

**THE**  
**FREEMASON'S DAUGHTER.**

THE  
FREEMASON'S DAUGHTER:

A Novel.

BY

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CHAPTER I.

England, farewell! fresh shores will rise,  
When thy white cliffs are lost to view,  
With warmer suns and brighter skies ; .  
But will their hearts, like thine, be true ?

WHEN Henry Beacham arrived in St. Petersburg he was received by the agent of the firm with that obsequious politeness which the world so well knows how to pay to the reputed heir of unbounded wealth.

The man of commerce had received his instructions from his uncle, and artfully spread the meshes which were to entangle him.

Henry knew little of business, and signed with blind confidence the various papers and securities which the representative of the firm from time to time laid before him.

His letters were suppressed, and he waited, day after day, in the hope of hearing from William and Amy, to whom he had repeatedly written, till he became painfully convinced that some treachery was being practised

against his happiness, and then he resolved to return to England.

"Return!" said the agent, to whom he announced his intention. "Impossible, my dear sir, at present."

"Why so?" drily demanded our hero.

"Because the affairs which rendered your presence here a matter of necessity are not yet closed—because, in fact, the creditors of the firm will not consent to your departure."

"Creditors!" exclaimed the indignant youth; "why, the name of Grindem, upon any Change in Europe, is good for a million."

"Possibly, but not here. The fact is, my dear sir," continued the tool of his uncle's villany, blandly, "the firm has over-specified in Russia—and drawn immense sums in advance of its consignments, and till they are cleared there is not the remotest probability of your getting away."

"We shall see."

"You will find that I am correct; the house of Hiram and Brothers hold the acceptances of the firm to an enormous amount, and, by the laws of Russia, no one can quit the country without giving three weeks' notice in the *Gazette*, or finding security that his creditors shall be satisfied."

"But how does this affect me?"

"You are a member of the firm," was the reply.

And so he was a member, without the power of drawing a shilling.

To all his entreaties that he would become his security, which he knew to be a mere form, the agent returned a polite but cold refusal; said that he should be most happy to oblige, but that he could not endanger his own fortune and the position of his family by such an undertaking.

Henry saw at last that he was duped; and bitterly did he curse the easy facility with which he had been led to undertake a voyage, whose only object was to separate him from the being to whom his heart was devoted.

Vainly did he write—post the letters himself; the clerks in the post-office were bribed. In Russia every man in office has his price, from the Minister to the doorkeeper; and gold was not spared by those who were interested in detaining him.

Nor was it till he encountered the sailor-boy, whom he protected against the ruffianly usage of his captain, that he found the means of communicating with his friend William Bowles.

Time rolled on; and our hero was truly wretched—heart-sick with hope deferred, and that worst of all agonies, suspense, which to some minds is more bitter than ill confirmed.

He was walking in a disconsolate mood, one summer's evening, along the Quai Verniski, when the sound of a quick step fell upon his ear.

He thought he knew it, and his heart beat wildly.

Before he could turn to ascertain whether his sus-

picion and hope were correct, a friendly grasp was laid upon his shoulder—it was the generous open-hearted William's.

Those only who have been long severed from a faithful heart can imagine the meeting of the two friends.

Tears stood in the eyes of both for some time. All they could utter was “William!”—“Henry!”

The meeting had been witnessed by a tall stately-looking man, in a plain undress uniform, who seemed struck by the singularity of the encounter. Whoever he might be, or whatever his position, it was evident that it was no ordinary one; for all drew back whenever he approached, without appearing however to notice him.

As soon as the friends had recovered in some degree from the emotion of their meeting, William drew Henry's arm in his—observing that the streets were not a fit place for conversation—and led his companion towards an hotel kept by an honest German, whose house is well known in St. Petersburg by the sign of the Black Eagle.

No sooner had the stranger observed them enter, than he called, by a sign, a person who stood carelessly smoking a cigar, watching with interest, to all appearance, the arrival of a vessel; but whose eye had never for an instant lost sight of the man in uniform.

“You see those strangers?” he said in a low tone.

The gentleman bowed.

“ You will follow them ? ”

A second bow.

“ And report to-night every word of their conversation.”

Without waiting for a reply, as if confident that with him to command was to be obeyed, the speaker resumed his walk.

Who could he be? Perhaps an agent of the police—such offices are filled in Russia by men not only of exalted rank but of the highest talent.

No one in that country of despotism dares refuse to act as a spy upon his neighbour.

It has been stated that even the members of the imperial family are surrounded by those who report regularly to the Emperor their conversation, the names of their visitors, and, in fact, the minutest actions of their lives.

The autocrat carries his system out even in the household of his own children.

Such is the fruit of a barren despotism, which leaves its possessor nothing but the iron sceptre, to whose terror he is himself a slave.

As soon as the friends were seated, and had repeated their joyous congratulations at again meeting after so long and cruel a separation, William demanded, in a serious tone, if Henry was really married.

“ Married ! ” repeated the young man, with surprise ; “ what in heaven’s name could put such an idea into your head ? You know I am engaged to Amy. Think



you so lightly of your friend that he could change his love like a worn-out garment, and cast the truest heart aside which ever beat in woman's breast?"

"I knew it!" exclaimed his friend, pressing him once more warmly by the hand; "I knew that it was the treachery of the Smalls. Forgive me, Henry, for the question. I, at least, ought to have known you better—known that you were incapable of trifling with the affections of a noble-minded girl, who had given you her whole heart."

"And did Small assert this?" demanded Beacham, more and more bewildered at the net which had been wound round him.

"Yes; added to which it was announced in all the journals."

"'Tis false, by heaven!" exclaimed the lover of poor Amy. "But I need not repeat this to you, who know me: my word is sufficient. I have written both to her and you repeatedly; but my letters have been intercepted—your correspondence has been suppressed. Oh, William!" he added, "my uncle has played a cruel game: to separate me from the woman I adore, he has left me at the mercy of his agent, on whose representations I signed bill acceptances, for the benefit of the firm, as he stated, to an enormous amount. By the laws of Russia, no one can quit the country without the permission of his creditors. My uncle thinks to compel me to renounce the bliss of calling Amy my wife. Never!" he added, passionately! "Cold, heart-

less, and selfish as he is, I renounce him and his wealth. He has broken my heart, William. Curse him! curse"—

Bowles hastily seized his friend by the arm—he knew that he would bitterly regret having expressed his enmity towards him in the grave.

“Hold, Henry!” he exclaimed; “you must forgive your poor unhappy relative.”

“Never!”

“I am sure you will when you shall learn all.”

“Is he ill?” demanded Beacham, struck by the seriousness of his friend’s manner.

William pointed to the crape upon his hat, and was silent.

“Dead!” exclaimed Henry, deeply moved; “God forgive him as freely as I do, and pardon me my hasty words. Poor old man! harsh as he was, I cannot but regret him; for, with all his unkindness, he loved me, William—that stern, cold man, loved me.”

“He proved it at his death: you are his sole heir.”

Beacham was thunderstruck—bewildered—by the change which that one circumstance had made in his position. He could not speak: grasping the speaker’s hand, he burst into tears, and sobbed like a child.

“I am come,” continued William, “to free you from this thralldom; come at the request—nay, the command—of Mary Heartland, three days before our wedding-day. I am sure you will love her, Henry—love her like a sister—for her generous sacrifice at the

shrine of friendship. She saw," he added, "that I could not be happy without you."

"Generous, true friend!" exclaimed the young man; "in all that friendship could desire—all that the noblest heart could sacrifice. William, William—I shall never be able to repay this last act of devotion."

"Then, like a bad debt," replied his friend, with a smile, "let us strike it from the account books, and think of it no more. I am your uncle's executor; armed as I am, not only in that capacity, but with my father's guarantee—and his signature is well known and honoured in St. Petersburg—I shall not find much difficulty in bringing the agent and the harpies he has employed to reason. As for your old enemy Small, he is a ruined man."

"How so?"

"By your uncle's direction the affairs of the firm are to be wound up—it was his last wish that you should not be a merchant."

It was late before the young men separated—they had each so much to ask and to relate.

Henry was deeply moved at the devotion his friend had shown, and asked himself a thousand times how he had merited or could repay such generous conduct.

The only drawback to his happiness was the information that Amy was in London; but the assurance that she was under the protection of a near relative and friend of the benevolent Dr. Currey somewhat consoled him.

William was careful not to afflict him by recounting his own uneasiness at the long, mysterious silence of the orphan.

That same night every word of the foregoing conversation was repeated to the tall stranger who had observed their meeting on the quay.

"Who is this agent?" he demanded.

"Mr. Maynard."

"What character does he bear?"

"Rich, but unscrupulous."

"Ascertain, at the Administration of the Post, by what means and through whose agency the letters of the young Englishmen have been suppressed."

The gentleman bowed.

"Also the holders of the securities he alluded to, and if Russian subjects or not. Make your report to-morrow."

The person to whom the order was given bowed and withdrew. It was evident, from his respectful air, that the speaker was a personage of importance.

The agent was much surprised, on the following morning, to receive from Henry and his friend the information of the death of Gilbert Grindem; for Small, who had latterly conducted the correspondence of the firm, had kept him ignorant of that particular.

Being a shrewd, avaricious man, he instantly saw the opportunity of realising the value of the securities—considerably over a hundred thousand pounds—which, by direction of his employer, he had obtained from the

young stranger, merely as a means of detaining him in Russia till the attachment between him and Amy should be broken off. To the offer, therefore, of giving security till the accounts could be investigated, he returned a polite but firm negative.

"We dispute their accuracy," observed William.

"That is too late," replied the man of figures; "Mr. Beacham has accepted them."

"But, by the laws of Russia, if my friend finds security," continued the young merchant, "you cannot refuse."

"Ah, bankers' security," said the agent; "bankers' security—you forget that; and where, I should like to know, in St. Petersburg, will you find that—the sum is enormous—over a hundred thousand pounds?"

"Where, indeed!" sighed Henry.

Still his friend would not give up the point, convinced as he was that treachery had been practised, and that the claims were morally, if not legally dishonest.

He could not bear the idea of his friend resigning so considerable a portion of his fortune, and he determined to see the holders of the papers, Messrs. Hiram and Brothers.

The visit to the firm of the Hebrew bankers was as useless as the one they had made to the agent.

The crafty Israelites were but the tools of their employer. It is true that they were assured a large per centage on the transaction, and they determined not to be balked of their profit.

As the young men were returning despondingly to their hotel, they encountered the tall, military-looking man who had observed their meeting.

“You are Englishmen?” he said, advancing, and gracefully addressing them.

They replied, of course, in the affirmative.

“And, if I mistake not, in some difficulty. Follow me; perhaps I may be of use to you.”

Without waiting to see if his request was complied with, the speaker turned away, and directed his steps towards a plain-looking house in the adjoining street.

Apparently he was expected, for the door opened at his approach, although Henry and his friend saw neither porter nor domestic. Following his steps, they entered with him, and found themselves in a comfortable-looking room, arranged something like a bureau.

The walls were covered with shelves, on which were a number of cases, something like despatch-boxes, all numbered and marked “Private.”

The singular person pointed to chairs, and, without uncovering himself, desired his visitors to be seated.

“Your names, I think, are Henry Beacham and William Bowles?”

The friends bowed.

“English merchants?”

“Yes.”

“One detained in St. Petersburg till he can settle

claims which he believes to have been purposely forged to detain him here?"

"Right. But how should you know this?"

"Very little passés in St. Petersburg which I do not know," observed the stranger, with a smile. "Excuse my abrupt way of proceeding—it is not intended to be discourteous; but my time is very much occupied. Have you any proofs of the treachery which you allege to have been practised?"

"None."

"That's unfortunate. Any letters from your friends?"

"They have been intercepted," said Henry. "I am the victim of as heartless a system of treachery as ever villany planned, or its tools executed. We have just left the agent, and he refuses to permit my departure till I have satisfied his infamous demands—paid claims which were only acknowledged by me in ignorance of the intention of those who forged them."

"And that intention was"—

Henry was silent.

"To separate you from the object of your affection. I know all; with that, however, I have nothing to do. The dead are beyond human justice, but not the living. I see," he added, "that you are surprised at my minute acquaintance with your affairs; but, as I told you before, I know all that passes in St. Petersburg; your case interests me. Why not give security for these demands?"

"It has been refused."

"Bankers?" demanded their mysterious host, in reply.

"That, I fear, I am unable to find," answered the young man. "The sum is enormous."

"I know—one hundred thousand pounds."

The two friends were more and more mystified.

"Summon the agent and the Messrs. Hiram to attend to-morrow, at ten o'clock, at the house of the court bankers, Geirwolf and Son: I will be your security."

"You!"

"I have said it."

"But are you a banker?" they demanded.

"Not exactly," said the stranger, with a smile; "but fear not—I shall do as well. And now that our interview is terminated, farewell. Fail not the appointment. I have little time to spare, and punctuality is the characteristic of a gentleman."

The speaker slightly inclined his head, as if to intimate that their interview was terminated.

"Stay!" exclaimed Henry Beacham. "I cannot think that you would amuse yourself at the expense of a being who is already sufficiently wretched, by an idle jest."

"I never jest," was the cold reply.

"Inform me whom, at least, I have to thank."

"That you will know to-morrow."

"Perhaps," said William, "you are the Minister of the Secret Police. I have heard that there is such an



officer in Russia, and that he holds the threads of all that passes. If you are, you can indeed serve us most materially."

"How?"

"By ascertaining how my friend's letters were suppressed."

"I have done so already."

"You are the Minister, then?"

"Not exactly the Minister," replied the stranger, whose answers were as laconic as they were to the purpose—"but one connected with him. Now, then, ask no more questions; I am not in the habit of answering them. Meet me at the time appointed, and doubt not my punctuality."

He bowed again; and the two friends, their curiosity aroused to the highest pitch, withdrew—full of hope and confidence in his promise.

"It must be the Secretary of the Minister, at least," observed William. "Well, for once, I bless the system of despotism which places the secrets of all within the grasp of such a police as that of Russia."

Their next step was to find the proper officer to summon the agent and the partners of the firm of Hiram, to meet them at the house of the court banker, the well-known firm of Geirwolf.

## CHAPTER II.

Creature of earth, without the soul of man  
The lash is raised, avoid it if you can ;  
Vainly from justice would the culprit fly—  
Vainly his faltering tongue her claims deny.

QUID PRO QUO—A POEM.

HENRY BEACHAM and his friend William were punctual to their appointment, on the following morning, at the house of the court bankers.

The agent and Hiram, the Jew merchant, were both there before them.

The two schemers were full of confidence in the success of their intrigue, and doubted not but the young merchant, large as the sum demanded was, would either pay it or find security for the amount, in order to quit the country at once.

The parties bowed stiffly: the meeting was an awkward one. The agent pretended to be busy occupied in looking over his memoranda, and the Israelite to be mentally calculating on the amount which his share in the nefarious transaction would bring him in.

“Humph!” whispered Bowles; “is that the Jew?”

His friend nodded, as much as to say, “Yes.”

“He looks like a keen blade—all edge,” continued

the speaker : " but unless I am mistaken in my surmise, our mysterious friend will prove too sharp for him."

" Why, who do you suppose the stranger to be?" demanded Henry.

" The Minister of Police himself."

Beacham shook his head—he had twice seen that redoubtable functionary ; and he assured his friend that there was not the least resemblance between them ; added to which, he pointed out the improbability of so high an officer interesting himself in the affairs of an unknown person like himself.

" It's his secretary, then," replied Bowles, with a look of disappointment.

Before his friend could reply the door of the apartment opened, and Mr. Geirwolf, the court banker, made his appearance : he was a little, thin, shrivelled old man, with a quick, piercing eye, which he invariably fixed upon those whom he addressed, or who were speaking with him, as if he would read their thoughts. He seemed to pay but little attention to their words.

Although known by a Russian name, his physiognomy was so evidently Greek, that no one could doubt, who gazed on his peculiar features, his descent from the astute, intriguing race.

He was supposed to be enormously wealthy, for he had been the banker of two Emperors—Alexander and Nicholas—and was high in favour with their mother, the widow of that madman Paul ; consequently he was no less courted by the merchants and foreign agents than by the dissipated aristocracy of St. Petersburg.

“Welcome, gentlemen, welcome,” said he, as he slid into the apartment, with a quiet, cat-like step. “I trust I have not kept you waiting; but have just been honoured with a message from the Emperor.”

The agent and Hiram bowed, as if the name of some deity had been pronounced.

“Now, then, to business,” continued the banker. “It seems that the house of Grindem and Company—whose signature is well known upon the Change of St. Petersburg, and who are represented by this young gentleman, who is a member of the firm—have become indebted largely to their correspondent, our respectable friend here. Have you vouchers for the transactions?” he added, “upon which you advance so large a claim.”

“It is not necessary,” replied the agent. “Mr. Beacham, by his signature to these securities, has acknowledged them.”

“Oblige me with them?”

The papers were handed to the speaker.

“My friend, Mr. Hiram, in his turn, has advanced considerable sums upon them. As yet, we have not received the consignments upon which the advances have been made. We are both naturally anxious to protect ourselves from risk.”

“Doubtless.”

“Mr. Beacham wishes to leave Russia. Let him either pay the liabilities, or find security to meet them, and we withdraw our objection; if not, he must remain till we are satisfied—such is the law of Russia.”

“ Nothing can be clearer,” replied the banker. “ And what security do you propose ? ”

“ Bankers’,” replied both the claimants.

“ It’s the safest,” added the Jew. “ I must have bankers’.”

“ Although I can scarcely account for the kind interest you have taken in this affair,” said Henry Beacham, “ permit me, sir, to thank you. At the same time, I must protest against the claims of these two persons, as being founded in dishonesty and conspiracy. When I signed those papers, I knew not what I signed.”

“ Father Abraham ! ” exclaimed the Jew, with a look of well-affected surprise.

“ Not know what you signed ? ” repeated the banker. “ That is strange, sir,—you, an English merchant !—one of a class certainly not the least ignorant of the consequences of such an act. You must know that it binds the firm ; and, as a member of that firm, renders you personally responsible.”

“ I admit it ; and therefore am willing to give what security they please, till the transactions on which the money alleged to have been advanced can be investigated. If they are found to be genuine, the money shall be paid ; if fraudulent, as I assert them to be, and, once in England, can prove them to be, I need no excuse for disputing them.”

“ Fraudulent ! ” repeated the agent, in a tone of indignation ; “ your late worthy uncle, sir, knew my character well—he would not have mistrusted me.”

"No doubt the late Mr. Grindem knew you," said William Bowles; "he was a shrewd man, and generally selected the fitting tool for the work in hand."

"Insolent!" observed the agent.

"That young man," said the Jew, "would suspect Moses himself."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" said the banker, "with all this I have nothing to do; the claims are legally valid—of that there can be no doubt; how they were obtained is another question. I have interested myself in this affair at the request of one whom I am bound to oblige, and who has offered to become surety for Mr. Beacham, in order that he may quit the country."

"His name?" demanded the agent.

"You will know that when you see him."

"Is he a banker?" inquired the Jew.

"No."

"Then he won't do. The law says a banker, and a banker's security I'll have."

The words were scarcely uttered than the door opened a second time, and the tall, military-looking man, in his plain undress uniform, entered the room, followed by a gentleman in brilliant regimentals, his breast covered with orders.

The effect, both on the agent and Jew, was electrical: the two or three discoloured teeth of the latter chattered in his aged jaws, and his whole frame seemed convulsed by a sudden terror.

Even the smile upon the features of the court banker

gave place to an expression of seriousness, as, drawing respectfully behind the table, he inclined his head, and pointed to a chair.

“Father Abraham!” exclaimed the Israelite, “the”—

“Minister of Police,” interrupted the decorated person, with a stern air. “You did not expect to see me here? You will answer every question this gentleman”—pointing to his companion—“may please to put. I need not advise you to speak the truth, when a visit to Siberia will prove the consequence of a lie.”

“I told you,” whispered William to his friend, “it was the Secretary to the Minister.”

“What were the instructions you received from the uncle of this young gentleman?” demanded the stranger, pointing at the same time to Henry Beacham.

“To involve him in certain liabilities which would prevent his leaving Russia without the consent of his relative, and which his utter ignorance of commercial transactions and nominal share in the firm rendered an easy task.”

“When did you first think of converting those securities to your own use?”

“As soon as I heard of Mr. Grindem's death.”

“Every claim, then, upon him is either a forgery or obtained by the means you stated?”

The agent hesitated; but his doubt endured but for an instant, for his questioner raised his head from the papers, which he was looking over, and fixed an eye of

such conspicuous power and command upon him, that even the hope of obtaining some part of the vast sum for which he had intrigued was not proof against its influence.

“Every one!” he faltered.

The questioner quietly tore up the securities.

Henry Beacham and William were both bewildered.

Certainly for a secretary he took great liberties in the presence of his superior; perhaps, they thought, he had received some signal from the Minister to do so—things are managed so very oddly in Russia.

“Now, Jew?” said the stranger.

Hiram started at the sound of his voice, and tried to stand steadily, but could not: his knees knocked against each other, and a confused prayer, in which the names of Abraham and Moses alone were audible, broke from his lips.

“How much are you to receive on this transaction?”

“Twenty per cent!—’pon my soul not a rouble more! I am poor—wretchedly poor—have five sons and seven daughters—the Lord protect his people—I have had losses, and the hand of power has been heavy on us lately!”

“Silence!” said the Minister, whose eyes, during the interview, were never for an instant removed from the countenance of his Secretary; “every unnecessary word you utter will only add to your punishment.”

“How were you enabled to suppress the corre-



spondence of the Englishman with his friends?" inquired the mysterious friend of the two strangers.

"Through the Post Office."

"It's false!" said the stranger, starting, in a fit of excitement, from his chair; "they dared not, for their lives. What! a public establishment—one of the best regulated in Russia—one which the Emperor watches over with peculiar care—bribed! I'll not believe it."

The agent was silent.

"Confess that you have lied, and though I never yet forgave the man who once deceived me, this time I'll pass it over. How! am I not understood? you are silent?"

"Through respect; since to speak can only be to repeat my former assertion. I know the danger of my position and in whose presence I stand too well to dream of uttering a falsehood."

The stranger—for we must still designate him as such, although some of our readers, we doubt not, begin to suspect whom they have been introduced to—eyed the speaker for a few moments in silence, as if to convince himself that he was really speaking the truth. Satisfied that such was the case, he briefly demanded what sum he had paid.

"Two thousand roubles."

"And to whom?"

Again the agent hesitated.

His eye glanced at the Minister of Police; but there was nothing in his countenance to betray either fear

or entreaty—it was as cold and impassable as a statue's.

“Must I speak twice?”

“To Alexander Galitzin, the President of the Foreign Department.”

This time the features of the Minister did change, but only for an instant: the party implicated had lately become his son-in-law; but he felt that even with his influence it would be hopeless to attempt to save his relative, and wisely forbore the attempt.

“Galitzin! ingrate! Men speak of government in Russia,” said the stranger, “as if honour, public faith, loyalty, and trust existed amongst the people; the scribblers of Europe represent its sovereign as a tyrant, oppressing an innocent people; when in reality he is like a man holding a serpent by the neck: let him loose his grasp, and it will turn and sting him. Galitzin,” he added, turning to the Minister, “is your son-in-law?”

“He is,” replied the functionary, turning very pale.

“How long has he been married?”

“Six months.”

“Heartless scoundrel! With the dawn, see that he departs for Siberia. We deprive him of his nobility and decorations—reduce him to the condition of a serf—dissolve his marriage with your daughter, who is to be considered as never having borne his name. To you we intrust the execution of our decree.”

Cold drops of perspiration trickled down the counte-

nance of the Minister as he heard the sentence ; but not one thought of disobeying it, or attempting to save the culprit, entered his imagination.

William and Henry, who heard the judgment, knew at last in whose presence they were standing—knew that there was but one person in the empire who could pronounce so terrible a judgment—and that person was Nicholas, Emperor of all the Russias.

[Let it not be considered that the above case is entirely the invention of the author—it is founded on facts—the writer having heard an anecdote very similar while on a visit to St. Petersburg a few years since.]

“Gentlemen,” said the Emperor, without appearing to notice their astonishment, “you are at liberty to depart from Russia. If the crime of which you have been the victim, in your own country is more difficult to perpetrate, remember that the justice which detects it is less prompt. Your enemies will both be severely punished, since to-morrow sees them depart for the mines for life.”

The speaker announced his terrible decree as calmly as if he had been giving some simple order to one of his courtiers.

The wretched Jew was annihilated at the words, and sank upon the floor of the apartment in a violent fit ; the agent could only falter out—

“Sire, I am an Englishman. Mercy!”

“But naturalised in Russia,” replied the Emperor, with a cold smile, “and subject to its laws. Gentle-

men," he added, "farewell; a pleasant journey to England."

Raising his hat with graceful courtesy, the modern Attila walked from the court banker's—his only escort the man whose son-in-law he had just condemned to Siberia; yet such was the terror of his power—the veneration in which it was held—that an idea of disputing it never once entered into the imagination of the Minister of Police, who did not exercise a greater terror over the minds of the people than dread of his master's anger exercised over his.

When the two friends re-entered their hotel they found an officer waiting to receive them, who presented them with the official permission to embark without giving the customary notice of three weeks in the *Gazette*.

"You must be high in favour," he observed, as he presented it; "they told me, at the *Chancellerie*, that they had never known a similar permission, unless to an ambassador or diplomatist."

"I think we are," observed William, with a smile; "it is not often that one has an hour's conversation with the Emperor of all the Russias."

"And have you really conversed with the Emperor?" demanded the messenger, whose respect for the young man increased tenfold on the supposition.

"This very morning."

"That, then, explains the second order I received respecting you."

“A second order!” they exclaimed.

“Yes. I am to accompany you wherever you go—see that every amusement is open to you in St. Petersburg—in fact, I am answerable for your safety with my head—which, foolish as it is, gentlemen, I prize exceedingly; so you may feel assured that I shall perform my office to the best of my ability. What say you?” he added; “will you visit the Opera to night, or have you an inclination to see something of Russian society? If so, to-night there is a party at Prince Demidoff’s—a *conversazione* at the Countess of Liebnitz—and a ball at the palace of the Princess Dumbrowski.”

“But we are not invited,” observed Henry Beacham.

The officer smiled.

“Pardon me,” he replied; “you are invited everywhere; there is not a house in St. Petersburg that is not open to you—from the palace of the prince to the dwelling of the serf. The Emperor’s guests are supposed to be welcome everywhere.”

Although Henry Beacham had been some months an inhabitant of the capital of all the Russias, he had been too unhappy to mingle in society, and knew as little of its tone and manners as his friend William, who had so lately arrived.

As three days were to elapse before the vessel sailed, and their minds were comparatively at ease, they agreed to put themselves under the guidance of their new acquaintance, and after dinner see something of Russian life.

Their first visit was to the Opera House, where they heard the first artists of Europe, who are nowhere more flatteringly received, or liberally paid.

On entering the theatre—which, *par parenthèse*, is one of the finest in the world, both for size and decoration—they would have paid for their box, but their companion pronounced some magical word in Russian, and the functionary pushed back the proffered gold with as many apologies as if he had been detected in the act of stealing it.

“What does he mean?” demanded William.

“I told you everything in St. Petersburg was open to you. The theatre is the Emperor's. Of course he receives no money from his guests.”

The box into which they were shown was a private one, facing the imperial box, in which the Grand Duke Michael and the Cesarewitch were seated. They were shortly after joined by the Empress.

The opera was *Norma*, and Grisi the *prima donna*. Never, perhaps, was that glorious singer in better voice, and the choruses were executed with an *ensemble* which neither London nor Paris have ever yet rivalled or even approached.

On Henry Beacham's remarking the perfection of the opera in this respect, the officer replied with a smile, and so meaning a shrug, that his curiosity was raised, and he asked for an explanation.

“They are serfs,” was the reply.

“But how does that enable them to sing so well?”

Perhaps you have some peculiar method of teaching in Russia? if so, it is ungenerous to keep it to yourselves; pray explain it?"

"Nothing can be more simple than our method of teaching music in Russia," answered the young man. "A certain number of serfs are chosen. It is first ascertained that they have voices; after which the score of the opera, or hymn—no matter what—is placed before them, and they are flogged every morning till they have learnt it. It's the same with our horn bands, which are unrivalled in Europe. The same system, the same success."

"You surely jest."

"Heaven forbid?" exclaimed the young man, "that I should take such a liberty with the guests of the Emperor. If you like to accompany me in the morning to the Academy of Music, I will convince you of the fact. I can point out another equally curious. You see that lady," he added, pointing to a pale, delicate-looking girl, who was seated in one of the boxes opposite to them.

"The one covered with jewels?" inquired Bowles.

"The same: she is the daughter of the Minister of Police. Her husband, who was an inveterate gamester, has just been ordered to Siberia. Her marriage has been dissolved—this is the first day of her widowhood."

"Is that the wife of Galitzin, the late President of the Foreign Department in the Administration of the

Posts?" demanded Beacham, who could not repress a feeling both of curiosity and pity.

"The same," said the officer, with a certain degree of uneasiness in his manner; for he was fearful that he had committed an indiscretion.

"Poor thing!—I pity her. Why is she present, and so decked out?"

"To mark her respect for the Emperor," continued their informant. "It would not be etiquette for her to absent herself. See how glassy her eyes appear. I dare say they have stupefied her with opium—they generally do on these occasions."

"God!" exclaimed the indignant Bowles, "And yet the man who exacts this slavish, this unfeeling homage, can prate of justice and humanity. Not for his crown—which must be a burthen to him, and a terror—or for the countless wealth which calls him master, would I have upon my conscience one hour the suffering which that pale, unhappy girl endures!"

"Hush!"

"What must be her feelings, decked like a victim for the sacrifice? seated there to listen to strains which find no echo in her heart! A creature whom friendship dares not sympathise with, or even paternal love venture to console!"

"For heaven's sake, hush!" whispered the officer, cold drops of terror starting upon his features. "The panels of the box are hollow: we shall be overheard—denounced. My indiscretion has caused this. You would not be my ruin?"



The conversation dropped, but for the two friends the charm of the music was over: they could think of nothing but the poor pale girl who faced them, and whose efforts to suppress the occasional convulsive quivering of her lips at times became fearfully visible to them.

From the Opera the party adjourned to the saloons of the Princess Dumbrowski, where they found assembled most of the leading nobility of St. Petersburg.

The mistress of the splendid mansion was one of the few privileged persons in Russia, who could both say and do what she pleased. She had been dame of honour to the Empress Dowager, and shared her chamber on that fearful night which made Alexander a sovereign and his mother a widow.

Few could account for the extraordinary influence she possessed. Both the present and late Emperor treated her with marked deference, and a request backed by her had seldom met with a refusal.

The only one of the imperial family ever known to treat her with disrespect was the late Archduke Constantine whose hands—brutal and cruel as he was—were at least supposed to be free from the blood of the unhappy Paul.

“And so you are Englishmen?” said the Princess, as the two friends, who had just been presented, stood bowing before her, “of that cosmopolite race which sighs, not like Alexander, for another world to conquer, but for another world to travel over. I have often wondered which sees most—the man who, standing still,

suffers the world to pass by him, or the one who passes through the world? The result, I suspect, is pretty much the same."

"To the mass perhaps it is: there are so few who analyse what they see," observed Henry Beacham; "if they did, few would travel, since the journey of a day would give employment for a life."

"A philosopher?" said his hostess.

"No, your highness."

"A dreamer, then; and that is a character I like much better; for poor philosophy, with all its speculations, cannot define the mystery of a flower. You have been to the Opera to-night—tell me what struck you the most there?"

"The appearance of Madame Galitzin."

"Poor thing!" said the Princess, in a tone of commiseration; "her fate is indeed a sad one! Passionately attached to a heartless gamester, who has incurred the Emperor's displeasure, the release from her marriage bonds, which to so many would bring happiness, to her is a living death!"

"She loves him them?" observed a lady who was standing by.

"As woman loves the being who first teaches her she has a heart: let us search our own memories, and we shall understand her weakness."

Both Henry and his friend thought the speaker a very remarkable person. Without the least affectation, or desire of appearing singular, there was a freshness in

her conversation widely different from the usual tone of society.

A vast number of foreigners were present, one of whom the friends recognised as a brother mason, having met him a year previously in a lodge at Manchester.

The travelling sign was given, and, much to the annoyance of the young officer, who accompanied them, they left his arm, and took their new-found friend's.

"You are a bold man," he observed, with a smile, "to be seen linked arm-in-arm with me! I am a suspected person here."

"How so?"

"I am known to be one of the heads of our order in France; and Freemasonry, as you are aware, is forbidden in Russia. It is something which the police cannot comprehend, therefore they prohibit it."

"Yet I have heard it whispered," said Henry, "that the Emperor himself is a brother."

"So was Alexander," continued the Count de Villa—the name of the speaker—"but they both persecuted it not the less on that account. My diplomatic character has hitherto protected me; but even with that shield I am obliged to be careful."

In making the tour of the rooms the friends recognised several of the initiated, not only foreigners, but Russians of high rank—men with crosses and honours in profusion, such as are only bestowed upon the personal favourites or officers of the Emperor.

“And yet the autocrat, with all his police, has not been able to put down the order,” observed William, with a smile. “I confess I should like to assist at a lodge in Russia, were it only for the romance of the thing.”

“You are in one now,” observed their companion, in a whisper.

“You jest.”

“Observe that aged nobleman who is seated in the east, apparently lecturing upon geology—that is our Venerable, or Master, as you term him in England. The specimen of lava he holds in his hand is the rough ashler, and the polished block of malachite the perfect one. That group of military men facing him consists of the Senior Warden and Deacons. And to the south, in the person of that dignified ecclesiastic of the Greek church, you have the Junior Warden. Would you believe it,” he added, with a smile at the astonishment of the two Englishmen; “I have seen an initiation going on in the midst of a ball-room, the Minister of Police looking gravely on—nay, on one occasion the Emperor himself was present.”

“And did he not suspect?”

“He could not; at first this will surprise you, but when you reflect upon our language of symbols, and the peculiar means we have of conversing without words, you will perceive that it is practicable; but all our lodges are not veiled in equal mystery; at the residence of one of the ambassadors one is frequently held.

the brothers come openly—that is to say, those who are foreigners. Would you like to visit it?"

Both the friends declared that nothing would give them greater happiness.

"'Tis well," whispered the Count; "to-morrow night you shall be gratified."

"But how are we to know?"

"Leave that to me."

"You see," said Bowles, glancing at the officer, "how we are followed. The Emperor, by way of doing us honour, we suppose, has given us in charge of the gentleman who presented us here to-night."

"He will not be in the way."

"How so?"

The Count leant aside, and whispered in their ears—  
"Because he is a brother."

Nothing could exceed the astonishment of the two friends when hearing that their companion—an officer whom they supposed high in the confidence of the Emperor—was a Freemason.

The feeling was still further increased on their informant adding that Nicholas himself was an adept in the craft, he having been privately initiated, before his accession to the throne of the Czars, while travelling in Italy.

"You forget," said the Count, "the facilities it affords for conspiracies, the impossibility of detecting them if concocted in lodges, the universal means of communication it affords. I know," he added, "that in England

politics are carefully excluded; but it was not always so: the Stuarts found it a powerful means of maintaining their interest in their absence. In Spain and Portugal, even at the present day, it exercises considerable influence. The church condemns it as an instrument independent of its control, and despots fear it."

"Unwisely," added William; "they had much better conciliate it."

Their friend smiled, and soon afterwards the party broke up.

## CHAPTER III.

The craft shall last till the last signal's given,  
Whose trumpet tongue shall rend the vault of heaven.  
Age feels its moral—it gives strength to youth—  
Its prop is Honour—its foundation Truth.

THE AUTHOR'S ILLUSTRATIONS ON MASONRY.

ON the following evening the two friends, together with their companion, repaired to a house on the Neiweed Strasse, kept by an Italian named Carbono.

Ostensibly it was a *café* much frequented by foreign merchants, captains of merchantmen, and the junior members of the Russian aristocracy.

The first intention had been to repair to the residence of the French ambassador, where a lodge—his residence, as a diplomatist, being privileged from the inspection of the police—was frequently held; but his excellency having been unexpectedly compelled to attend a conference with the representatives of the Great Powers, on the subject of the East, it was postponed, and they repaired to the one in the Neiweed Strasse.

On entering the principal *salon*, William and Henry

found it crowded with gentlemen, chiefly young men, who were smoking their cigars and taking coffee with an air of as much unconcern as if they had met for no other purpose.

One by one the number gradually thinned, and the friends observed that they left the *salon* by a back entrance leading through the billiard-room.

“ We shall soon be left alone,” observed William.

“ Hush !” said the officer ; “ when all is prepared we will follow : the lodge will soon be opened.”

This was the first intimation they had received from their companion of the purpose for which they had been brought there.

One of the waiters, a gray-headed old German, shortly after informed them that they were expected by some friends in the card-room.

The message was publicly given, not a person present but might have heard it ; and they mounted the staircase which conducted to the apartment above, where they found about thirty members of the craft assembled, but no appearance of a lodge.

It is true the three card-tables were arranged east, west, and south, and there was a slight peculiarity in the way in which the room was lighted, but nothing which could possibly indicate to the uninitiated that it was intended as a lodge : not a brother present wore apron, jewel, or insignia of any kind, and yet the officers were in their places, and the business of the evening was being carried on.



Two of the waiters were placed in the ante-room, to receive orders or give communication of the approach of the profane.

They had proceeded regularly, as far as the circumstances would permit, in the initiation of a young officer of the Imperial Guard, when the old waiter entered the room, and demanded if they had rung. This was the signal agreed upon if any suspected persons entered the house.

"Resume your uniform," said an old officer to the candidate, who seemed embarrassed more than the occasion required.

He hesitated.

"Resume it, sir," said the speaker, drawing his sword, and pointing it to his breast with an air of resolution. "We are not men to be trifled with or betrayed with impunity!"

The young man obeyed.

His hesitation might have arisen from the novelty of his position, but it made a painful impression upon all present.

The party immediately resumed their seats, money was scattered on the tables, and the cards dealt out.

The brethren had scarcely commenced their game, when a heavy tramp was heard upon the stairs, and shortly afterwards a file of soldiers entered the room, headed by an officer of the police.

"Gentlemen," said the functionary, looking round him with a dissatisfied air, "I am informed that you

are holding a masonic meeting, contrary to the pleasure of the Czar and the laws of the empire."

"You have been misinformed then," said the gentleman who had acted so determined a part with the neophyte; "search the apartment, and if you find the least trace of our having assembled for such a purpose, perform your duty."

The leader of the soldiers looked hard at the half-initiated brother, who was very pale, but spoke not: perhaps the sight of a small pistol, which one of the brothers held partially concealed within the breast of his coat, had tongue-tied him.

"He is a traitor," whispered Henry Beacham to his friend.

William nodded assent.

A most minute perquisition followed; but not a jewel or an apron could be seen.

Under pretence of assisting the officer in his search, the brethren caught up the candlesticks, whose peculiar arrangement was the only suspicious circumstance, and purposely disarranged them.

"Are you satisfied?" demanded the gentleman who had acted as Master of the lodge.

"Humph! I am convinced that I am baffled," replied the man. "However, as nothing positive has been found, and most present are known to me, I shall not proceed to an arrest. You will pass from the room, gentlemen, and every one give his name as he goes out."

The ceremony was complied with.

The young man, whose changing colour denoted that he was either very much frightened or had acted the part of a spy, was the fourth to quit the apartment.

At the bottom of the stairs he found those who had preceded him waiting to receive him,—one of them was the old officer. William and Henry followed.

“We must finish this affair elsewhere,” whispered the old man, taking him by the arm, whilst another brother followed his example; “we have another place of meeting.”

“Had we not better postpone it?” demanded the candidate.

“It cannot be postponed,” was the laconic answer.

The candidate, not quite certain that he was suspected, thought it better to comply, and permitted himself to be led down a long, dark passage, which terminated in a store-house, where, after waiting more than an hour, they were joined by the rest of the party, who, on the departure of the military, returned, one by one, to the house.

As soon as they were assembled, the door was tiled.

Just as they were about to proceed to business, a brother made his appearance; to the astonishment of William and Henry, he was masked.

A low murmur ran through the assembly, and the new comer, with a graceful bow, took the chair which the Master offered him.

“Brethren,” said the stranger, “you have escaped

an infamous snare, laid to entrap the secrets of the order, and betray you to the Government. There is a traitor present."

"Name him?" was the general exclamation.

"Alexander Nerwinski," replied the man in the mask.

This was the name of him who that night should have been received amongst them.

"It is false!" exclaimed the young man, who felt that the affair was becoming serious; "I have no such intention."

"How, brother, do you prove the accusation?" demanded an aged mason.

"I vouch it," said the stranger, "by the name which may not be pronounced aloud—by the awful symbol which Enoch—

Ere yet the fearful doom was hurled,  
Which brought destruction on a guilty world—  
Concealed within the caverned womb of earth,  
To wait the time foretold—its second birth."

"It is enough," replied the brethren; "we can demand no holier proof."

"But I can," said the young officer, gathering courage; "my honour is not to be blasted by the evidence of a masked accuser. I demand other proofs."

"You shall have them. Three days since you were reported to the Emperor as having lost a large sum at the gaming-table, and were about to be sent from the

Guards to a regiment serving against the Circassians, when you demanded and obtained an audience of his Imperial Majesty."

"That proves nothing."

"Be patient—you shall have proof enough. You were received in the amber cabinet, at the Hermitage; the Chamberlain, Shimbelitzki, introduced you—can you deny it?"

"No."

"You were received by the Czar—you threw yourself at his feet, and implored for pardon. You saw the refusal hovering on his lips, when the thought of purchasing your grace at the price of honour and friendship struck you. You told him that General Wortzoff and the young Count Dembrinski were to introduce you to the masonic order—named the night, and pledged yourself, if your steps were followed—for you had not been entrusted with the place of meeting—to remain and give evidence of the purpose for which the assembly met. The infamous compact was assented to. Alexander Nerwinski, can you deny my words?"

