friends of a candidate to back his election by subscribing their names beneath those of the actual proposer and seconder in the book. Gorles, who had by some means been admitted to that club, happening, as ill-luck would have it, to see my name up as a candidate, must needs wind up a tolerably long list of my personal friends by his own signature in gigantic type. It was a great pity that McTrigger did not at once withdraw my name, as the fate of any one supposed to be a friend of Gorles was a certainty.

He was very shortly afterwards himself expelled for throwing a bottle of ink in the face of one of the waiters who had offended him. It was just like my luck, my destiny, my fate, or whatever you like to call it, when, having been elected into the Marlborough, upon my first entrance I took up one of the lists of members, and amongst them found Gorles' name there also.

That is the club, in the Derby lottery of which I had happened to have drawn the winning horse. Though not one of the most fashionable, it has more than perhaps its proportion of City swells in it, fond of a snack of racing and sport, and with lots of money to spare.

I went there but very seldom, and never, as it happened, once ran against my *bête noir*, even when I did so, though that did not prevent him serving me another evil turn, again in the usual indirect manner, as of old.

I had run down out of town for three or four days, when I received by one morning's post, the pleasing intimation that the house in which I lodged had been burnt down to the ground, by which I lost all my clothes and effects, including no end of trophies, *curios*, pictures, and all manner of different things which I had collected in my various travels, and would not willingly have parted with for the world. "The fire had originated," as I derived some slight interest in learning from the next day's *Times*, "in a small house which communicated at the back, occupied by a gentleman of the name of Gorles, who fortunately," as the report went on to say, "had insured, only a few weeks previously, the whole of his furniture and other valuables, which he had collected and arranged at the greatest cost and trouble, but which had all been entirely destroyed by the fire." I, not having had the same fortunate prudence and foresight, of course lost everything. Gorles had done me the honour to call and leave, as I suppose I was to take

it, a card of condolence ; but I had never set eyes upon him until that day that we ourselves met, and when you saw him come up to buy the lottery-ticket from me in the Grand Stand at Epsom on the Derby day.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

“From grave to gay, from lively to severe.”

POPE.

I HAVE already mentioned, that although Frank Lambard gave me the general outline of these adventures of his early life, upon that summer's night that he first yielded to his inclination of unbosoming himself to me; yet it must not of course be supposed that I at that time, or indeed until many weeks and months afterwards, learnt all the details which I have been able to set forth at such length, in these many pages—many more than I ever had the slightest idea of filling when first I entered upon the undertaking of compiling and arranging, in the best form and order that I could, all that my friend would come and tell me, sometimes by the hour together. From the text of this narrative itself may perhaps be gathered, how some of his reminiscences would at one time rouse him to the most boisterous spirits, or again depress them to an opposite state of almost maudlin sentimentality; one day charging me to

treat his communications with the strictest confidence, the next he would come bouncing in upon me, to tell the same story over again with many and various alterations and additions, which had in the meantime occurred to him, insisting upon my instantly offering them to some particular magazine or periodical to which he might have taken a fancy, and declaring that we should make a fortune in no time, and take our places together among the literary lions of the day.

That notion certainly pleased and increased upon him, as from time to time we went on with the work, though, to tell the truth, rather discouraged than not by myself, for more good reasons than one. Finally it was agreed between us that the whole narrative, arranged and blended together as I had had it from him, at different times, and in different humours, though occasionally slightly modified at my suggestion, should be prepared under Frank's own immediate superintendence, so as to be kept ready for publication, should there at any time arise a need for the vindication of his own character; or from any other circumstances it might ever happen that the world at large should think it worth while to take any interest in his private affairs.

“Who knows but that such may be the case some day?” he said.

How often have those words since recurred to me! spoken as they were at the time more in joke than with any sort of definite idea attached to them; and if, as he has since declared to me, and I really believe in all truth, he had no more idea of what was impending over him at that time than myself, the presentiment which suggested that remark, or as he himself afterwards chose to define it, the foreknowledge of the spirit, as distinct from that of the mind, was certainly very remarkable.

Frank Lambard and I had thus become fast friends, so much so that while in London he had taken up his abode in chambers under the same roof as myself, and though our out-door pursuits and diversions did not entirely assimilate, much of our days, and almost always our evenings, were passed in each other's company.

