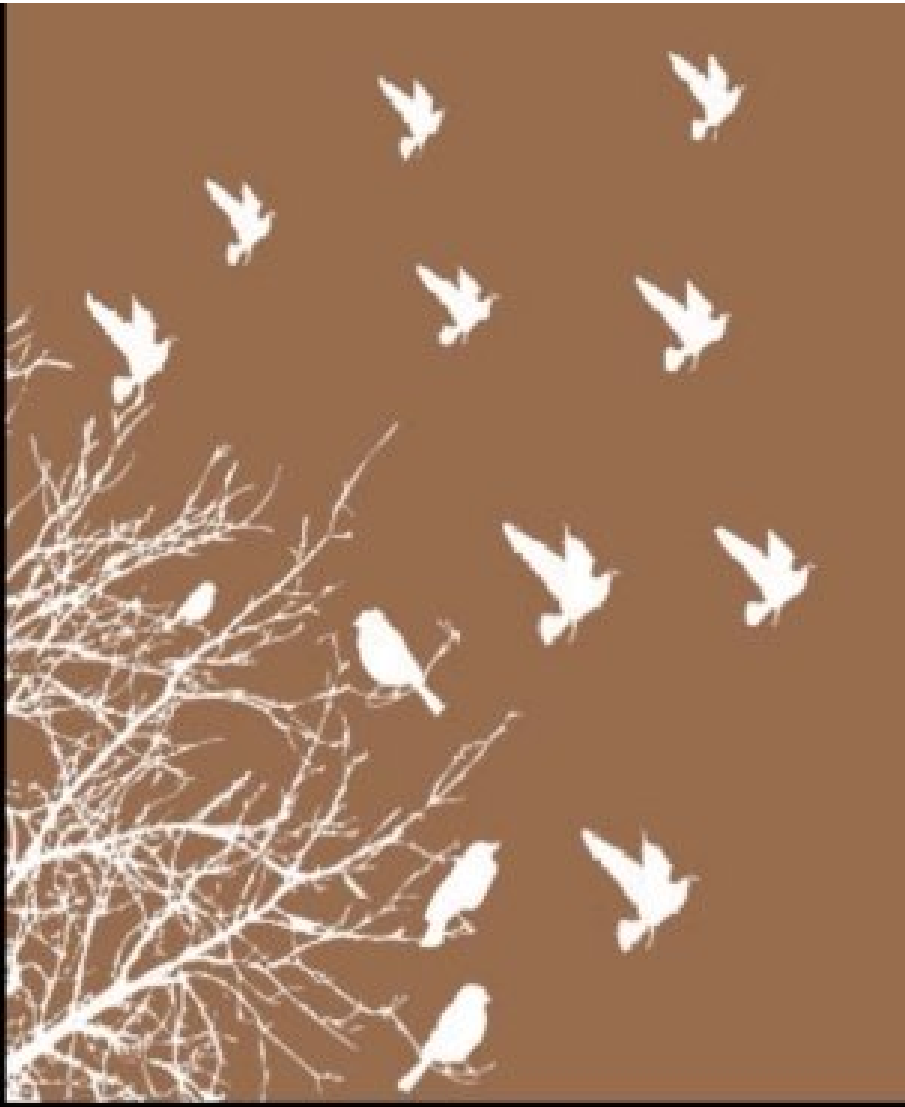
Confessions Of Con Cregan, the Irish Gil Blas



Jefferson Publication

Charles James Lever

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CONFESSIONS OF

CON CREGAN

The Irish Gil Blas

By Charles Lever

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PREFACE.

An eminent apothecary of my acquaintance once told me that at each increase to his family, he added ten per cent to the price of his drugs, and as his quiver was full of daughters, Blackdraught, when I knew him, was a more costly cordial than Curaçoa.

To apply this to my own case, I may mention that I had a daughter born to me about the time this story dates from, and not having at my command the same resource as my friend the chemist, I adopted the alternative of writing another story, to be published contemporaneously with that now appearing,—"The Daltons;" and not to incur the reproach so natural in criticism—of over-writing myself—I took care that the work should come out without a name.

I am not sure that I made any attempt to disguise my style; I was conscious of scores of blemishes—I

decline to call them mannerisms—that would betray me: but I believe I trusted most of all to the fact that I was making my monthly appearance to the world in another story, and with another publisher, and I had my hope that my small duplicity would thus escape undetected.

I was aware that there was a certain amount of peril in running an opposition coach on the line I had made in some degree my own; not to say that it might be questionable policy to glut the public with a kind of writing more remarkable for peculiarity than perfection.

I remember that excellent Irishman Bianconi, not the less Irish that he was born at Lucca,—which was simply a "bull,"—once telling me that to popularize a road on which few people were then travelling, and on which his daily two-horse car was accustomed to go its journey, with two or at most three passengers, the idea occurred to him that he would start an opposition conveyance, of course in perfect secrecy, and with every outward show of its being a genuine rival. He effected his object with such success that his own agents were completely taken in, and never wearied of reporting, for his gratification, all the shortcomings and disasters of the rival company.

At length, and when the struggle between the competitors was at its height, one of his drivers rushed frantically into his office one day, crying out, "Give a crown-piece to drink your honor's health for what I done to-day."

"What was it, Larry?"

"I killed the yallow mare of the opposition car; I passed her on the long hill, when she was blown, and I bruk her heart before she reached the top."

"After this I gave up the opposition," said my

friend; "'mocking was catching,' as the old proverb says; and I thought that one might carry a joke a little too far."

I had this experience before me, and I will not say it did not impress me. My puzzle was, however, in this wise: I imagined I did not care on which horse I stood to win; in other words, I persuaded myself that it was a matter of perfect indifference to me which book took best with the public, and whether the reader thought better of "The Daltons" or "Con Cregan," that it could in no way concern me.

That I totally misunderstood myself, or misconceived the case before me, I am now quite ready to own. For one notice of "The Daltons" by the Press, there were at least three or four of "Con Cregan," and while the former was dismissed with a few polite and measured phrases, the latter was largely praised and freely quoted. Nor was this all. The critics discovered in "Con Cregan" a freshness and a vigor which were so sadly deficient in "The Daltons." It was, they averred, the work of a less practised writer, but of one whose humor was more subtle, and whose portraits, roughly sketched as they were, indicated a far higher power than the well-known author of "Harry Lorrequer."

The unknown—for there was no attempt to guess him—was pronounced not to be an imitator of Mr. Lever, though there were certain small points of resemblance; for he was clearly original in his conception of character, in his conduct of his story, and in his dialogues, and there were traits of knowledge of life in scenes and under conditions to which Mr. Lever could lay no claim. One critic, who had found out more features of resemblance between the two writers than his colleagues, uttered a friendly caution to Mr. Lever to look to his laurels,

for there was a rival in the field possessing many of the characteristics by which he first won public favor, but a racy drollery in description and a quaintness in his humor all his own. It was the amusement of one of my children at the time to collect these sage comments and torment me with their judgments, and I remember a droll little note-book, in which they were pasted, and read aloud from time to time with no small amusement and laughter.

One or two of these I have even now before me:—

"Our new novelist has great stuff in him."—*Bath Gazette*.

"'Con Cregan'—author unknown—begins promisingly; his first number is a decided hit."—*Cambridge Chronicle*.

"The writer of 'Con Cregan' is a new hand, but we predict he will be a success"."—*Cambridge Advertiser*.

"A new tale, in a style with which Lever and his followers have made us acquainted."—*Hampshire Advertiser*.

"This tale is from the pen of an able Irish writer. The dialogue is very smartly written, so much so—and we cannot pay the writer a more genuine compliment—that it bespeaks the author to be an Irishman, &c."—*Somerset Gazette*.

"'Con Cregan '—by an unnamed author—is a new candidate for popularity," &c.—*Northern Whig*, Belfast.

"The writer must be an Irishman."—*Nottingham Gazette*.

"A new bark, launched by an unknown builder."—*Cheltenham Chronicle*.

"That the author's name is not disclosed will not

affect the popularity of this work,—one of the most attractive," &c.—*Oxford Journal*.

"This is a new tale by the pen of some able Irish writer, the first part of which is only published."—*Ten Town Messenger*.

"Another new candidate for popular fame, and 'Harry Lorrequer' had better look to his laurels. There is a poacher in the manor in the person of the writer of 'Con Cregan.'"—*Yorkshireman*.

"'Con Cregan' promises to become as great a fact as 'Harry Lorrequer.' "—*People's Journal*.

"The author of 'Con Cregan,' whoever he be, is no ordinary man."

"Another daring author has entered the lists, and with every promise of success."—*Exeter Post*.

It may sound very absurd to confess it, but I was excessively provoked at the superior success of the unacknowledged book, and felt the rivalry to the full as painfully as though I had never written a line of it. Was it that I thought well of one story and very meanly of the other, and in consequence was angry at the want of concurrence of my critics? I suspect not. I rather imagine I felt hurt at discovering how little hold I had, in my acknowledged name, on a public with whom I fancied myself on such good terms; and it pained me to see with what little difficulty a new and a nameless man could push for the place I had believed to be my own.

"The Daltons" I always wrote, after my habit, in the morning; I never turned to "Con Cregan" until nigh midnight; and I can still remember the widely different feelings with which I addressed myself to the task I liked, and to a story which, in the absurd fashion I have mentioned, was associated with wounded self-love.

It is scarcely necessary for me to say that there was no plan whatever in this book. My notion was, that "Con Cregan," once created, would not fail to find adventures. The vicissitudes of daily poverty would beget shifts and contrivances; with these successes would come ambition and daring. Meanwhile a growing knowledge of life would develop his character, and I should soon see whether he would win the silver spoon or spoil the horn. I ask pardon in the most humble manner for presuming for a moment to associate my hero with the great original of Le Sage.

But I used the word "Irish" adjectively, and with the same amount of qualification that one employs to a diamond, and indeed, as I have read it in a London paper, to a "Lord."

An American officer, of whom I saw much at the time, was my guide to the interior of Mexico; he had been originally in the Santa Fé expedition, was a man of most adventurous disposition, and a love of stirring incident and peril, that even broken-down health and a failing constitution could not subdue.

It was often very difficult for me to tear myself away from his Texan and Mexican experiences, his wild scenes of prairie life, or his sojourn amongst Indian tribes, and keep to the more commonplace events of my own story; nor could all my entreaties confine him to those descriptions of places and scenes which I needed for my own characters.

The saunter after tea-time, with this companion, generally along that little river that tumbles through the valley of the Bagno di Lucca, was the usual preparation for my night's work; and I came to it as intensely possessed by Mexico—dress, manner, and landscape—as though I had been drawing on the

recollection of a former journey.

So completely separated in my mind were the two tales by the different parts of the day in which I wrote them, that no character of “The Daltons” ever crossed my mind after nightfall, nor was there a trace of “Con Cregan” in my head at my breakfast next morning.

None of the characters of this story have been taken from life. The one bit of reality in the whole is in the sketch of “Anticosti,” where I myself suffered once a very small shipwreck, but of which I retain a very vivid recollection to this hour.

I have already owned that I bore a grudge to the story as I wrote it; nor have I outlived the memory of the chagrin it cost me, though it is many a year since I acknowledged that “Con Cregan” was by the author of “Harry Lorrequer.”



CHAPTER I. A PEEP AT MY FATHER

When we shall have become better acquainted, my worthy reader, there will be little necessity for my insisting upon a fact which at this early stage of our intimacy, I deem it requisite to mention; namely, that my native modesty and bashfulness are only second to my veracity, and that while the latter quality in a manner compels me to lay an occasional stress upon my own goodness of heart, generosity, candor, and so forth, I have, notwithstanding, never introduced the subject without a pang,—such a pang as only a sensitive and diffident nature can suffer or comprehend. There now, not another word of preface or apology!

I was born in a little cabin on the borders of Meath and King's County. It stood on a small triangular bit of ground, beside a cross-road; and although the place was surveyed every ten years or so, they were never able to say to which county we belonged; there being just the same number of arguments for one side as for the other,—a circumstance, many believed, that decided my father in his original choice of the residence; for while, under the "disputed boundary question," he paid no rates or county cess, he always made a point of voting at both county elections! This may seem to indicate that my parent was of a naturally acute habit; and indeed the way he became possessed of the bit of ground will confirm that impression.

There was nobody of the rank of gentry in the parish, nor even "squireen;" the richest being a farmer, a snug old fellow, one Henry M'Cabe, that had two sons, who were always fighting between themselves which was to have the old man's money, —Peter, the elder, doing everything to injure Mat, and Mat never backward in paying off the obligation. At last Mat, tired out in the struggle, resolved he would bear no more. He took leave of his father one night, and next day set off for Dublin, and 'listed in the "Buffs." Three weeks after, he sailed for India; and the old man, overwhelmed by grief, took to his bed, and never arose from it after.

Not that his death was any way sudden, for he lingered on for months long,—Peter always teasing him to make his will, and be revenged on "the dirty spalpeen" that disgraced the family, but old Harry as stoutly resisting, and declaring that whatever he owned should be fairly divided between them.

These disputes between them were well known in the neighborhood. Few of the country people passing

the house at night but had overheard the old man's weak, reedy voice, and Peter's deep, hoarse one, in altercation. When at last—it was on a Sunday night —all was still and quiet in the house,—not a word, not a footstep, could be heard, no more than if it were uninhabited,—the neighbors looked knowingly at each other, and wondered if the old man was worse—if he was dead!

It was a little after midnight that a knock came to the door of our cabin. I heard it first, for I used to sleep in a little snug basket near the fire; but I did n't speak, for I was frightened. It was repeated still louder, and then came a cry, “Con Cregan! Con, I say, open the door! I want you.” I knew the voice well; it was Peter M'Cabe's; but I pretended to be fast asleep, and snored loudly. At last my father unbolted the door, and I heard him say, “Oh, Mr. Peter, what's the matter? Is the ould man worse?”

“Faix that's what he is, for he 's dead!”

“Glory be his bed! when did it happen?”

“About an hour ago,” said Peter, in a voice that even I from my corner could perceive was greatly agitated. “He died like an ould haythen, Con, and never made a will!”

“That's bad,” says my father; for he was always a polite man, and said whatever was pleasing to the company.

“It is bad,” said Peter; “but it would be worse if we could n't help it. Listen to me now, Corny, I want ye to help me in this business; and here's five guineas in goold, if ye do what I bid ye. You know that ye were always reckoned the image of my father, and before he took ill ye were mistaken for each other every day of the week.”

“Anan!” said my father; for he was getting

frightened at the notion, without well knowing why.

“Well, what I want is, for ye to come over to the house, and get into the bed.”

“Not beside the corpse?” said my father, trembling.

“By no means, but by yourself; and you 're to pretend to be my father, and that ye want to make yer will before ye die; and then I 'll send for the neighbors, and Billy Scanlan the schoolmaster, and ye 'll tell him what to write, laving all the farm and everything to me,—ye understand. And as the neighbors will see ye, and hear yer voice, it will never be believed but that it was himself that did it.”

“The room must be very dark,” says my father.

“To be sure it will, but have no fear! Nobody will dare to come nigh the bed; and ye 'll only have to make a cross with yer pen under the name.”

“And the priest?” said my father.

“My father quarrelled with him last week about the Easter dues, and Father Tom said he 'd not give him the 'rites,' and that's lucky now! Come along now, quick, for we 've no time to lose; it must be all finished before the day breaks.”

My father did not lose much time at his toilet, for he just wrapped his big coat 'round him, and slipping on his brogues, left the house. I sat up in the basket and listened till they were gone some minutes; and then, in a costume as light as my parent's, set out after them, to watch the course of the adventure. I thought to take a short cut, and be before them; but by bad luck I fell into a bog-hole, and only escaped being drowned by a chance. As it was, when I reached the house, the performance had already begun.

I think I see the whole scene this instant before my

eyes, as I sat on a little window with one pane, and that a broken one, and surveyed the proceeding. It was a large room, at one end of which was a bed, and beside it a table, with physic-bottles, and spoons, and teacups; a little farther off was another table, at which sat Billy Scanlan, with all manner of writing materials before him. The country people sat two, sometimes three, deep round the walls, all intently eager and anxious for the coming event. Peter himself went from place to place, trying to smother his grief, and occasionally helping the company to whiskey, which was supplied with more than accustomed liberality.

All my consciousness of the deceit and trickery could not deprive the scene of a certain solemnity. The misty distance of the half-lighted room; the highly wrought expression of the country people's faces, never more intensely excited than at some moment of this kind; the low, deep-drawn breathings, unbroken save by a sigh or a sob,—the tribute of affectionate sorrow to some lost friend, whose memory was thus forcibly brought back; these, I repeat it, were all so real that, as I looked, a thrilling sense of awe stole over me, and I actually shook with fear.

A low, faint cough, from the dark corner where the bed stood, seemed to cause even a deeper stillness; and then, in a silence where the buzzing of a fly would have been heard, my father said, “Where's Billy Scanlan? I want to make my will!”

“He's here, father!” said Peter, taking Billy by the hand and leading him to the bedside.

“Write what I bid ye, Billy, and be quick; for I hav'n't a long time afore me here. I die a good Catholic, though Father O'Rafferty won't give me the

'rites '!"

A general chorus of muttered "Oh! musha, musha!" was now heard through the room; but whether in grief over the sad fate of the dying man, or the unflinching severity of the priest, is hard to say.

"I die in peace with all my neighbors and all mankind!"

Another chorus of the company seemed to approve these charitable expressions.

"I bequeath unto my son Peter,—and never was there a better son, or a decenter boy!—have you that down? I bequeath unto my son Peter the whole of my two farms of Killimundoonery and Knocksheboora, with the fallow meadows behind Lynch's house; the forge, and the right of turf on the Dooran bog. I give him, and much good may it do him, Lanty Cassara's acre, and the Luary field, with the limekiln; and that reminds me that my mouth is just as dry; let me taste what ye have in the jug." Here the dying man took a very hearty pull, and seemed considerably refreshed by it. "Where was I, Billy Scanlan?" says he; "oh, I remember, at the limekiln; I leave him—that's Peter, I mean—the two potato-gardens at Noonan's Well; and it is the elegant fine crops grows there."

"An't you gettin' wake, father, darlin'?" says Peter, who began to be afraid of my father's loquaciousness; for, to say the truth, the punch got into his head, and he was greatly disposed to talk.

"I am, Peter, my son," says he; "I am getting wake; just touch my lips again with the jug. Ah, Peter, Peter, you watered the drink!"

"No, indeed, father; but it's the taste is leavin' you," says Peter; and again a low chorus of

compassionate pity murmured through the cabin.

“Well, I'm nearly done now,” says my father; “there's only one little plot of ground remaining; and I put it on you, Peter,—as ye wish to live a good man, and die with the same easy heart I do now,—that ye mind my last words to ye here. Are ye listening? Are the neighbors listening? Is Billy Scanlan listening?”

“Yes, sir. Yes, father. We're all minding,” chorused the audience.

“Well, then, it's my last will and testament, and may—Give me over the jug.” Here he took a long drink. “And may that blessed liquor be poison to me if I 'm not as eager about this as every other part of my will. I say, then, I bequeath the little plot at the cross-roads to poor Con Cre-gan; for he has a heavy charge, and is as honest and as hard-working a man as ever I knew. Be a friend to him, Peter, dear; never let him want while ye have it yourself; think of me on my death-bed whenever he asks ye for any trifle. Is it down, Billy Scanlan? the two acres at the cross to Con Cregan and his heirs in *secla seclorum*. Ah, blessed be the saints! but I feel my heart lighter after that,” says he; “a good work makes an easy conscience. And now I 'll drink all the company's good health, and many happy returns—”

What he was going to add, there 's no saying; but Peter, who was now terribly frightened at the lively tone the sick man was assuming, hurried all the people away into another room, to let his father die in peace.

When they were all gone Peter slipped back to my father, who was putting on his brogues in a corner. “Con,” says he, “ye did it all well; but sure that was a joke about the two acres at the cross.”

“Of course it was, Peter,” says he; “sure it was all a joke, for the matter of that. Won't I make the neighbors laugh hearty to-morrow when I tell them all about it!”

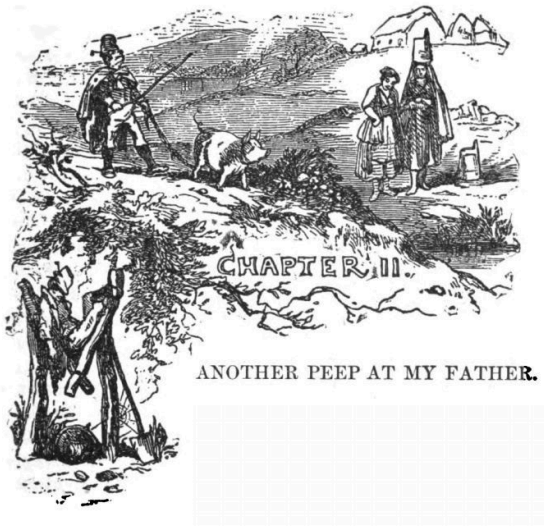
“You wouldn't be mean enough to betray me?” says Peter, trembling with fright.

“Sure ye would n't be mean enough to go against yer father's dying words,” says my father,—“the last sentence ever he spoke? And here he gave a low, wicked laugh, that made myself shake with fear.

“Very well, Con!” says Peter, holding out his hand; “a bargain's a bargain; yer a deep fellow, that's all!” And so it ended; and my father slipped quietly home over the bog, mighty well satisfied with the legacy he left himself.

And thus we became the owners of the little spot known to this day as Con's Acre; of which, more hereafter.





CHAPTER II. ANOTHER PEEP AT MY FATHER

My father's prosperity had the usual effect it has on similar cases.

It lifted him into a different sphere of companionship and suggested new habits of life. No longer necessitated to labor daily for his bread, by a

very slight exercise of industry he could cultivate his “potato-garden;” and every one who knows anything of Ireland well knows that the potato and its corollary, the pig, supply every want of an Irish cottier household.

Being thus at liberty to dispose of himself and his time, my parent was enabled to practise a long-desired and much-coveted mode of life; which was to frequent “sheebeens” and alehouses, and all similar places of resort,—not, indeed, for the gratification of any passion for drink, for my father only indulged when he was “treated,” and never could bring himself to spend a farthing in liquor himself, but his great fondness for these places took its origin in his passion for talk. Never, indeed, lived there a man—from Lord Brougham himself downwards—who had a greater taste for gossip and loquaciousness than my father. It mattered little what the subject, he was always ready; and whether it were a crim. con. in the newspapers, a seizure for rent, a marriage in high life, or a pig in the pound,—there he was, explaining away all difficult terms of law and jurisprudence; and many a difficulty that Tom Cafferty, the postmaster, had attempted in vain to solve was, by a kind of “writ of error,” removed to my father's court for explanation and decision.

That he soon became a kind of authority in the neighboring town of Kilbeggan need not excite any surprise. It is men of precisely his kind, and with talents of an order very similar to his, that wield influence in the great cities of the earth. It is your talking, pushing, forward men, seeming always confident in what they say, never acknowledging an error nor confessing a defeat, who take the lead in life. With average ability, and ten times the average assurance, they reach the goal that bashful merit

never even so much as gets within sight of.

His chief resort, however, was the Court of Quarter Sessions, where he sat from the first opening case to the last judgment, watching with an intense interest all the vacillating changes of the law's uncertainty, which unquestionably were not in any way diminished by the singular individual who presided in that seat of justice. Simon Ball, or, as he was better known at the bar, Snow Ball,—an epithet he owed to his white head and eyebrows,—had qualified himself for the Bench by improving upon the proverbial attribute of justice. He was not only blind but deaf. For something like forty-five years he had walked the hall of the Four Courts with an empty bag, and a head scarcely more encumbered, when one morning—no one could guess why—the "Gazette" announced that the Lord Lieutenant had appointed him to the vacant chairmanship of Westmeath,—a promotion which had the effect of confounding all political animosity by its perfect unaccountableness.

It is a law of Nature that nothing ever goes to loss. Bad wine will make very tolerable vinegar; spoiled hay is converted into good manure; and so, a very middling lawyer often drops down into a very respectable judge. Had the gods but acknowledged Mr. Ball's abilities some years earlier, doubtless he had been an exception to the theory.

They waited, however, so long that both sight and hearing were in abeyance when the promotion came. It seemed to rally him, however, this act of recognition, although late. It was a kind of corroboration of the self-estimate of a long life, and he prepared to show the world that he was very different from what they took him for. No men have the bump of self-esteem like lawyers; they live, and

grow old, and die, always fancying that Holts, and Hales, and Mansfields are hid within the unostentatious exterior of their dusty garments; and that the wit that dazzles, and the pathos that thrills, are all rusting inside, just for want of a little of that cheering encouragement by which their contemporaries are clad in silk and walk in high places. Snow Ball was determined to show the world its error, and with a smart frock and green spectacles he took the field like a “fine old Irish barrister,” with many a dry joke or sly sarcasm curled up in the wrinkles beside his mouth. However cheap a man may be held by his fellows in the “Hall,” he is always sure of a compensation in the provinces. There the country gentlemen looked upon their chairman as a Blackstone,—not alone a storehouse of law, but a great appeal upon questions of general knowledge and information. I should scarcely have ventured upon what some of my readers may regard as a mere digression, if it were not that the gentleman and the peculiar nature of his infirmities had led to an intimate relation with my father. My parent's fondness for law, and all appertaining to it, had attached him to the little inn where Mr. Ball usually put up at each season of his visit; and gradually, by tendering little services, as fetching an umbrella when it rained, hastening for a book of reference if called for, searching out an important witness, and probably by a most frequent and respectful use of the title “my lord,” instead of the humble “your worship,” he succeeded in so ingratiating himself with the judge that, without exactly occupying any precise station, or having any regular employment, he became in some sort a recognized appendage, a kind of “unpaid attaché to the court” of Kilbeggan.

My father was one of those persons who usually

ask only a “lift” from Fortune, and do not require to be continually aided by her. From being the humble attendant on the judge, he soon succeeded to being his privy councillor; supplying a hundred little secret details of the neighborhood and its local failings, which usually gave Mr. Ball's decisions on the bench an air approaching inspiration, so full were they of a knowledge of individual life. As confidence ripened, my father was employed in reading out to the judge of an evening the various depositions of witnesses, the informations laid, and the affidavits sworn,—opportunities from which he did not neglect to derive the full advantage; for while he usually accompanied the written document with a running commentary of his own to Mr. Ball, he also contrived to let the suitor feel how great was his knowledge of the case, and what a powerful influence behind the scenes he wielded over the fortunes of the cause; insomuch that it became soon well known that he who had Con Cregan on his side was better off than with the whole Bench of country magistrates disposed to favor him.

My father's prudence did not desert him in these trying circumstances. Without any historical knowledge of the matter, he knew by a species of instinct that pride was the wreck of most men, and that, to wield real, substantial power, it is often necessary to assume a garb of apparent inefficiency and incapacity. To this end, the greater the influence he possessed, the humbler did he affect to be; disclaiming everything like power, he got credit for possessing a far greater share than he ever really enjoyed.

That the stream of justice did not run perfectly pure and clear, however, may not be a matter of surprise; for how many rocks, and shoals, and

quicksands, are there in the channel! and certainly my father was a dangerous hand at the wheel. Litigation, it must be owned, lost much of its vacillation. The usual question about any case was, “What does Con say? Did Con Cregan tell ye ye 'll win?” That was decisive; none sceptical enough to ask for more!

At the feet of this Gamaliel I was brought up; nothing the more tenderly that a stepmother presided over the “home department.” As I was a stout boy, of some thirteen or fourteen at this period of my father's life, and could read and write tolerably well, I was constantly employed in making copies of various papers used at the Sessions. Were I psychologically inclined, I might pause here to inquire how far these peculiar studies had their influence in biassing the whole tenor of my very eventful life; what latent stores of artifice did I lay up from all these curious subtleties; how did I habituate my mind to weigh and balance probabilities, as evidence inclined to this side or that; above all, how gratified was I with the discovery that there existed a legal right and wrong, perfectly distinct from the moral ones,—a fact which served at once to open the path of life far wider and more amply before me.

I must, however, leave this investigation to the reader's acuteness, if he think it worth following out; nor would I now allude to it save as it affords me the opportunity, once for all, of explaining modes of thinking and acting which might seem, without some such clue, as unfitting and unseemly in one reared and brought up as I was.

Whether the new dignity of his station had disposed him to it or not, I cannot say; but my father became far more stern in his manner and exacting in his requirements as he rose in life. The practice of

the law seemed to impart some feature of its own peremptory character to himself, as he issued his orders in our humble household with all the impressive solemnity of a writ,—indeed, aiding the effect by phrases taken from the awful vocabulary of justice.

If my stepmother objected to anything the answer was, usually, she might “traverse in prox” at the next Sessions; while to myself every order was in the style of a “mandamus.” Not satisfied with the mere terrors of the Bench, he became so enamoured of the pursuit as to borrow some features of prison discipline for the conduct of our household; thus, for the slightest infractions of his severe code I was “put” upon No. 3 Penitentiary diet,—only reading potatoes *vice* bread.

There would seem to be something uncongenial to obedience in any form in the life of an Irish peasant; something doubtless in the smell of the turf. He seems to imbibe a taste for freedom by the very architecture of his dwelling, and the easy, unbuttoned liberty of his corduroys. Young as I was, I suppose the Celt was strong within me; and the “Times” says, that will account for all delinquencies. I felt this powerfully; not the less, indeed, that my father almost invariably visited me with the penalty of the case then before the Court; so that while copying out at night the details of the prosecution, I had time to meditate over the coming sentence. It was, perhaps, fortunate for me that capital cases do not come under the jurisdiction of a “sitting barrister;” otherwise I verily believe I might have suffered the last penalty of the law from my parent's infatuation.

My sense of “equity” at last revolted. I perceived, that no matter who “sued,” I was always “cast;” and I at length resolved on resistance. I remember well the

night this resolution was formed; it was a cold and cheerless one of January. My father had given me a great mass of papers to copy, and a long article for the newspapers to write out, which the “Judge” was to embody in his address to the Bench. I never put pen to either, but sat with my head between my hands for twelve mortal hours, revolving every possible wickedness, and wondering whether in my ingenuity I could not invent some offences that no indictment could comprise. Day broke, and found me still unoccupied. I was just meditating whether I should avow my rebellion openly, and “plead” in mitigation, when my father came in.

My reader must excuse me if I do not dwell on what followed. It is enough to say that the nature of my injuries are unknown to the criminal statute, and that although my wounds and bruises are familiar to the prize-ring, they are ignored by all jurisprudence out of the slave states. Even my stepmother confessed that I was not fit to “pick out of the gutter;” and she proved her words by leaving me where I lay.

Revenge must be a very “human” passion; my taste for it came quite naturally. I had never read “Othello” nor “Zanga;” but I conceived a very clear and precise notion that I had a debt to pay, and pay it I would. Had the obligation been of a pecuniary character, and some “bankrupt commission” been in jurisdiction over it, I had doubtless been called upon to discharge it in a series of instalments proportional to my means of life; being a moral debt, however, I enjoyed the privilege of paying it at once, and in full; which I did thus: I had often remarked that my father arose at night and left the cabin, crossing a little garden behind the house to a little shed, where our pig and an ass lived in harmony together; and

here, by dint of patient observation, I discovered that his occupation lay in the thatch of the aforesaid shed, in which he seemed to conceal some object of value.

Thither I now repaired, some secret prompting suggesting that it might afford me the wished-for means of vengeance. My disappointment was indeed great that no compact roll of bank-notes, no thick woollen stocking close packed with guineas, or even crown-pieces, met my hand. A heavy bundle of papers and parchment was all I could find; and these bore such an unhappy family resemblance to the cause of all my misfortunes that I was ready to tear them to pieces in very spite. A mere second's reflection suggested a better course. There was a certain attorney in Kilbeggan, one Morissy, my father's bitterest enemy; indeed, my parent's influence in the Session court had almost ruined and left him without a client. The man of law and precedents in vain struggled against decisions which a secret and irresponsible adviser contrived beforehand, and Morissy's knowledge and experience were soon discovered to be valueless. It was a game in which skill went for nothing.

This gentleman's character at once pointed him out as the fitting agent of vengeance on my father, and by an hour after daybreak did I present myself before him in all the consciousness of my injured state.

Mr. Morissy's reception of me was not over gracious.

“Well, ye spawn of the devil,” said he, as he turned about from a small fragment of looking-glass, before which he was shaving, “what brings ye here? Bad luck to ye; the sight of ye's made me cut myself.”

“I'm come, sir, for a bit of advice, sir,” said I,

putting my hand to my hat in salutation.

“Assault and battery!” said he, with a grin on the side of his mouth where the soap had been shaved away.

“Yes, sir; an aggravated case,” said I, using the phrase of the Sessions.

“Why don't ye apply to yer father? He's Crown lawyer and Attorney-General; faith, he 's more besides,—he 's judge and jury too.”

“And more than that in the present suit, sir,” says I, following up his illustration; “he's the defendant here.”

“What! is that his doing?”

“Yes, sir; his own hand and mark,” said I, laughing.

“That's an ugly cut, and mighty near the eye! But sure, after all, you 're his child.”

“Very true, sir; it's only paternal correction; but I have something else!”

“What's that, Con my boy?” said he; for we were now grown very familiar.

“It is this, sir,” said I; “this roll of papers that I found hid in the thatch,—a safe place my father used to make his strong-box.”

“Let us see!” said Morissy, sitting down and opening the package. Many were old summonses discharged, notices to quit withdrawn, and so on; but at last he came to two papers pinned together, at sight of which he almost jumped from his chair. “Con,” says he, “describe the place you found them in.”

I went over all the discovery again.

“Did ye yourself see your father put in papers there?”

“I did, sir.”

“On more than one occasion?”

“At least a dozen times, sir.”

“Did ye ever remark any one else putting papers there?”

“Never, sir! none of the neighbors ever come through the garden.”

“And it was always at night, and in secret, he used to repair there?”

“Always at night”

“That'll do, Con; that 'll do, my son. You'll soon turn the tables on the old boy. You may go down to the kitchen and get your breakfast; be sure, however, that you don't leave the house to-day. Your father mustn't know where ye are till we're ready for him.”

“Is it a strong case, sir?” said I.

“A very strong case—never a flaw in it.”

“Is it more than a larceny, sir?” said I.

“It is better than that.”

“I'd rather it didn't go too far,” said I, for I was beginning to feel afraid of what I had done.

“Leave that to me, Con,” said Mr. Morissy, “and go down to yer breakfast.”

I did as I was bid, and never stirred out of the house the whole day, nor for eight days after; when one morning Morissy bid me clean myself, and brush my hair, to come with him to the Court-house.

I guessed at once what was going to happen; and now, as my head was healed, and all my bruises cured, I'd very gladly have forgiven all the affair, and gone home again with my father; but it was too late. As Mr. Morissy said, with a grin, “The law is an elegant contrivance; a child's finger can set it in

motion, but a steam engine could not hold it back afterwards!"

The Court was very full that morning; there were five magistrates on the bench, and Mr. Ball in the middle of them. There were a great many farmers, too, for it was market-day; and numbers of the townspeople, who all knew my father, and were not sorry to see him "up." Cregan versus Cregan stood third on the list of cases; and very little interest attached to the two that preceded it. At last it was called; and there I stood before the Bench, with five hundred pair of eyes all bent upon me; and two of them actually looking through my very brain,—for they were my father's, as he stood at the opposite side of the table below the Bench.

The case was called an assault, and very soon terminated; for, by my own admission, it was clear that I deserved punishment; though probably not so severely as it had been inflicted. The judge delivered a very impressive lesson to my father and myself, about our respective duties, and dismissed the case with a reproof, the greater share of which fell to me. "You may go now, sir," said he, winding up a line peroration; "fear God and honor the king; respect your parents, and make your capitals smaller."

"Before your worship dismisses the witness," said Morissy, "I wish to put a few questions to him."

"The case is disposed of: call the next," said the judge, angrily.

"I have a most important fact to disclose to your worship,—one which is of the highest importance to the due administration of justice,—one which, if suffered to lie in obscurity, will be a disgrace to the law, and a reproach to the learned Bench."

"Call the next case, crier," said the judge. "Sit

down, Mr. Morissy."

"Your worshipw may commit me; but I will be heard—"

"Tipstaff! take that man into—" "When you hear of a mandamus from the King's Bench—when you know that a case of compounding a felony—"

"Come away, Mr. Morissy; come quiet, sir!" said the police-sergeant.

"What were ye saying of a mandamus?" said the judge, getting frightened at the dreaded word.

"I was saying this, sir," said Morissy, turning fiercely round; "that I am possessed of information which you refused to hear, and which will make the voice of the Chief Justice heard in this court, which now denies its ear to truth."

"Conduct yourself more becomingly, sir," said one of the county magistrates, "and open your case."

Morissy, who was far more submissive to the gentry than to the chairman, at once replied in his blandest tone:—

"Your worship, it is now more than a month since I appeared before you in the case of Noonan versus M'Quade and others,—an aggravated case of homicide; I might go further, and apply to it the most awful term the vocabulary of justice contains! Your worship will remember that on that very interesting and important case a document was missing, of such a character that the main feature of the case seemed actually to hang upon it. This was no less than the deathbed confession of Noonan, formally taken before a justice of the peace, Mr. Styles, and written with all the accurate regard to circumstances the law exacts. Mr. Styles, the magistrate who took the deposition, was killed by a fall from his horse the following week; his clerk

being ill, the individual who wrote the case was Con Cregan. Your worship may bear in mind that this man, when called to the witness box, denied all knowledge of this dying confession; asserted that what he took down in writing were simply some brief and unsatisfactory notes of the affray, all to the advantage of the M'Quades, and swore that Mr. Styles, who often alluded to the document as a confession, was entirely in error, the whole substance of it being unimportant and vague; some very illegible and-ill-written notes corroborating which were produced in court as the papers in question.

“Noonan being dead, and Mr. Styles also, the whole case rested on the evidence of Cregan; and although, your worship, the man's character for veracity was not of that nature among the persons of his own neighborhood to—”

“Confine yourself to the case, sir,” said the judge, “without introducing matter of mere common report.”

“I am in a position to prove my assertion,” said Morissy, triumphantly. “I hold here in my hand the abstracted documents, signed and sealed by Mr. Styles, and engrossed with every item of regularity. I have more: a memorandum purporting to be a copy of a receipt for eighteen pounds ten shillings, received by Cregan from Jos. M'Quade, the wages of this crime; and, if more were necessary, a promissory note from M'Quade for an additional sum of seven pounds, at six months' date. These are the papers which I am prepared to prove in court; this the evidence which a few minutes back I tendered in vain before you; and there,” said he, turning with a vindictive solemnity to where my father was standing, pale, but collected, “there's the man who, distinguished by your worship's confidence, I now

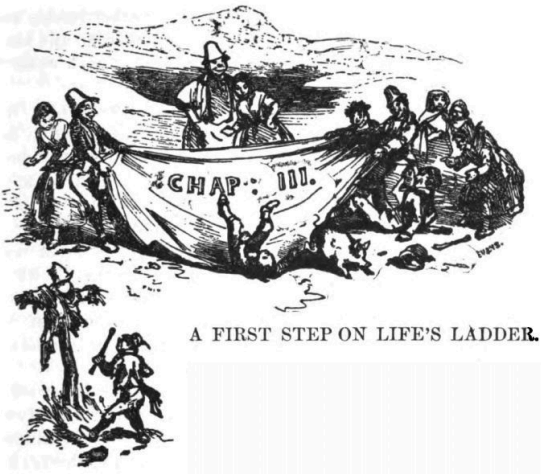
arraign for the suppression of this evidence, and the composition of a felony!”

If Mr. Morissy was not perfectly correct in his law, there was still quite enough to establish a charge of misdemeanor against my father; and he was accordingly committed for trial at the approaching assizes, while I was delivered over to the charge of a police-sergeant, to be in readiness when my testimony should be required.

The downfall of a dynasty is sure to evoke severe recrimination against the late ruler; and now my parent, who but a few days past could have tilted the beam of justice at his mere pleasure, was overwhelmed with not merely abuse and attack, but several weighty accusations of crime were alleged against him. Not only was it discovered that he interfered with the due course of justice, but that he was a prime actor in, and contriver of, many of the scenes of insurrectionary disturbance which for years back had filled the country with alarm and the jails with criminals.

For one of these cases, a night attack for arms, the evidence was so complete and unquestionable that the Crown prosecutor, disliking the exhibition of a son giving evidence against his parent, dispensed with my attendance altogether, and prosecuting the graver charge obtained a verdict of guilty.

The sentence was transportation for life, with a confiscation of all property to the Crown. Thus my first step in life was to exile my father, and leave myself a beggar,—a promising beginning, it must be owned!



A FIRST STEP ON LIFE'S LADDER.

CHAPTER III. A FIRST STEP ON LIFE'S LADDER

It is among the strange and singular anomalies of our nature that however pleased men may be at the conviction of a noted offender, few of those instrumental to his punishment are held in honor and esteem. If all Kilbeggan rejoiced, as they did, at my father's downfall, a very considerable share of obloquy rested on me,—a species of judgment, I honestly confess, that I was not the least prepared for.

“There goes the little informer,” said they, as I passed; “what did ye get for hanging—” a very admirable piece of Irish exaggeration—“for hanging

yer father, Con?" said one.

"Could n't ye help yer stepmother to a say voyage?" shouted another.

"And then we 'd be rid of yez all," chimed in a third.

"He's rich now," whined out an old beggar-man that often had eaten his potatoes at our fireside. "He's rich now, the chap is; he 'll marry a lady!"

This was the hardest to bear of all the slights, for not alone had I lost all pretension to my father's property, but the raggedness of my clothes and the general misery of my appearance might have saved me from the reproach of what is so forcibly termed "blood-money."

"Come over to me this evening," said Father Rush; and they were the only words of comfort I heard from any side. "Come over to me about six o'clock, Con, for I want to speak to you."

They were long hours that intervened between that and six. I could not stay in the town, where every one I met had some sneer or scoff against me; I could not go home, I had none! and so I wandered out into the open country, taking my course towards a bleak common, about two miles off, where few, if any one, was like to be but myself.

This wild and dreary tract lay alongside of the main road to Athlone, and was traversed by several footpaths, by which the country people were accustomed to make "short cuts" to market, from one part of the road to another; for the way, passing through a bog, took many a winding turn as the ground necessitated.

There is a feeling of lonely desolation in wide far-stretching wastes that accords well with the purposeless vacuity of hopelessness; but, somehow or

other, the very similitude between the scene without and the sense of desolation within, establishes a kind of companionship. Lear was speaking like a true philosopher when he uttered the words, “I like this rocking of the battlements.”

I had wandered some hours “here and there” upon the common; and it was now the decline of day when I saw at a little distance from me the figure of a young man whose dress and appearance bespoke condition, running along at a brisk pace, but evidently laboring under great fatigue.

The instant he saw me he halted, and cried out, “I say, my boy, is that Kilbeggan yonder, where I see the spire?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And where is the high-road to Athlone?”

“Yonder, sir, where the two trees are standing.”

“Have you seen the coach pass,—the mail for Athlone?”

“Yes, sir, she went through the town about half an hour ago.”

“Are ye certain, boy? are ye quite sure of this?” cried he, in a voice of great agitation.

“I am quite sure, sir; they always change horses at Moone's public-house; and I saw them 'draw up' there more than half an hour since.”

“Is there no other coach passes this road for Dublin?”

“The night mail, sir, but she does not go to-night; this is Saturday.”

“What is to be done?” said the youth, in deep sorrow; and he seated himself on a stone as he spoke, and hid his face between his hands.

As he sat thus, I had time to mark him well, and

scan every detail of his appearance.

Although tall and stoutly knit, he could not have been above sixteen, or at most seventeen, years of age; his dress, a kind of shooting-jacket, was made in a cut that affected fashion; and I observed on one finger of his very white hand a ring which, even to my uneducated eyes, bespoke considerable value.

He looked up at last, and his eyes were very red, and a certain trembling of the lips showed that he was much affected. “I suppose, my lad, I can find a chaise or a carriage of some kind in Kilbeggan?” said he; “for I have lost the mail. I had got out for a walk, and by the advice of a countryman taken this path over the bog, expecting, as he told me, it would cut off several miles of way. I suppose I must have mistaken him, for I have been running for above an hour, and am too late after all; but still, if I can find a chaise, I shall be in time yet.”

“They 're all gone, sir,” said I; “and sorry am I to have such tidings to tell. The Sessions broke up to-day, and they're away with the lawyers to Kinnegad.”

“And how far is that from us?”

“Sixteen miles or more, by the road.”

“And how am I to get there?”

“Unless ye walk it—”

“Walk! impossible. I am dead beat already; besides, the time it would take would lose me all chance of reaching Dublin as I want.”

“Andy Smith has a horse, if he'd lend it; and there's a short road by Hogan's boreen.”

“Where does this Smith live?” said he, stopping me impatiently.

“Not a half mile from here; you can see the house from this.”

“Come along, then, and show me the way, my boy,” said he; and the gleam of hope seemed to lend alacrity to his movements.

Away we set together, and as we went, it was arranged between us that if Andy would hire out his mare, I should accompany the rider as guide, and bring back the animal to its owner, while the traveller proceeded on his journey to town.

The negotiation was tedious enough; for, at first, Andy would n't appear at all; he thought it was a process-server was after him,—a suspicion probably suggested by my presence, as it was generally believed that a rag of my father's mantle had descended to me. It was only after a very cautious and careful scrutiny of the young traveller through a small glass eye—it wasn't a window—in the mud wall that he would consent to come out. When he did so, he treated the proposal most indignantly. “Is it he hire out his baste? as if she was a dirty garraun of Betty Nowlan's of the head inn; he wondered who 'd ask the like!” and so on.

The youth, deterred by this reception, would have abandoned the scheme at once; but I, better acquainted with such characters as Andy, and knowing that his difficulties were only items in the intended charge, higgled, and bargained, and bullied, and blarneyed by turns; and, after some five and forty minutes of alternate joking and abusing each other, it was at last agreed on that the “baste” was to be ceded for the sum of fifteen shillings,—“two and sixpence more if his honor was pleased with the way she carried him;” the turnpike and a feed of oats being also at the charge of the rider, as well as all repairs of shoes incurred by loss or otherwise. Then there came a supplemental clause as to the peculiar care of the animal. How “she was n't to be let drink

too much at once, for she 'd get the colic;" and if she needed shoeing, she was to have a "twitch" on her nose, or she'd kick the forge to "smithereens." The same precaution to be taken if the saddle required fresh girthing; a hint was given, besides, not to touch her with the left heel, or she 'd certainly kick the rider with the hind leg of the same side; and, as a last caution given, to be on our guard at the cross-roads at Toomes-bridge, or she'd run away towards Croghan, where she once was turned out in foal. "Barring" these peculiarities, and certain smaller difficulties about mounting, "she was a lamb, and the sweetest-tempered crayture ever was haltered."

In the very midst of this panegyric upon the animal's good and noble qualities he flung open the door of a little shed, and exhibited her to our view. I verily believe, whatever the urgency of the youth's reason for proceeding, that his heart failed him at the sight of the steed; a second's reconsideration seemed to rally his courage, and he said, "No matter, it can't be helped; saddle her at once, and let us be off."

"That's easier said nor done," muttered Andy to himself, as he stood at the door, without venturing a step farther. "Con," said he, at last, in a species of coaxing tone I well knew boded peril, "Con, a cushla! get a hould of her by the head, that's a fine chap; make a spring at the forelock."

"Maybe she 'd kick—"

"Sorra kick! get up there, now, and I'll be talking to you all the while."

This proposition, though doubtless meant as most encouraging, by no means reassured me.

"Come, come! I'll bridle the infernal beast," said the youth, losing all patience with both of us, and he

sprung forward into the stable; but barely had he time to jump back, as the animal let fly with both hind legs together. Andy, well aware of what was coming, pulled us both back and shut to the door, against which the hoofs kept up one rattling din of kicks that shook the crazy edifice from roof to ground.

“Ye see what comes of startlin' her; the crayture's timid as a kid,” said Andy, whose blanched cheek badly corroborated his assumed composure. “Ye may do what ye plaze, barrin' putting a bridle on her; she never took kindly to that!”

“But do ye intend me to ride her without one?” said the youth.

“By no manner of means, sir,” said Andy, with a plausible slowness on each word that gave him time to think of an expedient. “I would n't be guilty of the like; none that knows me would ever say it to me: I 'm a poor man—”

“You're a devilish tiresome one,” broke in the youth, suddenly; “here we have been above half an hour standing at the door, and none the nearer our departure than when we arrived.”

“Christy Moore could bridle her, if he was here,” said Andy; “but he's gone to Moate, and won't be back till evening; may be that would do?”

A very impatient, and not very pious exclamation consigned Christy to an untimely fate. “Well, don't be angry, anyhow, sir,” said Andy; “there's many a thing a body might think of, if they were n't startled. See, now, I have a way this minute; an elegant fine way, too.”

“Well, what is it? Confound your long-winded speeches!”

“There, now, you're angry again! sure it's enough

to give one quite a through-otherness, and not leave them time to reflect."

"Your plan, your plan!" said the young man, his lips trembling with anger and impatience.

"Here it is, then; let the 'gossoon,'" meaning me, "get up on the roof and take off two or three of the scraws, the sods of grass, till he can get through, and then steal down on the mare's back; when he 's once on her, she 'll never stir head nor foot, and he can slip the bridle over her quite asy."

"The boy might be killed; no, no, I 'll not suffer that—"

"Wait, sir," cried I, interrupting, "it's not so hard, after all; once on her back, I defy her to throw me."

"Sure I know that well; sorra better rider in the Meath hunt than little Con," broke in Andy; backing me with a ready flattery he thought would deceive me.

It was not without reluctance that the youth consented to this forlorn hope, but he yielded at last; and so, with a bridle fastened round me like a scarf, I was hoisted on the roof by Andy, and, under a volley of encouraging expressions, exhorted to "go in and win."

"There! there, a cushla!" cried Andy, as he saw me performing the first act of the piece with a vigor he had never calculated on; "'tis n't a coach and six ye want to drive through. Tear and ages! ye'll take the whole roof off." The truth was, I worked away with a malicious pleasure in the destruction of the old miser's roof; nor is it quite certain how far my zeal might have carried me, when suddenly one of the rafters—mere light poles of ash—gave way, and down I went, at first slowly, and then quicker, into a kind of funnel formed by the smashed timbers and

the earthen sods. The crash, the din, and the dust appeared to have terrified the wicked beast below, for she stood trembling in one corner of the stable, and never moved a limb as I walked boldly up and passed the bridle over her head. This done, I had barely time to spring on her back, when the door was forced open by the young gentleman, whose fears for my fate had absorbed every other thought.

“Are you safe, my boy, quite safe?” he cried, making his way over the fallen rubbish.

“Oh! the devil fear him,” cried Andy, in a perfect rage of passion; “I wish it was his bones was smashed, instead of the roof-sticks—see!—Och, murther, only look at this.” And Andy stood amid the ruins, a most comical picture of affliction, in part real and in part assumed. Meanwhile the youth had advanced to my side, and, with many a kind and encouraging word, more than repaid me for all my danger.

“'T is n't five pound will pay the damage,” cried Andy, running up on his fingers a sum of imaginary arithmetic.

“Where's the saddle, you old—” What the young man was about to add, I know not; but at a look from me he stopped short.

“Is it abusin' me you're for now, afther wrecking my house and destroying my premises?” cried Andy, whose temper was far from sweetened by the late catastrophe. “Sure what marcy my poor beast would get from the likes of ye! sorry step she 'll go in yer company; pay the damages ye done, and be off.”

Here was a new turn of affairs, and, judging from the irascibility of both parties, a most disastrous one; it demanded, indeed, all my skill,—all the practised dexterity of a mind trained, as mine had been been

by many a subtlety, to effect a compromise, which I did thus: my patron being cast in the costs of all the damages to the amount of twenty shillings, and the original contract to be maintained in all its integrity.

The young man paid the money without speaking; but I had time to mark that the purse from which he drew it was far from weighty. “Are we free to go at last?” cried he, in a voice of suppressed wrath.

“Yes, yer honor; all's right,” answered Andy, whose heart was mollified at the sight of money. “A pleasant journey, and safe to ye; take good care of the beast, don't ride her over the stones, and—”

The remainder of the exhortation was lost to us, as we set forth in a short jog-trot, I running alongside.

“When we are once below the hill, yonder,” said I to my companion, “give her the whip, and make up for lose time.”

“And how are you to keep up, my lad?” asked he, in some surprise.