The culprit was silent.

"Speak!" was the general exclamation of the brethren.

"I will not answer a masked accuser," said the young man, doggedly.

"It needs not," said the stranger, removing his mask, and discovering the features of one of the highest dignitaries of the empire—a person invested with the

confidence of the Czar, and bearing the rank of a Prince.

All present paid the peculiar honours to the speaker due only to one of the Grand Masters of the order.

The traitor was overwhelmed with shame and terror.

On a signal being given, all the brothers who possessed a certain rank advanced towards the chair, and held a whispered consultation with their chief.

It was soon terminated, and they resumed their places in solemn silence.

“Alexander Nerwinski—false gentleman and dishonoured soldier,” said the Prince; “fortunately the rites have been interrupted in time to place you still in the character of one of the profane; otherwise it would have been my painful duty to have pronounced on you the fearful penalty due to those who violate the masonic obligation. To us you are still a stranger, but a dangerous one. Your treason has compromised, and may again compromise, the lives of many honourable men. There are seven-and-twenty brothers present: when they have been removed, each a corse, you may pass out with life from here; but not till then.”

“Would you murder me?” faltered the young man.

“We are neither assassins nor traitors,” answered the speaker. “Were I, from this seat, to doom you to instant death, I could answer for my judgment before God and man. It is a throne more ancient than that of the Cæsars or the Czars. The power I exercise is unlimited—but enough of this. Draw your sword,

and select the brother whom you will first encounter. But let me add that, should his age render him an unequal antagonist, I shall myself name your opponent."

"I will not fight!" exclaimed Alexander Nerwinski, pale with terror; for the cold, stern manner of the speaker, and the gloomy silence of the brethren, had overawed him.

"Is that your fixed resolution?" said the Prince.

"It is."

"Then, brothers," said the Prince, in a solemn tone, "but one task remains. The traitor has refused the combat—the spy declines the chance our mercy gives. As Grand Master I pronounce the sentence, which every brother is sworn to execute. Let him die the death of a"—

"Stay—I—yes—I accept it," interrupted the young man, who saw that, as the speaker proceeded, half a dozen swords were drawn.

"'Tis well."

"Shall I have fair play?"

"Think you we are traitors like yourself? Make your choice."

"Well then," said Alexander, screwing up his courage to the point, and advancing towards William Bowles—whom as an Englishman, and a civilian, he thought the least dangerous enemy to encounter of those present—"I call upon this gentleman."

"I am quite ready," replied the party, advancing

into the circle; "and if any brother will favour me with a sword, I will promise, whatever the result, it shall not be dishonoured in my hands."

"It cannot be," said the Grand Master. "By the laws of our order, no foreign brother who is a visitor in a lodge can take part in its proceedings."

"That," said William, "is easily obviated by electing me an honorary member, if I may be deemed worthy of such a distinction."

Poor Henry trembled for his friend, whose courage he knew to be beyond suspicion, but whose skill, with such an antagonist, he doubted.

It was a relief to him when the Prince, after a moment's hesitation, again pronounced that it could not be.

"Well, then," said the villain, who now began to feel that desperate sort of courage which the vilest animal displays when driven into a corner, without a loophole for escape—"since your laws, it seems, forbid the Englishman to meet me, I call upon the Count Sigismund Sherwitzki—unless," he added with a sneer, "some other convenient law also prevents his accepting the combat."

A slight convulsive movement passed over the features of the Prince.

The young man selected was his nephew—the last of his ancient race. He loved him like a son, and the Count looked up to him with the affection due to a father.



The struggle, however, with his feelings was but a momentary one.

"Be it so!" he said; "and may the Great Architect of the universe decide between you."

Alexander Nerwinski was renowned for being one of the best swordsmen in the Russian service, and his antagonist, who was many years his junior, was as ill-matched with him in point of skill as in years.

After a few desperate passes, the sword of the traitor pierced his heart; and he fell, bathed in blood, at the foot of the chair on which his aged relative was seated.

A deep groan broke from the assembly; all pitied the bereaved old man, who, with superhuman fortitude, sat upon his seat of power without displaying the least emotion.

"Remove the body," he said, after a pause, "and give the victor wine."

A cup was handed to Nerwinski, and four of the noblest masons present raised the inanimate corse by the points of fellowship.

"Our brother," pronounced the Grand Master, as he bent over the corse, "has fought the good fight, and fallen. May the Architect raise him at the last day, and the acacia bloom over his grave."

The royal salute was rendered to the dead, and the body was carried into an inner chamber.

Fifteen minutes were allowed the conqueror to recover his breath before he made a second challenge, during which time the members of the lodge maintained an

unbroken silence—a silence terrible from the scene which had just taken place, and the determination it evinced.

“The time has elapsed,” said the Prince.

Flushed with his first success, Alexander Nerwinski went directly up to the brother who had proposed him.

He, like his late victim, was younger than himself. The ruffian thought, if he must die, that he would at least sacrifice as many as possible before he fell.

“Gustave,” he said, “your friend Sigismund is but a little on his way to Paradise—you can easily overtake him.”

Without a word the young man stepped into the circle, and the contest for life and death again commenced.

The second combat lasted longer than the first: the two swordsmen fought, if not with mutual skill, at least with equal determination.

Gustave felt that he must be sacrificed, for he knew the superiority of his worthless antagonist. He was not deceived.

After a contest which lasted twenty minutes, the unfortunate youth fell, pierced through the heart, like his predecessor.

Not a look or gesture betrayed the feelings of the brotherhood.

At a sign from the Grand Master, the corse was raised with the same honours as its predecessor, and removed to the inner chamber.

Alexander was joyous in his victory, and when the

Prince repeated, in his usual stern voice, "Give him wine and a quarter of an hour's rest," he glanced on him in scornful mockery.

"I do not require it," he observed, with a sneer; "I am quite fresh."

Poor William and Henry were absolutely sick with horror at the extraordinary scene of which they were unwilling witnesses.

"Remember," said the Prince, "there are five and twenty of us remaining. My sword," he added, "must be the last."

"Why not the next?"

"Our laws forbid it."

The successful duellist, who trusted either to tire out the courage of the party, or so to weaken their number that it would give him a better chance of escape, next selected, as the object of his encounter, the old officer who had been the first to suspect his treachery, and who had compelled him at the sword's point to resume his uniform on the arrival of the police officer.

"The age of him you have selected?" said the Grand Master.

"Need not interfere with the combat," observed the old man, with calmness. "I am quite ready, if the brethren permit."

As he was known to be not only a brave man, but an expert swordsman, his request was accorded, and they both prepared for the encounter.

This time the false candidate for the honours of the

craft went to work more warily, for he saw that he had a cool, determined head to deal with, and an arm which had once been as supple as his own. They fought long and warily.

“By heavens, I believe the old soldier,” whispered William to his friend, “has the best of it! See with what coolness he meets his attacks, and how admirably he parries them.”

Henry was too much excited by the scene to reply except by a silent pressure of the hand.

There was something really solemn and appalling in the stillness of that lonely chamber broken only by the clashing of the steel, which emitted sparks of fire, as with desperate fury Alexander Nerwinski lunged and thrust.

Vainly he tried all the tricks which the cunning masters of fence had taught him; the old soldier was up to them all, and parried them with a quickness and skill equal to his own.

Finding that his antagonist's arm began to tire, he pressed him in his turn. The professed duellist gave way, and the movement was fatal to him, for his foot slid in the blood of his victims, and, ere he could recover his balance, the sword of the old officer was plunged up to the very hilt through his heart!

He fell with a deep groan, and the only words he uttered were a broken curse upon his lips!

Many were the congratulations of the brethren to the old man on his escape. A high sense of honour,

and the presence of the Prince, alone had restrained them, during the bloody contests, from taking vengeance on the traitor into their own hands.

“What remains,” said the Grand Master, “is for me to do. Disperse, brothers; nor attempt to meet again till this storm has blown over. Your very shadows will be watched. Be cautious how you whisper, even to yourselves, the fearful secret of this night; for even an echo in St. Petersburg is sure to be repeated. And you,” he added, turning to the two friends, whom he shook warmly by the hand, “depart as soon as possible for England—for that happy land where unmasked justice sits in open day, and prince and peasant meet with equal hearing.”

The lodge was soon afterwards closed; and Henry and William, conducted by their companion, who seemed terribly unstrung, retired to their hotel, but not to sleep,—the scene they had witnessed had made too powerful an impression.

Fervently did they wish themselves safely out of a country where the will of one despot gave law to millions.

## CHAPTER IV.

Suspicion ever haunts the guilty mind ;  
The thief doth fear each bush an officer.

SHAKSPEARE.

ON the following morning, the Prince, according to custom, presented himself—with a visage as calm as a courtier's generally is when he wishes to veil a defeat or a disappointment—in the cabinet of the Emperor.

To his surprise he found that the Minister of Police was present, and that an unusual cloud hung over the features of his imperial master.

He saw at once that some unfavourable report had been made; but he was too long schooled in the intrigues of courts to permit his countenance to betray either surprise or terror.

“So, Prince, you are here at last,” said the Czar; “we have waited for you.”

“Will his Majesty permit me to observe that it is the usual hour of my audience.”

The old man pointed to the superb pendule upon the marble console, as he spoke.

The Emperor turned, and regarded it—paused, as if

undetermined how to proceed. The officer of state maintained a respectful silence.

“ True,” said the autocrat; “ we were in haste—it is the usual time. Before we proceed to our usual reports, answer me.”

The Prince bowed.

“ When did you see your nephew last?”

The questioner fixed his eyes upon the old man as though he would read his very soul; but his colour neither changed, nor did his voice—although his heart was breaking at his loss—betray the least emotion. He knew that his liberty, if not his life, depended upon his firmness.

“ Two days since, sire,” he replied. “ I trust nothing has occurred to draw upon him your displeasure.”

“ And when did you expect to see him?” continued Nicholas, without noticing the last part of his reply.

“ Last evening, at seven o'clock.”

“ And where?”

“ At our usual place of meeting, the private cabinet in the Hermitage, where I have the honour of being employed in the affairs which your Imperial Majesty deigns to commit to my charge.”

“ And have you heard nothing?”

“ Nothing.”

“ 'Tis strange!” thought the Emperor, struck by the calm manner of his Minister, whom he knew to be deeply attached to his nephew; “ he cannot have heard

it, or his cheeks would blanch, and his eye or voice betray him."

The autocrat of the Russias little knew how deadening was the despotism of the iron sceptre he swayed—that it could dry the tear of affection in the eye of age, or wither the smile of hope upon the lips of youth. And if he had known it, he would have slept as tranquilly and swayed it just the same. Nothing renders the heart so callous as the possession of irresponsible despotic power.

"There have been three bodies found this morning upon the banks of the river, each pierced through the heart by a single thrust of a rapier. One of them, I regret to add, was your nephew, the Count Sigismund."

Coldly, unfeelingly as the intelligence was given, it was mercy; it enabled the Prince, without exciting suspicion—without devoting himself and those who depended upon him to exile and beggary, to give way to the long pent-up sorrow of his heart: bursting into tears, he sank half-fainting upon the floor of the cabinet, murmuring!

"My boy—my poor boy!"

"He was a traitor," said the Minister of Police; "do you presume to regret him?"

"He was a son to me," groaned the old man; "dear as my own life—dearer far, for I would willingly have given it to save him. But who," he added—"who are his assassins?"



“What if he had fallen by our justice?” said the Emperor, willing to probe him yet further.

“Impossible!” said the Prince, with some degree of firmness; “you are too just, if not too merciful, without trial and proof to have condemned him: such is not the justice of the Czar. Who dares accuse him of treason?”

“I!” said the Minister of Police.

“And I!” added the Czar, severely.

“God help me!” exclaimed the bereaved uncle, with a fresh burst of grief; “I am very wretched!” and the poor old man clasped his hands together with all the agony of despair. Great as he was on his own domains, in the cabinet of his master, like every other Russian subject, he was a serf, whose liberty and life depended upon the imperial will.

“He was one of a society assembled last night in the Neiweed Strasse—a society of that order which I most fear and detest—the masons. I had already received information of the intended meeting from one who was to have been initiated into their revolutionary rites, but he, too, has met with his death by the same hand as your nephew. ’Tis strange,” he added, “that at the very hour you fixed for his meeting you, as you say, at the Hermitage, that he should have been elsewhere!”

He threw upon the table as he spoke a note which had been found upon the body of the unfortunate Sigismund. It was in the handwriting of the Prince, and contained only the following words:

“To-morrow, at seven, at the usual place.”

A word was added in cipher, which had baffled the curiosity of the Emperor, and the skill of the most experienced *employés* of the secret police.

“What means that mysterious sign at the end of the note?” continued the Czar.

“It means,” said the Prince, opening the official portfolio which he carried under his arm, and drawing from it a report in the handwriting of his nephew, which had long since been prepared in the event of a scene like the present, “that my nephew was devoted to your Majesty, as this report will prove, in which he speaks of a conspiracy, of which he had discovered the clue, against your throne and person. That cipher was agreed upon between us to be used by me as an intimation that no command of mine for his presence was to interfere with his duly prosecuting the discovery he had partially made. If Sigismund really was present last night at the place your Majesty has named, it was with intentions whose loyalty has never yet been doubted, unless,” he added, glancing at the Minister of Police, “by his enemies.”

Nicholas read over the report. As he proceeded his brow cleared—his doubts of his long-tried councillor were dissipated. He felt that he had treated him harshly, but his imperial pride could not descend to acknowledge it before a witness.

“You may retire,” he said, with a look at the Minister of Police. “You shall receive my orders by one of my aides-de-camp.”

The Minister withdrew.

"My old true friend!" exclaimed the Emperor, holding out his hand for the Prince to kiss—an unusual mark of favour with him; "we have wronged you."

"Ah, sire, that one word makes atonement."

"We feel for your distress, and will give orders that our Chamberlain attends the funeral of your nephew—it will proclaim that our favour to your house and opinion of your loyalty is unchanged. But why," he added, and a shade of suspicion returned upon his lofty brow—"why did you keep this a mystery from me? you know I hate concealment."

The old statesman was not without his answer.

"Because, sire, I did not wish unnecessarily to alarm you. I know how the anarchists of Europe conspire against your days—how many abortive attempts have been made to remove the defender of the true principles of monarchy in Europe—and I feared"—

"Feared?" interrupted the Czar proudly, "I have never known the word. Did I show fear when the rebellious soldiery besieged my very palace, and would have placed the mad Constantine upon the throne he had previously renounced? Did I show fear when the wretched Poles, whom I have crushed, menaced my days by steel and poison—when the party of nobles in the Senate plotted my abdication and death?" he added; "for in Russia a fallen Czar is dangerous, even in a dungeon. You should have told me."

“It would have been better, sire ; but my motives”—

“Redeem the error—for the future let there be no concealment between us. Even in you I pardon not such an error twice.”

“Sire, I am warned.”

“Now, then, to other matters,” continued the autocrat. “You have doubtless heard of the two Englishmen in whose affair with the agent and Jew banker, Hiram, I interested myself?”

“I have, sire.”

“And prettily they have repaid my benevolence! But sovereigns are but idiots when they expect gratitude for benefits conferred. The hand which grasps a sceptre may never hope to clasp a friend's. They, too, were present at the meeting of the black brotherhood last night.”

“Is your majesty sure there was really an assembly of the order?” demanded the Prince, who was most anxious, if possible, to avert the storm which he saw brewing in the royal mind from breaking over the heads of the English brothers.

“Have I not the word of Alexander Nerwinski?”

“He had been unfortunate enough to incur your imperial displeasure?” replied the statesman.

“How know you that?”

“Count Sigismund told me so—send for him, sire—your penetration will not easily be deceived: question him severely. You will easily discover then whether he has merely invented a tale to abuse your benevo-

lence, or if there really was such a meeting as you have alluded to."

"Impossible—he, too, is dead!"

"Dead!" repeated the prince, with well-affected surprise.

"One of the three I spoke of whose bodies were found this morning.

The statesman's surprise seemed to increase.

"Stay," said the Emperor; "you will proceed to the hotel where these young men reside: take a councillor of the chamber and two secretaries with you."

The heart of the old man beat violently.

"Examine them closely, and note down their replies: it will not be difficult to extort the truth from them."

"Should I find that they know nothing of the affair?"

"Dismiss them."

"And if they should, sire?"

"Arrest them—send them to the Fortress of Novoromin. Do it as privately as possible—I have no wish to embroil myself with the island government, who cringe to the people they should rule. If guilty," he added, sternly, as he left the cabinet, "I'll judge and punish them, though a British fleet were anchored in every port in Russia."

With these words the speaker withdrew, leaving the Prince in a state of mind more easy to imagine than describe.

“All is lost!” exclaimed the Prince; “the Englishmen will be taken by surprise—seeing me they will suspect no evil design—and confess everything. What is to be done to save them and myself?”

Mechanically he had approached the window of the cabinet which looked into the courtyard of the palace.

The carriage of the late Earl of Durham—at that time Ambassador at the Court of Russia, and a great personal favourite with the Emperor—was driving up the grand entrance.

Not a moment was to be lost; hastily writing a few lines in the masonic character, he folded it as a note, and hastened to meet him.

The clash of the military presenting arms to his lordship, as he entered the hall, fell upon his ear—there was yet time to intercept him before he reached the audience chamber.

“He must save them,” he murmured; “they are his countrymen, and he the Pro-Grand Master of England. God grant that I prove not too late!”

As he encountered the peer, he saluted him with a calm, courtly air; but in shaking hands contrived to give him the masonic sign of distress, and slip the billet into his hands.

At that moment one of the court attendants approached, to apologise to his lordship that the Emperor was not ready to receive him, on account of important intelligence just having arrived from the seat of war.

The ambassador bowed, as he answered that the time of the Czar was his.

"Prince," added the usher, "his Majesty has been asking if you have yet left the palace."

Casting a hasty glance at his distinguished brother—who replied by one that he was understood—the old man followed the messenger to the council of his despotic sovereign.

No sooner had Lord Durham read the note than he beckoned to a naval officer whom he had brought in his suite, in order to present him to the Emperor, and whispered a few hurried words in his ear.

"I dare not," replied Captain Manly; "at least, not on my own responsibility."

"You will do it, then, on mine."

The officer bowed.

"Take my carriage—lose not a moment; remember," added the peer, "it is an affair of life and death. Is your barge still in the river?"

"It is."

"And your ship?"

"Ready to slip cable at a moment's notice."

"I need not instruct you how to act: should any attempt be made to board you, the British flag will, I know, always be respected where you command. Away with you at once—I will frame some excuse to the Emperor for your non-presentation. Remember that the liberty, if not the lives, of two brothers is at stake."

The next moment the carriage of his lordship, with

the messenger, drove from the courtyard of the palace towards the hotel where William and Henry resided, as fast as the thorough-bred steeds could lay leg to the ground.

It was a fortunate circumstance for the Prince that the Emperor had recalled him. The council lasted more than an hour, and his presence prevented all suspicion from alighting on his aged head.

The two friends were seated in their room, chatting, in a low voice, over the events of the preceding night, when they were startled by the unceremonious entrance of a person in the British uniform into the apartment. Both rose from their seats, with a look of half-displeasure, half-surprise, at the intrusion.

“No time for apologies,” exclaimed the gallant son of Neptune, shaking them both by the hand; “you must come with me.”

“Where?” demanded William Bowles.

“On board my frigate; unless,” he added, “you prefer a dungeon or a trip to Siberia. Your secret meeting last night is betrayed. Never mind your traps—better lose them than your lives. The ambassador’s carriage is below—there is not a minute to lose.”

Without a word the two friends caught up their hats and followed the speaker, whom they had recognised as a brother; and the next minute saw them driving towards the banks of the river, where the captain’s barge was waiting.

“All hands on board?” demanded the officer.



"All right, sir."

"Pull away, then, my men, towards the frigate"—which was lying at anchor some miles distant; "a double allowance of grog and a sovereign to each man if we reach her in two hours."

As the speaker was both loved and feared by his crew—for he was one of those who, while he exacted a severe discipline, treated the sailors as men—a hearty cheer was their reply.

Captain Manly, motioning to his coxswain to take an oar, placed himself at the helm, and soon the regular splash of the oars, as they fell in measured time, took them into the centre of the stream.

Fortunately the tide was in their favour, and the barge dashed like a sea-bird on its way.

"They must find better men than the sailors of St. Petersburg to overtake us; once past that tower," said their preserver, pointing to a lighthouse on the distant shore, "and we are safe. By Neptune!" he exclaimed, looking back, "but there is some confusion on the shore—they are manning a boat,—row, men—row for your lives!" he added.

"Ay, ay, sir," was the cool reply.

The Czar had given orders to the Minister of Police to keep an eye upon the two Englishmen; consequently the hotel had been surrounded by spies, who having no orders to interfere with or prevent their departure, contented themselves with reporting it to their chief, who turned pale when he heard the intelligence,

for he knew the storm of fury he should have to face—since the affair of his son-in-law his favour having been but precarious.

Without a moment's hesitation he proceeded to the quay, and jumping into one of the police-boats, which are always in readiness, gave orders for a chase—threatening and praying by turns to his men to do the best to overtake them, and making signals to the barge to stop its course.

“What the deuce are the lubbers telegraphing at?” said the Captain; “do they think I am such a fool as to be stopped by a hoisted rag when under sailing orders? Row on, my men! row for your lives!”

“Ay, ay,” again replied the sailors.

At each stroke of the oars of the barge's crew the distance between them and their pursuers increased.

The Minister was in despair. He had brought with him twelve of his men, who, according to the regulations of the water-service, were armed like the police on shore, and, as a last resource, he commanded them to fire.

The balls whistled about the ears of the Captain and his men, but they were too much accustomed to such music to heed it.

A bullet slightly grazed the cheek of Henry Beacham, and caused the blood to flow.

Fortunately, before the pursuers had time to reload, the barge of the Captain was out of gun-shot.

“Blaze away, and be hanged to you!” said the

sturdy tar. "I only wish for your sakes," he added, "that my crew were armed. I'd show you what metal English sailors are made of! Are you hurt?" he asked, turning to his guest.

"Not much," said our hero, coolly wiping his cheek; "it's only a graze."

"The lubberly thieves! they could not hit a grampus at half the distance! It was more by luck than skill. I'd stand a dozen of their volleys at the same distance!"

Both the friends silently congratulated themselves that the danger was over from the distance. They were not quite so venturesome as the speaker, or accustomed, like him, to be made ball-practice of.

"Pooh!" he continued; "it won't spoil your beauty for more than a week. A little court plaster, and a glass of grog on board the frigate, and you'll forget it."

"I have forgotten it," replied Henry, who was rather piqued at the tone of the speaker. "It's not a shot I fear—it's captivity, or being compelled to remain any longer in this wretched land of despotism and cruelty."

Within the time stipulated by their commander, the men reached the frigate.

The police-boat had long previously given up the chase as hopeless.

No sooner was the Captain on deck than he gave the word for raising the anchors.

"The anchors, sir!" repeated the First Lieutenant, in

a tone of surprise—for he had understood that they were to remain on their present station for at least six weeks longer.

“Are you deaf this morning, Mr. Howard?” drily demanded his superior.

The subaltern knew his position, and touching his hat, gave the necessary orders to his inferiors; in a few seconds all hands were piped on deck.

“Now, gentlemen,” said the Captain, “follow me to the cabin; a glass of champagne, after our row, will do us no harm. My best uniform,” he added, “which was donned for a very different purpose, has suffered from the sea air.”

As soon as they were seated in the cabin, the friends—who had scarcely recovered from the confusion into which their rapid flight had thrown them—demanded of their new friend the nature of the danger from which his generous devotion and promptitude had saved them.

“May I eat mouldy biscuits for the rest of the voyage, if I can tell.”

“That’s strange,” observed William.

“Not more strange,” said the tar, “than the order received.”

“From whom?”

“Lord Durham, our ambassador.”

“What was it?” inquired Henry.

“To take his carriage, cut to your hotel, without a moment’s delay, and get you on board my frigate, like two bales of smuggled goods. All I know is that the

danger you have incurred arises from your having attended some masonic meeting last night. His lordship had just time to tell me that."

"And where, Captain, did this take place?"

"At the imperial palace, where I accompanied his lordship to be presented."

Both Henry and his friend were puzzled to know how the peer, with whom they were both equally unacquainted, could have heard of the affair; and still more why he should so warmly have interested himself in their favour.

On this point, however, their informant was almost as much in the dark as themselves.

"All I know," he said, in answer to their inquiries, "is, that in the ante-chamber of the palace we encountered a stately-looking old gentleman, whom a chamberlain, or some land-lubber of the same species, addressed as Prince."

The friends exchanged glances.

"He shook hands with his lordship, and, I suspect, gave him a paper, which I afterwards saw him read at one of the windows. An instant after he gave me sailing orders—took all the responsibility upon himself—and here we are safe under the flag of England, where you may defy the Emperor of all the Russias, and Tartaries to boot; for whilst a plank of the frigate remains," he added, warmly shaking his guests by the hand, "and a hand to man it, not all the orders of the Minister of Police, nor even the Czar himself—should

he be fool enough to come and demand you—shall induce me to give you up; so make your minds perfectly easy upon that score.”

The two fugitives thanked the gallant sailor for his generous resolve; and as the vessel, which by this time was under way, glided like a sea-bird through the waters, they drank to the flag which the sturdy sons of Albion know how to make respected wherever it flies—the meteor flag of England.

The First Lieutenant entered the cabin to report to his commander. He had felt hurt at the laconic tone in which the Captain had replied to him.

Touching his hat, he said, politely but coldly—  
“Ship under way, sir.”

“All right, Howard. Sit down, my boy, and take a glass of champagne with me.”

The invitation was formally declined.

The Captain smiled. He remembered his reply to the young man, for whom he entertained very great respect, for he was every inch a sailor, and a sailor's friend; but he knew how to bring him round without compromising his own dignity.

“Well, Howard,” he replied, “if not with me, at least with our *two brothers*, who have had a hard chase to escape from the emissaries of the autocrat, who would fain have treated them to a trip to Siberia, for having visited a lodge last night? You cannot refuse a glass of wine with them?”

“Nor with you, sir,” said the young man, with a

smile, at the same time filling his glass, and emptying it with the *hailing sign*. "And if you will permit me, I'll add a toast to their health."

"Ay, ay—let's have it," cried the Captain.

Where'er our wandering brothers roam,  
 May they still meet a brother's hand;  
 God guide them to their distant home,  
 Their long-sought friends and native land.

"Bravo!" exclaimed the commander, "that's a true mason's toast, and glads the heart of a sailor."

"And now, sir," said Howard, rising from the table and touching his hat, "your orders, if you please?"

"Orders!" repeated the Captain, with a puzzled look.

"How are we to steer?"

"By Neptune's trident, and the old girl who bears it, I never thought of that! Give us the chart, Howard, and let's hold a council of war."

The table was soon covered with charts and maps; and whilst the four masons are deliberating on their course, we will once more return to St. Petersburg.

It was a fortunate thing for the Prince that his imperial master had recalled him to assist at the council.

On entering the council-chamber his Highness ventured to observe that he was on the point of starting to execute the commission with which his Majesty had honoured him when his messenger had recalled him.

"Not rest," said the impatient Nicholas. "I

have given orders to the Minister of Police—they cannot escape. After the council will do for that.”

The intelligence from the seat of war happening to be favourable, the Czar was in excellent humour, and distributed crosses and decorations with even more than his wonted liberality.

“The cards play into my hand,” thought the old man. “We are saved!”

As they were leaving the chamber to proceed to the hall of audience, the Minister of Police, his countenance pale with terror, placed himself purposely in the way of the autocrat. He held his portfolio under his arm.

“Your news?” exclaimed the Emperor, sternly, for he knew, by the unusual circumstance of his appearing before him unsummoned, that something serious had occurred.

“Sire, the two Englishmen have escaped!”

“Impossible!”

The Minister did not dare to contradict him.

“Impossible!” repeated the autocrat; “unless, indeed, like your vile son-in-law, you have been bribed to aid them! Escaped!” he repeated, “with an army of spies at your command, and the force of the capital at your disposal! Fool, or traitor!”

“Sire,” said the Minister, “I am neither: I have served you faithfully. In obedience to your orders, I surrounded the hotel where they resided with my men; every step they they took was dogged. The carriage



of the Ambassador of England drove up, an officer in the British uniform leaped out, and rushed up stairs to their apartment. In a few seconds they all three descended, drove like madmen to the quay, and entered the barge of the frigate which is at anchor down the river. My emissaries instantly brought the intelligence to me."

"And you, like an imbecile, instead of acting, waited for orders?"

"Pardon me, sire—I followed; but they had too far the advance. I even fired upon their boat, but the distance was too great. Believe me, I did not give up the chase till it was hopeless."

"And where are they now?"

"Doubtless on board the frigate."

"Let them be pursued," said the Emperor; "board the vessel, and demand them in my name."

"Should they refuse to give them up?" observed the Minister of War, who saw the consequences of such an inconsiderate proceeding.

"Take them by force."

"Should the Captain of the frigate resist?" added the Chancellor.

"Sink him and his vessel, too!" exclaimed the Czar passionately. "What! am I to be braved by these insolent islanders in my own Empire—on my own rivers? Let a telegraphic dispatch be sent to the different ports along the banks of the Neva: if the vessel attempts to pass, I repeat it, sink her. You, Count,"

he added, "will resign your portfolio to the Prince, and retire to your estate at Moscow. You shall hear from me."

The unhappy man, who, after all, had acted to the best of his discretion, resigned the emblem of his office, and withdrew from the tyrant's presence with a heavy heart.

He knew what hearing from him meant—there was a bitter frost of Siberia in the very words.

His rival received the portfolio from him with a countenance as calm as if he had not so lately incurred the same risk as himself.

"Ah, Prince," said the Emperor, leaning familiarly upon his arm; "henceforth we will trust to you the safety of the capital, and the task of watching over our interests. Had we listened to your precaution and permitted you to depart, this had not occurred."

The Prince, now Minister of Police, bowed. From that time forth, as our readers may suppose, the craft were not molested in St. Petersburg.

"We are too much chafed to receive the visit of the Ambassador of England now," added the Czar; "there is something in the cold, calm pride of my Lord Durham which we respect, despite the trick he has played us."

To his lordship's great content, no less than the Emperor's, the audience was postponed.

Fortunately, either from the prudence of the Minister of War, or the swift sailing of the frigate, the orders to

fire upon her from the capital did not arrive till it was too late to execute them. The autocrat affected to be furious—perhaps in his heart he was secretly glad, as such an act must have embroiled him with England, which at that moment it was his policy to prevent.

When next the Earl of Durham presented himself at court, he was as graciously received as usual, nor was the circumstance ever alluded to between him and the despot of all the Russias.

Even the disgraced Minister escaped the fate he dreaded. It is true he was never afterwards recalled to court; but the Czar, content with his destitution, permitted him to remain in quiet on his estate, a resolution to which the generous intercession of his successor not a little contributed.

## CHAPTER V.

Autumn came next, in his stately pride—  
His form, it was lusty to see;  
The maiden he sought as his bride,  
And wooed her his true mate to be.  
But merrily thus the maiden sung,  
As she roamed the woodland free;  
“Age ne'er should mate with the gay and the young—  
So, Autumn, I'll ne'er wed with thee.”

ROBIN GOODFELLOW.

AMY LAWRENCE and her companion had now been more than a month together; and each fresh day endeared them more and more to each other.

In Fanny Wyndham the poor orphan found a heart to sympathise with her sufferings, and a kind spirit to pour balm on the yet bleeding wound which the supposed treachery and heartlessness of Henry Beacham, and the apparent desertion of her by the Bowleses had inflicted.

At first, when she attempted to console her, the unhappy girl would only sigh and shake her head.

One day she answered her—

“Ah, Fanny, you have never loved.”

In an instant the composure on the countenance of the young sempstress gave way. 'Tis strange how frequently a word will unseal the fountain of the heart,

call up feelings long repressed, and cause the tears to flow.

“Pardon me—pray pardon,” replied her friend, “for my inconsiderate words; but sorrow is generally selfish. I would not have wounded you, Fanny, for the world.”

“You have not wounded me,” replied the poor girl, trying to smile; “at least, not intentionally. But you wrong me, Amy: I have loved—loved fervently, truly; and though he I love is dead, love still.”

Fanny Wyndham was the daughter of a country curate, whose only means of bringing up a large family was the small stipend arising from his curacy, and a school which he kept at the parsonage; for the rector, to whom the living belonged, was one of those pluralists on whom the church had showered preferment, and generally resided at his deanery, or the vicarage-house of Pudington-cum-Appleton, which he possessed, and which, being situated in a more aristocratic neighbourhood than Mayfield, the name of the parish were Fanny's father served, was preferred by his wife and daughters on that account.

Poor Fanny's youthful days had been as cheerful as they were innocent, till love, that subtle poison, found entrance to her young heart.

The object of her passion was a young officer, who came to reside in the village for his health, which that scourge of our English climate, consumption, had gradually undermined.

He came there, as he fondly trusted, to recruit. Poor

fellow! he only came to die. He was the nephew and ward of the rector, and consequently took up his residence at the parsonage.

When Fanny first beheld his attenuated form and thin cheek, the sentiment was pity; but pity in the female heart is generally the precursor of love.

Like some fairy, graceful thing, she hovered round the invalid. Her care placed the freshest flowers in his room, her hands prepared the little delicacies which tempted his failing appetite; and her attention was amply repaid when she fancied that his eye shone brighter, or that a more healthy colour dawned upon his cheek.

For some time both Henry and Fanny were unconscious of the nature of their feelings.

A very simple circumstance revealed it to them.

The poor girl had been in the garden to cull her usual bouquet for the invalid; he had thanked her for it with his usual quiet smile and gentle pressure of the hand. Just as she left the room she saw him raise the flowers to his lips. Their eyes met, and the countenance of each was suffused with blushes.

They were both young—the world had not taught them to conceal their hearts. For the first time the true nature of her sentiments for the young stranger flashed upon the mind of Fanny; ardent, young, she welcomed the gentle passion to her breast, and, like a timid bird fluttering round its nest, trembled lest other eyes should discover the secret of her love.

Poor Henry! there had been no avowal; but in that blush, that parting glance, their mutual passion was revealed.

In the enthusiasm of the new-born sentiment he longed to vent his feelings in the open air—to make the trees, the flowers, the running stream, the passing cloud, confidants of his bliss.

Catching up his hat, he left his breakfast untasted upon the table, and hastened to the wood at the back of the house, to enjoy the transport of the discovery with the confidants he had chosen.

Casting himself upon a bank, he indulged in blissful anticipations of the future: his health, he fondly flattered himself, was re-established; he was well—quite well—or nearly so; and through the medium of his present happiness he viewed the future.

Oh, God! how bounteous, how benign  
Are those two precious boons of thine!  
Retrospection of pleasures gone,  
Hope of those which are drawing on.  
They are the banks so soft and sheen,  
Which times that are present roll between;  
And if for awhile some happy dream,  
We launch on the dancing, floating stream,  
The tiny bark, spite of helm or oars,  
Is sure to sail for one of those shores.

Near the spot where Henry was reclining grew some double violets, which Nature's prolific hand had planted.

He knew that Fanny was fond of their sweet per-

fume, and stooped to gather them in return for her morning offering.

While thus employed, with every flower he plucked he breathed her name.

A light footstep startled him—it was the object of his thoughts. Like him she had longed to gaze upon the face of Nature, and make its silent beauties the only witnesses of her newly-discovered passion.

In an instant poor Henry was at her side, his offering at her feet.

She affected not to notice his gallantry, and received them as if presented in a less impassioned manner.

“Fanny,” he said, “will you not raise me, and place those happy flowers where all my hopes of happiness are centred—next your heart? Am I less valued than my gift?”

“No, Henry—no! I value both,” answered the blushing girl.

“And I?”

“What would you more?”

“To be ever with you—to share your thoughts—to read within your speaking eye an answer to a thousand hopes and fears;—I would be loved!”

“After my parents and my brother,” replied Fanny, with a faint smile, “you shall be.”

“No, Fanny,—no!” impetuously interrupted the young man; “mine is not a brother’s love. I shudder even now as you pronounce the name. I would have heart for heart and soul for soul—but one thought, one



feeling, one communion between us : I would be loved as man by woman should be loved—with angel fondness and with equal truth.”

The poor girl felt that that the crisis of her fate had arrived : her heart pleaded strongly in his favour, and yet, without her father's sanction—the difference of his rank and position in the world. As these thoughts flashed upon her mind, her cheek grew pale ; but the kneeling form before her—his speaking eyes, and looks of fond entreaty, recalled the fleeting blush. Sinking her head upon his breast, she could only falter :

“ Henry, I love thee !”

Tears came to her relief, and Henry, as he kissed them off, felt that his passion was returned, and he was happy.

From that day the lovers were inseparable in their walks ; and all but the father of Fanny clearly saw the state of her affections. But he, good, easy, simple-minded man, had been so long accustomed to consider and treat her as a child, that the idea never entered into his erudite head that children in time grow to be men and women ; added to which, his time was too much occupied with his school, and the duties of his parish, to listen either to the gossip of the village, or observe what passed at home.

The village of Mayfield is perhaps one of the most picturesque spots in England ; and although removed from the fashionable world, could boast of something like good society.

Two or three half-pay officers, a retired physician, and the widow of a City knight, who kept a carriage, and occasionally hired post-horses, gave both importance and respectability, in the eyes of the peasantry, to the place.

The scenery around the village was beautifully diversified by hill and dale. Several small streams, of transparent brightness, meandered through the fertile valleys, and were lost gradually, and almost imperceptibly, in the thick grove in which Fanny had made her lover happy by the confession of her passion.

The church, too, whose square pillars, grotesque ornaments, and segment-formed arches, bespoke its Saxon origin, added not a little to the beauty of the scene.

Amongst the inhabitants of Mayfield was a Miss Burge—a lady of a certain, or rather uncertain, age; for no one ever exactly knew how many years she had bloomed in single blessedness.

By the young she had long been set down as an old maid—perhaps it was not her fault, but her misfortune; for no one dressed more gaily or gave better parties; but somehow or another, although matches were frequently concluded between those whose first flirtations were commenced at Verandah Cottage—the name of her residence—still no one ever ventured to propose to its mistress.

She had received more wedding favours, perhaps, than any other person in the village; but they had

not served either to soften her temper or render her disappointment more endurable.

She had seen with a malignant eye the love of the young officer and Fanny, whom, as the prettiest girl in the village, she honoured with her peculiar dislike, and determined, if she could not secure a beau for herself, to do her best to deprive the poor girl of hers.

For this purpose she waited, after the service was over, in order to encounter the worthy curate, in his way home, alone.

In her heart she believed that the simple-minded man was perfectly cognisant of the affair, and only affected blindness in order to give the artful girl, as she called the object of her dislike, time to play her cards.

“Well, Mr. Wyndham,” said the old maid, with a knowing look, “and when is the marriage to take place?”

“To-morrow,” answered the old gentleman.

The querist was astonished.

She had merely put the question as a means of introducing the conversation—of giving a friendly hint of what was going on.

“To-morrow?” she mechanically repeated.

“Yes; Peter Hurle has just spoken with me on the subject.”

The fact was, a young man—a farmer in the village—had just been to the vestry to settle the hour for his wedding with his cousin—a pretty little blue-eyed girl of the same place—and the curate naturally

thought that his inquisitive neighbour alluded to that.

In his unsuspecting nature, a courtship under his very nose would not have excited his attention, so absorbed was he in his books, school, and the labours of his office.

"I am not speaking of Peter Hurle's wedding," said the old woman, "but of Fanny's."

"What Fanny's?" demanded the astonished Mr. Wyndham.

"Why, your daughter Fanny's, to be sure."

The old man smiled. The idea of his daughter marrying had never once entered into his speculations—he regarded her as a mere child; he forgot that, in time, children become endowed with passions and feelings—whom toys no longer content—to whom the heart speaks with the resistless voice of its affections.

"As soon as she has found a bridegroom," he replied.

"I should have thought he was found already. I am sure it is high time."

"Perhaps you will name him."

"Why, Mr. Henry, to be sure," said the spiteful old maid; "your rector's nephew, who has been lodging so long with you. Is he not the companion of her walks, morning and evening? Does she not hang upon his arm in a way which—which"—

"Which what?"

"Makes prudent people stare. I never was seen to

hang upon a man's arm in such a fashion, and I am some years older than Fanny."

"Yes," innocently observed the father of the poor girl, who little imagined the storm which threatened to obscure the sunshine of her heart—"old enough to be her mother. But I will speak about it. Good evening."

And so they parted: the old gentleman, for the first time in his life, uneasy for the happiness of his child, whom he loved as men love the only thing to which their affections cling; his informant with her heart filled with spite, mortified vanity, and anger—any allusion to age being a most delicate subject: it was enough to feel that she was old—not to be told so.

"Old enough to be her mother, am I? Well," she muttered, "at least I am old enough to see your drift—artful, manœuvring set; but I'll spoil your game! We shall hear what the rector will say to this fine scheme of trepanning his nephew!"

Conformably with this resolution, the old maid that very night, on her return home, sat down and concocted an anonymous letter, signed, as such letters generally are, by a friend, and professing the most disinterested motives.

In it the conduct of poor Fanny and her father was depicted in the most odious light: the former as an artful girl, eager to entrap a young man whose fortune and family entitled him to look above her, and her father as quietly sanctioning the attempt.

The next post brought two letters from the rector—one to his nephew, full of reproaches, commanding his immediate return, the other to Mr. Wyndham, dismissing him from the curacy.

Perhaps of all the actions into which the evil passions of humanity are led, there is none more base than that of writing an anonymous letter!