Sometimes, as I have said, he would be in the highest possible good spirits, seeming thoroughly to enjoy every sort of pleasure and amusement which his comfortable means allowed him perfectly to indulge in: there were times when, as the saying is, there was really no holding him; but then again, as is not

unusual with extreme temperaments like his, a reaction would take place, and becoming low-spirited and downright melancholy from no apparent cause, he would shun all society, and shutting himself up, declare half-solemnly, and half-mockingly, while apologizing for himself, that the black spirit of Melchior Gorles, his enemy, was overshadowing him.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## A CRAFTY INQUIRY.

IT was, I suppose, about a year after I had been thus so constantly thrown with him, that having been for some weeks away in the country, I had not seen or heard anything of my friend during that time; when upon the second morning after my return to town, I received a visit from a gentleman, who sent up his card with a message most particularly desiring to see me,

MR. MCKRAFT,

SOLICITOR.

—a sleek and oily gentleman, whose name I, of course, immediately recognised; but not having my notes or papers handy, I very stupidly could not, upon the spur of the moment, call to mind whether he was the partner of the firm in Sharper's Row, who had remained as the legal adviser and friend of Frank Lambard, or not. My visitor seemed inclined to lose a good deal of his own, as well as my time, by beating about the bush, until I brought him at once to the point by asking him plainly whether it

was on Mr. Lambard's affairs, or what, that he wished to see me.

He seemed slightly taken aback at my abruptness; and then, with a little more palaver about having heard much of me as one of that gentleman's most intimate friends, or something of that sort, said that he had ventured to come to inquire, in the strictest confidence, whether, in the course of our intimacy, any doubts had ever occurred to my mind as to the mental health—in fact,—after a little more hesitation,—the perfect sanity—of Mr. Lambard at all times.

I was staggered, for until that moment no doubt on the subject had certainly ever once occurred to me, and to that effect I gave a most decided answer.

The slimy man of law seemed rather disappointed and surprised at the promptness and unhesitating firmness of my opinion on the point; and after a pause of consideration, he proceeded in a tone of artfully assumed solemnity, to put the case thus to me.

“Well, sir, you, of course, have had great opportunity for forming so decided a judgment; but should you be prepared, or, let us say, conscientiously obliged, to swear that such is your firm belief, supposing your friend to have been guilty of some great crime; manslaughter, or even perhaps a murder, for instance,

between which two names for what may be but one and the same fact, after all, a plea of insanity sometimes makes all the difference'——

“Good heavens! do you mean to say he has killed him then,” I exclaimed. “Well, I have, I own, sometimes almost expected it to come to that! I am sure I have seen poor Frank work himself into such a state of mind, when thinking or telling of that little fiend Gorles’s strange influence over him, that I feel I could, with a clear conscience, swear that in that respect he would not be responsible for his own actions.”

“Thank you, sir; that will do,” said Mr. McKraft; “and such evidence, having been given as it is, beforehand and unbiassed, will be of use, no doubt, to your friend, should such a catastrophe, which happily, I only put as a supposititious instance, ever occur. Good morning, sir. Thank you.”

And he was off before I could recover my self-possession at his slimy impertinence. I called after him for some further explanation, but in vain.

I naturally wrote off the same day to Lambard himself, and begged him to let me know what it all might mean, and what new scrape or adventure he had been lately engaged in, which would require so very desperate a line of defence as that hinted at by the

attorney, of my interview with whom I plainly gave him all the full particulars.

His answer, which (a most unusual thing from him) came by return of post, showed that he was under one of his melancholy fits. The latter part of it, however, alluded rather briefly to the subject of my earnest inquiries.

“I have, “he wrote, “only within the last few weeks learnt what has so long been the object of mingled curiosity and doubt to me — the real conditions of my Grandfather’s strange, and, as I call it, most unwarrantable will. You and all the world besides will, before long, know it too, and nobody will, I am sure, wonder at the effect that it has had upon me. The cloud which I have somehow long felt hanging over me has burst at last, and from the quarter that the bitter experience of my whole past life might make me almost, as a matter of course, naturally look for and expect it. I am, it seems, after all, to be dispossessed of my property. My tenants have already received official notice to withhold their rents ; and I have myself been served with a formal writ, the purport of which is, as far as I can make it out, to explain to me, in the politest, though at the same time most explicit, manner, that I am not the lawful possessor of Kraxted Manor ; and,

therefore, coolly demanding that I may appear, and be ready to deliver it up with all its messuages, tene-ments, and other appurtenances, within a period of sixteen days from having received this pleasant communication.