I could scarcely avoid a laugh at the simplicity of the question; as if an Irish gossoon, with his foot on his native bog, would n't be an overmatch in a day's journey for the best hack that ever ambled! Away we went, sometimes joking over, sometimes abusing, the old miser Andy, of whom, for my fellow-traveller's amusement, I told various little traits and stories, at which he laughed with a zest quite new to me to witness. My desire to be entertaining then led me on to speak of my father and his many curious adventures,—the skill with which he could foment litigation, and the wily stratagems by which he sustained it afterwards. All the cunning devices of the process-server I narrated with a gusto that smacked of my early training: how, sometimes, my crafty parent would append a summons to the collar

of a dog, and lie in wait till he saw the owner take it off and read it, and then, emerging from his concealment, cry out “sarved,” and take to his heels; and again how he once succeeded in “serving” old Andy himself, by appearing as a beggar woman, and begging him to light a bit of paper to kindle her pipe. The moment, however, he took the bit of twisted paper, the assumed beggar-woman screamed out, “Andy, yer sarved: that's a process, my man!” The shock almost took Andy's life; and there's not a beggar in the barony dares to come near him since.

“Your father must be well off, then, I suppose,” said my companion.

“He was a few weeks ago, sir; but misfortune has come on us since that.” I was ashamed to go on, and yet I felt that strange impulse so strong in the Irish peasant to narrate anything of a character which can interest by harrowing and exciting the feelings.

Very little pressing was needed to make me recount the whole story, down to the departure of my father with the other prisoners sentenced to transportation.

“And whither were you going when I met you this morning on the common?” said my fellow-traveller, in a voice of some interest.

“To seek my fortune, sir,” was my brief answer; and either the words or the way they were uttered seemed to strike my companion, for he drew up short, and stared at me, repeating the phrase, “Seek your fortune!” “Just so,” said I, warmed by an enthusiasm which then was beginning to kindle within me, and which for many a long year since, and in many a trying emergency, has cheered and sustained me. “Just so; the world is wide, and there 's a path for every one, if they 'd only look for it.”

“But you saw what came of *my* taking a short cut, this morning,” said my companion, laughing.

“And you'd have been time enough too, if you had been always thinking of what you were about, sir; but as you told me, you began a thinking and a dreaming of twenty things far away. Besides, who knows what good turn luck may take, just at the very moment when we seem to have least of it?”

“You 're quite a philosopher, Con,” said he, smiling.

“So Father Mahon used to say, sir,” said I, proudly, and in reality highly flattered at the reiteration of the epithet.

Thus chatting, we journeyed along, lightening the way with talk, and making the hours seem to me the very pleasantest I had ever passed. At last we came in sight of the steeple of Kinnegad, which lay in the plain before us, about a mile distant.

The little town of Kinnegad was all astir as we entered it The “up mail” had just come down, in the main street, sending all its passengers flying in various directions,—through shop-windows; into cow-houses and piggeries; some being proudly perched on the roof of a cabin, and others most ignobly seated on a dunghill; the most lamentable figure of all being an elderly gentleman, who, having cut a summerset through an apothecary's window, came forth cut by a hundred small vials, and bearing on his person unmistakable evidence of every odor, from tar-water to assafotida. The conveyance itself lay, like the Ark after the Deluge, quietly reposing on one side; while animals male and female, “after their kind,” issued from within. Limping and disconsolate figures were being assisted into the inn; and black eyes and smashed faces were as rife as in a country

fair.

I was not slow in appropriating the calamity to a good purpose. “See, sir,” I whispered to my companion, “you said, a while ago, that nobody had such bad luck as yourself; think what might have happened you, now, if you had n't missed the coach.”

“True enough, Con,” said he, “there is such a thing as being too late for bad as well as for good fortune; and I experience it now. But the next question is, how to get forward; for, of course, with a broken axle, the mail cannot proceed further.”

The difficulty was soon got over. The halt and the maimed passengers, after loudly inveighing against all coach-proprietors,—the man that made, and the man that horsed, he that drove, and he that greased the wheels of all public conveyances,—demanded loudly to be forwarded to the end of their journey by various chaises and other vehicles of the town; I at the same time making use of my legal knowledge to suggest that while doing so, they acted under protest; that it was “without prejudice” to any future proceedings they might deem fit to adopt for compensatory damages. If some laughed heartily at the source from which the hint came, others said I was a “devilish shrewd chap,” and insinuated something about a joint-stock subscription of sixpences for my benefit; but the motion was apparently unseconded, and so, like many benefactors of my species, I had to apply to my conscience for my reward; or, safer still, had to wait till I could pay myself.

My young companion, who now, in a few words, told me that he was a student at Trinity College and a “reader for honors,” pulled out his purse to pay me. “Remember, my boy, the name of Henry Lyndsay; I

'm easily found, if you chance to come to Dublin,—not that I can be of much service to any one, but I shall not forget the service you rendered me this day. Here, take this, pay for the mare's feeding, and when she has rested—”

I would not suffer him to proceed further, but broke in:

“I'm not going back, sir! I'll never turn my footsteps that way again! Leave the mare in the inn; Andy comes every Saturday here for the market, and will find her safe. As for me, I must 'seek my fortune;' and when one has to search for anything, there's nothing like beginning early.”

“You 're a strange fellow, Con,” said he, looking at me; and I was shrewd enough to see that his features exhibited no small astonishment at my words. “And where do you intend to look for this same fortune you speak of?”

“No one place in particular, sir! I read in an old book once, that good luck is like sunshine, and is not found in all climates at the same time; so I intend to ramble about; and when I breakfast on the sunny side of the apple, never stay to dine off the green one.”

“And you are the kind of fellow to succeed!” said he, half to himself, and rather as though reflecting on my words than addressing me.

“So I intend, sir,” replied I, confidently.

“Have you ever read 'Gil Blas,' Con?”

“I have it almost by heart, sir.”

“That's it!” said he, laughing; “I see whence you've got your taste for adventure. But remember, Con, Gil Blas lived in different times from ours, and in a very different land. He was, besides, a well-educated

fellow, with no small share of good looks and good manners.”

“As for age and country, sir,” said I, boldly, “men and women are pretty much alike at all times, and in all places; in the old book I told you of a while ago, I read that human passions, like the features of the face, are only infinite varieties of the same few ingredients. Then, as to education and the rest,—what one man can pick up, so can another. The will is the great thing, and I feel it very strong in me. And now, to give a proof of it, I am determined to go up to Dublin, and with your honor too, and you'll see if I won't have my way.”

“So you shall, Con!” replied he, laughing; “I'll take you on the top of the chaise; and although I cannot afford to keep a servant, you shall stay with me in College until chance, in which you have such implicit faith, shall provide better for you. Come, now, lead the mare into the stable, for I see my companions are packing up to be gone.”

I was not slow in obeying the orders, and soon returned to assist my new master with his luggage. All was quickly settled; and a few minutes after saw me seated on a portmanteau on the roof on my way to Dublin.





"HOW I ENTERED COLLEGE, AND HOW I LEFT IT."



CHAPTER IV. HOW I ENTERED COLLEGE, AND HOW I LEFT IT

It was still dark, on a drizzling morning in January, as we reached the Capital; the lamps shone faintly through the foggy, wet atmosphere; and the gloom was deepened as we entered the narrow streets at the west of the city. A few glimmering lights from five-stories high, showed where some early riser was awaking to his daily toil; while here and there, some rough-coated policeman stood at the corner of a street to be rained on; except these, no sign of living thing appeared; and I own the whole aspect was a sad damper to the ardor of that

enthusiasm which had often pictured the great metropolis as some gorgeous fairy-land.

The carriage stopped twice, to set down two of the travellers, in obscure dingy streets, and then I heard Mr. Lyndsay say, “To the College;” and on we went through a long labyrinth of narrow lanes and thoroughfares, which gradually widened out into more spacious streets, and at length arrived at a great building, whose massive gates slowly opened to receive, and then solemnly closed after us. We now stood in a spacious quadrangle, silent and noiseless as a church at midnight.

Mr. Lyndsay hastily descended, and ordering me to carry in some of the baggage, I followed him into a large scantily furnished room, beyond which was a bedchamber, of like accommodation. “This is my home, Con,” said he, with a melancholy attempt at a smile; “and here,” said he, leading me to a small one-windowed room on the opposite side, “here is yours.” A bed, of that humble kind called a stretcher, placed against one wall, and a large chest for holding coals against the other, a bottomless chair, and a shoe-brush with very scanty bristles, constituted the entire furniture.

It was some time after all the luggage was removed before Mr. Lyndsay could get rid of the postilion; like all poor men in a like predicament, he had to bargain and reason and remonstrate, submitting to many a mortification, and enduring many a sore pang, at the pitiless ribaldry which knows nothing so contemptible as poverty; at last, after various reflections on the presumption of people who travel and cannot afford it, on their vanity, self-conceit, and so forth, the fellow departed, with what my ears assured me was no contemptible share of my poor master's purse.

I was sitting alone in my den during this scene, not wishing by my presence to add anything to his mortification; and, now all was still and noiseless, I waited for some time expecting to be called,—to be told of some trifling service to execute, or, at least, to be spoken to; but no, not a sound, not a murmur, was to be heard.

My own thoughts were none of the brightest: the ceaseless rain that streamed against the little window, and shut out all prospect of what was without; the cold and cheerless chamber and the death-like silence were like lead upon my heart.

I had often, in my reveries at home, fancied that all who were lifted above the cottier in life must have neither care nor sorrow; that real want was unknown, save in their class; and that all afflictions of those more highly placed were of a character too trifling to be deemed serious; and now suddenly there came to me the thought, What if every one had his share of grief? I vow, the very suspicion thrilled through me, and I sat still, dwelling on the sad theme with deep intensity.

As I sat thus, a sigh, low, but distinct, came from the adjoining chamber. I suddenly remembered my young master, and crept noiselessly to the door; it stood ajar, and I could see in, and mark everything well. He was sitting at a table covered with books and writing materials; a single candle threw its yellow glare over the whole, and lit up with a sickly tint the travel-worn and tired features of the youth.

As I looked, he leaned his forehead down upon his arm, and seemed either overcome by sorrow or fatigue; when suddenly a deep-booming bell sent forth a solemn peal, and made the very chamber vibrate with its din. Lyndsay started at the sound; a

kind of shudder, like a convulsive throe, shook his limbs; and sitting up on his seat, he pushed back the falling hair from his eyes, and again addressed himself to his book. The heavy tolling sounds seemed now no longer to distract, but rather to nerve him to greater efforts, for he read on with an intense persistence; turning from volume to volume, and repeatedly noting down on the paper as he read.

Of a sudden the bell ceased, and Lyndsay arose from the table and passed into the bedroom, from which he almost instantaneously reappeared, dressed in his cap and gown,—a new and curious costume in my eyes, but which at the time was invested with a deep, mysterious interest to me.

I retired silently now to my room, and saw him pass out into the wide court. I hastened to look out. Already some hundred others in similar costume were assembled there, and the buzz of voices and the sound of many feet were a pleasant relief to the desert-like silence of the court as I had seen it before. The change was, however, of a very brief duration; in less than a minute the whole assemblage moved off and entered a great building, whose heavy door closed on them with a deep bang, and all was still once more.

I now set myself to think by what small services I could render myself acceptable to my young master. I arranged the scanty furniture into a resemblance, faint enough, certainly, to comfort, and made a cheerful fire with the remnant of the roomy coal-box. This done, I proceeded to put his clothes in order, and actually astonished myself with the skill I seemed to possess in my new walk. An intense curiosity to know what was going on without led me frequently to the door which led into the court; but I profited little by this step. The only figures which

met my eye were now and then some elderly personage clad in his academic robes, gravely wending towards the “Hall,” and the far less imposing cries of some “college women,” as the hags are called who officiate as the University housemaids.

It was at one of these visits that suddenly I heard the great door of the “Hall” burst open with a crash, and immediately down the steps poured the black tide of figures, talking and laughing in one multifarious din that seemed to fill the very air. Cautiously withdrawing, I closed the door, and retired; but scarcely had I reached my room, when young Lyndsay passed through to his own chamber: his cheek was flushed, and his eyes sparkled with animation, and his whole air and gesture indicated great excitement.

Having removed his cravat, and bathed his temples with cold water, he once more sat down before his books, and was soon so immersed in study as not to hear my footsteps as I entered.

I stood uncertain, and did not dare to interrupt him for some minutes; the very intensity of his application awed me. Indeed, I believe I should have retired without a word, had he not accidentally looked up and beheld me. “Eh!—what!—how is this?” cried he, endeavoring to recall his mind from the themes before him; “I had forgotten you, my poor boy, and you have had no breakfast.”

“And you, sir?” said I, in reality more interested for him than myself.

“Take this, Con,” said he, not heeding my remark, and giving me a piece of silver from his purse; “get yourself something to eat: to-morrow, or next day, we shall arrange these things better; for at this

moment my head has its load of other cares."

"But will *you* not eat something?" said I; "*you* have not tasted food since we met."

"We are expected to breakfast with our tutor on the examination mornings, Con," said he; and then, not seeming to feel the inconsistency of his acts with his words, he again bent his head over the table, and lost all remembrance of either me or our conversation. I stole noiselessly away, and sallied forth to seek my breakfast where I could.

There were few loiterers in the court; a stray student hurrying past, or an old slipshod hag of hideous aspect and squalid misery, were all I beheld; but both classes' bestowed most unequivocal signs of surprise at my country air and appearance, and to my question, where I could buy some bread and milk, answers the most cynical or evasive were returned. While I was yet endeavoring to obtain from one of the ancient maidens alluded to some information on the point, two young men, with velvet caps and velvet capes on their gowns, stopped to listen.

"I say, friend," cried one, seemingly the younger of the two, "when did *you* enter?"

"This morning," said I, taking the question literally.

"Do you hear that, Ward?" continued he to his companion. "What place did you take?"

"I was on the roof," replied I, supposing the quaere bore allusion to the mode of my coming.

"Quite classical," said the elder, a tall, good-looking youth; "you came as did Caesar into Gaul, '*summâ diligentiâ,*' on the top of the Diligence."

They both laughed heartily at a very threadbare

college joke, and were about to move away, when the younger, turning round, said, “Have you matriculated?”

“No, sir,—what's that?”

“It's a little ceremony,” interposed the elder, “necessary, and indeed indispensable, to every one coming to reside within these walls. You've heard of Napoleon, I dare say?”

“Bony, is it?” asked I, giving the more familiar title by which he was better known to my circle of acquaintance.

“Exactly,” said he, “Bony. Now Bony used to call a first battle the baptism of Glory; so may we style, in a like way, Matriculation to be the baptism of Knowledge. You understand me, eh?”

“Not all out,” said I, “but partly.”

“We 'll illustrate by a diagram, then.”

“I say, Bob,” whispered the younger, “let us find out with whom he is;” then, turning to me, said, “Where do you live here?”

“Yonder,” said I, “where that lamp is.”

“Mr. Lyndsay's chambers?”

“Yes, sir.”

“All right,” cried the younger; “we'll show you the secret of matriculation.”

“Come along, my young friend,” said the elder, in the same pompous tone he had used at first, “let us teach you to drink of that Pierian spring which 'Labitur et labetur in omne volubile oevum.'”

I believe it was the fluent use of the unknown tongue which at once allayed any mistrust I might have felt of my new acquaintances; however that may be, there was something so imposing in the high-sounding syllables that I yielded at once, and

followed them into another and more remote quadrangle.

Here they stopped under a window, while one gave a loud whistle with his fingers to his lips; the sash was immediately thrown up, and a handsome, merry-looking face protruded. “Eh!—what!—Taylor and Ward,” cried he, “what's going on?”

“Come down, Burton; here's a youth for matriculation,” cried the younger.

“All right,” cried the other. “There are eight of us here at breakfast;” and disappearing from the window, he speedily descended to the court, followed by a number of others, who gravely saluted me with a deep bow, and solemnly welcomed me within the classic precincts of old Trinity.

“Domine—what's his name?” said the young gentleman called Burton.

“Cregan, sir,” replied I, already flattered by the attentions I was receiving,—“Con Cregan, sir.”

“Well, Domine Cregan, come along with us, and never put faith in a junior sophister. You know what a junior sophister is, I trust?”

“No, sir.”

“Tell him, Ward.”

“A junior sophister, Mr. Cregan, is one who, being in 'Locke' all day, is very often locked out all night, and who observes the two rubrics of the statute '*de vigilantibus et lucentibus*,' by extinguishing both lamps and watchmen.”

“Confound your pedantry!” broke in Burton; “a junior soph, is a man in his ninth examination.”

“The terror of the porters,” cried one.

“The Dean's milch cow,” added another.

“A credit to his parents, but a debtor to his tailor,”

broke in a third.

“Seldom at Greek lecture, but no fellow commoner at the Currah,” lisped out Taylor; and by this time we had reached a narrow lane, flanked on one side by a tall building of gloomy exterior, and on the other by an angle of the square.

“Here we are, Mr. Cregan; as the poet says, 'this is the place, the centre of the wood.'”

“Gentlemen sponsors, to your functions!” Scarce were the words out, when I was seized by above half a dozen pair of strong hands; my legs were suddenly jerked upwards, and, notwithstanding my attempts to resist, I was borne along for some yards at a brisk pace. I was already about to forbear my struggles, and suffer them to play their—as I deemed it—harmless joke in quiet, when straight in front of me I saw an enormous pump, at which, and by a double handle, Burton and another were working away like sailors on a wreck; throwing forth above a yard off, a jet of water almost enough to turn a mill.

The whole plot now revealed itself to me at once, and I commenced a series of kickings and plungings that almost left me free. My enemies, however, were too many and too powerful; on they bore me, and in a perfect storm of blows, lunges, writhings, and boundings, they held me fast under the stream, which played away in a frothy current over my head, face, chest, and legs,—for, with a most laudable impartiality, they moved me from side to side till not a dry spot remained on my whole body.



I shouted, I yelled, I swore, and screamed for aid, but all in vain; and my diabolical tormentors seemed to feel no touch of weariness in their inhuman pastime; while I, exhausted by my struggles and the continual rush of the falling water, almost ceased to resist; when suddenly a cry of “The Dean! the Dean!” was heard; my bearers let go their hold,—down I tumbled upon the flags, with barely consciousness enough to see the scampering crew flying in all directions, while a host of porters followed them in hot pursuit.

“Who are you, sir? What brought you here?” said a tall old gentleman I at once surmised to be the Dean.

“The devil himself, I believe!” replied I, rising with difficulty under the weight of my soaked garments.

“Turn him outside the gates, Hawkins!” said the Dean to a porter behind him. “Take care, too, he never reenters them.”

“I 'll take good care of it, sir,” said the fellow, as with one strong hand on my collar, and the closed fingers of the other administering gentle admonitions

to the back of my head, he proceeded to march me before him through the square; revolving as I went thoughts which, certes, evinced not one sentiment of gratitude to the learned university.

My college career was, therefore, more brief than brilliant, for I was “expelled” on the very same day that I “entered.”

With the “world before me where to choose,” I stepped out into the classic precincts of College Green, fully assured of one fact, that “Town” could scarcely treat me more harshly than “Gown.” I felt, too, that I had passed through a kind of ordeal; that my ducking, like the ceremonies on crossing the line, was a kind of masonic ordinance, indispensable to my opening career; and that thus I had got successfully through one at least of my “trials.”

A species of filial instinct suggested to me the propriety of seeing Newgate, where my father lay, awaiting the arrival of the convict ship that was to convey him to Van Diemen's Land; and thither I accordingly repaired, not to enter, but simply to gaze, with a very awestruck imagination, upon that double-barred cage of human ferocity and crime.

In itself the circumstance has nothing worthy of record, nor should I mention it, save that to the deep impression of that morning do I owe a certain shrinking horror of all great crime; that impression has been of incalculable benefit to me through life.

I strained my eyes to mark if, amid the faces closely pressed against the strong bars, I could recognize that of my parent, but in vain; there was a terrible sameness in their features, as if the individual had sunk in the criminal, that left all discrimination difficult; and so I turned away satisfied that I had done a son's part most

completely.



CHAPTER V. A PEEP AT “HIGH AND LOW COMPANY”

I have often heard it observed that one has as little to do with the choice of his mode of life as with the name he receives at baptism. I rather incline to the opinion that this is true. My own very varied and somewhat dissimilar occupations were certainly far less the result of any preconceived plan or scheme than the mere “turn-up” of the rolling die of Fortune.

It was while revolving a species of fatalism in this wise, and calmly assuring myself that I was not born to be starved, that I strolled along Merrion Square on the same afternoon of my expulsion from Trinity and

visit to Newgate.

There were brilliant equipages, cavaliers, and ladies on horseback; handsome houses, with balconies often thronged by attractive-looking occupants; and vast crowds of gayly dressed persons promenaded within the square itself, where a military band performed; in fact, there was more than enough to interest and amuse one of higher pretensions in the scale of pleasure than myself.

While I was thus gazing on this brilliant panorama of the outdoor life of a great city, and wondering and guessing what precise object thus brought people together,—for no feature of a market, or a fair, or any festive occupation solved the difficulty,—I was struck by a class of characters who seemed to play the subordinate parts of the drama,—a set of ragged, ill-fed, half-starved boys, who followed in crowds each new arrival on horseback, and eagerly sought permission to hold his horse when he dismounted; the contrast of these mangy looking attendants to the glossy coated and handsomely caparisoned steeds they led about being too remarkable to escape notice. Although a very fierce rivalry prevailed amongst them, they seemed a species of organized guild, who constituted a distinct walk in life, and indignantly resented the attempt of some two or three “voluntaries” who showed a wish to join the fraternity.

I sat against the rails of the square, studying with some curiosity little details of their etiquette, and their strange conventionalities. A regular corps of them stood in front of me, canvassing with all the eager volubility of their craft for the possession of a handsome thoroughbred pony, from which a young officer, in a cavalry undress, was about to dismount.

“I 'm your own boy, Captain! I'm Tim, sir!” cried one, with a leer of most familiar intimacy.

“'Tis me towld ye about Miss O'Grady, sir,” shouted another, preferring another and stronger claim.

“I'm the boy caught your mare the day ye was thrown, Captain!” insinuated a third, exhibiting a want of tact in the reminiscence that drew down many a scoff upon him from his fellows; for these ragged and starving curs had a most lively sense of the use of flattery.

“Off with you!—stand off!” said the young dragoon, in a threatening tone; “let that fellow take my mare;” and he pointed to me as I sat, a patient but unconcerned spectator of the scene. Had a medical consultation been suddenly set aside on the eve of a great surgical operation, and the 'knife' committed to the unpractised hand of a new bystander, the breach of etiquette and the surprise could scarce have been greater. The gang stared at me with most undisguised contempt, and a perfect volley of abuse and irony followed me as I hastened to obey the summons.

It has been very often my fortune in life to take a position for which I neither had submitted to the usual probationary study, nor possessed the necessary acquirement; but I believe this my first step in the very humble walk of a “horse-boy” gave me more pain than ever did any subsequent one. The criticisms on my dress, my walk, my country look, my very shoes,—my critics wore none,—were all poignant and bitter; and I verily believe, such is the force of ridicule, I should have preferred the rags and squalor of the initiated, at that moment, to the warm gray frieze and blue worsted stockings of my country

costume.

I listened attentively to the young officer's directions how I was to walk his mare, and where; and then, assuming a degree of indifference to sarcasm I was far from feeling, moved away from the spot in sombre dignity. The captain—the title is generic—was absent about an hour; and when he returned, seemed so well pleased with my strict obedience to his orders that he gave me a shilling, and desired me to be punctually at the same hour and the same place on the day following.

It was now dark; the lamplighter had begun his rounds, and I was just congratulating myself that I should escape my persecutors, when I saw them approaching in a body. In an instant I was surrounded, and assailed with a torrent of questions as to who I was, where I came from, what brought me there, and, lastly, and with more eagerness than all besides,—what did “the captain” give me? As I answered this query first, the others were not pressed; and it being voted that I should expend the money on the fraternity, by way of entrance-fee, or, as they termed it, “paying my footing,” away we set in a body to a distant part of the town, remote from all its better and more spacious thoroughfares, and among a chaos of lanes and alleys called the “Liberties.” If the title were conferred for the excessive and unlimited freedoms permitted to the inhabitants, it was no misnomer. On my very entrance into it I perceived the perfect free and easy which prevailed.

A dense tide of population thronged the close, confined passages, mostly of hodmen, bricklayers' laborers, and scavengers, with old-clothesmen, beggars, and others whose rollicking air and daring look bespoke more hazardous modes of life.

My companions wended their way through the dense throng like practised travellers, often cutting off an angle by a dive through the two doors of a whiskey shop, and occasionally making a great short-cut by penetrating through a house and the court behind it,—little exploits in geography expiated by a volley of curses from the occupants, and sometimes an admonitory brickbat in addition.

The uniform good temper they exhibited; the easy freedom with which they submitted to the rather rough jocularities of the passers-by,—the usual salute being a smart slap on the crown of the head, administered by the handicraft tool of the individual, and this sometimes being an iron trowel or a slater's hammer,—could not but exalt them in my esteem as the most patient set of varlets I had ever sojourned with. To my question as to why we were going so far, and whither our journey tended, I got for answer the one short reply,—“We must go to 'ould Betty's.'”

Now, as I would willingly spare as much of this period's recital to my reader as I can, I will content myself with stating that “ould Betty,” or Betty Cobbe, was an old lady who kept a species of ordinary for the unclaimed youth of Dublin. They were fed and educated at her seminary; the washing cost little, and they were certainly “done” for at the very smallest cost, and in the most remarkably brief space of time. If ever these faint memorials of a life should be read in a certain far-off land, more than one settler in the distant bush, more than one angler in the dull stream of Swan River, will confess how many of his first sharp notions of life and manners were imbibed from the training nurture of Mrs. Elizabeth Cobbe.

Betty's proceedings, for some years before I had the honor and felicity of her acquaintance, had attracted towards her the attention of the authorities.

The Colonial Secretary had possibly grown jealous; for she had been pushing emigration to Norfolk Island on a far wider scale than ever a cabinet dreamed of; and thus had she acquired what, in the polite language of our neighbors, is phrased the “Surveillance of the Police,”—a watchful superintendence and anxious protectorate, for which, I grieve to say, she evinced the very reverse of gratitude. Betty had, in consequence, and in requirement with the spirit of the times—the most capricious spirit that ever vexed plain, old-fashioned mortals—reformed her establishment; and from having opened her doors, as before, to what, in the language of East Indian advertisements, are called “a few spirited young men,” she had fallen down to that small fry who, in various disguises of vagrancy and vagabondage, infest the highways of a capital.

By these disciples she was revered and venerated; their devotion was the compensation for the world's neglect, and so she felt it. To train them up with a due regard to the faults and follies of their better-endowed neighbors was her aim and object, and to such teaching her knowledge of Dublin life and people largely contributed.

Her original walk had been minstrelsy; she was the famous ballad-singer of Drogheda Street, in the year of the rebellion of '98. She had been half a dozen times imprisoned,—some said that she had even visited “Beresford's riding-school,” where the knout was in daily practice; but this is not so clear: certain it is, both her songs and sympathy had always been on the patriotic side. She was the terror of Protestant ascendency for many a year long.

Like Homer, she sung her own verses; or, if they were made for her, the secret of the authorship was never divulged. For several years previous to the

time I now speak of, she had abandoned the Muses, save on some special and striking occasions, when she would come before the world with some lyric, which, however, did little more than bear the name of its once famed composer.

So much for the past. Now to the present history of Betty Cobbe.

In a large unceilinged room, with a great fire blazing on the hearth, over which a huge pot of potatoes was boiling, sat Betty, in a straw chair. She was evidently very old, as her snow-white hair and lustreless eye bespoke; but the fire of a truculent, unyielding spirit still warmed her blood, and the sharp, ringing voice told that she was decided to wrestle for existence to the last, and would never "give in" until fairly conquered.

Betty's chair was the only one in the chamber: the rest of the company disposed themselves classically in the recumbent posture, or sat, like primitive Christians, cross-legged. A long deal table, sparingly provided with wooden plates and a few spoons, occupied the middle of the room, and round the walls were several small bundles of straw, which I soon learned were the property of private individuals.

"Come along till I show ye to ould Betty," said one of the varlets to me, as he pushed his way through the crowded room; for already several other gangs had arrived, and were exchanging recognitions.

"She's in a sweet temper, this evening," whispered another, as we passed. "The Polis was here a while ago, and took up 'Danny White,' and threatened to break up the whole establishment."

"The devil a thing at all they'll lave us of our institushuns," said a bow-legged little blackguard,

with the 'Evening Freeman' written round his hat; for he was an attaché of that journal.

“Ould Betty was crying all the evening,” said the former speaker; by this time we had gained the side of the fireplace, where the old lady sat.

“Mother! mother, I say!” cried my guide, touching her elbow gently; then, stooping to her ear, he added, “Mother Betty!”

“Eh! Who's callin' me?” said the hag, with her hand aloft. “I'm here, my Lord, neither ashamed nor afeard to say my name.”

“She's wanderin',” cried another; “she thinks she's in Coort.”

“Betty Cobbe! I say. It's me!” said my introducer, once more.

The old woman turned fiercely round, and her dimmed and glassy eyes, bloodshot from excess and passion, seemed to flare up into an angry gleam as she said, “You dirty thief! Is it you that's turnin' informer agin me,—you that I took up—out of yer mother's arms, in Green Street, when she fainted at the cutting down of yer father? Your father,” added she, “that murdered old Meredith!”

The boy, a hardened and bold-featured fellow, became lividly pale, but never spoke.

“Yes, my Lord,” continued she, still following the theme of her own wild fancies, “it's James Butterley's boy! Butterley that was hanged!” and she shook and rocked with a fiendish exultation at the exposure.

“Many of us does n't know what bekem of our fathers!” said a sly-looking, old-fashioned creature, whose height scarcely exceeded two feet, although evidently near manhood in point of age.

“Who was yours, Mickey?” cried another.

“Father Glynn, of Luke Street,” growled out the imp, with a leer.

“And yours?” said another, dragging me forward, directly in front of Betty.

“Con Cregan, of Kilbeggan,” said I, boldly.

“Success to ye, ma bouchal!” said the old hag; “and so you 're a son of Con the informer.” She looked sternly at me for a few seconds, and then, in a slower and more deliberate tone, added, “I 'm forty years, last Lady Day, living this way, and keepin' company with all sorts of thieves, and rogues, and blaguards, and worse,—ay, far worse besides; but may I never see Glory if an informer, or his brat, was under the roof afore!”

The steadfast decision of look and voice as she spoke seemed to impress the bystanders, who fell back and gazed at me with that kind of shrinking terror which honest people sometimes exhibit at the contact of a criminal.

During the pause of some seconds, while this endured, my sense of abject debasement was at the very lowest. To be the Pariah of such a society was indeed a most distinctive infamy.

“Are ye ashamed of yer father? Tell me that!” cried the hag, shaking me roughly by one shoulder.

“It is not here, and before the like of these,” said I, looking round at the ragged, unwashed assemblage, “that I should feel shame! or if I did, it is to find myself among them!”

“That's my boy! that's my own spirited boy!” cried the old woman, dragging me towards her. “Faix, I seen the time we 'd have made somethin' out of you. Howld yer tongues, ye vagabonds! the child's right,—yer a dirty mean crew! Them!” said she, pointing to me, “them was the kind of chaps I used to have, long

ago; that was n't afeard of all the Beresfords, and Major Sirr, and the rest of them. Singing every night on Carlisle Bridge, 'The Wearin' of the Green,' or 'Tra-lal-la, the French is coming;' and when they wor big and grown men, ready and willing to turn out for ould Ireland. Can you read, avick?"

"Yes, and write," answered I, proudly.

"To be sure ye can," muttered she, half to herself; "is it an informer's child,—not know the first rules of his trade!"

"Tear and ages, mother!" cried out the decrepit imp called Mickey, "we 're starvin' for the meat!"

"Sarve it up!" shouted the hag, with a voice of command; and she gave three knocks with her crutch on the corner of the table.

Never was command more promptly obeyed. A savory mess of that smoking compound called "Irish stew" was ladled out on the trenchers, and speedily disposed around the table, which at once was surrounded by the guests,—a place being made for myself by an admonitory stroke of Betty's crutch on the red head of a very hungry juvenile who had jostled me in his anxiety to get near the table.

Our meal had scarcely drawn to its close when the plates were removed, and preparations made for a new party; nor had I time to ask the reason, when a noisy buzz of voices without announced the coming of a numerous throng. In an instant they entered; a number of girls, of every age, from mere child to womanhood,—a ragged, tattered, reckless-looking set of creatures, whose wild, high spirits not even direst poverty could subdue. While some exchanged greetings with their friends of the other sex, others advanced to talk to Betty, or stood to warm themselves around the fire, until their supper, a

similar one to our own, was got ready. My curiosity as to whence they came in such a body was satisfied by learning that they were employed at the "Mendicity Institution" during the day, and set free at nightfall to follow the bent of their own, not over well-regulated, tastes. These creatures were the ballad-singers of the city; and, sometimes alone, sometimes in company with one of the boys, they were wont to take their stand in some public thoroughfare, not only the character of the singer, but the poetry itself, taking the tone of the street; so that while some daring bit of town scandal caught the ears of College Green, a "bloody murder" or a "dying speech" formed the attraction of Thomas Street and the "Poddle."

Many years afterwards, in the checkered page of my existence, when I have sat at lordly tables and listened to the sharpened wit and polished raillery of the high-born and the gifted, my mind has often reverted to that beggar horde, and thought how readily the cutting jest was answered, how soon repartee followed attack—what quaint fancies, what droll conceits, passed through those brains, where one would have deemed there was no room for aught save brooding guilt and sad repining.

As night closed in, the assembly broke up; some issued forth to their stations as ballad-singers; some, in pure vagabond spirit, to stroll about the streets; while others, of whom I was one, lay down upon the straw to sleep, without a dream, till daylight.





CHAPTER VI.

"VIEWS OF LIFE."

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When I woke the next morning, it was a few minutes before I could thoroughly remember where I was and how I came there; my next thought was the grateful one, that if the calling was not a very exaltued one, I had at least secured a mode of living, and that my natural acuteness, and, better still, my fixed resolve within me "to get forward in the world," would not permit me to pass my days in the ignoble craft of a "horse-boy." I found that the "walk," like every other career, had certain guiding rules and principles by which it was regulated. Not only were certain parts of the town interdicted to

certain gangs, but it was a recognized rule that when a particular boy was singled out habitually by any gentleman that no other should endeavor to supplant him. This was the less difficult as a perfect community of property was the rule of the order; and all moneys were each night committed to the charge of “old Betty,” with a scrupulous fidelity that would have shamed many a “joint-stock company.”

The regular etiquette required that each youth should begin his career in the north side of the city, where the class of horsemen was of a less distinguished order, and the fees proportionably lower. Thence he was promoted to the Four Courts; from which, as the highest stage, he arrived at Merrion Square and its neighborhood. Here the visitors were either the young officers of the garrison, the Castle officials, or a wealthy class of country gentlemen, all of whom gave sixpences; while in the cold quarter of northern Dublin, penny-pieces were the only currency. If the public differed in these three places, so did the claims of the aspirant: a grave, quiet, almost sombre look being the grand qualification in the one, while an air of daring effrontery was the best recommendation in the other. For while the master in chancery or the “six clerk” would only commit his bobtailed pony to a discreet-faced varlet of grave exterior, the dashing aide-de-camp on his thoroughbred singled out the wild imp with roguish eye and flowing hair, that kept up with him from the barrack in a sharp canter, and actually dived under a carriage-pole and upset an apple-stall to be “up” in time to wait on him; and while yet breathless and blown, was ready with voluble tongue to give him the current news of the neighborhood,—who was in the Square, or out dining; who had arrived, or why they were absent.

To do this task with dexterity and tact was the crowning feature of the craft, and in such hasty journalism some attained a high proficiency; seasoning their scandal with sly bits of drollery or quaint allusions to the current topics of the day. To succeed in this, it was necessary to know the leading characters of the town and the circumstances of their private history; and these I set myself to learn with the assiduity of a study. Never did a Bath Master of the Ceremonies devote himself more ardently to the investigation of the faults and foibles of his company; never did young lady, before coming out, more patiently pore over Debrett, than did I pursue my researches into Dublin life and manners; until at last, what between oral evidence and shrewd observation, I had a key to the secret mysteries of nearly every well-known house in the city.

None like me to explain why the father of the dashing family in Stephen's Green only appeared of a Sunday; how the blinds of No. 18 were always drawn down at three o'clock; and what meant the hackney-coach at the canal bridge every Thursday afternoon. From the gentleman that always wore a geranium leaf in his coat, to the lady who dropped her glove in the Square, I knew them all. Nor was it merely that I possessed the knowledge, but I made it to be felt. I did not hoard my wealth like a miser, but I came forth like a great capitalist to stimulate enterprise and encourage credit. Had I been a malicious spirit, there is no saying what amount of mischief I might have worked, what discoveries anticipated, what awkward meetings effected. I was, however, what the French call a “bon diable,” and most generously took the side of the poor sinner against the strong spirit of right. How many a poor subaltern had been put in arrest for wearing “mufti,” had I not been

there to apprise him the town-major White was coming. How often have I saved a poor college-man from a heavy fine, who, with his name on the sick-list, was flirting in the “Square.” How have I hastened, at the risk of my neck, between crashing carriages and prancing horses, to announce to a fair lady lounging in her britzska that the “Counsellor,” her husband, was unexpectedly returning from court an hour earlier than his wont. I have rescued sons from fathers, daughters from mothers; the pupil from his guardian, the debtor from his creditor,—in a word, was a kind of ragged guardian angel, who watched over the peccadilloes of the capital. My “amour propre”—if such an expression of such a quality may be conceded to one like me—was interested in the cause of all who did wrong. I was the Quixote of all deceivers.

With “Con on the look-out,” none feared surprise; and while my shrewdness was known to be first-rate, my honesty was alike unimpeachable. It may readily be believed how, with acquirements and talents like these, I no longer pursued the humble walk of “horse-holder;” indeed, I rarely touched a bridle, or, if I did so, it was only to account for my presence in such localities as I might need an excuse to loiter in. I was at the head of my profession; and the ordinary salutation of the cavaliers, “Con, get me a fellow to hold this mare,” showed that none presumed to expect the ignoble service at my own hands.

To some two or three of my early patrons, men who had noticed me in my obscurity, I would still condescend to yield this attention,—a degree of grateful acknowledgment on my part which they always rewarded most handsomely. Among these was the young officer whose pony I had held on the first night of my arrival. He was an Honorable

Captain De Courcy, very well-looking, well-mannered, and very poor,—member of the Commander-in-Chief's staff, who eked out his life by the aid of his noble birth and his wits together.

At the time I speak of, his visits to Merrion Square were devoted to the cause of a certain Mrs. Mansergh, the young and beautiful wife of an old red-faced, foul-mouthed Queen's Counsel, at least forty years her senior. The scandal was, that her origin had been of the very humblest, and that, seen by accident on circuit, she had caught the fancy of the old lawyer, a well-known connoisseur in female beauty. However that might be, she was now about two years married, and already recognized as the reigning beauty of the viceregal court and the capital.

The circumstances of her history,—her low origin, her beauty, and the bold game she played,—all invested her with a great interest in my eyes. I used to flatter myself that there was a kind of similarity in at least our early fortunes; and I enlisted myself in her cause with an ardor that I could not explain to myself. How often, as she passed in her splendid barouche,—the best-appointed and handsomest equipage of the capital,—have I watched her as, wrapped in her Cashmere, she reclined in all the voluptuous indolence of her queenly state; glorying to think that *she*,—she, whose proud glance scarce noticed the obsequious throng that bowed with uncovered heads around her,—that she was perhaps not better nurtured than myself. Far from envious jealousy at her better fortune, I exulted in it; she was a kind of beacon set on a hill to guide and cheer me. I remember well, it was an actual triumph to me one day, as the Viceroy, a gay and dashing nobleman, not overscrupulous where the claim of beauty was

present, stopped, with all his glittering staff, beside her carriage, and in playful raillery began to chide her for being absent from the last drawing-room. “We missed you sadly, Mrs. Mansergh,” said he, smiling his most seductive smile. “Pray tell my friend Mansergh that he shows himself a most lukewarm supporter of the Government who denies us the fairest smiles of the capital.”

“In truth, my Lord, he would not give me a new train, and I refused to wear the old one,” said she, laughing.

“Downright disloyalty, upon my honor,” said the Viceroy, with well got-up gravity.

“Don't you think so, my Lord?” rejoined she; “so I even told him that I 'd represent the case to your Excellency, who, I 'm sure, would not refuse a velvet robe to the wife, while you gave a silk gown to the husband.”

“It will be the very proudest of my poor prerogatives,” said he, bowing, while a flash of crimson lit up his pleased features. “Your favorite color is—”

“I should like to wear your Lordship's,” said she, with a look the most finished coquette might envy, so admirably blended were trust and timid bashfulness.

What he replied I could not catch. There was a flattering courtesy, however, in his smile, and in the familiar motion of the hand with which he bade “good-bye,” that were enough to show me that he, the haughty mirror of his sovereign, did not think it beneath him to bandy compliments and exchange soft looks with the once humble beauty. From that time out, my whole thoughts day and night were centred in her; and I have passed hours long,

fancying all the possible fortunes for which destiny might intend her. It seemed to me as though she was piloting out the course for me in life, and that her success was the earnest of my own. Often, when a ball or a great reception was given by her, have I sat, cold, shivering, and hungry, opposite the house, watching with thrilling interest all the equipages as they came, and hearing the high and titled names called aloud by the servants, and thinking to myself, "Such are *her* associates *now*. These great and haughty personages are here to do honor to *her*, their lovely hostess; and *she*, but a few years back, if report spoke truly, was scarcely better off than I was —I—myself."

Only they who have a sanguine, hopeful temperament will be able to understand how the poor houseless, friendless boy—the very outcast of the world, the convict's child—could ever dare to indulge in such day-dreams of future greatness. But I had set the goal before my eyes; the intermediate steps to it I left to fortune. The noble bearing and polished graces of the high and wealthy, which to my humble associates seemed the actual birthright of the great, I perceived could all be acquired. There was no prescriptive claim in any class to the manners of high breeding; and why should not I, if fortune favored, be as good a gentleman as the best? In other particulars, all that I had observed showed me no wondrous dissimilarity of true feeling in the two classes. The gentleman, to be sure, did not swear like the common fellow; but on the racecourse or the betting-ground I had seen, to the full, as much deceit as ever I witnessed in my "own order." There was faithlessness beneath Valenciennes lace and velvet as well as beneath brown stuff and check; and a spirit of backbiting, that we ragged folk knew nothing of,

seemed a current pastime in better circles.

What, then, should debar me from that class? Not the manners, which I could feign, nor the vices, which I could feel. To be like them, was only to be of them,—such, at least, was then my conviction and my theory.

Any one who will take the pains to reflect on and analyze the mode of thinking I have here mentioned, will see how necessarily it tends rather to depress those above than to elevate those beneath. I did not purpose to myself any education in high and noble sentiments, but simply the performance of a part which I deemed easy to assume. The result soon began to tell. I felt a degree of contemptuous hatred for the very persons I had once revered as almost demigods. I no longer looked up to the “gentleman” as such by right divine, but by accident; and I fostered the feeling by the writings of every radical newspaper I could come at. All the levelling doctrines of socialism, all the plausibilities of equality, became as great truths to me; and I found a most ready aptitude in my mind to square the fruits of my personal observation to these pleasant theories. The one question recurred every morning as I arose, and remained unanswered each night as I lay down, “Why should I hold a horse, and why should another man ride one?” I suppose the difficulty has puzzled wiser heads; indeed, since I mooted it to myself, it has caused some trouble in the world; nor, writing now as I do in the year of grace '48, do I suppose the question is yet answered.

I have dwelt perhaps too long on this exposition of my feelings; but as my subsequent life was one of far more action than reflection, the indulgent reader will pardon the prosiness, not simply as explaining the history which follows, but also as affording a small

breathing-space in a career where there were few “halts.”

I have said that I began to conceive a great grudge against all who were well off in life, and against none did I indulge this aversion more strongly than “the captain,” my first patron,—almost my only one. Though he had always employed me,—and none ever approached him save myself,—he had never condescended to the slightest act of recognition beyond the tap on my head with his gold-mounted whip, and a significant nod where to lead his pony. No sign of his, no look, no gesture, ever confessed to the fact that I was a creature of his own species, that I had had a share in the great firm which, under the name of Adam and Co., has traded so long and industriously.

If I were sick, or cold, or hungry, it mattered not; my cheek might be sunk with want or care, my rags might drip with rain, or freeze with sleet,—he never noticed them; yet if the wind played too roughly with his Arab's mane, or the silky tasselled tail, he saw it at once. If her coat stirred with the chill breeze, he would pat and pet her. It was evident enough which had the better existence.

If these thoughts chafed and angered me at first, at least they served to animate and rouse my spirit. He who wants to rise in life must feel the sharp spur of a wrong,—there is nothing like it to give vigor and energy to his motions. When I came to this conclusion, I did not wait long to put the feeling into action; and it was thus—But a new chapter of my life deserves a new chapter of my history.





CHAPTER VII.

A BOLD STROKE FOR AN OPENING IN THE WORLD.

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As regular as the day itself did I wait at the corner

of Merrion Square, at three o'clock, the arrival of Captain De Courcy, who came punctual to the instant; indeed, the clatter of the pony's hoofs as he cantered along always announced the striking of the Post-office clock. To dismount, and fling me the bridle, with a short nod of the head in the direction he wished me to walk the animal, was the extent of recognition ever vouchsafed me; and as I never ventured upon even a word with him, our intercourse was of the simplest possible kind. There was an impassive quietude about his pale cold features that awed me. I never saw him smile but once; it was when the mare seized me by the shoulder, and tore with her teeth a great piece of my ragged coat away. Then, indeed, he did vouchsafe to give a faint, listless smile, as he said to his pampered nag, “Fie, fie! What a dirty feeder you are!”

Very little notice on his part, the merest act of recognition, a look, a monosyllable, would have been enough to satisfy me,—anything, in short, which might acknowledge that we were part of the same great chain, no matter how many links might lie between us.

I do not wish it to be inferred that I had any distinct right to such an acknowledgment, nor that any real advantage would have accrued to me from obtaining it,—far from that; very little consideration might have induced me to be contented with my station; and, if so, instead of writing these notes in a boudoir with silk hangings, and—but this is anticipating with a vengeance! And now to go back.

After three hours of a cold wait, on a rainy and dreary afternoon, the only solace to my hunger being the imaginative one of reflecting on the pleasure of those happy mortals who were sitting down to dinner in the various houses along the Square, and

fancying to myself the blessed state of tranquillity it must impart to a man's nature to see a meal of appetizing excellence, from which no call of business, no demand of any kind could withdraw him. And what speculations did I indulge in as to the genial pleasantry that must abound,—the happy wit, the joyous ease of such gatherings when three or four carriages at a door would bespeak the company at such a dinner-party!

At last, out came my captain, with a haste and flurry of manner quite unusual. He did not, as was his constant custom, pass his hand along the mare's neck to feel her coat, nor did he mutter a single word of coaxing to her as he mounted. He flung himself with a jerk into the saddle, and, rapping my knuckles sharply with the gold knob of his whip, pettishly cried, “Let her go, sirrah!” and cantered away. I stood for some moments motionless, my mind in that strange state when the first thought of rebellion has entered, and the idea of reprisal has occurred. I was about to go away, when the drawing-room window, straight above me, was opened, and a lady stepped out upon the balcony. It was too dark to discern either her features or her dress; but a certain instinct told me it was Mrs. Mansergh. “Are you Captain De Courcy's boy?” said she, in a sweet and subdued voice. I replied in the affirmative, and she went on: “You know his quarters at the Royal Hospital? Well, go there at once, as speedily as you can, and give him this note.” She hesitated for a second, as if uncertain what to say, and then added, “It is a note he dropped from his pocket by accident.”

“I'll do it, ma'am,” said I, catching the letter and the half-crown, which she had half inserted in the envelope to give it weight. “You may trust me perfectly.” Before the words were well uttered, she

had retired, the window was closed, the curtain drawn, and, except the letter and the coin in my fingers, nothing remained to show that the whole had not been a trick of my foolish brain.

My immediate impulse was to fulfil my mission; I even started off at full speed to do so. But as I turned the corner of the Square, the glare of a bright gas-lamp suggested the temptation of at least a look at my despatches; and what was my astonishment to find that on this note, which had been dropped by “accident” from the captain's pocket, the superscription was scarcely dry,—in the very act of catching, I had blotted the words! This, of course, was no affair of mine; but it evinced deception,—and deception at certain moments becomes a dangerous injury. There are times when the mind feels deceit to be an outrage. The stormy passions of the fury-driven mob, reckless and headstrong, show this; and the most terrible moment in all political convulsions is when the people feel, or even suspect, that they have been tricked. My frame of mind was exactly in that critical stage. A minute before, I was ready to yield any obedience, tender any service; and now, of a sudden,—without the slightest real cause, or from anything which could in the remotest way affect me, —I had become a rebel. Let the reader forgive the somewhat tedious analysis of a motive, since it comes from one who has long studied the science of moral chemistry, and made most of his experiments —as the rule directs—in “ignoble bodies.”

My whole resolve was changed: I would not deliver the note. Not that I had any precise idea wherefore, or that I had the least conception what other course I should adopt; I was a true disciple of revolt: I rebelled for very rebellion's sake.

Betty Cobbe's was more than usually brilliant on

that evening. A race, which was to come off at Kingstown the next day, had attracted a numerous company, in the various walks of horse-boys, bill-carriers, and pickpockets, all of whom hoped to find a ready harvest on the morrow. The conversation was, therefore, entirely of a sporting character. Anecdotes of the turf and the ring went round, and in the many curious devices of roguery and fraud might be read the prevailing taste of that select company. Combinations were also formed to raise the rate of payment, and many ingenious suggestions thrown out about turning cattle loose, slacking girths, stealing curb-chains, and so on, from that antagonistic part of the public who preferred holding their horses themselves than intrusting them to the profession.

The race itself, too, engrossed a great share of interest; and a certain Fergusson was talked of with all the devotedness and affection of a dear friend. Nor, as I afterwards learned, was the admiration a merely blind one, as he was a most cunning adept in all the wily stratagems by which such men correct the wilful ways of Fortune.

How my companions chuckled over stories of “rotten ditches” that were left purposely to betray the unwary; swinging gates that would open at the least touch, and inevitably catch the horse that attempted to clear, if the hoof but grazed them; bog-holes, to swamp, and stone fences, to smash,—had their share of approval; but a drain dug eight feet deep, and that must certainly break the back of the horse, if not of the rider also, who made a “mistake” over it, seemed the triumph which carried away the suffrages of the whole assembly.

Now, although I had seen far more of real sport and horsemanship than the others, these narratives

were for the most part new to me; and I listened with a high interest to every scheme and trick by which cunning can overreach and outmanoeuvre simplicity. The admiration of adroit knavery is the first step on the road to fraud; and he who laughs heartily at a clever trick, seldom suspects how he is "booking himself" for the same road. For my own part, neither were my principles so fixed, nor my education so careful, that I did not conceive a very high respect for the rogue, and a very contemptuous disdain for his victim.

Morning came, and a bright sunny one it was, with a keen frost and that kind of sharp air that invigorates and braces both mind and body. The crisp, clear outline of every tree and building seen against the deep blue sky; the sparkling river, with its clean bed of bright gravel; and the ruddy faces one meets,—are all of a nature to suggest pleasant and cheerful thoughts. Even we—we, with our frail fragments and chapped hands—felt it, and there was an alacrity of movement and a bounding step, a gay laugh and a merry voice, everywhere. All set out for Kingstown, in the neighborhood of which the race was to come off. I alone remained behind, resisting every entreaty of my companions to join them,—I cannot yet say why I did so. It was partly that long habit had made my attendance upon "the Captain" a duty; partly, perhaps, that some vague notion that the letter, of which I still kept possession, should be delivered by me at last.

The town was quite empty on that day,—not a carriage, nor a horseman to be seen. There were very few on foot, and the Square was deserted of all, save its nursery population. I never felt a more tedious morning. I had full time, as I loitered along all alone, to contrast my solitude with the enjoyment my

companions were at that same moment pursuing.

True to the instant, Captain De Courcy cantered up, his face a thought graver and more stern than I had ever seen it before. As he dismounted, my hand, in holding his stirrup, soiled the brilliant polish of his lacquered boot; he perceived it, and rewarded my awkwardness with a smart cut of his whip. A minute before I had made up my mind to give him the note; now, torture itself would not have torn it from me.