It is a moral assassination, committed by a masked murderer!—a lie without an author!—the mean-spirited act of the disreputable coward in whose heart gall has replaced the wholesome blood, and whose malice, jealousy, and revenge vent themselves in slander! I would as soon trust my purse with a thief, my friendship with the hangman, my name with a coquette—take a serpent in my hand, or a liar to my heart, as hold communion of love, friendship, or interest with the despicable writer of an anonymous letter.

Nothing could exceed the dismay of Fanny's lover and the indignation of the poor curate at the letter of his harsh, overbearing rector.

Despite the entreaties of Fanny, her lover started that very night for his uncle's, determined to have an explanation.

Unfortunately the coach was full, so he rode outside, and the night proved a wet one. When he arrived he was in a burning fever—three days afterwards a corpse!

He died without a will, Fanny's name mingling in his last prayer.

Peace of mind may dawn to-morrow—  
Learn to scorn a broken vow.

Well I know how memory treasures,  
Like some miser, in her store,  
Early vows and faded pleasures—  
How it weeps when they are o'er!  
But the balm that should preserve them  
Is the tears of fond regret,  
Unless those we mourn deserve them,  
It is wiser to forget.

Then dismiss each shade of sorrow,  
From thy fair and sinless brow;  
Peace of mind may dawn to-morrow—  
Learn to scorn a broken vow.

The season—as the annual round of dissipation and extravagance is called in London—was a brilliant one. More than the usual number of marriages took place—heirs got plucked by designing friends, and daughters settled by manœuvring mammas.

Ball after ball was given—the milliners were at their wits' end not to disappoint their customers; and the number of coachhorses and needlewomen killed by being overworked was quite extraordinary.

In justice to the butterfly minions of pleasure, we must add, that the former were at least severely regretted by their owners, for it cost money to replace them; the latter were only mourned by some orphan, perhaps, or widowed mother, whom the bereavement reduced to starvation or the tender mercies of the parish.

Amy and Fanny worked hard. Night after night they sat up toiling over the delicate robe which some fair young creature or faded dowager was to wear at Court

or an assembly, and must have home by the appointed hour, little thinking of the eyes which grew dim over it, or that every stitch set in the costly tissue was accompanied by a sigh drawn from the heart of the toil-worn, ill-paid creature who made it.

Poor Fanny at last fell ill—dangerously ill of a nervous fever. Despite the anger and reproaches of Madame, the work was neglected: Amy could do nothing but attend upon her friend, who refused medicine and food alike from every hand but her's.

The savings of the poor are generally but little: the slender resources of the two orphans were soon exhausted, and Amy was driven to poverty's last resource—the pawnbroker.

It was at the close of a sultry evening, her last shilling spent, that the unhappy girl started off with the only trinket of any value she possessed.

Thrice did she pass the door—her heart failed her; the recollection of poor Fanny's sufferings at last gave her courage: with desperate resolution she stepped into the shop.

A tall, rakish, dissipated looking man was standing in front of the counter, while the shopman examined a gold watch and chain.

“Eight pounds,” said the man.

“Hang it! make it ten? you know I always take it out.”

“Can't indeed, sir.”

“Well, nine, then?”



“Not a shilling more—our stock is very heavy already.”

“Eight will do,” said the fellow, with a curse; at the same time he turned round, and leered impertinently under poor Amy’s bonnet.

His business transacted, he slowly left the shop, but not the street: he had evidently been struck by our heroine’s appearance, and was determined to watch her out; so placing himself at the window, he pretended to examine with considerable interest a bowl of trinkets—odds and ends which from time to time had accumulated in the tradesman’s hands.

We have often thought, that if the various trinkets scattered in the windows of a pawnbroker could speak, how varied and sad would be the tales they would tell of those who formerly possessed them! pledges of affection given in hours of happiness—parted with in those of misery; how the wedding-ring, placed upon the finger of some blushing girl whose path of life seemed strewn with flowers—drawn from her widowed hand to sustain the prattling innocent, perhaps, who cried for bread at home; next is the mother’s dying gift—how often, when years have passed and the grave closed over her hallowed form, will a word, a look, recall to mind the tender care of that loved being! again her eyes, beaming with affection, seem to dwell on ours! Mementoes of love, joy, friendship, and former prosperity lie confusedly jumbled together—not

one but, like a gravestone, tells of the past, and has its tale of sorrow and regret.

"Now, miss," said the shopman, civilly, for he saw that his customer was a novice; "what can I do for you?"

"I believe, sir," timidly answered Amy, "that you lend money?"

"Upon security."

She could not speak—there was a choking sensation in her throat which prevented her. Silently she drew from her bosom the chain and gold locket which contained Henry's hair and her dead brother's and laid it on the counter.

To save her own life she would not have parted with it: the sacrifice, like those made by most generous hearts, was for another—for poor Fanny.

"How much?" said the man.

This was a question she had not expected; she scarcely knew what to answer: it had been her lover's parting gift—she had never cast a thought upon its intrinsic value—the giver made it priceless to her.

"What you please," she faltered.

The man stared—he was not accustomed to such easy customers.

"Three pounds?"

"Yes, yes—that will do."

In her present poverty three pounds appeared a treasure.

The fellow knew that it was honestly worth ten.

"It's your own, I suppose?" he observed.

There was a mild dignity in Amy's manner—as, for the first time, she raised her eyes, and met the speaker's gaze—which silenced his suspicions.

"Of course it is."

The duplicate was made out, and the money paid.

Hastily placing the gold in her empty purse, Amy drew her shawl around her, and left the shop.

She had not proceeded far before the gentleman—we use the word conventionally—who had been watching her through the window, overtook her, and, touching her arm, asked her if she was going home.

The object of his persecution quickened her step—she was terrified.

"You had better let me accompany you?" he added.

"Leave me, sir—pray leave me. You are mistaken in supposing"—

She could not finish. Grief and indignation choked her utterance.

"Oh, that's all nonsense, though it's devilishly well acted," exclaimed her tormentor, trying to take her arm. "I am a gentleman, although I did slip into the pawnbroker's and pop my watch. Too late for the bank. Out for a spree—'pon my honour it's a fact. Psha! why so coy?"

Amy was nearly fainting: for the first time in her life she found herself exposed to insult, and no one near to protect her.

The sickness of heart which suddenly overcame her

rendered her unable to withdraw her arm, which the ruffian still retained, despite her feeble struggles.

"Let me go," she sobbed at last; "if you are a man, do not—pray do not insult me—I am wretched enough already!"

"It's all right—shall I call a cab?"

At this moment two old gentlemen turned the corner of the street: one of them was General Playwell, who, since the supposed loss of his fortune, had been so coldly treated by Lady Playwell, and her hopeful children, that he and Rigid, much to the delight of the latter, that very day had left the house and taken a quiet lodging in Jermyn Street, still keeping up the appearance of poverty.

"Leave me, I insist, sir!" exclaimed Amy, gathering courage.

The General was struck by the voice, and recognised it.

"Miss Lawrence?" he said, advancing, and bowing respectfully; "can I be of any service to you?"

"Yes, thank heaven, you will protect me."

"Do you know this person?"

"Know him!" exclaimed Amy, bursting into tears—"no. He has cruelly insulted me—persecuted me."

General Playwell, as we before stated, was a very peppery-tempered man. Amy, from the first moment he saw her, had interested him; and he had secretly caused his man Rigid to make every inquiry after her, but in vain.

To raise his heavy cane, and knock the ruffian down, was the act of an instant.

Poor Amy fainted, and in a moment they were surrounded by a crowd.

Several policemen came up. The fellow was only stunned. As soon as he recovered he charged the General with an assault, and, as several persons witnessed it, the defender of Amy was taken in charge.

"I am perfectly ready to attend you," he said, in reply to the officer, who told him he must go before the inspector. "Will you, my lord," he added, turning to his astonished companion, "oblige me by sending for your carriage—it is still waiting at the Carlton—and place the lady in it?"

A messenger was instantly despatched, and in a few minutes the still insensible girl was placed in the splendid equipage which drove up.

On their way to the station-house the orphan recovered.

"Where am I?" she sobbed.

"With a friend," replied the General, kindly; "an old man, but not an unkind one. As soon as I have settled a little business, I will conduct you home."

"General Playwell! Oh, I recollect all now! And that ruffian!"

"Will annoy you no more."

On their arrival at the police-office, the unmanly insulter of poor Amy made his charge, which the General at once acknowledged; but stated, as his

reason for the assault, his conduct to a young lady who was well known to him.

"Pretty lady!" observed the fellow. "Why I followed her from the pawnbroker's!"

Her protector was inexpressibly shocked—not at the circumstance so much as at the distress which Amy must have endured before she could have descended to such an extremity.

"Is the young lady in court?" demanded the inspector.

"She is in my carriage," replied the peer, who had followed to the office on foot. "I witnessed the whole affair, and the complainant's unmanly outrage upon one whom he thought unprotected and friendless."

"Your name, sir?"

"The Earl of Egmont."

The speaker was not only a peer of the realm, but a member of the Cabinet, the inspector became profuse in his civility; and said that if the young lady would step into the office and prefer her charge, he would at once send the now chapfallen ruffian before a magistrate—an offer which the General, from consideration for Amy's feelings, positively declined.

"You must feel, sir, that a young lady, whom accident has placed in so painful a position, cannot have her name bandied in the papers, and endure the gaze of a police-court."

"I presume," observed the peer, "you have no objection to take my bail for the appearance of my

friend to answer any charge which this person may prefer against him."

"Certainly not, my lord."

The customary forms were speedily complied with, and the General and Amy drove from the place.

The affair proceeded no farther, for the *gentleman*, when he found whom he had to deal with, never appeared to prefer the charge—consequently it dropped, and no report appeared in the papers; at which the old soldier was more delighted than he chose to express, for he had already begun to entertain certain designs respecting the orphan. In justice we must add, that they were—like himself—honourable.

"And so, my poor girl," he said, when seated at last in the humble lodging where Amy and Fanny resided, "you left the splendid abode of my sister-in-law for a wretched place like this? It is a sad change."

"But an honest one," replied our heroine, whose feelings had been cruelly humbled.

"Why did you leave?" demanded her protector.

"Because I was insulted daily—hourly—exposed to solicitations which the woman who voluntarily remains in a position to listen to encourages."

"I understand—my puppy of a nephew."

Amy was silent.

"And how have you lived!"

"By honest industry," she answered. "Day and night I worked at my needle, till my kind companion,

the dear girl who received and sheltered me, fell ill. What could I do? She would receive medicine from no hand but mine—permit no other to smooth her pillow: sickness is a sad thing, General, even to the wealthy, surrounded by all those ministering cares which money can procure; but to the poor it is terrible. Our last shilling was gone, and last night!—but you know the rest.”

The old soldier was moved: he had a generous heart, especially where his passions were not concerned: he pitied her—more—he respected her, and insisted on sending a physician and such delicacies as Fanny's state demanded. The offer was so delicately made, and so kindly pressed, that Amy could not refuse them.

“And will you permit me to call and see you?” he demanded.

“Yes, willingly,” replied our heroine; “I should indeed be ungrateful to refuse you; but I fear, General, it will be a long time,” she added, “before I and Fanny shall be able to repay you for your kindness.”

“Repay me!” said the old man, reproachfully; “true, I am poor—that is, comparatively poor—but I have still enough to serve a friend, if Miss Lawrence will condescend to consider me as one.”

“Friend!” repeated the grateful girl, “say, rather, benefactor—father!”

Perhaps the General would have been more pleased if the latter title had been spared him; it reminded him too much of the disparity of their years.



Before he left the house he placed ten pounds in the hands of the landlady, a worthy woman, with strict injunctions to see that her lodgers wanted for nothing, and added, that his servant would call in the morning to inquire after the young lady's health.

In his way home he could not help reflecting how delightful it would be to win the love of a sensible grateful girl like Amy—to have her for a companion—a friend—a nurse—a wife.

“Why should I not marry her?” he said; “the world will laugh, but I can laugh with it. At my age it would be ridiculous to expect her to love me with ardour; but what of that? I can be content—nay, happy—with friendship and respect.”

Like many of his own age, the speaker was mistaken: there is nothing more craving, jealous and exacting than an old man's love; but we must not anticipate events.

From that evening the visits of the General became constant at the humble abode of the two orphans.

The assistance he rendered them was just sufficient to prevent the necessity of their toil, and to procure the few little luxuries which Fanny's illness required.

For this he had his own motives: he did not wish to appear rich—he knew that Amy would never sell herself for wealth; his object was to keep the grim spectre, poverty, from approaching too near—not to drive him from her view.

Frequently would he regret the loss of his fortune,

because it prevented him placing her and her young friend above want; and he wondered what would become of them when he was dead.

“What, indeed,” thought Amy, with a sigh. “Again the needle and long nights of toil!”

Not that she would have feared that, had her companion's health been restored.

One evening, when he called, he found the poor girl more than usually depressed.

Upon inquiring the cause, she informed him that she had consulted the physician, Dr. Nunn, upon the chance of Fanny's recovery.

“And what said he?”

“That change of air and scene are her last chance; that the return to the labours of the needle will be the signal of her death. God help us!” she added: “I would willingly toil for her night and day; but, should my strength fail, what will become of her then—for we are both friendless?”

“Not quite friendless,” observed the General, reproachfully; “am not I near you?”

“Oh, you have been too good, too kind already!” exclaimed the grateful girl: “deprived yourself, for us, I am sure, of many luxuries which long habit has rendered almost necessary to your existence. Do not deem me ungrateful. I feel your generous conduct—your sacrifice; but we cannot always depend upon your bounty.”

“True—I may die; and my half-pay as a general

officer dies with me; but the pension of my widow would be ample."

Amy started.

"Hear me, Amy," he continued, in a voice as calm, as a father reasoning with his child. "I have thought of this, not with the feelings of passion, but with the deep interest I take in your welfare. Old as I am, the busy tongues of the world will not permit me, with impunity, to continue my visits here. Observations have already been made; and, unhappily, the loss of my fortune prevents me acting towards you and your suffering friend as my heart would dictate; but I can offer to you an honourable name, a cheerful home, and an assured asylum against the storms of life. You would not be rich, Amy, but you might be placed far above want—above the vulgar necessity of toiling for your bread. All I ask in return, is friendship—the love a child should bear its parent. What say you?"

"Another's," sobbed Amy; "oh, impossible!"

"Take three days—more, if you will—to consider of my offer: cast not away the plank which, in the shipwreck of your fortunes, may bear you safe to land; no answer now—at the expiration of the time I will return. God bless you, my poor girl, and may your decision be such as prudence and your welfare prompt."

With these words he took up his hat and left the house.

With all his selfishness, he had some generous feelings; and he could not endure the quiet agony of her

eye, the pale despair stamped upon her features—he feared to trust himself.

“Another’s!” repeated Amy, as soon as she was alone; “oh! never—never! false as he is, my heart still clings to him with all the fervour of its early love; his image is graved too deeply for another’s ever to replace it! I must work—beg—do anything rather than sacrifice the faith I vowed to Henry, though he has forgotten his!”

There was no anger towards the General for his proposition: in her simplicity she deemed it more the benevolent wish of securing her against the future—that dark and lonely future which fate seemed to have shadowed with adversity. Had she known him to be rich, her heart would have revolted at his offer. That which would have induced half the belles of the season to have accepted him, would have decided the orphan on rejecting; and General Playwell, who was no mean judge of character, knew this—pleaded friendship instead of love, poverty in lieu of wealth—and he judged rightly.

Full of her resolution to remain faithful to the recollections of the past, Amy sought the chamber of her sick friend. Poor Fanny opened her languid eyes and tried to welcome her with a smile, but it faded upon her thin, parched lips.

“Try some of these grapes,” said her friend, pointing to some delicious fruit which the General had sent; “they will refresh you?”

The sufferer shook her head, and burst into tears.

"I cannot touch them, Amy," she replied; "I know how you must have toiled, night after night, to procure me these unusual delicacies; they may prolong, but cannot preserve my life. Husband your strength—you will need it when I am gone; but you will often think of me—how we used to sit till the first light of morning, talking over older, happier times, as we sat at our weary work—will you not, Amy?"

"I will—I will."

"Sometimes," continued her friend, unconscious of the pang she was inflicting, "I think that if I could once more behold the green fields of Mayfield I should die happy. I cannot tell you how I long to breathe the cool, pure air of my native village. It's hard to die in a close room like this—to be buried amongst strangers, far from my mother's grave. 'Tis a foolish fancy, but I think I should sleep happier there."

"You shall see Mayfield again," exclaimed Amy, with desperate resolution; "not to die, dear Fanny, but to live. Doctor Nunn says that country air and change of scene might restore you, and I—I hesitated."

The sick girl only answered her by an inquiring look.

"Yes," continued the speaker, "you shall see the green lanes, and we will walk together, pray together—perhaps," she added, "die there, and both repose under the same turf: we should sleep sweetly then, for there is peace in the grave."

“Don't mock me,” said her friend; “the fever has passed now. I am not a child, to be promised impossibilities. See,” she added, extending her white, emaciated arm, “I am better now; my hand is almost steady; I shall soon be able to work again. We must labour hard to pay these sad expenses—very hard. But God will help us.”

“He has, Fanny,” observed the woman—“he has raised us up a friend.”

“A friend?”

“A kind, generous, noble-hearted one; and my selfishness shall not interfere with his benevolent designs. Yes—I renew my promise—we will go to your native village together—visit the spot dear to your memory—to your heart.”

“Bless you, Amy—bless you. I shall indeed die happy, if my last breath is drawn at Mayfield.”

Despite the resolution which the sight of Fanny's sufferings had caused her to take, poor Amy's courage gave way as the day drew near on which she was to give an answer to the General; and in all probability she would have refused him, but for the conduct of her landlady, who was in the old suitor's interests. She was a good sort of creature in her way, and really pitied the two orphans, who worked so hard in her humble lodgings, and paid so regularly, whilst able to ply their needles. The last three weeks, unfortunately, the account had been suffered to run on; and by the desire of the General, who paid her liberally, she

pressed for payment; but it went against her conscience. Still she reconciled herself to the unkindness, by reflecting that it was for Amy's good. Had she not been assured that it was the old gentleman's purpose to marry her, she would have scorned his bribe, poor as she was.

"I have brought your bill, miss," said the landlady, as she entered the apartment; "it has run now for three weeks, and that's a long time."

"It is a long time," replied her lodger, despairingly; "and I have no money."

"No money?"

"Not a shilling."

"What do you intend to do, then?"

"I thought, perhaps," replied Amy, mildly, "you would be kind enough to wait—wait till Miss Wyndham recovers. You know how industrious we both are—how hard we work. Believe me, you shall not lose a shilling."

"I am afraid," said the woman, whose heart reproached her for the part she was acting, "that Miss Wyndham never will recover—there is death in every feature. I am sure I am very sorry for her," she added, wiping her eyes; "but what can I do? I have a family of my own to support; quarter-day is very near, and I have had an offer for the rooms."

"But you will not take it?" exclaimed Amy; "you will not be so heartless as to turn two unhappy crea-

tures into the streets? What would become of Fanny in her feeble state? The shock would kill her."

"She can go to the hospital."

The idea of the dear girl's being carried to an hospital, to die amongst strangers, with only the half-sleeping nurse, perhaps, by her bedside, or some hireling looking coldly on, was more than the affectionate heart of Amy could endure: her firmness returned.

"You shall be paid," she said.

"But when?"

"To-day. Leave me now, for pity's sake. You know that you may trust my word. I tell you," she repeated, firmly, "you shall be paid."

Just as the promise escaped her lips, she heard the General's well-known knock at the door.

"Bless me," said the landlady, who was secretly delighted at the success of her errand; "there is that kind, handsome old gentleman again; perhaps he will pay it for you."

"No, no—pray do not name it," eagerly exclaimed her lodger; "he has been too kind already."

"As you please, miss. Are you at home?"

"No—yes, yes; I must be at home," answered Amy, with a sigh; mentally adding, "that if the sacrifice must be made, it was useless to delay it."

"All right, sir," whispered the woman, as she let him in; "I don't think you need fear a refusal; but I trust your intentions are honest. I have girls of my



own, and God knows, would not blindly lend a hand to the injury of any one."

The General assured her once more of the purity of his intentions, and mounted the stairs which led to Amy's apartment with an air of satisfaction which he could not, with all his efforts, entirely conceal.

It was not without a secret pang of reproach that he beheld the pale, agitated countenance of the suffering girl.

The impulse of his heart bade him act generously; but his love—if such a feeling in an old man who abuses his wealth to entrap an unprotected creature even into marriage is worthy of the name—restrained him.

"You will pardon me," he said, after having first inquired after the health of Fanny, "if I allude to the subject of our last conversation. Have you thought of it?"

"I have."

"And the answer?" he eagerly demanded.

"General, I will be truthful with you," replied our heroine. "I should blush for myself were I capable of deceiving the man who had honoured me with the offer of his name and hand—whose generosity, whose bounty"—

"No more of that," interrupted her suitor. "Had my means been more ample, the offer, which I fear distresses you, should not have been made. I would have then, Amy, adopted you as my child, despite the censoriousness of the world; but as it is"—

“ I know—I know. Before I reply to you, I must unfold my heart—lay bare its weakness—its regrets. I love another ! ”

General Playwell was too much a man of the world to have proffered his hand—however deeply he might be in love—to a woman of whose former position he was ignorant.

He cared little for family or name: his own rank was sufficient to enable him to cause his wife to be respected; but he cared much for character, and had secretly sent an agent to Manchester to make cautious inquiries respecting the former life of Amy; consequently he was no stranger to her early affection for Henry Beacham, and his supposed unworthy treatment of her.

This knowledge gave him an opportunity of displaying a false generosity, which at once decided his victim.

“ Then marry him ! ” he exclaimed, with affected warmth. “ Heaven forbid that I should step between your heart and its affections. Mine is not a selfish love; it would have shielded you from the storms of life, as the parent bird shelters its young; have provided a peaceful home for you and your suffering friend. It was no selfish passion,” he added, with a sigh; “ although the hope that your kind hands would close my eyes, your tears fall upon my grave, mixed with it. Pray forgive me the pain my offer must have caused you.”

Struck by his generosity, at that moment the sacrifice appeared less painful.

"Can I do less," she thought, "for friendship so disinterested—for my dying friend—than sacrifice the weak regrets which still cling to the past? He I love," she said, in a voice which she vainly endeavoured to render firm, "proved false to me without a word, a reason, save interest; perhaps married another."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed her suitor, with well-affected concern.

"Left me," she added, "the blighted, broken thing you see me."

"Heartless scoundrel!"

This time his indignation was real; for he firmly believed the report of his agent, that Henry Beacham was really married.

"How, then, could I give my hand to you, with my heart another's? deceive your generous, noble confiding nature, by promising an undivided love? I mistrust myself: memory would return—I should not make you happy."

"Not if I sought," eagerly interrupted the old man, "those warm, fresh feelings which have been wasted upon a heartless being unworthy of them. Such flowers bloom but once, Amy, in the heart—that I know full well; but respect, friendship, calm affection—these are still within your gift."

Amy only sighed.

"I ask but these, to shield you like a tender plant

from the storms of life, and to know that when I die you will not be left again to the cold mercies of an un pitying world."

"Then take my hand," sobbed the unhappy girl. "Would that the gift were worthy of the noble heart which asks it. Would that mine went with it."

The delighted suitor was too much transported at the consent to cavil at the terms in which it was given, and too prudent to startle her feelings by his transports.

Respectfully kissing the extended hand, he assured her that his life should prove how deeply he felt the value of the gift.

"And now, Amy," he said, "the sooner, for both our sakes, that this is concluded the better. Once a wife, you will, in the strong purity of your mind, find an additional strength; for it will then be a duty as well as wisdom to forget him. I regret I cannot offer you a more splendid destiny—but it is a safe one; for even if that tumultuous, short-lived feeling, happiness, escape your grasp, you will find that surer stay of life, content."

Seeing that Amy was overcome by her emotion, and the effort she had made, her now happy suitor took his leave—happy in his selfish joy—happy in the prospect of a bliss extorted from gratitude—not affection. But such is ever an old man's love. Like a flower which blooms out of season, it may dazzle the eye, but it possesses no perfume to cheer the heart.

No sooner was Amy alone than she bitterly repented of the promise she had given. It was like divorcing herself from the memory and old love of the past; something whispered her that she had done wrong—acted prematurely; and yet she doubted not for an instant that Henry Beacham was married.

Had the hope, the chance of his proving true, but glanced across her mind, there was no trial, no struggle which she would not have endured to preserve her faith to him.

“This is folly—weakness,” she murmured. “Why should my affections cling to a shadow—to an ideal love—to a being who has abandoned me—bartered my heart for wealth—heartlessly broken vows which I deemed true as heaven? I’ll think of him no more. A kind and generous man, who has stepped between me and misery, has asked my hand; my word is given, and gratitude demands that it should be kept. A last tear to my blighted love, a last sigh to the dream of my girlhood,” she added, “and Henry must henceforth be to me as the dead.”

Unfortunately for Amy’s peace of mind, neither the sigh nor the tear were doomed to be the last.

She wept so long and bitterly, that, fearful of her resolution, she sought the chamber of poor Fanny, to gather strength for the sacrifice she was about to make, by witnessing the fortitude and resignation of the suffering girl.

“Fanny,” said her friend, as the patient welcomed

her with a faint smile, "do you think that you are strong enough to take a short journey?"

"My next journey will be to the grave, Amy," replied her friend, in a tone of resignation. "The hand of death is upon me. I can already feel his cold touch and chilling breath. No, no—I must die here—here in this close, stifling room; but you," she added, "will be by my side—your hands will close my eyes—your prayers support me, and your tears embalm my memory."

Amy was for a few moments too much agitated to reply: the mild tone of resignation of the speaker affected her too much.

"I did not mean to grieve you," added the poor girl, as her friend's tears fell fast upon her thin, wasted hand.

"You must not speak of dying," sobbed Amy. "What would become of me, should I be left alone in the world, without one friend?"

"God will raise you up others, Amy."

"Ay, but not friends whom I can love as I do you. Who will feel for me, and sympathise with me. I am not, I trust ungrateful to Him," she continued, in answer to the half-reproving look of her friend. "He has indeed been merciful. He has raised us up a friend in the hour of our misery—a kind, generous one. Fanny," she added, trying to smile, "do you not think," she repeated, "you could bear the fatigue of a short journey?"

The patient shook her head.

“What not to Mayfield?”

“Mayfield!” exclaimed the dying girl; “oh, yes. But you are jesting with me, How are we to live at Mayfield?”

“I am too sad to jest, Fanny. We will go together.”

“Then I shall see the spot where I knew all that life has given me of happiness—sit once more by my poor mother’s grave—breathe the air of the quiet fields and green lanes, so different from the hot, stifling atmosphere of London—view once more the spot where I have walked with him whose smile, I trust, will welcome me at the gates of heaven. Death, dear Amy, will lose its sting. Bless you, bless you.”

Overcome with her emotions, the sick girl sank back, half-fainting, upon her pillow; but her tears were tears of joy.

The General returned home in a state of excitement difficult to describe. He was intoxicated with the prospect of his happiness: the thought of winning the love of a pure, young, and lovely girl, was too much for his philosophy to withstand. He trusted to his wealth—to the splendour and luxuries he could surround her with—to gain the heart of Amy. How little did he know it—how little understand that though we coin our affections—lavish gift on gift, prayer on prayer—we cannot purchase even a corner in that wayward thing—the human heart.

His old servant, Rigid, met him on his return

home. His thin, vinegar countenance expressed more than its usual dissatisfaction; but his master was too full of his own happiness and his dreams of the future to notice the discontent of his crabbed domestic.

"Back at last," muttered the old soldier.

"Yes, Rigid; anything the matter?"

"Nothing more than usual," replied the one-headed Cerberus. "Tiffin spoiled; but you never would keep your time. And pray how much longer is this foolery to last?"

"What foolery?" demanded his master, seriously alarmed, lest he had discovered anything respecting his intended marriage with Amy.

"What foolery?" repeated, or rather snarled the old soldier; "why, living here in these cursed lodgings, where the air is more stifling than in India—where I can't smoke my pipe in peace, because the landlady detests the smell of tobacco. A fine madam," he continued scornfully; "she is not above robbing us in our weekly bills."

"Well, well, it will soon be over," observed the General, with a complaisant smile.

"So much the better, sir."

"Rigid!"

"Well?"

"I have a secret to inform you of; but you must give me your word not to mention it without my permission."

"Another fine scheme, I suppose, to try your rela-



tions?" said Rigid. "I should have thought that you had tried them enough already. No sooner did they believe you to be poor, than your brother's and sister-in-law's affection cooled faster than a spent bomb; your puppy of a nephew cut you, your niece became suddenly near-sighted, and Sir William has called twice to see you when he knew you were sure to be out—perhaps he thought you wanted to borrow money of him."

"They have indeed been heartless."

"Bad lot! bad lot!"

"But it is nothing respecting them—it is something which concerns myself; and you are the first person—and, with the exception of Lord Egmont, the only one—I shall confide it to; but give me your promise?"

"Speak," said the old soldier, drawing himself up, and standing in an attitude of attention.

His master knew that one word was enough. With all his brusque manner and affected independence, the old soldier would have cheerfully died for his General. He loved him with that sort of savage fidelity which, like the affection of a bear, displays itself in a growl—but then, he permitted no one else to growl at him.

"Rigid," said the General, after a little hesitation, "I am going to get married."

The old soldier made no reply—a slight grimace, as if some-  
how  
telligence was to him.

"  
siler  
ed his master, annoyed at his  
ut to get married."

“Sorry to hear it.”

“Why so?”

“Too old—and too jealous a temper.”

“She who has accepted my hand will never give me cause for jealousy—of that I feel assured.”

“More than I do.”

“Why I have heard you praise her,” said his master.

“Have you?” exclaimed the old man. “By heaven, then, but she must be a rare one—there are few I praise.”

“That’s true, at any rate,” observed the General, with a smile.

Rigid was stung by the reply, for he immediately added—

“Few as they are, they are more, perhaps, than deserve it. Now you praise as little as I do, but you suspect more; it’s a wonder you never suspected yourself.”

“Well, well—no matter,” said his master, who knew by long experience, that he was no match at saying bitter things with his domestic; “as I told you, I am going to be married.”

“Sorry to hear it.”

“Why so?”

“Because you will make two people miserable—yourself and your wife.”

“Not the wife I have chosen,” exclaimed the old man, with fervour; “she is even more amiable than

beautiful! why, even you—bruin as you are—admired her.”

“Did I?” said Rigid, with a look of surprise.

“What think you of Amy Lawrence?”

The old soldier started, and eyed his master with a painful expression of countenance.

“Amy Lawrence! Poor thing—poor thing? And have you, General, really taken advantage of her poverty to trepan her into a marriage at which her heart, I am sure, revolts? I thought better of you.”

“She loves me.”

Rigid whistled.

“I repeat she loves me.”

“Did she tell you so?” inquired the man.

Not even to his domestic would General Playwell condescend to a lie—he remained silent.

“I am sure she did not,” continued the eccentric fellow; “she is too truthful for that. It is my opinion that she loves another.”

“Why so!”

“Because I have seen her pale face, her love of solitude, and the disgust with which she turned away from the ridiculous compliments which your puppy of a nephew was continually tormenting her. Her heart is engaged; but what do you care for that? her hand is all you require. Of course you are right; what is the use of being rich, unless we buy every toy which passion or caprice desire?”

“Hearts are not toys, Rigid.”

"Then why treat them as such?" retorted the old man, scornfully. "You can't be so blinded by vanity as to suppose that she accepts you for love?"

"She thinks me poor," exclaimed the General.

"And so marries you from pity. A pretty bargain: but I'll undeceive her. I'll tell her that you are still the wealthy General Playwell. Then, if she is the girl I take her for, she will shrink from selling herself: if not, she will at least know that the cage she hops into is a gilded one."

"And your promise, Rigid?"

The soldier paused: with him his word implied or given had hitherto been his bond; and not even to save Amy would he break it. With a dissatisfied shrug of the shoulder he turned upon his heel, and marched out of the apartment.

"Psha!" muttered the General, as soon as he was alone; "Rigid, although honest, is a fool. What should he know of hearts, a fellow that never loved anything, save his musket and his master?" he added, after a pause. "Amy must be happy—she shall be happy. I will make her the envy of her sex, anticipate her every wish, surround her with more than Eastern luxuries. Her life shall be one golden holiday. Once married she will forget all her girlish love for this Henry Beacham, who, like a true trader, has cast a pearl away because the setting was not of gold. The fool doubtless mistook it for a pebble."

That same day General Playwell engaged a magnifi-

beautiful! why, even you—” and gave orders for her.”

“Did I?” said Rigid, with a contemptuous style.

“What think you of it?” he asked, having received his orders, accusingly.

The old soldier started at the extent of the expenditure of the money, and looked at the painful expression of the general.

“Amy Lawrence!” he said, to observe that the outlay had not been so great as he had supposed.

“I have heard that you were in poverty to trepan the general,” observed the general, with a slight smile.

“She loves me,” he said, thoughtfully, “you had better call at my house.”

“Rigid whistled,” he said, to satisfy you that, even were the general so extravagant, General Playwell

“I repeat,” he said, “himself of his caprice.”

“Did she?” he said, and the name of Coutts the tradesman bowed, and

Not even the name of such inquiries were unnecessary; and the general, who was a prudent man, he determined to make

“I am sure,” he said, “that they were satisfactory, for on his part, the bankers, his men instantly commenced

that the costly order he had received.

“The most regal service of plate, and jewels to an amount, were ordered at Rundle and Bridge’s,

and in fashionable jewellers.

“Diamonds could have won a woman’s heart, Amy,” he said, “and have been purchased over and over again. The

“The bridegroom little dreamt that in her case they would only make it ache the more; but he judged as

“The judges.

“The preparations were studiously kept from

His intention was, on his return from Mayfield, to propose to spend the honeymoon, to bring her to his splendid mansion, and dazzle her, if possible, with the magnificence of his gifts.

"I am sure she will love me," he kept repeating to himself. "What woman's heart can refuse to be touched by a devotion so costly as mine?"

Like many others whose hair has become gray with age, experience had not followed. He knew the world as well as most men, but the heart was still a sealed volume to the wealthy General Playwell.

Three days before the ill-assorted marriage, Amy and Fanny started for Mayfield.

The vicarage, which happened to be disengaged, had been hired by the intended bridegroom; and the two orphans found themselves installed in the spot where one of them had passed the only happy moments of her brief existence.

The patient, whether from excitement or change of scene, found herself so much better the day after her arrival, that, accompanied by her friend, she even ventured to walk into the little wood where she had passed so many hours with her lover.

There was something soothing to her wounded spirit in the scene: she fancied that she heard his voice again, or listened for his step on the green turf; she could have remained for hours there, with no other companion than the memory of the past; it was now all to her.

That same evening General Playwell arrived ; the next morning his marriage with Amy was solemnised by special license in the village church, and poor Amy found herself a wife.

No sooner was the knot tied which death alone can break, than the poor girl would have given worlds, had it been possible, to recall the act which made her another's—but it was too late : out of gratitude, she struggled with her regrets and feelings. Had she known that her lover was still true—even at the very moment that she bartered her faith to another—it would not have been regret, but despair.

“ You have done wrong, Amy—very wrong,” said her friend, as soon as she was informed of what had taken place—for the union had been kept a secret from her till too late to be prevented ; “ and I have to reproach myself with being the cause. Unkind girl ! think you my friendship is so weak that, to prolong my life a few brief days—to gild my declining hour with the last ray of sunshine it can ever know—I would have consented to this sacrifice ? Unkind, dear, generous Amy.”

As the poor girl predicted, the sacrifice was comparatively a useless one. Three weeks afterwards she was found dead one morning on the bank of violets where her lover had first declared his passion, and presented her with the flowers—whose existence, brief as it was, lasted as long as their dream of happiness.

There was a smile upon her lips, and an expression

of deep, calm content on her pale features, when Amy and her husband—who, alarmed at her absence, had sought her—approached the spot.

“Dead—dead!” exclaimed her friend, falling upon the turf beside her; “my last, my only friend!”

“You forget me, Amy,” whispered her husband.

Although the mourner's tears fell fast, her lips moved in silent prayer.

“It is natural to mourn for those we love; but sorrow has its limits. Remember,” he continued, “that Fanny was unhappy; that to her death was a release from pain and a broken heart. Cease, then, to weep for her.”

“My tears are selfish,” sobbed Amy; “I do not regret—*I envy her.*”

These words sank deep into the mind of General Playwell.

Fanny Wyndham was buried—as she had frequently expressed a wish to be—in the grave of her mother; and her young friend, in token of her love, planted upon her resting-place some of her favourite violets.

She felt that could the dear girl have been conscious of the act, she would prefer those simple memorials to a prouder monument.

At the end of the month, Amy and her husband returned to London.

The very day that she started for town, Henry Beacham and his friend William Bowles landed in England, after their perils and escape from Russia.



Both the young men were full of hope and blissful anticipations of the future—each in fancy pictured a life of love and married happiness. Little did the former dream of the bitter disappointment which awaited him.

Nothing could exceed Amy's astonishment when, on her arrival in town, the chaise in which she travelled, instead of stopping at some quiet cottage in the suburbs—as she imagined the General's residence to be—drove up to a magnificent mansion in St. James's Square. A troop of liveried domestics lined the way from the door to the foot of the great staircase, up which her husband supported her. It was in vain that he looked for an expression of pleasure in her eye—it was, if possible, more than usually sad.

“Where are we?” she demanded.

“At home, love.”

“Home!” repeated Amy. “*This our home?*”

“Where you,” exclaimed the General, “shall reign a queen! Forgive me, Amy, the only deceit my heart ever knew. I am rich. The tale of the loss of my fortune was intended first to try the affection of my mercenary relatives, and not contrived from any doubt of you. Dispose of that fortune as you will—gratify every desire of your generous nature—make the poor rejoice in the bounties of your heart—dazzle your enemies by your magnificence and luxury. All that wealth can purchase I cast at your feet—you are its mistress, and I your friend—your slave.”

“Would you had been poor!” said Amy, faintly—

“would you had been poor ! The world will say I sold myself for that fortune which cannot bring one pleasure to the heart, or peace to the mind.”

“Not the pleasure of doing good ?” demanded her husband ; “of alleviating in others the miseries you have known yourself—of saving innocence from the snares of vice—of hearing your name pronounced with blessings by those whom your hand has snatched from ruin ?”

His wife tried to smile. He had touched the only chord which could reconcile her to wealth.

She felt that in solacing the miseries of others she might still find an alleviation for her own.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment and rage of the General's sister-in-law and her hopeful children, when they found that their relative was not only rich, but married ; and that they had lost by their selfishness and heartless conduct, all chance of the princely fortune once within their grasp.

Lady Playwell could have bit her lips through with vexation.

The only person who received the news with indifference was her husband.

The Captain was even more incensed than his worldly-minded mother. As far as his vain and selfish nature would permit, he had loved Amy. He now felt that all chance of obtaining her, on honourable or dishonourable terms, was lost.

His amiable sister was sulky and silent, as usual.

“The old fool!” exclaimed her ladyship, throwing down the *Morning Post* in a fit of disgust, in which she had just read a description of the magnificent diamonds ordered for the bride at Rundle and Bridge’s, and which the editor stated to be valued at sixty thousand pounds; “diamonds for such a creature!”

“Preposterous!” added her daughter.

“I suppose,” continued the mother, “he will be expecting me to present her at Court. Lady Playwell presenting her daughter’s lady’s-maid,” she added, bitterly; “that would be the climax.”

“Your daughter’s companion, you mean,” observed her husband, gravely. “Miss Lawrence was never considered in the light of a domestic in my house.”

“Companion or lady’s-maid, it’s all the same,” exclaimed the lady, testily. “I shall not patronise the creature!”

“There will be no occasion,” observed the Captain, who had taken up the morning paper which her ladyship had thrown down in a pet. “Here is a paragraph which escaped you.”

He read as follows—

“General Playwell’s house in St. James’s Square is a perfect *bijou*. The saloons are of the noblest proportions, and decorated with a splendour which would be overwhelming but for the exquisite taste which chastens it. We understand that as soon as the bride has been presented at Court, the noble mansion will be thrown open to the fashionable world, and the lovely

wife of the gallant General introduced into society, under the auspices of a royal Duchess."

"A royal Duchess! I shall go mad!"

"Devilish provoking," exclaimed her son. "And I cut the old fellow, too."

"Deceitful, mean trick!" added his mother, in allusion to the artifice by which her brother-in-law had tested the sincerity of his relatives. "But I suppose that artful creature either knew or guessed it."

"Lady Playwell," observed her husband, seriously, "you have no one to blame but yourself. Despite my entreaties, you and your son so conducted yourselves towards my brother on the presumed loss of his fortune, that he must have been blind indeed had he not seen through the motives of your preceding kindness. Regret is useless. You, of course, will act as you please."

"Of course," said the lady.

"But I," continued her husband, firmly, "shall most certainly recognise my brother's wife, and it will be but wisdom in you to do the same—that is," he added, "if you wish to escape the ridicule of a disappointed fortune-hunter, out-mancœuvred in her calculations."

Her ladyship began to reflect that there was some truth in the observation.

Ridicule was more galling to her pride than even the loss of fortune.

"Were you as good a general as my brother," continued the speaker, "you would put a smiling face on your defeat, and turn it to a drawn battle, in which,

although the spoil escapes, you retire with at least the honours of war. Call upon the bride and bridegroom, whisper it as a secret amongst your friends that the pretended poverty of the General was to test the sincerity of the lady, not the disinterestedness of his sister-in-law."

"True. Really, Sir William," said his wife with a smile, "you sometimes have an idea worth following. I may become *her friend!* Poor thing! with her dreadful inexperience I am sure she must require one. You are right—*I will visit them.*"

Our readers will not for an instant suspect that it was either a kind or repentant feeling which induced her ladyship to come to the determination of visiting Amy, but the hope, if possible, of poisoning her happiness and her husband's, whom she hated as disappointed women only hate.