“I have declined this very polite invitation, as you may well imagine. The consequence is, that I am cited to appear before her Majesty’s judges as early as the case can be brought on in the term, which commences in a day or two.

“My hands and head are full enough of business and anxiety, in consequence, as you may well imagine ; therefore, no more at present, but wait till I see you, and I will tell thee all.

“ Believe me,

“ Yours ever, most sincerely,

“ FRANK P. LAMBARD.”

## CHAPTER XXXI.

GORLES *versus* LAMBARD.

“If this be madness, yet there’s method in it.”

*Hamlet.*

As I have throughout endeavoured to keep myself as an humble individual entirely in the background, I need not more than very shortly allude to the part which I was obliged to take, having been subpœnaed, as I was, amongst some fifty or sixty other witnesses, in that famous ejection case with which, about two years since, the whole country was ringing. Who does not still remember the unparalleled mass of evidence to which whole columns of the daily papers were for a month entirely devoted? Perhaps the best summary of the whole of that remarkable trial was, as I have always thought, given in an article which appeared in the *Piccadilly Magazine* of the following month, and which I now, without having asked the permission of the editor, have taken the liberty of transcribing nearly at full length:—

Assuredly, in these spirit-rapping days, the ghosts of poor old John Doe, and Richard Roe, now at last, by

a comparatively recent act of Parliament deceased, must, we should imagine, have felt their indignation roused, and have been inclined to rap any amount of remonstrances through any respectable medium who would have been good enough to convey their well-founded complaints, at hearing of—as who has not?—the late famous ejection case, “Gorles *versus* Lambard,” merged and dissolved, as it were, into what has turned out to be neither more nor less than a sort of double *de lunatico* inquiry, one within the other, most irregularly tried in a wrong court.

Francis Lambard, Esq., of Kraxted Manor, is a gentleman whose birth and position, as proved by disinterested witnesses (whose expenses have, we sincerely trust, been paid strictly according to the value of their testimony), would seem to entitle him to a place of consideration amongst our landed gentry. Besides a conditional interest in the said Kraxted estates, which were the actual bone of contention in this *cause célèbre*, he inherited from his Grandfather a more questionable, though, in some extreme cases, not always to be despised legacy, in the shape of what is commonly called “hereditary madness,” which, with the eccentricity which is so often found in that malady, had been accustomed to reappear for some generations back in every alternate step of the family pedigree.

These two separate inheritances were coupled together, or rather were left to act inversely upon one another, in this wise.

The old gentleman, who seems to have had a considerable landed property entirely in his own power, left a most extraordinary will, by which, skipping over the head of his own eldest son, the late General Lambard, whose melancholy death from a railway accident some years ago in France may still be remembered, left everything to his grandson, Francis Lambard, the defendant in the late case, on two conditions: the first being that his grandson was to wait till the age of thirty-two, during which minority he must never have shown the slightest symptoms of the hereditary insanity. The other proviso, which seems not inconsistent with giving a better chance of the fulfilment of the first, was to the effect that the young man should never know what were the real conditions under which he was in due time to succeed. In the event of the non-fulfilment of the same, the said property was to pass on to a cousin, a lady, whose husband, one Mr. Gorles, has come forward as plaintiff, laying claim to the said estate on behalf of his wife, upon the plea of the non-fulfilment of the said conditions. The whole point of the trial, therefore, seemed to turn,

from the first, upon the sanity, or insanity, of the gentleman in possession ; for it seems that he certainly so far proved his sound sense by coming over very quietly from abroad as soon as he had arrived at the stipulated age, and without troubling himself about the other mysterious conditions (a command over his feelings of natural curiosity which to us certainly appears almost incredible), established himself as master of his ancestral property, and, as we may add, of the position.