I followed him with my eyes till he entered the house,—not over distinctly, it is true, for they were somewhat blinded by tears that would, in spite of me, come forth. The sensation was a most painful one; and I am heartily glad to confess I have seldom experienced a recurrence of it. Scarcely was the hall-door closed on him, when I remembered that he would soon hear of the note, which I had failed to deliver, and that, in all likelihood, a heavy punishment awaited me. My offence was a grave one: what was to be done? Turn the mare loose and fly, or patiently await my fate? Either were bad enough; the latter certainly the less advisable of the two. A third course soon suggested itself, doubtless inspired by that most mischief-working adage which says that one may be “as well hanged for the sheep as the lamb.”

I therefore voted for the “larger animal;” and to satisfy myself that I was honest to my own convictions, I immediately proceeded to act upon them. I led the mare quietly along to the angle of the Square, and then, turning into the next street, I shortened the stirrups, mounted, and rode off.

“Set a beggar on horseback—” says the proverb; and although the consequence is only meant figuratively, I have a suspicion that it might bear a

literal reading. I rode away, at first, at a trot, and then, striking into a brisk canter, I took the road to Kingstown, whither, even yet, some horsemen were hastening.

Every stride of the bounding animal elevated my spirits and nerved my courage. The foot-passengers, that plodded wearily along, I looked down upon as inferior; with the horsemen on either side I felt a kind of equality. How differently does one view life from the saddle and from the ground! The road became more thronged as I advanced, thicker crowds pressed eagerly forward, and numerous carriages obstructed the way. At another moment, perhaps, I should have attracted attention; but stranger sights were passing at every instant, and none troubled their heads about the "ragged urchin on the thoroughbred."

The crowd at last became so dense that horsemen were fain to desert the high road, and take short cuts wherever an open gate or an easily crossed fence opened the way. Following a group of well-mounted gentlemen, I cleared a low wall into a spacious grass field, over which we cantered, and beyond this, by leaping an easy ditch, into another of the same kind, till at length we saw the vast crowds that blackened a hill in front, and, beneath them, could distinguish the fluttering flags that marked the course, and the large floating standard of the winning-post.

What a grand sight was that! For what is so imposing a spectacle as vast myriads of people stirred by one interest, and animated by one absorbing passion? Every one has nowadays seen something of the kind, therefore I shall not linger to tell of the impression it made upon my youthful senses. The first race had already come off; but the second, and the great event of the day, was yet to

take place.

It was a steeplechase by “gentlemen riders” over a very severe line of country; several fences of most break-neck character having been added to the natural difficulties of the ground.

Mounted on my splendid barb, I rode boldly forward till I reached the field through which the first ditch ran,—a deep and wide trench, backed by a low rail,—a very formidable leap, and requiring both stride and strength to clear it.

“Some of 'em will tail off, when they sees that!” said an English groom, with a knowing wink; and the words were only out when, at a “slapping canter,” the riders were seen coming down the gently sloping hill. Three rode nearly abreast; then came a single horseman; and, after him, an indiscriminate mass, whose bright and party-colored jackets glowed like a rainbow.

I watched them with a breathless interest; as they came nearer they widened the space between them, and each cast a rapid but stealthy glance at his neighbor. One—he rode a powerful black horse—took the lead, and, dashing at the leap, his horse rose too soon, and fell, chested against the opposite bank, the rider under him; the next swerved suddenly round and balked; the third did the same; so that the leading horseman was now he who rode alone at first. Quickening his speed as he came on, he seemed actually to fly; and when he did take the fence, it was like the bound of a cannon-shot,—up, and over at once! Of the rest, some two or three followed well; others pulled short up; while the larger share, in various forms of accident and misfortune, might be seen either struggling in the brook, or endeavoring to rescue their horses from the danger of broken legs

and backs.

I did not wait to watch them; my interest was in those who gallantly led onward, and who now, some four in number, rode almost abreast. Among these, my favorite was the sky-blue jacket who had led the way over the dyke; and him did I follow with straining eyes and palpitating heart. They were at this moment advancing towards a wall,—a high and strong one, and I thought, in the slackened pace and more gathered-up stride, I could read the caution a difficult leap enforced.

A brown jacket with white sleeves was the first to charge it; and after a tremendous scramble, in which the wall, the horse, and the rider were all tumbling together, he got over; but the animal went dead lame, and the rider, dismounting, led him off the ground.

Next came blue-jacket; and just at the very rise his mare balked, and, at the top of her speed, ran away along the side of the wall. A perfect roar of angry disappointment arose from the multitude, for she was the favorite of the country people, who were loudly indignant at this mischance.

“The race is sold!” cried one.

“Beatagh”—this was the rider—“pulled her round himself! the mare never was known to refuse a fence!”

“I say you're both wrong!” cried a third, whose excited manner showed he was no indifferent spectator of the scene. “She never will take her first wall fairly; after that she goes like a bird!”

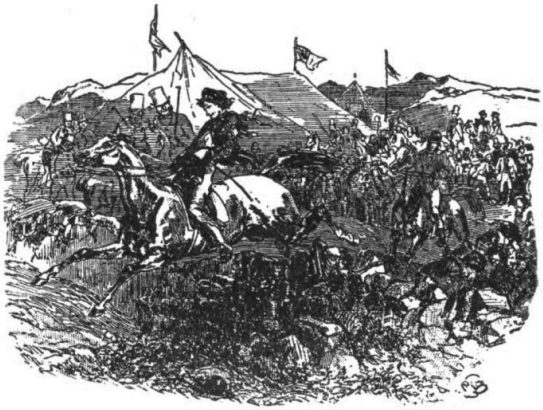
“What a confounded nuisance to think that no one will lead her over the fence! Is there not one here will show her the way?” said he, looking around.

“There's the only fellow I see whose neck can

afford it!" said another, pointing to me. "He, evidently, was never born to be killed in a steeplechase."

"Devilish well mounted he is, too!" remarked some one else.

"Hallo, my smart boy!" said he who before alluded to the mare as a bolter, "try your nag over that wall yonder,—go boldly. Let her have her head, and give her a sharp cut as she rises. Make way there, gentlemen! Let the boy have fair play, and I 'll wager a five-pound note he does it! You shall have half the stakes too, if you win!" added he. These were the last words I heard; for the crowd, clearing in front, opened for me to advance, and without a moment's hesitation of any kind, I dashed my heels to the mare's flanks, and galloped forward. A loud shout, and a perfect shower of whips on the mare's quarter from the bystanders, put all question of pulling up beyond the reach of possibility. In a minute more I was at the wall, and, ere I well knew, over it. A few seconds after, the blue-jacket was beside me. "Well done, my lad! You've earned twenty guineas if I win the race! Lead the way a bit, and let your mare choose her ground when she leaps." This was all he said; but such words of encouragement never fell on my ears before.



Before us were the others, now reduced to three in number, and evidently holding their stride and watching each other, never for a moment suspecting that the most feared competitor was fast creeping up behind them. One fence separated us, and over this I led again, sitting my mare with all the composure of an old steeplechaser. “Out of the way, now!” cried my companion, “and let *me* at them!” and he tore past me at a tremendous pace, shouting out, as he went by the rest, “Come along, my lads! I 'll show the way!”

And so he did! With all their efforts, and they were bold ones, they never overtook him afterwards. His mare took each fence flying, and as her speed was much greater than the others', she came in full half a minute in advance. The others arrived all together, crest fallen and disappointed, and, like all beaten men, receiving the most insulting comments from the mob, who are somewhat keen critics on misfortune. I came last, for I had dropped behind when I was ordered; but, unable to extricate my mare from the crowd, was compelled to ride the whole distance

with the rest. If the losing horsemen were hooted and laughed at, *my* approach was a kind of triumphal entry. “There's the chap that led over the wall! That little fellow rode the best of them all!” “See that ragged boy on the small mare; he could beat the field this minute!”

“'T is fifty guineas in goold ye ought to have, my chap!” said another,—a sentiment the unwashed on all sides seemed most heartily to subscribe to.

“Be my soul, I 'd rather be lookin' at him than the gentlemen!” said a very tattered individual, with a coat like a transparency. These, and a hundred similar comments, fell like hail-drops around; and I believe that in my momentary triumph I actually forgot all the dangers and perils of my offence.

It is a great occasion for rejoicing among the men of rags and wretchedness when a member of their own order has achieved anything like fame. The assertion of their ability to enter the lists with “their betters” is the very pleasantest of all flatteries. It is, so to say, a kind of skirmish, before that great battle which, one day or other, remains to be fought between the two classes which divide mankind,—those who have, and those who have not.

I little suspected that I was, to use the cant so popular at present, “the representative of a great principle” in my late success. I took all the praises bestowed, most literally, to myself, and shook hands with all the dirty and tattered mob, fully convinced that I was a very fine fellow.

“Mister Beatagh wants to see the boy that led him over the ditch,” shouted out a huge, wide-shouldered, red-faced ruffian, as he shoved the crowd right and left to make way for the approach of the gentleman who had just won the race.

“Stand up bowld, avic!” whispered one in my ear, “and don't be ashamed to ax for your reward.”

“Say ten guineas!” muttered another.

“No; but twenty!” growled out a third.

“And lashings of drink besides, for the present company!” suggested a big-headed cripple about two feet high.

“Are you the lad that took the fence before me?” cried out a smart-looking, red-whiskered young man, with a white surtout loosely thrown over his riding costume.

“Yes, sir,” I replied, half modestly and half assured.

“Who are you, my boy, and where do you come from?”

“He's one of Betty Cobbe's chickens!” shouted out an old savage-faced beggar-man, who was terribly indignant at the great misdirection of public sympathy; “and a nice clutch they are!”

“What is it to you, Dan, where the crayture gets his bread?” rejoined an old newsvender, who, in all likelihood, had once been a parlor boarder in the same seminary.

“Never mind *them*, but answer me, my lad!” said the gentleman. “If you are willing to take service, and can find any one to recommend you—”

“Sure, we'll all go bail for him—to any amount!” shouted out the little crippled fellow, from his “bowl;” and certainly a most joyous burst of laughter ran through the crowd at the sentiment.

“Maybe ye think I'm not a householder,” rejoined the fellow, with a grin of assumed anger; “but have n't I my own sugar hogshead to live in, and devil receave the lodger in the same premises!”

“I see there 's no chance of our being able to settle anything here,” said the gentleman. “These good people think the matter more their own than ours; so meet to-morrow, my lad, at Dycer's, at twelve o'clock, and bring me anything that can speak for your character.” As he said these few words he brushed the crowd to one side with his whip, and forcing his way, with the air of a man who would not be denied, left the place.

“And he 's laving the crayture without givin' him a farden!” cried one of the mob, who suddenly saw all the glorious fabric of a carouse and a drunken bout disappear like a mirage.

“Oh, the 'tarnal vagabond” shouted another, more indignantly; “to desart the child that a-way,—and he that won the race for him!”

“Will yez see the little crayture wronged?” said another, who appeared by his pretentious manner to be a practised street orator. “Will yez lave the dissolute orphan—” he meant “desolate”—“to be chayted out of his pater money? Are yez men at all? or are yez dirty slaves of the bloody 'stokessy that's murderin' ould Ireland'?”

“We'll take charge of the orphan, and of you too, my smart fellow, if you don't brush off pretty lively!” said a policeman, as, followed by two others, he pushed through the crowd with that cool determination that seems to be actually an instinct with them. Then, laying a strong hand on my collar, he went on: “How did you come by that mare, my lad?”

“She belongs to Captain De Courcy, of the Royal Hospital,” said I, doing my utmost to seem calm and collected.

“We know that already; what we want to hear is,

what brought you here with her? It was n't Captain De Courcy's orders?”

“No, sir. I was told to hold her for him, and—and —”

“And so you rode off with her,—out with it, it saves time, my lad. Now, let me ask you another question: Have you any notion of the crime you have just committed? Do you know that it amounts to horse-stealing? And do you know what the penalty is for that offence?”

“No, sir; I know neither one nor the other,” said I, resolutely; “and, if I did, it doesn't matter much. As well to live upon prison diet as to starve in the streets!”

“He's a bad 'un; I told ye that!” remarked another of the policemen. “Take him off, Grimes!” and so, amid a very general but subdued murmur of pity and condolence from the crowd, I was dragged away on one side, while the mare was led off on another.

It was a terrible tumble down, from being a hero to an embryo felon; from being cheered by the populace, to being collared by a policeman! As we went along towards Dublin on a jaunting-car, I was regaled by interesting narratives of others who had begun life like myself, and took an abrupt leave of it in a manner by no means too decorous. The peculiarity of anecdote which pertains to each profession was strongly marked in these officers of the law; and they appeared to have studied the dark side of human nature with eyes the keenest and most scrutinizing.

I wish I could even now forget the long and dreary hours of the night that ensued, as I lay, with some fifty others, in the jail of the station-house. The company was assuredly not select, nor their manners

at all improved by the near approach of punishment. It seemed as if all the disguises of vice were thrown off at once, and that iniquity stood forth in its own true and glaring livery. I do not believe that the heart can ever experience a ruder shock than when an unfledged criminal first hears himself welcomed into the “Masonry” of guilt. To be claimed by such associates as a fellow-laborer, to be received as one of the brethren into the guild of vice, is really an awful blow to one's self-esteem and respect; to feel yourself inoculated with a disease whose fatal marks are to stamp you like this one or that, sends a shuddering terror through the heart, whose cold thrill is never, in a life-long afterwards, thoroughly eradicated.

There should be a quarantine for suspected guilt, as for suspected disease; and the mere doubt of rectitude should not expose any unfortunate creature to the chances of a terrible contagion! I do not affect by this to say that I was guiltless,—not in the least; but my crime should scarcely have classified me with the associates by whom I was surrounded. Nor was a night in such company the wisest mode of restoring to the path of duty one who might possibly have only slightly deviated from the straight line.

When morning came I was marched off, with a strong phalanx of other misdoers, to the College Street office, where a magistrate presided whose bitterest calumniators could never accuse of any undue leanings towards mercy. By him I had the satisfaction of hearing a great variety of small offences decided with a railroad rapidity, only interrupted now and then by a whining lamentation over the “lenity of the legislature,” that never awarded one tithe of the suitable penalty, and bewailing his own inability to do more for the

criminal than send him to prison for two months with hard labor, and harder diet to sweeten it.

At last came my name; and as I heard it shouted aloud, it almost choked me with a nervous fulness in the throat. I felt as though I was the greatest criminal in the universe, and that the whole vast assemblage had no other object or aim there than to see me arraigned for my offence.

I was scarcely ordered to advance before I was desired to stand back again, the prosecutor, Captain De Courcy, not being in court. While a policeman was, therefore, despatched by the magistrate to request that he would have the kindness to appear,—for the captain was an honorable and an aide-de-camp, titles which the sitting justice knew well how to respect,—other cases were called and disposed of. It was nigh three o'clock when a great bustle in the outer court and a tremendous falling back of the dense crowd, accompanied by an ostentatious display of police zeal, heralded a group of officers, who, with jingling spurs and banging sabretaches, made their way to the bench, and took their seats beside the justice. Many were the courtesies interchanged between the magistrate and the captain: one averring that the delay was not in the slightest degree inconvenient; the other professing the greatest deference for the rules of court; neither bestowing a thought upon him most deeply concerned of all.

A very brief narrative, delivered by the captain with a most military abruptness, detailed my offence; and, although not exaggerated in the slightest degree, the occasional interruptions of the magistrate served very considerably to magnify its guilt,—such as “Dear me! a favorite mare; a pure Arab; a present from your noble father, Lord Littlemore; infamous

treatment; abominable case; abandoned young scoundrel!" and so on; closing with the accustomed peroration of regret that, as hanging was now done away with, he feared that the recorder could only award me a transportation for life!

"Have you anything to say, sirrah?" said he at last, turning towards me; "or would you rather reserve your observations for another time? as I shall certainly commit you for trial at the commission."

"I have only to suggest," said I, with an air of most insolent composure, "that you are probably mistaken in your law. The offence with which I stand charged amounts, at most, to the minor one of breach of trust."

"What! have we got a lawyer in the dock?" said the magistrate, reddening with fear and anger together.

"I have enjoyed some opportunities of legal study, your worship," said I, "and am happy to state that my opinion in the present instance will not discredit the assertion. The case stands thus: I am employed by the Honorable Captain De Courcy to perform a particular duty, which is of the distinct nature of a trust; that trust, whose importance I do not seek to extenuate in the slightest, I fail in. I will not plead the strong temptation of a race and a great spectacle. I will not allege, as perhaps I might, the example of my companions, then revelling in all the pleasures of the day. I will simply say that no one fact can be adduced to favor the suspicion of a meditated robbery; and that my conduct, so palpably open and public, rejects the least assumption of the kind, and at the utmost can establish nothing beyond what I am willing to plead guilty to,—a breach of trust."

"Listen to the Attorney-General! By the hokey, it's

himself they 've in the dock!" said one.

"That's the chap can give them chapter and varse!" cried another.

"Silence there! Keep silence in the court!" said the justice, now really warm with passion. "I'd have you to know, sirrah," said he, addressing me, "that your pettifogging shrewdness is anything but favorable to you in the unfortunate position in which you stand. I shall commit you for trial, and would advise you—it is the only piece of advice I 'll trouble you with—to charge some more skilful advocate with your defence, and not intrust it to the knavish flippancy of conceit and chicanery."

"I mean to have counsel, your worship," said I, resolutely; for my blood was up, and I would have argued with the twelve judges. "I mean to have one of the first and most eminent at the bar for my defence. Mr. Mansergh, of Merrion Square, will not refuse my brief when he sees the fee I can offer him."

A regular roar of laughter filled the court; the impudence of my speech, and my thus introducing the name of one of the very first men at the bar, as likely to concern himself for such a miserable case and object, was too much for any gravity; and when the magistrate turned to comment upon my unparalleled assurance and impertinence to Captain De Courcy, he discovered that the honorable captain had left his place.

Such was the fact! The dashing aide-de-camp was at that moment standing in earnest converse with myself beside the dock.

"May I speak with this boy in another room, your worship?" said he, addressing the court.

"Certainly, Captain De Courcy! Sergeant Biles, show Captain De Courcy into my robing-room."

The honorable captain did not regain his composure immediately on finding himself alone with me; on the contrary, his agitation was such that he made two or three efforts before he could utter the few words with which he first addressed me.

“What did you mean by saying that Mr. Mansergh would defend you? and what was the fee you alluded to?” were the words.

“Just what I said, sir,” said I, with the steady assurance a confidence of victory gives. “I thought it was better to have able counsel; and as I know I have the means of recompensing him, the opportunity was lucky.”

“You don't pretend that you could afford to engage one like him, my lad?” said he, affecting, but very poorly, an air of easy composure. “What could you give him?”

“A note, sir; and although it never issued from the Bank, one not without value!”

The captain became deadly pale; he made one step towards the door, and in a low voice of ill-restrained anger said, “I'll have you searched, sirrah! If anything belonging to me is found upon you—”

“No fear, sir,” said I, composedly; “I have taken precautions against that; the note is safe!”

He threw himself upon a chair, and stared at me steadily for some minutes without a word. There we were, each scanning the other, and inwardly calculating how to win the game we were playing.

“Well,” said he, at last; “what are your terms? You see I give in.”

“And so best,” said I; “it saves time. I ask very little from your honor,—nothing more, in fact, than to have this charge dismissed. I don't mean to wear

rags all my life, and consort with vagabonds, and so I dislike to have it said hereafter that I was ever arraigned or committed for an offence like this. You must tell the justice that it was some blunder or mistake of your orders to me; some accidental circumstance or other,—I don't much care what, or how; nor will he, if the explanation comes from *you!* This done, I 'll place the note in your hand within half an hour, and we need never see much more of each other."

"But who is to secure me that you keep your promise?"

"You must trust to me," said I, carelessly; "I have no bail to give."

"Why not return now, with the policeman, for the note, before I speak to the justice?"

"Then who is to go bail for *you?*" said I, smiling.

"You are a cool fellow, by Jove!" cried he, at the steady impudence which I maintained in the discussion.

"I had need be," replied I, in a voice very different from the feigned hardihood of my assumed part. "The boy who has neither a home nor a friend in the world has little else to rely on, save the cold recklessness of what may befall him!"

I saw a curl of contempt upon the captain's lip at the energy of this speech; for now, when, for the first time between us, a single genuine sentiment broke from me, he deemed it "cant."

"Well!" cried he, "as you wish; I'll speak to the justice, and you shall be free."

He left the room as he spoke, but in a few moments reentered it, saying, "All is right! You are discharged! Now for *your* share of the bargain."

“Where will your honor be in half an hour?”

“At the Club, Foster Place.”

“Then I 'll be there with the note,” said I.



He nodded, and walked out. I watched him as he went; but he neither spoke to a policeman, nor did he turn his head round to see what became of me. There was something in this that actually awed me. It was a trait so unlike anything I had ever seen in others that I at once perceived it was “the gentleman's” spirit, enabling him to feel confidence even in a poor ragged street wanderer as I was. The lesson was not lost on me. My life has been mainly an imitative one, and I have more than once seen the inestimable value of “trusting.”

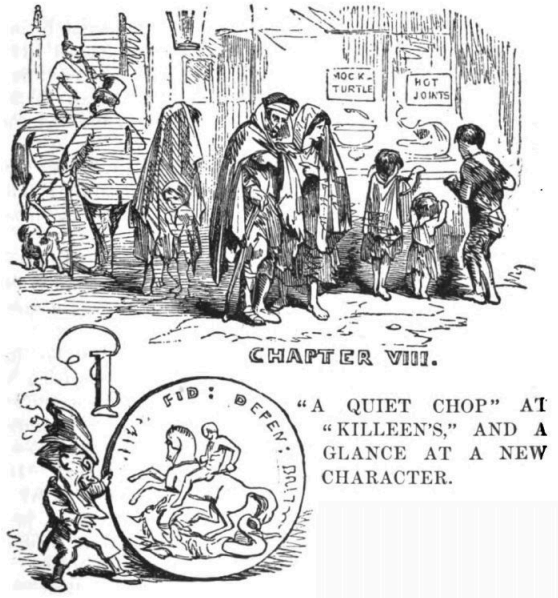
No sooner was I at large than I speeded to Betty's,

and was back again long before the half-hour expired. I had to wait till near five, however, before he appeared; so sure was he of my keeping my word that he never troubled himself about me. “Ha!” said he, as he saw me, “long here?”

“Yes, sir, about an hour;” and I handed him the note as I spoke.

He thrust it carelessly into his sabretache, and, pulling out a crown piece, chucked it towards me, saying, “Good-bye, friend; if they don't hang you, you 'll make some noise in the world yet.”

“I mean it, sir,” said I, with a familiar nod; and so, genteelly touching my cap in salute, I walked away.



CHAPTER VIII.

"A QUIET CHOP" AT "KILLEEN'S," AND A GLANCE AT A NEW CHARACTER.

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I looked very wistfully at my broad crown piece as it lay with its honest platter face in the palm of my hand, and felt, by the stirring sensations it excited within me, some inklings of his feelings who possesses hundreds of thousands of them. Then there arose in my mind the grave question how it was to be spent; and such a strange connection is there between what economists call supply and demand, that, in place of being, as I esteemed myself a few minutes back, "passing rich," I at once perceived that

I was exceeding poor, since to effect any important change in my condition, five shillings was a most inadequate sum. It would not buy me more than a pair of shoes; and what use in repairing the foundation of the edifice, when the roof was in ruin? —not to speak of my other garments, to get into which, each morning, by the same apertures as before, was a feat that might have puzzled a harlequin.

I next bethought me of giving an entertainment to my brethren at Betty's; but, after all, they had shown little sympathy with me in my late misfortune, and seemed rather pleased to be rid of a dangerous professional rival. This, and a lurking desire to leave the fraternity, decided me against this plan.

Then came the thought of entertaining myself, giving myself a species of congratulatory dinner on my escape; and, in fact, commemorating the event by anticipating the most fashionable mode now in use.

I canvassed the notion with all the skill and fairness I could summon, starting the various objections against it, and answering them with what seemed to myself a most judicial impartiality.

“Who does a man usually entertain,” said I, “but his intimate friends?” Those whose agreeability is pleasing to him, or whose acquaintance is valuable from their station and influence. Now, with whom had I such an unrestrained and cordial intercourse as myself? Whose society never wearied, whose companionship always interested me? My own! And who, of all the persons I had ever met with, conceived a sincere and heartfelt desire for my welfare, preferring it to all others? “Con Cregan, it is you,” said I, enthusiastically. “In you my confidence is complete. I believe you incapable of ever

forgetting me. Come, then, and let us pledge our friendship over a flowing bowl."

Where, too, was the next doubt? With a crown to spend, I was not going to descend to some subterranean den among coalheavers, newsvenders, and umbrella-hawkers. But how was I to gain access to a better-class ordinary,—that was the difficulty,—who would admit the street-runner, in his rags, into even a brief intimacy with his silver forks and spoons? And it was precisely to an entertainment on such a scale as a good tavern could supply that I aspired. It was to test my own feelings under a new stimulant,—just as I have often since seen grave people experiment upon themselves with laughing-gas and magnetism and the fumes of ether.

"It may be too much for you, Con," said I, as I went along; "there's no knowing what effect it may have on your nerves.

"Remember that your system is not attuned to such variations. Your vagaries may prove extravagant, and the too sudden elevation may disturb your naturally correct judgment." Against these doubts I pleaded the necessity of not being ungrateful to myself, not refusing a very proper acknowledgment of my own skill and astuteness; and, lastly, I suggested a glancing kind of hope that, like those famed heroes who dated their great fortune to having gone to sleep beneath the shadow of some charmed tree, or near the ripple of a magic fountain, that I, too, should arise from this banquet with some brilliant view of life, and see the path to success, bright and clear before me, through the hazy mists of fancy.

As I reasoned thus, I passed various ordinaries, stopping with a kind of instinct at each, to gaze at

the luscious rounds of beef so daintily tricked out with sprigs of parsley; the appetizing cold sirloins, so beautifully stratified with fat and lean; with hams that might tempt a rabbi; not to speak of certain provocative little paragraphs about “Ox-tail and Gravy ready at all hours.” “Queer world it is,” said I; “and there are passing at every instant, by tens and twenties, men and women and children, famishing and hungry, who see all these things separated from them by a pane of window-glass; and yet they only gather their rags more closely together, clench their thin lips tighter, and move on. Not that alone; but here am I, with means to buy what I want, and yet I must not venture to cross that threshold, as though my rags should be an insult to their broadcloth.” “Move on, youngster,” quoth a policeman at this moment, and thus put an end to my soliloquy.

Wearied with rambling, and almost despairing of myself, I was about to cross Carlisle Bridge, when the blazing effulgence of a great ruby-colored lamplight attracted my attention, over which, in bright letters, ran the words, “Killeen's Tavern and Chop House,” and beneath: “Steak, potatoes, and a pint of stout, one shilling and fourpence.” Armed with a bold thought, I turned and approached the house.

Two or three waiters, in white aprons, were standing at the door, and showed little inclination to make way for me as I advanced.

“Well,” cried one, “who are you? Nobody sent for you.”

“Tramp, my smart fellow,” said the other; “this an't your shop.”

“Is n't this Killeen's?” said I, stoutly.

“Just so,” said the first, a little surprised at my coolness.

“Well, then, a young gentleman from the college sent me to order dinner for him at once, and pay for it at the same time.”

“What will he have?”

“Soup, and a steak, with a pint of port,” said I; just the kind of dinner I had often heard the old half-pay officers talking of at the door of the Club in Foster Place.

“What hour did he say?”

“This instant. He's coming down; and as he starts by the mail at seven, he told me to have it on the table when he came.”

“All right; four-and-six,” said the waiter, holding out his hand for the money.

I gave him my crown piece; and as he fumbled for the sixpence I insinuated myself quietly into the hall.

“There's your change, boy,” said the waiter; “you need n't stop.”

“Will you be so good, sir,” said I, “to write 'paid' on a slip of paper for me, just to show the gentleman?”

“Of course,” said he, taken possibly by the flattering civility of my address; and he stepped into the bar, and soon reappeared with a small scrap of paper, with these words: “Dinner and a pint of port, 4s. 6d.—paid.”

“I'm to wait for him here, sir,” said I, most obsequiously.

“Very well, so you can,” replied he, passing on to the coffee-room.

I peeped through the glass door, and saw that in one of the little boxes into which the place was divided, a table was just spread, and a soup-tureen and a decanter placed on it. “This,” thought I, “is for

me;" for all the other boxes were already occupied, and a great buzz of voices and clashing of plates and knives going on together.

"Serve the steak, sir," said I, stepping into the room and addressing the head-waiter, who, with a curse to me to "get out of that," passed on to order the dish; while I, with an adroit flank movement, dived into the box, and, imitating some of the company, spread my napkin like a breastplate across me. By a great piece of fortune the stall was the darkest in the room, so that when seated in a corner, with an open newspaper before me, I could, for a time at least, hope to escape detection.

"Anything else, sir?" cried a waiter, as he uncovered the soup, and deposited the dish of smoking beef-steak.

"Nothing," responded I, with a voice of most imposing sternness, and manfully holding up the newspaper between us.

The first three or four mouthfuls I ate with a faint heart; the fear of discovery, exposure, and expulsion almost choked me. A glass of port rallied, a second one cheered, and a third emboldened me, and I proceeded to my steak in a spirit of true ease and enjoyment. The port was most insidious; place it wherever I would on the table, it invariably stole over beside me, and, in spite of me, as it were, the decanter would stand at my elbow. I suppose it must be in reality a very gentlemanlike tipple; the tone of sturdy self-reliance, the vigorous air of command, the sense of absolutism it inspires, smack of Toryism; and as I sipped, I felt myself rising above the low prejudices I once indulged in against rank and wealth, and insensibly comprehending the beauty of that system which divides and classifies mankind.

The very air of the place, the loud, overbearing talk, the haughty summons to the waiter, the imperious demand for this or that requisite of the table, all conspired to impress me with the pleasant sensation imparted to him who possesses money. Among the various things called for on every side, I remarked that mustard seemed in the very highest request. Every one ate of it; none seemed to have enough of it. There was a perpetual cry, “Mustard! I say, waiter, bring me the mustard;” while one very choleric old gentleman, in a drab surtout and a red nose, absolutely seemed bursting with indignation as he said, “You don't expect me to eat a steak without mustard, sir?”—a rebuke at which the waiter grew actually purple.

Now, this was the very thing I had myself been doing,—actually eating “a steak without mustard!” What a mistake, and for one who believed himself to be in every respect conforming to the choicest usages of high life! What was to be done? The steak had disappeared; no matter, it was never too late to learn, and so I cried out, “Waiter, the mustard here!” in a voice that almost electrified the whole room.

I had scarcely concealed myself beneath my curtain,—“The Times,”—when the mustard was set down before me, with a humble apology for forgetfulness. I waited till he withdrew, and then helping myself to the unknown delicacy, proceeded to eat it, as the phrase is, “neat.” In my eagerness, I swallowed two or three mouthfuls before I felt its effects; and then a sensation of burning and choking seized upon me. My tongue seemed to swell to thrice its size; my eyes felt as if they would drop out of my head; while a tingling sensation, like “frying,” in my nostrils, almost drove me mad; so that after three or four seconds of silent agony, during which I

experienced about ten years of torture, unable to endure more, I screamed out that “I was poisoned,” and, with wide-open mouth and staring eyes, ran down the coffee-room.

Never was seen such an uproar! Had an animal from a wild-beast menagerie appeared among the company, the consternation could scarce be greater; and in the mingled laughter and execrations might be traced the different moods of those who resented my intrusion. “Who is this fellow? How did he get in? What brought him here? What's the matter with him?” poured in on all sides,—difficulties the head-waiter thought it better to deal with by a speedy expulsion than by any lengthened explanation.

“Get a policeman, Bob!” said he to the next in command; and the order was given loud enough to be heard by me.

“What the devil threw him amongst us?” said a testy-looking man in green spectacles.

“I came to dine, sir,” said I; “to have my steak and my pint of wine, as I hoped, in comfort, and as one might have it in a respectable tavern.”

A jolly burst of laughter stopped me, and I was obliged to wait for its subsidence to continue.

“Well, sir! I paid for my dinner—”

“Is that true, Sam?” said a shrewd-looking man to the waiter.

“Quite true, sir! he paid four-and-sixpence, saying that the dinner was for a College gentleman.”

“I have been in College,” said I, coolly; “but no matter, the thing is simple enough: I am here in a house of public entertainment, the proprietors of which have accepted my money for a specific purpose; and putting aside the question whether they

can refuse admission to any well-conducted individual (see Barnes *versus* MacTivell, in the 8th volume Term Reports; and Hobbes against Blinkerton, Soaker, and others, in the Appendix), I contend that my presence here is founded upon contract."

Another and still louder roar of mirth again stopped me, and before I could resume, the company had gathered round me, in evident delight at my legal knowledge; and in particular, he of the spectacles, who was a well-known attorney of the Court of Conscience.

"That fellow's a gem!" said he. "Hang me if he's not equal to Bleatem! Sam, take care what you do; he 's the chap to have his action against you! I say, my man, come and sit down here, and let us have a little chat together."

"Most willingly, sir," responded I. "Waiter, bring my wine over to this table." This was the signal for another shout, of which I did not deign to take the slightest notice.

"I'll wager a hundred oysters," exclaimed one of the party, among whom I now seated myself, "that I have seen him before! Tell me, my lad, didn't you ride over the course yesterday, and cut out the work for Mr. Beatagh?"

I bowed an assent. "Who the devil is he?" cried two or three together; and my appearance and manner did not check the audible expression of this sentiment.

"A few words will suffice, gentlemen," said I, "on that head. My father was an estated gentleman, of small, but unincumbered fortune, which he lost by an unfortunate speculation; he accordingly went abroad—"

"To Norfolk Island!" suggested one, with a wink.

"Exactly," responded I, "a Colonial appointment; leaving me, like Norval, not exactly on the Grampian Hills, but in a worse place, in the middle of the bog of Allen; my sole dependence being in certain legal studies I had once made, and a natural taste for getting forward in life; which, with a most enthusiastic appreciation of good company,"—here I bowed politely all round,—"are, I flatter myself, my chief characteristics."

After a little, but most good-humored, quizzing about my present occupation and future prospects, they, with far more politeness than might be expected, turned the conversation upon other matters, and kindly permitted me to throw in from time to time my observations,—remarks which I could see, from their novelty, at least, seemed often to surprise them.

At length the hour of separating arrived, and I arose to bid the company good-night, which I performed with a very fair imitation of that quiet ease I had often studied in the young guardsmen about town.

"What do you bet that he has neither home to shelter him, nor bed to sleep on, this night?" whispered one to his neighbor.

"What are you writing there, Cox?" said another, to the keen-eyed man, who was pencilling something on a card.

"There, that's my address, my boy,—12, Stafford Street: Jeremiah Cox. Come to me about ten to-morrow."

Another, while he was speaking, made an effort to slip a half-crown into my hand,—a measure I felt it becoming to decline with a prompt, but courteous,

refusal. Indeed, I had so identified myself with the part I was performing that I flung down my only sixpence on the table for the waiter, and, with a last salutation to the honorable company, walked out. I have a perfect memory of every circumstance of the evening, and I recollect that my swaggering exit was as free from any semblance of concern or care as though a carriage waited for me outside to convey me to a luxurious home!

It has often been a fancy of mine through life to pass the entire of a summer night out of door; to wander either through the moonlit roads of some picturesque country, or in the still more solitary streets of a great city. I have always felt on these occasions as though one were “stealing a march” upon the sleeping world,—gaining so many more hours of thought and reflection, which the busy conflict of life renders so often difficult.

The hours of the night seem to typify so many stages of existence,—only reversing the natural order of age, and making the period of deep reflection precede the era of sanguine hope; for if the solemn closing in of the darkness suggests musing, so do the rosy tints and fresh air of breaking day inspire the warm hopefulness of youth. If “the daylight sinking” invites the secret communing of the heart, “the dawning of morn” glows with energetic purpose and bold endeavor.

To come back to myself. I left the tavern without a thought whither I should turn my steps. It was a calm night, with a starry sky and a mild, genial air, so that to pass the hours until morning without shelter was no great privation. One only resolve I had formed,—never to go back to Betty's. I felt that I had sojourned over long in such companionship; it was now time some other, and more upward, path

should open before me.

Following the course of the Liffey, I soon reached the quay called the North Wall, and at last arrived at the bluff extremity which looks out upon the opening of the river into the Bay of Dublin. The great expanse was in deep shadow, but so calm the sea that the two lighthouses were reflected in long columns of light in the tranquil water. The only sound audible was the low, monotonous plash of the sea against the wall, or the grating noise of a chain cable, as the vessel it held surged slowly with the tide. The sounds had something plaintive in them, that soon imparted a tone of sadness to my mind; but it was a melancholy not unpleasing; and I sat down upon a rude block of stone, weaving strange fancies of myself and my future.

As I sat thus, my ear, grown more acute by habit, detected the light clank of a chain, and something like a low thumping sound in the water beneath me; and on peering down, I discovered the form of a small boat, fastened to a ring in the wall, and which from time to time grated against the strong masonry. There it lay, with a pair of light oars run under the thwarts, and its helm flapping to and fro, inert and purposeless, like myself! So at least I fancied it; and soon began conceiving a strange parallel between it and me. I was suddenly startled from these musings by the sound of feet rapidly approaching.

I listened, and could hear a man coming towards me at full speed. I sat down beneath the shadow of the wall, and he passed me unnoticed, and then, springing up on the parapet, he gave a loud, shrill whistle, waiting a few seconds as if for the reply. He was silent, and then repeated it; but still in vain,—no answer came. “Blast them!” muttered he, “the scoundrels will not show a light!” A third time did he

whistle; but though the sounds might be heard a mile off, neither sight nor sound ever responded to them. “And that rascal, too, to have left the boat at such a moment!” Just as he uttered these words, he sprang down from the wall, and caught sight of me, as I lay, affecting sleep, coiled up beneath it.

With a rude kick of his foot on my side he aroused me, saying, “D—n the fellow! is this a time for sleeping? I told you to keep a sharp look-out for me here! What! who are you?” cried he, as I stood upright before him.

“A poor boy, sir, that has no roof to shelter him,” said I, plaintively.

He bent his head and listened; and then, with a horrible curse, exclaimed, “Here they are! here they come! Can you pull an oar, my lad?”

“I can sir,” answered I.

“Well, jump down into the punt there, and row her round the point to the stairs. Be quick! down with you! I have cut my hand, and cannot help you. There, that 's it, my lad! catch the ring; swing yourself a little more to the right; her gunwale is just beneath your foot; all right now! well done! Be alive now! give way, give way!” And thus encouraging me, he walked along the parapet above me, and in a few minutes stood fast, calling out, but in a lower and more cautious voice, “There! close in, now a strong pull—that 's it!” and then, hastily descending a narrow flight of steps, he sprang into the boat, and seated himself in the stern. “Hush! be still!” cried he; “do not stir! they'll never see us under the shadow of the wall!”

As he spoke, two dark figures mounted the wall, straight above our heads, and stood for some seconds as it were peering into the distance.

“I 'll swear I saw him take this way,” cried one, in a deep low voice.

“If he were the Devil himself, he could not escape us here,” said the other, with an accent of vindictive passion.

“And he is the Devil,” said the former speaker.

“Pooh, nonsense, man! any fellow who can win at dice, or has a steady finger with a pistol, is a marvel for you. Curses on him! he has given us the slip somehow.”

“I'd not wonder, Harry, if he has taken the water; he swims like a duck!”

“He could not have sprung from a height like that without a plash, and we were close enough upon his heels to hear it; flash off some powder in a piece of paper: it is dark as pitch here.”

While the men above were preparing their light, I heard a slight stir in the stern of the boat. I turned my head, and saw my companion coolly fitting a cap on his pistol; he was doing it with difficulty, as he was obliged to hold the pistol between his knees, while he adjusted the cap with his left hand; the right hand he carried in the breast of his coat. Nothing could be more calm and collected than his every movement, up to the instant when, having cocked the weapon, he lay back in the boat, so as to have a full stare at the two dark figures above us.

At last, the fuse was ready, and, being lighted, it was held for a few seconds in the hand, and then thrown into the air. The red and lurid glare flashed full upon two savage-looking faces, straight above our heads, and for an instant showed their figures with all the distinctness of noonday. I saw them both, as if by a common impulse, lean over the parapet and peer down into the dark water below,

and I could have almost sworn that we were discovered; my companion evidently thought so too, for he raised his pistol steadily, and took a long and careful aim. What a moment was that for me, expecting at every instant to hear the report, and then the heavy fall of the dead man into the water! My throat was full to bursting. The bit of burning paper of the fuse had fallen on my companion's pistol-hand; but though it must have scorched him, he never stirred, nor even brushed it off. I thought that by its faint flicker, also, we might have been seen. But no, it was plain they had not perceived us; and it was with a delight I cannot describe that I saw one and then the other descend from the wall, while I heard the words, “There's the second time above five hundred pounds has slipped from us. D—n the fellow! but if I hang for him, I'll do it yet!”

“Well, you've spoiled his hand for hazard for a while, anyhow, Harry!” said the other. “I think you must have taken his fingers clean off!”

“The knife was like a razor,” replied the other, with a laugh; “but he struck it out of my hand with a blow above the wrist; and, I can tell you, I 'd as soon get the kick of a horse as a short stroke of the same closed fist.”

They continued to converse as they moved away, but their words only reached me in broken, unconnected sentences. From all I could glean, however, I was in company with one of enormous personal strength and a most reckless intrepidity. At last, all was still; not a sound to be heard on any side; and my companion, leaning forward, said, “Come, my lad, pull me out a short distance into the offing; we shall soon see a light to guide us!”

In calm, still water I could row well. I had been

boat-boy to the priest at all his autumn fishing excursions on the Westmeath lakes, so that I acquitted myself creditably, urged on, I am free to confess, by a very profound fear of the large figure who loomed so mysteriously in the stern. For a time we proceeded in deep silence, when at last he said, “What vessel do you belong to, boy?”

“I was never at sea, sir,” replied I.

“Not a sailor! How comes it, then, you can row so well?”

“I learned to row in fresh water, sir.”

“What are you? How came you to be here to-night?”

“By merest chance, sir. I had no money to pay for a bed. I have neither home nor friends. I have lived, by holding horses, and running errands, in the streets.”

“Picking pockets occasionally, I suppose, too, when regular business was dull!”

“Never!” said I, indignantly.

“Don't be shocked, my fine fellow,” said he, jeeringly; “better men than ever you 'll be have done a little that way. I have made some lighter this evening myself, for the matter of that!”

This confession, if very frank, was not very reassuring; and so I made no answer, but rowed away with all my might.

“Well!” said he, after a pause, “luck has befriended me twice to-night; and sending you to sleep under that wall was not the worst turn of the two. Ship your oars there, boy, and let us see if you are as handy a surgeon as you are a sailor! Try and bind up these wounded fingers of mine, for they begin to smart with the cold night air.”

"Wait an instant," cried he; "we are safe now, so you may light this lantern;" and he took from his pocket a small and most elegantly fashioned lantern, which he immediately lighted.

I own it was with a most intense curiosity I waited for the light to scan the features of my singular companion; nor was my satisfaction inconsiderable when, instead of the terrific-looking fellow—half bravo, half pirate—I expected, I perceived before me a man of apparently thirty-one or two, with large but handsome features and gentlemanly appearance. He had an immense beard and moustache, which united at either side of the mouth; but this, ferocious enough to one unaccustomed to it, could not take off the quiet regularity and good-humor of his manly features. He wore a large-brimmed slouched felt hat that shaded his brows, and he seemed to be dressed with some care, beneath the rough exterior of a common pilot-coat,—at least, he wore silk stockings and shoes, as if in evening-dress. These particulars I had time to note, while he unwound from his crippled hand the strips of a silk handkerchief which, stiffened and clotted with blood, bespoke a deep and severe wound.

If the operation were often painful even to torture, he never winced, or permitted the slightest expression of suffering to escape him. At last the undressing was completed, and a fearful gash appeared, separating the four fingers almost entirely from the hand. The keenness of the cut showed that the weapon must have been, as the fellow averred, sharp as a razor. Perhaps the copious loss of blood had exhausted the vessels, or the tension of the bandage had closed them; for there was little bleeding, and I soon succeeded, with the aid of his cravat, in making a tolerable dressing of the wound,

and by filling up the palm of the hand as I had once seen done by a country surgeon in a somewhat similar case. The pain was relieved by the gentle support afforded.

“Why, you are a most accomplished vagrant!” said he, laughing, as he watched the artistic steps of my proceeding. “What's your name?—I mean, what do you go by at present? for of course a fellow like you has a score of aliases.”

“I have had only one name up to this,” said I, —“Con Cregan.”

“Con Cregan! sharp and shrewd enough it sounds too!” said he. “And what line of life do you mean to follow, Master Con? for I suspect you have not been without some speculations on the subject.”

“I have thought of various things, sir; but how is a poor boy like me to get a chance? I feel as if I could pick up a little of most trades; but I have no money, nor any friends.”

“Money—friends!” exclaimed he, with a burst of bitterness quite unlike his previous careless humor. “Well, my good fellow, I had both one and the other, —more than most people are supposed to have of either; and what have they brought me to?” He held up his maimed and blood-clotted hand as he spoke this with a withering scorn in every accent.

“No, my boy; trust one who knows something of life,—the lighter you start, the easier your journey! He that sets his heart on it, can always make money; and friends, as they are called by courtesy, are still more easily acquired.”

This was the first time I had ever heard any one speak of the game of life as such; and I cannot say what intense pleasure the theme afforded me. I am certain I never stopped to consider whether his views

were right or not, whether the shrewd results of a keen observer, or the prejudices of a disappointed man. It was the subject, the matter discussed, delighted me.

My companion appeared to feel that he had a willing listener, and went freely on, canvassing the various roads to success, and with a certain air of confidence in all he said that to me seemed quite oracular. “What a fellow am I,” said he at last, “to discourse in this strain to a street urchin whose highest ambition is to outrun his ragged competitors, and be first 'in,' for the sixpence of some cantering cornet! Pull ahead, lad, there's the light at last; and hang me if they're not two miles out.”

The contemptuous tone of the last few words effectually repressed any desire I might have had for further colloquy; and I rowed away in silence, putting forth all my strength and skill, so that the light skiff darted rapidly and steadily through the water.



CHAPTER IX. SIR DUDLEY BROUGHTON

Steadily, and with all the vigor I could command, I pulled towards the light. My companion sat quietly watching the stars, and apparently following out some chain of thought to himself; at last he said, “There, boy, breathe a bit; there's no need to blow yourself; we 're all safe long since; the 'Firefly' is right ahead of us, and not far off either. Have you never heard of the yacht?”

“Never, sir.”

“Nor of its owner, Sir Dudley Broughton?”

“No, sir, I never heard the name.”

“Well, come,” cried he, laughing, “that is consolatory. I 'm not half so great a reprobate as I thought myself! I did not believe till now that there was an urchin of your stamp living who could not have furnished at least some anecdotes for a memoir of me! Well, my lad, yonder, where you see the blue light at the peak, is the 'Firefly,' and here, where I sit, is Sir Dudley Broughton. Ten minutes more will put us alongside, so, if you're not tired, pull away.”

“No, Sir Dudley,” said I, for I was well versed in the popular tact of catching up a name quickly, “I am able to row twice as far.”

“And now, Master Con,” said he, “we are going to part. Are you too young a disciple of your craft for a glass of grog; or are you a follower of that new-fangled notion of pale-faced politicians, who like bad coffee and reason better than whiskey and fun?”

“I'll take nothing to drink, Sir Dudley,” said I. “I have dined and drunk well to-day, and I'll not venture further.”

“As you please; only I say you 're wrong not to victual the ship whenever you stand in-shore. No matter; put your hand into this vest pocket,—you 'll find some shillings there: take them, whatever they be. You'll row the boat back with one of my people; and all I have to say is, if you do speak of me, as no doubt you will and must, don't say anything about these smashed fingers; I suppose they'll get right one of these days, and I 'd rather there was no gossip about them.”

“I 'll never speak of it—I—”

“There, now, that's enough; no swearing, or I know you'll break your promise. Back water a little; pull the starboard oar,—so; here we are alongside.”

Sir Dudley had scarce done speaking when a hoarse voice from the yacht challenged us. This was replied to by a terrific volley of imprecations on the stupidity of not sooner showing the light, amid which Sir Dudley ascended the side and stood upon the deck. “Where's Halkett?” cried he, imperiously. “Here, sir,” replied a short, thickset man, with a sailor-like shuffle in his walk. “Send one of the men back with the gig, and land that boy. Tell the fellow, too, he's not to fetch Waters aboard, if he meets him: the scoundrel went off and left me to my fate this evening; and it might have been no pleasant one, if I had not found that lad yonder.”

“We have all Sam Waters' kit on board, Sir Dudley,” said Halkett; “shall we send it ashore?”

“No. Tell him I'll leave it at Demerara for him; and he may catch the yellow fever in looking after it,” said he, laughing.

While listening to this short dialogue I had contrived to approach a light which gleamed from the cabin window, and then took the opportunity to count over my wealth, amounting, as I supposed, to some seven or eight shillings. Guess my surprise to see that the pieces were all bright yellow gold,—eight shining sovereigns!

I had but that instant made the discovery, when the sailor who was to put me on shore jumped into the boat and seated himself.

“Wait one instant,” cried I. “Sir Dudley—Sir Dudley Broughton!”

“Well, what's the matter?” said he, leaning over the side.

“This money you gave me—”

“Not enough, of course! I ought to have known that,” said he, scornfully. “Give the whelp a couple

of half-crowns, Halkett, and send him adrift."

"You 're wrong, sir," cried I, with passionate eagerness; "they are gold pieces,—sovereigns."

"The devil they are!" cried he, laughing; "the better luck yours. Why did n't you hold your tongue about it?"

"You bid me take some shillings, sir," answered I.

"How d—d honest you must be! Do you hear that, Halkett? The fellow had scruples about taking his prize-money! Never mind, boy, I must pay for my blunder,—you may keep them now."

"I have pride, too," cried I; "and hang me if I touch them."

He stared at me, without speaking, for a few minutes, and then said, in a low, flat voice, "Come on deck, lad." I obeyed; and he took a lighted lantern from the binnacle, and held it up close to my face, and then moved it so that he made a careful examination of my whole figure.

"I 'd give a crown to know who was your father," said he, dryly.

"Con Cregan, of Kilbeggan, sir."

"Oh, of course, I know all that. Come, now, what say you to try a bit of life afloat? Will you stay here?"

"Will you take me, sir?" cried I, in ecstasy.

"Halkett, rig him out," said he, shortly. "Nip the anchor with the ebb, and keep your course down channel." With this he descended the cabin stairs and disappeared, while I, at a signal from Halkett, stepped down the ladder into the steerage. In the mean while it will not be deemed digressionary if I devote a few words to the singular character into whose society I was now thrown, inasmuch as to

convey any candid narrative of my own career I must speak of those who, without influencing the main current of my life, yet certainly gave some impulse and direction to its first meanderings.

Sir Dudley Broughton was the only son of a wealthy baronet, who, not from affection or overkindness, but out of downright indolent indifference, permitted him, first as an Eton boy, and afterwards as a gentleman commoner of Christ Church, to indulge in every dissipation that suited his fancy. An unlimited indulgence, a free command of whatever money he asked for, added to a temper constitutionally headstrong and impetuous, soon developed what might have been expected from the combination. He led a life of wild insubordination at school, and was expelled from Oxford. With faculties above rather than beneath mediocrity, and a certain aptitude for acquiring the knowledge most in request in society, he had the reputation of being one who, if he had not unhappily so addicted himself to dissipation, would have made a favorable figure in the world. After trying in vain to interest himself in the pursuits of a country life, of which the sporting was the only thing he found attractive, he joined a well-known light cavalry regiment, celebrated for numbering among its officers more fast men than any other corps in the service. His father, dying about the same time, left him in possession of a large fortune, which, with all his extravagance, was but slightly encumbered. This fact, coupled with his well-known reputation, made him popular with his brother officers, most of whom, having run through nearly all they possessed, saw with pleasure a new Croesus arrive in the regiment. Such a man as Broughton was just wanted. One had a charger to get off; another wanted a purchaser for his four-in-hand

drag. The senior captain was skilful at billiards; and every one played “lansquenet” and hazard.

Besides various schemes against his purse, the colonel had a still more serious one against his person. He had a daughter, a handsome, fashionable-looking girl, with all the manners of society, and a great deal of that tact only to be acquired in the very best foreign society. That she was no longer in the fresh bloom of youth, nor with a reputation quite spotless, were matters well known in the regiment; but as she was still eminently handsome, and “the Count Radchoffsky” had been recalled by the emperor from the embassy of which he was secretary, Lydia Delmar was likely, in the opinions of keen-judging parties, to make a good hit with “some young fellow who did n't know town.” Broughton was exactly the man Colonel Delmar wanted,—good family, a fine fortune, and the very temper a clever woman usually contrives to rule with absolute sway.