She knew by experience how difficult it is for a young creature to steer clear of the rocks and quicksands of society, cast, as the bride was, in a sphere so widely different from the one in which she had hitherto moved: and she decided, in her evil nature, on becoming her friend, her guide, and *chaperone*, on the same principle that pirates often contrive to place one of their crew on board a vessel to pilot it, but, in reality, the more effectually to wreck the gallant ship.

More women have been betrayed by the artifices of their own sex than by ours.

Ordering her carriage, and directing her daughter to

accompany her, she started, with this charitable intent, to pay her visit to the bride and her brother-in-law, at their splendid mansion in St. James's Square.

Had any incentive been wanting to confirm her in her purpose, the sight of the richly-decorated drawing-room into which she and her daughter were shown, whilst the groom of the chambers hastened to his mistress's boudoir to announce their visit, would have been sufficient.

She had not even the consolation of finding something to quarrel with in the arrangements. Costly as the furniture and pictures were, everything was in the most exquisite style.

If wealth had presided at the furnishing of the house, it had not been unaccompanied by good taste.

Amy and her husband were seated in conversation, when the card was brought to her by the domestic.

"Lady and Miss Playwell," said Amy, as she glanced at the names with an air of surprise, and handed it to the General. "Wait in the anteroom, James."

The groom of the chambers withdrew.

Although General Playwell cared as little for his sister-in-law as she did for him, still he was pleased at the visit—it gratified his pride. He knew her influence in the fashionable world, her powers of ridicule; and felt that a seeming friendship between the ladies would save his wife many little annoyances on her *entrées* in society—in fact, he preferred Lady Playwell as an ally rather than an enemy.

“To none but those whom the General wished me to receive.”

“Very right. There is nothing so dreadful as an ineligible acquaintance. Jane, my love,” she added, turning to her daughter, “go and kiss your uncle. Poor child, she is so timid.”

The young lady obeyed with her usual ill grace.

“But what do you intend to do?” continued the manœuvring visitor, “with all these persons? To a woman, her visiting list is one of the most important affairs of life, and it is doubtful whether you ought to know one-tenth part of those whose names and reputations these little bits of pasteboard represent.”

Seeing that Amy looked bewildered, the General undertook to reply for her.

He knew the importance of proper selection of acquaintance—we use the term proper in the fashionable sense of the word—as well as his sister-in-law, whose skill and tact as a leader of *ton* had long been universally acknowledged.

“Amy cares but very little for society,” he observed, “and will, I fear, never become, like your ladyship, one of its leaders. The Countess of Egmont, who has kindly offered to *chaperone* her in the world”—

“The Countess of Egmont!” interrupted his sister-in-law, in a tone which she tried to make one of affectionate reproach. “Oh, General, you will positively make me quarrel with you. What will the world say, if so near a relative is introduced into its circles by any

other than myself? The Countess is certainly a highly unexceptionable acquaintance, but *passé*, and about as fit to *chaperone* a young lady in society as I am to be Lord Chancellor. No—Amy must positively make her *entrée* into society at my house. I intend to give a ball three days after the Drawing-room. Positively I can take no refusal.”

This was what her brother-in-law secretly wished: he felt that it was important that his wife should be acknowledged by Lady Playwell, and he almost fancied that he had formed too hasty a judgment of her heart and character.

Could he have read the latent hope, the secret purpose for which so much kindness was shown, he would have turned from her as from a serpent in his path.

“Both Amy and myself,” he said, “feel delighted at the arrangement.”

“That’s settled. Of course I do not prefer my claim for the pleasure of presenting Mrs. General Playwell. A simple baronet’s wife against a royal Duchess would be too absurd. *Au revoir*, we shall meet at least at the Drawing-room. By-the-by, my love, who has arranged your dress?”

“Herbele.”

“Good; you can’t be in better hands. Give him a *carte blanche*, and I answer for the result. The jewels I need not inquire about—all the world has been to Rundle and Bridge’s to look at them. You will be the very queen of diamonds. Adieu!”



Saluting Amy on the cheek, her heartless relative bade her adieu, and, accompanied by her daughter, left the house with smiles upon her lips, kind words upon her tongue, but gall and hate in her heart.

The coolness of the girl who had so lately been treated by her as a 'dependent annoyed her, and she mentally vowed she would destroy her happiness, no matter what means she descended to in the attempt.

Amy's presentation at Court created quite a sensation: the women raved of her jewels, the men of her beauty; but all admitted the quiet grace with which she stood the ordeal; even Lady Playwell was at a loss to find a fault.

"Perfect, my dear creature—perfect!" she whispered, as, leaning on her husband's arm, Amy passed her on the great staircase of St. James's Palace. "I really must congratulate you on your self-possession. Remember," she added, "in three days you will have another ordeal to go through: doubt not but it will prove equally successful with the first."

The very day on which the drawing-room had taken place the two friends reached London.

It was agreed between them that William Bowles should proceed to Lady Playwell's and break the news of Henry's arrival to Amy.

Neither of the young men had the least suspicion that she was married.

Her ladyship had just returned from Court when the card of the young man was brought her, which she read twice over ere she consented to receive him.

“ Mr. William Bowles, Cannon Street, Manchester! who the deuce can he be? and what can he want with me?”

She was about to say “ Not at home,” when the recollection that Amy came from Manchester suddenly struck her.

She was too skilful a tactician to throw the slightest chance away. “ At home,” she said, and in a few minutes the visitor was admitted.

William Bowles felt himself placed in rather an awkward position when in the presence of the astute Lady Playwell, whose court dress and jewels made her appear more like a queen in his eyes than an ordinary mortal.

She saw at once the cause of his embarrassment, and hastened to relieve it.

“ I must apologise for receiving you thus,” she said, with a bland smile—for William was very handsome; “ but really the Drawing-room was so late that I have not had time to change my dress. Such crowds, such confusion. May I beg to be favoured with the object of this visit?”

“ It is,” said William, “ to inquire after a young lady who has, I believe, for some time been residing with your ladyship—Miss Lawrence.”

“ You mistake—Miss Lawrence is”—

“ What?” exclaimed her visitor.

“ *Not here at present,*” added Lady Playwell, who suspected that she might learn from her visitor some-

thing to aid her designs against Amy. She had been on the point of saying "married," when the idea struck her, and with her usual tact, she was not slow in seizing it. "You appear interested in the young lady, not—not that I wonder at it," she continued with a smile; "all who know her must love her. She has made sad havoc with the hearts of the men since her arrival in London."

"I can believe that, madam," replied William Bowles, with an unembarrassed air, which showed how little his feelings were affected by the observation.

Lady Playwell felt disappointed: she had hoped to have found out that he had been the lover of Amy Lawrence, instead of a friend.

"Too cold," she thought, "for a lover."

When the kind-hearted Doctor Currey first placed his *protégée* under her care, he had told her in confidence as much of poor Amy's history as he thought would secure her sympathy.

She was perfectly aware, therefore, that she had loved and been cruelly deceived—as all believed—by the object of her choice.

"And yet," she said, "the dear girl failed to secure the only heart which could have made her happy?"

"She is deceived," exclaimed William, eagerly; "we have all been cruelly deceived. His uncle, who had other views, sent him on a pretended errand to St. Petersburg, caused him to be detained there against

his will, and spread a false report of his marriage. Henry has not even in thought been unfaithful to the object of his affection; he is as true to Amy as she has been to him. A few hours since we arrived in London: he would have flown to her presence to undeceive her, had not my counsel restrained his impatience. I took the task upon myself, fearful," he added, "lest the unexpected sight of one so justly dear to her should cause too great a surprise."

To Lady Playwell every word he uttered was like delicious music—her ears drank greedily the intelligence: it placed the happiness of the being she secretly hated in her power.

Now, indeed she felt that she could crush her through her heart—be avenged upon the General for the deception which had placed her mercenary attentions in so ridiculous a light.

In an instant the whole plan of her proceedings became plain.

"You have made me happy indeed," she said, with a face radiant with smiles; "have removed a regret—a doubt—which I felt for the happiness of my young *protégée*. At present she is staying with a friend, but I will write to her this very day and break the intelligence. Stay," she added, "in three days I give a party: leave your address—I will send cards for yourself and your friend. Perhaps, it would be as well that their first meeting should be less public. No matter; they can easily escape from the crowd, and enjoy

a tête-à-tête in my boudoir—it will be better than delaying their interview.”

William was of the same opinion, and, after leaving his address, took his leave, impressed with the idea that the heartless woman was a true friend to the unfortunate being whose happiness she sought to blight, whose reputation she trusted to ruin.

“What a scene it will be!” thought Lady Playwell, as she paced the drawing-room with a triumphant air. “I would not miss the meeting for worlds. Now, General, I’ll pay you back scorn for scorn, deceit for deceit! Pray heaven nothing happens to mar my design?”

And she could pray to heaven—that heartless being—for the success of a project which a fiend might have blushed to have conceived.

Oh, woman, woman, how truly has it been said that you are better and worse than man—nearest to angels when worthy of your sex; akin to devils when evil passions take the rein, or jealousy, mortified vanity, and revenge stifle the impulses of your nature!

The next day the two friends received the promised cards of invitation. Eleven was the hour fixed.

Their intended hostess was resolved that not one circumstance which could detract from her triumph, or add to Amy’s mortification, should be spared.

She wished all the world, if possible, to witness the meeting, and dwelt in anticipation upon its agony—she would not spare them a single pang.

“What an hour,” observed William; “eleven! but I suppose it’s the rule in fashionable life. No matter, Henry: don’t look so sad, or let your heart devour itself with impatience. A few days will see us all at home, and the same day which unites me to Mary must see you the husband of Amy Lawrence. There is nothing to interfere with your happiness now,” he added; “you are rich, and free to offer your hand where you have so worthily bestowed your heart. They will rejoice at Burnley to see us again.”

“Heaven grant it!” replied his friend. “Would we were there!”

And thus did the two young men picture a life of future happiness, which, for one at least, was further than ever from being realised.

Lag as he will, old Time is sure to bring the appointed moment at last; although, to Henry’s love and William’s impatience to join his betrothed, the three intervening days seemed as many ages.

But the evening at last arrived, and the young men started upon their visit—Beacham’s countenance all radiant with happiness, Bowles content in the prospect of his friend.

On reaching the mansion of the baronet, from which a long line of carriages extended halfway down the square, they were shown into the library, where Captain Playwell, who had been initiated into the plot by his subtle mother, was waiting to receive them.

He had his part to play in the scene; he had neither

forgotten nor forgiven the mortification which Amy's scornful rejection of his infamous proposals had occasioned; and, like most ungenerous natures, he triumphed in the thought of a mean, despicable, womanly revenge.

In his usual off-handed manner he introduced himself to the young men, and offered his services to *chaperone* them through the crowded rooms. Amy and her husband, he knew, had arrived.

"Allow me," he said, "to be your guide through the menagerie of human animals. You will find men of all countries—statesmen, poets, philosophers, *flâneurs*; the collection is as varied as it is amusing. There, for instance, is the Earl of Carey, who in his youth was one of the wildest fellows upon town. He caused three divorces, and Heaven knows how many duels. At present he is an Exeter Hall man, subscribes to the Bible Society, talks at missionary meetings, and has got thoroughly whitewashed for the sins of his early life."

"I have heard that the Princess Augusta," said William Bowles, "was attached to him?"

The captain was surprised—he, too, had heard of the antiquated piece of scandal, but was puzzled to know how a man from the city of weavers could have learnt it.

"You are right," he said; "he was only a baronet, then. Her Highness even went so far as to consent to a marriage, but the Regent interfered, and the ardent

lover was consoled for the loss of his wife by an Earldom—no bad exchange.”

Both his friends thought differently, but did not think fit to contradict him.

“There goes the Prince of Sorento, with his wife upon his arm. There was a sad report about her at Naples with the King; but his Majesty gave the husband an embassy, when, of course, his honour was satisfied.”

“And is she still received into good society?” demanded Henry Beacham, with surprise.

“Certainly—as a foreigner. I need not tell you that in England, exclusive as we are, everything foreign is sure to be well received. We look carefully into the characters of our own countrywomen, but trouble ourselves very little about those of our continental neighbours. They have a morality of their own—we have no right to judge them by our standard.”

By this time they had reached the principal drawing-room, where Amy and Lady Playwell were standing in the centre of a bevy of beauties, who were secretly criticising the bride, and envying or admiring her jewels.

Adolphus caught his mother's eye, and felt that the moment had arrived.

“Here,” he said, “is the star of the evening—the young and beautiful bride of my old uncle, General Playwell. To be sure he is aged enough to be her



grandfather—but what of that? He is one of the wealthiest commoners in England. The lady's diamonds are unrivalled. She is envied by her own sex as much as he is by ours. Of course she must be happy."

"Is it possible?" said Henry, glancing towards Amy, whose back was turned to him, "so young and yet so heartless!"

Adolphus shrugged his shoulders.

"Sold herself," added William. "Of course there could be no love?"

"Allow me," said the Captain, "to present Mrs. General Playwell to"—

On hearing herself named, Amy naturally turned round, and her eyes fell upon Henry: his cheek glowing in manly health, his eyes sparkling with the hope which animated him of again beholding the object of his love.

To both the shock was electrical. A glassy expression came over the eyes of the fair bride, as, with a deep sigh, she sank fainting in the arms of her husband.

"Married!" faltered Henry, his heart crushed at the blow.

Without giving him time to repeat the word, William seized him by the arm, and dragged, or rather supported him through the rooms.

So sudden had been the introduction, so brief the moment it occupied, that only those who were con-

versing with Amy at the time were aware that it had taken place; by every one else the heat of the room was supposed to be the cause of her indisposition.

“How distressing,” said Lady Playwell. “Who can the young man be whose sudden appearance has caused this emotion?”

“Your son, madam,” said the General, coldly, “can best answer that question.”

“Oh, certainly—a Mr. Henry Beacham, some former acquaintance of my aunt’s: he requested an introduction—of course I could not refuse him.”

Amy, still insensible, was borne to the carriage by her husband, and driven home.

It was a sight to make an angel weep—that pale, fair girl, in her ball robe and resplendent with jewels, crushed like some delicate flower, by the machinations of Lady Playwell.

It was long—very long—ere she awoke to a sense of her misery.

She had seen him—the only being whom her heart had loved—and, faithless, changed as she still thought him, the sight had awakened feelings which, however time might subdue, death only could destroy.

General Playwell was scarcely less unhappy than his wife.

The inquiries he had caused to be made respecting Amy previous to his marriage sufficiently explained the scene he had witnessed.

Like most old men, he was jealous of the thing he

loved ; and the proof of the deep hold which a man whom he believed worthless still retained on the affections of Amy gave him a bitter pang.

What would it have been had he known that Henry Beacham's love had been as constant and unchanged as her own ?

"I must see the fellow," he muttered, between his clenched teeth. "It is for me to protect the woman he deserted against the recurrence of a scene like this !"

The first thing he did on the following morning was to write a note to Lady Playwell, requesting the address of Mr. Beacham.

## CHAPTER VI.

The eyes whose rays beam through the night—  
Whose glance 'twas paradise to see—  
Still brightly flash in beauty's light—  
Still beam with love—but not for me.

ROBIN GOODFELLOW.

THOSE only who have loved—who have seen the idol for whose worship they have made their hearts a shrine torn suddenly from them—can picture the despair of Henry Beacham.

With the greatest difficulty his friend procured a carriage, and conveyed him back to their hotel.

The only word he could draw from him was—

“Married! married!”

“Be a man, Henry,” said William, down whose honest, manly cheeks the tears were streaming fast, “and bear it bravely. If Amy has sold herself for gold, she is not worth regretting.”

“Married!” repeated Henry, with a vacant look.

Poor Bowles loved too sincerely himself not to know how vain, how useless, is consolation while the heart still suffers from the recent infliction of a blow like that which Henry had received: so he wisely forbore to offer it.

He had that very morning written home to Burnley and to Mary Heartland—every line of his letters breathing happiness; and now what a change!

The next morning saw his friend in a raging fever: the blood had rushed to his brain, and his life was despaired of.

In his madness he called upon Amy by the most endearing names—entreating her not to abandon him; but never did one word of reproach escape his lips—his love was too deep for that.

“Oh, heaven!” thought William, as he sat watching by his side, “what a heart she has broken!”

On the following day, while the physicians were in consultation, he was called from the sick room to receive General Playwell, whose card had twice been sent up to him.

The old man had come with the fixed resolution of calling out the man who, as he thought, had lent himself to a dastardly outrage upon the feelings of his wife.

“You are the friend, I presume, of Mr. Beacham?” he said, bowing stiffly, as the young man entered the apartment.

“I have that honour.”

“We will not dispute on terms. I must see him.”

“Impossible!”

“Why so?”

“Because he is at this moment labouring under a brain fever: he last night received a shock from which I fear it will be long, very long, before he recovers.”

"Psha!" exclaimed the General, impatiently; "this can be nothing more than an excuse to avoid meeting the husband of the woman he so cowardly insulted, so heartlessly abandoned; and now, forsooth, he makes a parade of sentimentality—of remorse—the last, no doubt, as sincere as his pretended passion!"

"My friend!" exclaimed the indignant William, "does suffer, but not from remorse; he has not one action of his life with which to reproach himself—he is truth and honour's self!"

"Indeed!" said the General, with a sneer; "was he not once engaged to Miss Lawrence?"

"Yes."

"And did he not abandon her—marry another?"

"You are deceived, General, like the rest of the world," said William, eagerly; "Mr. Beacham has never been married; it was a false report, circulated by his late uncle, who wished if possible, to separate him for ever from the girl of his choice. For this purpose he sent him on a pretended mission to St. Petersburg, and gave orders to his worthy agent there so to involve him in commercial transactions and pretended liabilities that he should be unable to leave the country. The infamous project succeeded; and, but for the personal interference of the Emperor himself, my suffering friend would at this moment be in Russia instead of England. Would to heaven he had!" he added, bitterly; "since he has only returned to find misery here."

"Not married!" ejaculated the General, turning deadly pale; for he foresaw the effect the intelligence of her former lover's fidelity would produce upon a heart like Amy's.

"I presume you do not doubt my word, sir?" observed the young man, with an air of defiance, which at any other moment would have been met with one equally hostile from the old soldier, but his spirit was crushed.

He loved his young wife with all an old man's fondness.

Confident in her virtue, Henry Beacham married would have been no very dangerous rival in her affections; but Henry Beacham single, faithful, suffering, the victim of treachery endured for his fidelity to her, was a very different person; and for the first time since his marriage, the demon jealousy took possession of his heart.

"No, no—I cannot doubt your word," faltered the old man; "still the meeting was most unfortunate."

"For that, sir, you must thank Lady Playwell: she it was who invited us to meet *Miss Lawrence*, whom Henry, after so long an absence, was most anxious to see. She said nothing about her marriage; the intelligence came like a thunderbolt upon my friend—I fear it has crushed him."

"Devil!—artful devil!" muttered the General.

"Sir!"

"I mean the fiend who planned the meeting—a dis-

appointed manœuvring woman, who, foiled in her design upon my fortune, has taken these unworthy means of vengeance. I will confess to you, sir, that I came with very different feelings; the purport of my visit was to call your friend to an account for what I deemed an unmanly insult to the woman he had abandoned—*now my wife!*”

The peculiar emphasis which the speaker laid upon the words “my wife” annoyed William sadly.

He felt at that moment that he should like very much to shoot the General, and so end Amy’s and Henry’s troubles at once. For the first time in his life he almost hated a human being.

Bowing stiffly, he observed, that if General Playwell felt in the slightest degree aggrieved at what had passed, he was perfectly ready to assume the responsibility of his friend’s conduct in any way he pleased.

“No, no—it is unnecessary.”

Poor William felt disappointed: he would rather that the reply had been “Yes, yes.”

“I naturally expect, under the circumstances,” said the General, “that your friend will not attempt to see Mrs. Playwell again.”

“He alone can answer that, sir.”

“Or write to her?”

“What!” exclaimed the indignant William; “not see her—not explain to her the infamous treachery by which his heart had been blighted, his hopes of hap-



piness destroyed—not prove to her that he has been betrayed—impossible!”

“Your friend may think better of it,” observed his visitor.

“Not if I know him rightly.”

“But your influence with him”—

“Will never be used for such a purpose,” interrupted William; “I cannot give to my friend the advice which my own heart and reason would reject. No—he must stand blameless, pure, and honourable in her eyes—his faith beyond suspicion—his conduct beyond reproach: let the blame fall upon those whose treachery has occasioned all this misery.”

Finding that he was not likely to obtain an ally in the speaker, the General took his leave.

Mentally he could not but acknowledge that the young man was right—that her former lover ought to clear himself from the doubts of his honour and good faith. What the effect of the intelligence would be upon Amy, he feared to think.

“We must quit England,” he muttered, “before Beacham has sufficiently recovered to write or seek an interview. In Italy or France it will be easy to prevent all correspondence—change of scene may efface from her memory the recollection of her early love.”

Full of this resolution he returned home, carefully concealing from his wife not only the visit he had made, but the illness of poor Henry.

At the end of a fortnight Henry was sufficiently

recovered to start with his friend for Manchester, where old Mr. Bowles and Mary Heartland were anxiously awaiting their arrival.

They were exceedingly shocked to see the ravages which illness had made in the person of Henry.

His features were so pale and woe-begone that the mother who bore him would scarcely have known him; and poor William was ill and careworn with the anxiety he had endured.

Previous to quitting Manchester on his expedition to St. Petersburg, William Bowles had given authority to a Mr. Mortimer, a man who had hitherto borne an unimpeachable character, to settle the affairs of the firm.

This was at the commencement of the railroad fever, when thousands were daily lost and won. Although not wishing to act dishonourably, he could not resist the temptation of speculation: he thought it a pity that such large sums should lay idle in his hands whilst fortunes were being daily made.

He bought first into one line, and lost; then doubled the venture, in the hope of retrieving himself; and so went on, step by step, till the property he had received in trust was fearfully diminished.

Things were in this state when the return of the young men fell like a thunderbolt upon him.

He felt that his character was blasted, for there existed not the remotest possibility of his replacing the funds he had so improperly employed.

At first he thought of suicide ; his next idea was of flight.

He was pacing the room in a most pitiable condition, when the servant announced a visitor.

“ Not at home. I can't see any one,” he exclaimed, impatiently.

“ But the gentleman says he must see you, sir.”

“ Must !” and the conscious-stricken man trembled at the word. “ Must—surely you mistake.”

“ No, I don't, sir.”

“ Did he leave his name.”

“ Mr. Small, sir.”

“ What the deuce can he want ?” thought Mr. Mortimer. “ No matter. Show him up.”

Small was not one of those men who pass through the world with their eyes shut. He had watched the proceedings of the receiver with intense interest, made himself acquainted with his various speculations, calculated the rise and fall of the markets, and had a shrewd guess as to the results.

Far from regretting, his hatred to Henry Beacham induced him to rejoice at this. He would willingly have seen him return to England beggared in fortune, as he felt he must be in happiness ; for he had seen the announcement of Amy's marriage with General Playwell in the papers.

“ Good evening, my dear sir,” he exclaimed, as he entered the room, with a cat-like pace. “ Sad news—sad news.”

“What news?” demanded Mr. Mortimer, turning deadly pale.

“Have you not heard? Well that is extraordinary.”

“I have heard nothing. Pray do speak out. I am rather of a nervous temperament; and to me suspense is worse than actual misfortune. What has happened?”

“Only that Mr. Beacham has returned.”

“Is that a misfortune?” replied the gentleman, trying to smile.

“Perhaps not. But his health is so shaken that it is ten to one if he ever recovers. Therefore I say it is a sad thing—with so fine a fortune, too.”

“Very.”

“So admirably secured. Why you must already have in hand at least eight hundred thousand pounds?”

“Somewhere thereabouts,” replied the unhappy man with a shudder, as he reflected how fearfully it had been diminished speculating.

Small eyed him for a few moments steadily. He wished to read him before he decided on his grand attack.

The task was not a very difficult one. He saw, from his agitated look, quivering lip, and pale features, that he had to do with a man weak, irresolute, and nervous—one whom a strong mind would find little or no difficulty in bending to its purpose.

Suddenly changing his polite, calm tone, he rudely asked him how he intended to make up his accounts.

“Sir!” exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, trying to look indignant. “I do not understand your meaning.”

"Humph! perhaps not; for the question should have been, how do you intend to avoid making them up. That would have been more to the purpose, I believe, between ourselves."

"Do you mean to impugn"—

"Pooh! leave fine phrases for those who do not know their value. That I come with no hostile intent you will believe; for I hate deeply the man you have plundered, and would willingly that every shilling of my late partner's fortune were lost, instead of the three or four hundred thousand pounds with which you have played ducks and drakes."

Mortimer was overwhelmed at the knowledge of his delinquency which Small's speech betrayed; still, in the hate he expressed towards Henry Beacham he saw a gleam of hope.

"I have indeed been most unfortunate."

"Say foolish—that's the better word," retorted Small. "But come—let's be candid with each other, for I see you will never get out of the mess without my assistance. What is the amount of your defalcations?"

"Three hundred thousand."

"It's a large sum. It's useless to suppose that you can replace it."

The unhappy man bowed his head in token of assent.

"The next thing to be considered," continued the speaker, "is how to get over the affair, Breach of trust is an ugly business. You must quit England."

"But what am I to do? How live?"

"How live!" repeated Small, in a tone of contempt. "The man who can lay his hands on five hundred thousand pounds never need ask that question. Is this house your own?" he added looking round the room.

"It is."

"It seems an old one."

"One of the oldest in Manchester."

"Then it would burn easily. When do you give up your accounts to the young heir?"

"In three days."

"Now listen to me," said Small, drawing his chair closer to his intended dupe, and speaking in a low tone. "The evening before the settlement, draw from the bank the large deposit standing in your name—the circumstance will not appear suspicious. Place the books and vouchers in the safe, leave a little gold there—only for appearance sake—it will look well. I will provide you with a disguise in which you may defy detection. When the servants have retired to rest, fire the house. It will be supposed that you and the property perished equally in the flames."

"But where am I to fly to?"

"To the land whose citizens ask no questions of those who come laden with wealth to its shores. Go into the back settlements, purchase land, and live like one of the patriarchs of old, upon your own estate. You will not be the first trustee who has done so."

"But this is felony—base, ignoble theft!" exclaimed

Mr. Mortimer. "I don't know. Is there no other way?"

"Yes," said Small, looking at her gray eyes upon him, as if to read his very soul. "There is yet another means of escape."

"Show it to me, and I will take it."

"With pleasure."

She went straight to the chimney-piece, over which a group of painted figures were leaning, took one of them down, examined it, and it was changed and capped. Placing the weapon in his hand, he handed it to Mr. Mortimer.

"There!"

The weapon was pressed to his forehead, and twice—twice it was pressed to the eye if the need prevailed.

Showing the pistol from him, he hung him back,

—

"No more, I am in the."

"I thought so," muttered Small to himself.

"I like your pistol. This is my hand is better than the first and last time I have."

"Of course it is."

"But, Mr. Mortimer, who saw that the plan, or any the least of it, was feasible—"

"—is it in your interest in the affair? for, like you, I know the world too well to suppose that either pity or vanity have procured me your assistance at such a"

"Hark!" replied Small. "I am tired of England,

and, although I have not the same motives as yourself for leaving it, intend to settle in America. It is a land for a man of energy to struggle in—there are no dreamers there.”

Wine was ordered, and the two men—who till that day scarcely had exchanged more than a few words—sat down and discussed in detail every point of their dishonest scheme.

As fast as Mr. Mortimer raised an objection, Small was ready to answer it.

It was evident that he had well considered his plan.

“I think it will do,” he observed with a self-satisfied smile, after having answered, one by one, every doubt, and stifled the remorse of his dupe, either by working on his terrors or ridiculing them.

“I think so, too; but how about the servants?” whispered Mr. Mortimer. “Should a life be lost in the fire, I should never know another happy hour.”

“Oh, they will doubtless escape; at least, they will have the chance. Of course we have no interest in preventing them. By-the-by,” added his visitor, “where is your bed-room?”

Mortimer pointed to a door opening into the drawing-room.

“That’s fortunate; for, as the ruins will doubtless be sifted in hopes of recovering some portion of the lost property, we must place some human remains in the room. You stare—but I have foreseen even that. I lately bought at a sale several anatomical preparations,



under the idea of presenting them to a museum, of which I am the treasurer and trustee: I'll send them in the morning. And now," he added, "I must leave you. Call boldly on the young fools, William Bowles and his love-sick friend; press them to fix the hour for the surrender of your trust—rely upon yourself—and leave the rest to my management."

"But when shall I see you again?"

"To-morrow, to make our final arrangements. Have you much brandy in your cellar? If not, order some; also spirits of wine, and oil for your lamps. Remember, there must be no lack of means to feed the flames."

"Fear not that," said Mortimer, with a shudder; "the old house will burn like tinder."

With these words they parted.

Small, in his way home, stepped into his chemist's, and bought a bottle of laudanum; he had a use for it.

The very next day after their interview, the Bowleses—father and son—were seated with Henry Beacham, who had taken possession of his late uncle's house.

The old gentleman appeared unusually gloomy.

His son saw that there was something on his mind, but he knew his humour too well to question him. He knew that he should not have long to wait, for his father had asked for a pipe—a sure indication that he had arranged his ideas; and was about to bring them forth in words.

Poor Henry tried to be cheerful, in honour of his guests, but the effort had been too much for him; still,

whenever he replied to William, his countenance would brighten with a look of kindness.

That heart must have been insensible indeed which could not feel affection for such a friend.

“Now for it,” whispered William to Henry, as his father slowly knocked the ashes out of his pipe and placed it on the table. “It must be something important—he has taken three pipes to reflect over it.”

“William,” said the old man.

“Yes, sir.”

“Have you seen or heard anything of Mr. Mortimer since your return?”

“Not much, for most of my time has been passed at Miss Heartland’s. Small informed me that he had been very busy in settling the affairs of the firm, and that he had given up to him all vouchers for moneys due, bills, and receipts, according to my instructions.”

“Ah! you have not been on Change, then?”

“No, sir.”

“I have,” continued his father, “and I heard rumours which, without altogether believing, have somewhat alarmed me. They say that Mortimer has been speculating fearfully in railway shares lately, and lost enormously.”

“Mortimer speculate in railways!” replied William, with an incredulous smile; “you do not know him, sir—he is one of the most cautious men living—bears, as you well know, an unimpeachable character; besides, you yourself recommended him.”

Mr. Bowles took up his pipe and refilled it—a sure sign that, although relieved, he was far from being convinced. His son began to feel alarmed.

“ I fear, sir, that you are not of my opinion ?”

“ Unfortunately I know that Mr. Mortimer has speculated, but not to what extent. He has hitherto borne an honourable character ; but, alas, experience proves that the hour of temptation comes to all. Has he called on you ?”

“ No.”

“ Nor on Henry ?”

“ No,” replied Beacham, starting from his reverie ; “ at least not that I know of.”

The words were scarcely spoken before the servant threw open the drawing-room door, and announced Mr. Mortimer.

All three exchanged glances as they rose to receive him.

“ Welcome, sir—welcome back to England,” exclaimed the gentleman, as he shook Henry Beacham warmly by the hand. “ Happy to see you, my young friend.” (This was addressed to William.)

“ I suppose,” he added, with a smile, “ you guess the purport of my errand here ?”

“ Not exactly.”

“ It is to get rid of the awful responsibility of eight hundred thousand pounds which I have already received under the power of attorney which Mr. William Bowles left with me on his departure for St. Petersburg.

Ah, Mr. Beacham," he added, "you are a happy man—with youth, fortune, all that can render life agreeable.

Poor Henry replied only by a sigh.

"Eight hundred thousand pounds," repeated Mr. Bowles, senior; "why the sum is enormous! you must have been very expeditious."

"The late Mr. Grindem's affairs were in excellent order, and to do his little partner justice, he gave me every assistance in his power. But come, gentlemen, fix a day, that I may surrender up my trust, for, to speak the truth, I am weary of the responsibility."

"To-morrow," said William Bowles, "since you desire it."

"No, not to-morrow," interrupted his friend; "you forget," he added, in a whisper, "that you are engaged to spend the day with Mary: the dear girl has already sacrificed so much, that it would be cruel to disappoint her. The day after to-morrow."

"The day after to-morrow be it, then," repeated Mr. Mortimer. "Perhaps you will honour me by dining with me? I will have all the vouchers and accounts arranged for your inspection: and if you, sir," he added, addressing Mr. Bowles, senior, "will honour me with a visit, perhaps your experience may prove of service to your young friend."

To his son's great surprise—for the old man rarely visited—his father accepted the invitation, and their visitor took his leave.

"Well, father, what say you now?" exclaimed his

son, as the old gentleman once more began filling his pipe ; " are you satisfied ?"

" I don't know."

" Can anything be more straightforward ?"

" Perhaps not."

" But what do you think ?"

" I'll tell you the day after to-morrow."

And the speaker once more more commenced puffing the fragrant weed ; he was evidently cogitating.

" Upon my soul," muttered his son to himself, " the governor is absolutely growing suspicious."

The next morning, previous to his starting on his visit to Mary Heartland, William Bowles entered the room where his friend Henry was busily occupied in writing. He had a packet of papers in his hand.

" Not now," said Beacham, as he laid them on the table. " I am in no humour for business now : give me till to-morrow ?"

" This is not exactly business," replied his friend, seriously.

" What do they relate to ?"

" That is more than I can tell, for I have never read a single line of them ; but I feel that the time has arrived when you ought to be made acquainted with their contents. They relate, I believe to some transactions of your late uncle."

The young man's curiosity was excited : he was about to break the seal, when William laid his hand upon his arm to restrain him.

"Listen to me first," he said; "and when you have heard how I became possessed of them, then use your own discretion whether you will read or destroy them."

"There is some mystery, then?" observed Henry.

"There is a mystery."

William related to his astonished friend all the circumstances which preceded and followed old Gridley's death, and the various attempts made by Small and Grindem, through the agency of Marjoram, to obtain possession of the papers; also the power which the former personage had exercised over his uncle whilst he possessed them.

When he had done, his friend grasped his hand, and thanked him.

"You are right," he said; "I ought to peruse these papers alone."

## CHAPTER VII.

Wise men may take counsel from a knave,  
But fools alone would trust them in the work  
Of it. SPANISH PROVERB.

THE evening previous to the day fixed for the settlement of the affairs of the firm of Grindem and Small, Mr. Mortimer was seated in his drawing-room, awaiting the arrival of his rascally confederate.

That very day he had drawn from the banks the enormous sum of five hundred thousand pounds, and the amount in bills, gold, and notes, was placed in his cash-box on the table before him.

Despite the resolution which he had displayed in his interview with the Bowleses and Henry, as the moment approached his courage began to fail him, and he half repented of the promise he had given; yet how to recede he knew not.

Like the Thane of Cawdor he was so far advanced in crime that to recede was more difficult than to advance.

Much to the astonishment of his domestics, he had ordered considerable quantities of spirits to be brought into the drawing-room, and made such dispositions to

secure the burning of his house, that had they not supposed him mad, or felt every confidence in his character, his intentions must have been suspected—the veil which covered them was so transparent.

“What did I want with wealth?” he murmured; “I had not even the poor excuse of poverty, for my income more than satisfied my wishes; and yet, for an idol I once despised, I have sacrificed honour, name, reputation—everything; and to conceal one crime am about to commit another, banish myself to a distant land, and die unhonoured and unknown. God help me!” he added, “how frail are our resolutions! a year since, had any one predicted such an event, I should have laughed him to scorn.”

There was a knock at the drawing-room door.

“Come in.”

A footman entered with a box—it was the one Small had promised to send.

“Place it down,” said his master, “and give the porter half-a-crown.”

“He is gone, sir,” replied the man; “he said it was paid for, and required no answer; but am I to leave it here?”

“I told you so.”

“I beg pardon, but I thought you expected company?”

“Leave it as I desire you,” said his master, sternly, “and make no more remarks. I expect a gentleman: as soon as he arrives show him up stairs, and remember that I am not at home to any one else.”



The domestic left the room, but in a few minutes returned, ushering in Mr. Small.

To the physiognomist the countenance of Mr. Mortimer's visitor might have appeared a curious study.

His features were set as with some firm resolution, and his little gray eyes occasionally flashed with a light like those of a rattlesnake before it makes its spring.

"You are punctual," observed his host.

"I always am to business. It has been my maxim through life. Have you followed my directions?"

"I have."

"And the money?"

Mortimer pointed to the cash-box in the centre of the table: a quiet smile of satisfaction broke on the countenance of his visitor.

It was indeed a triumph to him to obtain even a portion of the wealth of his late partner, whom he had so hated; besides, it gratified his pride as well as his avarice, for he defeated the precautions which Grindem had taken to prevent a shilling of it from falling into his hands.

"What have you there?" demanded Mr. Mortimer, pointing to the trunk which Small had sent a short time previous to his arrival.

A smile of hate and triumph passed over the countenance of the malignant wretch at the question.

"Some disguise, I suppose?" said the querist.

"Not a disguise alone," replied his confederate,

sinking his voice to a whisper, as if he feared the walls should echo his villany; "but the ledgers of the firm, the account books, and the vouchers for far the greater part of old Grindem's wealth."

"But they are the property of his heir."

"True. And without them he will be a beggar."

"What do you intend to do with them?" inquired the terror-stricken Mortimer.

"Burn them," replied Small, deliberately; "cripple him. My revenge would be but half gratified were I not assured of his utter ruin. Ay, you may stare! but dearly as I love gold, deeply as I prize my personal safety, I would sacrifice both to insure his destruction. He has scorned—insulted me—and I am not one of those who forget."

"Or forgive?" added his confederate in iniquity, with a sigh.

"Right. Fools only practise that—it is the idiot's virtue. Revenge for me! But come, man," he added, "we have little time to lose. Have you no wine? Considering that I come to serve you, you give me but a cold reception. Am I not your friend—your preserver—your guardian angel?"

The tone of bitter mockery in which the question was asked, grated on the ears of Mortimer, who was naturally more weak than criminal: cursed with one of those plastic minds which yield to every impression, and are easily moulded to good or evil by men of stronger purpose.

"Angel!" he faltered, with a look of ill-disguised terror and disgust.

"Ay, Satan was one. Am I worse than he?" demanded Small. "But come, wine—wine," he added; "let's have a night of it—carouse to the success of our project—to the ruin of Henry Beacham!"

With a deep-drawn sigh his host proceeded to the sideboard, and placed several bottles, and two well-filled decanters upon the table. Filling a glass, Small raised it above his head, and, with eyes sparkling with hate, exclaimed—

"Success!"

"Success," repeated Mortimer, with the air of a man who found himself obliged to hob and nob with the arch-enemy of mankind.

"Again," continued Small, filling the glasses. "Confusion to our enemies!"

"I have no enemies," replied his host, with a sigh.

"Fool!" exclaimed his guest, "at this moment all mankind are your enemies, or will be, should your defalcations be discovered. Those who are already plotting the plunder of the wealthy heir will hate you because you have been beforehand with them—the minions of justice will try in vain to trace your steps—the mob whom your escape will disappoint—the fool whom you have robbed. No enemies!" he added, with a sneer; "why, there is not a knave who prates of honesty, or a dupe who believes in it, but to-morrow,

should your conduct be discovered, will join in the hue and cry against you. A man never yet practised a piece of successful villany but he made a thousand enemies. The world is so envious."

"God help me!" exclaimed the repentant man. "I have indeed fallen never to rise again."

"Then why regret it?" continued his tempter. "Regret is the most useless feeling of the human heart. With me it shall be the last. I, too, have played a bold game, and lost it. Had I sat down with cold regret to keep me company, I might have been a beggar. No; I waited, calculated, staked again," he added, pointing to the cash-box upon the table, "and won. So may you."

"Ay, at the loss of reputation."

A low chuckle from Small indicated how little he either understood or sympathised with the feelings of his victim.

To him reputation had long been merely a marketable commodity, worth only what it would bring.

"Reputation," he repeated; "pooh! did you ever know a man who was rich, no matter in what land, who was not respected, courted, feared? Men pay homage to gold—it is the god of the earth, and rules it: there is not a vice it will not gild, or a pleasure which it will not purchase. But fill, man—fill—drown these gloomy forebodings; wine will give you nerve—courage; and before the night is out you will require both!"

The little man, who had been drinking before his arrival, was quite poetical in his excitement.

Although he had a dangerous game to play, and meditated an act of atrocious cruelty and treachery, he still continued to drink: he knew his strength. Like the serpent, whose venom is most virulent under a burning sun, Small was always most dangerous when under the maddening influence of drink.

And so they continued to drain glass after glass in silence, till the time-piece on the chimney struck the hour of midnight.

Mortimer started: he had no idea it was so late.

"Now," said his guest, "to business; but let us do everything in order. First send the servants to their beds."

"The servants?" faltered his host.

Small only nodded.

"I—I thought," continued the wretched man, "you spoke of firing the house?"

"Of course I did."

"Then they—the servants, I mean—will be burnt with it."

The look of horror with which this was uttered convinced Small that he had gone too far: the conscience of his dupe was not sufficiently seared for his purpose, so he thought it best to conceal it.

"Ridiculous!" he said. "Who ever heard of servants being burnt to death? They always contrive to escape, let who will suffer. Do you suppose," he

added, in a tone of pretended reproach, "that I would run the risk of murder?"

"I don't know," exclaimed Mortimer, passionately; "it seems as if for the last two hours I have been banquetting with the fiend!"

"How are we to leave the house unperceived," continued the tempter, "if they remain up?"

"True—true."

"Or fire the house? They would give the alarm at the first blaze, and all would be discovered! Act like a man, and don't let any foolish qualms of conscience spoil our enterprise. You seem more careful of their safety than your own!"

"As you say, they will escape."

"Of course they will—or at least they may. We leave them the choice."

Confused by the wine he had already drunk—subdued, if not convinced, by the specious reasons of his confederate—Mortimer rang the bell, and directed the servants to retire to rest; adding, that he had business to arrange with his visitor, and would let him out himself.