Not the least strange phase in this very extraordinary trial has been that the evidence of most of the witnesses who were called on the part of the plaintiff, as a rule, tended to strengthen the cause of the defendant ; whilst, *vice versâ*, those of the defendant seemed, in spite of themselves, to prove the allegations of the plaintiff. This was most especially so in the case of one young gentleman, whose positive assertions as to the talents and undoubted sanity of the defendant, were only equalled by the flippancy of his replies under cross-examination, and his astounding revelations as to some of the evident delusions and private opinions of his dearest friend.

The strange variety of witnesses—and a formidable list they were, too—who passed in succession through that box, were really more like a medley taken hap-

hazard from some masquerade, than anything else to which we can compare it: beginning with a resuscitated old nurse, who had been cruelly dragged forth from her almshouse, they brought the governess of the defendant's—we were nearly saying victim's—earliest childhood; his Tutor, and old schoolfellows at Eton, many of whom, as it appeared, had never even met him, since he was a boy at that venerable institution—at which, by-the-bye, he was said to have held in his day, for some time, the high and enviable position of Captain of the Boats. Then were there not collected from all parts of Europe, at what cost and expense we positively shudder even to think, German students trampling close upon the heels, to say nothing of the feelings, of Cambridge dons; landladies, and *lacqueys de place* from Dresden; Italian doctors of European reputation; *sœurs de charité*, and *commissaires de police* from France; and enterprising ladies and gentlemen who had met the young man at Rome, and had a sensation scene to record, as having taken place at some public *table d'hôte* at Rome?

It was about that stage of the proceedings that a most pertinacious old lady insisted upon edging in her testimony, and commencing with an explanation of why, how, and when, she had contrived to exchange her former name of Blobb for the certainly more

euphonious one of De Lorme, went on to offer the most useless hearsay evidence ; and in the course of cross-examination was even brought to confess that she had never even seen Mr. Lambard in her life, except once—and then without knowing who he was, in a railway carriage—though she felt sure that she could tell more about him than most people, even though they may have happened to see him more frequently. Persisting as she did in continuing her tale in defiance of the whole Bench and Bar combined, she was politely conducted to the door by the usher, where, as we have been informed, she still continued the thread of her discourse from the steps of the Court to a select audience in Westminster Hall.

Then there were officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, of the Queen's army, as well as from that romantic body of warriors of whom a few years since we used to hear so much, the Bashi Bazooks, and other wild sons of the desert ; Abyssinian interpreters ; African travellers and intrepid lion-slayers ; settlers, brought expressly from the Cape of Good Hope ; and an Indian judge, who testified enthusiastically to the refined taste and connoisseurship of one whom he himself evidently looked upon with pride, as his pupil in the love of the fine arts, and therefore untainted by the slightest suspicion as to his sanity.

We are able fully to appreciate this learned gentleman's sentiments, though not perhaps so certain that experience will quite endorse his argument. Last then, though not least, in this strange assembly of witnesses, stood forth one, who, as far as we could gather from his own account of himself, was a repentant German rationalist, a Professor in more than one of the famous continental Universities, who having dipped deeply into many of the occult sciences, including mesmerism, magnetism, with a strong dash of what seemed like necromancy itself, had turned from the error of his ways, thrown his books and his parchments in the fire, and was now seeking his peace with Heaven, having joined a society of Protestant monks lately established in the city of Norwich. He actually appeared in the witness-box of the Court at Westminster in his newly-adopted costume, with sackcloth garment, sandalled feet, and shaven head, of the regular ecclesiastical, or as we in this country are more accustomed to associate the ideas, conventional stage monk. Besides all these, there were, of course, the usual pack of doctors, surgeons, and chemists, all volunteering contradictory evidence, with no other object in view than widely advertising their own vast talents and experience, at the expense of whichever side should finally have

the honour adjudged to it of paying the costs of this astounding trial. Having kept up this interesting investigation for twenty-four consecutive days, at a cost of how many hundreds, or perhaps, even thousands a day, we dare not even try to compute, it then, for the first time, seems to have occurred to some of the eminent counsel employed, and even then only upon the suggestion of the alleged lunatic himself, whether a doubt might not have been raised as to the sanity of old Mr. Lambard himself, the original, in more senses than one, framer of this eccentric testament.