There would be, unfortunately, no novelty in recording the steps by which such a man is ruined. He did everything that men do who are bent upon testing Fortune to the utmost. He lent large sums to his “friends;” he lost larger ones to them. When he did win, none ever paid him, except by a good-humored jest upon his credit at Coutts's. “What the devil do you want with money, Sir Dudley?” was an appeal he could never reply to. He ran horses at Ascot, and got “squeezed;” he played at “Crocky's,” and fared no better; but he was the favorite of the corps. “We could never get on without Dudley,” was a common remark; and it satisfied him that, with all his extravagance, he had made an investment in the hearts at least of his comrades. A few months longer of this “fast” career would, in all likelihood, have ruined him. He broke his leg by a fall in a

steeplechase, and was thus driven, by sheer necessity, to lay up, and keep quiet for a season. Now came Colonel Delmar's opportunity; the moment the news reached Coventry, he set off with his daughter to Leamington. With the steeplechasing, hazard-playing, betting, drinking, yachting, driving Sir Dudley, there was no chance of even time for their plans; but with a sick man on the sofa, bored by his inactivity, hipped for want of his usual resources, the game was open. The Colonel's visit, too, had such an air of true kindness!

Broughton had left quarters without leave; but instead of reprimands, arrests, and Heaven knows what besides, there was Colonel Delmar, the fine old fellow, shaking his finger in mock rebuke, and saying, “Ah, Dudley, my boy, I came down to give you a rare scolding; but this sad business has saved you!” And Lydia also, against whom he had ever felt a dislike,—that prejudice your boisterous and noisy kind of men ever feel to clever women, whose sarcasms they know themselves exposed to,—why, she was gentle good-nature and easy sisterlike kindness itself! She did not, as the phrase goes, “nurse him,” but she seldom left the room where he lay. She read aloud, selecting with a marvellous instinct the very kind of books he fancied,—novels, tales of every-day life, things of whose truthfulness he could form some judgment; and sketches wherein the author's views were about on a level with his own. She would sit at the window, too, and amuse him with descriptions of the people passing in the street; such smart shrewd pictures were they of watering-place folks and habits, Dudley never tired of them! She was unsurpassed for the style with which she could dress up an anecdote or a bit of gossip; and if it verged upon the free, her French

education taught her the nice perception of the narrow line that separates “libertinage” from indelicacy.

So far from feeling impatient at his confinement to a sofa, therefore, Broughton affected distrust in his renovated limb for a full fortnight after the doctor had pronounced him cured. At last he was able to drive out, and soon afterwards to take exercise on horseback, Lydia Delmar and her father occasionally accompanying him.

People will talk at Leamington, as they do at other places; and so the gossips said that the rich—for he was still so reputed in the world—the “rich” Sir Dudley Broughton was going to marry Miss Delmar.

Gossip is half-brother to that all-powerful director called “Public Opinion;” so that when Sir Dudley heard, some half-dozen times every day, what it was reputed he would do, he began to feel that he ought to do it.

Accordingly, they were married; the world—at least the Leamington section of that large body—criticising the match precisely as it struck the interests and prejudices of the class they belonged to.

Fathers and mothers agreed in thinking that Colonel Delmar was a shrewd old soldier, and had made an “excellent hit.” Young ladies pronounced Liddy—for a girl who had been out eight years—decidedly lucky. Lounging men at club doors looked knowingly at each other as they joked together in half sentences, “No affair of mine; but I did not think Broughton would have been caught so easily.” “Yes, by Jove!” cried another, with a jockey-like style of dress, “he 'd not have made so great a mistake on the 'Oaks' as to run an aged nag for a two-year old!”

“I wonder he never heard of that Russian fellow!”

said a third.

“Oh, yes!” sighed out a dandy, with an affected drawl; “poor dear Liddy did indeed catch a 'Tartar '!”

Remarks such as these were the pleasant sallies the event provoked; but so it is in higher and greater things in life! At the launch of a line-of-battle ship, the veriest vagrant in Tags fancies he can predict for her defeat and shipwreck!

The Broughtons were now the great people of the London season, at least to a certain “fast” set, who loved dinners at the Clarendon, high play, and other concomitant pleasures. *Her* equipages were the most perfect; *her* diamonds the most splendid; while *his* dinners were as much reputed by one class, as *her* toilet by another.

Loans at ruinous interest; sales of property for a tithe of its value; bills renewed at a rate that would have swamped Rothschild; purchases made at prices proportionate to the risk of non-payment; reckless waste everywhere; robbing solicitors, cheating tradesmen, and dishonest servants! But why swell the list, or take trouble to show how the ruin came? If one bad leak will cause a shipwreck, how is the craft to mount the waves with every plank riven asunder?

If among the patriarchs who lend at usury, Broughton's credit was beginning to ebb, in the clubs at the West End, in the betting-ring, at Crockford's, and at Tattersall's, he was in all the splendor of his former fame. Anderson would trust him with half his stable. Howell and James would send him the epergne they had designed for a czar. And so he lived. With rocks and breakers ahead, he only “carried on” the faster and the freer.



Not that he knew, indeed, the extent, or anything approaching the extent, to which his fortune was wrecked. All that he could surmise on the subject was founded on the increased difficulty he found in raising money,—a circumstance his pliant solicitor invariably explained by that happy phrase, the “tightness of the money market.” This completely satisfied Sir Dudley, who, far from attributing it to his own almost exhausted resources, laid all the blame upon some trickery of foreign statesmen, some confounded disturbance in Ireland, something that the Foreign Secretary had done, or would not do; and that thus the money folk would not trust a guinea out of their fingers. In fact, it was quite clear that to political intrigue and cabinet scheming all Sir Dudley's difficulties might fairly be traced!

It was just at this time that the Count Radchoffsky arrived once more in London in charge of a special mission, no longer the mere secretary of embassy, driving about in his quiet cab, but an envoy extraordinary, with cordons and crosses innumerable. He was exactly the kind of man for

Broughton's “set,” so that he soon made his acquaintance, and was presented by him to Lady Broughton as a most agreeable fellow, and something very distinguished in his own country.

She received him admirably: remembered to have met him, she thought, at Lord Edenbury's but he corrected her by saying it was at the Duke of Clifton's,—a difference of testimony at which Broughton laughed heartily, saying, in his usual rough way, “Well, it is pretty clear you didn't make much impression on each other.”

The Russian noble was a stranger to the turf. In the details of arranging the approaching race, in apportioning the weights and ages and distances, Broughton passed his whole mornings for a month, sorely puzzled at times by the apathy of his Northern friend, who actually never obtruded an opinion, or expressed a wish for information on the subject.

Sir Dudley's book was a very heavy one too. What “he stood to win” was a profound secret; but knowing men said that if he lost, it would be such a “squeeze” as had not been known at Newmarket since the Duke of York's day.

Such an event, however, seemed not to enter into his own calculations; and so confident was he of success that he could not help sharing his good fortune with his friend Radchoffsky, and giving him something in his own book. The count professed himself everlastingly grateful, but confessed that he knew nothing of racing matters, and that, above all, his Majesty the Emperor would be excessively annoyed if a representative of his in any way interfered with the race; in fact, the honor of the Czar would be tarnished by such a proceeding. Against such reasonings there could be no

opposition; and Broughton only took to himself all the benefits he had destined for his friend.

At last the eventful day came; and although Sir Dudley had arranged that Lady Broughton should accompany him to the course, she was taken with some kind of nervous attack that prevented her leaving her bed. Her husband was provoked at this ill-timed illness, for he was still vain of her appearance in public; but knowing that he could do nothing for hysterics, he sent for Doctor Barham, and then with all speed he started for the race.

Among the friends who were to go along with him, the count had promised to make one; but despatches —that admirable excuse of diplomatists, from the great secretary to the humblest unpaid attaché— despatches had just arrived; and if he could manage to get through his business early enough, “he'd certainly follow.”

Scarcely had Sir Dudley reached the ground when a carriage drove up to the stand, and a gentleman descended in all haste. It was Mr. Taperton, his solicitor,—his trusty man of loans and discounts for many a day, “Eh, Tappy!” cried Broughton, “come to sport a fifty on the filly?”

“Walk a little this way, Sir Dudley,” said he, gravely; and his voice soon convinced the hearer that something serious was in the wind.

“What's the matter, man? You look as if Cardinal was dead lame.”

“Sir Dudley, you must start from this at once. Holdsworth has taken proceedings on the bills; Lord Corthern has foreclosed; the whole body of the creditors are up; and you 'll be arrested before you leave the field!”

If the threat had conveyed the ignominious penalty

of felony, Broughton could not have looked more indignant. “Arrested! You don't mean that we cannot raise enough to pay these rascals?”

“Your outstanding bills are above twenty thousand, sir.”

“And if they be; do you tell me that with my estate —”

“My dear Sir Dudley, how much of it is unencumbered? What single portion, save the few hundreds a year of Lady Broughton's jointure, is not sunk under mortgage? But this is no time for discussion; get into the chaise with me; we 'll reach London in time for the mail; to-morrow you can be in Boulogne, and then we shall have time at least for an arrangement.”

“The race is just coming off! how can I leave? I'm a steward; besides, I have a tremendous book. Do you know how many thousands I stand to win here?”

“To lose, you mean,” said the solicitor. “You 're sold!” The words were whispered so low as to be almost inaudible; but Broughton actually staggered as he heard them.

“Sold! how? what? Impossible, man! Who could sell me?”

“Only one man, perhaps, but he has done it! Is it true you have backed Calliope?”

“Yes!” said he, staring wildly.

“She was found hamstrung this morning in the stable, then,” said Taperton; “if you want to hear further particulars, you must ask your friend the Count Radchoffsky!”

“The scoundrel! the black-hearted villain! I see it all!” cried Broughton. “Come, Taperton, let us start! I'll go with you; by Jove, you have found a way to

make me eager for the road!”

The lawyer read in the bloodshot eye and flushed face the passion for vengeance that was boiling within him, but he never spoke as they moved on and entered the carriage.

It was full three hours before the expected time of his return, when the chaise in which they travelled drew up at the Clarendon, and Broughton, half wild with rage, dashed upstairs to the suite of splendid rooms he occupied.

“Oh, dear, Sir Dudley,” cried the maid, as she saw him hastening along the corridor, “oh, I 'm sure, sir, how you 'll alarm my lady if she sees you so flurried!”

“Stand out of the way, woman!” said he, roughly, endeavoring to push her to one side, for she had actually placed herself between him and the door of the drawing-room.

“Surely, sir, you'll not terrify my lady! Surely, Sir Dudley—”

Despite her cries, for they had now become such, Broughton pushed her rudely from the spot, and entered the room.

Great was his astonishment to find Lady Broughton, whom he had left so ill, not only up, but dressed as if for the promenade; her face was flushed, and her eye restless and feverish; and her whole manner exhibited the highest degree of excitement.

Broughton threw down his hat upon the table, and then, returning to the door, locked and bolted it.

“Good Heavens, Dudley!” exclaimed she, in a voice of terror, “what has happened?”

“Everything!” said he; “utter ruin! The whole crew

of creditors are in full chase after me, and in a few hours we shall be stripped of all we possess."

She drew a long full breath as she listened; and had her husband been in a mood to mark it, he might have seen how lightly his terrible tidings affected her.

"I must fly! Taperton—he's in the carriage below—says France, at least for some weeks, till we can make some compromise or other; but I have one debt that must be acquitted before I leave."

There was a terrible significance in the words, and she was sick to the heart as she asked, "What, and to whom?"

"Radchoffsky!" cried he, savagely; "that scoundrel whom I trusted like a brother!"

Lady Broughton fell back, and for a moment her motionless limbs and pallid features seemed like fainting; but with a tremendous effort rallying herself, she said, "Go on!"

"He betrayed me,—told every circumstance of my book! And the mare I had backed for more than thirty thousand is dying this instant; so that I am not only ruined, but dishonored!"

She sat with wide staring eyes and half-open lips while he spoke, nor did she seem, in the fearful confusion of her fear, to understand fully all he said.

"Have I not spoken plainly?" said he, angrily. "Don't you comprehend me when I say that to-morrow I shall be branded as a defaulter at the settling? But enough of this. Tell Millar to get a portmanteau ready for me. I 'll start this evening; the interval is short enough for all I have to do." As he spoke, he hastened to his bedroom, and, providing himself with a case containing his duelling-pistols, he hurried downstairs, ordering the postilion to drive to

the Russian Embassy.

The carriage was scarce driven from the door when Lady Broughton, taking a key from her pocket, opened a small door which led from the drawing-room into her dressing-room, from which the count walked forth,—his calm features unruffled and easy as though no emotion had ever stirred them.

“You heard what Broughton said?” whispered she, in an accent of faltering agitation.

“Oui, *parbleu*, every word of it!” replied he, laughing gently. “The people of the house might almost have heard him.”

“And is it true?” asked she, while a cold sickness crept over her, and her mouth was shaken convulsively.

“I believe so,” said he, calmly.

“Oh, Alexis, do not say so!” cried she, in an agony of grief; “or, least of all, in such a voice as that.”

He shrugged his shoulders; and then, after a moment's pause, said, “I confess myself quite unprepared for this show of affection, madame—”

“Not so, Alexis. It is for *you* I am concerned; for your honor as a gentleman; for your fair fame among men—”

“Pardon, madame, if I interrupt you; but the defence of my honor must be left to myself—”

“If I had but thought this of you—”

“It is never too late for repentance, madame. I should be sorry to think I could deceive you.”

“Oh, it is too late, far too late!” cried she, bursting into tears. “Let us go! I must never see him again! I would not live over that last half-hour again to save me from a death of torture!”

“Allow me, then,” said he, taking her shawl and

draping it on her shoulders. “The carriage is ready;” and with these words, spoken with perfect calm, he presented his arm and led her from the room.

To return to Sir Dudley. On arriving at the Russian Embassy, he could learn nothing of the whereabouts of him he sought; a young secretary, however, with whom he had some intimacy, drawing him to one side, whispered, “Wait here a moment; I have a strange revelation to make you,—but in confidence, remember, for it must not get abroad.” The story was this: Count Radchoffsky had been, on his recall from the Embassy, detected in some Polish intrigue, and ordered to absent himself from the capital and preserve a life of strict retirement, under police “surveillance;” from this, he had managed to escape and reach England, with forged credentials of Envoy Extraordinary; the mission being an invention of his own, to gain currency in the world and obtain for him loans of large sums from various houses in the “City.” “As he knows,” continued Broughton's informant, “from his former experience, the day of our courier's expected arrival, he has up to this lived fearlessly and openly; but the despatch having reached us through the French cabinet sooner than he expected, his plot is revealed. The great difficulty is to avoid all publicity; for we must have no magisterial interference, no newspaper or police notoriety; all must be done quietly, and he must be shipped off to Russia without a rumor of the affair getting abroad.”

Broughton heard all this with the dogged satisfaction of a man who did not well know whether to be pleased or otherwise that an object of personal vengeance had been withdrawn from him.

But not accustomed to dwell long on any subject where the main interest of his own line of action was

wanting, he drove home to his hotel to hasten the preparations for his departure. On his arrival at the Clarendon, a certain bustle and movement in the hall and on the stairs attracted his attention, and before he could inquire the cause, a half whisper, “There he is; that's Sir Dudley!” made him turn round; the same instant a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a man said, “I arrest you, Sir Dudley Broughton, at the suit of Messrs. Worrit and Sneare, Lombard Street.”

“Be calm; don't make any resistance,” whispered Taperton in his ear; “come upstairs.” They passed on, and entered the drawing-room, where everything appeared in disorder. As for Broughton, he was bewildered and stupefied by all he had gone through, and sat in a chair staring vacantly at the groups around him, evidently unable, through the haze of his disordered faculties, to see clearly how, and in what, he was interested in the affair.

“Where's my lady?” whispered Taperton to the valet, who stood almost as spell-bound as his master.

“Gone, sir; she's gone,” said the man, in a faint voice.

“Gone where, scoundrel?” said Sir Dudley, jumping up and seizing him by the throat with both hands, while he roared out the words with a savage vehemence that startled all the room.

“Gone away, Sir Dudley,” said the half-choking man; “I saw her drive off in a chaise and pair with Count Radchoffsky.”

Broughton let go his hold, and fell heavily upon his face to the ground. A surgeon was called in, who at once perceived that the attack was one of apoplexy. For that night and part of the next day his recovery was almost hopeless; for, though repeatedly bled, he gave no signs of returning animation, but

lay heaving, at intervals, long, heavy sighs, and respiring with an effort that seemed to shake the strong frame in convulsions.

Youth and bold remedies, however, favored him, and on the third morning he awoke, weak and weary, like one who had just reached convalescence after a long and terrible fever. His features, his gestures, his very voice, were all altered; there was a debility about him—mental and physical—that seemed like premature decay; and they who knew the bold, high-spirited man of a few days before could never have recognized him in the simple-looking, vacant, and purposeless invalid who sat there, to all seeming, neither noticing nor caring what happened around him. It is true, indeed, few essayed the comparison. Of those who visited him, the greater number were creditors curious to speculate on his recovery; there were a couple of reporters, too, for gossiping newspapers desirous of coining a paragraph to amuse the town; but no friends,—not a man of those who dined, and drank, and drove, and played with him. In fact his fate was soon forgotten even in the very circles of which he had been the centre; nor did his name ever meet mention, save in some stale report of a bankruptcy examination, or a meeting of creditors to arrange for the liquidation of his debts.

The wasteful, heedless extravagance of his mode of living was urged even to vindictiveness by his creditors, so that for three years he remained a prisoner in the Fleet; and it was only when they saw he had no feeling of either shame or regret at his imprisonment that an arrangement was at last agreed to, and he was liberated,—set free to mix in a world in which he had not one tie to bind, or one interest to attach him!

From that hour forth none ever knew how far his memory retained the circumstances of his past life; he never certainly mentioned them to any of those with whom he formed companionship, nor did he renew acquaintance with one among his former friends. By great exertions on the part of his lawyers, almost a thousand a year was secured to him from the wreck of his great fortune,—the proceeds of a small estate that had belonged to his mother.

On this income he lived some time in total seclusion, when, to the astonishment of all, he was again seen about town, in company with men of the most equivocal character,—noted gamblers at hells, "Legs of Newmarket," and others to whom report attributed bolder and more daring feats of iniquity. While it was a debated point among certain fashionables of the clubs how far he was to be recognized by them, he saved them all the difficulty, by passing his most intimate friends without a bow or the slightest sign of recognition. A stern, repulsive frown never left his features; and he whose frank, light-hearted buoyancy had been a proverb, was grave and silent, rarely admitting anything like an intimacy, and avoiding whatever could be called a friendship.

After a while he was missed from his accustomed haunts, and it was said that he had purchased a yacht and amused himself by sea excursions. Then there came a rumor of his being in the Carlist insurrection in Spain,—some said with a high command; and afterwards he was seen in a French voltigeur regiment serving in Africa. From all these varied accidents of life he came back to London, frequenting, as before, the same play resorts, and betting sums whose amount often trenched upon the limits of the bank. If, in his early life, he was a

constant loser, now he invariably won; and he was actually the terror of hell-keepers, whose superstitious fears of certain “lucky ones” are a well-known portion of their creed.

As for himself, he seemed to take a kind of fiendish sport in following up this new turn of fortune. It was like a Nemesis on those who had worked his ruin. One man in particular, a well-known Jew money-lender of great wealth, he pursued with all the vindictive perseverance of revenge. He tracked him from London to Brighton, to Cheltenham, to Leamington, to Newmarket, to Goodwood; he followed him to Paris, to Brussels; wherever in any city the man opened a table for play, there was Broughton sure to be found.



At last, by way of eluding all pursuit, the Jew went over to Ireland,—a country where of all others fewest resources for his traffic presented themselves; and here again, despite change of name and every precaution of secrecy, Broughton traced him out; and, on the night when I first met him, he was on his return from a hell on the Quays where he had broken the bank and arisen a winner of above two thousand

pounds.

The peculiar circumstances of that night's adventure are easily told. He was followed from the play table by two men, witnesses of his good fortune, who saw that he carried the entire sum on his person; and from his manner,—a feint I found he often assumed,—they believed him to be drunk. A row was accordingly organized at the closing of the play, the lights were extinguished, and a terrible scene of tumult and outrage ensued, whose sole object was to rob Broughton of his winnings.

After a desperate struggle, in which he received the wound I have mentioned, he escaped by leaping from a window into the street,—a feat too daring for his assailants to imitate. The remainder is already known; and I have only again to ask my reader's indulgent pardon for this long episode, without which, however, I felt I could not have asked his companionship on board the “Firefly.”



CHAPTER X. THE VOYAGE OUT

The crew of the "Firefly" consisted of twelve persons, natives of almost as many countries. Indeed, to see them all muster on deck, it was like a little congress of European rascality,—such a set of hang-dog, sullen, reckless wretches were they; Halkett, the Englishman, being the only one whose features were not a criminal indictment, and he, with his nose split by the slash of a cutlass, was himself no beauty. The most atrocious of all, however, was a Moorish boy, about thirteen years of age, called El Jarasch (the

fiend), and whose diabolical ugliness did not belie the family name. His functions on board were to feed and take care of two young lion whelps which Sir Dudley had brought with him from an excursion in the interior of Africa. Whether from his blood or the nature of his occupation, I know not, but I certainly could trace in his features all the terrible traits of the creatures he tended. The wide, distended nostrils, the bleared and bloodshot eyes, the large, full-lipped mouth, drawn back by the strong muscles at its angles, and the great swollen vessels of the forehead, were developed in him, as in the wild beasts. He imitated the animals, too, in all his gestures, which were sudden and abrupt; the very way he ate, tearing his food and rending it in fragments, like a prey, shewed the type he followed. His dress was handsome, almost gorgeous; a white tunic of thin muslin reached to the knees, over which he wore a scarlet cloth jacket, open, and without sleeves: this was curiously slashed and laced, by a wonderful tissue of gold thread so delicately traceried as to bear the most minute examination; a belt of burnished gold, like a succession of clasps, supported a small scimitar, whose scabbard of ivory and gold was of exquisite workmanship, the top of the handle being formed by a single emerald of purest color; his legs were bare, save at the ankles, where two rings of massive gold encircled them; on his feet he wore a kind of embroidered slippers, curiously studded with precious stones. A white turban of muslin, delicately sprigged with gold, covered his head, looped in front by another large emerald, which glared and sparkled like an eye in the centre of his forehead.

This was his gala costume; but his every-day one resembled it in everything, save the actual value of the material. Such was El Jarasch, who was to be my

companion and my messmate,—a fact which seemed to afford small satisfaction to either of us.

Nothing could less resemble his splendor than the simplicity of my costume. Halkett, when ordered to "rig me out," not knowing what precise place I was to occupy on board, proceeded to dress me from the kit of the sailor we had left behind in Dublin; and although, by rolling up the sleeves of my jacket, and performing the same office for the legs of my trousers, my hands and feet could be rendered available to me, no such ready method could prevent the clothes bagging around me in every absurd superfluity, and making me appear more like a stunted monster than a human being. Beside my splendidly costumed companion I made, indeed, but a sorry figure, nor was it long dubious that he himself thought so; the look of savage contempt he first bestowed on me, and then the gaze of ineffable pleasure he accorded to himself afterwards, having a wide interval between them. Neither did it improve my condition, in his eyes, that I could lay claim to no distinct duty on board. While I was ruminating on this fact, the morning after I joined the yacht, we were standing under easy sail, with a bright sky and a calm sea, the southeastern coast of Ireland on our lee; the heaving swell of the blue water, the fluttering bunting from gaff and peak, the joyous bounding motion, were all new and inspiriting sensations, and I was congratulating myself on the change a few hours had wrought in my fortune, when Halkett came to tell me that Sir Dudley wanted to speak with me in his cabin. He was lounging on a little sofa when I entered, in a loose kind of dressing-gown, and before him stood the materials of his yet untasted breakfast. The first effect of my appearance was a burst of laughter; and although there is

nothing I have ever loved better to hear than a hearty laugh, his was not of a kind to inspire any very pleasant or mirthful sensations. It was a short, husky, barking noise, with derision and mockery in every cadence of it.

“What the devil have we here? Why, boy, you'd disgrace a stone lighter at Sheerness. Who rigged you in that fashion?”

“Mr. Halkett, sir.”

“Halkett, if you please; I know no 'misters' among my crew. Well, this must be looked to; but Halkett might have known better than to send you here in such a guise.”

I made no answer; and, apparently, for some minutes, he forgot all about me, and busied himself in a large chart which covered the table. At last he looked up; and then, after a second or two spent in recalling me to his recollection, said, “Oh, you 're the lad I took up last night; very true. I wanted to speak with you. What can you do, besides what I have seen; for I trust surgery is an art we shall seldom find use for,—can you cook?”

I was ashamed to say that I could boil potatoes and fry rashers, which were all my culinary gifts, and so I replied that “I could not.”

“Have you never been in any service, or any kind of employment?”

“Never, sir.”

“Always a vagabond?”

“Always, sir.”

“Well, certes, I have the luck of it!” said he, with one of his low laughs. “It is, perhaps, all the better. Come, my boy, it does not seem quite clear to me what we can make of you; we have no time, nor,

indeed, any patience, for making sailors of striplings,—we always prefer the ready-made article; but you must pick up what you can, keep your watches when on board, and when we go ashore anywhere, you shall be my scout; therefore don't throw away your old rags, but be ready to resume them when wanted,—you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"So far! Now, the next thing is,—and it is right you should know it,—though I keep a yacht for my pleasure and amusement, I sometimes indulge myself in a little smuggling,—which is also a pleasure and amusement; and, therefore, my people are liable, if detected, to be sentenced to a smart term of imprisonment,—not that this has yet happened to any of them, but it may, you know; so it is only fair to warn you."

"I 'll take my chance with the rest, sir."

"Well said, boy! There are other little ventures, too, I sometimes make; but you 'd not understand them, so we need not refer to them. Now, as to the third point,—discipline. So long as you are on board, I expect obedience in everything; that you agree with your messmates, and never tell a lie. On shore, you may cut each other's throats to your heart's content. Remember, then; the lesson is easy enough: if you quarrel with your comrades, I 'll flog you; if you ever deceive me by an untruth, I'll blow your brains out!" The voice in which he spoke these last few words grew harsher and louder, and at the end it became almost a shout of angry denunciation.

"For your private governance, I may say, you'll find it wise to be good friends with Halkett, and, if you can, with Jarasch. Go now; I 've nothing more to say."

I was about to retire, when he called me back.

“Stay! you've said nothing to me, nor have I to you, about your wages.”

“I want none, sir. It is enough for me if I am provided in all money could buy for me.”

“No deceit, sir! No trickery with *me!*” cried he, fiercely, and he glared savagely at me.

“It is not deceit, nor trick either,” said I, boldly; “but I see, sir, it is not likely you 'll ever trust one whom you saw in the humble condition you found me. Land me, then, at the first port you put in to. Leave me to follow out my fortune my own way.”

“What if I take you at your word,” said he, “and leave you among the red Moors, on the coast of Barbary?”

I hung my head in shame and dismay.

“Ay, or dropped you with the Tongo chiefs, who'd grill you for breakfast?”

“But we are nigh England now, sir.”

“We shall not long be so,” cried he, joyfully. “If this breeze last, you 'll see Cape Clear by sunrise, and not look on it again at sunset. There, away with you! Tell Halkett I desire that you should be mustered with the rest of the fellows, learn the use of a cutlass, and to load a pistol without blowing your fingers off.”

He motioned me now to leave, and I withdrew, if I must own it, only partially pleased with my new servitude. One word here to explain my conduct, which perhaps in the eyes of some, may appear inconsistent or improbable. It may be deemed strange and incomprehensible why I, poor, friendless, and low-born, should have been indifferent, even to the refusal of all wages. The fact is this: I had set out

upon my “life pilgrimage” with a most firm conviction that one day or other, sooner or later, I should be a “gentleman;” that I should mix on terms of equality with the best and the highest, not a trace or a clew to my former condition being in any respect discoverable. Now, with this one paramount object before me, all my endeavors were gradually to conform, so far as might be, all my modes of thought and action to that sphere wherein yet I should move; to learn, one by one, the usages of gentle blood, so that, when my hour came I should step into my position ready suited to all its requirements and equal to all its demands. If this explanation does not make clear the reasons of my generosity, and my other motives of honorable conduct, I am sorry for it, for I have none other to offer.

I have said that I retired from my interview with Sir Dudley not at all satisfied with the result. Indeed, as I pondered over it, I could not help feeling that gentlemen must dislike any traits of high and honorable motives in persons of my own station, as though they were assuming the air of their betters. What could rags have in common with generous impulses; how could poverty and hunger ever consort with high sentiments or noble aspirations? They forgive us, thought I, when we mimic their dress and pantomime their demeanor, because we only make *ourselves* ridiculous by the imitation; but when we would assume the features that regulate their own social intercourse, they hate us, as though we sullied with our impure touch the virtues of a higher class of beings.

The more I thought over this subject, the more strongly was I satisfied that I was correct in my judgment; and, sooth to say, the less did I respect that condition in life which could deem any man too

poor to be high-minded.

Sir Dudley's anticipations were all correct. The following evening at sunset the great headlands of the south of Ireland were seen, at first clear, and at last like hazy fogbanks; while our light vessel scudded along, her prow pointing to where the sun had just set behind the horizon; and then did I learn that we were bound for North America.

Our voyage for some weeks was undistinguished by any feature of unusual character. The weather was uniformly fine; steady breezes from the northeast, with a clear sky and a calm sea, followed us as we went, so that, in the pleasant monotony of our lives, one day exactly resembled another. It will, therefore, suffice if, in a few words, I tell how the hours were passed. Sir Dudley came on deck after breakfast, when I spread out a large white bear's skin for him to lie upon; reclined on which, and with a huge meerschaum of great beauty in his hand, he smoked, and watched the lions at play. These gambols were always amusing, and never failed to assemble all the crew to witness them. Jarasch, dressed in a light woollen tunic, with legs, arms, and neck bare, led them forth by a chain; and, after presenting them to Sir Dudley, from whose hands they usually received a small piece of sugar, they were then set at liberty,—a privilege they soon availed themselves of, setting off at full speed around the deck, sometimes one in pursuit of the other, sometimes by different ways, crossing and recrossing each other; now with a bold spring, now with cat-like stealthiness, creeping slowly past. The exercise, far from fatiguing, seemed only to excite them more and more, since all this time they were in search of the food which Jarasch, with a cunning all his own, knew how, each day, to conceal in some new

fashion. Baffled and irritated by delay, the eyes grew red and lustrous, the tails stiffened, and were either carried high over the back or extended straight backwards; they contracted their necks too, till the muscles were gathered up in thick massive folds, and then their great heads seemed actually fastened on the fore part of the trunk. When their rage had been sufficiently whetted by delay, Jarasch would bring forth the mess in a large “grog tub,” covered with a massive lid, on which seating himself, and armed with a short stout bludgeon, he used to keep the beasts at bay. This, which was the most exciting part of the spectacle, presented every possible variety of combat. Sometimes he could hold them in check for nigh half-an-hour, sometimes the struggle would scarce last five minutes. Now, he would, by a successful stroke, so intimidate one of his assailants that he could devote all his energies against the other. Now, by a simultaneous attack, the savage creatures would spring upon and overthrow him, and then, with all the semblance of ungovernable passion, they would drag him some distance along the deck, mouthing him with frothy lips, and striking him about the head with their huge paws, from which they would not desist till some of the sailors, uncovering the mess, would tempt them off by the savor of the food. Although, in general, these games passed off with little other damage than a torn tunic or a bruise more or less severe, at others Jarasch would be so sorely mauled as to be carried off insensible; nor would he again be seen for the remainder of the day. That the combat was not quite devoid of peril was clear, by the fact that several of the sailors were always armed, some with staves, others with cutlasses, since, in the event of a bite, and blood flowing, nothing but immediate and

prompt aid could save the boy from being devoured. This he knew well, and the exercises were always discontinued whenever the slightest cut, or even a scratch, existed in any part of his person. Each day seemed to heighten the excitement of these exhibitions; for, as Jarasch became more skilful in his defence, so did the whelps in the mode of attack; besides that, their growth advanced with incredible rapidity, and soon threatened to make the amusement no longer practicable. This display over, Sir Dudley played at chess with Halkett, while I, seated behind him, read aloud some book,—usually one of voyages and travels. In the afternoon he went below, and studied works in some foreign language of which he appeared most eager to acquire a knowledge, and I was then ordered to copy out into a book various extracts of different routes in all parts of the world: sometimes, the mode of crossing a Syrian desert; now the shortest and safest way through the wild regions on the shores of the Adriatic. At one time the theme would be the steppes of Tartary or the snowy plains of the Ukraine; at another, the dangerous passes of the Cordilleras or the hunting-grounds of the Mandaus. What delightful hours were these to me; how full of the very highest interest! The wildest adventures were here united with narratives of real events and people, presenting human life in aspects the strangest and most varied. How different from my old clerkship with my father, with the interminable string of bastard and broken law Latin! I believe that in all my after-life, fortunate as it has been in so many respects, I have never passed hours more happy than these were.

In recompense for my secretarial functions, I was free of the middle watch; so that, instead of turning into my berth at sundown to snatch some sleep

before midnight, I could lounge about at will,—sometimes dropping into the steerage to listen to some seaman's “yarn” of storm and shipwreck, but far oftener, book in hand, taking a lesson in French from the old cook, for which I paid him in being “aide-de-cuisine;” or, with more hardy industry, assisting our fat German mate to polish up his Regensburg pistols, by which I made some progress in that tongue of harsh and mysterious gutturals.

Through all these occupations the thought never left me,—what could be the object of Sir Dudley's continued voyaging? No feature of pleasure was certainly associated with it; as little could it be attributed to the practice of smuggling,—the very seas he had longest cruised in forbade that notion. It must be, thought I, that other reason to which he so darkly alluded on the day he called me to his cabin; and what could that be? Never was ingenuity more tortured than mine by this ever-recurring question; since it is needless to tell the reader I was not then, nor indeed for a very long time afterwards, acquainted with those particulars of his history I have already jotted down. This intense curiosity of mine would doubtless have worn itself out at last, but for a slight circumstance occurring to keep it still alive within me. The little state-room in which I used to write lay at one side of the cabin, from which it was entered,—no other means of getting to it existing; a heavy silk curtain supplied the place of a door between the two; and this, when four o'clock came, and my day's work was finished, was let down till the following morning, when it was drawn aside, that Sir Dudley, from time to time, might see, and, if needful, speak with me. Now, one day, when we had been about three weeks at sea, the weather being intensely hot and sultry, Sir Dudley had fallen asleep

in his cabin while I sat writing away vigorously within. Suddenly, I heard a shout on deck: “The whales! a shoal of whales ahead!” and immediately the sudden scuffling of feet, and the heavy hum of voices, proclaimed the animation and interest the sight created. I strained myself to peep through the little one-paned window beside me, but all I could see was the great blue heaving ocean as, in majestic swell, it rolled along. Still the noise continued; and, by the number and tone of the speakers, I could detect that all the crew were on deck,—every one, in fact, save myself. What a disappointment! full as my mind was of every monster of land and water, burning to observe some of the wonderful things I had read so much about, and now destined actually to be denied a sight on which my comrades were then gazing! I could endure the thought no longer; and although my task was each morning allotted to me, and carefully examined the next day by Sir Dudley, I stepped lightly out on tiptoe, and letting fall the curtain so that if he awoke I should not be missed, I stole up the “companion,” and reached the deck.

What a sight was there! the whole sea around us was in motion with the great monsters, who, in pursuit of a shoal of herrings, darted at speed through the blue water,—spouting, blowing, and tossing in all the wildest confusion; here, every eye was bent on a calm still spot in the water, where a whale had “sounded,” that is, gone down quite straight into the depths of the sea; here, another was seen scarcely covered by the water, his monstrous head and back alternately dipping below or emerging above it; harpoons and tackle were sought out, firearms loaded, and every preparation for attack and capture made, but none dared to venture

without orders, nor was any hardy enough to awake him and ask for them. Perhaps the very expectancy on our part increased the interest, for certainly the excitement of the scene was intense,—so much so that I actually forgot all about my task, and, without a thought of consequences, was hanging eagerly over the taffrail in full enjoyment of the wild scene, when the tinkle of the captain's bell startled me, and, to my horror, I remembered it was now his dinner hour, and that, for the rest of the day, no opportunity would offer of my reaching the state-room to finish my writing.

I was so terrified that I lost all interest in the spectacle, whereof, up to that time, my mind was full. It was my first delinquency, and had all the poignancy of a first fault. The severity I had seen practised on others for even slight infractions of duty was all before me, and I actually debated with myself whether it would not be better to jump overboard at once than meet the anger of Sir Dudley. With any one else, perhaps, I should have bethought me of some cunning lie to account for my absence; but he had warned me about trying to deceive him, and I well knew he could be as good as his word. I had no courage to tell any of the sailors my fault, and ask their advice; indeed, I anticipated what would be the result: some brutal jest over my misfortune, some coarse allusion to the fate they had often told me portended me, since “no younker had ever gone from land to land with Sir Dudley without tasting his hemp fritters.” I sat down, therefore, beside the bowsprit, where none should see me, to commune alone with my grief, and, if I could, to summon up courage to meet my fate.

Night had closed in some time, and all was tranquil on board, when I saw Halkett, as was his

custom, going aft to the cabin, where he always remained for an hour or more each evening. It was just then, I know not how the notion occurred, but it struck me that if I could lower myself over the side, I might be able to creep through the little window into the state-room, and carry away the paper to finish it before morning. I lost little time in setting about my plot; and having made fast a rope to one of the clews, I lowered myself fearlessly over the gunwale, and pushing open the little sash, which was unfastened, I soon managed to insert my head and shoulders, and, without any difficulty dragging my body slowly after, entered the state-room. So long as the danger of the enterprise and its difficulty lasted, so long my courage was high and my heart fearless; but when I sat down in the little dark room, scarcely venturing to breathe, lest I should be overheard, almost afraid to touch the papers on the table, lest their rustling noise should betray me, how was this terror increased when I actually heard the voices of Sir Dudley and Halkett as plainly as though I were in the cabin beside them!

"And so, Halkett," said Sir Dudley, "you think this expedition will be as fruitless as the others?"

"I do, sir," said the other, in a low, dogged tone.

"And yet you were the very man who encouraged me to make it!"

"And what of that? Of two things, I thought it more likely that he should be the leader of a band to a regiment in Canada than be a Faquino on the Mole of Genoa. A fellow like him could scarcely fall so low as that."

"He shall fall lower, by Heaven, if I live!" said Sir Dudley, in a voice rendered guttural with deep passion.

“Take care you fall not with him, sir,” said Halkett, in a tone of warning.

“And if I should,—for what else have I lived these three last years? In that pursuit have I perilled health and life, satisfied to lose both if I but succeed at last.”

“And how do you mean to proceed? For, assuredly, if he be attached to the regiment at Kingstown, he 'll hear of you, from some source or other. You remember when we all but had him at Torlosk, and yet he heard of our coming before we got two posts from Warsaw; and again, at 'Forli,' we had scarce dropped anchor off Rimini when he was up and away.”

“I 'll go more secretly to work this time, Halkett; hitherto I have been slow to think the fellow a coward. It is so hard to believe anything so base as a man bereft of every trait of virtue: now I see clearly that he is so. I 'll track him, not to offer him the chances of a duel, but to hunt him down as I would a wild beast. I 'll proceed up the river in the disguise of an itinerant merchant,—one of those pedler fellows of which this land is full,—taking the Irish dog along with me.”

“Of whom, remember, you know nothing, sir,” interposed Halkett.

“Nor need to know,” said he, impatient at the interruption. “Let him play me false, let me only suspect that he means it, and my reckoning with him will be short. I have watched him closely of late, and I see the fellow's curiosity is excited about us: he is evidently on the alert to learn something of our object in this voyage; but the day he gains the knowledge, Tom, will be his last to enjoy it. It is a cheap process if we are at sea,—a dark night and an

eighteen-pound shot! If on shore, I 'll readily find some one to take the trouble off my hands."

It may be imagined with what a sensation of terror I heard these words, feeling that my actual position at the moment would have decided my fate, if discovered; and yet, with all this, I could not stir, nor make an effort to leave the spot; a fascination to hear the remainder of the conversation had thoroughly bound me as by a spell; and in breathless anxiety I listened, as Sir Dudley resumed:

"You, with Heckenstein and the Greek, must follow, ready to assist me when I need your aid; for my plan is this: I mean to entice the fellow, on pretence of a pleasure excursion, a few miles from the town, into the bush, there to bind him hand and foot, and convey him, by the forest tracks, to the second 'portage,' where the batteaux are stationed, by one of which—these Canadian fellows are easily bribed—we shall drop down to Montreal. There the yacht shall be in waiting all ready for sea. Even without a wind, three days will bring us off the Island of Orleans, and as many more, if we be but fortunate, to the Gulf. The very worst that can happen is discovery and detection; and if that ensue, I 'll blow his brains out."

"And if we succeed in carrying him off, Sir Dudley, what then?"

"I have not made up my mind, Halkett, what I'll do. I 've thought of a hundred schemes of vengeance; but, confound it, I must be content with one only, though fifty deaths would not satisfy my hate."

"I'd put a bullet through his skull, or swing him from the yardarm, and make an end of it," said Halkett, roughly.

"Not I, faith! He shall live; and, if I can have my

will, a long life too. His own government would take charge of him at 'Irkutsk,' for that matter, at the quicksilver mines; and they say the diseased bones, from the absorption of that poison, is a terrible punishment. But I have a better notion still. Do you remember that low island off the east shore of the Niger, where the negro fellows live in log huts, threshing the water all day to keep the caymans from the rice-grounds?"

"The devil!" exclaimed Halkett; "you'll not put him there?"

"I have thought of it very often," said Sir Dudley, calmly. "He 'd see his doom before him every day, and dream of it each night too. One cannot easily forget that horrid swamp, alive and moving with those reptiles! It was nigh two months ere I could fall asleep at night without starting up in terror at the thought of them." Sir Dudley arose as he said this, and walked the cabin with impatient steps; sometimes as he passed his arm would graze the curtain and shake its folds, and then my heart leaped to my mouth in very terror. At last, with an effort that I felt as the last chance of life, I secured the papers in my bosom, and, standing up on the seat, crept through the window, and, after a second's delay to adjust the rope, clambered up the side, and gained the deck unobserved. It could not have been real fatigue, for there was little or no exertion in the feat; but yet such was my state of exhaustion that I crept over to the boat that was fastened midships, and, lying down in her, on a coil of cable, slept soundly till morning. If my boyish experiences had familiarized my mind with schemes of vengeance as terrible as ever fiction fabricated, I had yet to learn that "gentlemen" cherished such feelings; and I own the discovery gave me a tremendous shock. That

some awful debt of injury was on Sir Dudley's mind was clear enough, and that I was to be, in some capacity or other, an aid to him in acquitting it, was a fact I was more convinced of than pleased at. Neither did I fancy his notions of summary justice,—perhaps it was my legal education had prejudiced me in favor of more formal proceedings; but I saw with a most constitutional horror the function of justice, jury, and executioner in the hands of one single individual.

So impressed was I with these thoughts that had I not been on the high seas, I should inevitably have run for it. Alas, however, the banks of Newfoundland —which, after all I had heard mentioned on our voyage, I imagined to be grassy slopes glittering with daisies, and yellow with daffodils—are but sand heaps some two hundred fathoms down in “the ocean blue;” and all one ever knows of them is the small geological specimens brought up on the tallowed end of the deep-sea lead. Escape, therefore, was for the present out of the question; but the steady determination to attempt it was spared me by a circumstance that occurred about a week later.

After some days of calm, common enough in these latitudes, a slight but steady breeze set in from the northeast, which bore us up the Gulf with easy sail till we came in sight of the long, low island of Anticosti, which, like some gigantic monster, raises its dark, misshapen beach above the water. Not the slightest trace of foliage or verdure to give it a semblance to the aspect of land. Two dreary-looking log-houses, about eighteen miles apart, remind one that a refuge for the shipwrecked is deemed necessary in this dangerous channel; but, except these, not a trace exists to show that the foot of man had trod that dreary spot.

The cook's galley is sure to have its share of horrors when a ship “lies to” near this gloomy shore; scarcely a crew exists where some one belonging to it has not had a messmate wrecked there; and then, the dreadful narratives of starvation, and strife, and murders, were too fearful to dwell on. Among the horrors recorded on every hand all agreed in speaking of a terrible character who had never quitted the island for upwards of forty years. He was a sailor who had committed a murder under circumstances of great atrocity, and dared not revisit the mainland, for fear of the penalty of his guilt. Few had ever seen him; for years back, indeed, he had not been met with at all, and rumor said that he was dead. Still, no trace of his body could be found, and some inclined to the opinion that he might at last have made his escape.

He was a negro, and was described as possessing the strength of three or four men; and although the proverbial exaggeration of sailors might, and very probably did, color these narratives, the sad fate of more than one party who had set out to capture him, gave the stories a terrible air of truth. The fear of him was such that although very liberal terms had been offered to induce men to take up their abode in the island to succor the crews of wrecked vessels, none could be found to accept the post; and even at the period when I visited these seas, and after a long lapse of years since the Black Boatswain had been seen, no one would venture.

The story went that his ghost still wandered there, and that at night, when the storm was high, and the waves of the Gulf sent the spray over that low and dreary island, his cries could be heard, calling aloud to “shorten sail,” to “brace round the yards, close the hatchways,” mingled with blasphemies that made the

very hair stand on end.

If the reader, armed with the triple mail of incredulity, so snugly ensconced in his easy-chair, before a sea-coal fire, can afford to scoff at such perils, not so did I, as I sat in a corner of the galley, gathering with greedy ears the horrors that fell on every side, and now and then stealing out to cast a glance over the bulwarks at the long low bank of sand, which seemed more like an exhalation from the water than a solid mass of rock and shingle.

I have said that a feeling of rivalry existed between the Moorish boy, El Jarasch, and myself; and although I endured the scoffs and sneers at first with a humility my own humble garb and anomalous position enforced, I soon began to feel more confidence in myself, and that species of assurance a becoming dress seems somehow to inspire; for I was now attired like the rest of the crew, and wore the name of the yacht in gold letters on my cap, as well as on the breast of my waistcoat.

The hatred of El Jarasch increased with every day, and mutual scoffs and gibes were the only intercourse between us. More than once, Halkett, who had always befriended me, warned me of the boy, and said that his Moorish blood was sure to make his vengeance felt; but I only laughed at his caution, and avowed myself ready to confront him when and however he pleased. Generosity was little wasted on either side, so that when one day, in a fierce encounter with the lions, El Jarasch received a fall which broke one of his ribs, and was carried in a state of insensibility to his berth, I neither pitied him nor regretted his misfortune. I affected even to say that his own cowardice had rendered the creatures more daring, and that had he preserved a bolder front the mischance would have never occurred.

These vauntings of mine, coupled with an avowed willingness to take his place, came to Sir Dudley's ears on the third evening after the accident, and he immediately sent for me to his cabin.

“Is it true, sirrah,” said he, in a harsh, unpleasant voice, “that you have been jesting about Jarasch, and saying that you were ready to take charge of the whelps in his stead?”

“It is,” said I, answering both questions together.

“You shall do so to-morrow, then,” replied he, solemnly; “take care that you can do something as well as boast!” and with this he motioned me to leave the cabin.

I at once repaired to the steerage to report my interview to the men, who were all more friendly with me than with the “Moor.” Many were the counsels I received about how I should conduct myself the next morning; some asserting that, as it was my first time, I could not be too gentle with the animals, avoiding the slightest risk of hurting them, and even suffering their rough play without any effort to check it. Others, on the contrary, advised me at once to seek the mastery over the beasts, and by two or three severe lessons to teach them caution, if not respect. This counsel, I own, chimed in with my own notions, and also better accorded with what, after my late vauntings, I felt to be my duty.

It was altogether a very anxious night with me, not exactly through fear, because I knew, as the men were always ready with their arms loaded, life could not be perilled, and I did not dread the infliction of a mere sprain or fracture; but I felt it was an ordeal wherein my fame was at stake. Were I to acquit myself well, there would be an end forever of those insulting airs of superiority the Moorish boy had

assumed towards me. Whereas if I failed, I must consent to bear his taunts and sarcasms without a murmur.

In one point only the advice of all the crew agreed, which was, that the female cub, much larger and more ferocious than the male, should more particularly demand my watchfulness. “If she scratch you, boy, mind that you desist,” said an old Danish sailor, who had been long on the African coast. This caution was re-echoed by all; and, resolving to follow its dictates, I “turned in” to my hammock, to dream of combats and battles till morning.

I was early astir,—waking with a sudden start. I had been dreaming of a lion-hunt, and fancied I heard the deep-mouthed roaring of the beasts in a jungle; and, true enough, a low, monotonous howl came from the place where the animals lay, for it was now the fourth morning of their being confined without having been once at liberty.

I had just completed my dressing,—the costume was simply a short pair of loose trousers, hands, arms, and feet bare, and a small Fez cap on my head, —when Halkett came down to me to say that he had been speaking to Sir Dudley about the matter, and that as I had never yet accustomed myself to the whelps, it was better that I should not begin the acquaintance after they had been four days in durance. “At the same time,” added Halkett, “he gives you the choice; you can venture if you please.”

“I've made up my mind,” said I. “I'm sure I'm able for anything the black fellow can do.”

“My advice to you, boy,” said he, “is to leave them alone. Those Moorish chaps are the creatures' countrymen, and have almost the same kind of natures,—they are stealthy, treacherous, and cruel.

They never trust anything, man or beast!”

“No matter,” said I. “I'm as strong as he is, and my courage is not less.”

“If you will have it so, I have nothing to say,—indeed, I promised Sir Dudley I'd give you no advice one way or other; so now get the staff from Jarasch, and come on deck.”

The staff was a short thick truncheon of oak, tipped with brass at each end, and the only weapon ever used by the boy in his encounters.

“So you're going to take my place!” said the black fellow, while his dark eyes were lighted up like coals of fire, and his white teeth glanced between his purple lips. “Don't hurt my poor pet cubs; be gentle with them.”

“Where's the staff?” said I, not liking the tone in which he spoke, or well knowing if he affected earnest or jest.

“There it is,” said he; “but your white hands will be enough without that. You'll not need the weapon the coward used!” and as he spoke, a kind of shuddering convulsion shook his frame from head to foot.

“Come, come,” said I, stretching out my hand, “I ought not to have called you a coward, Jarasch,—that you are not! I ask you to forgive me; will you?”

He never spoke, but nestled lower down in the hammock, so that I could not even see his face.

“There, they 're calling me already. I must be off! Let us shake hands and be friends this time at least. When you're well and up, we can fight it out about something else!”

“Kiss me, then,” said he; and though I had no fancy for the embrace, or the tone it was asked in, I

leaned over the hammock, and while he placed one arm round my neck, and drew me towards him, I kissed his forehead, and he mine, in true Moorish fashion; and not sorry to have made my peace with my only enemy, I stepped up the ladder with a light heart and a firm courage.

I little knew what need I had for both! When Jarasch had put his arm around my neck, I did not know that he had inserted his hand beneath the collar of my shirt, and drawn a long streak of blood from his own vein across my back between my shoulders. When I arrived on deck, it was to receive the congratulations of the crew, who were all struck with my muscular arms and legs, and who unanimously pronounced that I was far fitter to exercise the whelps than was the Moor.

Sir Dudley said nothing. A short nod greeted me as I came towards him, and then he waved me back with his hand,—a motion which, having something contemptuous in it, pained me acutely at the moment. I had not much time, however, to indulge such feelings. The whelps were already on deck, and springing madly at the wooden bars of their cage for liberty. Eager as themselves, I hastened to unbolt the door and set them free.

No sooner were they at large than they set off down one side of the deck and up the other, careering at full speed, clearing with a bound whatever stood in their way; and when by any chance meeting each other, stopping for an instant to stare with glaring eyes and swelling nostrils; and then, either passing stealthily and warily past, or one would crouch while the other cleared him at a spring, and so off again. In all this I had no part to play. I could neither call them back, like Jarasch, whose voice they knew, nor had I his dexterity in

catching them as they went, and throwing all manner of gambols over and upon them, as he did.

I felt this poignantly, the more as I saw, or thought I saw, Sir Dudley's eyes upon me more than once, with an expression of disdainful pity. At last, the great tub which contained the creatures' food was wheeled forward; and no sooner had the men retired than the quick-scented animals were on the spot,—so rapidly, indeed, that I had barely time to seat myself, cross-legged, on the lid, when they approached, and with stately step walked round the vessel, staring as it were in surprise at the new figure who disputed their meal with them.