In less than an hour the two plotters were the only persons awake within the house; and that hour was employed in dividing the contents of the cash-box—the ill-acquired wealth of Gilbert Grindem.

By the time the division was accomplished the clock struck one.

"When do we start?" demanded Mortimer.

“In an hour.”

“To London?”

“To London,” replied Small. “My wife and family have already left—all but Matthew,” he added, bitterly; “the fool whose unnatural conduct has caused my ruin. Him I have left behind to starve—rot!”

“Your own son!” observed his host. “Have you a heart?”

“I suppose so, seeing that I could not well live without one. But if you mean to ask whether it is weak and womanish like yours, I answer, No. Why should I think of the tie of blood between us, since he has forgotten it? But come, to business.”

Going to the trunk he unlocked it, and removed from it several anatomical preparations which he had purchased some time previously, under the idea of presenting them to the Museum, of which he was one of the trustees and treasurer.

“What am I to do with these?” demanded Mortimer, as Small placed them in his arms.

“Put them in your bed, that when the ruins are examined—as they are sure to be—the fools may be convinced you perished in the fire; unless,” he added, with a grin, “you prefer making the farce a tragedy by taking the place there yourself; it will prevent suspicion, and consequently pursuit. Let us get but four-and-twenty hours’ start, and we may defy them: the vessel will have sailed.”

Pale with terror and disgust, the wretched man took

the remnants of mortality as he was directed, and staggered with them into his chamber, which opened from the drawing-room.

No sooner was he gone than Small hastily drew a phial from his side pocket, and emptied its contents into the decanter which contained the port.

Small had been drinking sherry all the night.

The phial contained the laudanum which, he had bought on his way home, after his first visit to Mortimer.

"Why how pale you look," he exclaimed, as his dupe returned; "one would imagine that you had either seen a ghost or committed a murder."

"Your countenance is as ghastly," replied his victim, with a sigh. "Heaven forgive us both."

"Amen!" said Small. "But come, take another glass of wine—it will give you courage. Our task is not half over yet. We shall never accomplish it, if you suffer such thoughts to prey upon you. They drink the life-blood of man, and blanch his cheek. There," he added, pouring out a glass of port for Mortimer, and one of sherry for himself, "that will refresh you!"

Despite his reckless character, the lips of the speaker became pale, and his teeth chattered, as the wretched man drained the fatal draught. To conceal his agitation, he hastily tossed off the contents of his own glass, and placed it on the table.

"It has a strange taste," observed Mortimer, as he followed his example.

"Pooh! your palate is out of order. Try another."



He did so, but observed that the second tasted even more strangely than the first.

Convinced that the potion would in a few minutes do its work, Small hastily began to pile the furniture of the room upon the table, adding to it the account-books, bills and vouchers which he had stolen from the office; next he poured over the mass several bottles of brandy and oil, so as to render the mass as combustible as possible.

When he had finished, he viewed the preparations with savage delight. It was the funeral pyre of Henry Beacham's fortune! If he felt a pang of regret, it was that he could not sacrifice the object of his hatred with it.

"It will do," he said, addressing his confederate, who sat in his easy chair, watching his proceedings with glassy eyes.

"Ye—es," faltered Mortimer, upon whom the drug began to take effect; "I feel sick at heart—ugh—ugh!"

"Another glass of wine will set all right."

Small filled it, and held it to the lips of the half-stupefied man; but he, either disgusted with the smell or suspected treachery, by a violent effort dashed it hastily from his hand, and sat glaring upon his destroyer.

"Hang the fellow," muttered Small; "why does he not sleep?"

Seating himself opposite his victim, he coldly watched the effects of of the draught.

It was evident that Mortimer suspected something, for after one or two ineffectual efforts to rise from his chair and speak, he uttered a deep groan, and his eyes, which followed every look and motion of his destroyer, were strained with mental agony.

The assassin began to feel uneasy, not at the sufferings of the wretched man, but at the delay.

"I must end this," he muttered, between his clenched teeth, as the time-piece struck the hour of two. "If the fool wont sleep, it's not my fault!"

So saying, he took up the decanter of port, and advancing to the wretch who sat spell-bound beneath the influence of the drug, poured a great portion of its contents down his throat.

"I think that will do for him!" he added.

For about ten minutes longer Mortimer continued to sit with his eyes fixed upon Small, who quailed beneath the stony death-like glance.

At last, to his infinite relief, the mental power by which the unhappy man had resisted the influence of the drug gave way, and his head sank upon his breast.

To rifle his person of his share of the plunder of Henry Beacham's fortune was the work of an instant; that done, the murderer dragged him by the collar from the drawing-room into the bed-room, placed the still breathing body upon the bed, and returned for several bottles of spirits and oil, which he poured over the sheets and coverlid.

During the whole of these transactions, although

deeply excited, Small's prudence never once deserted him: he carefully closed the shutters of both rooms, in order that the appearance of the flames might not cause an alarm to be given too soon.

His next step was to heap up every combustible matter he could lay his hands on under the staircase, before he returned to the drawing-room to disguise himself, which he did as coolly as if preparing for a masquerade.

And it was a masquerade between him and death, in which he was playing a terrible game with justice.

When all was arranged he took up one of the candles, and retired to the staircase, which he fired.

The house being old the flames caught rapidly, and in a few minutes all possibility of escape for the servants was cut off.

He next descended to the bed-room of the still breathing Mortimer, and applying the light to the curtains, the room in an instant was in a blaze.

Repeating the treacherous act, the pile in the drawing-room was ignited, and Small saw, with the exultation of a fiend, the books, bills, and vouchers shrivelled up before his eyes.

Thus the house was fired in three places.

"'Tis done!" he exclaimed; "and the man I hate is a beggar! I am old Grindem's heir!" he added, with a diabolical laugh; "I alone inherit his ill-gotten wealth. It was for his drudge, his tool, his despised partner, that he toiled, slaved, and sinned for. For all

his crimes I wish him no other punishment than the knowledge of my triumph over him and his idol nephew. Ha, ha! how the old serpent must writhe within his grave!"

Finding that the room was getting too hot to remain, the cold-blooded assassin drew his disguise closer round him, descended to the hall; the staircase which was burning was the one leading to the upper portion of the house.

His heart, although he had consigned so many human beings to destruction, felt not the least reproach or pang of remorse; such feelings—even if he had ever possessed them—were drowned in the intoxication of his revenge.

"One minute more," he exclaimed, as he approached the door, "and I am free. I shall be just in time for the early train. In a foreign land I shall have wealth enough to satisfy even my craving spirit. Grindem's wealth—there is the triumph! The old miser's hoard and Beacham's fortune. I should be but half-satisfied with my success did it not leave him a beggar!"

He carefully laid his hand upon the lock—to his terror and disappointment the key was gone; it was one of those which fasten with a spring, and the footman, knowing that his master had a key, and could let his guest out when he pleased, as a matter of precaution had withdrawn his.

Cold, heavy drops of perspiration broke over Small's countenance—his heart beat wildly.

Here was a chance he had not foreseen.

In the very moment of success the hand of justice had reached him—not human justice, but that Divine, unerring hand which forbears with patience; but when it strikes, strikes with certainty.

In an instant the horror of his fate rushed on him. His presence of mind deserted him. He who had been so cold and calculating whilst plotting and executing the destruction of others, became helpless as a child to save himself.

In the agony of his terrors the impious wretch dared to call upon heaven for assistance—invoke the Being whose laws he had outraged, whose image he had defaced.

The lower part of Mr. Mortimer's residence, like many of the houses in Manchester, was let off for warehouses, and entirely separated from the upper stories.

Only the entrance hall, which was of stone, and terminated in an old-fashioned wooden staircase, was retained.

There was no back yard—no staircase that way—no egress but by the door; and that was barred—sternly barred against him.

The wretched man, in his despair, dashed himself against the walls, like some wild animal which suddenly finds itself caught in a trap.

He tried to force the lock by thrusting in his fingers, till they bled, between the bolt and the catch—it was all in vain.

Exhausted by his fruitless efforts, he sank despair-

ingly upon the floor, alternately howling curses on his own folly, or calling upon heaven to assist him.

Not one pang of remorse—not one thought of his victims.

And there he crouched, like a lonely, sullen thing, caught in his own toils.

He was roused from the stupor into which he at last had fallen; by the cracking of the flames above.

With desperate force he threw himself against the door, and began screaming and shouting for assistance, but there was none at hand.

“What am I to do!” he exclaimed. “I shall be burnt—scorched like a wolf in my den! Is there no hope? God have mercy on me! No help—no assistance!”

The very precautions the wretch had taken in closing the shutters of the rooms above prevented the flames from being visible; so that whilst the house was a glowing furnace within, all was dark without.

As a last chance, he resolved to pass the burning staircase, and, if possible, reach the roof; from thence it was possible, he thought, to pass to one of the neighbouring houses, and so escape—it was his last hope; for even if he could endure the heat below until an alarm was given, his being found in the house would lead to suspicion, inquiry and detection.

“Better die in the fire,” he thought, “than swing as a murderer!”

With this resolution he mounted the staircase, and once more endeavoured to enter the drawing-room.

On opening the door the current of air caused the flames to rush out.

They blackened his face, scorched his brows and eyelids.

In vain he attempted to close it—the pain was too much to be braved a second time.

The staircase leading to the servants' rooms was one blaze of fire; the flames leaped and curled round the balustrade like things instinct with life.

In several places the charred boards had fallen through, and nothing remained but the red, angry, glowing beams which had supported them; and even these were so far eaten through that he was afraid to trust them, lest his weight should cause them to break, and precipitate him into the fearful furnace beneath.

Howling with agony, he placed his hand on the fiery balustrade, and began his ascent.

By the time he had reached the top his feet and hands were burnt to the bone, and his body scorched by the circling flames which, with retributive justice, leaped and played around his person.

In the midst of his agony he perceived the notes and bills for which he had risked so much curl and crisp in his bosom, where he had concealed them.

His clothes being woollen, did not blaze, but he felt that he was incased in them as in a glowing cinder.

Great as was his bodily pain, his mental agonies exceeded it.

Like all ferocious animals, Small possessed a dogged resolution where life was at stake.

Half dead as he was, and suffocated, he resolved to struggle to the last.

Perhaps the feverish state of his blood gave him an unnatural courage, for no sooner did he reach the top of the stairs than he looked wildly round for the means of egress.

Despite his own position and the visible justice which had reached him, no sentiment of pity for the unfortunate wretches who were sleeping near him, unconscious of their danger, touched his heart.

With a groan of satisfaction he perceived a ladder upon the landing-place, which led to a trap-door opening on the roof.

With a desperate effort he mounted the ladder, grinding his teeth at every step, pushed aside the door, and stood upon the leads. He little thought how soon they would melt beneath his feet!

“Thank heaven,” he exclaimed; “I am saved!”

His next thought was to draw the ladder up after him, thereby rendering the escape of the servants hopeless. And yet an instant before he had dared to offer thanks to heaven.

The shutters of the drawing-room and Mr. Mortimer's bed-room, which faced the street, soon became charred by the flames within.

The heat caused the glass to crack, and the current



of air which the opening of the door admitted, gave fresh strength to the raging fire.

Just as Small reached the roof, the flames broke from the windows in all directions. At first there was a single cry of "Fire!"

"Discovered!" groaned the guilty wretch. "The fire is discovered, and I still here!"

In an inconceivably short space of time the one voice which had given the alarm was swelled to hundreds.

Then rose the hum of voices, the rattling of wheels, as the engines drove furiously up, and the shouts of the police and firemen.

Small cast his eyes despairingly round him—it was almost daylight—and he saw no means of passing from the roof of the blazing pile to the next, for the houses on either side were considerably higher; and turn which way he would, nothing but a steep party-wall presented itself, nothing by which even a cat could climb, and the leads began to burn beneath his feet.

In his terror, his presence of mind, on which he so much prided himself, entirely deserted him; and thinking only of his present safety, he contrived to perch himself upon the summit of a tall stack of chimneys, which rose in the centre of the roof: as they were continued through each story of the house, his position was comparatively a safe one.

In this situation, where he was hidden by the projecting walls of the neighbouring houses from observa-

tion, we must leave him, whilst we beg our readers to follow us to the street below.

Foremost amongst the firemen, who were vainly endeavouring to master the raging element, was our old friend, Tim's Dick.

The little weaver had a mania for being present at every fire in Manchester, and could date certain events from the time Mr. So-and-So's house had been burned, or such a factory destroyed.

Small's precaution had been too well taken, and the fire had raged too long to give the faintest hope of subduing it.

The chief of the fire brigade saw, with a practised eye, that the flames broke out in three places.

Shaking his head, with a knowing look at Marjoram, who, with the police, were actively engaged on the spot, he observed—

“That's not a natural fire!”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean,” replied the man, “that when the flames break out in several places at once, some one must have prepared the work.”

“You think, then,” said the officer, “that it is a planned affair.”

“No doubt of it.”

At this moment a loud shriek from the mob announced that something fearful had occurred.

Looking up towards the upper window, they saw the three domestics of Mr. Mortimer, who at last had been

awakened by the noise, wringing their hands at the casements, with all the signs of despair.

There was a general cry for the fire-escape.

Some of the neighbours brought beds and mattresses, and made signs for them to cast themselves down; but the height was too fearful.

“They will be burnt to death!” observed Tim’s Dick, with a groan; “why don’t they jump—its their only chance.”

Those who were near regarded the speaker as an oracle in all matters concerning fires, and there was a general cry for them to leap—still the wretched creatures hesitated.

Just as the fire-escape was seen at the end of the street, the entire front and floors of the building fell in with a loud crash.

Nothing was to be seen but a mass of burning rafters, a cloud of smoke and sparks, which rose from the ruins like those of a smothered rocket.

“Lord have mercy on them!” exclaimed the weaver; “their troubles are over!”

And so they were: their last groan was drowned in the crash of the falling materials—their last sigh smothered in the fiery embers.

In the midst of the ruins, when the clouds of smoke cleared away, the tall stack of chimneys was discovered, like some tottering tower which time had spared whilst the surrounding building fell in decay.

To their astonishment and horror, the mob discovered

a creature—whom at first they scarcely considered human—clinging to the summit of the shaking mass, which threatened every instant to fall.

There was no cry of terror this time—the danger of the position held every one mute—men scarcely drew their breath: it was like the sullen silence in the crowd which precedes the sweep of the sword of the executioner.

Marjoram was the first to speak.

“Advance the escape!” he cried.

“It will be useless,” replied the chief fireman; “the mass would not bear the least weight. See how it reels already.”

And the speaker was right—its vibrations were plainly perceptible.

Some thought that the miserable wretch was already dead, and clung to his hold merely with the death-clutch.

“He is dead!” they cried.

“No, no—he moves!”

Small, although half stifled with the smoke, was not insensible; his agonies were too intense for that. The flesh had cracked upon his bones with the heat and flames; and the sinews of his arms and legs were so contracted, that even if he had had the strength, it would have been impossible to have stretched them.

If suffering could atone for crime, he had paid a fearful penalty.

Whilst the crowd were silently regarding him, Henry

Beacham, accompanied by William Bowles, arrived upon the spot.

“By Heavens, 'tis Mortimer!” he exclaimed. “A hundred guineas to the man who rescues him!”

The offer was made in vain; not a being stirred.

Small heard and recognised the voice: even in that moment his ferocious hatred did not abandon him. Conscious that the fortune for which he had envied him was lost, he uttered a yell of triumph, so loud and unearthly, that all who heard it trembled.

The next moment the tottering mass fell, with a loud crash, and the murderer was buried in the pile which his own desperate hands had lighted.

William and Henry, after the death of Small, continued to regard each other in silence—they were too much overcome to speak.

No sooner had the tottering mass fallen, than the firemen, with their long rakes, endeavoured to draw the remains from the still burning ashes; after several ineffectual attempts, they at last succeeded. Foremost amongst the crowd who pressed forward to recognise them was Tim's Dick.

Although the body was partially consumed, and the flesh, in parts, falling in fragments, the little weaver recognised the distorted, blackened features of Small. He was perfectly aware that Mr. Mortimer had been intrusted to wind up the affairs of the firm of Grindem and Company, and, with his natural shrewdness, he instantly suspected that something was wrong. Like

the senior fireman, he too had felt convinced that the fire was not accidental.

“So,” he thought, “there is an end to the richest firm in Manchester. First the old man, whose heart was as hard as granite, was suddenly called to his account—now his partner. In truth the murderers of old Gridley have not prospered.”

As he made his way through the mob, he saw the two friends still silently gazing on the scene.

“A sad thing, Mr. Bowles,” he said, touching his hat respectfully

“Fearful—shocking!”

“I suppose you know who it was that was perched like a fiend on the top of the chimneys, and who fell with them?”

“Not Mortimer, poor fellow—I trust it was not Mortimer?” replied the kind-hearted fellow.

“Mortimer!” said the weaver; “no, no; sad as his fate has been, he was spared, I hope, a death like that!”

“Who was it?” demanded Henry.

“Your uncle’s old partner, Mr. Small.”

“Small!” repeated both the young men, in astonishment. “What should he do there?”

“That, gentlemen, is a question between him and his Judge; but if we may guess from his past life, no good. If you doubt my word, approach, and convince yourselves. His features, although blackened by the fire and smoke, and twisted and distorted by agony, are still recognisable.”

Tempted by resistless curiosity, the young men advanced to the spot where the disfigured corse had been laid, and then they distinctly recognised the mangled, half-burnt body as that of Small. Even Henry, whom he had so cruelly injured, felt a touch of pity. It was impossible for any being with a heart not to feel some touch of pity for such a fate.

“God forgive him,” he sighed, “as freely as I do!”

“Amen,” repeated William Bowles.

And the two friends, sick at heart at the scene they had witnessed, made the best of their way through the crowd, and retired from the spot.

The confusion occasioned by the destruction of the books and papers rendered the winding up of the affairs of the firm a difficult, if not hopeless task.

Many of the principal debtors, when they found that all the accounts and vouchers were destroyed, advanced counter-claims, which it was useless to dispute; so that, at the end of a month, Henry Beacham found that of the splendid inheritance left by his uncle, not more than a hundred and fifty thousand pounds had been realised. This, however, was the least of the young man's sorrow—he had never cared for money. There was a hidden sorrow in his heart which was slowly consuming him.

“It is enough, Henry,” observed his faithful friend, as they were talking over matters after the final settlement of the accounts: “enough for contentment, though not for splendour. Why, with a hundred and

fifty thousand pounds you are placed far beyond the cares of the world."

"But I do not possess that sum," replied Henry, with a bitter smile.

"Not possess it? Why I placed it in the bank myself. There is a mystery about poor Mortimer's death, and that rascal Small's—heaven forgive me for speaking ill of the dead—that I cannot understand. I cannot bring myself to believe that eight hundred thousand pounds perished in the fire."

"Nor I."

"Yet that Mortimer and Small met their fate there we have ample proof; whether by accident or design. Time, the great unraveller of all mysteries, perhaps will one day inform us. But come," he added, "tell me how do you intend to invest the remains of your fortune—purchase an estate, and turn country gentleman?"

"No."

"Or enter into the mercantile world? with your talents and character, the path of success lies open. Besides, it will amuse you."

"Amuse me," repeated Henry, bitterly. "My dear fellow, as yet you do not know half my misfortune. You think me still comparatively rich, when in honesty and truth twenty thousand pounds is all I can call my own; and even that, when I recollect the nature of my late uncle's transactions, I fear will bring a curse with it."



"Only twenty thousand!" deliberately answered William, at the same time mentally asking himself if his friend's wits were in their right place. "I do not understand you."

"It is time, then, that I should explain myself. You remember the papers," he added, and a blush of shame suffused his pale cheek, "which you recovered at the expenditure of a thousand pounds from Marjoram."

"Perfectly."

"They informed me of a fearful secret: that the foundation of my uncle's wealth was laid in fraud; that he had dishonestly withheld from the orphan and the widow a sum which, with the interest due, amounts to one hundred and thirty thousand pounds."

"And Gridley knew this?" exclaimed William: "that explains everything; even his"—

He paused, fearful of saying too much.

"His death, you would have added," observed Henry, calmly; "I fear even that. Poor old man! he had a kind heart, although a weak one."

"And what do you intend to do?"

"Return the money to the rightful owner," replied Henry, proudly; "it is painful enough to feel that one whom, with all his faults—crimes," he added, with a shudder, "I must still regard—for he loved me—committed an unworthy act. I can neither participate in it nor descend to profit by it."

"And the heir to this large sum—is poor?"

"No; but her youth was passed in poverty and

privation, when wealth should have encircled her with every comfort. She is wealthy now, for she has made a brilliant marriage—sold herself for gold, William—gold—and broken my heart.”

“Is it possible,” said William, “the heiress is”—  
“Amy Lawrence.”

And the speaker buried his face in his hands, to hide the tears which, despite his resolution, the name of her he so fondly loved called forth.

“What will she think of me,” he added, bitterly, “when the felon’s heir shall restore to her her plundered wealth. Will not the image of her brother, who died worn out with toil and disappointments, from which a tenth part of this sum would have saved him, rise to her view, and teach her heart to spurn me? But even that bitter humiliation I must endure, rather than despise myself. Little did I think that my uncle’s fortune was founded on the plunder of his ill-used clerk.”

“Humiliation,” repeated William, wiping away a tear; “no, Henry—there will be honour, not shame in the act; and if I read Amy’s heart aright, your noble conduct will but render you more dear to her. She loves you still.”

“Psha!” replied his friend, with an air of incredulity.

“Her fainting at the ball to which that treacherous Lady Playwell invited us proves it. Let us be just,” continued William; “she deemed you false—married

to another. Friendless and unprotected, alone in the world, can you blame her that she accepted a shelter from its storms?"

"Had she loved truly, William, she would have refused it. Poverty would have been light, toil a pleasure, death a relief. Such was my love for Amy."

"And such," replied his friend, "would have been her's for you, had she not deemed you false to her. Come, be just: let the sin rest with those whose heartless falsehood separated you; not with the poor, broken-hearted girl who has been its victim. Had you seen her when she read the account of your marriage in the paper, as she lay half dead upon my shoulder, you would not doubt the sincerity of her passion. But this is idle now, and can only serve to awaken regrets as useless as they are vain; you require to mix in the world, and shake off this lethargy, which is destroying you."

"The world—what is it now to me?—a blank, a desert."

"But even in the desert flowers may still be found," urged William. "There is an oasis everywhere, if we but search for it. In three days, you know, I am to be married."

"Happy fellow."

"We intend to take a trip to Paris; perhaps in a week or fortnight you will join us? Mary loves you already like a brother. Will you come?"

"What, to mar your happiness by the sight of my

misery—cast a gloom over the joys of your bride! Do not ask it. I trust I am not envious, William; but I could not bear the contrast. No," he added. "I will, despite the anger or prohibition of the General, see his wife once more—restore to her her fortune—and then it little matters what follows."

Despite the entreaty of Bowles, Henry remained firm in his resolution not to visit Paris—the thought of gaiety was hateful to him. Like the wounded stag, he preferred solitude, where he could die in silence.

Firm as his refusal was, it was destined to be broken: the friends met in Paris.

## CHAPTER VIII.

They bid me seek in change of scene,  
The charms which others see;  
But were I in a foreign land,  
They'd find no change in me.

BALLAD.

As soon as Amy was sufficiently recovered from the shock she had received at Lady Playwell's ball, her husband, anxious to prevent the explanation which he felt assured would destroy her peace of mind for ever, urged her departure for Paris. To Amy it was indifferent where she hid her sorrows; she was alarmed at her own weakness, and readily gave consent.

"I can die," she thought, "in Paris, as easily as in London. A grave is to be found everywhere."

Weeks rolled on, and Amy, who was sustained in the struggle by a sense of duty and gratitude to her husband for his untiring kindness, had, if not recovered her health, at least recovered her fortitude. In this she was assisted by the idea that Henry had abandoned her; and she felt that it was due no less to the name she bore than her own self-respect to forget him.

How strange is human love! uncertain, wild:  
Reason its slave—philosophy a child,  
Which fleeteth from us on the rainbow wings  
Of the weak heart's vain, fond imaginings.

With all her resolution and high principle, there were moments when the young wife found her fortitude sadly tried. A word, a flower, a snatch of music, unconsciously hummed, recalled the past; tears would flow, and bitter regrets, and sad reflections of what her fate might have been, suggest themselves.

Amy was seated one evening in her splendid apartment at the Meurice Hotel, alone—as the General had been obliged to dine at the embassy, much to his secret annoyance; for, like a miser, he was never happy when separated from his treasure.

When her *femme de chambre* entered the room, she found her mistress weeping.

Doubtless the girl, in her simplicity, wondered how so rich a lady, whose diamonds at the last Court ball had been the admiration of half Paris, could find time to cry; but she was young, and had not yet found out that gems and gold can give little pleasure to an aching heart.

“A card, madame.”

Amy mechanically took it from the salver; and read the name of “Mrs. William Bowles,” and underneath, written in pencil, “late Miss Heartland.”

“At home,” she eagerly exclaimed.

The girl left the room, delighted to find that anything

could afford pleasure to her sorrowing mistress, whose gentleness had won her affectionate gratitude.

The two girls—for Amy and Mary were little more—met with all the signs of that affection which time cannot destroy, for it was founded upon a knowledge of each other's worth.

The latter had a delicate task to perform: for, contrary to his first resolution, Henry Beacham, on hearing that Amy was in Paris, had arrived that very day, and declared that no consideration should prevent his seeing her, and vindicating his honour and faith.

"It will make her wretched," observed William.

"Not so," observed his wife, with true woman's instinct. "Better that she should find that she has been betrayed by the treachery of others, than by her lover's unworthiness; better to mourn [his loss than despise him."

William was silenced--his own heart convinced him that his wife was right.

"Dear, dear, unkind Amy," sobbed Mary, as she held her in a fond embrace. "How cruel of you not to answer our letters."

"What letters?" demanded her astonished friend.

"Mine and Mr. Bowles's; the old gentleman is quite broken-hearted on your account—says that his adopted daughter has forgotten him."

"Letters!" repeated Amy—"I received none. I wrote day after day—waited till I was heart-sick for a reply; for I was loth to think my last friends had

gotten me. A line—a word would have saved me from much misery.”

“There must have been treachery somewhere. Indeed, William’s father always said so; and I believe, if his son had not been at St. Petersburg, he would have gone up to London himself to find out the truth. Can you explain it?”

“I think I can,” replied her friend, after a pause. “In the house of Lady Playwell I was exposed to the solicitations of one of those heartless libertines who think every woman frail—perhaps they judge us from their own vile natures. I remember now that on one occasion, when I had repelled him with scorn, he threatened to isolate me from my friends, menaced me with poverty. Heaven forgive him!” she added. “It was a cruel act towards one so helpless as myself.”

“You left Lady Playwell, then?”

“I was driven from her house, Mary, by my self-respect. I sought shelter with a dear, good girl, who had known sorrow and disappointment. We toiled together at the needle—sat up night after night to earn a scanty pittance. At length poor Fanny fell ill—was dying. Our last shilling was gone, the hospital seemed her only resource, the poor-house mine. In this position a kind and generous man offered me his hand. I told him everything—told him how I had loved, and been deceived—that I had no heart to give. I may blush at the weakness of that heart, Mary, but not before my husband.”



Mary was astonished.

What a scene of treachery and misery did the few words of Amy unravel.

In her heart she had judged that the poor girl, finding herself alone in the world, had wisely given her hand to a man whose wealth and rank secured her against the cares of the future: little had she imagined that want in its most appalling form had driven her to it.

The excited manner of the speaker informed her that she would have a more painful task than she anticipated in undeceiving her—she knew not how to begin, and therefore remained silent.

The words "St Petersburg" had caught the attention of Amy—her heart beat violently at the name—but she feared to question her visitor.

"And so," she at last observed, "you are married?"

"Yes," replied Mary, with a modest blush.

"And happy?"

"Most happy," continued the bride. "William is all kindness and affection. Often do I ask myself how I have deserved so true a heart; for you know I was once weak enough to doubt it. But have you no friend to inquire after?" she added with a faint smile; "none in whose welfare you take an interest?"

"None."

"Not Henry?"

"Forbear!" exclaimed Amy, starting from the couch; "pray forbear, dear girl! there are chords in

the human heart which, touched, respond in agony. Why name him? why remind me of one who has forgotten me?"

"Not forgotten you, Amy," interrupted her friend. "You must know the truth at last, and it will be better to hear it from the lips of one who can sympathise with you—share your sorrows—than from a stranger. Summon up all your fortitude, for you will require it."

"What mean you? Is—is he dead?" gasped Mrs. Playwell.

"No."

"Speak—speak freely—I am firm now. My heart is so schooled in suffering it can bear anything—anything but suspense; though what have I to fear, to whom hope and happiness alike are strangers?"

"I trust not: you have much within your reach—you are rich now?"

"Ay, rich—rich! the world thinks me happy, Mary, but it cannot read my heart. True, I might walk on gold, and deck my brow with the spoils of India's mines; but did you ever hear," she added, "that the victim offered as a sacrifice felt proud of its gilded trappings? Do not keep me in suspense, I entreat you! Henry is"—

"Still true to you—still unmarried."

Amy stood for an instant like one who had received a violent blow upon the brain.

Stunned and overwhelmed by the intelligence, she

could not speak—her heart was too full—words were denied her.

Her friend, who suffered little less than herself at the sight of her agony, caught her by the hand, and endeavoured, by a thousand tender words, to recall her to herself.

At first she feared that reason had fled for ever, so mute and motionless she stood—a statue of despair.

“Amy—dear Amy,” she exclaimed, “one word—but one! God, this is dreadful!”

Still no reply.

“Forgive me for thus distressing you. I thought it for the best, judging your heart by her own. I yielded to the entreaties of poor Henry, and”—

At the name the spell was broken, the consciousness of the extent of her misery returned, and the unhappy Amy sank upon the floor with a deep-drawn sigh.

With the assistance of her waiting-woman, Mary conveyed her to her chamber, but more than an hour elapsed ere she could draw from her more than inarticulate words of self-reproach.

Tears came at last to her relief, and she sobbed like a child upon the bosom of its mother.

“Thank heaven!” said her agitated friend, “you are better now. Tears relieve the heart. I little thought that it would give me pleasure to see you weep, dear girl.”

“Unmarried!” repeated Amy.

Mary replied not.

“What must he think of me, that, like a heartless thing, I sold myself for wealth—bartered my hand. It wanted but this—but this!”

“Not so,” eagerly interrupted her friend; “he judges you better. Deeply as he is wounded, much as he has suffered, he fully exonerates you. But I am the bearer from him of a last request.”

“A last request? Let me hear it?”

“He entreats to see you, to prove to you the cruel means by which your mutual happiness has been destroyed by his unworthy uncle.”

“No, no—I cannot, dare not see him. My heart would break beneath his eye. I can bear misery alone, but not the pang of seeing his. Tell him that I request, entreat, that he will not attempt to see me; that I implore him to forget me, and in the arms of another”—

She could not conclude her wish—the struggle was too great for her.

“Another,” repeated Mary, reproachfully. “Amy, I did not expect that from you. Henry is not the man to love a second time. Reflect—it is but one effort. In justice to yourself as well as him, you ought to see him.”

“You are right,” exclaimed her friend, with sudden resolution. “It is but the last pang—why should I shrink from it? Better to die beneath the effort than live beneath the weight of his contempt. Let him come, then.”

“In a few days—as soon as you have strength.”

The sufferer turned her eyes with a touching expression upon the speaker.

There was, in the glance, the despair of a broken heart.

“Strength,” she repeated; “you do not know how strong I am to suffer. If the last blow failed, nothing can kill me: death shuns a wretch to whom the doom were mercy.”

“But your husband, Amy?”

“True, true—I have a husband; I had forgotten him: a kind old man, who gave an honoured name to a poor friendless girl, in the hope to win her love. Pity,” she added, with a sigh, “she had no love to give.”

It was late before Mary tore herself away, but not until she had arranged to see her friend on the following morning.

“God bless you, Amy,” she said, as she bent over her, and kissed her burning brow; “and may He strengthen you, for you are sorely tried.”

A large round tear which fell upon the sufferer's cheek, proved how deep was the sympathy of the kind speaker.

When General Playwell returned to the hotel after leaving the ambassador, he was met by Lisette, his wife's waiting-woman, upon the stairs; he saw, by her red eyes, that she had been weeping.

Knowing how sincerely she was attached to her mistress, he became alarmed, and exclaimed—

“Your lady?”

“Is ill, General—very ill.”

The anxious old man was proceeding towards her chamber, when Lisette arrested his steps.

“My mistress sleeps now, General,” she added; “pray do not disturb her.”

“I must see her.”

“It was her request.”

“Her request,” repeated the old man, in a tone of disappointment; “well, she shall not complain of my unkindness. Where is Rigid?”

“In the servants’ room.”

“Send him to me.”

Lisette hastened to fulfil his order, leaving the old General a prey to the most cruel anxiety.

His jealousy was aroused; for he loved his young wife—fondly, passionately loved her.

When Rigid entered the General’s dressing-room he found his master pacing up and down the apartment with all the signs of violent agitation. The faithful old fellow’s first thought was that the General was unwell, and he exclaimed, in his usual blunt, sharp manner—

“What is the matter now?”

“I am ill, Rigid,” exclaimed his master, striking his breast; “ill at ease.”

“Gout or rheumatism?”

The old man darted a furious look at his follower.

His first impression was that Rigid was sporting

with his feelings ; but the serious calm face with which the speaker had put the question proved his perfect good faith in asking it.

“Neither,” groaned the General; “but ill at heart.”

“Humph!” said the old soldier, after a pause, “that’s a complaint I can’t prescribe for—I know nothing about hearts: you had better send for some one else.”

He turned upon his heel, and was about to quit the room, when the voice of the General, who pronounced the word “Halt!” in a tone of military command, restrained him.

Rigid drew himself up to his full height and saluted: he never trifled with or dreamt of disobeying any orders that were delivered in that manner.

“Rigid,” said the old man, after a pause, “I am wretched, my wife does not love me!”

“Serve you right—what did you marry for? You could not expect, at your age, that a young creature of nineteen should love an old fellow who might be her grandfather—it is not natural. Had you befriended her instead of marrying her, she would have loved you—loved you like a father—shed over your grave tears of the tenderest affection, visited it with grateful recollection—as it is”—

“She will rejoice when I am gone—rejoice to be disembarassed of the aged fool whose life is a bar to her happiness—whose wealth she anticipates as the means of enriching her early lover. But I’ll disappoint

her—disappoint them both—not a penny of my fortune shall she inherit. If she marries him, she shall go to him a beggar.”

Rigid regarded his master for a few moments with an air of painful surprise. He knew him to be, from long experience, of a jealous and suspicious nature; but he had never before thought him of a mean or revengeful one.

“Am I not right?” added the General.

“No,” replied the old soldier, firmly; “you are not right, and the very inquiry proves it. Those who feel that they are right, never ask the question. What! after having deluded the poor thing into a marriage, under the plea that you were too poor to offer her a shelter, or save her from the cares and perils of the world in any other way, you would punish her for your disappointment? She told you before she married you that she loved another.”

“How know you that?” said his master, with a look of surprise; “did Amy tell you so?”

“I guessed it from her character and love of truth,” answered the old soldier; “she is too good to have deceived you; and you, instead of imitating her sincerity and candour, urged your selfish suit—won her. Were you so blind,” he added, “as to suppose that a reluctant bride could make a happy wife?”

The General bowed his head at the reproach—he felt that he merited it; for there could be little doubt that Amy’s marriage with him was the only bar to her happiness.



“ Rigid,” he observed, after a pause, “ your mistress has had a visitor ?”

“ I know it.”

“ One of her earliest friends, from whom she has doubtless learnt that—the person,”—he added, for he could not bring himself to pronounce the name of Henry Beacham—“ to whom she was once attached is still unmarried.”

“ And did you know it, General ?” demanded Rigid, with a look and in a tone of reproach.

“ No, by heavens !” exclaimed his master, “ like the rest of the world, I deemed he had been faithless to her. Whatever my weakness may have descended to, it has never led me to dishonour.”

The countenance of the old soldier cleared—nay, almost assumed a kindliness of expression: he felt relieved that he could still respect his master.

“ Do you know where her friend is staying ?” continued the General.

“ Hotel de Bristol: I heard her give directions to the coachman as she drove away. Poor thing, her eyes were red with weeping.”

“ You must go there ”—

“ Must I ?” growled the Sergeant, with a dissatisfied air, for he had a soldier's contempt for a spy.

“ And inquire,” continued his master, “ if a gentleman named Beacham is staying there. - Do this quietly, and then return to me.”

“ And what then ?” demanded Rigid, with an inquiring glance.

“If I find that he is in Paris, I shall endeavour to persuade Amy to depart for Italy. Indeed, I have meditated such a step,” added the General, “for some days—the aspect of Paris alarms me. His Most Christian majesty is dreadfully unpopular—his Ministers are hurrying on a crisis which the Orleans faction will not be slow to profit by. But enough of this—do as I have directed you.”

Rigid walked towards the door, but suddenly turned back, as if struck by some idea.

“You have no intention of a duel, General?” he said.

“No.”

“Honour?”

“At present, positively no,” replied his master.

Perfectly satisfied as to the speaker's intention upon this point, the old soldier left the hotel, and returned in about an hour, with the intelligence that Henry Beacham was in Paris, at the Hotel de Bristol, Place Vendôme.

“I thought so,” muttered the General, with a groan of despair. “We must go to Italy—anywhere—to avoid him. Their meeting will be the signal for the ruin of my happiness.”

It was late the following day before the General was admitted to his wife's dressing-room.

Knowing the severe shock she must have received, he was astonished to find her dressed; but her countenance was pale as a marble statue sculptured on some tomb.

There was an unnatural calmness in her appearance and manner which alarmed her anxious husband more than passionate grief would have done, or violent bursts of emotion ; for such sorrow, like the throes of the earthquake, however terrible, are not lasting. It is the silent grief which kills.

“ Amy—dear Amy,” said the old man, tenderly, “ you have been ill, and I away.”

The lips of the sufferer quivered slightly as she attempted to reply to him.

“ Not now—not now,” he added hastily. “ We will speak of this some other time, when you are more composed. Paris does not agree with you. We will depart for Italy: there you will be better—happier. What say you ?”

“ In three days I shall be ready to accompany you.”

“ But why in three days? why not start to-morrow?”

“ Because,” replied his wife with desperate calmness, “ I have a task to perform which will require all my fortitude. He”—she could not bring herself to pronounce the name of Henry—“ whom I once loved has arrived in Paris, unmarried, true—true as my heart once believed him : he has asked to see me.”

“ But you will not see him?” exclaimed the General passionately ; “ you will not indulge a request which is both ungenerous and unwise, and which will be torture to me—for what purpose ?”

“ To vindicate myself—to prove to him that I am not the mercenary thing I blush to name—that I did

not knowingly barter my faith for wealth. I can endure anything but his contempt..”

“Contempt!” repeated her husband; “he cannot—dares not!”

“Believe me,” she added, “I shall find no harsh judge. His heart is as generous as your own.”

“Amy, I entreat—I implore.”

“Do not ask it,” said his wife, hurriedly; “could I avoid the interview with honour, I would spare myself and him the pang; but I have no right to refuse it. What!” she continued, and her pale cheek flushed as she spoke; “would you have me pass in the eyes of the man to whom my faith was once pledged—to whom my heart was once given—for a sordid thing who bartered her hand for wealth—made vilest merchandise of her affections?—the thought would kill me.”

It was in vain that the General used the most passionate entreaties—Amy remained firm.

There was a gentleness and kindness in her manner of refusing him which showed that even the misery of her own heart had not rendered her insensible to the agony of his.

Not one word of reproach for the deceit he had practised respecting his fortune—not one word of regret for the barrier which her ill-starred marriage had raised between her and the object of her dearest affections.

Finding it impossible to shake her resolution, the General left the room in a state of mind little less agonised than his suffering wife's.

He was jealous—not of the virtue of Amy—as yet that suspicion had not gnawed his heart or stung his brain to madness—it was of her love: he pined for that as the lost traveller in the desert pines for the oasis and gushing fountain.

That same day Amy dispatched a note to her friend Mary, simply saying that she would receive the visit of Henry Beacham the following morning.

## CHAPTER IX.

Good heavens, the souls of all my tribe  
Defend from jealousy.

OTHELLO.

OF all the pangs of which humanity is susceptible, jealousy is the worst; for most frequently it is an effect without a cause—a monster engendered in the imagination of its victim; and, feeding alike upon its heart and brain, it withers the rose upon the cheek of beauty, dethrones reason from its judgment-seat, and gives the reins to passion; it is the punishment of Tantalus, without his crime.

To the jealous mind madness would be a relief, and death a blessing; it takes a martyr's pleasure in its torments, and adds to their intensity by the ingenious skill with which it adduces proofs from air-drawn nothings, adding fuel to the flame by which it suffers.

Jealousy is a passion against which persuasion and argument are equally vain; the proofs which should convince but tend to confirm its fatal error.

Trifles light as air are to the jealous  
Confirmation strong as proof of Holy Writ.

General Playwell left Amy in a state of mind which even Henry Beacham might have pitied.

It is a fearful thing for the body to grow old and the heart to remain young—to retain the susceptibilities and affections of youth, when youth can no longer respond to them—to feel that time has made us a check upon its smiles, a damper on its mirth—to be treated with cold respect, instead of that warm and gushing love for which the soul is pining.

“She loves him still,” muttered the General, as he reached his room; “loves him with all the devotion of her young heart; and doubtless curses in her solitude the golden chain in which my love has bound her. They will meet, despite my wishes and entreaties; pledge vows, perhaps, for the future, or”—

He paused, and his countenance flushed, for a thought which he dared not breathe even to himself had flashed across his brain.