Thus commenced what might be distinguished, as the third volume of this romance in real life, in the shape of a post-mortem *de lunatico inquisitio*, in some respects analogous to a movement of the "previous question" in Parliament. That this plea should not have been originally set up on the part of the defendant, which seems almost incredible, can only be explained by the strange concatenation of facts brought out in the course of cross-examination; first, that the said defendant himself had been, as one can well understand, brought up from his cradle in the most carefully watched ignorance of the fatal curse hanging over his family. That he had never been allowed to hear even of the existence of his grandfather; that

he had no idea where, or how he had lived, or when he had died. Secondly, that when he did at last learn something of his future prospects, the only part of the condition he was allowed to know was, that everything would be immediately forfeited by any movement or attempt on his part to inquire into what it was obviously intended that he was not to know, until he had arrived at a certain time of life ; in abiding by which, if not an absolute proof of sanity, he certainly exhibited a degree of trustful patience and common-sense of no ordinary quality.

But what could his attorneys and his counsel have been about ?

It must be borne in mind that Messrs. Wiley and McKraft, now singularly enough the rival attorneys in this great case, were in former days partners in business, and it was in that respectable house that that will must have been originally drawn for the old gentleman, who had all his life been a client of theirs. But with a wholesome fear of legal damages for defamation before our eyes, we feel that we are treading upon delicate ground, and so hastening back to our original narrative, have only to record that three very straightforward witnesses were, upon the very sensible suggestion of the defendant himself, found without much difficulty, though they had never been even

thought of by either side, upon whose simple evidence it was most satisfactorily proved that although the old gentleman had never up to the last been actually shut up, or officially declared to be a lunatic, he had for the last twenty years of his life—a period which ran back far anterior to the date of the said will—entirely dropped all communication with any of his relations: his own son, the late General, although in command of a regiment, he persisted in declaring to be mad, and had more than once commenced measures for putting him under restraint. Nothing would induce him to go near his own property, Kraxted Manor, though he refused to let it, or to dismiss his establishment. But he had taken a great fancy to a small place close upon the Great Western Railway, and almost exactly opposite the well-known county asylum at Hanwell. There he had established himself, having, by his own particular desire and arrangement, put himself under the regular surveillance of a most respectable elderly married couple, who acted, to all intents and purposes, as his regular keepers: and appears to have lived in great contentment and real happiness, dividing his time, as deposed by these faithful retainers, in putting the leading articles in the morning papers into comic verse, of which he had left volumes upon volumes of manuscript behind

him, and watching the passing trains, to every one of which he made a point of rushing to the end of his little lawn, and saluting with his handkerchief tied like a flag upon his walking stick. His greatest delight was to gain an admission into the asylum itself, as he sometimes did, through the principal Doctor of that establishment, who was his dearest friend, and there play long whist with some of the inmates, with many of whom he was most intimately acquainted. It further transpired that the two witnesses to the signature of the will in question were inmates of Hanwell at the time they had attested it, though both were since recovered, and again at large.

It was perfectly true that when the humour seized him, this (to put it in its mildest form) eccentric character would occasionally go, with his faithful servant attending him, up to London, and pay visits amongst his few friends, like any one else. On this point Messrs. Wiley and McKraft, though now antagonists and at daggers drawn upon any other question in the world, were ready to agree with a marvellous unanimity, and to swear to any amount that their ancient client was as competent to make a will or execute any other important deed as any individual in the world. Again and again did they, on both sides, do their best to shuffle off the ground on which

they found themselves thus unwillingly compelled to fight out their battle, and to shift the trial back again to the original point of dispute, as to whether Mr. Lambard has, or has not complied to the letter with the strange and unusual conditions on which his title to the inheritance of his forefathers was alleged to depend ; but happily for justice, in vain. The absurd, and we have no hesitation in adding, insane will, was upset by the special jury ; and most heartily do we congratulate the young squire of Kraxted Manor upon being thus firmly reinstated in his property, with the far less assailable title than that under which he has hitherto enjoyed it—that of being the heir-at-law to his grandfather, who has been pronounced by a British jury to have died insane and consequently intestate.