At last, the male placed one paw on the lid, and with the other tapped me twice or thrice on the shoulder with the kind of gentle, pattering blow a cat will sometimes use with a mouse. It was a sort of mild admonition to “leave that,” nothing of hostility whatever being announced.

I replied by imitating the gesture, so far as a half-closed fist would permit, and struck him on the side of the head. He looked grave at this treatment, and, slowly descending from his place, he lay down about a yard off. Meanwhile the female, who had been smelling and sniffing round and round the tub, made an effort to lift the lid with her head, and, failing, began to strike it in sharp, short blows with her paw; the excitement of her face, and the sturdy position of her hind legs, showing that her temper was chafed at the delay. To increase her rage, I pushed the lid a few inches back; and as the savory steam arose, the creature grew more eager, and at last attracted the other to the spot.

It was quite clear that hunger was the passion uppermost with them, and that they had not yet

connected me with the cause of their disappointment; for they labored by twenty devices to insert a paw or to smash the lid, but never noticed me in the least. Wearied of my failures to induce them to play, and angry at the indifference they manifested to me, I sprang from the lid, and, lifting it from the tub, flung it back. In an instant they had each their heads in the mess; the female had even her great paw in the midst of the tub, and was eating away with that low, gurgling growl peculiar to the wild beast.

Dashing right between them, I seized one by the throat with both hands, and hurled him back upon the deck. A shout of “Bravo!” burst from the crew at the boldness of the feat, and with a bound the fellow made at me. I dropped suddenly on one knee as he came, and struck him with the staff on the fore legs. Had he been shot, he could not have fallen more rapidly; down he went, like a dead mass, on the deck. To spring on his back and hold him fast down was the work of a second, while I belabored him about the head with my fists.

The stunning effect of his first fall gave me the victory for a moment, but he soon rallied, and attacked me boldly. It was now a fair fight; for if I sometimes succeeded in making him shake his huge head or drop his paw with pain, more than once he staggered me with a blow which, had it been only quickly followed, would soon have decided the struggle. At last, after a scuffle in which he had nearly vanquished me, he made a leap at my throat. I put in a blow of such power with the staff on the forehead that he gave a loud roar of pain, and, with drooping tail, slunk to hide away himself beneath a boat.

Up to this moment the female had never stirred

from the mess of food, but continued eating and snarling as though every mouthful was a battle. Scarcely, however, had the roar of the other cub been heard than she lifted her head, and, slowly turning round, stared at me with an expression which, even now, my dreams will recall.

I had not yet recovered from the exhaustion of my late encounter, and was half sitting, half kneeling on the deck, as the whelp stood glowering at me, with every vein in her vast forehead swollen, and her large, red eyes seeming to dilate as she looked. The attitude of the creature must have been striking, for the crew cheered with a heartiness that showed how much they admired her.

So long as I sat unmoved she never stirred; but when I prepared to arise, she gave one bound, and, striking me with her head, hurled me back upon the deck: her own impulse had carried her clean over me, and when she returned, I was already up, on my knees, and better prepared to receive her. Again she tried the same manoeuvre; but this time I leaped to my feet, and, springing on one side, struck her a heavy blow on the top of the head. Twice or thrice the same attack, with the same result, followed; and at each blow a gallant cheer from the men gave me fresh courage.



The beast was now excited to a dreadful degree; but her very passion favored me, for her assaults were wilder and less circumspect than at first. At length, just as I was again making the side leap by which I had escaped, my foot slipped, and I fell. I was scarcely down ere she was upon me, not, as before, to strike with her paws, but with a rude shock she threw herself across me, as if to crush me by her weight; while her huge head and terrific mouth, frothy and steaming, lay within a few inches of my face.

Halkett and two others advanced to my rescue; but I bade them go back and leave me to myself, for I was only wearied, not conquered. For some minutes we lay thus; when at length, having recovered strength once more, I grasped the whelp's throat with both hands, and then by a tremendous effort threw her back, and rolled myself uppermost. She soon shook herself free, however, and turned upon me: I was now on my knees, and with the staff I dealt her a fierce blow on the leg. A terrific howl followed, and she closed with me in full fury. Seizing my shirt,

she tore it away from my breast, and with her paw upon the fragment, ripped it in a hundred pieces. I endeavored to catch her by the throat once more, but failed, and rolled over on my face, and in doing so, disclosed the bloody streak between my shoulders; she saw it, and at the same instant sprang on me. I felt her teeth as they met in my neck, while her terrible cry, the most appalling ears ever heard, rang through my brain.

“Save him! Save him! She's killing him!” were now heard on every side; but none dared to fire for fear of wounding me, and the terrible rage of the animal deterred all from approaching her. The struggle was now a life-and-death one; and alternately falling and rolling, we fought—I cannot tell how, for the blood blinded me as it came from a wound in my forehead; and I only felt one firm purpose in my heart: “If I fall, she shall not survive me.” Several of the sailors came near enough to strike her with their cutlasses; but these wounds only increased her rage, and I cried to them to desist.

“Shoot her! put a bullet through her!” cried Halkett. “Let none dare to shoot her!” cried Sir Dudley, loudly. I just heard these words, as, after a fierce struggle, in which she had seized me by the shoulder, I fell against the bulwark. With a last effort I staggered to my knees, flung open the gangway, and then, with an exertion that to myself seemed my very last on earth, I seized her by the throat and hurled her backwards into the sea. On hands and knees I leaned forward to see her as the rapid Gulf-stream, hurrying onward to the ocean, bore her away; and then, as my sight grew fainter, I fell back upon the deck, and believed I was dying.



CHAPTER XI. MEANS AND MEDITATIONS

It was the second evening after my lion adventure, and I was stretched in my hammock in a low, half-torpid state, not a limb nor a joint in all my body

that had not its own peculiar pain; while a sharp wound in my neck, and another still deeper one in the fleshy part of my shoulder, had just begun that process called “union,”—one which, I am bound to say, however satisfactory in result, is often very painful in its progress. The slightest change of position gave me intolerable anguish, as I lay, with closed eyes and crossed hands, not a bad resemblance of those stone saints one sees upon old tombstones.

My faculties were clear and acute, so that, having abundant leisure for the occupation, I had nothing better to do than take a brief retrospect of my late life. Such reviews are rarely satisfactory, or rather, one rarely thinks of making them when the “score of the past” is in our favor. Up to this moment it was clear I had gained little but experience; I had started light, and I had acquired nothing, save a somewhat worse opinion of the world and a greater degree of confidence in myself. I had but one way of balancing my account with Fortune, which was by asking myself, “Would I undo the past, if in my power? Would I wish once more to be back in my 'father's mud edifice,' now digging a drain, now drawing an indictment,—a kind of pastoral pettifogger, with one foot in a potato furrow, and the other in petty sessions?” I stoutly said, “No!” a thousand times “no!” to this question.

I could not ask myself as to my preference for a university career, for my college life had concluded abruptly, in spite of me; but still, during my town experiences I saw enough to leave me no regrets at having quitted the muses. The life of a “skip,” as the Trinity men have it,—*vice* gyp., for the Greek word signifying a “vulture,”—is only removed by a thin sheet of silver paper from that of a cabin boy in a

collier; copious pummelling and short prog being the first two articles of your warrant; while in some respects the marine has a natural advantage over him on shore. A skip is invariably expected to invent lies “at discretion” for his master's benefit, and is always thrashed when they are either discovered or turn out adverse. On this point his education is perfectly “Spartan;” but, unhappily too, he is expected to be a perfect mirror of truth on all other occasions. This is somewhat hard, inasmuch as it is only in a man's graduate course that he learns to defend a paradox, and support by good reasons what he knows to be false.

Again a “skip” never receives clothes, but is flogged at least once a week for disorders in his dress, and for general untidiness of appearance; this, too, is hard, since he has as little intercourse with soap as he has with conic sections.

Thirdly, a good skip invariably obtains credit for his master at “Foles's” chop-house; while, in his own proper capacity, he would not get trust for a cheese-paring.

Fourthly, a skip is supposed to be born a valet, as some are born poets,—to have an instinctive aptitude for all the details of things he has never seen or heard of before; so that when he applies Warren's patent to French leather boots, polishes silver with a Bath brick, blows the fire with a quarto, and cuts candles with a razor, he finds it passing strange that he should be “had up” for punishment. To be fat without food, to be warm without fire, to be wakeful without sleep, to be clad without clothes, to be known as a vagabond, and to pass current for unblemished honesty, to be praised as a liar, and then thrashed for lying,—is too much to expect at fifteen years of age.

Lastly, as to Betty's I had no regrets. The occupation of horse-boy, like the profession of physic, has no “avenir.” The utmost the most aspiring can promise to himself is to hold more horses than his neighbors, as the Doctor's success is to order more “senna.” There is nothing beyond these; no higher path opens to him who feels the necessity for an “upward course.” It is a ladder with but one round to it! No, no; I was right to “sell out” there.

My steeplechase might have led to something,—that is, I might have become a jockey; but then, again, one's light weight, like a “contralto” voice, is sure to vanish after a year or two; and then, from the heyday of popularity, you sink down into a bad groom or a fourth-rate tenor, just as if, after reaching a silk gown at the bar, a man had to begin life again as crier in the Exchequer! Besides, in all these various walks I should have had the worst of all “trammels,” a patron. Now, if any resolve had thoroughly fixed itself in my mind, it was this: never to have a patron, never to be bound to any man who, because he had once set you on your legs, should regulate the pace you were to walk through a long life. To do this, one should be born without a particle of manhood's spirit,—absolutely without volition; otherwise you go through life a living lie, talking sentiments that are not yours, and wearing a livery in your heart as well as on your back!

Why do we hear such tirades about the ingratitude of men, who, being once assisted by others,—their inferiors in everything save gold,—soar above the low routine of toadyism, and rise into personal independence? Let us remember that the contract was never a fair one, and that a whole life's degradation is a heavy sum to pay for a dinner with

his Grace, or a cup of tea with her Highness. “My Lord,” I am aware, thinks differently; and it is one of the very pleasant delusions of his high station to fancy that little folk are dependent upon him,—what consequence they obtain among their fellows by his recognition in public, or by his most careless nod in the street. But “my Lord” does not know that this is a paper currency that represents no capital, that it is not convertible at will, and is never a legal tender; and consequently, as a requital for actual *bona fide* services, is about as honest a payment as a flash note.

It was no breach of my principle that I accepted Sir Dudley's offer. Our acquaintance began by my rendering him a service; and I was as free to leave him that hour, and, I own, as ready to do so, if occasion permitted, as he could be to get rid of me; and it was not long before the occasion presented itself for exercising these views.

As I lay thus, ruminating on my past fortunes, Halkett descended the steerage-ladder, followed by Felborg, the Dane; and, approaching my hammock, held a light to my face for a few seconds. “Still asleep?” said Halkett. “Poor boy! he has never awoke since I dressed his wound this morning. I 'm sure it's better; so let us leave him so.”

“Ay, ay,” said the Dane, “let him sleep; bad tidings come soon enough, without one's being awoke to hear them. But do you think he 'll do it?” added he, with lower and more anxious tone.

“He has said so; and I never knew him fail in his promise when it was a cruel one.”

“Have you no influence over him, Halkett? Could you not speak for the boy?”

“I have done all I could,—more than perhaps it

was safe to do. I told him I could n't answer for the men, if he were to shoot him on board; and he replied to me short, 'I 'll take the fellow ashore with me alone; neither you nor they have any right to question what you are not to witness.'"

"Well, when I get back to Elsinore, it's to a prison and heavy irons I shall go for life, that's certain; but I 'd face it all rather than live the life we've done now for twenty months past."

"Hush! speak low!" said the other. "I suppose others are weary of it as well as you. Many a man has to live a bad life just because he started badly."

"I 'm sorry for the boy!" sighed the Dane; "he was a bold and fearless fellow."

"I am sorry for him too. It was an evil day for him when he joined us. Well, well, what would he have become if he had lived a year or two on board!"

"He has no father nor mother," said the Dane, "that's something. I lost mine, too, when I was nine years old; and it made me the reckless devil I became ever after. I was n't sixteen when the crew of the 'Tre-Kroner' mutinied, and I led the party that cut down the first lieutenant. It was a moonlight night, just as it might be now, in the middle watch, and Lieutenant Oeldenstrom was sitting aft, near the wheel, humming a tune. I walked aft, with my cutlass in one hand, and a pistol in the other; but just as I stepped up the quarter-deck my foot slipped, and the cutlass fell with a clank on the deck.

"'What's that?' cried the lieutenant.

"'Felborg, sir, mate of the watch,' said I, standing fast where I was. 'It's shoaling fast ahead, sir.'

"'D—n!' said he, 'what a coast!'

"'Could n't you say a bit of something better than

that?' said I, getting nearer to him slowly.

"'What do you mean?' said he, jumping up angrily; but he was scarce on his legs when he was down again at his full length on the plank, with a bullet through his brain, never to move again!"

"There, there, avast with that tale; you've told it to me every night that my heart was heavy this twelvemonth past. But I 've hit on a way to save the lad,—will you help me?"

"Ay, if my help does n't bring bad luck on him; it always has on every one I befriended since—since—"

"Never mind that. There 's no risk here, nor much room for luck, good or bad." He paused a second or two, then added,—

"I 'm thinking we can't do better than shove him ashore on the island yonder."

"On Anticosti!" said Felborg, with a shudder.

"Ay, why not? There's always a store of biscuit and fresh water in the log-houses, and the cruisers touch there every six or seven weeks to take people off. He has but to hoist the flag to show he 's there."

"There's no one there now," said the Dane.

"No. I saw the flag-staff bare yesterday; but what does that matter? A few days or a few weeks alone are better than what's in store for him here."

"I don't think so. No! Beym alia Deyvelm! I 'd stand the bullet at three paces, but I 'd not meet that negro chap alone."

"Oh, he's dead and gone this many a year," said Halkett. "When the 'Rodney' transport was wrecked there, two years last fall, they searched the island from end to end, and could n't find a trace of him. They were seven weeks there, and it's pretty clear if he were alive—"

“Ay, just so,—if he were alive!”

“Nonsense, man! You don't believe those yarns they get up to frighten the boys in the cook's galley?”

“It's scarce mercy, to my reckoning,” said Felborg, “to take the lad from a quick and short fate, and leave him yonder; but if you need my help, you shall have it.”

“That's enough,” said Halkett; “go on deck, and look after the boat. None of our fellows will betray us; and in the morning we 'll tell Sir Dudley that he threw himself overboard in the night, in a fit of frenzy. He'll care little whether it's true or false.”

“I say, Con—Con, my lad,” said Halkett, as soon as the other had mounted the ladder. “Wake up, my boy; I've something to tell you.”

“I know it,” said I, wishing to spare time, which I thought might be precious; “I've been dreaming all about it.”

“Poor fellow, his mind is wandering,” muttered Halkett to himself. “Come, my lad, try and put on your clothes,—here's your jacket;” and with that he lifted me from my hammock, and began to help me to dress.

“I was dreaming, Halkett,” said I, “that Sir Dudley sent me adrift in the punt, and fired at me with the swivel, but that you rowed out and saved me.”

“That's just it!” said Halkett, with an energy that showed how the supposed dream imposed upon him.

“You put me ashore on Anticosti, Halkett,” said I; “but wasn't that cruel!—the Black Boatswain is there.”

“Never fear the Black Boatswain, my lad, he 's dead years ago; and it strikes me you 'll steer a course in life where old wives' tales never laid down

the soundings."

"I can always be brave when I want it, Halkett," said I, letting out a bit of my peculiar philosophy; but I saw he didn't understand my speech, and I went on with my dressing in silence.

Halkett meanwhile continued to give me advice about the island, and the log-houses, and the signal-ensign; in fact, about all that could possibly concern my safety and speedy escape, concluding with a warning to me, never to divulge that anything but a mere accident had been the occasion of my being cast away. "This for your own sake and for mine too, Con," said he; "for one day or other he,"—he pointed to the after-cabin,—"he'd know it, and then it would fare badly with some of us."

"Why not come too, Halkett?" said I; "this life is as hateful to you as to myself."

"Hush, boy; no more of that," said he, with a degree of emotion which I had never witnessed in him before. "Make yourself warm and snug, for you mustn't take any spare clothes, or you 'd be suspected by whoever takes you off the island; here's my brandy-flask and a tinder-box; that's a small bag of biscuit,—for you 'll take six or seven hours to reach the log-house,—and here is a pistol, with some powder and ball. Come along, now, or shall I carry you up the ladder?"

"No, I'm able enough now," said I, making an effort to seem free from pain while I stepped up on deck.

I was not prepared for the affectionate leave-taking which met me here; each of the crew shook my hand twice or thrice over, and there was not one did not press upon me some little gift in token of remembrance.

At last the boat was lowered, and Halkett and three others, descending noiselessly, motioned to me to follow. I stepped boldly over the side, and, waving a last good-bye to those above, sat down in the stern to steer, as I was directed.

It was a calm night, with nothing of a sea, save that rolling heave ever present in the Gulf-stream; and now the men stretched to their oars, and we darted swiftly on, not a word breaking the deep stillness.

Although the island lay within six miles, we could see nothing of it against the sky, for the highest point is little more than twelve feet above the water-level.

I have said that nothing was spoken as we rowed along over the dark and swelling water; but this silence did not impress me till I saw ahead of us the long low outline of the dreary island shutting out the horizon; then a sensation of sickening despair came over me. Was I to linger out a few short hours of life on that melancholy spot, and die at last exhausted and broken-hearted? “Was this to be the end of the brilliant dream I had so often revelled in?” “Ah, Con!” said I, “to play the game of life, a man must have capital to stand its losses,—its runs of evil fortune; but you are ruined with one bad deal!”

“Run her in here, in this creek!” cried Halkett to the men; and the boat glided into a little bay of still water under the lee of the land, and then, after about twenty minutes' stout rowing, her keel grated on the rugged, shingly shore of Anticosti.

“We cannot land you dry-shod, Con,” said Halkett; “it shoals for some distance here.”

“No matter,” said I, trying to affect an easy, jocular air, my choking throat and swelling heart made far from easy; “for me to think of wet feet would be like

the felon at the drop blowing the froth off the porter because it was unwholesome!"

"I 've better hopes of you than that comes to, lad!" said he; "but good-bye! good-bye!" He shook my hand with a grasp like a vice, and sat down with his back towards me; the others took a kind farewell of me; and then, shouldering my little bag of biscuit, I pressed my cap down over my eyes, and stepped into the surf. It was scarcely more than over mid-leg, but the clay-like, spongy bottom made it tiresome walking. I had only gone a few hundred yards, when a loud cheer struck me; I turned: it was the boat's crew, giving me a parting salute. I tried to answer it, but my voice failed me; the next moment they had turned the point, and I saw them no more!

I now plodded wearily on, and in about half an hour reached the land; and whether from weariness, or some strange instinct of security on touching shore, I know not, but I threw myself heavily down upon the shingly stones, and slept soundly,—ay, and dreamed too! dreamed of fair lands far away, such as I have often read of in books of travels, where bright flowers and delicious fruits were growing, and where birds and insects of gaudiest colors floated past with a sweet murmuring song that made the air tremble.

Who has not read "Robinson Crusoe;" and who has not imagined himself combating with some of the difficulties of his fortune, and pictured to his mind what his conduct might have been under this or that emergency?

No speculations are pleasanter, when indulged at our own fireside, in an easy-chair, after having solaced our "material" nature by a good dinner, and satisfied the "moral" man by the "City Article," which assures us that the Three per Cents are rising,

and that Consols for the Account are in a very prosperous state. Then, indeed, if our thoughts by any accident stray to the shipwrecked sailor, they are blended with a wholesome philanthropy, born of good digestion and fair worldly prospects; we assure ourselves that we should have made precisely the same exertions that he did, and comported ourselves in all the varied walks of carpenter, tailor, hosier, sail-maker, and boat-builder exactly like him. The chances are, too, that if accidentally out of temper with our neighbors, we cordially acknowledge that the retirement was not the worst feature in his history; and if provoked by John Thomas, the footman, we are ready to swear that there was more gratitude in Friday's little black finger than in the whole body corporate of flunkeys, from Richmond to Blackwall.

While these very laudable sentiments are easy enough in the circumstances I have mentioned, they are marvellously difficult to practise at the touch of stern reality. At least I found them so, as I set out to seek the “Refuge” on Anticosti. It was just daybreak as, somewhat stiffened with a sleep on the cold beach, and sore from my recent bruises, I began my march. “Nor'-west and by west” was Halkett's vague direction to me; but as I had no compass, I was left to the guidance of the rising sun for the cardinal points. Not a path nor track of any kind was to be seen; indeed, the surface could scarcely have borne traces of footsteps, for it was one uniform mass of slaty shingle, with here and there the backbone of a fish, and scattered fragments of seaweed, washed up by the storms, on this low bleak shore. I cannot fancy desolation more perfect than this dreary spot; slightly undulating, but never sufficient to lose sight of the sea; not a particle of shelter to be found; not a

rock, nor even a stone large enough to sit upon when weary. Of vegetation, no trace could be met with; even a patch of moss or a lichen would have been a blessing to see; but there were neither. At last, as I journeyed on, I wandered beyond the sound of the sea as it broke upon the low strand, and then the silence became actually appalling. But a few moments back, and the loud booming of the breakers stunned the ear; and now, as I stopped to listen, I could hear my own heart as in full, thick beat it smote against my ribs. I could not dismiss the impression that such a stillness, thus terrible, would prevail on the day of judgment, when, after the graves had given up their millions of dead, and the agonizing cry for mercy had died away, then, as in a moment of dread suspense, the air would be motionless, not a leaf to stir, not a wing to cleave it. Such possession of me did this notion take that I fell upon my knees and sobbed aloud, while, with trembling and uplifted hands, I prayed that I too might be pardoned.

So powerful is the influence of a devotional feeling, no matter how associated with error, how alloyed by the dross of superstition, that I, who but an instant back could scarcely drag my wearied limbs along for very despair, became of a sudden trustful and courageous. Life seemed no longer the worthless thing it did a few minutes before; on the contrary, I was ready to dare anything to preserve it; and so, with renewed vigor I again set forward.

At each little swell of the ground, I gazed eagerly about me, hoping to see the log-hut, but in vain; nothing but the same wearisome monotony met my view. The sun was now high, and I could easily see that I was following out the direction Halkett gave me, and which I continued to repeat over and over to

myself as I went along. This and watching my shadow—the only one that touched the earth—were my occupations. It may seem absurd, even to downright folly; but when from any change in the direction of my course the shadow did not fall in front of me, where I could mark it, my spirits fell, and my heavy heart grew heavier.

When, however, it did precede me, I was never wearied watching how it dived down the little slopes, and rose again on the opposite bank, bending with each swell of the ground. Even this was companionship,—its very motion smacked of life.

At length I came upon a little pool of rain-water, and, although far from clear, it reflected the bright blue sky and white clouds so temptingly that I sat down beside it to make my breakfast. As I sat thus, Hope was again with me, and I fancied how—in some long distant time, when favored by fortune, and possessed of every worldly gift, with rank, and riches, and honor—I should remember the hour when, a poor, friendless outcast, I ate my lonely meal on Anticosti. I fancied even, how friends would listen almost incredulously to the tale, and with what traits of pity or of praise they would follow me in my story.

I felt I was not doomed to die in that dreary land, that my own courage would sustain me; and, thus armed, I again set out.

Although I walked from daybreak to late evening, it was only a short time before darkness closed in that I saw a bulky mass straight before me, which I knew must be the log-house. I could scarcely drag my legs along a few moments before; but now I broke into a run, and with many a stumble, and more than one fall,—for I never turned my eyes from

the hut,—I at last reached a little cleared spot of ground, in the midst of which stood the “Refuge-house.”

What a moment of joy was that as, unable to move farther, I sat down upon a little bench in front of the hut! All sense of my loneliness, all memory of my desolation, was lost in an instant. There was my home; how strange a word for that sad-looking hut of pine-logs, in a lone island, uninhabited! No matter, it would be my shelter and my refuge till better days came round; and with that stout resolve I entered the great roomy apartment, which in the settling gloom of night seemed immense.

Striking a light, I proceeded to take a survey of my territory, which I rejoiced to see contained a great metal stove and an abundant supply of bed-clothing,—precautions required by the frequency of ships being ice-bound in these latitudes. There were several casks of biscuits, some flour, a large chest of maize, besides three large tanks of water, supplied by the rain. A few bags of salt and some scattered objects of clothing completed the catalogue, which, if not very luxurious, contained nearly everything of absolute necessity.

I lighted a good fire in the stove, less because I felt cold, for it was still autumn, than for the companionship of the bright blaze and the crackling wood. This done, I proceeded to make myself a bed on one of the platforms, arranged like bed-places round the walls, and of which I saw the upper ones seemed to have a preference in the opinion of my predecessors, since, in these, the greater part of the bed-clothing was to be found,—a choice I could easily detect the reason of, in the troops of rats which walked to and fro, with a most contemptuous indifference to my presence; some of them standing

near me while I made my bed, and looking, as doubtless they felt, considerably surprised at the nature of my operations. Promising myself to open a spirited campaign against them on the morrow, I trimmed and lighted a large lamp, which from its position had defied their attempt on the oil it still contained; and then, a biscuit in hand, betook myself to bed, watching with an interest not, I own, altogether pleasant, the gambols of these primitive natives of Anticosti.

From my earliest years I had an antipathy to rats,—so great that it mastered all the instincts of my courage. I feared them with a fear I should not have felt in presence of a wild beast, and I was confident that had I been attacked vigorously by even a single rat, the natural disgust would have rendered me unable to cope with him. When very young, I remembered hearing the story of an officer who, desirous of visiting the vaults under St. Patrick's Church, in Dublin, descended into them under the escort of the sexton. By some chance they separated from each other, and the sexton, after in vain seeking and calling for his companion for several hours, concluded that he had already returned to the upper air; and so he returned also, locking and barring the heavy door, as was his wont. The following day the officer's friends, alarmed at his absence, proceeded to make search for him through the city, and at last, learning that he had visited the cathedral, went thither, and even examined the vaults, when what was their horror to discover a portion of the brass ornament of his shako and a broken sword in the midst of several hundreds of rats, dead and dying,—the terrible remains of a combat that must have lasted for hours. This story, for the truth of which some persons yet living will vouch, I heard when a

mere child; and perhaps to its influence may I date a species of terror that has always been too much for either my reason or my courage.

If I slept, then, it was more owing to my utter weariness and exhaustion than to that languid frame of mind; and although too tired to dream, my first waking thought was how to commence hostilities against the rats. As to any personal hand-to-hand action, I need scarcely say I declined engaging in such; and, my supply of gunpowder being scanty, the method I hit upon was to make a species of grenade, by inserting a quantity of powder with a sufficiency of broken glass into a bottle, leaving an aperture through the cork for a fuse; then, having smeared the outside of the bottle plentifully with oil, of which I discovered a supply in bladders suspended from the ceiling, I retired to my berth, with the other extremity of the fuse in my hand, ready to ignite when the moment came.

I had not long to wait; my enemies, bold from long impunity, came fearlessly forward, and surrounded the bottle in myriads; it became a scene like an election row, to witness their tumbling and rolling over each other. Nor could I bring myself to cut short the festivity, till I began to entertain fears for the safety of the bottle, which already seemed to be loosened from its bed of clay. Then at last I applied a match to my cord, and almost before I could cover my head with the blanket, the flask exploded, with a crash and a cry that showed me its success. The battle-field was truly a terrible sight, for the wounded were far more numerous than the dead, and I, shame to say, had neither courage nor humanity to finish their sufferings, but lay still, while their companions dragged them away in various stages of suffering.

I at first supposed that this was an exploit that could only succeed but once, and that the well-known sagacity of the creatures would have made them avoid so costly a temptation. Nothing of the kind; they were perfect Scythians in their love of oil; and as often as I repeated my experiment, they were ready to try their fortunes. Or perhaps they had some of the gambler's element in their nature, and each felt that he might win where others lost.

I had made Halkett a promise that for a couple of days, at least, I would not hoist the signal-flag, lest any accident should induce Sir Dudley to suspect my place of refuge, so that I was completely reduced to my campaign against the rats for occupation and amusement. So far as I could discover, the little island, traverse it how I would, never varied, the same rise and swell of surface, clad with loose stone, lay on every side; and so depressing had this mournful uniformity become to me that I rarely ventured out of the hut, or, when I did, it was to sit upon the little bench outside the door, from which a sea view extended over the wide waters of the Gulf.

To sit here and try to decipher the names cut into the wood was my constant occupation. What histories, too, did I weave of those who carved these letters; and how did they fix themselves in my mind, each name suggesting an identity, till I felt as if I had known them intimately. Some seemed the precious work of weeks; and it was easy to see that after the letters were cut, the sculptor had gone on embellishing and ornamenting his work for very lack of labor. Others, again, were mere initials, and one was a half-finished name, leaving me to the perpetual doubt whether he had been rescued from his captivity, or died ere it was completed.

Between my hours spent here and the little duties

of my household, with usually three or four explosions against my rats, the day went over,—I will not say rapidly, but pass it did; and each night brought me nearer to the time when I should hoist my signal, and hope—ay, that was the great supporter through all—hope for rescue.

It was now the third night of my being on the island, and I sat at my fire trying to invent some new mode for the destruction of my enemies, for my last charge of powder had been expended. I had nothing remaining, save the loading in my pistol. It was true that I had succeeded to a great extent; the creatures no longer appeared with their former air of assurance, nor in large bodies. Their army was evidently disorganized; they no longer took the field in battalions, but in scattered guerilla parties, without discipline or courage. Even had my ammunition lasted, it is more than doubtful that my tactics would have continued to have the same success; they had begun to dread the bottle, like a reformed drunkard. Often have I seen them approach within a few feet of it, and wait patiently till some younger and more adventurous spirit would venture nearer, and then, at the slightest stir,—the least rustling of my bed-clothes,—away they went in full career. It was evident that the secret, like most great mysteries of the same kind, had had its day. This was consolatory, too, as I had no longer the means of continuing my siege operations; while the caution and reserve of the enemy suggested a system of defence of the simplest, but most effectual kind, which was, to place a certain number of bottles at different parts of the hut, the very sight of which inspired terror; and if followed by any noise, was certain to secure me, for some time at least, from all molestation.

Shall I tell the reader how this stratagem first occurred to me? It was simply thus: In one of the early but unrecorded years of my history, I used to act as driver to the Moate and Kilbeggan caravan,—not, indeed, as the recognized coachee of that very rickety and most precarious conveyance, but as a kind of “deputy assistant” to the paid official, who, having a wife at Kilbeggan, usually found some excuse for stopping at Clara, and sending me forward with the passengers,—a proceeding, I am bound to own, not over consistent with humanity to “man or beast.” Many were the misadventures of that luckless conveniency, and the public were loud in their denunciations of it; but as nobody knew the proprietors, nor did the most searching scrutiny detect the existence of a “way-bill,” the complaints were uttered to the wind, and I was at full liberty “to do my stage” in three hours, or one half the time, as I fancied.

The passengers at length learned this valuable fact, and found that greasing my palm was a sure method of oiling the wheels. All complaints gradually subsided; in fact, the dumb animals were the only ones who had any right to make them. I drove them at a very brisk pace,—a thriving trade; the caravan became popular, and my fame rose as the horses' condition declined. At last the secret was discovered; and instead of my imposing whip of four yards and a half of whipcord, they reduced me to a stunted bit of stick, with a little drooping lash that would n't reach the tail of my one leader. My receipts fell off from that hour; in fact, instead of praises and sixpences, I now got nothing but curses and hard names; and at one hill, near “Horse-leap,” which I used in my prosperous days to “go at” in a slashing canter, amid a shower of encomiums, I was now obliged to stagger

slowly up, with four-and-twenty small farmers, and maybe a priest, in full cry at my sulkiness, laziness, incivility, and other good gifts; and all this, ay, and more, for lack of a bit of whipcord.

I have been told that very great people will stoop to low alliances when hard pressed; even cabinet ministers, I believe, have now and then acknowledged very dubious allies. Let not Con Cregan, then, be reproached if he called in the help of a little bare-footed boy who used to beg on the hill of Horse-leap, and who, at the sound of the approaching caravan, sallied forth with a long branch of an ash-tree, and belabored the team into some faint resemblance to a canter. Through this auxiliary I recovered in part my long-lost popularity, and was likely to be again reinstated in public favor, when my assistant caught the measles, and I was once more reduced to my own efforts.

In this emergency I had nothing for it but a stratagem; and so, as the conveyance arrived at the foot of the hill, and the horses, dropping their heads, were gradually subsiding into the little shuffling amble that precedes a slow walk, I used to scream out at the top of my voice all my accustomed exhortations to the boy. “Ah, hit him again, Tommy, —into him, boy,—under the traces, my lad!—give him enough of it!—welt him well. Ha! there!” exclamations that, from old associations, always stimulated the wretched beasts into a canter; and under the impression of this salutary terror, we used to reach the top almost as speedily as in the old days of the penal code.

The same device now aided me against the rats of Anticosti; and if any one will say to what end this narrative of an encounter so insignificant, my answer is, that whether in the St. Lawrence or in St.

Stephen's, rats are far more formidable than their size or strength would seem to imply; and whether they nibble your rags or your reputation, their success is invariably the same.

Four days had now elapsed, and I concluded that the yacht must ere this have been miles on her voyage up the river. The next morning, then, I should venture to hoist the signal, and thus apprise the passing ships that one deserted and forlorn creature, at least, still lingered on the miserable island.

I sat at my fire till a late hour. I was lower in spirits than usual. I had watched the Gulf from sunrise to sunset, and without seeing one sail upon its surface. A light breeze was blowing from the northward, and on this I supposed many of the outward vessels would be borne along; but not one appeared. From time to time a fleeting cloud, resting for a moment on the horizon, would assume the semblance of a ship; but at length I grew accustomed to these deceptions, and suffered little or no disappointment when a second glance at the spot failed to detect them.

Once or twice the thought crossed my mind that I might never leave the island, that winter might close in, and the Gulf be frozen before I could make my escape; and I actually shuddered at the very notion of a fate so terrible. I cowered nearer to the fire as the flame subsided, and was sitting with my hands outstretched over the blaze, when the sudden crash of one of the bottles behind startled me. Were the rats already regaining courage in anticipation of the time when I could no longer resist them? With this idea, I turned my head round. The flame threw a long ray of light upon the floor as I moved, and in the midst of this I beheld, at a distance of about

three yards off, a large black head, with two immense and bloodshot eyes glaring fixedly at me. It seemed to rise out of the earth, above which it rose scarcely more than a foot in height.

Paralyzed by terror, I could not stir, I could scarcely breathe, as with a slow and nodding motion the large black face came nearer; and now I could see that it was a man—a negro,—who on hands and knees was slowly creeping towards me. Overwhelmed by fear as I was, I noted the features as marked by age and worn by want; they resembled those of a wild beast rather than of a human creature. More from the force of a mere mechanical impulse than with any notion of defence, for which my terror totally incapacitated me, I had drawn my pistol from my bosom, and held it pointed towards him. “No fire!—no fire!” cried the creature, in a low, faint voice; and at the same time, while resting on one hand, he held up with the other a long bright knife in an attitude of menace.

“No nearer, then!” screamed I, as I fell back beside the stove, and still kept my eyes fixed upon him whom now I knew to be the Black Boatswain; and thus we remained, each watching the other, while the fire flickered and threw its fitful glare over the gloomy space around us. As we were thus, I saw, or I thought I saw, the negro stealthily drawing up his legs, as if for a spring, and in my terror I believe I should have pulled the trigger, when suddenly the knife dropped from his hand, and pointing with his finger to his dry, cracked lips, he said, “A boire, “—water.

The look of earnest, almost passionate entreaty of the poor creature's face, the expression of want and misery, struggling with a faint hope, as he uttered these words, routed all fears for myself; and filling a

cup from the tank with water, I emptied the last remaining drops of my brandy-flask into it, and held it to his mouth.



He swallowed it greedily; and then, clasping my wrist with his gaunt and bony fingers, held me fast for a few seconds while he recovered his breath; at last, with an effort that seemed almost convulsive, he said some words in Spanish which I could not understand. I shook my head to show him my ignorance of the language, and then, fixing his eye full upon me, he said, “Alone, here? boy alone?”

Understanding that this referred to myself, I answered at once that I was alone, and had been deserted by my companions.

“Bad men, white men!” cried he, gnashing his teeth savagely; while again he pointed to his lips, and muttered, “Water!” I endeavored to free myself from his grasp to fill the cup once more; but he held me firmly, and showed by a sign that he wished me

to assist him to reach the tank. I accordingly stooped down to help him, and now perceived that he could do little more than drag his legs forward and support himself on the knees; being either wholly or in part paralyzed from his hips downwards. “Ah, foco!” cried he, twice or thrice, and then changed to the word “Feu!” “Le feu!” on which his gaze was fixed with a horrid earnestness.

It was not without labor and much exertion that I succeeded in dragging him near the embers of the fire; but having done so, I quickly replenished the dying flame, and, fanning it with my hat, soon succeeded in making a cheerful blaze once more. “Buono! goot! goot!” said he, several times, as he held his shrivelled and wasted fingers almost into the fire.

“Are you hungry?” said I, bending down to make myself heard.

He nodded twice.

“Can you eat biscuit? I have nothing else,” said I; for I half feared that the hard, dry food would be impracticable for his almost toothless jaws.

He said something about “Guisado,” once or twice; and at last made a sign that I understood to mean that the biscuit might be softened in water for him. And with that I placed a pot of water on the fire, and soon saw by the expression of his eye that I had divined his meaning.

As I continued to blow the fire, and occasionally examined the water to see if it boiled, I could mark that the negro's eyes never once quitted me, but, with a restless activity, followed me wherever I went, or whatever I did; and although from his age, and the dreadful infirmity he labored under, I felt I should prove his equal in any struggle, I own that I

cast many a sidelong look towards him, lest he should take me by surprise. That he was the notorious Black Boatswain of whom I had heard so much, I had no doubt whatever; and I felt not a little vain of my own courage and presence of mind as I saw myself so possessed and collected in such company.

“Give! give!” cried he, impatiently, as I examined the mess of steeping biscuit, and for which he seemed ravenously eager; and at length I removed it from the fire, and placed it before him. Such voracity as his I never witnessed, save in the case of Sir Dudley's lions; he crammed the food with both hands into his mouth, and devoured it with all the savage earnestness of a wild beast. Twice was I obliged to replenish the mess; and each time did it vanish with the same despatch.

He now lay back on one arm, and, half closing his eyes, appeared as if he was going asleep; but at the least stir or movement on my part, I saw that his wild, red-streaked eyes followed me at once.

Halkett had given me a little bag of tobacco at parting, saying that although I was no smoker, I should soon learn to become one in my solitude. This I now produced, and offered him a handful.

The dark features were immediately lighted up with an almost frantic expression of pleasure, as he clutched the precious weed; and tearing off a fragment of the paper, he rolled it into the shape of a cigarette.

“No smoke?” asked he, as I sat watching his preparations.

I shook my head. “Ah!” cried he, laying down the tobacco before him. “Tehoka, here,” said he, pointing to it.

“I don't understand,” said I; “what is Tehoka?”

“Bad! bad!” said he, shaking both hands; “weed make negro so———, so———,” and he opened his mouth wide, and dropped his arms heavily backwards, to represent sickness, or perhaps death.

“No, no,” said I; “this is good, a friend gave it to me.”

“Smoke,” said he, pushing it over towards me; and I saw now that my abstaining had excited his suspicions.

“If you like, I will smoke,” said I, setting to work to manufacture a cigar like his own.

He sat eying me all the while; and when I proceeded to fill it with tobacco, he leaned over to see that I did not attempt any sleight of hand to deceive him.

“Will that do?” said I, showing him the little paper tube.

“Smoke,” said he, gravely.

It was only after watching me for several minutes that he took courage to venture himself; and even then he scrutinized the tobacco as keenly as though it demanded all his acuteness to prevent stratagem. At length he did begin; and certainly never did anything seem to effect a more powerful and more immediate influence. The fiery, restless eyes grew heavy and dull; the wide-distended nostrils ceased to dilate with their former convulsive motion. His cheek, seamed with privation and passion, lay flaccid and at rest, and a look of lethargic ease stole over all the features one by one, till at last the head fell forward on his chest, his arm slipped softly from beneath him, and he rolled heavily back,—sunk in the deepest sleep.

I soon abandoned my tobacco now, which had already begun to produce a feeling of giddiness and confusion very unfavorable to cool determination,—sensations which did not subside so readily as I could have wished; for as I sat gazing on my swarthy companion, fancies the wildest and most absurd associated themselves with the strange reality. The terrible tales I once listened to about the “Black Boatswain” came to mingle with the present. The only remnant of right reason left prompted me to keep up my fire; a certain terror of being alone and in the dark with the negro predominating over every other thought.

By the bright blaze, which soon arose, I could now mark the enormous figure, which, in all the abandonment of heavy slumber, lay outstretched before me. Although it was evident he was very old, the gigantic limbs showed what immense strength he must have possessed; while in the several white cicatrices that marked his flesh, I could reckon a great number of wounds, some of them of fearful extent. The only covering he wore was a piece of sailcloth wrapped round his body; over this he had a blanket, through a round hole in which his head issued, like as in a Mexican poncho, leaving his sinewy limbs perfectly naked. A bit of ragged, worn bunting—part, as it seemed, of an old union-jack—was bound round his head, and, in its showy colors, served to enhance the stern expression of his harsh features.

As my senses became clearer, I began to imagine how it happened that he came to the hut, since in all the narratives I had heard of him, the greatest doubt existed that he was still living, so effectually did he manage his concealment. At last, and by dint of much thought, I hit upon what I suspected to be the

real solution of the difficulty, which was, that he was accustomed to venture hither whenever the signal-flag was not hoisted; and as I had not done so, that he was under the belief that he was the only living man on the island.

That he must have contrived his hiding-place with great success was clear enough; for whether the allegations against him were true or false, they were so universally believed by sailors that if he had been discovered they would unquestionably have carried him off to Quebec. It was now in *my* power "to do the state this service;" and I began to canvass with myself all the reasons for and against it. If, on the one hand, it reminded me of the old legends I used to read about striplings that led captive huge giants or fierce dragons, on the other, I felt it would be a species of treachery to one who had eaten bread from my hands. Besides, to what end—even supposing him guilty to any extent—to what end bring him now to justice, when a few days, or hours, perhaps, would close a life whose suffering was manifest enough? And, lastly, was I so certain of escape myself that I already plotted carrying away a prisoner with me? The last reflection saved me the trouble of thinking much more on the others; and so I fell a pondering over myself and my destitution.

Not long was I permitted to indulge in such reveries; for the negro now began to dream, and talk aloud with a rapidity of utterance and vehemence very different from the monosyllabic efforts he had favored me with. As the language was Spanish, I could catch nothing of his meaning; but I could see that some fearful reminiscence was agitating his mind, by the working of his fingers and the violent contortions of his face.

In the struggle of his paroxysm—for it was really

little less—he tore open the coarse rag of canvas that he wore, and I could perceive something fastened round his neck by a piece of spun-yarn. At first I thought it one of those charms that seamen are so fond of carrying about them,—amulets against Heaven knows what kind of dangers: but, on stooping down, I perceived it was an old leather pocket-book which once had been red, but by time and dirt was almost black.

More than once he clutched this in his hand, with a wild energy, as if it was his heart's treasure; and then the great drops of sweat would start out upon his forehead, and his parted lips would quiver with agony. In one of these struggles he tore the book from the cord, and, opening it, seemed to seek for something among its contents. The rapidity of the movement, and the seeming collectedness of every gesture, made me believe that he was awake; but I soon saw that his great and staring eyeballs were not turned to the spot, but were fixed on vacancy.

His motions were now more and more hurried; at one time his fingers would turn over the papers in the pocket-book, at another he would grope with his hand along the ground, and pat the earth down with his palm, as if, having buried something in the earth, he would conceal every trace of it from discovery; and at these moments the Spanish word *oro*, gold, would escape him in a half-sigh; and this and the word “Guajaqualla” were the only ones I could catch; but my mind retained both for many a day after.

At last he crushed the papers hurriedly together and closed the pocket-book; but in doing so, a single slip of paper fell to the ground. I leaned over, and caught it; and by the light of the fire I read the following lines, which were in print, and apparently cut from the column of a newspaper:—

ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD.

Any one will be entitled to the above reward who may detect or give such information as may lead to the detection of Menelaus Crick, a negro slave, aged forty-eight; he stands six feet two high; broad chest and shoulders, the right higher than the left; has marks of the lash on back, and two cutlass scars on the face; the great toe of the left foot is wanting, and he walks occasionally with difficulty, from a gunshot wound in the spine.

As he is a fellow of resolute character and great strength, all persons are hereby warned not to attempt his capture, save in sufficient numbers. He was last seen at San Luis, and is supposed to have gone in the direction of Guajaqualla, where it is said he worked once as a gold- washer.

Address: The Office of the "Picayune "— Letter—T. G— B—. New Orleans.

There were a few words in Spanish scrawled on the back.

"Here is the man!" said I, looking down on the sleeping figure; "who would have thought a thousand dollars could be made of him?" Not, indeed, that I speculated on such an unholy gain. No, the very offer enlisted my sympathies in favor of the poor wretch; besides, how many years ago must that advertisement have appeared? He was forty-eight at that time, and now his age might be nigh eighty. My curiosity became intense to see the contents of the pocket-book, from which I could fancy abundant materials to eke out the negro's history. I am afraid that nothing but the terror of discovery prevented my stealing it. I even planned how it might be done

without awaking him; but the long bright knife which glistened in the strap of his blanket admonished me to prudence, and I abstained.

My fire waxed fainter as the dawn drew nigh, and as I was afraid of sleep coming over me, I stepped noiselessly from the hut, and gained the open air. My first occupation was to hoist the signal; and as it rose into the air, I watched its massive folds unfurling, with a throb of hope that gave me new courage. The standard was very lofty, and stood upon a mound of earth; and as the flag itself was large, I had every reason to think it could not escape notice. Scarcely, indeed, had I made fast the halyard than I beheld on the very verge of the horizon what seemed to be a vessel. The moment of sunrise, like that of sunset, is peculiarly favorable to distinct vision; and as the pink line of dawn sheeted over the sea, the dark object stood out clear and sharp; but the next moment the glare of brighter day covered sky and water together, and I could no longer see the ship.

In my anxiety to try and catch sight of it from another spot, I hastened down to the shore; but already a rosy tint was spread over the wide sea, and nothing was discernible except the heaving waves and the streaked sky above them.

I sat upon a rock straining my eyes, but to no purpose; and at last the cold raw air pierced through me, and I remembered that I had left my jacket in the hut. But for this, indeed, I would not have returned to it,—for, without absolute fear of the negro, his repulsive features and scowling look made his companionship far from pleasurable. His suspicion of me, too, might have led him to some act of violence; and therefore I determined, if I were even to seek shelter in the Refuge-house at the other end of the island, I would not go back to this one.

It was some time before I could summon courage to venture back again; and even when I had reached the door, it was not without a struggle with myself that I dared to enter. The daylight was now streaming in, across the long and dreary chamber, and, encouraged by this, I stepped across the threshold. My first glance was towards the stove, where I had left him lying asleep. The fire had burned out, and the negro was gone! With cautious steps, and many a prying glance around, I ventured forward, my heart thumping with a fear I cannot explain,—since his very presence had not caused such terror; but nowhere was he to be found,—not a trace of him remained. Indeed, were it not for the scrap of printed paper, which I had carefully preserved, I should have believed the whole events of the night to be the mere fancies of a dream.

Twice was I obliged to take it from my pocket and read it over, to assure myself that I was not pursuing some hallucination of sleep; and if I felt convinced that the events were real, and had actually happened, I will frankly own that the reality inspired me with a sense of fear which no memory of a mere vision could have inspired.

Daylight is a bold companion, however, and where night would make the heart beat fast and the cheek pale, the sun will give a strong pulse and a ruddy face. This I could not help feeling, as I acknowledged to myself that had it been yet dark, I had rather have perished with cold than sought for my jacket within the hut.

At last, grown bolder, I had even courage to seek for the negro on every side. I examined the berths along the walls; I searched the recesses beside the biscuit-casks; I removed planks and turned over sails; but without success. The difficulty with which he

moved made this seem doubly strange, and satisfied me that his place of concealment could not be far off, —nay, possibly, at that very moment he might be actually watching me, and waiting for a favorable instant to pounce upon me. This dread increased as my search continued to be fruitless; so that I abandoned the pursuit, assured that I had done everything that could have been asked either of my courage or humanity; nor was I sorry to assure myself that I had done enough.

My interest in the subject was soon superseded by one nearer to my heart; for as I left the hut I beheld, about four miles off, a large three-masted vessel bearing up the Gulf, with all her canvas spread. Forgetting the distance, and everything save my longing to be free, I ascended a little eminence, and shouted with all my might, waving my handkerchief back and forward above my head. I cannot describe the transport of delight I felt, at perceiving that a flag was hoisted to the main peak, and soon after lowered,—a recognition of the signal which floated above me. I even cried aloud with joy; and then, in the eagerness of my ecstasy, I set off along the shore, seeking out the best place for a boat to run in.

Never did a ship appear so glorious an object to my eyes; her spars seemed more taper, her sails more snowy, her bearing prouder, than ever a vessel owned before; and when at length I could distinguish the figures of men in the rigging, my heart actually leaped to my mouth with delight.

At last she backed her topsail, and now I saw shooting out from beneath her tall sides a light pinnace, that skimmed the water like a sea-bird. As if they saw me, they headed exactly towards where I stood, and ran the craft into a little bay just at my feet. A crew of four sailors and coxswain now

jumped ashore, and advanced towards me.

“Are there many of you?” said the coxswain, gruffly, and as though nothing were a commoner occurrence in life than to rescue a poor forlorn fellow-creature from an uninhabited rock.

“I am alone, sir,” said I, almost bursting into tears, for mingled joy and disappointment; for I was, I own it, disappointed at the want of sympathy for my lone condition.

“What ship did you belong to, boy?” asked he, as shortly as before.

“A yacht, sir,—the 'Firefly.'”

“Ah, that 's it; so they shoved you ashore here. That's what comes of sailing with gentlemen, as they calls 'em.”

“No, sir; we landed—a few of us—during a calm —”

“Ay, ay,” he broke in, “I know all that,—the old story; you landed to shoot rabbits, and somehow you got separated from the others; the wind sprung up meantime; the yacht fired a gun to come off—eh, is n't that it! Come, my lad, no gammon with me. You 're some infernal young scamp that was 'had up' for punishment, and they either put you ashore here for the rats, or you jumped overboard yourself, and floated hither on a spare hencoop. But never mind,—we 'll give you a run to Quebec; jump in.”

I followed the order with alacrity, and soon found myself on board the “Hampden” transport, which was conveying the —th Regiment of Foot to Canada.

“No one but this here boy, sir,” said the coxswain; shoving me before him towards the skipper, who, amidst a crowd of officers in undress, sat smoking on the after-deck.

A very significant grunt seemed to imply that the vessel's way was lost for very slight cause.

“He says as how he belonged to a yacht, sir,” resumed the coxswain.

“Whose yacht, boy?” asked one of the officers.

“Sir Dudley Broughton's, sir; the 'Firefly,'” said I.

“Broughton! Broughton!” said an old, shrewd-looking man, in a foraging-cap; “don't you know all about him? But, to be sure, he was before *your* day;” and then, changing his discourse to French,—with which language, thanks to my kind old friend Father Rush, I was sufficiently acquainted to understand what was said,—he added, “Sir Dudley was in the Life Guards once; his wife eloped with a Russian or a Polish Count,—I forget which,—and he became deranged in consequence. Were you long with Sir Dudley, boy?” asked he, addressing me in English.

“Not quite two months, sir.”

“Not a bad spell with such a master,” resumed he, in French, “if the stories they tell of him be true. How did you happen to be left on Anticosti?”

“No use in asking, Captain!” broke in the skipper. “You never get a word of truth from chaps like that; go for'ard, boy.”

And with this brief direction I was dismissed. All my fancied heroism—all my anticipated glory—vanishing at once; the only thought my privations excited being that I was a young scamp, who, if he told truth, would confess that all his sufferings and misfortunes had been but too well merited.

This was another lesson to me in life, and one which perhaps I could not have acquired more thoroughly than by a few days on Anticosti.



"A GLIMPSE OF ANOTHER OPENING IN LIFE."

CHAPTER XII. A GLIMPSE OF ANOTHER OPENING IN LIFE

Although only a few hundred miles from Quebec, our voyage still continued for several days; the "Hampden" like all transport-ships, was only "great in a calm," and the Gulf-stream being powerful enough to retard far better sailers.