During his long career in India he had moved in the world with an observant eye, and the demoralising state of society in that land of gold and pleasure had given him but a poor opinion of the honour of man or the faith of woman, where the passions are concerned.

“Would I had never seen her,” he added, “or that I were dead. To know that she loves another, and is coldly prudent, is worse than death. I shall become the scorn, the jest of all who know me.”

There was a tap at the door but he paid no attention to it.

“ I’ll be a witness,” he thought, “ to their meeting—listen to every word. If she fail in her duty as a wife, God have mercy on her soul and mine !”

The knocking was repeated.

“ Come in,” he impatiently exclaimed.

It was Rigid, with the tray for him.

“ I do not require it,” said his master, waving his hand impatiently, “ wait till I ring.”

“ It’s past your usual hour.”

“ No matter—I can’t eat—food would choke me. Leave me, Rigid:—I know,” he added, “ that you mean it kindly ; but I am better alone now.”

The faithful fellow sat down the tray, and fixing his eyes upon his master—whom, despite his eccentricities, he really loved—answered in a tone much more respectful than the one he generally used—

“ I can’t leave you, sir. You know that I am no prying, curious knave to busy myself about my master’s secrets. Suspicious as you are of all the world, you can’t think me capable of that. I have eaten your bread now for many a long year, fought on the same field with you, been wounded in the same battle, and—hang it, General, you know what I mean—speak out, it relieves the mind, and that’s half the cure.”

“ I am wretched,” said the General, with a deep sigh.

“ I can see that plain enough ; but why should you be wretched ?”

The General was silent.



"I'll tell you, sir," continued the speaker; "because you are jealous of my lady—not of her virtue, for that the fiend himself could not suspect—but of her love; is this wise—is it just? You can't expect the sunshine of August in December, or the flowers of May in winter. I am sure that she respects you, honours you—be content with that."

"What!" replied the General, "and know that her heart is another's?"

"You knew that before you married her," observed Rigid.

"Ay, but I hoped to win it, Rigid—win it by my unceasing kindness, by the idolatry of my affection, the holiness of my love. Is there a pleasure the world can yield that I have not placed within her reach—a gem I have not sought to deck her beauty? And yet, despite my entreaties—prayers—she has resolved to see the man whom I most dread on earth—the man to whom her hand was once engaged, and who still retains her heart—again."

The old soldier became thoughtful; had the General explained her reasons, he would perfectly have understood the motive.

"Now," continued the speaker, "have I not cause of jealousy? The wife who courts danger is half prepared to meet it. But I will be a witness to their interview," he added, with increased excitement; "old as I am, I can defend my honour, if not my peace of mind."

He walked with a hurried step to his dressing-table, and, opening a case of duelling pistols, began minutely to examine them.

Having satisfied himself of their condition, he prepared to load them, Rigid all the time watching him in painful silence.

He was surprised at Amy's resolution of granting an interview with Henry Beacham—it was not what he had expected from her, still the old soldier's confidence in her virtue was as unshaken as ever.

“General,” he said, “did I ever deceive you?”

“Never.”

“And you don't expect I ever will?” said Rigid.

“I would stake my life and honour—never.”

Rigid rubbed something like a tear from his eyelids with the cuff of his coat, at the tone of more than confidence—of friendship—with which his master replied to him: he felt gratified where he was most susceptible—in his fidelity; although he knew in his heart it was no more than he deserved.

“Then trust to me now,” he said. “I have watched my lady as closely as you have done, and closer, for I have not been blinded by passion. I'll stake more than my own life—I'll stake your wife's—upon her honour.”

“What mean you?”

“You shall witness the interview—I can arrange all that; but I exact two conditions, General.”

“Name them,” eagerly exclaimed the General.

“That I am present with you, and that you give me those pistols. My head is cooler than yours, though perhaps my heart is almost as much concerned.”

“I shall not part with my weapons,” replied his master, drily.

“Then you shan’t be present. I’ll warn my lady of your intentions, and advise her to see Mr. Beacham at the house of her friend.”

“Rigid,” exclaimed General Playwell, turning pale with passion, and grasping one of the pistols convulsively in his hand, “do not trifle with me.”

“I never trifled with you in my life,” replied the old soldier; “pooh! I don’t mind your pistols—you can’t frighten me. I never yet shrank from my duty, and I am too old to do so now. I’ll not see my old General, in a moment of passion and excitement, commit murder, dishonour his gray hairs, and—there it’s out—break old Jack Rigid’s heart.”

“But should she dishonour them?” whispered his master.

His attached and humble friend gazed on him for an instant with an eye like that of a bloodhound gazing on its master.

“I’ll place the pistols in your hand, General,” he muttered in a deep tone, “and be the last to stay your arm. All I want is to guard you against yourself—the impulse of sudden passion. I didn’t serve under you so many years without knowing what temper you are made of.”

General Playwell reflected for a few minutes. He felt that there was not only wisdom, but much kindness in the proposal. He knew the stern fidelity of the speaker to his word, and that he could rely on him.

"I consent," he said. "Take the pistols. But how will you arrange?"

"Leave that to me."

"Should anything occur to prevent our presence?"

"Leave all to me," repeated the old soldier. "It's a desperate game, General, you have given me to play; but I'll not balk you—you shall be a witness to their interview, since you passionately desire it. Perhaps it may be final."

"Or fatal!" groaned his master.

Without a reply, Rigid left the room, carrying the pistols with him.

The old soldier wore an air more than usually serious: he felt that he had pledged himself to a serious undertaking; and he had yet to consider the means of accomplishing it.

"I can't doubt her," he thought. "I never saw a glance or a smile at the young puppies who press round her with their fulsome admiration: and I have heard her pray when she has been alone—women who act the wanton don't do that. I'll trust her," he added, with the air and tone of a man whose mind was thoroughly made up to the consequences. "There are, heaven knows, in the world, women enough to disgrace their rank and

sex, and are still deemed virtuous ; but not such women as the wife of General Playwell."

After placing the pistols carefully in his room, the old man donned his best uniform, and started forth for a tour on the boulevards.

He felt that he could collect his ideas and arrange his plans better in uniform—long habit had made it a part of himself ; in fact, Rigid deemed himself but half a man without it.

It was late when he returned to the hotel, accompanied by an English carpenter, whom he had picked up at Bradford's, the agent, in his way.

The apartments occupied by General Playwell were a magnificent suite of rooms running the whole length of the Hotel Meurice, and perfectly distinct from the rest of the establishment.

It was easy, therefore, for Rigid, who had perfect authority over the household, to act as he pleased.

Locking himself up with his companion in the morning-room, where visitors were always received, he pointed to a superb book-case, and bade him saw out the back of it.

"It will spoil the piece of furniture," observed the carpenter.

"That's my affair," was the reply.

It was soon done.

Their next task was to conceal the magnificently bound volumes, which were thrust under the sofas and squabs ; they then placed the empty case, which, when

the books and shelves were removed, was quite capable of containing two persons, before a door which opened into a small ante-room, which again communicated with the General's study.

"Well," exclaimed the carpenter, when it was arranged; "that's very clever; but you have forgotten one thing."

"What's that?"

"That the door of the room is so much higher, that it will be impossible for any one to open it without its being perceived," replied the man.

Rigid reflected for an instant, and then ordered the man to saw the door in two, so as to form a sort of hatch of the lower part of it.

When all was done, he rewarded the fellow liberally for his pains, and accompanied him about a hundred yards from the hotel, in order to prevent any one in the house from asking questions.

"Now, my friend," he said, "you have been well paid for your job, and yet only half paid, if you can make that out."

"How so?"

"If I find that for two days—mind, only two, you keep a still tongue, I shall double the sum I have just given you; if not, I shall stop it. Good day. You will find me a man of my word."

When Rigid entered the study of his master, he found the General had relapsed into the gloomy humour which the old soldier's remonstrances had partially aroused him from.

Solitude is a bad counsellor to a jealous man.

"So you have come," he exclaimed. "Where have you been?"

"Out," bluntly replied Rigid, dissatisfied at the question, which he thought implied a degree of suspicion.

"I must know," continued his master, "how you are to perform your promise? I am in a state of mind in which suspense is worse than even the certainty of dishonour, Rigid."

"You shall—follow me."

The speaker led the way from the study into the antechamber, showed him the hatchway which had been cut in the door of communication, and the means of entering the book-case, through the thin silk-gauze curtains of which they could distinctly see all that passed in the reception-room.

"Are you satisfied?" demanded the old soldier.

His master grasped his hand.

"And do you doubt me now?" asked Rigid.

"No, nor ever did."

"Humph!" articulated the old man.

"Would it were morning," muttered the General, as he retired to his room; "would it were morning."

## CHAPTER X.

O wake from thy slumber, the gray dawn is breaking—  
Hast thou forgotten this day we must part ?  
It may be for years, and it may be for ever—  
O why art thou silent, thou joy of my heart ?

IRISH BALLAD.

ON the morning appointed for his interview with Amy, Henry Beacham, who had passed the night in pacing his lonely chamber, left the Hotel de Bristol for the Meurice Hotel, in the Rue St. Honoré.

In his way a thousand tender recollections crowded on his mind—a thousand crushed hopes of a life of happiness and love pressed on his bruised heart.

He had loved her with that deep and fervent passion which knows no second object, and he longed and trembled at the idea of once more beholding her.

“ I shall see her again,” he thought ; “ listen to the music of her voice. Perhaps it will tremble ; for unless her heart has changed, she cannot be insensible to the misery she has caused me. But in what light shall I appear ? Not as the outraged lover, who has been abandoned and betrayed, but as the nephew and heir of that bold, bad man who consigned her youth to poverty—



her brother to the grave. Perhaps she will scorn and spurn me. No, no!" he added; "wealth must indeed have changed her nature for Amy to act unkindly, or to believe that I was, even for an instant, a partner in my uncle's villany. She will not do me that injustice: I wrong her by the thought."

As he approached the hotel—which, *par parenthèse*, that worthy creature Meurice has transferred to the Rue de Rivoli—his emotion increased.

"Shame on my manhood," he murmured, "I thought I had more firmness. Courage, Henry, courage! I go to vindicate my faith and honour. I must be firm; the interview once past, I shall have time enough for weakness and regret."

Rigid, who was on the watch, saw him approach the house, and hastened to apprise the General.

Before the poor fellow found firmness sufficient to send up his card, the old soldier and his master were safely ensconced in their hiding-place.

"You have the pistols?" demanded the General, in a stern tone.

Rigid glanced at his breast, in which they were both concealed.

"Enough," added his master, with a deep-drawn sigh.

"Be firm, General," whispered the attached domestic. "Remember that something must be allowed for human regret—human weakness. Promise me not to start at a word, or unnecessarily betray yourself. It is a fearful

experiment that we are trying ; but my confidence in my lady's honour is as unshaken as ever."

"Heaven grant it!" was the hoarse reply of the jealous husband, who trembled from the excess of his emotion. "This day makes me a wretch or a happy man for life."

"It will do neither," thought Rigid ; but he wisely kept his opinion to himself.

A hand was heard upon the door of the reception-room, and Henry Beacham was shown into the apartment by one of the domestics, who informed him that his mistress would see him in a few minutes.

Both the concealed spectators of the coming interview were struck by the elegance of his appearance, and the manly grace of his person.

Although fearfully pale, his countenance bore that intellectual expression which is more admired than beauty.

The General observed it with a pang—Rigid with doubt.

For the first time, he regretted the ordeal to which he felt both Amy and her husband were about to be subjected.

A table, covered with books, papers and visiting cards, was in the centre of the room. Henry seated himself at the side nearest the window, so that the two watchers had a perfect view of him ; for the book-case stood between him and the door, upon which his eyes were fixed so hopelessly and wretchedly, that any one, save a jealous husband, might have pitied him.

To the General it seemed an age until his wife made her appearance.

At last she did so.

Like Henry's, her countenance was extremely pale, and the circles round her eyes showed that she had been weeping.

"Henry!"

"Amy!"

No other words passed between them.

The poor girl, with a faint gesture, pointed to her visitor to resume his seat, and sank herself into a chair near the door, leaving the table between them.

"Come," thought Rigid, "it commences better than I expected. Poor girl, poor girl!"

It is impossible to describe the feelings which agitated the breast of General Playwell. There they were together, the only beings in the world whom he either loved or hated.

A thousand jealous pangs shot through his heart, and he bit his lips till they absolutely bled, to repress his emotion.

"You wished to see me, Henry," Amy at last began, with an attempt at firmness, which her voice betrayed to be but an attempt; "and I felt that you had a right to ask the meeting, painful as it will prove to both of us. I too," she added, after a pause, "desired it; for I could not bear the thought that you should deem me a mercenary wretch who had bartered faith for wealth. Did you but know"——

“ I know it all ! ” exclaimed her lover ; “ know how cruelly we have been both deceived. By my bad uncle’s treachery at St. Petersburg—where I was in all but name a prisoner—my letters were intercepted—a false marriage was announced, which you too credulously believed ; as if the man who had once heard your lips pronounce that he was the chosen of your heart could ever love another. Amy,” he added, with a passionate burst of grief, “ the hope of calling you mine, even in poverty, sustained me against the machinations of my enemies : not to have won a crown—the wealth of the world—would I have bartered that hope, for I truly, deeply loved you.”

The implied reproach was not lost upon her to whom it was addressed ; she raised her eyes to him with an expression which seemed to say, “ And have not I, too, suffered ? ”

The generous heart of the young man understood the mute appeal—it was more eloquent than a hundred protestations could have been.

“ Forgive me ? ” he added ; “ angel, martyr ! ungenerous, selfish as my words appear, my heart, Amy, was not in them—that acquits you. Why should you have kept a faith which you believed I had broken ? Why refuse the hand and fortune of a honourable though aged man, who, from all I hear, has acted most nobly by you ? There are few who remain constant to memory merely.”

“ Henry,” replied the suffering girl, “ I am sure

you did not mean to utter words which, when I am dead, will return to you as reproaches. Think you, unless I could have met your gaze without a blush, I should have consented to this interview, which wrings my heart with a pang no words can paint? Those who have felt as I do alone can judge me. It was that you might acquit me even of the suspicion of having acted unworthily. I yielded to it. Had you seen me when, driven by want and hunger, I parted with this locket—your gift—and which I now restore—had you witnessed the anguish, the struggles it cost me, you would not accuse me of lightheartedness.”

She drew from her bosom the chain and locket, which had long since been redeemed from the pawnbroker's, and placed it on the table.

Beacham was thunderstruck.

“Want and poverty!” he repeated.

“Ay, that bitter want which finds no sympathy with the unfeeling world. I had left Lady Playwell's house, where I was exposed to insult and offers my cheek would burn to repeat, and found shelter with a kind, dear girl, who, like myself, had lost all earthly hope. For weeks and months we toiled at our needles for a scanty meal—toiled contentedly till she fell ill—way dying—dying for want. I could not see her perish—I parted with it, Henry. I could have starved myself, but could not see poor Fanny die.”

“I see—I see it all,” exclaimed Henry; “General Playwell took advantage of your poverty; with his

wealth stepped in and robbed me of a heart I would not have bartered for the wealth of worlds."

"I knew not," replied Amy, "that the General was rich—like the rest of the world I deemed him poor. He spoke of a home—a shelter from the storms of life—a retreat where I could die in peace. Had I known he was rich, I should have refused him, Henry."

Her husband and Rigid exchanged glances: that of the latter was reproachful, his master's confused—he felt that he had acted unworthily.

"You love him?" said Henry, with a sigh.

"You have no right to ask that question," replied Amy; "but I will answer it truthfully. No: I respect and honour him like a father. He has been kind and generous to me, but I do not love him as you understand the word, with the devotion of my heart. Henry, I shall never love again—such feelings are dead within me. And now," she added, "that I have told you of my sufferings; proved to you that no mercenary feelings actuated me—for even when I believed you false, I was faithful to the memory of the past—but one sad word remains—farewell for ever!"

"Not for ever!" exclaimed her lover, casting himself passionately at her feet. "Amy, you have a strength of mind beyond your years—you despise the conventionalities of a hollow, prejudiced world. Your hand may be the General's, but your heart is mine—mine by the love of youth—mine by the sufferings which have tried it. Doom me not to hopeless misery—to despair

and death! What are the opinions of mankind to us? Fly with me—by heaven I will love you, respect you—like a sister—till death shall remove the barrier to our happiness! I can be content to linger by your side—to breathe the air you breathe—bask in the light of your dear eyes—nor frame a wish beyond.”

The General extended his hand convulsively towards his companion, and whispered:

“The pistols—the pistols!”

“Wait!” was the cool reply.

So unexpected had the mad proposal been to Amy, that for a few moments she was incapable of either withdrawing her hand—which, in his agony, Henry had grasped—or replying to him.

Tears fell upon his cheek, but her woman's heart was firm.

“Release my hand, Henry,” she said, struggling for calmness; “release it—you have no right to detain it!”

“True,” said the young man, throwing himself into a chair. “It is another's now.”

“Henry,” she continued, “madness has destroyed your reason. You would not, I am sure, degrade the girl you once so truly loved. You would despise me were I capable of entertaining, even for an instant, a proposal uttered in passion. What! quit the man who has honoured me with his name, snatched me from misery—bring his white hairs with shame and sorrow to the grave, and brand myself a thing which even you

would soon loath to look upon. You could not, I am sure, mean this seriously, to the sister of your dead friend, the playmate of your boyhood."

Henry was silent.

"And if you did," she added, firmly, "though my heart broke with the effort, I would tear your image from it. I may not, do not, love General Playwell with the affection his kindness deserves, and which a wife should bear her husband; but he shall never blush for the choice he has made."

"Do you want the pistol now?" whispered Rigid to his master, who, pale as death from agitation, was obliged to lean against the side of the book-case for support.

"Spare me—spare me!" faintly groaned the old man.

Rigid pitied his emotion, and was silent.

"You can reason coldly, Amy," groaned the wretched Henry; "for you have not loved as I do."

"Not loved," repeated Amy, bursting into tears. "Henry, I love you still. Approach me not!" she hastily exclaimed, as the young man, in a transport of delight started from the seat into which he had thrown himself. "I can still respect myself. Yes, Henry, I love you with all my childhood's love, but not my girlhood's hope. You have wrung the confession from me—be satisfied; and never attempt to see me more."

"You love me, Amy?"



“Yes ; and by that love respect me. By the memory of the dead, by your own honour and true, generous heart, never again insult my ears by a proposal which would shock me more from your lips than from those of any earthly being.”

Rising from her chair, she tottered towards the door, and, fixing a look of anguish upon him, added—

“Farewell for ever !”

“Stay one instant. Fear not that I shall abuse your patience—it was the madness of despair—of a broken heart, Amy. My task is not yet ended. I have discovered since my uncle’s death, that a large sum of money had for years been wrongfully withheld by him from you and your poor brother—I came to restore it to you.”

“To me ? Impossible !”

“Have you not heard your mother and poor Richard speak of a relative who died in India, from whom your father expected to inherit a considerable fortune.”

“Yes, something of the kind I do remember.”

“It fell into my bad uncle’s hands. You know his heartless nature, Amy, and perhaps, for my sake, will not expose his memory to reproach. This was the secret of poor old Gridley’s influence over him. It was the knowledge of this fraud which he relied upon to wring from him a consent to”—

“I understand,” hastily interrupted the wife of General Playwell, with a sigh. “Had this discovery been sooner made, it might have saved much misery.”

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mine may never know peace. May the sunshine of happiness revisit your path, though mine is for ever clouded. God bless you, Amy—God bless you, and farewell!”

Pressing her for an instant—and an instant only—to his manly breast, he imprinted a passionaté kiss upon her cheek, and rushed like a madman from the room.

Poor Amy, the interview had been too much for her, and, as the door closed upon his receding form, with a deep-drawn sigh, she sank back fainting in her chair.

When Henry Beacham reached the street he stood for a moment or two bewildered which way to turn, then walked slowly in the direction of the Hotel de Bristol.

Sad indeed were his thoughts—he had seen her whom he so fondly, purely loved—had heard from her own lips the misery she had endured whilst he was absent, the bitter stings of poverty, the heart-breaking conviction that he was false to her—that he had married another—that she loved him still. But then she was another's; the thought almost distracted his brain, and, in the bitterness of his anguish, he cursed those who had, to serve their own guilty purposes, circulated the false report that he was married.

He called to his memory the time when he first beheld her, when, but a child, he felt that she was the only being with whom he would wish to pass through life. But, alas! how seldom are our boyhood's dreams permitted to be realised?

Yet there is often a pleasure in calling to mind the memories of the past—the happy days of childhood—those cheerful hours of joy and happiness. Oh, how the heart yearns for the repetition of those bygone days, when all was innocence, hope, sunshine and gladness. When in after years we look back to those times, how bright and serene all then appeared, and we almost wish that fate would transform us into children again. Oh, boyhood's dreams, how light, how joyous, not a cloud of sadness to cast a shade over our future destinies—not a tear of sorrow to dim the eye of happiness—not a sigh for future misfortunes—not a thought of after days of toil and care. Happy days, never more to return—gone, for ever gone—like some pleasing vision they have passed away, leaving nought behind but recollection to gladden the heart and cheer the mind.

The mind of Henry Beacham wandered back to those happy hours he had passed with Amy—to the day when he clasped her to his breast, and they plighted eternal fidelity to each other. But now how changed had all become—all was dark despair.

All had passed so rapidly that General Playwell, who laboured under a species of fascination like that which the rattlesnake is said to exercise over its victims, had scarcely time to extend his hand to clutch one of the pistols which Rigid held, when Henry was gone, and his wife insensible.

“Are you mad?” whispered the old soldier, half-

dragging him from their place of concealment into the ante-room, and thence into his study, the door of which he carefully locked. "What would you do?"

"I know not," groaned his master, writhing with his feelings. "I am mad—wretched—wretched! She is virtuous—coldly virtuous; but she loves another."

"Well, she told you so before she married you."

"Ay," said the General, bitterly; "and when I am dead will wed him. If she does," he added bitterly; "she shall go to him a beggar. Not a shilling of my fortune shall she inherit. They shall not laugh over my grave, and rejoice that the old dotard can no longer mar their happiness."

"You forget that she is rich—the fortune which Mr. Beacham so honourably restored"—

"Is mine, Rigid—mine! Every penny of it mine."

The old soldier eyed the speaker for an instant, and struck by the sullen determination in his eye and manner, turned sadly away, as if grieved at the want of generosity in the master he had so faithfully served and truly loved.

"You will think better of it," he at last observed.

"Never, by heavens!" exclaimed General Playwell, impatiently pacing the room. "She has no marriage settlement, and this unlooked-for wealth is legally mine. If I cannot win my wife's affections, I can at least secure her fortune."

He was proceeding towards the door, when an observation from the old soldier stopped him.

“Would you have her despise you?” he asked.

The General paused.

“If you demand it, she will know that you have descended to act the spy upon her conduct, and witnessed her interview with that young man.”

“No matter—I am determined to possess it.”

Just as he opened the door of his study, Lisette presented herself, holding in her hand the packet.

Both Rigid and his master recognised it in an instant.

“My lady, sir,” said the waiting woman, “is extremely ill; but she has sent you this, and says she will explain how it came into her possession when she sees you to-morrow.”

The intimation that till to-morrow Amy wished to be alone, which the message thus evidently conveyed, did not tend to soothe the feelings of the General, who, however, took the packet, without a word of reply, and closed the door.

Rigid eyed him curiously as he broke the envelope, and hastily examined its contents.

“One hundred and thirty thousand pounds,” he exclaimed, as he finished counting the notes.

“And what can you want with it?” demanded the old soldier. “You are rich enough already, heaven knows. If wealth could afford happiness, you need not complain. Your wife, in the singleness of her heart, despite the warning of that young man—who, after all, is not such a fool as at one time I was inclined to take him for—has sent it to you unopened and untouched.”

"She loves another."

"And what then, so she is faithful to you? Think you that persecution is likely to wean her from him? Were I in your place, I would so act that if she did not behave like a wife while living, she should revere my memory like a child when dead."

General Playwell seemed struck by the observation, although at the moment he did not reply to it.

Hastily rolling up the notes, which were spread out on the table, he handed them to the speaker.

"And what am I to do with these?" said Rigid.

"Keep them safely till I demand them," said the General.

"I won't," was the reply.

"You won't?"

"No, if I do I——there, it's as good as said. I'll lend no hand to your heartless project. If you place the notes in my care, I shall return them to my mistress, with a caution to follow the young fellow's advice, and not trust to one who can carry his resentments and evil passions with him to the grave."

Without waiting for a reply, the honest, blunt-hearted fellow walked out of the room, leaving the General still under the influence of feelings of jealousy and anger.

Had he asked himself how far the fault had been his own, in marrying a girl whose affections he knew were another's, and whom the disparity of age rendered it impossible to love him, the result might have been

different; but, like most selfish men, he never once suspected that the error could by any possibility be his own.

Before he left the study he carefully sealed up the notes, and placed them in his desk, intending to send them to his bankers on the following morning.

At an early hour the next day—which was the one after the fatal ordinances which hurled the elder Bourbons from the throne of France—Rigid entered his master's room.

The old soldier was in full uniform, his sword by his side, and an air of calm resolution on his countenance.

“Eh, Rigid, what has happened?” demanded the General, starting from his uneasy slumber, and surprised at the unusual appearance.

“That's what I have been asking for the last hour. The people are assembling in all directions, and the military galloping like wildfire along the streets. The English are quitting Paris. Lady Derry's maid says there is a revolution, and that all strangers are to be massacred.”

The roll of the distant musketry confirmed in one part at least the speaker's statement.

“By heavens!” exclaimed the General, “it is true. The fools have driven the people into rebellion.”

Springing from the bed, the speaker hastily dressed himself, determined to ascertain, by calling at the Embassy, the actual position of affairs.

“Will you not wear your uniform?” demanded Rigid.



"No," replied his master, drily; "and you would do well to change your's. This is an affair in which we have nothing to do, Rigid."

"What quit the British uniform before the French," exclaimed the veteran, who had a true John Bull dislike to our Gallic neighbours. "If I do, may I never live to wear it again."

"I request—if necessary, command!" said his master. "Were you to appear in the streets thus attired, it would excite the fury of the populace, perhaps the most ferocious in Europe. They have not forgotten the colour of the uniform, or forgiven its appearance in Paris, during its occupation by the allied armies."

"I should think not," growled Rigid, with an air of discontent. "But I little thought my old General would order me to strike my colours."

"But England is at peace with France," said the General.

"More shame for her," was the reply.

"Besides, it would attract attention to your mistress and myself; perhaps compromise our safety."

The last observation was sufficient: the idea of endangering the safety of Amy, whom the old soldier loved with the same fidelity he bore to his master decided him. With a reluctant step he left the room, and returned in about half-an-hour in his usual attire.

"Right, Rigid," observed his master, with a smile.

During his absence the firing in the streets had

increased, and the General began to be seriously alarmed.

When he descended from his apartments, he found the courtyard of the hotel in the greatest confusion.

Carriages were being packed, and horses put to; the English were flying in all directions.

Poor Meurice was in despair at the departure of so many guests.

"It is nothing," he kept exclaiming; "milords, it is nothing. Only an *émeute* with de *gamins* of Paris. Curse dem all over, very much!"

"Amen!" exclaimed Rigid, heartily.

As the hotel of the Ambassador was in the same street, the General set out on foot; but nothing could prevent the old soldier from accompanying him.

"It's no use," he doggedly answered: "if you go into the fire I go. You never had a skirmish for the last twenty years without me; so recall your orders, General, or hang me if I don't declare a mutiny."

His master yielded, and they set forth together.

General Playwell, on his arrival at the hotel of the Ambassador, found the rooms crowded with his countrymen, who, on the first outbreak of the revolution, had hastened to their Minister, to ask his advice.

Some pretended to treat the affair as a mere effervescence of the people, and laughed at the fears of their compatriots; others, more far-seeing, judged that the hour when the elder branch of the Bourbons were to quit the throne, alternately adorned by so many

virtues, or sullied by such detestable crimes, had arrived; but all that agreed that, considering how unpopular the English were in Paris, despite the enormous sums they annually spent there, that it would be advisable to quit the metropolis of France till the storm had blown over.

"Be tranquil, gentlemen," said the Count de Fleure, a French nobleman who was attached to the Ministry. His majesty knows very well what he is about: the turbulent citizens of Paris have long required a lesson, and the Government are determined to give them one; the Ministers are united and resolute."

"So seem the people," drily observed the General; "they fire as steadily as disciplined troops. Listen," he added, as the distant sound of musketry rolled heavily on the air; "this is no child's play.

"Yes," said the Frenchman, gratified, despite his political bias, at the praise of his countrymen: "the *gamins* of Paris fight well. So do our troops," he added.

"But they will not, perhaps, long remain in arms against their brothers? Trust me, the experiment is a dangerous one."

At this moment the Ambassador made his appearance. He was one of those clear-headed statesmen whom long experience made prudent, and who could judge of the political atmosphere from the least breath of wind.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said, with a grave

smile, as he entered the *salon*. "I fear the street music has disturbed you?"

In an instant he was surrounded by questioners, all eager to ask his opinion and advice as to the propriety of quitting the capital.

Of course he was too cautious to commit himself by directly giving either in a sense unfavourable to the stability of the present Government; although in his own mind he saw that it was foredoomed.

"Judge for yourselves, gentlemen," he said; "I have received assurances from the Minister of Foreign Affairs that the Government is sufficiently strong to make a head against all attempts to overthrow it: of course, I am satisfied."

At this moment the Earl of Blantyre, who was afterwards accidentally shot in the outbreak at Brussels, arrived. All eagerly demanded the news.

"Paris is in arms," he said. "I myself saw many in the ranks of the insurgents in the uniform of the national guards opposed to the troops; several of the guard-houses are in the possession of the people; barricades are rising in all directions. Your Excellency," he added, "will oblige me with your *visé* for Brussels?"

The secretary, who was present, signed the passport, and afterwards affixed the seal of the embassy.

"Where is the King?" asked Lord Henry Seymour.

"At St. Cloud," replied De Fleurie.

"And the Duke of Orleans?"

The Count seemed slightly embarrassed ; he knew where the danger really existed.

“ Doubtless with his Majesty—as a prince of the blood at such a moment should be,” he replied. “ But, gentlemen, I repeat, give yourselves no unnecessary alarm—every precaution has been taken ; Lafitte by this time is arrested.”

“ And Lafayette ? ”

“ The Government have an eye upon him.”

General Playwell was anything but satisfied with the position of affairs ; he began to feel seriously alarmed, not on his own account, but on Amy's. Drawing his Excellency aside, he took the liberty of an old friend, and asked him his candid opinion on the propriety of remaining.

“ Quit Paris directly,” replied the peer, in a low voice ; “ my wife and daughters start for England in three hours ; I, of course, remain at my post. With you the case is different—you have no public duty to detain you. The fools deceive themselves ; it is not an *émeute*, but a revolution, the Government have provoked.”

“ In that case I shall start to-day for Italy,” observed the General.

“ What ! ” said the Ambassador, hastily ; “ traverse the south of France ! the most desperate and excitable population in Europe ; you would be mad to attempt it. Have you forgot the massacres of Avignon and Marseilles ? No, my dear Playwell—England—return to

England. Remember," he added with a smile, "you have now another's safety to care for, as well as your own. You have asked my advice frankly—as frankly have I given it."

At this moment their conversation was broken off by the arrival of a messenger from St. Cloud; the *corps diplomatique* were invited to attend Charles X. there. The poor fellow, in crossing the Ponte Royale, had been wounded. He was eagerly questioned.

"The insurgents are masters of the Quai d'Orsay," replied the man; "the troops seem to fight with only half a heart."

Again the roar of the cannon was heard. Many, and amongst them General Playwell, hastily left the hotel of the Minister.

On his reaching the Hotel Meurice, he found the place in even greater confusion than he had left it. The courtyard was filled with baggage; servants were packing carriages, and the cry for post-horses was every instant repeated. The elder Meurice was in despair.

"I trust, General," he said, with an imploring air, "you do not intend to leave me?"

"As soon as my horses can be put to," was the reply. "Were I alone, I should wait and see the end of it. But you shall not be a loser, that is, provided everything is ready for my departure in an hour. I shall pay for my apartments for six months. Perhaps," he added, "when all is tranquil, I shall return."

"It will be over in a few hours."

“ Will it ? ”

“ The troops fight bravely.”

“ And the people desperately,” answered the General. “ This is no child’s play : the citizens are joined by the disbanded national guards. The gold of Lafitte has already gained over one regiment ; others will not be long to follow.”

“ The fools—the idiots ! ” muttered the distracted landlord, as he walked away to give the necessary orders for the departure of the General. “ Had it but lasted three years longer, I should not have cared ; I should have been a rich man.”

The excitement which the outbreak of the revolution produced on the mind of Amy had, for the moment, a beneficial effect. Ill as she was, it nerved her with strength. Perhaps the latent hope that a random shot might end her sorrows was not a stranger to the cause. She wished to die. For her the dream of life seemed over—her heart was breaking.

Her husband was not less delighted than surprised at the self-possession she displayed, and Rigid swore that she was worthy to be a soldier’s wife. They little thought that the courage they so much admired was the offspring of despair.

Urged by the General’s promise, Monsieur Meurice was not long in procuring post-horses. In an hour the carriage was packed, and, with Amy and Rigid, whom his master bound by a solemn promise, whatever might occur, not to quit his wife, he started from the hotel.

They made their way along the Place of the Madeleine and along the boulevards, without any great interruption. The numerous patrols of cavalry, which dashed along in all directions, rendered their progress comparatively easy; but no sooner had they passed the Arch of St. Denis, and entered the long narrow street, than a very different scene presented itself.

The people—we are not one of those who term them the mob, although many ruffians were mingled with them and polluted their cause by their excesses—were in the progress of erecting several barricades, for which purpose all was considered lawful spoil that came within their reach. Diligences were stopped, the passengers compelled to dismount; even the horses were killed, and added to the pile which was to form a rampart against the soldiery.

It is astonishing with what equanimity the inhabitants either saw their furniture taken, or gave it, to form a barrier against the troops. Chairs, tables, pianofortes were hurled from the windows upon the heads of the crest-fallen soldiery, who, in return, fired at the windows. The bodies of the fallen were even added to the heap, and, with a shout of "Vive la Charte!" the father mounted over the body of his son. Nor were the women less active than their husbands and brothers: many, armed with pistols or sabres, fought valiantly in the ranks of the people.

"You had better not attempt to pass," said an officer who commanded a body of troops at the commencement



of the street; several carriages have already been overturned or forced to turn back. The people are desperate."

The General hesitated.

"Let us proceed," said Amy, coolly. "The scene is dreadful. We are strangers—they will not injure us."

"Forward!" exclaimed her husband to the postilions, and at a slow pace they advanced up the Rue St. Denis. A simple *chaise de poste* preceded them.

In the centre of the street the insurgents were busily occupied in erecting a barrier, for which purpose carts had been overturned, and furniture from the neighbouring houses either taken by force or voluntarily supplied.

Women and boys were tearing up the pavement, and placing the stones in piles to be used as missiles against the troops.

As the chaise, which was about fifty paces ahead of the General's carriage, approached, the men welcomed it with a loud shout. One—the leader of the party—a stout, bull-necked fellow, whose shirt-sleeves were rolled over his elbows, seized the horses by the reins, and commanded the driver to stop. There was a faint scream from the inside. It proceeded from Amy's friend, Mary, who, with her husband and Henry Beacham, were hastening from Paris. The appearance of the man terrified her.

"Give them money," she exclaimed. "For Heaven's sake, do not provoke them."

William was about to spring from the vehicle to expostulate, or insist on being permitted to proceed, when his friend anticipated him.

“Let me deal with them,” he said, with a melancholy smile; “I have no one to regret me.”

This was uttered in the tone of a man to whom death would have been a relief.

“What would you, my friends?” he demanded in French.

“The chaise—the people require it.”

“And so do we. Come,” he added, “you are brave fellows, and would not, I am sure, wish a lady and a stranger, who has trusted herself to the hospitality of France, to be either insulted or detained; as Frenchmen, you are too gallant for that.”

“Let them pass,” said a young man in a blouse and cap, who seemed struck by the manner in which the speaker addressed them. “These are not aristocrats, but honest citizens.”

“Traders, like yourselves,” added Henry.

“Let them cry ‘Vive la nation!’ then,” shouted the crowd.

“Not only ‘Vive la nation,’ but ‘Vive la France!’” said our hero.

William, who had been listening with breathless anxiety to the conference, repeated the cry; and the people, delighted with the readiness with which their demand had been complied with, made way for them. The pavement, however, was so disturbed that the

horses could only proceed at a very slow rate; and Henry, to prevent further interruption, led them by the reins; for the affrighted postilion had lost all presence of mind.

“Here comes something more in our way,” exclaimed the leader of the insurgents, not altogether satisfied at the escape of the first party. “There is no mistaking these. Look at the liveries and arms. Aristocrats, flying from the country when they should defend it.”

“Drive on;” exclaimed the General to the postilions, when he saw the attempt to bar their passage: “ten louis a man if you reach the gate!”

Stimulated by the proffered recompense, the drivers spurred and whipped their terrified steeds; and most probably would have succeeded in breaking through the crowd, had not a *gamin* about fourteen years of age coolly shot the foremost. His companion, terrified at his comrade's fate, immediately drew rein. In an instant the carriage was seized, and the doors forced open.

Fortunately the General had compelled Rigid to lay aside his arms.

“What seek you?” he demanded.

“Descend!”

“I am an English gentleman,” replied the General, “on my way to Calais. If you wish to see my passport, I have no objection to produce it; but I shall not quit my carriage.”

“You must—the people demand it.”

Despite his resistance, the General was dragged from the vehicle; but no sooner did Rigid see his master in danger than he sprang from his seat on the box, regardless of his promise not to interfere, and, snatching a pistol from the pocket of the carriage, fired at the man who had laid his hands first upon the collar of the General, and slightly wounded him in the arm.

There was a general cry of "Down with them! down with the proud aristocrats, who shed the blood of the people!"

Bludgeons and pikes were raised, when Amy sprang from the carriage with a loud scream, and cast herself between her husband and the infuriated people.

"Mercy!" she exclaimed. "Spare him! spare him!"

There was one not far distant upon whom that cry fell like a thunderbolt.

Henry had heard it, and recognised the voice.

Leaving the horses of the chaise, he made his way with desperate struggles to the spot, just as a blow which laid the General senseless fell upon his head, he caught the fainting Amy in his arms.

"Villains!" said Rigid, with fury, "you have murdered him!"

"His skull must have been thinner than yours, then," observed a fellow in the crowd; "the blow would scarcely have cracked an egg-shell."

"Are you an Englishman?" demanded Henry.

"Faith an' I am an Irishman; and that's first cousin to it."

"Assist me, then, for the honour of your country:"

"That will I, were you the blackest Cromwellian that ever plundered it," replied the man, who was perfectly well known to the crowd; "so, back, my masters," he added, speaking in French; "these good people are my friends—Irish to the back-bone. Let them pass."

"But not the carriage," replied the leader, in a determined tone.

Hastily catching Amy in his arms, Henry, preceded by his new ally, and closely followed by Rigid, made the best of his way through the speakers, entreating some, striking desperately at others, and warding off from his senseless burthen with his left arm the shower of blows directed at him.

Struck by his gallantry, the young fellow in the blouse, who at the first had befriended his party, began to expostulate, and finally to use more effectual means with his countrymen, by driving them back with the butt-end of his gun.

The contest could not have endured much longer, for Henry's left arm was broken.

They reached the chaise at last, and Amy was placed by the side of her terrified friend.

"Where is the General?" demanded William.

"I go to seek him," said his friend, mournfully; "honour compels me. Whoever else may fail, Henry Beacham must not be the man to desert General Playwell at an hour like this."

Rigid was about to follow him as he rushed into the

crowd again, when the recollection of a solemn promise he had made to his master, not to desert Amy, restrained him.

With a deep sigh the old soldier took the vacant seat on the box; and the postilions, despite the menaces and entreaties of William—who, between the tears and prayers of his wife, and anxiety for his friend, was half-distracted—moved on.

When Henry reached the barrier, he found the carriage overturned, and the people dragging it, with the still palpitating horses, to fill up the gap.

General Playwell, still in a state of insensibility, was supported on the arms of two ruffianly-looking fellows, one of whom held his watch and the other his purse.

They had rifled him.

“What!” he exclaimed, pointing them out to the people, as they stood under the doorway of a shop, the shutters of which were carefully closed; “do those who fight for liberty condescend to plunder?”

A shout of execration from the insurgents, who had here too much occupation with the barrier to attend to the fallen man, announced their detestation of a crime which sullied their cause.

To seize them, and convey the still insensible husband of Amy into an adjoining wine-shop was the work of an instant.

The justice of the people was as prompt as it was terrible.

The two unhappy wretches were placed against the wall, a volley was fired, and all was over.

The measured tramp of the approaching cavalry was now distinctly heard ; one of the insurgents thrust a pike into the hands of Henry, and before he had time to reflect he was engaged in the thickest of the contest, defending the barricade, which, after the first discharge, became a contest hand to hand.

There is something awful and sublime in the spectacle of a people rising in their strength and combating for their liberties—for the rights of their unborn children.

To the chant of the "Marseillaise" the citizens and workmen of Paris rushed to death ; boys engaged eagerly in the contest ; nor were the wives and mothers tranquil : from the windows and house-tops they hurled furniture and every species of missile upon the soldiers, and encouraged the defenders of the barricade by their cries and gestures.

Warmed by the excitement of the scene, Henry soon found himself as fiercely engaged as the rest. A young fellow in a blouse, who fought near him, frequently encouraged him by a smile and approving words.

Three times the charge of the cavalry had been repelled ; several of the officers dismounted, to set their men an example. At the fourth charge, a powerful fellow had levelled his musket at the young Frenchman : Henry saw it, and, dropping his pike, drew a pistol and shot him dead. It was his last effort ; for a ball from one of the fellow's comrades struck him in

the side, and he fell, at the foot of the man whose life he had preserved.