Having, in this extra notice of so extraordinary a story, already far exceeded all recognition of the limits which are ordinarily devoted to a subject of this kind, we have neither space nor inclination to trespass further on the patience of our readers' attention in this number, at least, to moralize upon, or draw any further deductions from, this complicated, and in some respects, though it may be no business of ours more pointedly to allude to that subject, disgracefully mismanaged affair, than by merely asking a simple question.

Now that young Mr. Lambard has been established

beyond all further doubt in the possession of his legally-inherited property, about which, if all those about him had been honest, there ought to have been no doubt at all; when all the motley crew of witnesses, eminent practitioners, quacks, lawyers, special jurymen, come for the settlement of their expenses, we should like to ask in four simple monosyllables—

WHO IS TO PAY?

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## DE GUSTIBUS NON DISPUTANDUM.

“ In every day's experience, how many things there are constantly occurring, deaths, popular excitements, scandals, or even individual feelings, such as motives or tastes, which are quite unaccountable.”

M. TAPPER'S *Commonplace Book*.

I TOOK an opportunity of asking Lambard one day—when I was down with him at his place, and we were talking over the trial, *à propos* to the arrival of the new *Piccadilly* number, from which I have selected the above article—how it was that his best friend and ally, *Taraxacum*, had not been sought out and subpoenaed by either side as an important witness?

To tell the truth, I had been considerably disappointed at not seeing that queer character, of whom I had heard so much; certainly, next to the Professor, whom I did see in the unexpected disguise as described in the article, I had looked forward to meeting Mr. De Lyons with some curiosity and interest.

“ It was not for want of trying for him,” answered Lambard. “ Did you not see him again and again advertised for, some two or three months since in the second column of the *Times*, requesting—

**D**. DE L., formerly of Bramton, and last heard of as connected with the house of Messrs. Weichkoff Zehewahlen and Co., of Dresden, to communicate with Mr. Keeholey, private information office, personally or by letter. All expenses from any distance to be amply re-imbursed.

“I heard a report some time since,” he added, “that he had gone over to America, and my lawyer, Wyley, informed me one morning, while the trial was going on, that there was such a name, which was not a common one, mentioned by some newspaper correspondent as holding the commission of Major, I think he said, in the Federal army, but that he knew no more than that of him.”

I have, I am aware, more than once in the course of these pages disclaimed all intention of putting my humble self forward. I catch myself, however, as I draw nearer to my wind-up, more often tempted to emerge from that well-intentioned retirement; but here it is merely to mention that I have another intimate friend, whose name, as you will not hear of him again before we take leave of one another altogether, it is scarcely worth while mentioning.

He is passionately devoted to music, and performs really very creditably on the piano. He occupies the rooms on the ground floor beneath my own, and I should

perhaps enjoy and appreciate his music more than I do, if he could only be prevailed upon to alter his usual hours of practice, which, commencing at about eleven P.M., generally continue until from half-past two to three A.M. every night, or rather morning, Sundays included.

One particular night he had been to the Opera, and had not commenced his practice until rather later than usual, and then he went to work at one peculiar air, over and over and over again, until I thought I should have really gone distracted—now slowly and softly, now fortissimo, then singing it, then whistling it with slight variations, but always the same tune, which he set running in my head, as I could only suppose it must be doing in his own, until at last I was driven to jump out of my warm bed, and, running down to his door, entreated him for pity's sake to desist.

He was a good-natured fellow, and only begging me to listen while he should only once more play through the most lovely new air that ever was composed by mortal man, then complied with my request, and let me get back to my bed with some chance of sleep. Even then, as he was himself undressing, I could hear him humming over the same air, until I began positively to loathe every note of it.

Next morning, while I was at breakfast, my musical

friend looked in under the pretence I believe of apologizing, but really, as I could see, to elicit my praise for his last night's performance. While he was even talking to me he was still mentally enjoying the air which had thus taken possession of him, as I could perceive by the imaginary piano accompaniment which his fingers were executing the whole time upon the edge of my table.

“Is it not a most wonderful air?” he asked. “There is something so excruciatingly captivating, so entirely new about it.”

“New it is not,” I replied, perhaps rather testily, “for I have heard my friend Frank Lambard whistle, and sing it too, a hundred times.”