To those who, like myself, were not pressed for time, or had no very pleasing vista opening to them on shore, the voyage was far from disagreeable. As the channel narrowed, the tall mountains of Vermont came into view, and gradually the villages on the shore could be detected,—small, dark clusters, in the midst of what appeared interminable pine forests. Here and there less pleasant sights presented themselves, in the shape of dismasted hulks, being the remains of vessels which had got fastened in the ice of the early “fall,” and were deserted by the crews.

On the whole, it was novelty, and novelty alone, lent any charm to the picture; for the shores of the Gulf, until you come within two days' journey of Quebec, are sadly discouraging and dreary. The Log-house is itself a mournful object; and when seen standing alone in some small clearing, with blackened stumps studding the space, through which two or three figures are seen to move, is inexpressibly sad-looking and solitary.

Now and then we would pass some little town, with a humble imitation of a harbor for shipping, and a quay; and in the midst a standard, with a flag, would denote that some Government official resided there,—the reward, doubtless, of some gallant deed, some bold achievement afloat; for I heard that they were chiefly lieutenants in the navy, who, having more intimacy with French grape and canister than with “First Lords,” were fain to spend the remnant of their days in these gloomiest of exiles.

The absence of all signs of life and movement in the picture cannot fail to depress the spectator. No team of oxen draws the loaded wagon along; not a plough is seen. There are no gatherings of people in the open places of the towns; no cattle can be

descried on the hills. The settlements appear like the chance resting-places of men travelling through the dark forests, and not their homes for life. At times a single figure would be seen on some high cliff above the sea, standing motionless, and, to all seeming, watching the ship. I cannot say how deeply such a sight always affected me; and I could not help fancying him some lone emigrant, following with beating heart the track he was never again to travel.

Apparently, these things made a deeper impression on me than upon most others on board. As for the soldiers, they were occupied with getting their arms and equipments in order, to make a respectable appearance on landing. It was one eternal scene of soap and pipeclay all day long; and creatures barely able to crawl, from sea-sickness and debility, were obliged to scour and polish away as if the glory of England depended upon the show the gallant—th would make, the day we should set foot on shore. The skipper, too, was bent on making an equally imposing show to the landsmen; his weather topmasts were stowed away, and in their place were hoisted some light and taper spars, not exactly in accordance with the lubberly hull beneath. Pitch and white paint were in great requisition too; and every day saw some half-dozen of the crew suspended over the side, either scraping or painting for the very life. Many a shirt dangled from the boom, and more than one low-crowned hat received a fresh coat of glistening varnish; all were intent on the approaching landing, even to the group of lounging officers on the poop, who had begun to reduce their beards and whiskers to a more “regulation” standard, and who usually passed the morning inspecting epaulettes and sword-knots, shakos, gorgets, and such like, with the importance of men who felt what

havoc among the fair Canadians they were soon about to inflict.

My services were in request among this section of the passengers, since I had become an expert hand at cleaning arms and equipments with Sir Dudley; besides that, not wearing his Majesty's cloth, the officers were at liberty to talk to me with a freedom they could not have used with their men. They were all more or less curious to hear about Sir Dudley, of whom, without transgressing Halkett's caution, I was able to relate some amusing particulars. As my hearers invariably made their comments on my narratives in French, I was often amused to hear them record their opinions of myself, expressed with perfect candor in my own presence. The senior officer was a Captain Pike, an old, keen-eyed, pock-marked man, with a nose as thin as a sheet of parchment. He seemed to read me like a book; at least, so far as I knew, his opinions perfectly divined my true character.

“Our friend Con,” he would say, “is an uncommonly shrewd varlet, but he is only telling us some of the truth; he sees that he is entertaining enough, and won't produce 'Lafitte' so long as we enjoy his 'Ordinaire.'”

“Now, what will become of such a fellow as that?” asked another. “Heaven knows! such rascals turn out consummate scoundrels, or rise to positions of eminence. Never was there a more complete lottery than the life of a young rogue like that.”

“I can't fancy,” drawled out a young subaltern, “how an ignorant cur, without education, manners, and means, can ever rise to anything.”

“Who can say whether he has not all these?” said the captain, quietly. “Trust me, Carrington, you'd cut

a much poorer figure in *his* place than would he in *yours*."

The ensign gave a haughty laugh, and the captain resumed: "I said it were not impossible that he had each of the three requisites you spoke of, and I repeat it. He may, without possessing learning, have picked up that kind of rudimentary knowledge that keenness and zeal improve on every day; and as for tact and address, such fellows possess both as a birthright. I have a plan in my head for the youngster; but you must all pledge yourselves to secrecy, or I'll not venture upon it."

Here a very general chorus of promises and "on honors" broke forth; after the subsidence of which, Captain Pike continued, still, however, in French; and although being far from a proficient in that tongue, I was able to follow the tenor of his discourse, and divine its meaning, particularly as from time to time some of the listeners would propound a question or two in English, by the aid of which I invariably contrived to keep up with the "argument."

"You know, lads," said the captain, "that our old friend Mrs. Davis, who keeps the boarding-house in the Upper Town, has been always worrying us to bring her out what she calls a first-rate man-servant from England; by which she means a creature capable of subsisting on quarter rations, and who, too far from home to turn restive, must put up with any wages. The very fact that he came out special, she well knows, will be a puff for the 'Establishment' among the Canadian Members of Parliament and the small fry of officials who dine at the house; and as to qualifications, who will dare question the 'London footman '?"

“Pooh, pooh!” broke in Carrington; “that fellow don't look like a London footman.”

“Who says he does?” retorted the captain. “Who ever said brass buttons and blue beads were gold and turquoise? But they pass for the same in villages not fifty miles from where we are sailing. Mother Davis was wife of a skipper in the timber trade who died harbor-master here; she is not a very likely person to be critical about a butler or footman's accomplishments.”

“By Jove,” cried another, “Pike is all right! Go on with your plan.”

“My plan is this: we'll dress up our friend Con, here, give him a few lessons about waiting at table, delivering a message, and so forth, furnish him with a jolly set of characters, and start him on the road of life with Mother Davis.”

A merry roar of approving laughter broke forth from the party at this brief summary of Captain Pike's intentions; and indeed it was not without great difficulty I avoided joining in it.

“He looks so devilish young!” said Carrington; “he can't be fifteen.”

“Possibly not fourteen,” said Pike; “but we'll shave his head and give him a wig. I'll answer for the 'make up;' and as I have had some experience of private theatricals, rely on 't he'll pass muster.”

“How will you dress him, Pike?”

“In livery,—a full suit of snuff-brown, lined with yellow; I 'll devote a large cloak I have to the purpose, and we 'll set the tailor at work to-day.”

“Is he to have shorts?”

“Of course; some of you must 'stand' silk stockings for him, for we shall have to turn him out with a

good kit."

A very generous burst of promises here broke in, about shirts, vests, cravats, gloves, and other wearables, which, I own it, gave the whole contrivance a far brighter coloring in my eyes than when it offered to be a mere lark.

"Will the rogue consent, think you?" asked Carrington.

"Will he prefer a bed and a dinner to nothing to eat and a siesta under the planks on the quays of Quebec?" asked Pike, contemptuously. "Look at the fellow! watch his keen eyes and his humorous mouth when he's speaking to you, and say if he would n't do the thing for the fun of it? Not but a right clever chap like him will see something besides a joke in the whole contrivance.

"I foresee he 'll break down at the first go-off," said Carrington, who through all the controversy seemed impressed with the very humblest opinion of my merits.

"I foresee exactly the reverse," said Pike. "I've seldom met a more acute youngster, nor one readier to take up your meaning; and if the varlet does n't get spoilt by education, but simply follows out the bent of his own shrewd intelligence, he'll do well yet."

"You rate him more highly than I do," said Carrington, again.

"Not impossible either; we take our soundings with very dissimilar lead-lines," said Pike, scoffingly. "My opinion is formed by hearing the boy's own observations about character and life when he was speaking of Broughton; but if you were ten times as right about him, and I twice as many times in the wrong, he 'll do for what I intend him."

The others expressed their full concurrence in the captain's view of the matter, voted me a phoenix of all young vagabonds, and their brother-officer Carrington a downright ass,—both being my own private sentiments to the letter.

And now for an honest avowal! It was the flattery of my natural acuteness—the captain's panegyric on my aptitude and smartness—that won me over to a concurrence in the scheme; for, at heart, I neither liked the notion of “service,” nor the prospect of the abstemious living he had so pointedly alluded to. Still, to justify the favorable impression he had conceived of me, and also with some half hope that I should see “life”—the ruling passion of my mind—under a new aspect, I resolved to accept the proposition so soon as it should be made to me; nor had I long to wait that moment.

“Con, my lad,” said the captain, “you may leave that belt there; come aft here,—I want to speak to you. What are your plans when you reach Quebec? Do you mean to look after your old master, Sir Dudley, again?”

“No, sir; I have had enough of salt water for a time,—I 'll keep my feet on dry land now.”

“But what line of life do you propose to follow?”

I hesitated for the answer, and was silent.

“I mean,” resumed he, “is it your intention to become a farm-servant with some of the emigrant families, or will you seek for employment in the town?”

“Or would you like to enlist, my lad?” broke in another.

“No, thank you, sir; promotion is slow from the ranks, and I 've a notion one ought to move 'up,' as they move 'on,' in life.”

“Listen to the varlet now,” said Pike, in French; “the fellow's as cool with us as if we were exactly his equals, and no more. I 'll tell you what it is, lads,” added he, seriously, “when such rogues journey the road of life singly, they raise *themselves* to station and eminence; but when they herd together in masses, these are the fellows who pull *others* down, and effect the most disastrous social revolutions.—So you 'll not be a soldier Con?” added he, resuming the vernacular; “well, what are your ideas as to the civil service?”

“Anything to begin with, sir.”

“Quite right, lad,—well said; a fair start is all you ask?”

“Why, sir, I carry no weight, either in the shape of goods or character; and if a light equipment gives speed, I 've a chance to be placed well.”

The captain gave a side-glance at the others as though to say, “Was I correct in my opinion of this fellow?” and then went on: “I have a thought in my head for you, Con: there is a lady of my acquaintance at Quebec wants a servant; now, if you could pick up some notion of the duties, I 've no doubt you'd learn the remainder rapidly.”

“I used to wait on Sir Dudley, sir, and am therefore not entirely ignorant.”

“Very true; and as these gentlemen and myself will put you into training while the voyage lasts, I hope you 'll do us credit in the end.”

“Much will depend on my mistress, sir,” said I, determining to profit by what I had overheard, but yet not use the knowledge rashly or unadvisedly. “Should she not be very exacting and very particular, but have a little patience with me, accepting zeal for skill, I 've no doubt, sir, I 'll not discredit your

recommendation."

"That's the very point I'm coming to, Con," said the captain, lowering his voice to a most confidential tone.

"The true state of the case is this: "—and here he entered upon an explanation which I need not trouble the reader by recapitulating, since it merely went the length I have already related, save that he added, in conclusion, this important piece of information:—

"Your golden rule, in every difficulty, will then be, to assure Mrs. Davis that you always did so, whatever it may be, when you were living with Lord George, or Sir Charles, or the Bishop of Drone. You understand me, eh?"

"I think so, sir," said I, brightening up, and at the same time stealing an illustration from my old legal practices. "In Mrs. Davis's court there are no precedents."

"Exactly, Con; hit the nail on the very head, my boy!"

"It will not be a very difficult game, sir, if the guests are like the mistress."

"So they are, for the most part; now and then you'll have a military and naval officer at table, and you'll be obliged to look out sharp, and not let them detect you; but with the skippers of merchantmen, dockyard people, storekeepers, male and female, I fancy you can hold your own."

"Why, sir, I hope they'll be satisfied with the qualification that contented my former titled masters," said I, with a knowing twinkle of the eye he seemed to relish prodigiously, and an assumed tone of voice that suited well the part I was to play.

“Come down below, now, and we 'll write your characters for you;” and so he beckoned the others to accompany him to the cabin, whither I followed them.

An animated debate ensued as to the number and nature of the certificates I ought to possess, some being of opinion that I should have those of every kind and degree; others alleging that my age forbade the likelihood of my having served in more than two or three situations.

“What say you to this, lads?” said Pike, reading from a rough and much-corrected draft before him:—

> The bearer, Cornelius Cregan, has lived in my service ten months as a page; he is scrupulously honest, active, and intelligent, well acquainted with the duties of his station, and competent to discharge them in the first families. I now dismiss him at his own request. Cecilia Mendleshaw.

“Gad! I'd rather make him start as what they call in his own country a 'Tay-boy,'” said Carrington, —“one of those bits of tarnished gold-lace and gaiters seen about the outskirts of Dublin.”

“Your honor is right, sir,” said I, glad to show myself above any absurd vanity on the score of my early beginning; “a 'Tay-boy' on the Rathmines road, able to drive a jaunting-car and wait at table.”

“That's the mark, I believe,” said Pike. “Suppose, then, we say: 'Con Cregan has served me twelve months, waited at table, and taken care of a horse and car.'”

“Ah, sir!” said I, “sure an Irish gentleman with a 'Tay-boy' would be finer spoken than that. It would be: 'I certify that Cornelius Cregan, who served in my establishment as under-butler, and occasionally

assisting the coachman, is a most respectable servant, well-mannered and respectful, having always lived in high situations, and with the most distinguished individuals.'"

"Ah, that's it," broke in Carrington; "'understands lamps, and is perfectly competent to make jellies, soups, and preserves.'"

"Confound it, man! you 're making him a cook."

"By Jove, so I was! It's so hard to remember what the fellow is."

"I think we may leave it to himself," said Pike; "he seems to have a very good notion of what is necessary. So, Master Con, write your own biography, my lad, and we 'll give it all the needful currency of handwriting and seal."

"It's a pity you're a Papist," said another, "or you could have such a recommendation from a 'serious family' I know of in Surrey."

"Never mind," rejoined the captain; "one signed 'P. O. Dowdlum, Bishop of Toronia,' will do even better in the Lower Province."

"Exactly, sir; and, as I used to serve mass once, I can 'come out strong' about my early training with 'his Grace'!"

"Very well," said Pike; "tell the tailor to take your measure for the livery, and you'll wait on us to-day at table." With this order I was dismissed, to con over my fictitious and speculate on my true "character."



CHAPTER XIII. QUEBEC

As viewed from Diamond Harbour, a more striking city than Quebec is seldom seen.

The great rock rising above the lower town, and crowned with its batteries, all bristling with guns, seemed to my eyes the very realization of impregnability. I looked from the ship that lay tranquilly on the water below, and whose decks were thronged with blue jackets, to the Highlander who paced his short path as sentry, some hundred feet high upon the wall of the fortress; and I thought to

myself, with such defenders as these, that standard yonder need never carry any other banner.

The whole view is panoramic. The bending of the river shuts out the channel by which you have made your approach, giving the semblance of a lake, on whose surface vessels of every nation lie at anchor, some with the sails hung out to dry, gracefully drooping from the taper spars; others refitting again for sea, and loading the huge pine-trunks, moored as vast rafts to the stern. There were people everywhere; all was motion, life, and activity. Jolly-boats with twenty oars, man-of-war gigs bounding rapidly past them with eight; canoes skimming by without a ripple, and seemingly without impulse, till you caught sight of the lounging figure who lay at full length in the stern, and whose red features were scarce distinguishable from the copper-colored bark of his boat. Some moved upon the rafts, and even on single trunks of trees, as, separated from the mass, they floated down on the swift current, boat-hook in hand, to catch at the first object chance might offer them. The quays, and the streets leading down to them were all thronged; and as you cast your eye upwards, here and there above the tall roofs might be seen the winding flight of stairs that lead to the upper town, alike dark with the moving tide of men. On every embrasure and gallery, on every terrace and platform, it was the same. Never did I behold such a human tide!

Now, there was something amazingly inspiriting in all this, particularly when coming from the solitude and monotony of a long voyage. The very voices that ye-hoed, the hoarse challenge of the sentinels on the rock, the busy hum of the town, made delicious music to my ear; and I could have stood and leaned over the bulwark for hours to gaze at the scene. I

own no higher interest invested the picture, for I was ignorant of Wolfe; I had never heard of Montcalm; the plains of “Abra'm” were to me but grassy slopes, and “nothing more.” It was the life and stir; the tide of that human ocean on which I longed myself to be a swimmer,—these were what charmed me. Nor was the deck of the old “Hampden” inactive all the while, although seldom attracting much of my notice. Soldiers were mustering, knapsacks packing, rolls calling, belts buffing, and coats brushing on all sides; men grumbling; sergeants cursing; officers swearing; half-dressed invalids popping up their heads out of hatchways, answering to wrong names, and doctors ordering them down again with many an anathema; soldiers in the way of sailors, and sailors always hauling at something that interfered with the inspection-drill: every one in the wrong place, and each cursing his neighbor for stupidity.

At last the shore-boats boarded us, as if our confusion wanted anything to increase it. Red-faced harbor-masters shook hands with the skipper and pilot, and disappeared into the “round-house” to discuss grog and the late gales. Officers from the garrison came out to welcome their friends, for it was the second battalion we had on board of a regiment whose first had been some years in Canada; and then what a rush of inquiries were exchanged. “How's the Duke?” “All quiet in England?” “No signs of war in Europe?” “Are the 8th come home?” “Where's Forbes?” “Has Davern sold out?”—with a mass of such small interests as engage men who live in coteries.

Then there were emissaries for newspapers, eagerly hunting for spicy rumors not found in the last journals; waiters of hotels, porters, boatmen, guides, Indians with moccasins to sell, and a hundred

other functionaries bespeaking custom and patronage; and, although often driven over the side most ignominiously at one moment, certain to reappear the next at the opposite gangway.

How order could ever be established in this floating Babel, I knew not; and yet at last all got into train somehow.

First one large boat crammed with men, who sat even on the gunwales, moved slowly away; then another and another followed; a lubberly thing, half lighter, half jolly-boat, was soon loaded with baggage, amid which some soldiers' wives and a scattering population of babies were seen; till by degrees the deck was cleared, and none remained of all that vast multitude, save the “mate” and the “watch,” who proceeded to get things “ship-shape,”—pretty much in the same good-tempered spirit servants are accustomed to put the drawing-rooms to rights, after an entertainment which has kept them up till daylight, and allows of no time for sleep. Till then I had not the slightest conception of what a voyage ended meant, and that when the anchor dropped from the bow, a scene of bustle ensued, to which nothing at sea bore any proportion. Now, I had no friends; no one came to welcome me, —none asked for *my* name. The officers, even the captain, in the excitement of arriving, had forgotten all about me; so that when the mate put the question to me, “why I didn't go ashore?” I had no other answer to give him than the honest one, “that I had nothing to do when I got there.” “I suppose you know how to gain a livin' one way or t' other, my lad?” said he, with a very disparaging glance out of the corner of his eye.

“I am ashamed to say, sir, that I do not.”

“Well, I never see'd Picaroons starve,—that's a comfort you have; but as we don't mean to mess you here, you 'd better get your kit on deck, and prepare to go ashore.”

Now, the kit alluded to was the chest of clothes given to me by the captain, which, being bestowed for a particular purpose, and with an object now seemingly abandoned or forgotten, I began to feel scruples as to my having any claim to. Like an actor whose engagement had been for one part, I did not think myself warranted in carrying away the wardrobe of my character; besides, who should tell how the captain might resent such conduct on my side? I might be treated as a thief,—I, Con Cregan, who had registered a solemn vow in my own heart to be a “gentleman”! Such an indignity should not be entertained, even in thought. Yet was it very hard for one in possession of such an admirable wardrobe to want a dinner; for one so luxuriously apparelled on the outside, to be so lamentably unprovided within. From the solution of this knotty question I was most fortunately preserved by the arrival of a corporal of the—th, who came with an order from Captain Pike that I should at once repair to his quarters in the Upper Town.

Not being perhaps in his captain's confidence, nor having any very clear notion of my precise station in life,—for I was dressed in an old cloak and a foraging-cap,—the corporal delivered his message to me with a military salute, and a certain air of deference very grateful to my feelings.

“Have you a boat alongside, Corporal?” said I, as I lounged listlessly on the binnacle.

“Yes, sir; a pair of oars,—will that do?”

“Yes, that will do,” replied I, negligently. “See my

traps safe on board, and tell me when all's ready."

The corporal saluted once more, and went to give the necessary directions; meanwhile the mate, who had been a most amazed spectator of the scene, came over and stood right opposite me, with an expression of the most ludicrous doubt and hesitation. It was just at that moment that, in drawing the cloak round me, I discovered in a pocket of it an old cigar-case. I took it out with the most easy *nonchalance*, and, leisurely striking a light, began smoking away, and not bestowing even a glance at my neighbor.

Astonishment had so completely gotten the better of the man that he could not utter a word; and I perceived that he had to look over the side, where the boat lay, to assure himself that the whole was reality.

"All right, sir," said the corporal, carrying his hand to his cap.

I arose languidly from my recumbent position, and followed the soldier to the gangway; then, turning slowly around, I surveyed the mate from head to foot, with a glance of mild but contemptuous pity, while I said, "In your station, my good man, the lesson is perhaps not called for, since you may rarely be called on to exercise it; but I would wish to observe that you will save yourself much humiliation and considerable contempt by not taking people for what they seem by externals." With this grave admonition, delivered in a half-theatrical tone of voice, I draped my "toga" so as to hide any imperfection of my interior costume, and descended majestically into the boat.

When we reached the barrack, which was in the Upper Town, the captain was at mess, but had left orders that I should have my dinner, and be ready at

his quarters, in my full livery, in the evening.

I dined, very much to my satisfaction, on some of the “débris” of the mess, and, under the auspices of the captain's servant, arrayed myself in my new finery, which, I am free to confess, presented what artists would call “a flashy bit of color;” being far more in the style of Horace Vernet than Van Dyke. Had the choice been given me, I own I should have preferred wooing Fortune in more sombre habiliments; but this was a mere minor consideration, and so I felt as I found myself standing alone in the captain's sitting-room, and endeavoring to accustom myself to my own very showy identity, as reflected in a large cheval glass, which exhibited me down to the very buckles of my shoes.

I will not affirm it positively, but only throw it out as a hint, that the major part of a decanter of sherry, which I discussed at dinner, aided in lifting me above the paltry consideration of mere appearance, and made me feel what I have often heard ragged vagabonds in the streets denominate “the dignity of a man.” By degrees, too, I not only grew reconciled to the gaudy costume, but began—strange accommodation of feeling—actually to enjoy its distinctive character.

“There are young gentlemen, Con,” said I, in soliloquy, “many are there who would look absurd merry-andrews if dressed in this fashion. There are fellows to whom this kind of thing would be a sore test! These bright tints would play the very devil with their complexion,—not to mention that every one's legs could n't afford such publicity! But Con, my friend, you have a natural aptitude for every shade of color, and for every station and condition. Courage, my boy! although in the rear rank at present, you 'll march in the van yet. Nature has been

gracious with you, Mr. Cregan!" said I, warming with the subject, while, with my hands deep down in my coat-pockets, I walked backward and forward before the glass, stealing sidelong glances at myself as I passed; "there are fellows who, born in your station, would have died in it, without a bit more influence over their fate in this life than a Poldoody oyster; they 'd vegetate to the end of existence, and slip out of the world as a fellow shirks out of a shebeen-house when he has n't tu' pence for another 'dandy' of punch. Not so with you, Con Cregan! You have hydrogen in you,—you have the buoyant element that soars above the vulgar herd. These are not the partial sentiments of a dear friend, Con, they are the current opinions of the world about you. How soon the 'Captain' saw what stuff you were made of! How long was old Pike in detecting the latent powers of your intellect?" What a shout of laughter followed these words! It came from half-a-dozen officers, who, having entered the room during my apostrophe, had concealed themselves behind a screen to listen to the peroration.



They now rushed out in a body, and, throwing themselves into chairs and upon sofas, laughed till the very room rang with the clamor, the captain himself joining in the emotion with all his heart. As for me, however self-satisfied but one moment back, I was humbled to the very earth now; the vauntings by which I had been soothing my vanity were suddenly turned into scorns and sneers at my self-conceit, and I actually looked to see if I could not leap out of the window, and never be seen by one of the party again. The window, however, was barred, the door was unapproachable, there was a fire in the grate; and so, as escape was denied me, I at once abandoned a plan which I saw unfeasible, and, with a quickness to which I owe much in life, immediately adopted an opposite tactic. Assuming a deferential position, I drew back towards the wall, to be laughed at as long as the honorable company should fancy it.

“So, Mr. Cregan,” cried one, drying his eyes with his handkerchief, “modesty is one of those invaluable gifts with which nature has favored you?”

“I sincerely trust it may be no bar to your advancement,” said another.

“Rather cruel,” added a third, “to be balked for such a mere trifle.”

“I say, Pike,” added another, “I rather envy you the insinuated flattery of your discrimination. It would seem that you detected the precious metal here at once.”

“What country do you come from, boy?” said a hard-featured old officer who had laughed less than the others.

“How can you ask, Chudleigh?” said another. “There's only one land rears that plant.”

“There's a weed very like it in Scotland, M'Aldine,” said the captain, with a grin which the last speaker did not half relish.

“You're Hirish, ain't you?” said a very boyish-looking ensign, with sore eyes.

“Yes, sir.”

“Very much so, I fancy,” said he, laughing as though he had been very droll.

“I always heard your countrymen had wings; what has become of them?”

“I believe we used to have, sir; but the English plucked us,” said I, with a look of assumed simplicity.

“And what is all that about the Blarney stone?” said another; “is n't there some story or other about it?”

“It's a stone they kiss in *my* country, sir, to give us a smooth tongue.”

“I don't see the great use of that,” rejoined he, with a stupid look.

“It's mighty useful at times, sir,” said I, with a half glance towards Captain Pike.

“You're too much, gentlemen, far too much for my poor friend Con,” said the captain; “you forget that he's only a poor Irish lad. Come, now, let us rather think of starting him in the world, with something to keep the devil out of his pocket.” And, with this kind suggestion, he chucked a dollar into his cap, and then commenced a begging tour of the room, which, I am ready to confess, showed the company to be far more generous than they were witty.

“Here, Master Con,” said he, as he poured the contents into my two hands, “here is wherewithal to pay your footing at Mrs. Davis's. As a traveller from the old country, you 'll be expected to entertain the servants' hall,—do it liberally; there's nothing like a bold push at the first go off.”

“I know it, sir; my father used to say that the gentleman always won his election who made most freeholders drunk the first day of the poll.”

“Your father was a man of keen observation, Con.”

“And is, sir, still, with your leave, if kangaroo meat has n't disagreed with him, and left me to sustain the honors of the house.”

“Oh, that's it, Con, is it?” said Captain Pike, with a sly glance.

“Yes, sir, that's it,” said I, replying more to his look than his words.

“Here's the letter for Mrs. Davis: you'll present it early to-morrow; be discreet, keep your own counsel, and I 've no doubt you 'll do well.”

“I'd be an ungrateful vagabond if I made your

honor out a false prophet," said I; and, bowing respectfully to the company, I withdrew.

"What a wonderful principle of equilibrium exists between one's heart and one's pocket!" thought I as I went downstairs. "I never felt the former so light as now that the latter is heavy."

I wandered out into the town, somewhat puzzled how to dispose of myself for the evening. Had I been performing the part of a "walking gentleman," I fancied I could have easily hit upon some appropriate and becoming pastime. A theatre,—there was one in the "Lower Town,"—and a tavern afterwards, would have filled the interval before it was time to go to bed. "Time to go to bed! "—strange phrase, born of a thousand and one conventionalities. For some, that time comes when the sun has set, and with its last beams of rosy light reminds labor of the coming morrow. To some, it is the hour when wearied faculties can do no more, when tired intellect falters "by the way," and cannot keep the "line of march." To others, it comes with dawning light, and when roses and rouge look ghastly; and to others, again, whose "deeds are evil," it is the glare of noonday.

Now, as for me, I was neither wearied by toil nor pleasure; no sense of past fatigue, no anticipation of coming exertion, invited slumber,—nay, I was actually more wakeful than I had been during the entire evening, and I felt a most impulsive desire for a little social enjoyment,—that kind of intercourse with strangers which I always remarked had the effect of eliciting my own conversational qualities to a degree that astonished even myself.

In search of some house of entertainment, some public resort, I paced all the streets of the Upper

Town, but to no purpose. Occasionally, lights in a drawing-room, and the sound of a piano, would tell where some small evening party was assembled; or now and then, from a lower story, a joyous roar of laughter, or the merry chorus of a drinking-song, would bespeak some after-dinner convivialities; but to mingle in scenes like these, I felt that I had yet a long road to travel,—ay, to pass muster in the very humblest of those circles, what a deal had I to learn! How much humility, how much confidence; what deference, and what self-reliance; what mingled gravity and levity; what shades and gradations of color, so nicely balanced and proportioned, too, that, unresolved by the prism, they show no preponderating tint,—make up that pellucid property men call “tact!” Ay, Con, that is your rarest gift of all,—only acquire that, and you may dispense with ancestry, and kindred, and even wealth itself; since he who has “tact” participates in all these advantages, “*among his friends*.”

As I mused thus, I had reached the “Lower Town,” and found myself opposite the door of a tavern, over which a brilliant lamp illuminated the sign of “The British Grenadier,”—a species of canteen in high favor with sergeants and quartermasters of the garrison. I entered boldly, and with the intention of behaving generously to myself; but scarcely had I passed the threshold than I heard a sharp voice utter in a half-whisper, “Dang me if he an't in livery!”

I did not wait for more. My “tact” assured me that even there I was not admissible; so I strolled out again, muttering to myself, “When a man has neither friend nor supper, and the hour is past midnight, the chances are it is 'time to go to bed;'” and with this sage reflection, I wended my way towards a humble lodging-house on the quay, over which, on landing, I

read the words, “The Emigrant's Home.”



HOW I “FELL IN” AND “OUT” WITH “THE WIDOW DAVIS.”

CHAPTER XIV. HOW I 'FELL IN' AND 'OUT' WITH THE WIDOW DAVIS

For the sake of conciseness in this veracious history, I prefer making the reader acquainted at

once with facts and individuals, not by the slow process in which the knowledge of them was acquired by myself, but in all the plenitude which intimate acquaintance now supplies; and although this may not seem to accord with the bit-by-bit and day-by-day narrative of a life, it saves a world of time, some patience, and mayhap some skipping too. Under this plea, I have already introduced Sir Dudley Broughton to the reader; and now, with permission, mean to present Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. Davis, relict of Thomas John Davis, was a character so associated with Quebec that to speak of that city without her would be like writing an account of Newfoundland and never alluding to the article “cod-fish.” For a great number of years her house had been the rendezvous of everything houseless, from the newly come “married” officer to the flash commercial traveller from the States; from the agent of an unknown land company to the “skipper” of a rank pretentious enough to dine at a boarding-house. The establishment—as she loved to style it—combined all the free-and-easy air of domesticity with the enjoyment of society. It was an “acted newspaper,” where paragraphs, military and naval, social, scandalous, and commercial, were fabricated with a speed no “compositor” could have kept up with. Here the newly arrived subaltern heard all the pipeclay gossip, not of the garrison, but of the Province; here the bagman made contracts and took orders; here the “French Deputy” picked up what he called afterwards in the Chamber “l'opinion publique;” and here the men of pine-logs and white deal imbibed what they fervently believed to be the habits and manners of the “English aristocracy.” “To invest the establishment with this character,” to make it go forth to the world as the mirror of high

and fashionable life, had been the passion of Mrs. D.'s existence. Never did monarch labor for the safeguard that might fence and hedge round his dynasty more zealously; never did minister strive for the guarantees that should insure the continuance of his system. It was the moving purpose of her life; in it she had invested all her activity, both of mind and body; and as she looked back to the barbarism from which her generous devotion had rescued hundreds, she might well be pardoned if a ray of self-glorification lighted up her face. “When I think of Quebec when T. J.”—her familiar mode of alluding to the defunct Thomas John—“and myself first beheld it,” would she say, “and see it now, I believe I may be proud.” The social habits were indeed at a low ebb. The skippers—and there were few other strangers—had a manifest contempt for the use of the fork at dinner, and performed a kind of sword-exercise while eating, of the most fearful kind. Napkins were always misconstrued,—the prevailing impression being that they were pocket-handkerchiefs. No man had any vested interest in his own wine-glass; while thirsty souls even dispensed with such luxuries, and drank from the bottle itself.

Then sea-usages had carried themselves into shore life. The company were continually getting up to look out of windows, watching the vessels that passed, remarking on the state of the tide, and then, resuming their places with a muttering over the “half ebb,” and that the wind was “northing-by-west,” looked for change. All the conversation smacked of salt-water; every allusion had an odor of tar and seaweed about it.

Poor Mrs. Davis! How was she to civilize these savages; how invest their lives with any interest above timber? They would not listen to the polite

news of “Government House;” they would not vouchsafe the least attention to the interesting paragraphs she recited as table-talk,—how the Prince of Hohenhumbughousen had arrived at Windsor on a visit to Majesty, nor how Royalty walked in “The Slopes,” or sat for its picture.

Of the “Duke of Northumberland,” they only knew a troopship of the name, and even that had been waterlogged! The “Wellington” traded to Mirimachi, and the “Robert Peel” was a barque belonging to Newfoundland, and employed in general traffic, and not believed very seaworthy.

Some may make the ungracious remark that she might have spared herself this task of humanizing; that she could have left these “ligneous Christians,” these creatures of tar and turpentine, where she found them. The same observation will apply equally to Cooke, to Franklin, to Brooke of Borneo, and a hundred other civilizers: so Mrs. D. felt it, and so she labored to make T. J. feel it; but he would n't. The ungrateful old bear saw the ordinary grow daily thinner; he perceived that Banquo might have seated himself at any part of the table, and he actually upbraided his wife with the fact. Every day he announced some new defection from the list of their old supporters. Now it was old Ben Crosseley, of the “Lively Biddy,” that would n't stand being ordered to shake out his canvas—that is, to spread his napkin—when he was taking in sea store; then it was Tom Galket grew indignant at not being permitted to beat “to quarters” with his knuckles at every pause in the dinner. Some were put out by being obliged to sit with their legs under the table, being long habituated to dine at a cask with a plank on it, and of course keeping their limbs “stowed away” under the seat; and one, an old and much-respected river pilot, was

carried away insensible from table, on hearing that grog was not a recognized table beverage throughout the British dominions.

The banishment of lobscouse and sea-pie, pork, with its concomitant cataplasm of peas, and other similar delicacies from the bill of fare, completed the defection; and at last none remained of the “once goodlie company,” save an old attenuated Guernsey skipper too much in debt to leave, but who attributed his fealty to the preference he entertained for “les usages de la bonne société et la charmante Mde. Davis.” T. J. could never hold up his head again; he moped about the docks and quays, like the restless spirit of some Ancient Mariner. Every one pitied him; and he grew so accustomed to condolence—so dependent, in fact, on commiseration —that he spent his days in rowing from one ship to the other in the harbor, drinking grog with the skippers, till, by dint of pure sympathy, he slipped quietly into his grave, after something like a two years' attack of delirium tremens.

The same week that saw T. J. descend to the tomb saw his widow ascend to the “Upper Town,”—the more congenial locality for aspirations like hers. If no eulogistic inscription marked *his* resting-place, a very showy brass plate adorned *hers*. From that hour she was emancipated; it seemed, indeed, as if she had turned a corner in life, and at once emerged from gloom and darkness into sunshine. It chanced that the barracks were at that very moment undergoing repair, and several officers were glad to find, at a convenient distance, the comforts and accommodations which a plausible advertisement in the “Quebec Messenger” assured them were to be obtained for one pound one shilling weekly.

There are people who tell you that we live in a

heartless, selfish, grabbing, grasping age, where each preys upon his neighbor, and where gain is the spirit of every contract; and yet, in what period of the world was maternal tenderness, the comforts of a home, the watchful anxieties of parental love, to be had so cheaply? Who ever heard of bachelors being admitted into families, where music and the arts formed the evening's recreation, in the Middle Ages? Does Herodotus inform us that “young and attractive ladies would take charge of a widower's household, and superintend the care of his family”? Not a bit of it! On this point, at least, the wisdom of our ancestors has no chance with us. There is not a wish of the heart, there is not a yearning of the affections, that a three-and-sixpenny advertisement in the “Times” will not evoke a remedy for. You can make love, or a book, or a speech, by deputy; for every relative you lose, there are fifty kind-hearted creatures to supply the place; and not only may you travel over half the globe without more personal exertion than it costs you to go to bed, but you can be measured either for a wife or a suit of clothes without ever seeing the lady or the tailor.

The “Hotel Davis,” so said the newspaper, “was situated in the most airy and healthful locality of the Upper Town.” No one ever rung the bell of the hall-door from the first of October to May, but would acknowledge the truth of the first epithet. The society, for admission to which the most particular references are required, embraces all that is intellectual, high-bred, and refined. The table, where preside the 'feast of reason and the flow of soul,' combines the elegance and delicacy of the French, with the less sophisticated succulence of English cookery. Intellectual resources,—the humanizing influences of song and poetry,—the varied pleasures

of cultivated and kindred spirits, which have won for this establishment the epithet of the Davisian Acropolis, continue to make it the chosen retreat of gentlemen connected with civil and military pursuits, who are lodged and boarded for one guinea weekly.

"Receptions every Thursday. Balls, during the winter, on the first Monday of each month."

Such was one among many—I select it as the shortest—announcements of this cheap Elysium; and now, two words about Mrs. D. herself. She was a poor, thin, shrivelled-up little woman, with a rugged, broken-up face, whose profile looked like a jagged saw. Next to elegance of manner, her passion was personal appearance,—by which she meant the adventitious aid of false hair, rouge, and cosmetics; and these she employed with such ever-varying ingenuity that her complexion changed daily from classic pallor to Spanish richness, while the angle of incidence of her eyebrows took in everything, from forty-five degrees to the horizontal. Her style was "sylph," and so she was gauzy and floating in all her drapery. A black veil to the back of her head, a filmy, gossamer kind of scarf across her shoulders, assisted this deception, and when she crossed the room, gave her the air of a clothes'-line in a high wind.

Black mittens, over fingers glowing in all the splendor of imitation rings, and a locket, about the size of a cheese-plate, containing the hair—some said the scalp—of the late T. J., completed a costume which Mrs. D. herself believed Parisian, but to which no revolution, democratic or social, could reduce a Frenchwoman.

She borrowed her language as well as her costume from the "Grande Nation," and with this comfortable reflection, that she was not likely to be asked to

restore the loan. Her French was about as incongruous as her dress; but Quebec, fortunately, was not Paris, and she drove her coach-and-six through “Adelow,” with a hardihood that outstripped, if it did not defy, criticism.

By the military and naval people she was deemed the best “fun” going; her pretension, her affectation, her shrewdness, and her simplicity, her religious homage to fashion, her unmerciful tyranny towards what she thought vulgarity, made her the subject of many a joke and much amusement. The other classes, the more regular *habitués* of the “house,” thought she was a princess in disguise; they revered her opinions as oracles, and only wondered how the court-end could spare one so evidently formed to be the glass of fashion.

If I have been too prolix in my sketch, kind reader, attribute it to the true cause,—my anxiety to serve those who are good enough to place themselves under my guidance. Mrs. D. still lives; the establishment still survives; at five o'clock each day —ay, this very day, I have no doubt—her table is crowded by “the rank and fashion” of the Quebec world; and the chances are, if you yourself, worthy reader, should visit that city, that you may be glad to give your blank days to the fare of Madam Davis.

It was ten o'clock in the forenoon as I arrived at her door, and sent in Captain Pike's letter, announcing my arrival. I found Mrs. D. in what she called her own room,—a little den of about eleven feet square, shelved all round, and showing an array of jars and preserve-pots that was most imposing,—the offerings of skippers from the West India Islands and Madeira, who paid a kind of black-mail in preserved ginger, guavas, yams, pepper-pots, chili, and potted crabs that would have given liver

complaints to half the Province.

Mrs. D. was standing on a step-ladder, arranging her treasures by the aid of a negro boy of about twelve years old, as I entered; and not feeling that I was of consequence sufficient to require a more formal audience, she took a steady and patient observation of me, and then resumed her labors. The little window, about six feet from the ground, threw a fine Rembrandt light upon me as I stood in my showy habiliments, endeavoring, by an imposing attitude, to exhibit myself to the best advantage.

“Forty-seven; Guava jelly, Sambo!—where is forty-seven?”

“Me no see him,” said Sambo; “missus eat him up, perhaps.”

“Monsonze! you filthy creature; look for it, sirrah!” So saying, Mrs. Davis applied her double eye-glass to her eyes, and again surveyed me for some seconds.

“You are the”—she hesitated—“the young person my friend Pike brought out, I believe?”

“Yes, my lady,” said I, bowing profoundly.

“What's your name? The captain has not written it clearly.”

“Cregan, my lady,—Con Cregan.”

“Con—Con,” repeated she twice or thrice; “what does Con mean?”

“It's the short for Cornelius, my lady.”

“Ah, the abbreviation for Cornelius! And where have you lived, Cornelius?”

“My last place, my lady, was Sir Miles O'Ryan's, of Roaring Water.”

“What are you doing, you wretch? Take your filthy fingers out of that pot this instant!” screamed she, suddenly.

“Me taste him, an' he be dam hot!” cried the nigger, dancing from one foot to the other, as his mouth was on fire from tasting capsicum pods.

I thought of my own mustard experience, and then, turning a glance of ineffable contempt upon my black friend, said, “Those creatures, my lady, are *so* ignorant, they really do not know the nature of the commonest condiments.”

“Very true, Cornelius. I would wish, however, to observe to you that although my family are all persons of rank, I have no title myself,—that is to say,” added she, with a pleasing smile, “I do not assume it here; therefore, until we return to England, you need n't address me as ladyship.”

“No, my lady,—I beg your ladyship's pardon for forgetting; but as I have always lived in high families, I 've got the habit, my lady, of saying, 'my lady.'”

“I am Madam, plain Madam Davis. There, I knew you 'd do it, you nasty little beast, you odious black creature!” This sudden apostrophe was evoked by the nigger endeavoring to balance a jam-pot on his thumb, while he spun it round with the other hand, —an exploit that ended in a smash of the jar, and a squash of the jam all over my silk stockings.

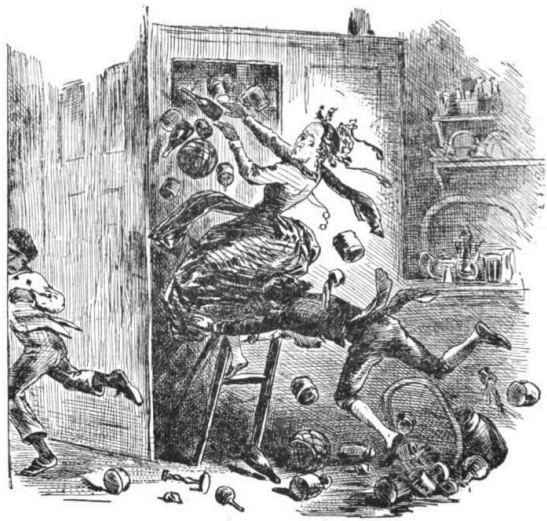
“It's of no consequence, my lady; I shall change them when I dress for dinner,” said I, with consummate ease.

“The jam is lost, however. Will you kindly beat him about the head with that candlestick beside you?”

I seized the implement, as if in most choleric mood. But my black was not to be caught so easily; and with a dive between my legs he bolted for the door, whilst I was pitched forward against the step-

ladder, head foremost. In my terror, I threw out my hands to save myself, and caught—not the ladder, but Madam Davis's legs; and down we went together, with a small avalanche of brown jars and preserve-pots clattering over us.

As I had gone headforemost, my head through the ladder, and as Mrs. Davis had fallen on the top of me,—her head being reversed,—there we lay, like herrings in a barrel, till her swoon had passed away. At last she did rally; and, gathering herself up, sat against the wall, a most rueful picture of bruises and disorder, while I, emerging from between the steps of the ladder, began to examine whether it were marmalade or my brains that I felt coming down my cheek.



“You'll never mention this shocking event, Cornelius,” said she, trying to adjust her wig, which now faced over the left shoulder.

“Never, my lady. Am I to consider myself engaged?”

“Yes, on the terms of Captain Pike's note,—ten pounds—, no wine nor tea-money, no passage-fare out, no livery, no—” I was afraid she was going to add, “No prog;” but she grew faint, and merely said, “Bring me a glass of water.”

“I'll put you in charge of the lamps and plate tomorrow,” said she, recovering.

“Very well, madam,” said I, aloud; while to myself I muttered, “They might easily be in better hands.”

“You'll wait at table to-day.”

“Yes, my lady—madam, I mean.”

“Soup always goes first to Mrs. Trussford,—black velvet, and very fat; then to the lady in blue spectacles; afterwards Miss Moriarty. Ah, I 'm too weak for giving directions; I 'm in what they call 'un état de fuillete;'” and with these words Mrs. Davis retired, leaving me to the contemplation of the battle-field and my own bruises.

My next care was to present myself below stairs; and although some may smile at the avowal, I had far more misgivings about how I should pass muster with the underlings than with the head of the department. Is the reader aware that it was a farrier of the Emperor Alexander's guard who first predicted the destruction of the “grand army” in Russia? A French horseshoe was shown to him, as a curiosity; and he immediately exclaimed, “What! not yet frost-roughed? These fellows don't know the climate; the snows begin to-morrow!” So is it: ignorance and pretension are infallibly discovered by “routine” people; they look to details, and they at once detect him who mistakes or overlooks them.

Resolving, at all events, to make my “Old World”

habits stand my part in every difficulty, and to sneer down everything I did not understand, I put on a bold face, and descended to the lower regions.

Great people, “Ministers” and Secretaries for the “Home” and “Foreign,” little know how great their privilege is that in taking office they are spared all unpleasant meetings with their predecessors. At least, I conclude such to be the case, and that my Lord Palmerston, “stepping in,” does not come abruptly upon Lord Aberdeen “going out,” nor does an angry altercation arise between him who arrives to stay and he who is packing his portmanteau to be off. I say that I opine as much, and that both the entrance and the departure are conducted with due etiquette and propriety; in fact, that Lord A. has called his cab and slipped away before Lord P. has begun to “take up” the “spoons,”—not a bad metaphor, by the way, for an entrance into the Foreign Office.

No such decorous reserve presides over the change of a domestic ministry. The whole warfare of opposition is condensed into one angry moment, and the rival parties are brought face to face in the most ungracious fashion.

Now, my system in life was that so well and popularly known by the name of M. Guizot, “la paix à tout prix;” and I take pride to myself in thinking that I have carried it out with more success. With a firm resolve, therefore, that no temptation should induce me to deviate from a pacific policy, I entered the kitchen, where the “lower house” was then “in committee,”—the “cook in the chair”!

“Here he com, now!” said Blackie; and the assembly grew hushed as I entered.

“Ay, here he comes!” said I, re-echoing the speech;

"and let us see if we shall not be merry comrades."

The address was a happy one; and that evening closed upon me in the very pinnacle of popularity.

I have hesitated for some time whether I should not ask of my reader to enroll himself for a short space as a member of "the establishment," or even to sojourn one day beneath a roof where so many originals were congregated; to witness the very table itself, set out with its artificial fruits and flowers, its pine-apples in wax, and its peaches of paper,—all the appliances by which Mrs. D., in her ardent zeal, hoped to propagate refinement and abstemiousness; high-breeding and low diet being, in her esteem, inseparably united. To see the company, the poor old faded and crushed flowers of mock gentility,—widows and unmarried daughters of tax-collectors long "gathered;" polite storekeepers, and apothecaries to the "Forces," cultivating the Graces at the cost of their appetites, and descending, in costumes of twenty years back, in the pleasing delusion of being "dressed" for dinner; while here and there some unhappy skipper, undergoing a course of refinement, looked like a bear in a "ballet," ashamed of his awkwardness, and even still more ashamed of the company wherein he found himself; and, lastly, some old Seigneur of the Lower Province, —a poor, wasted, wrinkled creature, covered with hair-powder and snuff, but yet, strangely enough, preserving some "taste of his once quality," and not altogether destitute of the graces of the land he sprung from;—curious and incongruous elements to make up society, and worthy of the presidency of that greater incongruity who ruled them.

Condemned to eat food they did not relish, and discuss themes they did not comprehend,—what a noble zeal was theirs! What sacrifices did they not

make to the genius of “gentility”! If they would sneer at a hash, Mrs. D.'s magic wand charmed it into a “ragout;” when they almost sneezed at the sour wine, Mrs. D. called for another glass of “La Rose.” “Rabbits,” they were assured, were the daily diet of the Duke of Devonshire, and Lady Laddington ate kid every day at dinner. In the same way, potatoes were vulgar things, but “pommes de terre à la maître d'hôtel” were a delicacy for royalty.

To support these delusions of diet, I was everlastingly referred to. “Cregan,” would she say,—placing her glass to her eye, and fixing on some dish, every portion of which her own dainty fingers had compounded,—“Cregan, what is that?”

“Poulet à la George Quatre, madame! “—she always permitted me to improvise the nomenclature, —“the receipt came from the Bishop of Beldoff's cook.”

“Ah, prepared with olives, I believe?”

“Exactly, madame,” would I say, presenting the dish, whose success was at once assured.

If a wry face or an unhappy contortion of the mouth from any guest announced disappointment, Mrs. D. at once appealed to me for the explanation. “What is it, Cregan?—Mrs. Blotter, I fear you don't like that 'plat'?”

“The truffles were rather old, madame;” or, “the anchovies were too fresh;” or, “there was too little caviar;” or something of the kind, I would unhesitatingly aver: for my head was stocked with a strong catalogue from an old French cookery-book which I used to study each morning. The more abstruse my explanation, the more certain of its being indorsed by the company,—only too happy to be supposed capable of detecting the subtle

deficiency; all but the old French Deputy, who on such occasions would give a little shake of his narrow head, and mutter to himself, “Ah, il est mutin, ce gaillard-là!”

Under the influence of great names, they would have eaten a stewed mummy from the Pyramids. What the Marquis of Aeheldown or the Earl of Brockmore invariably ordered, could not without risk be despised by these “small boys” of refinement. It is true, they often mourned in secret over the altered taste of the old country, which preferred kickshaws and trumpery to its hallowed ribs and sirloins; but, like the folk who sit at the Opera while they long for the Haymarket, and who listen to Jenny Lind while their hearts are with Mrs. Keeley, they “took out” in fashion what they lost in amusement,—a very English habit, by the way. To be sure, and to their honor be it spoken, they wished the Queen would be pleased to fancy legs of mutton and loins of veal, just as some others are eager for royalty to enjoy the national drama; but they innocently forgot, the while, that “they” might have the sirloin, and “the others” Shakspeare, even without majesty partaking of either, and that a roast goose and Falstaflf can be relished even without such august precedent. Dear, good souls they were, never deviating from that fine old sturdy spirit of independence which makes us feel ourselves a match for the whole world in arms, as we read the “Times” and hum “Rule Britannia.”

All this devout homage of a class with whom they had nothing in common, and with which they could never come into contact, produced in me a very strange result; and in place of being ready to smile at the imitators, I began to conceive a stupendous idea of the natural greatness of those who could so impress the ranks beneath them. “Con,” said I to

myself, “that is the class in life would suit you perfectly. There is no trade like that of a gentleman. He who does nothing is always ready for everything; the little shifts and straits of a handicraft or a profession narrow and confine the natural expansiveness of the intellect, which, like a tide over a flat shore, should swell and spread itself out, free and without effort. See to this, Master Con; take care that you don't sit down contented with a low round on the ladder of life, but strive ever upwards; depend on it, the view is best from the top, even if it only enable you to look down on your competitors.”

These imaginings, as might be easily imagined, led me to form a very depreciating estimate of my lords and masters of the “establishment.” Not only their little foibles and weaknesses, their small pretensions and their petty attempts at fine life, were all palpable to my eyes, but their humble fortunes and narrow means to support such assumption were equally so; and there is nothing which a vulgar mind—I *was* vulgar at that period—so unhesitatingly seizes on for sarcasm as the endeavor of a poor man to “do the fine gentleman.”

If no man is a hero to his valet, he who has no valet is never a hero at all,—is nobody. I conceived, then, the most insulting contempt for the company, on whom I practised a hundred petty devices of annoyance. I would drop gravy on a fine satin dress, in which the wearer only made her appearance at festivals, or stain with sauce the “russia ducks” destined to figure through half a week. Sometimes, by an adroit change of decanters during dinner, I would produce a scene of almost irremediable confusion, when the owner of sherry would find himself taking toast-and-water, he of the last beverage having improved the time and finished the

racier liquid. Such reciprocities, although strictly in accordance with “free-trade,” invariably led to very warm discussions, that lasted through the remainder of the evening.