Much admiration of his courage—for it was known that his left arm was previously broken—had been excited, and several rushed forward to extricate him from the mass of the dead and dying. They succeeded at last in drawing him from the barricade, and were bearing him to the same wine-shop to which General Playwell had been conveyed, when the young Frenchman interfered.

“Not there, my friends,” he said; “living or dead, the gallant fellow who preserved my life shall rest under my father’s roof.”

Forcing their way through the crowd, the speaker, assisted by those who felt an interest in our hero, conveyed his still breathing body to a respectable-looking house near, mounted the narrow staircase, and placed him upon a bed in a neat chamber, of which Albert Onfroy had the key. It was his own.

Hastily speaking to the wife of the porter, as he descended, to give directions to send for a surgeon, the grateful fellow rushed once more into the thickest of the fight.



## CHAPTER XI.

The heart of woman is as true to its early love  
As the mother to her child—the needle  
To the pole.

CREON.

It was past midnight when William Bowles and his companions arrived at the little town of Beauvais, which was in a state of great excitement. Rumours of what was passing in Paris had reached the citizens, who, to do them justice, were well-disposed enough.

Each fresh post brought fresh intelligence, and the streets were filled with groups of workmen and masters discussing the events of the day.

The hotels were crowded; rooms were scarcely to be procured at any price; and post-horses at a fabulous premium.

It was not till after having tried at least half-a-dozen places that the party succeeded in obtaining apartments at the Lion d'Or, a comfortable house near the Abbeville Gate.

Both Amy and Mary were in the deepest despair: to the latter the danger of her husband and the absence of Henry Beacham were sources of the deepest

grief; whilst her friend's heart was torn by feelings which it would have been difficult to analyse.

In justice to her, we must add, that *hope* was not the foremost. It was too grateful, too kind for that.

Poor old Rigid was like a tiger which had been deprived of its young. He cursed the French by turns in Hindostanee and English, and bitterly lamented the fate of his old master.

The night indeed was a wretched one.

The next day, William, whose anxiety for his friend equalled that of the ladies, proposed to return to Paris, if possible, to learn his fate; but at the first hint of such a project, his wife threw her arms round his neck, and declared that if he went she would accompany him—that death was a hundred times less terrible than the thought of such a separation.

The warm-hearted fellow felt that it would be unmanly to urge it; so resigned himself with a sigh, determining, however, to send Rigid: an arrangement which pacified Mary—anything rather than part with her husband.

He found the old soldier smoking his pipe at the door of the hotel, listening to the accounts which the servants of an English family who had just arrived were giving of the progress of the revolution.

“They fight like devils,” observed the valet of the party.

“Ay,” said a fat coachman, “and they do say that *guillotine* is to be erected in the cathedral—that all

the nobles are to be beheaded, the priests massacred, and Paris given up to pillage. Thank heaven, I and my horses are safe out of it."

• He patted the worn-out animals with a look of affection, as they stood panting in the yard, waiting till the ostlers could find room for them in the overcrowded stables.

"Rigid," said William, approaching the old soldier, "have you any objection to return to Paris?"

"Every objection," was the short, sharp reply

"What! not to seek your master?" said William.

"Can't."

"Why?"

"On duty here. My old commander made me promise that I would not leave my lady. I never disobeyed orders, though I occasionally grumbled at them. He trusted me, and I loved him, with all his faults;—faults!" he repeated reproachfully, "he had none—his heart was pure gold. How should I look when I meet him in heaven"—and here the poor fellow raised his hat with an air of devotion which was too sincere to be ridiculous—"if my old General was to say: 'Sergeant Rigid, you have broken the consign, and, like a raw recruit, disobeyed orders.' No, no, I should expect to be reduced to the ranks, at the very least."

It was as useless to reason with him as unnecessary to urge the danger of his master, to which the attached fellow was painfully alive. William gave up the attempt. In endeavouring to send him back to Paris

to search after the General, his real motive was, if possible, to discover what had become of Henry. He feared lest, in his despair, he had sought death in the ranks of the insurgents. His heart was heavy, for he was a true friend.

"I cannot go myself," he exclaimed; "I cannot leave my wife unprotected in the midst of danger and confusion: it would be unkind—unmanly."

"Of course it would," added Rigid, with a groan.

"And your mistress, she must not be left without a protector."

"She never will be whilst I live," exclaimed the old soldier. "She is an angel; God help her. Both she and my master deserve a better fate."

The news which each fresh arrival brought of the massacre in Paris increased the excitement of the fugitives to the highest pitch. Amy could endure it no longer; her heart was seared, and she declared her determination of returning the following morning, unless some intelligence reached her of the General.

It would be too curious, perhaps, to inquire how far the fate of Henry Beacham was a party to her resolution; she would have trembled to ask herself the question. Deeply as she was attached to him, that attachment was pure; it was love without its passion—the flame upon the altar, without the ashes which sully it.

"You go, dear Amy!" exclaimed the terrified Mary; "impossible."

"Think of the danger," added William.

“My sorrows,” replied Amy, “will protect me; there is a majesty in grief which even the wicked must respect. Besides,” she added, with a melancholy smile, “what have I to fear?”

Remonstrance was useless; she declared her resolution to be unalterable. She in her woman's heart had comprehended the devotion of her lover in returning to the rescue of General Playwell; it was the sacrifice of a generous mind—an effort to atone for the wrong which, in a moment of passion, he had contemplated in asking Amy to abandon him.

Imagination pictured him to her wounded—dying—trampled upon by the infuriated soldiery; no voice he loved to whisper consolation—no dear hand to close his eyes; perhaps, too, she secretly entertained the hope of breathing her last sigh by his side, and resting in the same grave with him.

At Mary's and William's earnest entreaty she retired at an early hour. They deemed her resolution the excitement of the moment, and trusted that with rest she would judge more calmly. They knew not the devotion of which her heart was capable.

It was past midnight, when a chaise drove up to the *auberge*, and General Playwell, pale from excitement and suffering, stepped from it. His blood was on fire; the fever of jealousy was in his heart. He had not seen the return of his rival in the affections of his wife: all that he knew was that Amy had been rescued and borne away from him. His diseased imagination

painted them rejoicing in his supposed death, indulging in pleasing anticipations of a future, the thought of which was torture to him.

General Playwell, at least, was spared one pang. With all his mad jealousy, he could not suspect the virtue of his wife.

Whilst the General was making inquiries of the landlord, Lisette, his wife's waiting-woman, who had more than even her sex's share of curiosity, and had been questioning each fresh arrival, descended. She had heard the rattle of the chaise as it drove into the inn-yard, and was eager to learn the latest intelligence from her dear Paris. On beholding her master, whom she firmly believed to have fallen, she gave a shriek, exclaiming—

“*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*”

“Lisette!”

“*Mais*—it is the General. *Vous êtes bien heureux*, miladi and monsieur! Rigid was to went to-morrow to find for you in Paris.”

“Your lady, then, is here?”

“*Oui*—yes, certainly—with Monsieur Henry, a charming gentleman—so kind, so brave.”

The chambermaid had but a bad memory for names. She had heard those of William and Henry several times during the day, and very naturally confounded one with the other.

The General almost staggered at the intelligence—his worst fears were confirmed.

"Show me your mistress," he faltered.

"Miladi is in sleep."

"Show me to her," repeated the General, in a tone which admitted of no second reply.

"Certainly; it will be as you please," she answered.

It seemed an age to the General till he reached the corridor. His heart was gnawing itself.

By the taper which Lisette carried he saw a mattress spread out before the door of one of the chambers, and a figure apparently sleeping upon it.

"Who goes there?" demanded the man, in a military tone, starting from his recumbent position.

His master breathed more freely, for he recognised the voice of Rigid; but even the fidelity of the old soldier, on second thoughts, gave him a pang: he must have seen something, the demon which possessed him whispered, to have taken such a precaution as he had done.

"Leave us," he added, turning to the waiting-woman.

Lisette obeyed.

"Thank you—thank you, Rigid," exclaimed the General, grasping the hand of the veteran convulsively; "you are a true friend to watch over your master's honour in his absence. Alas, that it should require guarding."

"And who says it does require it?" gruffly answered Rigid, his delight at finding his master safe suddenly checked by the ungenerous impression which his words implied.

"If not, why do I find you here?"

"Because I am a fool, more faithful than wise—because I would have guarded the safety of your wife, not her honour—the fiend only could suspect that. She is too good for you."

"But he—he is here."

"And who the deuce is he?" interrogated Rigid.

"The man I most hate and fear in the world—he to whom her heart is given."

"You knew that when you married her," said Rigid, calmly, "but the *he* you allude to is not here."

"Lisette told me."

"Do you doubt me?" interrupted the old soldier, drawing himself up proudly. "You might as well suspect the angel who is sleeping or praying in that chamber. No; the gallant fellow, after placing my lady under the care of his friends, returned to the skirmish to look for you—*you*, who suspect him—God forgive you! That ever I should live to reprove my old General for injustice and suspicion. But I am glad you are returned to raise the consign."

"What mean you?"

"That I require a furlough for a week—may-be more. In the morning I am off to Paris."

"To Paris!" repeated the General, with a look of surprise.

"Ay, to Paris. Do you think I'd suffer the noble fellow who volunteered, and did Jack Rigid's duty for him, in looking after your safety, to die like a dog in a



ditch, without 'I thank you,' or a shake of the hand? Why, I would not do it to a comrade who had given me a draught of water from his canteen—my heart wouldn't let me."

"Your heart, Rigid?"

"Ay, I have such a thing. It often beats warmer under the worsted lace than the gold epaulette. I must go, so give me my furlough, or my discharge."

"Has your mistress"—faltered his master, struck by a painful suspicion.

"Doubting again," interrupted the old soldier. "No. And if she had, what then? It would be nothing very strange, I think, that she should feel some interest in the man who risked his life to preserve yours."

The sound of voices had disturbed the broken slumber of Amy.

She listened, and recognised that of her husband.

One weight, at least, was removed from her heart; for, despite the misery her marriage had entailed upon her, she valued him for his good qualities, and if she could not love, at least she respected him.

Hence his safety inspired her with the hope of Henry's. Perhaps they had escaped together.

Poor Amy was doomed to disappointment; the General had not even seen the man who had generously risked his life in his cause.

The General ordered a carriage at an early hour the following morning, in order to proceed to England;

and after coolly thanking William and his wife for their protection of Amy, and expressing a polite regret at the uncertainty of their friend's fate, he descended to the court-yard of the *auberge*, to see that all was in readiness.

Very different was the parting between Amy and her friends.

On leaving William, she felt as if quitting a beloved brother, and wept freely upon his shoulder.

This time Mary was not jealous.

"Dear Amy," she said, "Henry will escape; I am sure he will. We shall hear of his safety in a few days."

"No, no; he is wounded—dying; and I—I am chained here by the world's opinion. I may not seek him as a sister would seek a dying brother—hear his last words—soothe his sad pillow."

"True, Amy," replied William, kindly; "you have another duty to perform, not less sacred. General Playwell, I am sure, is ill: once or twice, during our short interview this morning, I observed him turn deadly pale, and with an involuntary movement place his hand upon his heart. He is no longer young, and his excitement and anxiety have been fearful."

"I know my duty, William," said the poor girl—for in years she still was one—"and am prepared to fulfil it. Neither you nor Mary, when you strew flowers upon my grave, will ever have cause to blush that you have loved me."

There was a gentle tap at the room-door, and Rigid, attired for travelling, made his appearance.

His mistress thought that the General had sent him to announce that all was in readiness for their departure, and once more made her adieu to her friends.

"You need not be in such a hurry, my lady, the carriage won't be ready this hour. Like everything French," he added, with a grimace, "it is only half fit for use: one of the wheels is broken, and the back spring gone; the smith is repairing it."

"Why do you seek me, then?" demanded Amy, mildly.

"Because I am a fool," answered the old soldier, bluntly. "Because, if I should not see you again, I should feel a pleasure in the recollection of a kind word from you."

"Not see me again! Do you not accompany us to England?"

"No."

"Have you left the General's service?" demanded William, who had taken a liking to the blunt manner of Rigid, his independent spirit, and thorough English notions.

"Only on furlough; but it almost comes to a discharge. But the General and I know each other; and fit we did, after thirty years' service together. When Jack Rigid says his mind is made up, 'tis no use to argue the topic—and mine is made up to return to Paris."

"To Paris!" replied Amy, with a ray of hope.

"To Paris!" repeated William. "Why, I thought you hated it?"

"And so I do, as every thorough-bred Englishman ought to do—with its nasty soups, lean beef and sour wine. It is for no love of the place that I return to it, sir, but from duty."

"Duty!"

"Ay, to seek that fine fellow who saved my lady, and risked his life again to preserve the General. If dead, he shall have a soldier's grave; if living, I'll ferret him out, watch him, nurse him, and bring him back to old England, or never return myself."

Amy seized the speaker's hand, and would have pressed it to her lips, if the old man would have permitted it; his generous resolution removed a portion of the weight which was pressing at her heart.

"Does the General send you?" she demanded; for the cool indifference he had shown to the fate of her preserver had deeply wounded her grateful nature.

"Of course, I could not go without permission," was the equivocal reply; for Rigid, who had felt ashamed of his master's heartlessness, was willing to give him some portion of the credit, which was all his own. "And now, lady," he added, "good-bye—God bless you; when you see me again I shall have good news for you, or my name is not Jack Rigid. I never felt more confident of success in my life. It is not a forlorn hope I am venturing on, but a certain victory."

"Heaven grant it!"

"Amen!" exclaimed the old soldier, and quitted the apartment.

"There goes a true heart," said William.

"Ay, and a kind one," added his wife, whose woman's tact had penetrated Rigid's real motive, which was nothing less than bringing peace of mind, if possible, to his mistress. "Oh, William, I feel assured that he will succeed, and that we shall be happy yet; the General cannot"—

"Live long," she would have added, but the blush upon Amy's cheek, who guessed her meaning, restrained her, and she substituted for her first thought—"Be so ungrateful as we imagined."

William ordered his chaise at the same time, and the two parties left the *auberge* together, and went towards Abbeville; from thence they proceeded to Calais, and finding a packet ready, sailed an hour after their reaching that quaint, old, dirty town—which Sterne has so graphically described—for England. By the time they reached the General's splendid mansion in St. James's Square, he was in a high fever, accompanied by symptoms of the gout. Amy was his constant attendant.

## CHAPTER XII.

Life is but a change from storm and sunshine—  
Tears and smiles—hopes and fears—

CREON.

THE third day of the insurrection in Paris had drawn to a close, and the people were everywhere victorious. Charles X. was a fugitive on his way to exile, and the Provisional Government installed at the Hotel de Ville. The citizens and workmen, whose determined courage had overturned the monarchy, were transported at their success; men gave the hand to one another in the streets with pride, for they fancied that they were free. Little did they imagine that the astute masterspirit of the revolution—the princely plotter who alone profited by their blood and courage—would bind them to a yoke yet more degrading than the one they had so heroically cast off. The policy of the elder Bourbons was, “Divide and reign;” that of the younger branch, “Corrupt and govern.”

Everywhere traces of the barricades remained, although the people had laboured to efface them.

A city which has been given up to cruel warfare for three days does not easily recover its ordinary aspect.

Traces of the cannon-balls were to be seen upon the façades of the houses, carts were passing removing the wounded and the dead ; the former to the hospitals, the latter to the deep trenches dug to receive them.

It matters very little where those who fall in the struggle for liberty are buried—the martyr's blood ennobles the sepulchre.

Most people who have been in Paris know Bradford, an Englishman, who keeps a coffee-house a few doors from the Embassy ; one who, in his humble position, has done more, perhaps, to assist his distressed countrymen than those who have given hundreds for the purpose.

He gave his time, his advice, his energies. He was a man whose heart flowed with the milk of human kindness. All who knew him respected him.

His little shop was crowded with his countrymen, most of whom were discussing the events of the last few days.

Some were boasting of their exploits—to these Bradford listened with a quiet smile ; others were making anxious inquiries after their missing relatives.

Rigid had frequently left the Hotel Meurice to smoke a quiet pipe in the little back parlour, and talk over his campaigns with the worthy landlord.

A sort of friendship had sprung up between them. It was not, therefore, without pleasure that the honest fellow saw his old acquaintance make his appearance once more.

"What, Sergeant," he exclaimed, shaking him warmly by the hand, "still in Paris?"

"As you see."

"Why, I thought the General had left?" said Bradford.

"And so he has."

"And you?"

"Have returned. I never flinch from service at the call of duty; but come," added the speaker, "give me a pipe, and sit down; you can speak the cursed gibberish of the mounseers, and I require your assistance."

As soon as they were comfortably seated, Rigid related as much of what had passed as he deemed necessary, and proposed to the worthy landlord to accompany him in his search after Henry Beacham.

"I suppose the best thing," he added, "will be to apply to the police?"

Bradford shook his head—it was disorganised.

"Or the hospitals?"

"That's more likely. But where did this take place?"

"In the Rue St. Denis."

"Come with me, then—I'll take you to a man who is more likely to give us the information we seek, than either the police or the surgeons—to Cabert the rag-gatherer; he was always applied to by the former in cases of difficulty. His calling is but a blind—he is the most expert spy in France."



"A spy!" repeated Rigid, with a grimace, for he had a soldier's contempt for the name. "Faugh!"

"Everyone to his trade."

"Ay, but his is a dirty one."

"It is not deemed so here. Would you believe it, just before the outbreak, he was consulted by a person who possessed the confidence of the Ministry? Had his advice been taken, Charles X. would now be King of France. He knew what was in preparation."

"A rag-gatherer?"

"Ay," replied Bradford; "who heeds the rag-gatherer, or interrupts his conversation at his approach? Cabert is the head of them. There are eight thousand of the trade in Paris, and they all make their reports to him. Now can you understand it, Master Rigid?"

The two friends set forward on foot, for the Boulevards were still too much encumbered by the fallen trees, and the half-cleared barricades, to permit vehicles to circulate.

A hundred times as they passed they were stopped by the victorious people, and compelled to shout "Vive la République," "Vive Lafayette!" to Rigid's no small annoyance, for, Englishman-like, he did not approve of being *compelled* to cry anything.

On reaching the Rue St. Denis they dived down a narrow, dirty passage, and found the domicile of the rag-gatherer at the further end.

It was as closely beset by applicants as the hotel of a new Minister on his first levee days.

Most of the persons were in blouses, which had become suddenly the most fashionable costume—perhaps because it was the safest.

Rigid observed with surprise that beneath the coarse frock many of the wearers wore well-fitting trowsers and varnished boots, and their delicate hands, as they gave them to the crowd, denoted that they had never earned their living by labour.

They were compelled to wait their turn, and nearly an hour passed before they were admitted to the presence of Monsieur Cabert, a little gray-haired old man, whose wrinkled face, and quick, gray eye were bent upon a pile of dirty scraps of paper, scrawled over with various hieroglyphics, perfectly intelligible to him, although he could neither read nor write.

“Your pleasure, gentlemen,” he said; “and be brief, for my time is very much occupied just now.”

“Only one question,” observed Bradford.

“Ten francs first.”

The sum was paid, and quietly pocketed by the old man.

“A young Englishman,” continued the landlord, “who fought at the barricade in the Rue St. Denis—is he living!”

“The same who carried a lady from a carriage which was overturned by the people to form the barricade?”

“The same.”

“He lives.”

"Thank God!" exclaimed Rigid, to whom his companion translated the reply of the rag-gatherer.

"And where?" said Bradford.

"At the lodgings of a young carpenter, 19, Rue St. Denis. You will find him there, badly wounded, I fear. Who is this man?" he added, fixing an inquiring glance on the old soldier.

"The confidential servant of the gentleman whose carriage was overturned," answered Bradford.

"And who was knocked down and taken to Fainet's wine-shop?"

"The same."

Monsieur Cabert paused for a moment, as if weighing something in his mind. At last he seemed decided.

"Return with him," he whispered, "at midnight, when the crowd is gone, and the old rag-gatherer is left alone."

"What for?"

"I have something to communicate."

"Can't it be done now?" demanded Bradford.

"No."

"Why not?"

"That's my affair; it is something which regards his master. Had it not been that he came with you, whom I know to be a safe person, I should not have spoken. Go now, and return at the hour I name: it will be worth your while as well as mine."

The visitors took their leave.

What the deuce can the old rascal have to commu-

nicate?" said Rigid, when Bradford had informed him of the extraordinary proposal of the rag-gatherer.

"Will you go?"

"Certainly; Jack Rigid never yet feared to meet any one. I'll be with him."

"And I," said the landlord, whose curiosity was equally excited. "Cabert would not have proposed such a meeting without a purpose, though what it is we have to learn: for I am quite as much in the dark as yourself."

On their arrival at the lodgings of Albert Omfroy, the door was opened by the young carpenter himself.

At first he was extremely cautious in his replies: the grateful fellow felt interested in the fate of his preserver, whose rank in life was evidently so much above his own; nor was it till he felt perfectly assured that they were the friends of the sufferer, that he consented to admit them to the chamber of his guest.

They found Henry badly wounded, in a state of burning fever, which the close air of the place not a little tended to increase.

In his delirium he called upon Amy, imploring her forgiveness for the rash proposal he had made to her to abandon her husband.

"I shall die soon," he added—"very soon—so pray forgive me! that we may meet again in heaven: its gates will not be barred against me, with the seal of Amy's pardon on my brow."

"What does he say?" whispered Bradford.

"Raves," replied the old soldier.

"Do you comprehend his meaning?"

"Perfectly."

"And what is it?"

"A secret."

The landlord asked no more questions: he saw that his curiosity was not likely to be gratified.

Rigid was not the man from whom confidence could either be extorted or cajoled; and, to do him justice, Bradford was not the person to try either.

Like most soldiers who have seen much active service, Rigid was something of a surgeon, and prided himself upon his treatment of gunshot wounds.

Despite the remonstrance of Albert, he persisted in removing the dressings which the apothecary who had been called in had applied, and examining the state of the patient himself.

Henry uttered a sigh of relief, as Rigid drew from the orifice the plug of coarse linen which the man had thrust into his wound.

"Monsieur Narville says he will be well in a week, if left to himself and kept warm," said the young carpenter.

Bradford translated the observation of their host.

"Tell him Monsieur Narry, or Narvil, is a fool," was the reply. "In less than a week, if we had not arrived, he would have been dead. The ball is still to be extracted."

"How do you know?"

“By the time, friend Bradford,” said Rigid, “that your carcase has been riddled as frequently as mine, you will be able to judge too. He is in a violent fever. The first thing to do is to open all the windows.”

To the great regret of the carpenter—who, like most Frenchmen, had a religious belief that warmth was necessary for all diseases—it was done.

“What next?” said Bradford.

“Send for a surgeon.”

In half an hour the worthy landlord returned with a medical student, whom he had brought from the neighbouring hospital—one of those noble youths who, during the fiercest of the contest, had braved death from either party, in order to fulfil his mission of humanity.

Rigid eyed him doubtfully at first; nor was it till he witnessed the tenderness and skill with which he sounded the wound, that he felt justified in trusting the life of the patient in his hands.

“What does he say?” he demanded of his companion.

“That the ball is still in the wound,” said Bradford.

“I told you so.”

“And that it must be extracted as the only chance of saving life.”

Rigid nodded—as much as to say “Quite right.”

“He wishes to know if you will have him removed to the hospital.”

“No; I am here to watch him. The man who

risked his life to save my old General shall never die in an hospital. Tell the recruit to do his duty."

The recruit, as Rigid patronisingly termed him, extracted the bullet with considerable skill—and even the old soldier acknowledged that it was not so badly done, considering that the operator was a Frenchman. The extraction of the ball and the setting of the broken arm—which had been too long neglected—gave the patient considerable relief, and towards midnight, Henry fell into a refreshing sleep.

Rigid and his friend Bradford left him to the care of the young carpenter, and set out to pay their promised visit to the rag-gatherer.

They found Monsieur Cabert alone in his den—a quiet air of satisfaction on his wrinkled countenance—for the day had been a profitable one, and he was pleased with the punctuality of his visitors, who were both not a little anxious to learn what affair he could possibly have with them, and which required so much secrecy and caution. He was a man of business—as chary of his words as a Prime Minister, whose every syllable is weighed.

"Good evening, gentlemen; you are punctual."

"As a fogleman on drill," said Rigid.

"I believe," continued Cabert, "you are the confidential domestic of General Playwell?"

The term domestic was grating to the ears of the old soldier, who made a slight grimace at the word.

"Tell the baboon," he said to Bradford, who inter-

preted between them, "that I never served anyone but the King—that I am the General's orderly, not his servant."

"Its much the same thing," quietly observed the rag-gatherer, with a scarcely perceptible smile at the distinction. "Ask him what was in the General's carriage when the people seized it to form the barricade?"

"In it? why the General and his lady," replied Rigid.

"Any jewels?"

"No; they were deposited at the Embassy."

"Any cash?"

"Not much."

"Was there a desk?"

Rigid remembered the fortune of Amy so honourably restored by Henry Beacham, and which the General, in his jealous fury, had declared should never serve to enrich her with another when he was gone. A sudden light broke upon him, and explained the cause of Monsieur Cabert's desire to see him. Still, he suffered no sign of satisfaction to appear; he was too old a soldier for that.

"A desk?" he repeated; "yes, certainly there was a desk—cedar wood bound with silver—patent lock, plate on the lid—crest, a dragon—motto 'Forwards!'"

"And what did it contain?"

"Papers."

"Any money?"



“Not absolutely money,” said Rigid, who had a game of his own to play; “since the bills and securities in a packet sealed with black are entirely useless—without the signature of the General, they are little better than waste paper.”

The perfect air of sincerity with which this was uttered deceived both his companion and Monsieur Cabert; the latter saw, with a sigh, his hopes of wealth vanish. He had recognised the meagre words “Bank of England” upon several of the notes, and imagined, by the assistance of the old soldier, that he should be able to get them cashed, on the commonest principle—division of the proceeds.

“Could they not be converted into money?” he demanded.

Rigid shook his head, and smiled.

“Not without the General’s signature,” he said; “they are mere waste paper; even then they would only be payable in England. I wish they could; it would have made us rich for life.”

The Frenchman, who was a keen judge of humanity—humanity in its worst phases—could not comprehend the fidelity which was proof against the temptation of wealth. Like Sir Robert Walpole, he believed that every man had his price. Rigid’s manner completely deceived him; the old soldier was as good an actor as himself.

“If any of them are signed,” he added, “we might do something, perhaps; but the risk would be great.”

Cabert, completely thrown off his guard, produced from a pile of rags the desk, and, opening the packet, spread out before the astonished Bradford and his friend the notes and bills to the enormous amount of one hundred and thirty thousand pounds.

His keen gray eyes watched the countenance of the old soldier with intense anxiety as he looked over them.

“Silence!” said Rigid to Bradford; “not a word.”

Carefully examining them one by one, the speaker passed them back to the rag-gatherer with a sigh of disappointment.

“Not worth a guinea the lot,” he said; “they are not indorsed.”

“What does he say?” demanded Cabert.

Bradford explained to him.

“Could you do nothing with them?” he demanded.

“Nothing: the General might give twenty pounds to recover his letters; for the rest, not twenty pence.”

“Will you speculate?”

“I?” replied Rigid, with a well-affected laugh; “not a straw: had they been convertible, the case would have been different. So if this is all you have to communicate, Master Cabert, good night. “Tell him,” said the old soldier, turning to the coffee-house keeper, “that it was hardly worth while to keep us from our beds at midnight for such a mare’s nest.”

Had the speaker betrayed the least anxiety to possess himself of them—had his hand trembled, or his eye brightened, the clever Frenchman’s suspicions would

have been excited ; but the perfect air of indifference, and even disappointment, with which Rigid threw back the bills and securities, completely lulled his suspicions.

“ What would you advise me to do with them ? ” he demanded.

“ Take them to the Ambassador, who is a friend of the General's,” said Bradford ; “ he is very generous, and may reward your honesty.”

“ Perhaps,” said Rigid, “ it would be the best way.”

He saw that there was a lingering doubt on the mind of the speaker.

Coolly drawing his pipe from his pocket, he took up a note for a hundred pounds, twisted it, held it to the candle, and lit his pipe with it.

Bradford, who was watching him eagerly, thought him mad, but Rigid perfectly well knew what he was about.

The rag-gatherer was convinced. It was worth the sacrifice.

“ Tell him,” he said, in a disappointed tone, “ that if he will give me ten louis, they are his.”

The soldier laughed, and shook his head at the proposal.

“ His master would reward him ? ” insinuated the rag-gatherer.

“ Perhaps,” answered Rigid, in his usual short manner.

“ Five louis, then ? ” eagerly asked the rag-gatherer.

After a great deal of haggling, Rigid suffered himself to be persuaded, and, with great apparent reluctance, counted out the sum, at the same time declaring that in all probability the General would never give him the money back.

In this, at least, the speaker spoke truly, for it was not the old man's intention that General Playwell should ever know that the fortune of Amy had fallen into his hands.

Rigid had a morality of his own.

The treaty being concluded, Rigid and his companion left the house, carrying the desk with them.

"Well," exclaimed Bradford, as they got into the street, "it's the first time in my life I ever saw a man light his pipe with a hundred pound note."

"Better that than pay yon rascally Frenchman a thousand," said the old soldier. "I could have strangled him. The idea of offering Jack Rigid a share of the plunder!"

"The General will be overjoyed," remarked Bradford.

"The General will never know it," replied his companion.

Bradford was as honest a man as ever lived, and entertained a high opinion of the character of his friend.

The cool avowal that he intended to conceal the recovery of so large a sum from his master staggered him.

Turning to his companion, with a look of surprise depicted on his countenance, he said—

“Why, surely you”—

Rigid nodded, as much as to say: “I do, though.”

“By heavens, then, old soldier, I am disappointed in you!” exclaimed Bradford. “I would at any time have pledged my life on your honesty. I thought you a queer fellow—odd ideas—many prejudices; but above an act like this. I am disappointed—indeed I am.”

“No, you are not,” said Rigid, laying his hand upon his arm; “in my place you would do as I shall.”

“Never,” replied Bradford, in the most emphatic manner.

“Yes you would,” said Rigid. “Service is no inheritance.”

“But honesty is,” quickly replied his companion.

“True,” said Rigid; “and I’ll make a bargain with you: that if you do not agree to my retaining the desk and its contents, it shall be given up to the General. What say you?”

“That there is little fear of that,” replied Bradford. “At the coronation of Charles the Tenth I had the Duke of Northumberland’s jewels two days in my possession—not a creature knew it.”

“Except your wife,” interrupted Rigid, slyly; for he had been too intimate in the house not to perceive that the gray mare was the better horse in the establishment.

"Well—yes—of course," said Bradford; "they were left in the carriage after the ceremony at Rheims. I found them; and, on my return to Paris, gave them to his Grace. He asked me if I knew their value. I told him yes; and he gave me"—

"What?"

"The means to start my present establishment," answered the coffee-house keeper. "Believe me, honesty, in the long run, is the best policy; so, if you intend to offer any share of the spoil to me, I tell you candidly, Mr. Rigid, it is of no use. I have lived an honest man, and am determined to die one."

"I told you," said his companion, "that you should decide"

"Well?"

"Listen."

A long, whispered conversation ensued between the two friends, which lasted till they reached the house in which Henry Beacham was lodged.

"Well," said the soldier, extending his hand to his companion, "what am I to do with the money?"

"Keep it," exclaimed Bradford emphatically; "and forgive me that ever I entertained doubts of your honour."

Rigid wrung his hand cordially, and the speakers separated, Bradford to return to his home, and Rigid to the bedside of Henry Beacham.

During the night, whilst watching the slumber of his charge, Rigid ripped open the seams of his coat,

and sewed the strangely recovered fortune of poor Amy in the lining. It was daylight before he had finished.

For several days he never left his patient, whose grateful thanks and gentleness under his sufferings gradually won upon the old man's heart.

At first he had devoted himself to find him out and watch over him from a sense of duty; but the task gradually became one of affection.

In a few days his care was rewarded: the young surgeon declared Henry Beacham out of danger—he was slowly but gradually recovering.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Age does not always bring content ;  
But like the frost on Etna's brow,  
Too oft it hides the fires unspent  
Which rage beneath the winter's snow.

BRIDE OF THE RHINE.

THE experience of life daily proves to us that we never violate a law of nature or suppress the feelings of the heart, but that sooner or later they avenge themselves.

General Playwell had gone out to India a poor man ; in his father's house he had been treated, when a youth, coldly. The affection of his parents had been centred in his elder brother, who was destined to bear the title and inherit the fortune ; for the cadet there was cold regard alone, and it had chilled his young heart.

He had dearly loved his brother ; and to do Sir William justice, that affection had been returned. When, with his commission in his pocket and five hundred pounds credit, he was sent to seek his fortune in the East, he resolved, in the bitterness of his feelings, never to return to England unless he returned rich.



To this end he laboured, devoted the unbroken energies of his mind, and succeeded.

Love and friendship were to him but names; he schooled himself till he found he had succeeded in destroying affections, which he termed weaknesses.

He deceived himself—he had only suppressed them, to break forth in his age with the strength of the torrent, which destroys—not the gentleness of the placid stream, which spreads fertility and causes flowers to bloom where it passes.

After having sacrificed the affections of his youth, its gushing sympathies, love, and friendship, to the one purpose of his existence, he returned to England, an aged, but a wealthy man.

He had worshipped Mammon till the idol had smiled upon him—one of those bitter, mocking smiles which accompany the demon's treacherous gifts—for, after wasting his existence, he found that gold could not purchase happiness. He was astonished to find that in his age he pined for what he had scorned in his youth—love.

His passionate affection for Amy was a torment to him. The thought that he must soon leave her—for he could not conceal from himself that he was dying—was madness to him. His heart was wrung by the bitter pangs of jealousy and envy. In his selfishness he would have preferred her death to knowing that he left her behind to bless another.

“It will soon be over,” he murmured frequently to

himself; "she will be free from the old man who has placed his heart at her feet—who has loved her with such devoted kindness, and marry the choice of her youth, the object of her secret sorrow—not a thought for the husband in his grave—not a tear for his memory. If she does," he added, "she shall go to him a beggar—a beggar."

Frequently, whilst Amy—who was constant in her attendance—was watching by his side, he would implore her to promise him never to wed again.

"Promise me," he would exclaim, "and I will leave you rich. You shall be the envy of the world, as you have been the idol of my heart. Remove from me the doubt, the agony that you will be another's—that you will not forget me."

"I shall never forget you," poor Amy would reply, "nor your generous conduct and affection. I have not an ungrateful heart."

Then he would try to exact the promise again; but Amy only replied by her tears; and so days and even weeks passed on, the unhappy man gradually sinking under the fever and excitement of his passions.

Sir William and Lady Playwell, on hearing of the state of their relative, called repeatedly to see him, but, by the General's orders, they had hitherto been refused.

One day, after he had in vain tormented his unhappy wife to make the required promise, in a fit of rage and jealousy he resolved to see them.

"Leave me," he said to Amy, in a sullen tone. "Let me remain with those who love me."

The pure-minded woman, into whose heart one mercenary thought had never entered, obeyed; wisely and justly she had resolved not to make the sacrifice he demanded; her own happiness perhaps she could have sacrificed to the claim of gratitude; but she felt that she had no right, if heaven should release her from her thralldom, to destroy that of Henry.

"I am going," said the General, as he grasped his brother's hand; "I cannot last many days—the struggle is nearly over."

"I trust not," observed the Baronet; "I hope you will yet live for years of happiness"

"I tell you, no!" fiercely exclaimed his brother. "Happiness! would you mock me with the word? I was a fool ever to return to England; India was my home—I was content, if not happy there. Destiny has mocked me with a view of happiness, but never permitted me to taste it. Amy does not love me."

These words served Lady Playwell as a clue to the feelings of the speaker: she was too clever a woman not to avail herself of it.

"Dear General," said the hypocritical Lady Playwell, "despite appearances, you must be mistaken. Not love you! after having rescued her from the most frightful poverty, given her your name and fortune—she cannot possibly be so heartless or ungrateful!"

"She loves another," groaned the dying man; "and

when I am gone will wed him. There—there is the torment; but I'll disappoint them," he added, fiercely; "they shall not riot in my wealth when I am gone, and laugh at the old fool in his grave! No—no."

During the visit, which lasted more than an hour, Lady Playwell strove, not directly—she was far too experienced for that—but by hints and words, to excite the jealousy of the dying man; and when she took her leave, it was with the firm conviction that Amy would either be left without fortune, or the gift so fettered that she would be compelled to renounce it.

"I know her well," she thought; "she is one of those simple creatures who would sacrifice wealth to what she terms duty or affection."

And the manœuvring woman rejoiced in the conviction; for even if her own family did not inherit the General's property, she felt assured that the being she hated would never enjoy it.

The day after the ill-omened visit the General sent for his lawyer to attend him in the evening.

He had been meditating his will; but, before making it, resolved to urge for the last time his request to Amy.

"Amy," said the dying man, in a voice more calm than usual, "I am about to make my last will, to dispose of that wealth for which, like a fool, I wasted my youth, and sacrificed youth's hopes and pleasures. It's a sad thing to be poor," he added; "to struggle with the frowns and contempt of the cold, heartless

world—to have to toil for the daily bread we eat, and see, with every morsel, the phantom Want, gibing and mocking us—is it not, Amy?”

“Terrible! but still to be endured when the heart is pure and conscience light. Poverty is not the worst evil in the world,” said Amy.

“Still it is an evil. Wealth is the world’s idol,” said her husband. “Rich, mankind bow down to us; poor, it scorns us. Amy,” he added, “I can leave you rich—so rich the world shall bow down before you, and worship their idol, Mammon, in your person—leave you the means to indulge in a thousand pleasures, a thousand charities. Hunger shall fly the poor at your approach, the wretched shall bless your name. Amy, I have loved—that is not the word—I have worshipped you—endured the pangs of unrequited affection, of burning jealousy, which sears and dries the heart. One word, and the wealth I have toiled for shall be yours. I shall die calmly, then—happy—happy. Make me the promise, Amy—make me the promise.”

The poor girl was silent, and gave no reply except in tears.

“Make me the promise,” repeated the General, fiercely.

“I dare not!” she sobbed. “My faith has once been broken. Henry may not claim it—I know not even if he lives. Be generous—do not ask it—I cannot make it.”

“Curse you for an ingrate, then!” frantically ex-

claimed her husband. "Live as I found you—a beggar! You have driven me to despair. Wretched was the hour in which I first beheld you, cold, heartless woman!"

"Not cold—not heartless!" cried Amy, sinking on her knees by the side of the bed, and taking his hand. "Why urge an unwise and ungenerous request? why seek to shadow the rest of my young days with misery? I desire not your wealth. Leave me poor as you found me; but if you have ever loved me, do not leave me with your curse upon my heart."

"I repeat it," he almost shrieked; "I curse"—

"Heaven will not repeat it!" exclaimed Amy, rising from her knees. "Heaven, which hath witnessed my struggles, my temptations, and my truth. I have tried to love you—never wronged you—borne a breaking heart with patience!"

"True—true," he murmured. "I must die despairingly—no pity—no affection—the last wish refused me."

Finding his appeal to her interests in vain, the General appealed to her gratitude.

In his despair he became fearfully eloquent—besought her, for the sake of his soul, to grant his request, for that he could not die in peace without it.

"I cannot turn my thoughts to God," he added. "He, too, has abandoned me. He has punished me, through my love for you, by turning your heart against me—for the sins of my youth—the sacrifice of my

feelings. Amy, my salvation depends upon one word from you: speak it, and I die content."

The poor girl was not only terrified, but fearfully moved. Rigid's not returning as he had promised left her scarcely a hope that Henry was living; the agony and tears of the old man touched her heart.

She was on the point of pronouncing the promise, when the door of the dying man's chamber slowly opened, and the soldier appeared at the door.

There was a smile upon his lip; for he had not heard of the General's illness—or, at least, not of its gravity.

Amy read that smile, and overcome by her feelings, fainted.

"Curse you!" said his master, madly; "curse you—officious fool! You have destroyed my hopes for ever!"

Rigid, without one word of reply, rang the bell, and, raising his mistress from the floor, gave her into the arms of the terrified Lisette, who bore her, with his assistance, to her own room.

When Rigid returned, he found his master doggedly silent.

At any other time the temper of the old soldier would have broken forth at such a reception; but he was too deeply moved by the sight of the ravages which disease and passion had made upon the countenance of the General.

Gently drawing a chair, he seated himself by the

side of the bed, and fixed his eyes affectionately upon him.

"General," he said, "you—you cursed me just now—cursed," he added, in a tone of deep emotion, "the man who has stood by you in the battle-field—shared your campaigns and dangers—who has loved you with the fidelity of a dog. You did not mean it—I am sure you did not mean it, General!"

The General groaned, and turned impatiently upon his pillow.

The tone of wounded feeling in which the soldier spoke had more weight than a storm of reproaches would have done.

"If I have been absent," continued Rigid, "it was that I knew not you were ill; and at the call of duty"—

"Duty?" repeated his master.

"Ay, duty, General—I never yet neglected it, as you well know, Come, say that you did not mean it?"

The General fixed his eyes anxiously upon the speaker. The agony of suspense was in his glance.

Rigid knew what he would ask; but, even to console his dying hour, he could not descend to a lie.

"He lives," said the old soldier; "the man who saved your life, and my mistress's—but badly wounded: a bullet through the side, and a broken arm."

"He lives?" repeated his master, with a groan.

"Ay," said the old soldier. "Master, there is no time for worldly distinctions: the gold epaulette and



the knapsack are equal in the sight of the Great Commander. He has called over the muster-roll, and your name is spoken. Why persecute your wife by a senseless request? will your bones rest more quietly in the grave? No; rather leave your memory as a household thing, a tender sorrow—not a curse.”

“If she marries she is a beggar!” said the dying man.