“Your friend, Frank Lambard, is no doubt a very wonderful fellow; but, as it happens, that tune came out for the first time, entirely new, last night, at the Opera. I never in my life before witnessed anything like the *furore* with which it was received. The whole house was crammed, and rose like one man from pit to gallery, in a frenzy of enthusiasm. I never, I say, saw or heard of anything like the reception the new *Prima Donna* received, and genuine too, mainly upon the strength of that song alone. Four times was it encored, and each time she seemed to put more power and excitement into her execution than

the last. She is a very handsome woman, is the star of the season, the *bella* Giuletta, though rather past her quite *première jeunesse*. I must positively have a stall this season, if I have to sell my last shirt studs to pay for it; for there has been nothing like Giuletta Sottonebbia here for years. As to your friend Frank Lambarà, indeed! to look at him, he is just the sort of fellow that I should have imagined could never know one tune from another—couldn't find out the difference between 'God save the Queen' and 'Jim Crow.'" And he departed to his office in high dudgeon—though not, by the way, before he had had another half-hour's performance of the new tune upon his piano below.

He was quite borne out, however, as to the rage with which that tune, new or old as it might be, within even a few days, seemed to be taken up by the public in the same way as by himself.

On one particular morning every street-boy—as if by concerted arrangement—was whistling or singing that tune at the top of his voice; there was not an organ or German band which was not playing it. You might hear it in the most select Belgrave Square concerts—where each *artiste* was engaged at twenty guineas a song; or if you preferred, the more genial, though less refined, atmosphere of the Cider Cellars,

or even, as I was told, at every penny-gaff in St. Giles's, where it was nightly applauded and encored with the same enthusiasm. Every volunteer regiment marched out to that same spirit-stirring air; every quadrille band brought it in again half a dozen times over at the same ball, into their Lancer medleys, and every other kind of dance-music. From the highest to the lowest, every one you met was singing, whistling, or playing it—those who could not reproduce it in any of those forms, were talking about that wonderful new tune; and yet I still stuck to my assertion, that I had heard my friend Frank Lambard whistle it over hundreds of times, months before—whenever he was considering anything earnestly, or more particularly if anything had occurred to bother him.

Before the end of that season—almost before the popularity of that wonderful new tune had begun to pass off—an additional interest arose in connexion with it, which set the whole town again frantic with excitement and delight. The magnificent new *prima donna* one fine morning eloped with a married man, who had deserted his own wife, and started off, taking with him all her jewellery, and all the remains of her private fortune which he had not already dissipated. They were said to have gone straight off for California, or Vancouver's Island—or somewhere in those

directions. There were, of course, all sorts of reports and different stories about the hero of this delicious piece of scandal. At every club in London there were, at least, a dozen members, each of whom had the very best possible authority for knowing all about it, and each would insist upon giving a totally different version of the particulars, all talking at the same time; and yet no two people could even agree as to the party's right name. No one seemed to know anything about him personally, except one fact upon which all were agreed, and that was—that he was a dwarf, the most ill-conditioned, malignant specimen of humanity in London.

Lambard, who happened to be up in town, came in, in immense spirits about it. “You have heard this last escapade of Gorles?” he said.

“Thank God! the country in general, and I myself in particular, will be henceforth for ever rid of that little demon! I feel that I can go now and make the acquaintance of his wife, whom he has so basely deserted; she is my nearest relation, you know, and I feel that I ought to do something for her, for they say she is left in positive destitution. Do you think I ought to introduce myself, by writing to congratulate her?”

I declined to give any advice on so delicate a

question. Frank was in one of his rattling humours and so ran on.

“Fancy that woman—you know of course that she is his old flame, that used to be at Florence. I trust she will lead the wicked beggar a precious life of it! The only possible motive that I can conceive for the extraordinary step she has taken, is a concentration of the most dire revenge; or why on earth should any woman, who at her age has made the most successful *début* on the stage that is remembered for years, fling herself, and every chance away, upon a deformed little monster, who so many years ago had not only basely deserted, but publicly insulted her?

“The force of mesmeric affinity between two persons is sometimes unbounded, and beyond all conception inexplicable, but my solution to the riddle, perhaps because I hope it, is a hidden motive of vengeance—vengeance most dire!”