Then I removed plates ere the eater was satisfied, and that with an air of such imposing resolve as to silence remonstrance. When a stingy guest passed up his decanter to a friend, in a moment of enthusiastic munificence, I never suffered it to return till it was emptied; while to the elderly ladies I measured out the wine like laudanum. Every now and then, too, I would forget to hand the dish to some one or other of the company, and affect only to discover my error as the last spoonful was disappearing.

Nor did my liberties end here. I was constantly introducing innovations in the order of dinner, that produced most ludicrous scenes of discomfiture,—now insisting on the use of a fork, now of a spoon, under circumstances where no adroitness could compensate for the implement; and one day I actually went so far as to introduce soap with the finger-glasses, averring that “it was always done at Devonshire House on grand occasions.” I thought I should have betrayed myself as I saw the efforts of the party to perform their parts with suitable dignity; all I could do was to restrain a burst of open laughter.

So long as I prosecuted my reforms on the actual staff of the establishment, all went well. Now and then, it is true, I used to overhear in French, of which they believed me to be ignorant, rather sharp comments on the “free-and-easy tone of my manners; how careless I had become,” and so on,—complaints, however, sure to be be met by some assurance that “my manners were quite London;” that what I did was the type of fashionable servitude,—apologies

made less to screen me than to exalt those who invented them, as thoroughly conversant with high life in England.

At last, partly from being careless of consequences, for I was getting very weary of this kind of life,—the great amusement of which used to be repeating my performances for the ear of Captain Pike, and he was now removed with his regiment to Kingstown,—and partly wishing for some incidents, of what kind I cared not, that might break the monotony of my existence, I contrived one day to stretch my prerogative too far, or, in the phrase of the Gulf, I "harpooned a bottle-nose,"—the periphrasis for making a gross mistake.

I had been some years at Mrs. Davis's,—in fact, I felt and thought myself a man,—when the last ball of the season was announced,—an entertainment at which usually a more crowded assemblage used to congregate than at any of the previous ones.

It was the choice occasion for the *habitués* of the house to invite their grand friends; for Mrs. D. was accustomed to put forth all her strength, and the arrangements were made on a scale of magnificence that invariably occasioned a petty famine for the fortnight beforehand. Soup never appeared, that there might be "bouillon" for the dancers; every one was on a short allowance of milk, eggs, and sugar; meat became almost a tradition; even candles waned and went out, in waiting for the auspicious night when they should blaze like noonday. Nor did the company fail to participate in these preparatory schoolings. What frightful heads in curl-papers would appear at breakfast and dinner! What buttoned-up coats and black cravats refuse all investigation on the score of linen! What mysterious cookings of cosmetics at midnight, with petty thefts of lard and

thick cream! What washings of kid gloves, that when washed would never go on again! What inventions of French-polish that refused all persuasions to dry, but continued to stick to and paint everything it came in contact with! Then there were high dresses cut down, like frigates razeed; frock-coats reduced to dress ones; mock lace and false jewelry were at a premium; and all the little patchwork devices of ribbons, bows, and carnations, gimp, gauze, and geraniums, were put into requisition,—petty acts of deception that each saw through in her neighbor, but firmly believed were undetectable in herself.

Then what caballings about the invited; what scrutiny into rank and station,—"what set they were in," and whom did they visit; with little Star-chamber inquisitions as to character, all breaches of which, it is but fair to state, were most charitably deemed remediable if the party had any pretension to social position; for not only the saint in crape was twice a saint in lawn, but the satin sinner was pardonable where the "washing silk" would have been found guilty without a "recommendation."

Then there was eternal tuning of the pianoforte, which most perversely insisted on not suiting voices that might have sung duets with a peacock. Quadrilles were practised in empty rooms; and Miss Timmock was actually seen trying to teach Blotter to waltz,—a proceeding, I rejoice to say, that the moral feeling of the household at once suppressed. And then, what a scene of decoration went forward in all the apartments! As in certain benevolent families, whatever is uneatable is always given to the poor, so here, all the artificial flowers unavailable for the toilet were generously bestowed to festoon along the walls, to conceal tin sconces, and to wreathe round rickety chandeliers. Contrivance—that most

belauded phenomenon in Nature's craft—was everywhere. If necessity be the mother of invention, poor gentility is the “stepmother.” Never were made greater efforts, or greater sacrifices incurred, to make Mrs. D. appear like a “West-end” leader of fashion, and to make the establishment itself seem a Holderness House.

As for me, I was the type of a stage servant,—one of those creatures who hand round coffee in the “School for Scandal.” My silk stockings were embroidered with silver, and my showy coat displayed a bouquet that might have filled a vase.

In addition to these personal graces, I had long been head of my department; all the other officials, from the negro knife-cleaner upwards, besides all those begged, borrowed, and, I believe I might add, stolen domestics of other families, being placed under my orders.

Among the many functions committed to me, the drilling of these gentry stood first in difficulty, not only because they were rebellious under control, but because I had actually to invent “the discipline during parade.” One golden rule, however, I had adopted, and never suffered myself to deviate from, viz., to do nothing as it had been done before,—a maxim which relieved me from all the consequences of inexperience. Traditions are fatal things for a radical reformer; and I remembered having heard it remarked how Napoleon himself first sacrificed his dignity by attempting an imitation of the monarchy. By this one precept I ruled and squared all my conduct.

The most refractory of my subordinates was a jackanapes about my own age, who, having once waited on the “young gentlemen” in the cock-pit of a

man-of-war, fancied he had acquired very extended views of life. Among other traits of his fashionable experience, he remembered that at a *déjeuner* given by the officers at Cadiz once, the company, who breakfasted in the gun-room, had all left their hats and cloaks in the midshipman's berth, receiving each a small piece of card with a number on it, and a similar one being attached to the property,—a process so universal now in our theatres and assemblies that I ask pardon for particularly describing it; but it was a novelty at the time I speak of, and had all the merits of a new discovery.

Smush—this was my deputy's name—had been so struck with the admirable success of the arrangement that he had actually preserved the pieces of card, and now produced them, black and ragged, from the recesses of his trunk.

“Mr. Cregan”—such was the respectful title by which I was now always addressed—“Mr. Cregan can tell us,” said he, “if this is not the custom at great balls in London.”

“It used to be so, formerly,” said I, with an air of most consummate coolness, as I sat in an arm-chair, regaling myself with a cigar; “the practice you allude to, Smush, did prevail, I admit. But our fashionable laws change; one day it is all ultra-refinement and Sybarite luxury,—the next, they affect a degree of mock simplicity in their manners: anything for novelty! Now, for instance, eating fish with the fingers—”

“Do they, indeed, go so far?”

“Do they! ay, and fifty things worse. At a race-dinner the same silver cup goes round the table, drunk out of by every one. I have seen strange things in my time.”

“That you must, Mr. Cregan.”

“Latterly,” said I, warming with my subject, and seeing my auditory ready to believe anything, “they began the same system with the soup, and always passed the tureen round, each tasting it as it went. This was an innovation of the Duke of Struttenham's; but I don't fancy it will last.”

“And how do they manage about the hats, Mr. Cregan?”

“The last thing, in that way, was what I saw at Lord Mudbrooke's, at Richmond, where, not to hamper the guests with these foolish bits of card, which they were always losing, the servant in waiting chalked a number on the hat or coat, or whatever it might be, and then marked the same on the gentleman's back!”

Had it not been for the imposing gravity of my manner, the absurdity of this suggestion had been at once apparent; but I spoke like an oracle, and I impressed my words with the simple gravity of a commonplace truth.

“If you wish to do the very newest thing, Smush, that's the latest,—quite a fresh touch; and, I 'll venture to say, perfectly unknown here. It saves a world of trouble to all parties; and as you brush it off before they leave, it is always another claim for the parting douceur!”

“I'll do it,” said Smush, eagerly; “they cannot be angry—”

“Angry! angry at what is done with the very first people in London!” said I, affecting horror at the bare thought. The train was now laid; I had only to wait for its explosion.

At first, I did this with eager impatience for the result; then, as the time drew near, with somewhat of

anxiety; and, at last, with downright fear of the consequences. Yet to revoke the order, to confess that I was only hoaxing on so solemn a subject, would have been the downfall of my ascendency forever. What was to be done?

I could imagine but one escape from the difficulty, which was to provide myself with a clothes-brush, and, as my station was at the drawing-room door, to erase the numerals before their wearers entered. In this way I should escape the forfeiture of my credit, and the risk of maintaining it.

I would willingly recall some of the strange incidents of that great occasion, but my mind can only dwell upon one, as, brush in hand, I asked permission to remove some accidental dust,—a leave most graciously accorded, and ascribed to my town-bred habits of attention. At last—it was nigh midnight, and for above an hour the company had received no accession to its ranks; quadrilles had succeeded quadrilles, and the business of the scene went swimmingly on,—all the time-honored events of similar assemblages happening with that rigid regularity which, if evening-parties were managed by steam, and regulated by a fly-wheel, could not proceed with more ordinary routine. “Heads of houses” with bald scalps led out simpering young boarding-school misses, and danced with a noble show of agility, to refute any latent suspicion of coming age. There were the usual number of very old people, who vowed the dancing was only a shuffling walk, not the merry movement they had practised half a century ago; and there were lack-a-daisical young gentlemen, with waistcoats variegated as a hearth-rug, and magnificent breast-pins like miniature pokers, who lounged and lolled about, as though youth were the most embarrassing and

wearying infliction mortality was heir to.

There were, besides, all the varieties of the class young lady, as seen in every land where muslin is sold, and white shoes are manufactured. There was the slight young lady, who floated about with her gauzy dress daintily pinched in two; then there was the short and dumpling young lady, who danced with a duck in her gait; and there were a large proportion of the flouncing, flaunting kind, who took the figures of the quadrille by storm, and went at the "right and left" as if they were escaping from a fire; and there was Mrs. Davis herself, in a spangled toque and red shoes, pottering about from place to place, with a terrible eagerness to be agreeable and fashionable at the same time.

It was, I have said, nigh midnight as I stood at the half-open door, watching the animated and amusing scene within, when Mrs. Davis, catching sight of me, and doubtless for the purpose of displaying my specious livery, ordered me to open a window, or close a shutter, or something of like importance. I had scarcely performed the service, when a kind of half titter through the room made me look round, and, to my unspeakable horror, I beheld, in the centre of the room, Town-Major McCan, the most passionate little man in Quebec, making his obeisances to Mrs. Davis, while a circle around were, with handkerchiefs to their mouths, stifling, as they best could, a burst of laughter; since exactly between his shoulders, in marks of about four inches long, stood the numerals "158," a great flourish underneath proclaiming that the roll had probably concluded, and that this was the "last man."



Of the major, tradition had already consecrated one exploit; he had once kicked an impertinent tradesman down the great flight of iron stairs which leads from the Upper Town to Diamond Harbor,—a feat, to appreciate which, it is necessary to bear in mind that the stair in question is almost perpendicular, and contains six hundred and forty-eight steps! My very back ached by anticipation as I thought of it; and as I retreated towards the door, it was in a kind of shuffle, feeling like one who had been well thrashed.

“A large party, Mrs. D.; a very brilliant and crowded assembly,” said the major, pulling out his bushy whiskers, and looking importantly around. “Now what number have you here?”

“I cannot even guess, Major; but we have had very few apologies. Could you approximate to our numbers this evening, Mr. Cox?” said she, addressing a spiteful-looking old man who sat eying the company through an opera-glass.

“I have counted one hundred and thirty-four, madam; but the major makes them more numerous still!”

“How do you mean, Cox?” said he, getting fiery red.

“If you'll look in that glass yonder, which is opposite the mirror, you 'll soon see!” wheezed out the old man, maliciously. I did not wait for more; with one spring I descended the first flight; another brought me to the hall; but not before a terrible shout of laughter apprised me that all was discovered. I had just time to open the clock-case and step into it, as Major McCan came thundering downstairs, with his coat on his arm.

A shrill yell from Sambo now told me that one culprit at least was “up” for punishment. “Tell the truth, you d—d piece of carved ebony! who did this?”

“Not me, Massa! not me, Massa! Smush did him!”

Smush was at this instant emerging from the back parlor with a tray of colored fluids for the dancers. With one vigorous kick the major sent the whole flying; and ere the terrified servitor knew what the assault portended, a strong grasp caught him by the throat, and ran him up bang! against the clock-case. Oh, what a terrible moment was that for me! I heard the very gurgling rattle in his throat, like choking, and felt as if when he ceased to breathe that I should expire with him.

“You confess it! you own it, then, you infernal rascal!” said the major, almost hoarse with rage.

“Oh, forgive me, sir! oh, forgive me! It was Mr. Cregan, sir, the butler, who told me! Oh dear, I'm—” What, he couldn't finish; for the major, in relinquishing his grasp, flung him backwards, and he fell against the stairs.

“So it was Mr.—Cregan,—the—butler,—was it?” said the major, with an emphasis on each word as

though he had bitten the syllables. “Well! as sure as my name is Tony McCan, Mr. Cregan shall pay for this! Turn about is fair play; you have marked *me*, and may I be drummer to the Cape Fencibles if I don't mark *you!*” and with this denunciation, uttered in a tone, every accent of which vouched for truth, he took a hat—the first next to him—and issued from the house.

Shivering with terror,—and not without cause,—I waited till Smush had, with Sambo's aid, carried downstairs the broken fragments; and then, the coast being clear, I stepped from my hiding-place, and opening the hall-door, fled,—ay, ran as fast as my legs could carry me. I crossed the grass terrace in front of the barrack, not heeding the hoarse “Who goes there?” of the sentry; and then, dashing along the battery-wall, hastened down the stairs that lead in successive flights to the filthy “Lower Town,” in whose dingy recesses I well knew that crime or shame could soon find a sanctuary.



CHAPTER XV. AN EMIGRANTS FIRST STEP ON SHORE

If I say that the Lower Town of Quebec is the St. Giles's of the metropolis, I convey but a very faint notion indeed of that terrible locality. I have seen life in some of its least attractive situations. I am not ignorant of the Liberties of Dublin and the Claddagh of Galway; I have passed more time than I care to mention in the Isle St. Louis of Paris; while the Leopoldstadt of Vienna and the Ghetto of Rome are tolerably familiar to me; but still, for wickedness in its most unwashed state, I give palm to the Lower Town of Quebec.

The population, originally French, became gradually intermixed with emigrants, most of whom came from Ireland, and who, having expended the

little means they could scrape together for the voyage, firmly believing that, once landed in America, gold was a “chimera” not worth troubling one's head about, they were unable to go farther, and either became laborers in the city, or, as the market grew speedily overstocked, sunk down into a state of pauperism, the very counterpart of that they had left on the other side of the ocean. Their turbulence, their drunkenness, the reckless violence of all their habits, at first shocked and then terrified the poor timid Canadians,—of all people the most submissive and yielding,—so that very soon, feeling how impossible it was to maintain co-partnery with such associates, they left the neighborhood, and abandoned the field to the new race. Intermarriages had, however, taken place to a great extent; from which, and the daily intercourse with the natives, a species of language came to be spoken which was currently called French, but which might, certainly with equal propriety, be called Cherokee. Of course this new tongue modified itself with the exigencies of those who spoke it; and as the French ingredient declined, the Milesian preponderated, till at length it became far more Irish than French.

Nothing assists barbarism like a dialect adapted to its own wants. Slang is infinitely more conducive to the propagation of vice than is generally believed; it is the “paper currency” of iniquity, and each man issues as much as he likes. If I wanted an evidence of this fact, I should “call up” the place I am speaking of, where the very jargon at once defied civilization and ignored the “schoolmaster.” The authorities, either regarding the task as too hopeless, or too dangerous, or too troublesome, seemed to slur over the existence of this infamous locality. It is not impossible that they saw with some satisfaction that

wickedness had selected its only peculiar and appropriate territory, and that they had left this den of vice, as Yankee farmers are accustomed to leave a spot of tall grass to attract the snakes, by way of preventing them scattering and spreading over a larger surface.

As each emigrant ship arrived, hosts of these idlers of the Lower Town beset the newly landed strangers, and by their voice and accent imposed upon the poor wanderers. The very tones of the old country were a magic the new-comers could not withstand, after weeks of voyaging that seemed like years of travel. Whatever reminded them of the country they had quitted, ay,—strange inconsistency of the human heart!—of the land they had left for very hopelessness, touched their hearts, and moved them to the very tenderest emotions. To trade on this susceptibility became a recognized livelihood; so that the quays were crowded with idle vagabonds who sought out the prey with as much skill as a West-end waiter displays in detecting the rank of a new arrival.

This filthy locality, too, contained all the lodging-houses resorted to by the emigrants, who were easily persuaded to follow their “countryman” wherever he might lead. Here were spent the days—sometimes, unhappily, the weeks—before they could fix upon the part of the country to which they should bend their steps; and here, but too often, were wasted in excess and debauchery the little hoards that had cost years to accumulate, till farther progress became impossible; and the stranger who landed but a few weeks back full of strong hope, sunk down into the degraded condition of those who had been his ruin, —the old story, the dupe become blackleg.

It were well if deceit and falsehood, if heartless

treachery and calculating baseness, were all that went forward here. But not so; crimes of every character were rife also, and not an inhabitant of the city, with money or character, would have, for any consideration, put foot within this district after nightfall. The very cries that broke upon the stillness of the night were often heard in the Upper Town; and whenever a shriek of agony arose, or the heartrending cry for help, prudent citizens would close the window, and say, “It is some of the Irish in the Lower Town,”—a comprehensive statement that needed no commentary.

Towards this pleasant locality I now hastened, with a kind of instinctive sense that I had some claims on the sanctuary. It chanced that an emigrant ship which had arrived that evening was just disembarking its passengers; mingling with the throng of which, I entered the filthy and narrow lanes of this Alsatia. The new arrivals were all Irish, and, as usual, were heralded by parties of the resident population, eagerly canvassing them for this or that lodging-house. Had not my own troubles been enough for me, I should have felt interested in the strange contrast between the simple peasant first stepping on a foreign shore, and the shrewd roguery of him who proposed guidance, and who doubtless had himself once been as unsuspecting and artless as those he now cajoled and endeavored to dupe.

I soon saw that single individuals were accounted of little consequence; the claim of the various lodging-houses was as family hotels, perhaps; so that I mixed myself up with a group of some eight or ten, whose voices sounded pleasant, for, in the dark, I had no other indication to suggest a preference.

I was not long in establishing a footing, so far as talking went, with one of this party,—an old, very

old man, whose greatest anxiety was to know, first, if “there was any Ingins where we were going,” and, secondly, if I had ever heard of his grandson, Dan Cullinane. The first doubt I solved for him frankly and freely, that an Indian would n't dare to show his nose where we were walking; and as to the second, I hesitated, promising to refer to “my tablets” when I came to the light, for I thought the name was familiar to me.

“He was a shoemaker by trade,” said the old man, “and a better never left Ireland; he was 'prentice to ould Finucane in Ennis, and might have done well, if he had n't the turn for Americay.”

“But he'll do better here, rely upon it,” said I, inviting some further disclosures; “I'm certain he's not disappointed with having come out.”

“No, indeed; glory be to God! he's doing finely; and 't was that persuaded my son Joe to sell the little place and come here; and a wonderful long way it is!”

After expending a few generalities on sea voyages in general, with a cursory glance at naval architecture, from Noah's “square” stern, down to the modern “round” innovation, we again returned to Dan, for whom I already conceived a strong interest.

“And is it far to New Orleans from this?” said the old man, who, I perceived, was struck by the air of sagacity in my discourse.

“New Orleans! why that's in the States, a thousand miles away!”

“Oh, murther, murther!” cried the old fellow, wringing his hands; “and ain't we in the States?”

“No,” said I; “this is Canada.”

“Joe, Joe!” cried he, pulling his son by the collar,

“listen to this, acushla. Oh, murther, murther! we're kilt and destroyed intirely!”

“What is it, father?” said a tall, powerfully built man, who spoke in a low but resolute voice; “what ails you?”

“Tell him, darlint, tell him!” said the old man, not able to utter his griefs.

“It seems,” said I, “that you believed yourselves in the States; now, this is not so. This is British America,—Lower Canada.”

“Isn't it 'Quaybec'?” said he, standing full in front of me.

“It is Quebec—, but still, that is Canada.”

“And it's ten thousand miles from Dan!” said the old fellow, whose cries were almost suffocating him.

“Whisht, father, and let me talk,” said the son; “do you know New Orleans?”

“Perfectly.—every street of it,” said I, with an effrontery the darkness aided considerably.

“And how far is't from here?”

“Something like thirteen or fourteen hundred miles, at a rough guess.”

“Oh, th' eternal villain! if I had him by the neck!” cried Joe, as he struck the ground a blow with his blackthorn which certainly would not have improved the human face divine; “he towld me they were a few miles asunder,—an easy day's walk!”

“Who said so?” asked I.

“The chap on Eden Quay, in Dublin, where we took our passage.”

“Don't be down-hearted, anyway,” said I; “distance is nothing here: we think no more of a hundred miles than you do in Ireland of a walk before breakfast. If

it's any comfort to you, I'm going the same way myself." This very consolatory assurance, which I learned then for the first time also, did not appear to give the full confidence I expected, for Joe made no answer, but, with head dropped and clasped hands, continued to mutter some words in Irish that, so far as sound went, had not the "clink" of blessings.

"He knows Dan," said the old man to his son, in a whisper which, low as it was, my quick ears detected.

"What does he know about him?" exclaimed the son, savagely; for the memory of one deception was too strong upon him to make him lightly credulous.

"I knew a very smart young man,—a very promising young fellow indeed,—at New Orleans," said I, "of the name you speak of,—Dan Cullinane."

"What part of Ireland did he come from?" asked Joe.

"The man I mean was from Clare, somewhere in the neighborhood of Ennis."

"That's it!" said the old man.

"Whisht!" said the son, whose caution was not so easily satisfied; and, turning to me, added, "What was he by trade?"

"He was a shoemaker, and an excellent one,—indeed, I've no hesitation in saying, one of the best in New Orleans."

"What was the street he lived in?"

Here was a puzzler; for, as my reader knows, I was at the end of my information, and had not the slightest knowledge of New Orleans or its localities. The little scrap of newspaper I had picked up on Anticosti was the only thing having any reference to that city I ever possessed in my life. But, true to my

theory to let nothing go to loss, I remembered this now, and, with an easy confidence, said, “I cannot recall the street, but it is just as you turn out of the street where the 'Picayune' newspaper-office stands.”

“Right!—all right, by the father of Moses!” cried Joe, stretching out a brawny hand, and shaking mine with the cordiality of friendship. Then, stepping forward to where the rest of the party were walking, with two most loquacious guides, he said, “Molly! here's a boy knows Dan! Biddy! come here, and hear about Dan!”

Two young girls, in long cloth cloaks, turned hastily round, and drew near, as they exclaimed in a breath, “Oh, tell us about Dan, sir!”

“T is betther wait till we 're in a house,” said the old man, who was, however greedy for news, not a little desirous of a fire and something to eat. “Sure, you 'll come with us, and take yer share of what 's going,” said he to me,—an invitation which, ere I could reply to, was reiterated by the whole party.

“Do you know where we're going here?” asked Joe of me, as we continued our way through mazes of gloomy lanes that grew gradually less and less frequented.

“No,” said I, in a whisper, “but 'tis best be on our guard here: we are in a bad neighborhood.”

“Well, there's three boys there,” said he, pointing to his sons, who walked in front, “that will pay for all they get. Will you ax the fellows how far we 're to go yet, for they don't mind me.”

“Are we near this same lodging-house?” said I, bluntly, to the guides, and using French, to show that I was no unfledged arrival from beyond the seas.

“Ah!” cried one, “a gaillard from the battery.”

“Where from, à la gueule de loup, young mounsieur?” said the other, familiarly catching me by the lapel of my coat.

“Because I am not afraid of his teeth,” said I, with an easy effrontery my heart gave a flat lie to.

“Vrai?” said he, with a laugh of horrible meaning.

“Vrai!” repeated I, with a sinking courage, but a very bold voice.

“I wish we were in better company,” whispered I to Joe; “what directions did you give these fellows?”

“To show us the best lodging-house for the night, and that we 'd pay well for it.”

“Ah!” thought I, “that explains something.”

“Here we are, mounseers,” said one, as, stopping at the door of a two-storied house, he knocked with his knuckles on the panel.

“Nous filions, slick, en suite, here,” said the other, holding out his hand.

“They are going!” whispered I; “they want to be paid, and we are well rid of them.”

“It would be manners to wait and see if they 'll let us in,” said Joe, who did not fancy this summary departure, while he fumbled in his pocket for a suitable coin.

“Vite!—quick!—sharp time!” cried one of the fellows, who, as the sound of voices was heard from within, seemed impatient to be off; and so, snatching rather than taking the shilling which still lingered in Joe's reluctant fingers, he wheeled about and fled, followed rapidly by the other.

“Qui va!” cried a sharp voice from within, as I knocked for the second time on the door-panel with a stone.

“Friends,” said I; “we want a lodging and

something to eat."

The door was at once opened, and, by the light of a lantern, we saw the figure of an old woman, whose eyes, bleared and bloodshot, glared at us fixedly.

"'Tis a lodgen' yez want?" said she, in an accent that showed her to be Irish. "And who brought yez here?"

"Two young fellows we met on the quay," said Joe; "one called the other 'Tony.'"

"Ay, indeed!" muttered the hag; "I was sure of it: his own son! his own son!"

These words she repeated in a tone of profound sorrow, and for a time seemed quite unmindful of our presence.

"Are we to get in at all?" said the old man, in an accent of impatience.

"What a hurry yer in; and maybe 'tis wishing yerself out again ye 'd be, after ye wor in!"

"I think we'd better try somewhere else," whispered Joe to me; "I don't like the look of this place." Before I could reply to this, a loud yell burst forth from the end of the street, accompanied by the tramp of many people, who seemed to move in a kind of regulated step.

"Here they are! Here they come!" cried the old woman; "step in quick, or ye 'll be too late!" and she dragged the young girls forward by the cloak into the hall; we followed without further question. Then, placing the lantern on the floor, she drew a heavy chain across the door, and dropped her cloak over the light, saying in a low, tremulous voice, "Them's the 'Tapageers!'"

The crowd now came closer, and we perceived that they were singing in chorus a song, of which the

air, at least, was Irish.

The barbarous rhyme of one rude verse, as they sung it in passing, still lingers in my memory:

"No bloody agint here we see,
Ready to rack, distrain, and saze us;
Whatever we ax, we have it free,
And take at hand, whatever plaze us.
Row, row, row, Will yez show me, now,
The polis that 'll dare to face us!"

"There they go! 'tis well ye wor safe!" said the old hag, as the sounds died away, and all became silent in the street without.

"Who or what are they?" said I, my curiosity being stimulated by fear.

"Them 's the 'Tapageers '! The chaps that never spared man or woman in their rounds. 'T is bad enough, the place is; but they make it far worse!"

"Can we stop here for the night?" said Joe, growing impatient at the colloquy.

"And what for wud ye stop here?" asked the crone, as she held up the lantern the better to see him who made the demand.

"We want our supper, and a place to sleep," said the old man; "and we 're able and willin' to pay for both."

"'T is a nice place ye kem for either!" said she; and she leaned back against the wall and laughed with a fiend-like malice that made my blood chill.

"Then I suppose we must go somewhere else," said Joe. "Come, boys; 't is no use losing our time here!"

"God speed you!" said she, preparing to undo the chain that fastened the door. "Ye have bould hearts, any way! There they go! d' ye hear them?" This was said in a half-whisper, as the wild yells of the

“Tapageers” arose without; and soon after, the noise and tumult of a scuffle,—at least we could hear the crashing of sticks, and the shouting of a fray; from which, too, piercing cries for help burst forth.

“What are ye doin'? Are ye mad? Are ye out of your sinses?” cried the hag, as Joe endeavored to wrest open the chain, the secret of which he did not understand.

“They're murdering some one without there!” said he. “Let me free, or I'll kick down your old door this minute!”

“Kick away, honey!” said the hag; “as strong men as yourself tried that a'ready; and—d'ye hear?—it's done now; it 's *over!*” These terrible words were in allusion to a low kind of sobbing sound, which grew fainter and fainter, and then ceased altogether.

“They 're taking the body away,” whispered she, after a pause of death-like stillness.

“Where to?” said I, half breathless with terror.

“To the river! the stream runs fast, and the corpse will be down below Goose Island,—ay, in the Gulf, 'fore morning!”

The two young girls, unable longer to control their feelings, here burst out a crying; and the old man, pulling out a rosary, turned to the wall and began his prayers.

“'Tis a bloody place; glory be to God!” said Joe, at last, with a sigh, and clasped his hands before him, like one unable to decide on what course to follow.

I saw, now, that all were so paralyzed by fear that it devolved upon me to act for the rest; so, summoning my best courage, I said, “Will you allow us to stay here for the night, since we are strangers, and do not know where to seek shelter?” She shook

her head, not so much with the air of refusing my request as to convey that I had asked for something scarce worth the granting.

“We only want a shelter for the night—”

“And a bit to eat,” broke in the old man, turning round from his prayers. “Sanctificatur in sec'la,—if it was only a bit of belly bacon, and—Tower of Ivory, purtect us—with a pot of praties, and—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—”

“Is he a friar?” said the hag to me, eagerly; “does he belong to an 'ordher'?”

“No,” said I;” he's only a good Catholic.”

She wrung her hands, as if in disappointment; and then, taking up the lantern once more, said, “Come along! I 'll show yez where ye can stay.”

We followed, I leading the others, up a narrow and rickety stair, between two walls streaming with damp and patched with mould. When she reached the landing she searched for a moment for a key, which having found, she opened the door of a long low room, whose only furniture was a deal table and a few chairs; a candle stuck in a bottle, and some drinking-vessels of tin, were on the table, and a piece of newspaper containing some tobacco.

“There,” said she, lighting the candle, “you may stay here; 't is all I 'm able to do for yez, is to give ye shelter.”

“And nothing to eat?” ejaculated the old man, sorrowfully.

“Hav' n't you a few potatoes?” said Joe.

“I did n't taste food since yesterday morning,” said the hag; “and that's what's to keep life in me to-morrow!” and as she spoke, she held out a fragment of blackened sea-biscuit such as Russian sailors call

“rusk.”

“Well, by coorse, there's no use in talking,” said Joe, who always seemed the first to see his way clearly. “Tis worse for the girls, for *we* can take a draw of the pipe. Lucky for us we have it!”

Meanwhile, the two girls had taken off their cloaks, and were busy gathering some loose sticks together, to make a fire,—a piece of practical wisdom I at once lent all aid to.

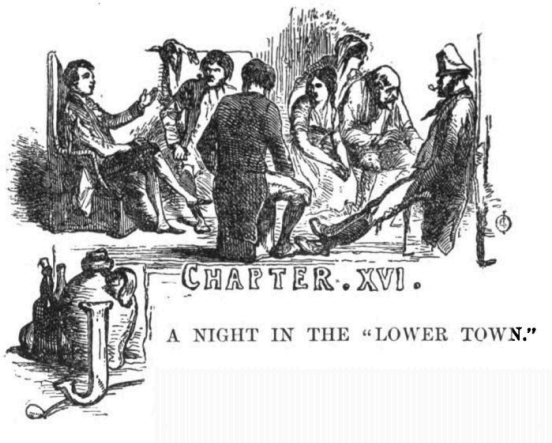
The hag, apparently moved by the ready compliance to make the best of matters, went out, and returned with some more wood,—fragments of ship-timber,—which she offered us, saying, “'T is all I can give yez. Good night to yez all!”

“Well, father,” said Joe, as soon as he had lighted his pipe, and taken a seat by the fire, “ye wor tired enough of the ship, but I think ye wish yerself back again there, now.”

“I wish more nor that,” said the old man, querulously; “I wish I never seen the same ship; nor ever left ould Ireland!”

This sentiment threw a gloom over the whole party, by awakening, not only memories of home and that far-away land, but also by the confession of a sense of disappointment which each was only able to struggle against while unavowed. The sorrow made them silent, and at last sleepy. At first, the three “boys,” great fellows of six feet high, stretched themselves full-length on the floor, and snored away in concert; then the two girls, one with her head on the other's lap, fell off; while the old man, sitting directly in front of the fire, nodded backwards and forwards, waking up, every half hour or so, to light his pipe; which done, he immediately fell off into a doze once more, leaving Joe and myself alone,

waking and watchful.



CHAPTER XVI. A NIGHT IN THE LOWER TOWN

Joe's eyes were bent upon me, as I sat directly opposite him, with a fixedness that I could easily see was occasioned by my showy costume; his glances ranged from my buckled shoes to my white cravat, adorned with a splendid brooch of mock amethyst; nay, I almost fancied once that he was counting the silver clocks on my silk stockings! It was a look of most undisguised astonishment,—such a look as one bestows upon some new and singular animal, of

whose habits and instincts we are lost in conjecture.

Now, I was “York too,”—that is to say, I was Irish as well as himself; and I well knew that there was no rank nor condition of man for which the peasant in Ireland conceives the same low estimate as the “Livery Servant.” The class is associated in his mind with chicanery, impudence, falsehood, theft, and a score of similar good properties; not to add that, being occasionally, in great families, a native of England, the Saxon element is united to the other “bitters” of the potion.

Scarcely a “tenant” could be found that would not rather face a mastiff than a footman,—such is the proverbial dislike to these human lilies who neither toil nor spin. Now, I have said I knew this well: I had been reared in the knowledge and practice of this and many similar antipathies, so that I at once took counsel with myself what I should do to escape from the reproach of a mark so indelibly stamped upon me by externals. “La famille Cullinane” suited *me* admirably; they were precisely the kind of people *I* wanted; my care, therefore, was that they should reciprocate the want, and be utterly helpless without *me*. Thus reflecting, I could not help saying to myself, how gladly would I have parted with all these gauds for a homely, ay, or even a ragged, suit of native frieze. I remembered the cock on the dunghill who would have given his diamond for one single grain of corn; and I felt that “Æsop” was a grand political economist.

From these and similar mental meanderings I was brought back by Joe, who, after emptying the ashes from his pipe, said, and with a peculiarly dry voice, “Ye 'r in a service, young man?”

Now, although the words are few, and the speaker

did not intend that his manner should have given them any particular significance, yet the tone, the cautious slowness of the enunciation, coupled with the stern, steady stare at my “bravery,” made them tingle on my ears, and send the blood rushing to my cheeks with shame. It was like a sharp prick of the spur; and so it turned out.

“In a service!” said I, with a look of offended dignity. “No, I flatter myself not that low yet. What could have made you suppose so? Oh, I see! “—here I burst out into a very well-assumed laugh. “That is excellent, to be sure! ha, ha, ha! so it was these”—and I stretched forth my embroidered shins—“it was these deceived you! And a very natural mistake, too. No, my worthy friend,—not but, indeed, I might envy many in that same ignoble position.” I said this with a sudden change of voice, as though overcast by some sad recollection.

“'Twas indeed your dress,” said Joe, with a modest deference in his manner, meant to be a full apology for his late blunder. “Maybe 'tis the fashion here.”

“No, Cullinane,” said I, using a freedom which should open the way to our relative future standing; “no, not even that.” Here I heaved a heavy sigh, and became silent. My companion, abashed by his mistake, said nothing; and so we sat, without interchanging a word, for full five minutes.

“I have had a struggle with myself, Cullinane,” said I, at last, “and I have conquered. Ay, I have gained the day in a hard-fought battle against my sense of shame. I will be frank with you, therefore. In this dress I appeared to-night on the boards of the Quebec theatre.”

“A play actor!” exclaimed Joe, with a face very far from expressing any high sense of the histrionic art.

“Not exactly,” said I, “only a would-be one. I am a gentleman by birth, family, and fortune; but taking it into my head, in a foolish hour, that I should like the excitement of an actor's life, I fled from home, quitted friends, relatives, affluence, and ease, to follow a strolling company. At another time I may relate to you all the disguises I assumed to escape detection. Immense sums were offered for my apprehension—why do I say *were?*—ay, Cullinane, are offered. I will not deceive you. It is in your power this instant, by surrendering me to my family, to earn five thousand dollars!”

“Do ye think I'd be—”

“No, I do not. In proof of my confidence in you, hear my story. We travelled through the States at first by unfrequented routes till we reached the North, when, gaining courage, I ventured to take a high range of characters, and, I will own it, with success. At last we came to Canada, in which country, although the reward had not been announced, my father had acquainted all the principal people with my flight, entreating them to do their utmost to dissuade me from a career so far below my rank and future prospects. Among others, he wrote to an old friend and schoolfellow, the Governor-General, requesting his aid in this affair. I was always able, from other sources, to learn every step that was taken with this object; so that I not only knew this, but actually possessed a copy of my father's letter to Lord Poynder, wherein this passage occurred: 'Above all things, my dear Poynder, no publicity, no exposure! Remember the position Cornelius will one day hold, and let him not be ashamed when he may meet you in after-life. If the silly boy can be induced, by his own sense of dignity, to abandon this unworthy pursuit, so much the

better; but coercion would, I fear, give faint hope of eradicating the evil.' Now, as I perceived that no actual force was to be employed against me, I did not hesitate to appear in the part for which the bills announced me. Have you ever read Shakespeare?"

"No, sir," said Joe, respectfully.

"Well, no matter. I was to appear as Hamlet,—this is the dress of that character,—little suspecting, indeed, how the applause I was accustomed to receive was to be changed. To be brief. In the very centre of the dress-circle was the Governor himself, he came with his whole staff, but with out any previous intimation. No sooner had I made my entrance on the scene,—scarcely had I begun that magnificent soliloquy, 'Show me the thief that stole my fame,'—when his Excellency commenced hissing! Now, when the Governor-General hisses, all the staff hiss; then the President of the Council and all his colleagues hiss; then come the bishop and the inferior clergy, with the judges and the Attorney-General, and so on; then all the loyal population of the house joined in, with the exception of a few in the galleries that hated the British connection, and who cried out, 'Three cheers for Con Cregan and the independence of Canada!' In this way went on the first act; groans and yells and cat-calls overtopping all I tried to say, and screams for the manager to come out issuing from every part of the house. At last out he did come. This for a while made matters worse; so many directions were given, questions asked, and demands made that it was clearly impossible to hear any one voice; and there stood the manager, swinging his arms about like an insane telegraph, now running to the stage-box at one side, then crossing over to the other, to maintain a little private conversation by signs, till the sense of the

house spoke out by accidentally catching a glimpse of me in the side-scenes.

“'Is it your pleasure, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen, that this actor should not appear again before you?'

“'Yes—yes. No—no—no,' were shouted from hundreds of voices.

“' What am I to understand?' said he, bowing, with his arms crossed submissively before him. 'I submit myself to your orders. If Mr. Cregan does not meet your approbation—'

“'Throw him into the dock!—break his neck!—set him adrift on a log down the Gulf-stream!—chip him up for bark!—burn him for charcoal!'—and twenty other like humane proposals burst forth together; and so, not waiting to see how far the manager's politeness would carry him, I fled from the theatre. Yes, Cullinane, I fled with shame and disgust from that fickle public, who applaud with ecstasy today that they may condemn with infamy to-morrow. Nor was I deceived by the vain egotism of supposing that *I* was the object of their ungenerous anger. Alas! my friend, the evil lay deeper,—it was my Irish name and family they sought to insult! The old grudge that they bear us at home, they carry over the seas with them. How plain it is: they never can forgive our superiority. It is this they seek revenge upon wherever they find us.”

I own that in giving this peculiar turn to my narrative I was led by perceiving that my listener had begun to show a most lamentable want of sympathy for myself and my sufferings; so I was driven to try what a little patriotism might do in arousing his feelings; and I was right. Some of Cullnane's connections had been Terrys,—or

Blackfeet, or White-feet, or some one or other of these pleasant fraternities who study ball-practice, with a landlord for the bull's-eye. He at once caught up the spirit of my remarks, and even quoted some eloquent passages of Mr. O'Connell about the width of our shoulders and the calves of our legs, and other like personal advantages, incontestably showing as they do that we never were made to be subject to the Saxon. It was the law of the land, however, which had his heartiest abhorrence. This, like nine-tenths of his own class in Ireland, he regarded as a systematic means of oppression, invented by the rich to give them the tyrannical dominion over the poor. Nor is the belief to be wondered at, considering how cognizant the peasant often is of all the schemes and wiles by which a conviction is compassed; nay, the very adroitness of a legal defence in criminal cases,—the feints, the quips, the stratagems,—instead of suggesting admiration for those barriers by which the life and liberty of a subject are protected, only engendered a stronger conviction of the roguish character of that ordeal where craft and subtlety could do so much.

It was at the close of a very long diatribe over Irish law and lawyers that Cullinane, whose confidence increased each moment, said, with a sigh, “Ay! they wor n't so 'cute in ould times, when my poor grandfather was tried, as they are now, or may be he'd have had betther luck.”

“What happened to him?” said I.

“He was hanged, acushla!” said he, knocking the ashes out of his pipe as leisurely as might be, and then mumbling a scrap of a prayer below his breath.

“For what?” asked I, in some agitation; but he didn't hear me, being sunk in his own reflections, so

that I was forced to repeat my question.

“Ye never heerd of one Mr. Shinane, of the Grove?” said he, after a pause. “Of coorse ye did n't,—'tis many years ago now; but he was well known oncet, and owned a great part of Ennistymore, and a hard man he was. But no matter for that,—he was a strong, full man, with rosy cheeks and stout built, and sorra a lease in the country had not his life in it!—a thing he liked well, for he used to say, 't 'll be the ruin of ye all, if any one shoots me!' Well, my grandfather—rest his sowl in glory!—was his driver, and used to manage everything on the property for him; and considerin' what a hard thing it is, he was well liked by the country round,—all but by one man, Maurice Cafferty by name. I never seed him, for it was all 'fore I was born; but the name is in my mind as if I knew him well,—I used to hear it every night of my life when I was a child!

“There was a dispute about Cafferty's houldin', and my grandfather was for turnin' him out, for he was a bad tenant; but Mr. Shinane was afeerd of him, and said, 'Leave him quiet, Mat,' says he; 'he's a troublesome chap, and we 'll get rid of him in our own good time; but don't drive him to extremities: I told him to come up to the cottage, this morning: come with me there, and we 'll talk to him.' Now, the cottage was a little place about two miles off, in the woods, where the master used to dine sometimes in summer, when they were chipping bark; but nobody lived there.

“It was remarked by many that morning, as they went along, that my grandfather and Mr. Shinane were in high words all the time,—at least, so the people working in the fields thought, and even the childer that was picking bark said that they were talking as if they were very angry with each other.

“This was about eleven o'clock, and at the same time Cafferty, who was selling a pig in Ennistymore, said to the butcher, 'Be quick, and tell me what you 'll give, for I must go home and clean myself, as I 'm to speak to the master today about my lease.' Well, at a little before twelve Cafferty came through the wood, and asked the people had they seen Mr. Shinane pass by, for that he towld him to meet him at the cottage; and the workmen said yes, and more by token that he was quarrellin' with Mat Cullinane. 'I'm sorry for that,' says Cafferty, 'for I wanted him to be in a good humor, and long life to him! 'The words was n't well out, but what would they see but my grandfather running towards them, at the top of his speed, screeching out like mad, 'The master's murdered! the master's kilt dead!' Away they all went to the cottage, and there upon the floor was the dead body, with an axe buried deep in the skull,—so deep that only the thick part of the iron was outside. That was the dreadful sight! and, sure enough, after looking at the corpse, every eye was turned on my grandfather, who was leaning on the dresser, pale and trembling, and his hands and knees all covered with blood. 'How did it happen, Mat?' said three or four together; but Cafferty muttered, 'It's better ask nothing about it; it's not likely *he 'll* tell us the truth!'

“The same night my grandfather was arrested on suspicion and brought to Ennis, where he was lodged in jail; and although there was no witness agin' him, nor anything more than I towld ye,—the high words between them, the axe being my grandfather's, the blood on his clothes and hands, and his dreadful confusion when the people came up,—all these went so hard against him, and particularly as the judge said it was good to make an example, that he was condemned; and so it was he was hanged on the next

Saturday in front of the jail!”

“But what defence did he make; what account did he give of the circumstance?”

“All he could tell was, that he was standing beside the master at the table, talking quietly, when he heard a shout and a yell in the wood, and he said, 'They 're stealing the bark out there; they 'll not leave us a hundredweight of it yet!' and out he rushed into the copse. The shouting grew louder, and he thought it was some of the men cryin' for help, and so he never stopped running till he came where they were at work felling trees. 'What's the matter?' says he, to the men, as he came up panting and breathless; 'where was the screeching?'

“'We heerd nothing,' says the men.

“'Ye heerd nothing! didn't ye hear yells and shouting this minute?'

“'Sorra bit,' says the men, looking strangely at each other, for my grandfather was agitated, and trembling, between anger and a kind of fear; just as he said afterwards, 'as if there was something dreadful going to happen him!' 'Them was terrible cries, anyway!' says my grandfather; and with that he turned back to the cottage, and it was then that he found the master lying dead on his face, and the axe in his skull. He tried to lift him up, or turn him over on his back, and that was the way he bloodied his hands and all the front of his clothes. That was all he had to say, and to swear before the sight of Heaven that he didn't do it!

“No matter! they hanged him for it! Ay, and I have an ould newspaper in my trunk this minit, where there 's a great discourse about the wickedness of a crayture going out of the world wid a lie on his last breath!”

“And you think he was innocent?” said I.

“Sure, we know it! sure, the priest said to my father,—'Take courage,' says he, 'your father is n't in a bad place if he 's in purgatory,' says he,' he 's not over the broken bridge, where the murderers does be, but in the meadows, where the stream is shallow, and stepping-stones in it! and every stone costs ten masses—sorra more! 'God help us! but blood is a dreadful thing!” And with this reflection, uttered in a voice of fervent feeling, the hardy peasant laid down his pipe; and I could see, by his muttering lips and clasped hands, that he was offering up a prayer for the soul's rest of his unhappy kinsman.

“And what became of Cafferty?” said I, as he finished his devotions.

“'T was never rightly known; for, after he gave evidence on the trial, the people did n't like him, and he left the place; some say he went to his mother's relations down in Kerry!”

The deep-drawn breathings of the sleepers around us; the unbroken stillness of the night; the fast-expiring embers, which only flickered at intervals,—contributed their aid to make the story more deeply affecting; and I sat pondering over it, and canvassing within my mind all the probabilities of the condemned man's guilt or innocence; nor, I must own it, were all my convictions on the side of the narrator's belief; but even that very doubt heightened the interest considerably. As for Cullinane, his thoughts were evidently less with the incidents of the characters as they lived, than with that long pilgrimage of expiation, in which his imagination pictured his poor relative still a wanderer beyond the grave.

The fire now barely flickered, throwing from time

to time little jets of light upon the sleeping figures around us, and then leaving all in dark indistinctness. My companion also, crouching down, hid his face within his hands, and either slept or was lost in deep thought, and I alone of all the party was left awake, my mind dwelling on the tale I had just heard, with a degree of interest to which the place and the hour strongly contributed.

I had been for some time thus, when the sound of feet moving heavily overhead attracted my attention; they were like the sluggish footsteps of age, but passing to and fro with what seemed haste and eagerness. I could hear a voice, too, which even in its indistinctness I recognized as that of the old woman; and once or twice fancied I could detect another, whose accents sounded like pain and suffering. The shuffling footsteps still continued, and I heard the old crazy sash of the window open, and after an interval shut again, while I distinctly could catch the old hag's voice saying, “It 's all dark without; there 's no use 'trying'!” a low whining sound followed; and then I heard the old woman slowly descending the stairs, and, by the motion of her hand along the wall, I conjectured that she had no light.

She stopped as she came to the door, and seemed to listen to the long-drawn breathing of the sleepers; and then she pushed open the door and entered. With a strange dread of what this might mean, I still resolved to let the event take its course; and, feigning deepest sleep, I lay back against the wall and watched her well.

Guiding herself along by the wall, she advanced slowly, halting every second or third step to listen,—a strange precaution, since her own asthmatic breathing was enough to mask all other sounds. At last she neared the grate; and then her thin and cord-

like fingers passed from the wall, to rest upon my head. It was with a kind of thrill I felt them; for I perceived by the touch that she did not know on what her hand was placed. She knelt down now, close beside me, and, stooping over, stirred the embers with her fingers till she discovered some faint resemblance to fire, amid the dark ashes. To brighten this into flame, she blew upon it for several minutes, and, even taking the live embers in her hands, tried in every way to kindle them.

With a patience that seemed untirable, she continued at this for a long time; now selecting from the hearth some new material to work upon, and now abandoning it for another; till, when I had almost grown drowsy in watching this monotonous process, a thin bright light sprung up, and I saw that she had lighted a little piece of candle that she held in her hand. I think even now I have her before me, as, crouched down upon her knees, and sheltering the candle from the current air of the room, she took a stealthy, but searching, glance at the figures, who, in every attitude of weariness, were sleeping heavily around.

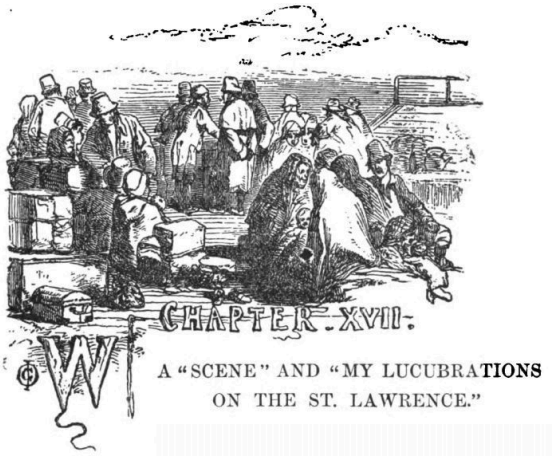
It was not without a great effort that she regained her feet, for she was very old and infirm; and now she retraced her steps cautiously as she came,—stooping at intervals to listen, and then resuming her way as before. I watched her till she passed out; and then, as I heard her first heavy footstep on the stair, I slipped off my shoes and followed her.

My mind throughout the whole of that night had been kept in a state of tension that invariably has the effect of magnifying the significance of every, even the very commonest, occurrences. It resembles that peculiar condition in certain maladies when the senses become preternaturally acute; in such

moments the reason is never satisfied with drawing only from inferences for any fact before it; it seeks for more, and in the effort becomes lost in the mazes of mere fancy. I will own that as, with stealthy step and noiseless gesture, I followed that old hag, there was a kind of ecstasy in my terror which no mere sense of pleasure could convey. The light seemed to show ghastly shapes, as she passed, on the green and mouldy walls, and her head, with its masses of long and straggling gray hair, nodded in shadow like some unearthly spectre.

As she came nigh the top, I heard a weak and whining cry, something too deep for the voice of infancy, but seeming too faint for manhood. “Ay, ay,” croaked the hag, harshly, “I'm coming, I'm coming!” and as she said this, she pushed open a door and entered a room, which, by the passing gleam of light as she went, I perceived lay next to the roof, for the rafters and the tiles were both visible, as there was no ceiling.

I held my breath as I slowly stole along, and then, reaching the door as it lay half ajar, I crouched down and peeped in.



CHAPTER XVII. A “SCENE” AND “MY LUCUBRATIONS ON THE ST. LAWRENCE.”

When the light of the candle which the old woman carried had somewhat dissipated the darkness, I could see the whole interior of the room; and certainly, well habituated as I had been from my earliest years to such sights, poverty like this I never had seen before! Not a chair nor table was there; a few broken utensils for cooking, such as are usually thrown away as useless among rubbish, stood upon the cold hearth. A few potatoes on one broken dish, and a little meat on another, were the only things like food. It was not for some minutes that I perceived in the corner a miserable bed of straw confined within a plank, supported by two rough stones; nor was it till I had looked long and closely

that I saw that the figure of a man lay extended on the bed, his stiffened and outstretched limbs resembling those of a corpse. Towards this the old woman now tottered with slow steps, and, setting the small piece of candle upright in a saucer, she approached the bed. “There it is, now; look at it, and make yer mind aisy,” said she, placing it on the floor beside the bed, in such a position that he could see it.

The sick man turned his face round, and as his eyes met the light, there came over his whole features a wondrous change. Livid and clammy with the death-sweat, the rigid muscles relaxed, and in the staring eyeballs and the parted lips there seemed a perfect paroxysm of emotion. “Is that it?—are ye sure that's it?” cried he, in a voice to which the momentary excitement imparted strength.

“To be sure I am; I seen Father Ned bless it himself, and sprinkle it too!” said she.

“Oh, the heavenly—” He stopped, and in a lower voice added, “Say it for me, Molly!—say it for me, Molly! I can't say it myself.”

“Keep your eyes on the blessed candle!” said the hag, peevishly; “'t is a quarter dollar it cost me.”