“And if she does not?” asked the old soldier.

“She’s my heiress,” said the General, raising himself with some difficulty from his pillow, “mistress of my wealth. I would not leave a guinea from her to save mankind from ruin.”

“Humph!” said Rigid, with a look of disappointment. “And so you would place a temptation in the way of the virtue of the woman you profess to love! Is this honourable?—is it just? If she marries, she is a beggar; but if, forgetful of the virtue which has been the sentinel of your honour and peace of mind, she should consent to live with him, she remains rich—rare tactics for an old soldier like yourself.”

This was a view which had not struck his master before.

The idea of Amy becoming the mistress of Henry Beacham was more tormenting to him than the thought of her being his wife.

He absolutely writhed in the agonies of jealousy.

“I know her virtue too well,” he murmured at last.

“And so you would punish her for it. That’s one way of showing how you appreciate it. General,” he added, drawing a paper from his breast, “I saved your life in India—have been faithful to you because I loved you. Here,” he added, holding out the deed, “is the paper which makes me independent; but Jack Rigid scorns to owe ease and comfort to the man who, when the last trumpet sounds for his drill on earth, owns to a revengeful heart. If your wife must starve, hang me if we don’t starve together!”

With these words he tore up the paper, and dropped the fragments at the side of the bed.

General Playwell was deeply moved: if ever he had placed confidence in any human being it was the speaker.

“Rigid,” he said, “leave me for an hour: I have need of reflection. When the lawyer arrives send him to me. Do not let me be disturbed before.”

“I know the consign,” replied the old soldier.

“Not even my wife,” added the dying man.

Rigid nodded, to intimate that he understood him.

“That’s right,” he said; “reflect—think how much sweeter it is to be regretted in your grave than remembered only for injustice. Better that Amy should visit your tomb and shed a tear over it, than avoid it with aversion and disgust. Would it embalm your memory less because she retired to a happy home instead of a wretched garret? Would your sleep be the less calm because her’s was unbroken? Banish

these revengeful thoughts, unworthy of a man; and, if it is the will of the Great Commander that you must die, die like a Christian and a soldier, upon a bed of honour."

With this speech, which was the longest Jack Rigid was ever known to make, he left the room, and remained on the outside of the door till the arrival of the lawyer.

He had not been long upon his post when Lisette made her appearance, to inquire after the state of the General.

"Better—at least in mind—I trust," said the faithful fellow. "How is your mistress, Lisette?"

"Ill, poor lady—very ill," answered the waiting woman.

"Did she give you no other command?" asked Rigid.

"None."

Rigid smiled; he was pleased that at such a moment she had not inquired after her lover.

"Tell her," he said, "my master has requested to be alone till the arrival of the lawyer, and add that I have kept my word. The gentleman who saved her at the barricade in Paris is safe in England."

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the waiting-woman; "the tall, handsome young gentleman, who"—

"Yes, yes," interrupted the old soldier. "There, get away with you; and tell the servants not to approach the chamber of the General till the shark arrives."

"Shark! who is that?" asked Lisette, in some surprise.

"The lawyer!" growled Rigid, seating himself before the door.

Lisette knew the temper of the speaker too well to attempt further conversation, so hastened at once to the chamber of her mistress, little thinking how precious was the intelligence of which she was the bearer.

## CHAPTER XIV.

How calm is the rest of the dead,  
How deep is the slumber they sleep ;  
When the eye hath no tear-drop to shed,  
The heart hath no sorrow to weep.  
What is honour, what fortune, or Fame's fleeting breath,  
Compared to thy slumber, oh ! beautiful death.

EARLY LAYS.

RIGID remained upon his post for several hours before the arrival of the lawyer—one of a profession which, soldier-like, he detested.

According to his idea there was no court like a court-martial, and no justice save military justice.

The man of law came with his professional mask : his countenance was serious, for he came to make a will for a wealthy client ; had it been to draw a marriage settlement, it would have been lit with smiles ; like most of the fraternity, he had a face for every occasion.

“ A bad counsellor for a dying man,” muttered the soldier, as he gently closed the door of the General's chamber after him ; “ I trust my old commander will die with his conscience clear, nor dread the court-martial on high.”

In about two hours' time the bell rang—Rigid answered it himself.

His eye fell with an inquiring glance upon the dying man's; he sighed, and thought it a bad sign, for the sufferer avoided his.

"God forgive him!" he thought; "he has followed the dictates of his own evil temper. I should have liked to have loved him dead, even as I honoured him living."

"Send two of the oldest of my servants into the room," said the General, in a feeble voice, "and let them witness my last testament. Stay," he added, "one with yourself will do."

"I'd rather not, General," replied the old soldier; "witnessing such things is not much in my way."

"As you please, Rigid," answered the dying man.

Rigid left the room, and in a few minutes returned with two of the domestics—the butler and the coachman.

The will was signed, sealed, and delivered in their presence.

As they were about to withdraw, their master motioned them to remain.

"Stay," he said, "there is another deed to execute."

His hand trembled as he wrote his signature, which was to give vitality to his wishes after death.

As soon as it was accomplished the servants withdrew, and the lawyer, carefully folding the deed in an envelope, sealed it with the General's arms in three

places, and, according to his directions, placed it under his pillow.

"Have you any further commands, General?" demanded the man of law, with an attempt to look sorrowful.

"None," answered the husband of Amy; "but to recommend you to observe your promise."

The lawyer laid his hand upon his waistcoat, as if to feel for his heart—bowed, and left the room.

Rigid and his master remained alone, regarding each other for some time in silence.

"It is done, Rigid," faltered the General; "I have repaired the folly your hasty temper occasioned. You will find I have neither forgotten your fidelity nor your advice."

The countenance of the honest fellow brightened at the words.

"Never mind me, your honour; it was not that I have been thinking of, but of your wife—of that angel whom you have unjustly doubted."

"Not her virtue, but her love; but the time—the time for regret is past. Draw nearer to me," said the dying man; "I feel calmer now. Rigid, I have not been so insensible to your fidelity as you imagine. Give me your hand, and let me thank you for having saved my life, and for all your services. God bless you, old soldier—may we meet again!"

"Amen, General!" sobbed Rigid, raising the proffered hand to his lips, and letting fall an honest

tear of affection on it; "amen! If you have done your duty, General, we shall meet at the last parade.

Yes, Jack Rigid's eyes were filled with tears—he who had faced death in a hundred different forms—he who had seen his comrades lay dead and dying around him—he who had been associated with scenes that renders the heart callous to suffering—felt the scalding tears dim his eyes and roll down his cheeks as he grasped the hand of him whom for years he had so faithfully served.

His master paused—there was evidently something labouring on his mind which he wished to communicate, but scarcely knew how to begin.

The attached fellow saw it, and, in a voice choked with emotion, entreated him to speak out.

"I will," sighed the General; "I have a last request."

"Name it," said Rigid, fervently, "and it shall be granted—fulfilled as faithfully as though you were still in commission."

"I know it, Rigid," said the General; "I know it."

General Playwell slowly removed his hand from the grasp of the speaker, and drew from under his pillow the deed which the lawyer had so carefully sealed.

With a deep-drawn sigh he placed it in the hands of Rigid.

"What is this?" asked the old soldier, in a tone of surprise.

"To be opened only in the event," faltered the



General, "of my widow marrying again. No words," he added; "I have done my duty, and can answer for my acts where I am going. Promise me, Rigid," he continued with deep earnestness—"promise me that no entreaty—bribes, I am sure, will not avail—shall induce you to break the seals, unless the event I allude to shall take place."

"I promise you," exclaimed the old man, placing it in his breast; "and may I never meet my commander face to face in Heaven if I keep not my word."

"I know—I am sure you will. I should like to see Amy once more," added the General. "My hours will not be many on earth—I feel that I am going."

Rigid left the room to conceal his weakness, and to summon his lady to the bed-side of her husband.

"Amy," said the General, fixing his dying eyes with intense affection upon her pale, tearful face, "I must soon leave you—resign for the cold grave this earth, which never seemed so beautiful as since I have known you. You will not forget the old man who loved you with all the fervour of a youthful passion—who worshipped you—whose last sigh will be for you?"

"Forget you!" replied the sobbing girl—"oh! never—never! My heart is not so ungrateful. Your generous conduct to the poor orphan will make your memory ever dear to me. My lips must be sealed in death ere they cease to pronounce your name with

gratitude ; my heart cold as the earth which covers it ere it forgets your kindness."

Stooping over the bed, she imprinted a kiss upon the brow of her husband, who was deeply moved by her words.

He reflected for a few minutes. Perhaps he thought the act was prompted by a latent hope of changing his resolution respecting the disposal of his fortune—if so, he was greatly undeceived.

"I have made my will, Amy," he observed at last. "Everything is yours as long as you remain my widow."

"I do not require it—I do not wish it," she replied. "Humbly born, accustomed to the stern lessons of poverty, such wealth to me will prove an incumbrance rather than a blessing. The pension which, as the widow of a general officer, I shall be entitled to, will more than supply my simple wants. Take back your fortune—give it to those who have the claim of blood ; but, in exchange, leave me your blessing. I have not deceived you," she added. "You knew my unhappy story before I gave you my hand. I have struggled, prayed to do my duty as a wife—tried to forget the past. It is not my fault if memory is treacherous."

"True, Amy," sighed the old man, faintly, "true."

"Let me not have the bitter thought that the man I loved—if not with all a wife's devotion, with all a daughter's fondness—died with one bitter thought of the poor girl he honoured with his name. One kind

word—one blessing now—will be a richer legacy than all the wealth for which the world would envy me.”

General Playwell was deeply moved. The last doubt of her sincerity, as well as the hope of extorting from her weakness the required promise, vanished.

Perhaps, as death approached, the storm of human passion became lulled, or the remonstrance of the old soldier had recalled to him his better reason.

With fond affection he laid his hand upon her head, and blessed and thanked her for her faith and love.

A weight was removed from the heart of Amy.

With her affectionate, grateful disposition, she felt she never could have been happy had her husband died at enmity with her; the thought would have pursued her in after years like a reproach: nor would the feeling that it was unmerited have deprived it of its sting.

The General had too often witnessed death not to be conscious of its near approach; and, much as he desired to breathe his last sigh in her arms, he possessed too manly a spirit to subject her to so fearful a trial.

Clasping her for the last time passionately to his breast, he imprinted a kiss upon her cheek, and sank exhausted upon his pillow with the effort.

“Leave me, Amy,” he resumed, faintly; “leave me.”

“Not yet. I know my duty,” replied the poor girl.

“And I mine. You have been too dutiful to refuse me this, my last request. Send Rigid to me. God bless you, Amy! If in the world to which I am hastening the spirit is permitted to watch over those it loved on earth, mine shall be ever near you. Think of the old man in happier hours; and when I am dead imprint a kiss upon the lips that loved you—that will murmur your name till the last—the last!”

Amy did not wait till they were cold before she granted the request. With filial love she bent over him, and bestowed a kiss of gratitude and true affection, as pure as that with which the angel welcomes the soul redeemed first winged for heaven.

Her emotion was so powerful that she could scarcely totter to the door.

As she opened it she must have fallen, had not Rigid, who was waiting, caught her in his arms, and borne her to her chamber, when, resigning her to the care of Lisette, he hastened back to the bed-side of his expiring master.

The poor old General was in his last agony. With straining eyes he had followed the receding form of the being he had so madly loved; and, when it disappeared, closed them upon the world for ever, as if unwilling to pain his gaze by any other object. Still he recognised the grasp of the rough, honest hand of the old soldier, and faintly returned the pressure.

The name of Amy was the last word upon his lips, as, with a deep-drawn sigh, his spirit fled for ever.

His faithful, humble friend breathed a soldier's prayer as it departed.

Amy was a widow.

When Rigid announced to his mistress that all was over, he observed her closely. Had there been the slightest expression of joy, a brightening of the eye even, he felt that he could have hated her; but no—the only impression it produced upon the pure-minded girl was that of sorrow for the dead!

The memory of his devoted love and generosity overcame every other feeling, and she prayed and wept in silence.

“She is an angel!” thought the soldier, as, with a heavy heart, he returned to perform his last duty—that of watching over the remains of him he had so faithfully served while living. “I have not been deceived in her.”

That very night he wrote to inform Sir William Playwell of what had taken place, and a letter to William Bowles, in which, with a delicacy scarcely to be expected from one of his rough manner, he hinted how acceptable to his lady the presence of one of her friends would be at such a moment. The hint was not thrown away.

## CHAPTER XV.

But thou, O hope, with eyes so fair!  
What was thy delighted measure?  
Still it whispered promised pleasure,  
And bade the lovely scene at distance hail!

COLLINS'S ODE TO THE PASSIONS.

ON his return to England, Henry Beacham made the best of his way to Burnley.

From his still weak state of health he did not arrive till the second day, being compelled to proceed by slow and easy stages.

It is needless to say that he was received with joy by all the family.

Mary laughed and cried by turns, kissed his pale cheek with a sister's fondness; and William, upon whose countenance she had not seen a smile since their flight from Paris, was once more all happiness and sunshine.

The little party were assembled in the breakfast-room, talking over late events; old Mr. Bowles had twice looked at his watch to remind his son that it was time for him to proceed to Manchester; but the young man, in the fulness of his joy, paid no attention to the hint.

His horse at last was brought to the door, and the groom announced that all was ready.

"I see," said the old gentleman, good-humouredly, "I must go myself. Order the carriage, John, and put Mr. William's horse in the stable."

The young man declared his readiness to start, but his father, who saw how much he desired to remain, declared that he had some private business to attend to, and preferred going himself.

He was a kind-hearted old man, worthy to be the parent of such a son as William Bowles.

While the carriage was getting ready, young Matthew Small was announced.

It will be remembered that when his wretched parent had started his family to America, in the expectation of joining them with the plunder of Henry Beacham's fortune, he had purposely left him behind. In his vindictive nature he had never forgiven him his share in the abstraction of old Gridley's papers.

The young man entered the room with a humble, crest-fallen air—for poverty had overtaken him, and those who once courted his society, since his father's death had turned their backs upon him. Knaves never find real friends.

"To what, sir," demanded Mr. Bowles, "am I indebted for the honour of this visit?"

The tone in which the question was put brought a blush to the still pale cheek of the young scamp.

"I come, sir," he replied, "to offer my services."

"Indeed! In what capacity?" asked the old gentleman.

"As clerk, or anything," answered Matthew. "Since the downfall of my family, and the death of my father, I have sought employment in vain. It's a hard thing to starve in a city where I have known plenty. Besides," he added, "I can be of use. I know all the late Mr. Grindem's affairs, can prove by what rascally contrivances my father"—

"Hold, sir," said the old gentleman, "your parent may have been all that you would paint him—worse even. The world may condemn him, for it has the right; justice may brand his memory, for it is her duty. But I beg you will not shock my ears by hearing a son pronounce judgment on his father."

The speaker resumed his seat with the blush of honest indignation on his aged cheek—Matthew Small looked completely crestfallen—William pitied him.

"Call on me at the office to-morrow," he whispered, as he pointed to the door. "My father is too angry to listen to you now."

The young man was prompted perhaps as much by a desire to recover some portion of his friend's fortune as by sympathy for the delinquent. Small took the hint and withdrew.

Perhaps it may be as well to dismiss him at once from the pages of our tale by stating that three days afterwards, when, upon his promise of amendment, William Bowles persuaded his father to give him a



trial, the first act in his new position was to rob his employer of three hundred pounds, and escape with it to America, where a short career of dissipation soon ended him.

The old gentleman never reproached his son with the loss; the error was of the heart, and such errors he easily forgave.

Just as the carriage drove up to the door the boy arrived with letters: one sealed with black was addressed to William.

It ran thus—

“ Sir,

“ By my lady's wish I write to inform you that my honoured master died last night at five o'clock; he resigned his life like a man, a soldier, and a Christian. I am sure that, in his widow's present state, the presence of one of her friends would be a consolation.

“ Your honour's to command,

“ JACK RIGID.”

It is impossible to describe the feelings with which the old soldier's brief epistle was read: joy was uppermost in every heart, and yet they hesitated to express it.

Mr. Bowles was the first to give vent to his feelings.

“ Thank God!” he exclaimed in a fervent tone.

“ My dear,” said his wife, reprovingly, “ did you say thank God?”

“ Yes,” said the old gentleman; “ of course I did—could I do less—that Amy's husband died like a soldier

and a Christian? It would have been very uncharitable in me if I had not."

None were deceived by the explanation; although, of course, it was received.

Mary and her husband exchanged a smile of quiet satisfaction. There was a chance at last of the friends whom they both sincerely loved being made happy.

"William," said his father, with an air of sudden resolution, "after all you must go to Manchester."

"I, sir!" exclaimed William, in some astonishment.

"You—you will see me during the day. This evening I start for London, and shall most probably return, bringing Amy with me."

"Take me with you!" exclaimed Mary. "Poor dear Amy must need a friend at an hour like this; besides, we women have a thousand little consolations to offer, which you men, with all your fine judgment and wisdom, know nothing about."

William looked rather blank at the idea of parting from his wife so soon after their marriage; though he not only approved of her going in his heart, but secretly loved her the better for the sacrifice.

"I've but one objection," observed Mrs. Bowles, gravely.

"An objection!"

"Whilst Henry Beacham remains at Burnley, I do not see how the widow of General Playwell can

become an inmate of our house ; it would look odd—it would be too indiscreet—too precipitate—too”—

She paused.

“ Too soon,” said Mary with a smile.

“ Fie ! ” replied the old lady ; “ that is not *exactly* what I was about to say.”

“ But it is what you thought,” added her son, with a kiss. “ Leave that to me—that is easily arranged. I undertake to be Henry’s doctor. Currey will be jealous of my skill. I’ll have him round and heart-whole in less than a week.”

It was finally arranged that Mary and her father-in-law should at once proceed to London ; and William, before starting for the counting-house, which he never detested so cordially as at that moment, holding Rigid’s letter in his hand, with a light heart mounted the staircase to Henry’s chamber.

He found the invalid reading, and much better than on the preceding day.

With great tact, as he thought, he began to break the intelligence that Amy was a widow ; but no sooner had he alluded to the health and age of General Playwell than his smiles betrayed him—his friend dreamed the rest.

“ Speak ! ” he exclaimed. “ You know, William, what I would ask—a look—a word will be sufficient ? ”

William pressed his hand, and the sweet balm of hope once more rushed into his true heart.

The same day old Mr. Bowles and Mary started for London.

Henry Beacham felt, with the delicacy of an honourable mind, that it would be impossible for Amy, considering their former position, and his new-born hopes, to avail herself of the kindness of her friends if he remained at Burnley ; he therefore declared to William his intention on the following day, when he had well conned over the matter in his mind, to travel for a year in Italy.

“ But why leave Burnley ? ” demanded his friend.

“ Did you not say that Amy was expected ? Would you have me cast a shade upon the purity of her name—upon the delicacy of her conduct—by remaining here ? ” asked Henry.

“ But your health ? ”

“ Will soon be strong again. I feel the life-stream flowing to my heart. The world has ceased to be a blank, for I have hope to cheer it.”

William's only regret was that he and Mary could not accompany him ; but, as he observed with a sigh, he had a duty to his parents, who were now aged, as well as to his friend.

“ Fear not,” said Henry, grasping his hand, “ but we shall soon meet again.”

It was extraordinary with what rapidity the speaker regained strength. When he quitted Burnley, William was no less surprised than delighted at the elasticity of his step and the fire of his eye.

He began to look like the Henry Beacham of the olden time.

With a promise to write to each other, the two friends separated.

How beautiful is such friendship—the perfect confidence and communing of two young hearts, with not a sordid thought or unworthy motive to intervene.

Poor Amy was indeed consoled by the arrival of her friends.

Old Mr. Bowles kissed and pressed her to his heart like a child whom he had recovered, and Mary wept and smiled by turns: for, with the foresight of her sex, she saw a vista of future happiness for the widow, which gratitude and sorrow for the dead had not yet permitted Amy to glance at.

“And you have no friend,” she whispered, “at Burnley, whom you wish to inquire after?”

Amy blushed, and named William.

“Oh, he is well, and as saucy as though he had been married a twelvemonth; but we have had a guest.”

Her friend was silent—she guessed to whom the speaker alluded.

“Henry has been with us,” said the kind-hearted Mary.

“Hold,” said her friend, seriously; “respect the memory of the dead; not even from your lips, dear, kind Mary, must I hear that name. The General was a generous friend, protector, father to me. I owe him much.”

“Not the least,” mentally observed the young wife, “his leaving you a widow so soon after your marriage.”

But she wisely kept that reflection to herself.

In her delight at regaining her friend, she almost forgot that she was in the house of death; nor was it till Amy had repeatedly reminded her, by gentle words, that she schooled herself down to what the world would call proper behaviour on the melancholy occasion.

On the morning of the funeral Amy appeared for the first time in her weeds, and both Mr. Bowles and his daughter-in-law thought that she had never appeared more lovely.

The family of Sir William Playwell were assembled in the library, to hear the will read before the mournful pageant set out for the final resting-place of the dead.

A hundred hopes and jealousies, heart-burnings and surmises, were either suppressed or exhibited on the occasion.

As soon as the young widow, leaning on the arm of Mr. Bowles, and attended by Mary, entered the room, the lawyer broke the seal, and read the will aloud—it was brief.

Everything was left to Amy: house, plate, jewels, money; the only reservation was an annuity of £500 a year to his faithful friend Rigid.

The widow was to enjoy the magnificent bequest as long as she remained a widow, and no longer.

“And to whom does the fortune of the General go then?” demanded Lady Playwell, in a tone of spite.

"In that case, madam," continued the lawyer, still reading from the will, "the late General directs that a deed left in the care of his faithful friend John Rigid shall be opened, but not before. The eventual heir of his immense wealth will then be named."

"Don't you think," said Adolphus, who was terribly disappointed at the testament, "that my late uncle was mad when he made that will?"

"As sane as I am," replied the man of law.

Lady Playwell and her son left the house. The baronet would not even remain to pay the last respect to the dead.

Avarice can harden the heart even of a brother.

Old Mr. Bowles and the faithful Rigid were the only mourners who followed the General to his grave.

In the evening, after the ceremony, Rigid found a note from Lady Playwell, in which she begged to speak with him.

The old man refused to wait upon her, but her Ladyship was not a woman to be easily put off.

Ordering her carriage, she drove to the residence of her late brother-in-law, and desired to speak with the man who alone could throw light upon the ultimate disposal of that wealth for which she had so manœuvred.

Much to his distaste, Rigid was compelled to speak with her.

"Not here," she said; "get into the carriage, my dear Mr. Rigid. What I have to say is of the utmost importance."

"Speak out, then, at once, my lady," said Rigid, bluntly.

"Not here—not here."

With a grimace which might have convinced anyone less eager than Lady Playwell how hopeless would be the attempt to cajole, he stepped into her splendid equipage and drove with her towards the Park.

During their drive in the Park, Lady Playwell tried, by turns, flattery and promises with the old soldier, in order to draw from him a knowledge of the contents of the paper which the General had left in his keeping.

"Don't know, my lady—sealed orders," said Rigid.

"But you can guess?" said her ladyship, coaxingly.

"Perhaps I can," replied Rigid, "and perhaps I cannot. At any rate, I am not going to try. My poor dead commander trusted me. I never broke consign while he lived—I am not going to do so now."

Tired with her vain attempt to discover who, in the event of Amy's marrying again, would be the envied heir, her ladyship spitefully observed that, at any rate, the moment the widow changed her state she would be a beggar.

A shrewd smile lit the countenance of the old man, for he felt that even in that he could disappoint her.

"That's as may happen," he said. "I may adopt her."

"You! why you have only your annuity! you adopt her?"



"There's your mistake, my lady. Jack Rigid at this moment could keep his carriage; only he prefers using his legs. So now, having tried all your manoeuvres in vain, with your permission I will walk home. I have not betrayed either the dead or the living. I have done my duty, despite all your blarney and temptation."

"Insolent!" exclaimed her ladyship, in a tone of vexation.

"As your ladyship pleases," returned the old soldier.

"No matter," exclaimed Lady Playwell, as she pulled the check-string of the carriage, in order to let her companion out; "the General was an old fool, and lately evinced something more than eccentricity. I shall advise Sir William to dispute the will."

"Try it, my lady," replied Rigid, with a chuckle.

"It was a most unjust one," she said, spitefully.

"There I agree with you," said the old soldier: "and its the only act of my late commander which casts a shade upon his memory. He ought to have left the dear girl free and unfettered. Its a poor blow which is directed from the grave. But whatever may occur," he added, "be assured of this that his widow will be richer than either her enemies or friends are aware of."

With these words the speaker quitted the luxurious equipage. He felt indignant that his fidelity should have been tampered with.

When our readers take the trouble to recollect what had taken place between him and Monsieur Cabert respecting the recovery of the desk which contained Amy's fortune, they will understand that the old man's boast was not a vain one.

On his return home he was informed that his lady wished to speak with him.

He immediately mounted to the boudoir, where he found Amy and Mary busily occupied in placing the magnificent jewels of the former in their cases.

"No, Mary—no," observed Amy, as Rigid entered; "I shall never wear them again. These baubles will not make the heart beat the lighter."

"True," thought the old man to himself, "for if gifts could have purchased love, the General had been a happy man."

The costly gems, which, on their flight from Paris, had been left in charge of the Ambassador, had previously been returned to her through the Foreign Office.

"Rigid," said Amy, kindly extending her hand to him, "I sent for you to consult you. You are a friend upon whom I can rely. It is my wish that these jewels should be deposited with the banker of my late husband."

"It will be safest," replied the old man, drily.

By one of those strange revulsions of feeling, the speaker, since the death of his master, began to feel jealous of the future proceedings of his widow.

Death had cast a veil over the errors of his old General, and shed a halo round his virtue.

Rigid's heart and head were at variance. He feared lest unseemly joy or haste should lessen the respect he entertained for Amy.

"It is my intention," said Amy, "to leave London to-morrow, with my kind friends, for Burnley."

This was the place where Henry Beacham had started for; and the old man received the unexpected intelligence with an undisguised grimace.

"You and Lisette," continued the speaker, "will accompany me."

"Pardon me, madam; I am too old for service."

"Service!" repeated Amy—"service! You mistake, Rigid—as a friend, a true and valued friend. Never let the word service be heard between us."

Rigid was somewhat mollified. Still the idea of witnessing her supposed meeting with Henry Beacham was distasteful to him.

How little did he know the heart he suspected of want of delicacy.

"That is not my only reason," said the old man.

"Speak plainly," said Amy; "I do not understand you."

"Well, then, I will speak—I have not forgotten the dead," answered the old man, seriously.

"Nor I."

"And yet you are impatient to rejoin the living. Is this wise to yourself—kind to my old master's memory?"

I know you did not love him as he was weak enough to wish—no matter for that. Perhaps you feel resentful at his will—I can't defend it. Still he was your husband, lady; and if not a wise, at least a kind one."

The poor girl burst into tears; it needed no appeal to her heart to respect the memory of the man who had saved her from indigence and misery, even though the price had been her happiness.

She blushed, too, at the allusion to Henry Beacham, which was too plain to be misunderstood.

Taking the old man by the hand, she looked into his weather-beaten face, and said—

"Have you, too, misjudged me? He you allude to has left England. Think you if the possibility of meeting him existed, I could sink so far in my own esteem and the world's respect to risk it? No; I honour and revere the memory of my late husband. You never saw aught to blame in me as his wife?"

"Never!" exclaimed Rigid, fervently—"never!"

"Trust me, you will not blush for me as his widow."

"I am a fool—a wretched, jealous, peevish old fool!" exclaimed the poor fellow, hastily concealing a tear; "or I should never have suspected so much goodness and virtue; will you—can you forgive me?"

"On one condition," said Amy, with a smile.

"Name it?"

"That you accompany me to Burnley—not as my servant, but my friend," said the noble-minded Amy.

“To the world’s end, if you require it,” said the now happy Rigid, hastening from the room to conceal the drops of feeling he could no longer stem.

Coarse, cold natures may smile, perhaps, at the idea of tears in the eye of manhood: they pride themselves upon that feelingless apathy which can view the sufferings of the heart, the regrets of blighted love, or the wounds of betrayed friendship, with indifference.

They are wrong—some weakness is more beautiful than strength. I would not give the lightest feather from the wing of Time for the friendship of that man who has not a tear for the pangs his errors have caused.

“What a dear old man,” exclaimed Mary; “they will be delighted with him at Burnley: he and papa Bowles can sit and gossip over adventures in India—they will be rare friends.”

At an early hour the following morning the party left London—William, Amy, and Mary in the luxurious travelling carriage of the young widow, Rigid and Lisette in the rumble.

Poor William, during the journey was repeatedly called to order by his little wife—his buoyancy of spirit ran away with him: he saw a prospect of happiness opening to his friend, and his generous heart shared it; the almost certitude that poor Henry would be happy at last, added to his own felicity. He laughed and sang by turns, kissed his wife, pressed Amy’s hand, and even told her that she looked divinely in her weeds.

“Not,” he added, “that I would advise you to wear them for ever.”

“William,” exclaimed Mary, holding up her finger, for she saw by the blush upon her companion’s cheek that she was pained, “how can you rattle on so madly, an old married man like you.”

“Were I as old as Methusaleh, my heart would still be young,” replied the culprit, trying to look penitent; “especially on an occasion like the present. Are we not returning to Burnley with our dear Amy? Won’t the governor find his daughter again—for you know he loves her like one? and shan’t we all be happy? Oh, so happy! I would not barter the joy I feel at having recovered Amy for the crown of the Czar; and that, they say, would purchase the richest firm in Manchester.”

Then, despite the pouting lips of his monitress, he burst forth into the snatch of love song:

“Come with thy dark eyes beaming,  
Brightly in beauty’s spell;  
Come while the world is dreaming,  
Our tale of love to tell.

“There,” he added, seeing that his companions were really vexed with him; “I will be as grave as an heir at a miser’s funeral, only forgive me. Remember, I am like a schoolboy out on a holiday—don’t be angry with me for making the most of it.”

His pardon was soon sealed, and for the rest of the journey he tried to keep his word; but despite his pro-

mise, the exuberant joy of his heart would break forth, and even Amy could not avoid a smile at the air of mock penitence with which he checked himself when the reproving look of Mary reminded him of his outbreak.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Home! the heart's first nest, the seat  
Of warm affections and of childhood's hopes,  
And the tired spirit's rest.

As the carriage drove up to the lodge at Burnley, old Mr. Bowles and his wife, as well as Dr. Currey, were discovered on the lawn with the travellers, impatiently waiting to receive them.

Our readers can imagine the warm greetings which passed, and how Amy's heart bounded at once more revisiting the spot where she had received so much affectionate care.

Her venerable host pressed her like a child to his breast, as he assisted her from the carriage, and kissed off the tear upon her still pale cheek.

"Welcome home, dear Amy!" he whispered! "a thousand welcomes to your father's heart. Bitterly have I regretted that ever I suffered you to quit it. But that Doctor Currey," he added, as he resigned her to his old friend, who had been shaking hands with William and Mary, "is so obstinate, one would imagine that his prescriptions are like bills—not to be protested without loss of credit."

"And of constitution too," added the doctor, saluting,



in his turn, the youthful widow, for whom he felt an almost paternal affection.

That was a happy night at Burnley. Old times were talked over, old affections revived. To Mr. Bowles it seemed like a dream that his adopted child had ever left him, or been married. He was even on the point of asking her for one of the simple ballads which he loved to hear her sing, when an awful "Oh, my dear!" from his kind-hearted wife, reminded him of the impropriety of his request.

"No matter," thought the old man; "she will sing soon, and with a lighter heart than ever."

William was delighted, and laughingly observed to Mary that the indiscretion she complained of ran in the blood—for the governor was almost as great a boy as himself.

Rigid was not forgotten: instead of mixing, as he had hitherto done, with the domestics in the late General's splendid establishment, at Amy's wish he was invited into the drawing-room, where the kindness of all who knew of his devotion to Henry Beacham soon made him feel at home.

To the old man's credit, as well as taste, he never abused the privilege, but contented himself with the respect and kindness of the inmates of Burnley, without obtruding his society upon them.

It was not without deep emotion that Amy once more took possession of the cheerful room which the hand of affection had decorated for her arrival.

How many eventful scenes had passed since she last inherited it. Her grief at the supposed falsehood of Henry—her visit to London—privations—marriage. With a prayer for the future, and thanksgiving for the past, she laid her head upon her pillow, and dreamed till morning.

A year soon passed—before half its course was told, the bloom of health once more revisited the cheek of the young and beautiful widow.

William received a letter weekly from his absent friend, which he took good care his wife—in confidence, of course—should read to Amy. At last the wanderer wrote to her himself.

How her heart trembled as she broke the seal! How the memory of the old time returned!

“So,” whispered Mary, as they were strolling together in the grounds, “you have received a letter from the absent one at last.”

Amy blushed, and looked serious, at this remark.

“Come, my dear girl,” continued her kind friend, “there is not the slightest occasion to feel ashamed. You have now been six months a widow; every respect has been paid to the memory of one who, with all his kindness, was the cause of your unhappiness, and whose will”—

“Mary, not a word on that subject,” said Amy.

“Well, be it so,” replied Mary; “on condition that you tell me the contents of Henry’s letter?”

“He inquires after my health,” answered Amy.

"Of course he does," said her friend, drily; "in common politeness he could not possibly do less."

"He tells me," continued Amy, "that his return to England depends upon me. He has alluded—very prematurely—to an engagement which once subsisted between us—and—and"—

She hesitated.

"Asks you to renew it?" added her friend, slyly.

"Yes."

"And you will do so?" said Mary, archly, "I am sure you will. What to you is the wealth you will forfeit by your marriage? it did not make you happy. I know your heart too well to deem that will weigh an instant with you."

"Henry tells me that he is comparatively poor."

Her friend looked surprised at this remark.

"Ought I," she added, "to bring poverty to him—cripple him in his exertions—be a burthen to the man I"—"I love," she would have said, but corrected herself, and substituted: "so much respect?"

"Do you not bring him," exclaimed her friend, "a richer treasure—a true affectionate wife? In marrying him you will restore energies both to his brain and heart. Henry were unworthy of you, Amy, could such considerations weigh with you an instant. They ought not—they will not!"

"They have not," said her friend. "Why should I attempt to conceal from you my feelings? I have renewed my promise!"

Mary kissed her.

"In a year's time he will return and claim it."

"A year!" repeated her friend; "you cruel creature! A year! Why, I never could have suspected you of such ingratitude! What will poor William do so long without his friend and partner?"

"Partner?" said Amy.

"Yes; it's all arranged. Think you we have been forgetful of your happiness or his? Dear old Mr. Bowles declared last night that the day which united you to Henry, should see him an equal partner with William: he is quite rich enough to retire. He considers the gift as the fortune of his adopted daughter."

Amy was moved at so much affection and kindness.

"A year!" repeated Mary. "Come, you have not written this cruel letter?"

"Yes."

"Ay, but you can add a postscript, or one of those dear little crooked things called a parenthesis, to explain that the year dates from the commencement of your widowhood—not your letter."

Amy hesitated.

"Tut!" continued the speaker. "I must send William to you—he will plead much better than I can. Poor fellow! he was half wild with joy last night, after the conversation with his father. Cruel Amy!"

"If you really think there would be no precipitation—no indelicacy?" said Amy, hesitatingly.

“Not the least. As a married woman, you know, I am an authority on these points.

It is not difficult to persuade where the heart sides with the pleader.

The parenthesis, or rather postscript, was added, and the letter dispatched, which bound Amy, at the expiration of her widowhood, to become once more a wife.

The day at last arrived on which Amy was to lay aside her weeds. She would fain have retained them two or three months longer, as a mark of respect for the General; but her friends would not hear of it.

Mary herself attended her toilette, and assisted to array her in her simple dress of white.

The previous evening she had observed considerable bustle in the house at Burnley; knowing looks and signs were exchanged amongst her friends; but her heart anticipated their secret, and the surprise they had planned.

“Upon my word,” said William, gallantly kissing her hand, as she made her appearance in the breakfast parlour, “you look divinely, Amy! but Burnley, as Mary’s cheeks can testify, is a great improver of beauty.”

“It ought to be,” observed his wife: “for it is the seat of happiness.”

“Well,” said her husband, “I am glad to see you both looking so well; for I have a guest to introduce to you.”

“A stranger?” demanded Mary, with affected surprise.

“Not quite,” he answered, with a smile; at the same time taking his wife’s arm, and leading her towards the conservatory. “Amy, at least, is well acquainted with him. Let us leave them to introduce themselves.”

As they passed from the breakfast-room, a warm pressure of the hand was exchanged between Mary and Henry, who had arrived that very morning. The next moment he was at the feet of Amy.

We will pass over the smiles and tears, the joy of such a meeting, which seemed enhanced by the recollection of the misery of their last.

A hundred times did Henry bless the virtue which had resisted the mad proposal he had made, and bless the mercy which forgave it.

Before William and Mary returned—and they were not more than an hour in examining their favourite plants—sly creatures!—Amy had renewed the promise of her hand.

“You will wed comparatively a poor man,” he observed.

“But one I can respect, honour, as well as love, Henry,” she replied. “Believe me, I have seen enough of wealth. Content needs so little; and that little is still within our reach.”

Rigid welcomed the return of the traveller as sincerely, perhaps, as any one of the happy party

assembled at Burnley. Even according to his strict ideas, all due respect had been paid to the memory of his beloved commander.

As he grasped the young man's hand, he bade him joy.

"Of what?" demanded Henry, with a smile.

"Of having won the girl of your heart. Girl, do I call her? Heaven forgive me—she is an angel!"

"And do you think she would resign her princely wealth to marry a poor man?" asked Henry Beacham.

"Pooh! to be sure she will; what does she care for money? I can leave her enough from the savings of my pension and other matters beside, to content her little heart; so no trying the double on an old soldier. She has done her duty to the dead. May God," he added, raising his cap respectfully, "bless her union with the living."

Henry was touched by the warmth and sincerity with which the old man expressed his wishes for their happiness; thanked him again and again for his kindness, and made him promise that he would never separate from them.

"Did that wish come from your heart?" demanded the old soldier, with an inquiring glance.

"Else it had never been uttered," replied Henry.

"Then, by heavens, I will not!" exclaimed Rigid. "My last wish will be gratified: I shall close my eyes under the roof of my old General's widow."

As Mr. Bowles observed to his friend Dr. Currey in the evening, it was another happy day at Burnley.

We flatter ourselves that our numerous readers, during the progress of our tale, have sympathised too deeply with the various trials and temptations of poor Amy and her lover, not to feel rejoiced at this termination.

A month after Henry's return, the day was fixed for their marriage, and Sir William Playwell written to, that he might attend and hear the important paper read which was to deprive his brother's widow of that fortune which a more mercenary nature, at any sacrifice, would have retained.

Mr. Bowles, Rigid, and the two friends, were seated over their wine the evening before the wedding. The ladies—heaven bless them!—were occupied in examining the dress of the bride, descanting most learnedly upon blonde, silks, and orange flowers. The old gentleman seized the opportunity to broach his long-cherished resolution.

“It is time,” he said, “Henry and William, that I should retire from active life. The firm is rich and respected. Some one must replace me. You, Henry, will do so with honour. Amy and yourself, after my own children, are nearest to my heart. To-morrow sees you the husband of the girl you love, and the partner of your friend.”

It was in vain that the grateful youth refused to



accede to an arrangement as generous as it was unexpected.

Both William and his father refused to listen to a denial. He was obliged to yield.

"I can bring but little to the firm," he said.

"More than it requires," observed Mr. Bowles. "It is rich enough already."

"Not even business habits," remarked Henry.

"As many as your partner. Would you believe it, in the last balance-sheet, William added up the date of the year with the profits? -But I discovered the reason—he had just received the letter announcing your return."

The young men silently pressed each other's hands.

"Mr. Beacham will not be so poor a partner as he imagines!" exclaimed Rigid, throwing a packet into his hands.

"What is this?" demanded Henry, in surprise.

"The fortune of your bride. The hundred and thirty thousand pounds which you so honourably returned. It has not been diminished from having been in Jack Rigid's keeping."

It was in vain that all three entreated him to explain how he became possessed of it. He could not do so without casting a reproach upon the memory of his late master; and he revered it too much for that.

Marriages are things of smiles and tears, hopes and anticipations. On the following morning Amy plighted

her faith to the object of her childhood's love, without one thought or sigh for the wealth her vow deprived her of.

"How beautiful you would have looked in your jewels," whispered Mary, as she arranged the bridal veil upon her brow.

"I told you I should never wear them again."

On their return from the church, the whole party assembled in the drawing room; Sir William Playwell had arrived the evening previous, anxious to learn the contents of the important paper.

Neither Henry nor his bride evinced the least anxiety. It was only out of respect to the memory of the General that they were present.

With an anxious countenance, Rigid, who had donned his uniform for the occasion, broke the seal. He twice essayed to read, but in vain; dashing a tear aside, he passed it to the hands of William Bowles, who, to the astonishment of all, read as follows—

"Having by my will deprived my widow of all interest in my fortune should she ever marry again, I now proceed to nominate my heir. I will and bequeath to Henry Beacham, Esquire, all my property, real and personal, on condition that he assumes the name and arms of Playwell."

The deed was too well attested to permit it to be disputed.

Sir William silently rose and left the house.

Neither Amy nor her husband could speak for

astonishment; the General had nobly taken the means to cause his memory to be respected.

Rigid was the first to speak.

“Thank God!” he exclaimed, “my old commander has done his duty, and Jack Rigid can still love him.”

A tear from the eyes of the bride, could the dead man have witnessed it, was a yet more grateful comment.

The rest of Amy's and Henry's days were passed in unclouded happiness.

The death of Mary's aunt, and her guardian, Mr. Majorbanks, induced William to retire from business, and purchase an estate close to his friends, and they saw their children grow together.

Jack Rigid had his wish—he died under the roof of Amy.