My musical friend from beneath had dropped in, and begging to differ, though not quite in the same contemptuous tones with which he had, on a former occasion, treated Lambard's opinion behind his back, was just offering his particular views of the matter, when they were unfortunately interrupted by the loud grunts of a barrel organ in the street below, playing—as he was now pleased to call it—that cursed

stale tune, which not six weeks before had driven him into such ecstasies of delight.

“It never somehow has grown stale to me, though I have known it these twelve years,” remarked Lambard, innocently, “and also knew the German gentleman very well, who originally composed it.”

My musical friend either did not, or pretended not to hear the remark, but reverting to the original topic of our conversation, favoured us with the philosophic generalism, that it was, after all, in vain seeking after motives in women, since there was no sort of accounting for any of the tastes which that sex will show, or what they will do in the case of love or matrimony.

“Nor the other sex either,” I might with reason have added to the above axiom, if I could only have been *clairvoyant* enough to have foreseen, or even dreamt, that within that day six months, Frank Lambard would, in spite of all remonstrances of his Mother and other relations, and the most plain-spoken representations of his best friends, have actually married his own cousin, Mrs. Gorles, or Miss Duffa, which name and style the lady had again resumed, after having, by the kind assistance of the learned and Right Honourable Sir J. P. Wilde, found herself legally released, having, without the slightest blemish on her

own character, obtained her divorce from her disreputable husband, Melchior Gorles.

It was a strange step to take on Frank's part, there is no denying ; and yet when I went down to pay them a visit at Kraxted Manor, nothing could exceed the happiness and pride with which he seemed to have taken a fresh start in life as a married man.

The lady, though no longer very young, is strikingly handsome, perhaps more so, I should fancy, than when a girl, with an open-hearted, pleasant style of manner, and highly accomplished.

Lambard himself one evening, as we were sitting over the fire in his snug smoking-room, gave me a most singular supplementary reason for the choice he had made.

“When I went that time to see if I could do anything for poor Carry in her distress, I found that I had marked her before, in church, and in the park, and other places, without having a notion that she was my own cousin, or who she was. I had admired her immensely, and bought that picture that hangs up there over the mantelpiece, because I fancied it was like my unknown beauty.

“When I at last found out who she was, and came to know her, I very soon felt sure that she would make

just the wife to suit me in a thousand ways ; but what really clenched the matter was, I found that those rascally lawyers of hers, or rather her late husband's, were preparing to move for a new trial against my property, on the ground of misdirection on the part of the judge ; and as Carry would come in for the place if they succeeded in ousting me, even if she hadn't suited me to a T in every other respect, I think I would still have done what I have done, for the mere pleasure of selling them. And between ourselves, I will give you my honour, that though she was married all those years to that little wretch, of whom, even now more than ever, I feel that I can hardly bear to think,—let alone talk about—that she was never anything to him but his wife in name only.

“ The poor girl, left as she was an orphan without a single friend in the world, and only too glad of any chance of escape from an old brute of a governess, who led her a most awful life, rashly consented to take a husband whom she had never seen, but in whose eyes her eight thousand pounds, besides the chances of supplanting myself in my property here at Kraxted, which were represented, and, indeed, fully believed in by his scoundrel of a relation, old McKraft, to be a perfect certainty, were her main and principal attractions.

“ My poor Father had, as her guardian, taken good

care to tie up her fortune securely in her own power—leaving it to herself, however, to make a settlement on her husband for his life, if after marriage she should think fit to do so ; of this precaution, Gorles, it seems, was not fully aware until the very morning of their marriage—but fell into a most fearful rage at the discovery, and spoke and behaved most atrociously even before they had arrived at Dover, whither they had set out to spend their honeymoon.

“ Intensely disgusted at his disgraceful language and conduct, and being a high-spirited girl as she was, she offered him, in so many words, to sign an agreement of separation that very day—by which she was to make over to him two-thirds of her fortune, on condition that they should at once arrange to live together as strangers only, in the same *ménage*, but never as man and wife.

“ He was mean enough to accept the settlement thus proposed ; and though they travelled together, and continued—when they returned to England—to live ostensibly under the same roof, she kept him from first to last strictly to his compact.

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