“Wouldn't he come, Molly?—did he say he wouldn't come?”

“Father Ned! arrah, 'tis likely he'd come here at night, with the Tapageers on their rounds, and nothing to give him when he kem!”

“Not to hear my last words!—not to take my confession!” cried he, in a kind of shriek. “Oh, 'tis the black list of sins I have to own to!”

“Whisht, whisht!” cried the hag. “'T is many a year ago now; maybe it's all forgot.”

“No, it's not,” cried the dying man, with a wild energy he did not seem to have strength for. “When you wor away, Molly, he was here, standing beside the bed.”

The old hag laughed with a horrid sardonic laugh.

“Don't—don't, for the love of—ah—I can't say—I can't say it,” cried he; and the voice died away in the effort.

“What did he say to ye when he kem?” said she, in a scoffing tone.

“He never spoke a word, but he pressed back the cloth that was on his head, and I saw the deep cut in it, down to the very face!”

“Well, I am sure it had time to heal before this time,” said the woman, with a tone of mockery that at last became palpable to the dying man.

“Where's Dan, Molly,—did he never come back since?”

“Sorra bit; he said he'd go out of the house, and never come back to it. You frightened the boy with the terrible things you say in your ravings.”

“Oh, murther—murther! My own flesh and blood desart me!”

“Then why won't you be raisonable,—why won't you hould your peace about what happened long agone?”

“Because I can't,” said he, with a peevish eagerness. “Because I'm going where it's all known a'ready.”

“Faix, and I would n't be remindin' them, anyway!” said the hag, whose sarcastic impiety added fresh tortures to the dying sinner.

“I wanted to tell Father Ned all; I wanted to have masses for him that's gone,—the man that suffered

instead of me! Oh, dear!—Oh, dear!—and nobody will come to me."

"If ye cry that loud, I 'll leave you too," said the hag. "They know already 'tis the spotted fever ye have, and the Tapageers would burn the house under ye, if I was to go."

"Don't go, Molly,—don't leave me," he cried, with heart-rending anguish. "Bring the blessed candle nearer; I don't see it well."

"You'll see less of it soon; 'tis nigh out," said she, snuffing the wick with her fingers.

The dying man now stretched out his fleshless fingers towards the light, and I could see by his lips that he was praying. "They 're calling me now," cried he, "Molly,"—and his voice of a sudden grew strong and full,—"don't ye hear them? There it is again, —'Maurice Cafferty, Maurice Cafferty, yer wantin'."

"Lie down and be at peace," said she, rudely pushing him back on the bed.

"The blessed candle, where's the blessed candle?" shrieked he.

"'T is out," said the hag; and as she spoke, the wick fell into the saucer, and all was dark.

A wild and fearful cry broke from the sick man and re-echoed through the silent house; and ere it died away I had crept stealthily back to my place beside my companions.

"'Did ye hear anything, or was I dreamin'?" said Joe to me; "I thought I heard the most dreadful scream,—like a man drownin'."

"It was a dream, perhaps," said I, shuddering at the thought of what I had just witnessed, while I listened with terrible anxiety for auy sound overhead; but none came; and so passed the long

hours till day-dawn.

Without revealing to my companion the terrible scene I had been witness to, I told him that we were in the same house with a fearful malady,—an announcement I well knew had greater terror for none than an Irish peasant. He at once decided on departing; and, although day was barely breaking, he awoke the others, and a low whispering conversation ensued, in which I felt, or imagined, at least, that I was an interested party. At last Joe, turning towards me, said, “And you, sir, what do you mean to do!”

“The very question,” said I, “that I cannot answer. If I were to follow my inclination, I 'd turn homeward; if I must yield to necessity, I 'll call upon the Governor-General, and remain with him till I hear from my friends.”

There was a pause; a moment of deliberation seemed to fall upon the bystanders, which at length was broken by the old man saying, “Well, good luck be with you; any way, 't is the best thing you could do!”

I saw that I had overshot my bolt, and with difficulty concealed my annoyance at my own failure. My irritation was, I conclude, sufficiently apparent, for Joe quickly said, “We 're very sorry to part with you; but if we could be of any use before we go—”

“Which way do you travel?” said I, carelessly.

“That's the puzzle, for we don't know the country. 'T is New Orleans we'd like to go to first.”

“Nothing easier,” said I. “Take the steamer to Montreal, cross over into the States, down Lake Champlain to Whitehall, over to Albany, and then twenty hours down the Hudson brings you to New York.”

"You know the way well!" said Joe, with an undisguised admiration for my geography, which, I need not tell the reader, was all acquired from books and maps.

"I should think so," said I, "seeing that I might travel it blindfold!"

"Is it dangerous? Are there Injians?" said the old man, whose mind seemed very alive to the perils of red men.

"There are some tribes on the way," said I; "but the white fellows you meet with are worse than the red ones,—such rogues, and assassins too!"

"The saints presarve us! How will we ever do it?"

"Look out for some smart fellow who knows the way and thoroughly understands the people, and who can speak French fluently, for the first part of the journey, and who is up to all the Yankee roguery, for the second. Give him full power to guide and direct your expedition, and you 'll have both a safe journey and a pleasant one."

"Ay, and where will we get him?" cried one.

"And what would he be askin' for his trouble?" said another; while Joe, with an assenting nod, reiterated both questions, and seemed to expect that answer from me.

"It ought to be easy enough in such a city as this," said I, negligently. "Are you acquainted with Forbes and Gudgeon? They are my bankers. They could, I am sure, find out your man at once."

"Ah, sir, we know nobody at all!" exclaimed Joe, in an accent of such humility that I actually felt shocked at my own duplicity.

"By Jove!" said I, as though a sudden thought had struck me, "very little would make me go with you

myself.” A regular burst of joy from the whole party here interrupted me. “Yes, I'm quite in earnest,” said I, with a dignified air. “This place will be excessively distasteful to me henceforth. I have placed myself in what is called a false position here, and 'twere far better to escape from it at once.”

“That would be the making of us, all out, if ye could come, Mr. Cregan!” said Joe.

“Let me interrupt you one moment,” said I. “If I should accompany you on this journey, there is one condition only upon which I would consent to it.”

“Whatever you like; only say it,” said he, over whom I had established a species of magnetic influence.

“It is this, then,” said I, “that you treat me on terms of perfect equality,—forget my birth and rank in life; regard me exactly as one of yourselves. Let me be no longer anything but 'Con Cregan.'”

“That's mighty handsome, entirely!” said the old man,—a sentiment concurred in by the whole family in chorus.

“Remember, then,” said I, “no more 'Mr. Cregan.' I am 'Con'—nothing more!”

Joe looked unutterable delight at the condescension.

“Secondly, I should not wish to go back to my lodgings here, after what has occurred; so I 'll write a few lines to have my trunks forwarded to Montreal, until which time I 'll ask of you to procure me a change of costume, for I cannot bear to be seen in this absurd dress by daylight.”

“To be sure; whatever you please!” said Joe, overjoyed at the projected arrangement.

After some further discussion on the subject, I

inquired where their luggage was stored, and learned that it lay at the Montreal Steamer Wharf, where it had been deposited the preceding day; and by a bill of the packets, which Joe produced, I saw that she was to sail that very morning, at eight o'clock. There was then no time to lose; so I advised my companions to move silently and noiselessly from the house, and to follow me. With an implicit reliance on every direction I uttered, they stole carefully down the stairs and issued into the street, which was now perfectly deserted.

Although in total ignorance of the locality, I stepped out confidently; and first making for the Harbor, as a “point of departure,” I at last reached the “New Wharf,” as the station of the river steamers was called. With an air of the most consummate effrontery, I entered the office to bargain for our passage; and although the clerks were not sparing of their ridicule both on my pretensions and my costume, as the conversation was carried on in French, my companions stared in wonder at my fluency, and in silent ecstasy at the good fortune that had thrown them into such guidance.

It was a busy morning for me; since besides getting their luggage on board and procuring them a hearty breakfast, I had also to arrange about my own costume, of which I now felt really ashamed at every step.

At length we got under way, and steamed stoutly against the fast-flowing St. Lawrence; our decks crowded with a multifarious and motley crew of emigrants, all bound for various places in the Upper Province, but with as pleasant an ignorance of where they were going, what it was like, and how far off, as the most devoted fatalist could have wished for. A few, and they were the shrewd exceptions,

remembered the name of the city in whose neighborhood they were about to settle; many more could only say, negatively, that it was n't Lachine, nor it was n't Trois Rivières; some were only capable of affirming that it was “beyant Montreal,” or “higher up than Kingston;” and, lastly, a “few bright spirits” were going, “wid the help o' God, where Dan was,” or “Peter.” They were not downhearted, nor anxious, nor fretful for all this; far from it. It seemed as if the world before them, in all the attractions of its novelty, suggested hope. They had left a land so full of wretchedness that no change could well be worse; so they sat in pleasant little knots and groups upon the deck “discoorsin!” Ay, just so, —“discoorsin'”! Sassenach that you are, I hear you muttering, “What is that?” Well, I'll tell you. “Discoorsin'” is not talking, nor chaffing, nor mere conversing. It is not the *causerie* of the French, nor the *conversazione* of Italy, nor is it the *Gespräch's Unterhaltung* of plodding old Germany; but it is an admirable *mélange* of all together. It is a grand *olla podrida*, where all things, political, religious, agricultural, and educational, are discussed with such admirable keeping, such uniformity in the tone of sentiment and expression, that it would be difficult to detect a change in the subject-matter, from the quiet monotony of its handling. The Pope; the praties; Molly Somebody's pig and the Priest's pony; Dan O'Connell's last installment of hope; the price of oats; the late assizes; laments over the past, —the blessed days when there was little law and no police; when masses were cheap, and mutton to be had for stealing it,—such were the themes in vogue. And though generally one speaker “held the floor,” there was a running chorus of “Sure enough!” “Devil fear ye!” “An' why not?” kept up, that made every

hearer a sleeping partner in the eloquence. Dissent or contradiction was a thing unheard of; they were all subjects upon which each felt precisely alike.

No man's experience pointed to anything save rainy seasons and wet potatoes, cheap bacon and high county cess. Life had its one phase of monotonous want, only broken in upon by the momentary orgie of an election, or the excitement of a county town on the Saturday of an execution.

And so it was. Like the nor'-easter that followed them over the seas, came all the memories of what they had left behind. They had little care for even a passing look at the new and strange objects around them. The giant cedar-trees along the banks,—the immense rafts, like floating islands, hurrying past on the foaming current, with myriads of figures moving on them,—the endless forests of dark pines, the quaint log-houses, unlike those farther north, and with more pretension to architectural design,—and now and then a Canadian “bateau” shooting past like a sword-fish, its red-capped crew saluting the steamer with a wild cheer that would wake the echoes many a mile away: if they looked at these, it was easy to see that they noted them but indifferently; their hearts were far away. Ay, in spite of misery, and hardship, and famine, and flood, they were away in the wilds of Erris, in the bleak plains of Donegal, or the lonely glens of Connemara.

It has often struck me that our rulers should have perpetuated the names of Irish localities in the New World. One must have experienced the feeling himself to know the charm of this simple association. The hourly recurring name that speaks so familiarly of home, is a powerful antidote to the sense of banishment. Well, here I am, prosing about emigrants, and their regrets, and wants, and hopes,

and wishes, and forgetting the while the worthy little group who, with a hot “net” of potatoes (for in this fashion each mess is allowed to boil its quota), and a very savory cut of ham, awaited my presence in the steerage; they were good and kindly souls every one of them. The old grandfather was a fine prosy old grumbler about the year '98 and the terrible doings of the “Orangemen.” Joe was a stout-hearted, frank fellow that only wanted fair play in the world to make his path steadily onward. The sons were, in Irish parlance, “good boys,” and the girls fine-tempered and good-natured,—as ninety-nine out of the hundred are in the land they come from.

Now, shall I forfeit some of my kind reader's consideration if I say that, with all these excellences, and many others besides, they became soon inexpressibly tiresome to me. There was not a theme they spoke on that I had not already by heart. Irish grievances, in all their moods and tenses, had been always “stock pieces” in my father's cabin, and I am bound to acknowledge that the elder Cregan had a sagacity of perception, a shrewdness of discrimination, and an aptitude of expression not to be found every day. Listening to the Culliuanes after him was like hearing the butler commenting in the servants' hall over the debate one had listened to in “the House.” It was a strange, queer sensation that I felt coming over me as we travelled along day by day together, and I can even now remember the shriek of ecstasy that escaped me one morning when I had hit upon the true analysis of my feelings, and, jumping up, I exclaimed, “Con, you *are* progressing, my boy; you 'll be a gentleman yet; you have learned to be '*bored*' *already!*” From that hour I cultivated “my Cullinanes” as people take a course of a Spa, where, nauseous and distasteful at the time, one fancies he

is to store up Heaven knows how many years of future health and vigor.

In a former chapter of these Confessions I have told the reader the singular sensations I experienced when first under the influence of port wine: how a kind of trausfusion, as it were, of Conservative principles, a respect for order, a love of decorum, a sleepy indisposition to see anything like confusion going on about me,—all feelings which, I take it, are eminently gentleman-like. Well, this fastidious weariness of the Cullinanes was evidently the "second round of the ladder." "It is a grand thing to be able to look down upon any one!" I do not mean this in any invidious or unworthy sense; not for the sake of depreciating others, but purely for the sake of one's own self-esteem. I would but convey that the secret conviction of superiority is amazingly exhilarating. To "hold your stride" beside an intellect that you can pass when you like, and yet merely accompany to what is called "make a race," is rare fun; to see the other using every effort of whip and spur, bustling, shaking, and lifting, while you, well down in your saddle, never put the rowel to the flank of your fancy,—this is indeed glorious sport! In return for this, however, there is an intolerable degree of lassitude in the daily association of people who are satisfied to talk forever of the same things in the same terms.

The incidents of our journey were few and uninteresting. At Montreal I received a very civil note from Mrs. Davis, accompanying my trunk and my purse. In the few lines I had written to her from the packet-office, I said that my performance of a servant's character in her establishment had been undertaken for a wager, which I had just won; that I begged of her, in consequence, to devote the wages

owing to me to any charitable office she should think fit, and kindly to forward my effects to Montreal, together with a certificate, under her hand, that my real rank and station had never been detected during my stay in her house: this document being necessary to convince my friend Captain Pike that I had fulfilled the conditions of our bet.

Mrs. Davis's reply was a gem. “She had heard or read of Conacre, but didn't suspect we were the Cregans of that place. She did not know how she could ever forgive herself for having subjected me to menial duties. She had indeed been struck—as who had not?—with certain traits of my manner and address.” In fact, poor Mrs. D., what with the material for gossip suggested by the story, the surprise, and the saving of the wages—for I suspect that, like the Duke in Junius, her charity ended where it is proverbially said to begin, at home,—was in a perfect paroxysm of delight with me, herself, and the whole human race.

To me, this was a precious document; it was a patent of gentility at once. It was a passport which, if not issued by authority, had at least the “visa” of one witness to my rank, and I was not the stuff to require many credentials.

Before we had decided on what day we should leave Montreal, a kind of small mutiny began to show itself among our party. The old man, grown sick of travelling, and seeing the America of his hopes as far off as ever, became restive, and refused to move farther. The sons had made acquaintances on board the steamer, who assured them that “about the lakes “—a very vague geography—land was to be had for asking. Peggy and Susan had picked up sweethearts, and wanted to journey westward; and poor Joe, pulled in these various directions, gave

himself up to a little interregnum of drink, hoping that rum might decide what reason failed in.

As for me, I saw that my own influence would depend upon my making myself a partisan; and, too proud for this, I determined to leave them. I possessed some thirty dollars, a good kit, but, better than either, the most unbounded confidence in myself, and a firm conviction that the world was an instrument I should learn to play upon, one day or other. There was no use in undeceiving them as to my real rank and station. One of the pleasantest incidents of their lives would be, in all probability, their having travelled in companionship with a gentleman; and so, remembering the story of the poor alderman who never got over having learned that “Robinson Crusoe” was a fiction, I left them this solace unalloyed, and after a most cordial leave-taking, and having written down my father's address at New Orleans, I shook hands with the men twice over, kissed the girls ditto, and stepped on board the “Kingston” steamer,—for no other reason that I know, except that she was the first to leave the wharf that morning.

I have said that I possessed something like thirty dollars: an advantageous sale of a part of my wardrobe to a young gentleman about to reside at Queenstown as a waiter, “realized” me as much more; and with this sum I resolved upon making a short tour of Canada and the States, in order to pick up a few notions and increase my store of experiences, ere I adopted any fixed career.

We laugh at the old gentleman in the play who, on hearing that his son has no want of money, immediately offers him ten pistoles, but who obstinately leaves him to starve when he discovers that he is without funds. We laugh at this, and we

deem it absurd and extravagant; but it is precisely what we see the world do in like circumstances. All its generosity is reserved for all those who do not require assistance; all its denials for those in need. “My Lord” refuses half-a-dozen dinners, while the poor devil author only knows the tune of “Roast Beef.” These reflections forced themselves upon me by observing that as I travelled along, apparently in no want of means, a hundred offers were made me by my fellow-travellers of situations and places: one would have enlisted me as his partner in a very lucrative piece of peripateticism,—viz., knife-grinding; a vocation for which, after a few efforts on board the steamer, Nature would seem to have destined me, for I was assured I even picked up the sharp-knowing cock of the eye required to examine the edge, and the style of my pedal-action drew down rounds of applause: still, I did not like it. The endless tramp upon a step which slipped from beneath you seemed to emblematize a career that led to nothing; while an unpleasant association with what I had heard of a treadmill completed my distaste for it.

Another opened to me the more ambitious prospect of a shopman at his “store,” near Rochester, and even showed me, by way of temptation, some of the brilliant wares over whose fortunes I should preside. There were ginghams, and taffetas, and cottons of every hue and pattern. But no, I felt this was not my walk either; and so I muttered to myself: “No, Con! if you meddle with muslin, wait till it's fashioned into a petticoat.”

My next proposition came from a barber; and really if I did not take to the pole and basin, I own I was flattered at his praises of my skill. He pronounced my brush-hand as something bold and

masterly as Rubens',—while my steel manipulation was more brilliant than bloodless.

Then there was a Jew spectacle-maker, a hawker of pamphlets, an Indian moccasin merchant, and twenty other of various walks,—all of whom seemed to opine that *their* craft, whatever it might be, was exactly the very line adapted to my faculties. Once only was I really tempted: it was by the editor of the Kingston newspaper, "The Ontario Herald," who offered to take me into his office, and in time induct me into the gentle pastime of paragraph-writing. I did, I own, feel a strong inclination for that free and independent kind of criticism, which, although issuing from a garret, and by the light of a "dip," does not scruple to remind royalty how to comport itself, and gives kings and kaisers smart lessons in good-breeding. For a time, my mind dwelt on all these delights with ardor; but I soon felt that he who *acts* life has an incomparable advantage over him who merely *writes* it, and that even a poor performer is better, when the world is his stage, than the best critic.

"I'll wait," thought I,—nothing within, no suggestive push from conscience, urged me to follow any of these roads; and so I journeyed away from Kingston to Fort George, thence to Niagara, where I amused myself agreeably for a week, sitting all day long upon the Table Rock, and watching the Falls in a dreamy kind of self-consciousness, brought on by the din, the crash, the spray, the floating surf, and that vibration of the air on every side, which all conspire to make up a sensation that ever after associates with the memory of that scene, and leaves any effort to describe it so difficult.

From this I wandered into the States by Schenectady, Utica, and Albany, down the Hudson to

New York, thence—but why recite mere names? It was after about three months' travelling, during which my wardrobe shared a fate not dissimilar to Æsop's bread-basket, that I found myself at New Orleans. Coming even from the varied and strange panorama that so many weeks of continual travelling present, I was struck by the appearance of New Orleans. Do not be afraid, worthy reader; you're not “in” for any description of localities. I 'll neither inflict you with a land view nor a sea view. In my company you 'll never hear a word about the measurement of a cathedral, or the number of feet in height of a steeple. My care and my business are with men and women. They are to me the real objects of travel. The checkered board of human life is the map whose geography I love to study, and my thoughts are far more with the stream that flows from the heart, than with the grandest river that ever sought the sea. When I said I was struck with New Orleans, it was then with the air of its population. Never did I behold such a mass of bold, daring, reckless fellows as swaggered on every side. The fiery Frenchman, the determined-looking Yankee, the dark-browed Spaniard, the Camanche and the half-caste, the Mulatto, the Texan, the Negro, the Cuban, and the Creole, were all here, and all seemed picked specimens of their race.

The least acute of observers could not fail to see that it was a land where a quick eye, a steady foot, and a strong hand were requisites of every-day life. The personal encounters that in other cities are left altogether to the very lowest class of inhabitants, were here in frequent use among every grade and rank. Every one went armed; the scenes which so often occurred, showed the precaution a needful one.

The wide-awake look of the Yankee was sleepy

indifference when contrasted with the intense keenness of aspect that met you here at every step, and you felt at once that you were in company where all your faculties would be few enough for self-protection. This, my first impression of the people, each day's experience served to confirm. Whatever little veils of shame and delicacy men throw over their sharp practices elsewhere, here, I am free to confess, they despised such hypocrisy. It was a free trade in wickedness. In *their* game of life "cheating was fair." Now, this in nowise suited me nor my plans. I soon saw that all the finer traits of my own astuteness would be submerged in the great ocean of coarse roguery around me, and I soon resolved upon taking my departure.

The how and the whereto—two very important items in the resolve—were yet to be solved, and I was trotting along Cliff Street one day, when my eyes rested suddenly upon the great board, with large letters on it, "Office of the 'Picayune.'" I repeated the word over and over a couple of times, and then remembered it was the journal in which the reward for the Black Boatswain had been offered.

There was little enough, Heaven knows, in this to give me any interest in the paper; but the total isolation in which I found myself, without one to speak to or converse with, made me feel that even the "Picayune" was an acquaintance; and so I drew near the window where a considerable number of persons were reading the last number of the paper, which, in a laudable spirit of generosity, was exposed within the glass to public gaze.

Mingling with these, but not near enough to read for myself, I could hear the topics that were discussed, among which a row at the Congress, a duel with revolvers, a steam explosion on the

Mississippi, and a few smart instances of Lynch-law figured.

“What 's that in the 'Yune print?” said a great raw-boned fellow, with a cigar like a small walking-cane in the corner of his mouth.

“It's a Texan go,” said another; “sha'n't catch me at that trick.”

“Well, I don't know,” drawled out a sleek-haired man, with a very Yankee drawl; “I see Roarin' Peter, our judge up at New Small-pox, take a tarnation deal of booty out of that location.”

“Where had he been?” asked the tall fellow.

“At Guayugualla,—over the frontier.”

“There *is* a bit to be done about there,” said the other, and, wrapping his mantle about him, lounged off.

“Guayugualla!” repeated I; and, retiring a little from the crowd, I took from my pocket the little newspaper paragraph of the negro, and read the name which had sounded so familiarly to my ears.

I endeavored once more to approach the window, but the crowd had already increased considerably; and I had nothing for it but to go in and buy the paper, which now had taken a strong hold upon me.

Cheap as was the paper, it cost me that day's dinner; and it was with a very great anxiety to test the value of my sacrifice that I hastened to the little miserable den which I had hired as my sleeping-place.

Once within, I fastened the door, and, spreading out the journal on my bed, proceeded to search for the Texan paragraph. It was headed in capitals, and easily found. It ran thus:—

“WANTED—A few downright, go-ahead ones, to

join an excursion into the One-Star Republic,—the object being to push a way down South, and open a new trade-line for home doings. Applicants to address the Office of the paper, and rally at Galveston, with rifle, pistols, ammunition, horse, pack, and a bowie, on Tuesday, the 8th instant."

I 'm sure I knew that paragraph off by heart before bedtime, but just as I have seen a stupid man commit a proposition in Euclid to memory,—without ever being able to work it. I was totally at a loss what to make of the meaning of the expedition. It was, to say the least, somewhat mysterious; and the whole being addressed to "go-ahead ones," who were to come with rifles and bowie-knives, showed that they were not likely to be missionaries. There was one wonderful clause about it,—it smacked of adventure. There was a roving wildness in the very thought which pleased me, and I straightway opened a consultation with myself how I could compass the object. My stock of money had dwindled down to four dollars; and although I still possessed some of the best articles of my wardrobe, the greater portion had been long since disposed of.

Alas! the more I thought over it, the more hopeless did my hope of journey appear,—I made every imaginable good bargain in my fancy; I disposed of old waistcoats and gaiters as if they had been the honored vestments of heroes and sages; I knocked down my shoes at prices that old Frederick's boots would n't have fetched; and yet, with all this, I fell far short of a sum sufficient to purchase my equipment,—in fact, I saw that if I compassed the "bowie-knife," it would be the full extent of my powers. I dwelt upon this theme so long that I grew fevered and excited: I got to believe that here was a great career opening before me, to which one petty,

miserable obstacle opposed itself. I was like a man deterred from undertaking an immense journey, by the trouble of crossing a rivulet.

In this frame of mind I went to bed, but only to rove over my rude fancies, and, in a state between sleep and waking, to imagine that some tiny hand held me back, and prevented me ascending a path on which Fortune kept waving her hand for me to follow. When day broke, I found myself sitting at my window, with the newspaper in my hands,—though how I came there, or how long I had spent in that attitude, I cannot say; I only know that my limbs were excessively cold, and my temples hot, and that while my hands were benumbed and swollen, my heart beat faster and fuller than I had ever felt it before.

“Now for the 'Picayune,'” said I, starting from my chair; “though I never may make the journey, at least I 'll ask the road.”



CHAPTER XVIII. THE ORDINARY OF ALL NATIONS

Making my way with difficulty through the crowd which filled the hall of the house, and which consisted of purchasers, newsvenders, reporters, printers' devils, and others interested in the "Picayune," all eagerly discussing the news of the day, I reached a small back office, where, having knocked timidly twice, I was desired to enter.

A man seated at a coarse deal table was cutting out paragraphs from various newspapers, which, as he threw them at either side of him, were eagerly caught up by two or three ragged urchins who were in waiting behind him. He looked up at me as I entered, and roughly asked what I wanted.

"I have seen an advertisement in your paper, headed, 'Expedition to Texas '———"

“Upstairs,—No. 3,—two-pair back,” said he, and went on with his labor.

I hesitated, hoping he might add something; but seeing that he had said all he intended or was likely to say, I slowly withdrew.

“Upstairs, then,—No. 3,—two-pair back,” said I to myself, and mounted, with the very vaguest notions of what business I had when I got there. There was no difficulty in finding the place; many others were hastening towards it at the same time; and, in company with some half-dozen very ill-favored and meanly clad fellows, I entered a large room, where about forty men were assembled, who stood in knots or groups, talking in low and confidential tones together.

“Is there a committee to-day?” asked one of those who came in with me.

“Business is over,” said another.

“And is the lottery drawn?”

“Ay, every ticket, except one or two.”

“Who's won Butcher's mare?”

“Tell us that if you can,” said a huge fellow, with a red worsted comforter round his throat; “that's exactly what we want to know.”

“Well, I'm whipped if it ain't among those numbers,” said a pale man with one eye, “and I 'll give fifty dollars for one of 'em.”

“You would, would you?” said another, jeering. “Lord, how soft you 've grown! Why, she's worth five hundred dollars, that 'ere beast!”

“Butcher gave a mustang and two hundred and seventy for her,” cried another.

“Well, she broke his neck, for all that,” growled out he of the red neckcloth; “you'll see that some

chap will win her that don't want a beast, and she 'll be sold for a trifle."

"And there's a free passage to Galveston, grub and liquor, in the same ticket," said another,—"an almighty sight of luck for one man!"

"It ain't me, anyhow," said red cravat; and then, with a tremendous oath, added: "I've been a putter in at these Texas lotteries for four years, and never won anything but a blessed rosary."

"What became of it, Dick?" said another, laughing.

"The beads fitted my rifle-bore, and I fired 'em away when lead was scarce."

Various discussions followed about luck and lotteries, with anecdotes of all kinds respecting fortunate winners; then came stories of Texan expeditions in former times, which I began to perceive were little else than speculations of a gambling kind, rarely intended to go farther than the quay of New Orleans.

On the present occasion, however, it would seem a real expedition had been planned. Some had already sailed, others were to follow the very day after the lottery, and only waited to learn who was the fortunate winner of Butcher's mare, at that time waiting at Galveston for an owner.

I waited a long time, in hope of acquiring something like an insight into the scope of the enterprise, but in vain; indeed, it was easy to see that, of the company, not a single one, in all likelihood, intended to join the expedition. When I left the "Picayune," therefore, I was but little wiser than when I entered it; and yet somehow the whole scheme had taken a fast hold on my imagination, which readily filled in the details of what I was ignorant. The course of reading in which I had

indulged on board Sir Dudley's yacht was doubtless the reason of this. My mind had laid up so many texts for adventurous fancies that on the slightest pretext I could call up any quantity of enterprise and vicissitude.

A hundred times I asked myself if it were likely that any of these Texan adventurers would accept, of my services to wait upon them. I was not ignorant of horses, a tolerably fair groom, could cook a little,—that much I had learned on board the yacht; besides, wherever my qualifications failed, I had a ready witted ingenuity that supplied the place almost as well as the “real article.”

“Ah!” thought I, “who knows how many are passing at this moment whose very hearts would leap with joy to find such a fellow as I am,' accustomed to in-door and out, wages no object, and no objection to travel! '” Possessed with this notion, I could not help fancying that in every look that met mine as I went, I could read something like an inquiry, a searching glance that seemed to say, “Bless me! ain't that Con? As I live, there's Con Cregan! What a rare piece of fortune to chance upon him at this juncture!”

I own it did require a vivid and warm imagination so to interpret the expressions which met my eyes at every moment, seeing that the part of the town into which I had wandered was that adjoining to the docks,—a filthy, gloomy quarter, chiefly resorted to by Jew slop-sellers, ship-chandlers, and such like, with here and there a sailors' ordinary usually kept by a negro or half-breed.

I had eaten nothing that day, and it was now late in the afternoon, so that it was with a very strong interest I peeped occasionally into the little dens, where, under a paper lantern with the inscription,

“All for Twelve Cents,” sat a company, usually of sailors and watermen, whose fare harmonized most unpleasantly with their features.

The combat between a man's taste and his exchequer is never less agreeable than when it concerns a dinner. To feel that you have a soul for turtle and truffles, and yet must descend to mashed potatoes and herrings; to know that a palate capable of appreciating a salmi des perdreaux must be condemned to the indignity of stock fish,—what an indignity is that! The whole man revolts at it! You feel, besides, that such a meal is unrelieved by those suggestive excursions of fancy which a well-served table abounds in. In the one case you eat like the beast of the field,—it is a question of supporting nature, and no more; in the other, there is a poetry interwoven that elevates and exalts. With what discursive freedom does the imagination range from the little plate of oysters that preludes your soup, to pearl fishery and the coral reefs, “with moonlight sleeping on the breaking surf!” And then your soup, be it turtle or mulligatawny, how associated is it with the West Indies or the East, bearing on its aromatic vapor thousands of speculative reflections about sugar and slavery, pepper-pots, straw hats, pickaninnies, and the Bishop of Barbadoes; or the still grander themes of elephants, emeralds, and the Indus, with rajahs, tigers, punkahs, and the Punjaub!

And so you proceed, dreamily following out in fancy the hints each course supplies, and roving with your cutlets to the “cattle upon a thousand hills,” or dallying with the dessert to the orange-groves of Zaute or Sicily.

I do love all this. The bouquet of my Bordeaux brings back the Rhone, as the dry muscat of my Johannisberg pictures the vine-clad cliffs of the

Vaterland, with a long diminuendo train of thought about Metternich and the Holy Alliance—the unlucky treaty of '15—Vienna—Madame Schrader—and Castelli.

And how pleasantly and nationally does one come back with the port to our “ancient ally, Portugal,” with a mind-painted panorama of Torres Vedras and the Douro,—with Black Horse Square and the Tagus,—“the Duke” ever and anon flitting across the scene, and making each glass you carry to your lips a heartfelt “long life to him!”

Alas and alas! such prandial delights were not for me; I must dine for twelve cents, or, by accepting the brilliant entertainment announced yonder, price half-a-dollar, keep Lent the rest of the week.

The temptation to which I allude ran thus:—

> Ladies and Gentlemen's Grand Ordinary of all Nations
>
> At 5 o'clock precisely.
>
> Thumbo-rig—Mint julep—and a Ball. The “Half-dollar.”
>
> Monsieur Palamede de Rosanne directs the Ceremonies.

If there was a small phrase in the aforesaid not perfectly intelligible, it seemed, upon the principle of the well-known adage, only to heighten the inducement. The “Thumbo-rig” above might mean either a new potation or a new dance. Still, conceding this unknown territory, there was quite sufficient in the remainder of the advertisement to prove a strong temptation. The house, too, had a pretentious air about it that promised well. There was a large bow-window, displaying a perfect landscape of rounds and sirloins, with a tasteful drapery of sausages overhead; while a fragrant odor

of rum, onions, fresh crabs, cheese, salt cod, and preserved ginger made the very air ambrosial.

As I stood and sniffed, my resolution staggered under the assaults made on eye, nose, and palate, a very smartly-dressed female figure crossed the way, holding up her dress full an inch or so higher than even the mud required, and with a jaunty air displayed a pair of very pink stockings on very well-turned legs. I believe—I 'm not sure, but I fear—the pink stockings completed what the pickled beef began. I entered. Having paid my money at the bar, and given up my hat and greatcoat, I was ushered by a black waiter, dressed in a striped jacket and trousers, as if he had been ruled with red ink, into a large room, where a very numerous company of both sexes were assembled, some seated, some standing, but all talking away with buzz and confusion that showed perfect intimacy to be the order of the day. The men, it was easy to see, were chiefly in the "shipping interest." There was a strong majority of mates and small skippers, whose varied tongues ranged from Spanish and Portuguese to Dutch and Danish; French, English and Russian were also heard in the *mêlée*, showing that the Grand Ordinary had a world-made repute. The ladies were mostly young, very condescending in their manners, somewhat overdressed, and for the most part French.

As I knew no one, I waited patiently to be directed where I should sit, and was at last shown to a place between a very fat lady of créole tint—another dip would have made her black—and a little brisk man, whom I soon heard was Monsieur Palamede himself.

The dinner was good, the conversation easiest of the easy, taking in all, from matters commercial to social,—the whole seasoned with the greatest good-humor and no small share of smartness. Personal

adventures by land and sea,—many of the latter recounted by men who made no scruple of confessing that they “dealt in ebony,”—the slave-trade. Little incidents of life, that told much for the candor of the recounter, were heard on all sides, until at length I really felt ashamed of my own deficiency in not having even contributed an anecdote for the benefit of the company. This preyed upon me the more as I saw myself surrounded by persons who really, if their own unimpeachable evidence was to be credited, began the world in ways and shapes the most singular and uncommon. Not a man or woman of the party that had not slipped into existence in some droll, quaint fashion of their own, so that positively, and for the first time, I really grew ashamed to think that I belonged to “decent people” who had not compromised me in the slightest degree. “Voilà un jeune homme qui ne dit pas un mot!” said a pretty-looking woman, with fair brown hair and a very liquid pair of blue eyes. The speech was addressed to me, and the whole table at once turned their glances towards me.

“Ay, very true,” said a short, stout little skipper, with an unmistakable slash from a cutlass across his nose; “a sharp-looking fellow like that has a story if he will only tell it.”

“And you may see,” cried another, “that we are above petty prejudices here; roguery only lies heavy on the conscience that conceals it.” The speaker was a tall, sallow man, with singularly intelligent features; he had been a Jesuit tutor in the family of an Italian noble, and after consigning his patron to the Inquisition, had been himself banished from Rome.

Pressing entreaties and rough commands, half imperious instances and very seductive glances, all

were directed towards me, with the object of extorting some traits of my life, and more particularly of that part of it which concerned my birth and parentage. If the example of the company invited the most unqualified candor, I cannot say that it overcame certain scruples I felt about revealing my humble origin. I was precisely in that anomalous position in life when such avowals are most painful. Without ambition, the confession had not cost me any sacrifice; while, on the other hand, I had not attained that eminence which has a proud boastfulness in saying, “Yes, I, such as you see me now,—great, titled, wealthy, and powerful,—I was the son of a newsvender or a lamplighter.” Such avowals, highly lauded as they are by the world, especially when made by archbishops or chancellors, or other great folk, at public dinners, are, to my thinking, about as vainglorious bits of poor human nature as the most cynical could wish to witness. They are the mere victories of vanity over self-esteem. Now, I had no objection that the world should think me a young gentleman of the very easiest notions of right and wrong, with a conscience as elastic as gutta-percha, picking my way across life's stream on the stepping-stones made by other men's skulls,—being, as the phrase has it, a very loose fish indeed; but I insisted on their believing that I was well-born. Every one has his weakness,—this was Con Cregan's; and as these isolated fissures in strong character are nearly allied with strength, so was it with me: had I not had this frailty, I had never cherished so intensely the passion to become a gentleman. This is all digressionary; but I 'll not ask pardon of my dear reader for all that. If he be reading in his snug, well-cushioned chair, with every appliance of ease about him, he'll not throw down

these “Confessions” for a bit of prosing that invites the sleep that is already hovering round him. If he has taken me up in the few minutes before dinner, he 'll not regret the bit of meditation which does not involve him in a story. If he be spelling me out in a mail-train, he'll be grateful for the “skipping” place, which leaves him time to look out and see the ingenious preparations that are making by the “down” or the “up” train to run into and smash the unhappy convoy of which he forms a part.

“Come, my young lad, out with it. Let us hear a bit about the worthy people who took the sin of launching you into the wide ocean. You must have had owners one time or other.” This was said by a hearty looking old man, with hair white as snow, and an enormous pair of eyebrows to match.

“Willingly, sir,” said I, with an air of the easiest confidence; “I should be but too proud if anything in a history humble as mine is could amuse this honorable company. But the truth is, a life so devoid of interest would be only a tax upon its patience to listen to; and as to my birth, I can give little, indeed no, information. The earliest record of my existence that I possess is from the age of two days and three hours.”

“That will do,—do admirably!” chorused the party, who laughed heartily at the gravity with which I spoke, and which to them seemed an earnest of my extreme simplicity. “We shall be quite satisfied with that,” cried they again.

“Well, then, gentlemen, thanking you for the indulgence with which you consent to overlook my want of accuracy, I proceed. At the tender age I have mentioned, I was won in a raffle!”

“Won in a raffle! won in a raffle!” screamed one

after the other; and amid shouts of laughter the phrase continued to be echoed from end to end of the table. “That beats you hollow, Giles!” “By Jove, how scarce babies must be in the part you come from, if people take tickets for em!” Such were some of the commentaries that broke out amidst the mirth.



“I move,” said a dapper little Frenchman who had been a barber and a National Guard once, “I move that the honorable deputy make a statement to the Chamber respecting the interesting fact to which he has alluded.”

The motion was carried by acclamation, and I was accordingly induced to ascend the tribune,—a kind of rude pulpit that was brought specially into the room, and stationed at the side of the president's chair; the comments on my personal appearance, age, air, and probable rank, which were made all the while, evidencing the most candid spirit one can well imagine.

“A right-down slick and shrewd 'un, darn me if he ain't!”

“A very wide awake young gemman,” quoth number two.

“Il a de 'beaux yeux,' celui-là,”—this was a lady's

remark.

“Set that young 'un among the girls 'down east,' and he'll mow 'em down like grass.”

“A Londoner,—swell-mobbish a bit, I take it.”

“Not at all, he a'nt; he's a bank clerk or a post-office fellow bolted with a lot of tin.”

“Der ist ein echter Schelm,” growled out an old Dantzic skipper; “I kenn him vehr wohl,—steal your wash wid a leetle scheer,—scissars you call him, ha! ha!”

“Ladies and gentlemen,” said I, assuming a pose of the most dignified importance, “before entering upon the circumstance to which you have so graciously attached a little interest, let me assure you—not that the fact can or ought to have any weight with this distinguished company—that I have no claim upon your sympathy with regard to any of the pleas whispered around me. I am neither thief, pickpocket, runaway postman, burglar, nor highwayman. If I be, as you are pleased to say, 'wide awake,' I believe it is only a common precaution, considering the company I find myself in; and if I really could lay claim to the flattering praise of a fair lady on the left, it would be merely from accidentally reflecting her own bright glances. I present myself, then, with much diffidence before you, for the simple reason that I come in a character somewhat strange in these parts,—I am a gentleman!”

The ineffable impertinence of this address succeeded to a miracle. Some laughed, some applauded, a few muttered an unintelligible discontent; but the majority of the men and all the women were with me, and I saw that audacity had gained the day. Ay, and so will it ninety-nine times out of the hundred in everything through life! The

strategic axiom, that no fortress is impregnable, is a valuable worldly lesson, and one ought never to forget that a storming-party rarely fails.

“The circumstance to which I alluded a few miuutes back—I dare not presume to call it a story—occurred thus :

“There was a large and brilliant party assembled to pass the Christmas at the Duke of Y————'s; you will understand my reserve. The company included many of the first persons in fashionable life, and a Royal *Duke to boot, a great friend of her Grace, and, some said, an old admirer of one of her sisters, who—so went the rumor—showed the strength of her attachment to his Royal Highness by never having accepted any of the brilliant offers of marriage made her. She was remarkably beautiful, and although a little past the first bloom of youth, in full possession of her charms at the time I speak of. Old Lord K———— was one of the guests; and I am sure many of the distinguished company to whom I now address myself will not need any more particular description of the man they must have met a hundred times every London season, well known, indeed, as he is, with his light-blue coat and his buckskin tights, his wide beaver hat, and his queue; his eccentricities, his wealth, and his great avarice are themes all London is acquainted with.” I paused.

A buzz of acknowledgment and recognition followed, and I resumed:—

“Lord E————, you are aware, was a great musical amateur ; he was the leader of everything of that kind about town, and whenever he could prevail upon himself to open his house in Carlton Terrace, it was always to Lablache, and Kubini, and Marini, and the reat of them. Well, it was just at the period of

this Christmas visit—over which I may remark, en passant, Lady Blanche's indisposition cast a shade of gloom—that, in making some alteration in the mansion, they discovered in a concealed press in the wall a mahogany case, on opening which were found the moth and worm eaten remains of a violin. A parchment document enclosed in a little scroll of brass, and which had escaped the ravages of time, explained that this was the instrument of the celebrated Giacomo Battesta Pizzicbetoni, the greatest violinist that ever lived,—the composer of 'II Diavolo e la sua Moglia' and the 'Balia di Paradise,' and many other great works, with which you are all familiar."

The company chorused assent, and I continued: "The party had somehow not gone off well; the accustomed spirit aud animation of the scene were wanting. Perhaps Lady Blanche's illness had some share in this; in any case, every one seemed low aud out of sorts, and the pleasant people talked of taking leave, when his Royal Highness proposed, by way of doing something, that they should have a raffle for this wonderful fiddle, of which, though only seen by the host and another, every one was talking.

"Even this much of stir was hailed with enthusiasm, the secrecy and mystery increasing the interest to a high degree.

The tickets were two guineas each ; and Lord E ————, dying to possess 'a real Pizzichetoni,' took twenty of them. The number was limited to a hundred; but such was the judicious management of those who directed the proceedings that the shares were at a 'high premium' on the day of drawing, his Royal Highness actually buying up several at five guineas apiece. The excitement, too, was immense ; encyclopedias were ransacked for histories of the

violin, and its great professors and proficients. The 'Conversations Lexicon' opened of itself at the letter P., and Pizzichetoni's name turned up in every corner and on every theme, fifty times a day. What a time I have heard that was! nothing talked of but bow-action, shifting, bridging, double fingering, and the like, from morning to night. Lord E———— became, in consequence of this run about a favorite subject, a personage of more than ordinary importance; instead of being deemed, what he was commonly called at the clubs, the Great 'Borassus,' he was listened to with interest and attention; and, in fact, from the extent of his knowledge of the subject, and his acquaintance with every detail of its history, each felt that to his Lordship ought by right to fall the fortunate ticket.

“So did it, in fact, turn out. After much vacillation, with the last two numbers remained the final decision. One belonged to the Royal Duke, the other to Lord E———.

“'You shall have a hundred guineas for your chance, E———,' said the Duke; 'what say you?'

“'Your Ruyal Highness's wish is a command,' said he, bowing and blushing; 'but were it otherwise, and to any other than your Royal Highness, I should as certainly say nay.'

“'Then “nay” must be the answer to me also; I cannot accept of such a sacrifice: and, after all, you are much more worthy of such a treasure than I am,—I really only meant it for a present to Mori.'

“'A present, your Royal Highness!' cried he, horrified; 'I would n't give such a jewel to anything short of St. Cecilia,—the violin, you are aware, was her instrument.'

“'Now, then, for our fortunes!' cried the Duke, as

he drew forth his ticket. 'I believe I 'm the lucky one: this is number 2000.'

"'Two thousand and one!' exclaimed Lord E———, holding up his, and, in an ecstasy of triumph, sat down to recover himself.

"'Here is the key, my Lord,' said one of the party, advancing towards him.

"He sprang up, and thrust it into the lock; in his agitation he shook the box, and a slight, soft cadence, like a faint cry, was heard.

"'The soul of music hovers o'er it still,' he exclaimed theatrically, and, flinging back the lid, discovered—Me! Yes, ladies and gentlemen, in a very smart white robe, with very tasty embroidery, and a lace cap which I am assured was pure Valenciennes, there I lay! I am not aware whether my infantine movements were peculiarly seductive or not; but I have been told that I went through my gamut at a key that even overtopped the laughter around me.

"'A very bad jest—a *mauvaise plaisanterie* of the worst taste, I must say,' said Lord E———turning away, and leaving the room.



“I never rightly knew how the matter was afterwards made up, but certainly it was by his lordship's directions, and at his charge, that I was nursed, reared, and educated. My expenses at Eton and Oxford, as well as the cost of my commission, came from him; and it was only a few days ago, on learning his death, that I also learned the termination of my good fortune in life. He bequeathed me what he styled my 'family mansio,'—the fiddle-case; thus repaying by this cruel jest the practical joke passed upon himself so many years before.”

“What name did they give you, sir?”

“'I was called after the celebrated violinist of Cremona who lived in the seventh century, who was named Cornelius Crejanus, or, as some spell, Creganus; and, in compliance with modern usages, they anglicized me into Con Cregan.”

“I have the honor to propose Con Cregan's health,” said the president; “and may he see many happy years ere he next goes to sleep in a wooden box!”

This very gratifying toast was drunk with the most

flattering acclamations, and I descended from the tribune the “man of the evening.”

If some of the company who put credence in my story did not hesitate to ascribe a strong interest in me to the Royal Duke himself, others, who put less faith in my narrative, thought less of my parentage, and more of myself; so that what I lost on one hand, I gained on the other.

There was a discretion, a certain shadowy prudery about certain portions of my story, of which I have not attempted to convey any notion here, but which I saw had “told” with the fair part of my audience, who, possibly not over rigid in many of their opinions, were well pleased with the delicate reserve in which I shrouded my direct allusion to my parentage. A rough, red-whiskered skipper, indeed, seemed disposed to pour a broadside into this mystery, by asking “If his Royal Highness never took any notice of me?” but the refined taste of the company concurred in the diplomatic refusal to answer a question of which the “hon. gentleman on the straw chair” had given “no notice.”

The pleasures of the table,—a very luscious bowl of the liquid which bore the mysterious epithet of “Thumbo-rig,” and which was a concoction of the genus punch, spiced, sugared, and iced to a degree that concealed its awful tendency to anti-Mathewism; bright eyes that were no churls of their glances; merry converse; and that wondrous “magnetism of the board” which we call good fellowship,—made the time pass rapidly. Toasts and sentiments of every fashion went round, and we were political, literary, arbitrary, amatory, sentimental, and satiric by turns. They were pleasant varlets! and in their very diversity of humors there was that clash and collision of mind and metal that tell more effectively than the

best packed party of choice wits who ever sat and watched each other.

Then, there was a jolly jumbling up of bad English, bad Dutch, bad French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, that would drive a sober listener clean mad. Stories begun in one tongue merged into another; and so into a third; while explanations, mistakes, and corrections ran alongside of the narrative, often far more amusing than the story to which they were attached. Personalities, too, abounded, but with a most unqualified good temper; and, on the whole, I never beheld a merrier set.

M. Palamede alone did not relish the scene. He himself was nobody at such a moment, and he longed for the ballroom and the dance; and it was only after repeated summonses of his bell that we at last arose and entered the saloon, where we found him standing, fiddle in hand, while, rapping smartly a couple of times with his bow, he called out,—

“Places! places! Monsieur le Duc de Gubbins, to your place. Ladies, I beg attention. Madame la Marquise, dans la bonne société on ne donne jamais un soufflet.”

“Ah, here's old Rosin again!” cried several of the party, who, with all this familiarity, appeared to view him with no small respect.

“Shall I find you a partner, Monsieur de Congreganne?” said he to me.

“Thanks,” said I; “but, with your permission, I'll not dance just yet.”

“As you please, it is but a contre-danse,” said he shrugging his shoulders, while he moved away to arrange the figures.

I had not perceived before that a kind of orchestra, consisting of two fiddles, a flute, and a tambourine,

was stationed in a long gallery over the door by which we entered; Monsieur Palamede being, however, director, not alone of the music, but of the entire entertainment. The band now struck up a well-known English country-dance, and away went the couples, flying down the room to the merry measure; Monsieur de Rosanne arranging the figures, beating the time, preserving order, and restraining irregularities, with the energy of one possessed.

"Ah, Monsieur le Capitaine de Cocks, c'en est trop. Mademoiselle de Spicer, pas si haut! de arms graceful! Ladies, no keep your hands under * your—what ye call him—jupe—apron—ha! ha! Black man—negro—no talk so loud when you make punch!"

"Chassez—balancez! La grace! Madame la Marquise, la grace!" Then, as he passed me, he muttered with a voice guttural from anger, "Quel supplice!"

As I continued to gaze on the scene, I could not help being struck with the extreme diversity of look and expression; for while there were some faces on which iniquity had laid its indelible stamp, there were others singularly pleasing, and some actually beautiful. Among the men, the same character prevailed throughout,—a rude, coarse good-humor,—the sailor-type everywhere; but a few seemed persons of a higher class, and on these a life of vice and debauchery had produced the most marked change, and you could still see, amid the traces of nights of riot and abandonment, the remnant of finer features, the expression they had worn before their "fall." If I was surprised at the good looks of many of the women, still more was I by a gracefuluess of carriage and an air of deportment that seemed as much out of place as they were unsuited to such companionship. One young fellow appeared to be a

general favorite with the company. He was tall, well-made, and had that indescribably rakish character about his very gesture that is rarely a bad indication of the possessor's mode of life. I had no difficulty in learning his name, for every one called him by it at each instant, and “Fred Falkoner” was heard on all sides. It was he who selected the music for the dance; his partner, for the time being, was the belle of the room, and he lounged about supreme. Nor was his title a bad one,—he was the great entertainer of the whole assembly. The refreshments were almost entirely of his ordering, and the clink of his dollars might be heard keeping merry time with the strains of the violins. I watched him with some interest; I thought I could see that, in descending to such companionship, there was a secret combat between his self-respect and a strange passion for seeing life in low places, which, when added to the flattery such a man invariably obtains from his inferiors, is a dangerous and subtle temptation. The more I studied him, the stronger grew this conviction,—nay, at times, the expression of scorn upon his handsome features was legible even to the least remarking. It was while I still continued to watch him that he passed me, with a dark, Spanish-looking girl upon his arm, When he turned round suddenly, and, staring at me fixedly a few seconds, said, “We met once before, to-day.”

“I am not aware of it,” said I, doubtingly.

“Yes, yes. I never forget a face, least of all when it resembles yours. I saw you this morning at the 'Picayune.'”

“True, I was there.”

“What a precious set of rascals those fellows were! You supposed that they were going to join the

expedition. Not a bit of it. Some were gamblers; the greater number thieves and pickpockets. I know them all; and, indeed, I was going to warn you about them, for I saw you were a stranger, but I lost sight of you in the crowd. But there's the music. Will you have a partner?"

"With all my heart," said I, glad to encourage our further acquaintance.

"You speak Spanish?"

"Not a word."

"Well, no matter. If you did, you should have mine here. But what say you to Mademoiselle Héloïse, yonder?—a bit faded or so; but I remember her second 'Ballarina' at the Havana, only two years back."

I made the suitable acknowledgment; and the next moment saw me whirling away in a waltz, at least in such an approximation to that measure as my Quebec experience suggested, with a very highly rouged and black-eyebrowed "danseuse." My French was better than my dancing; and so Mademoiselle Héloïse was satisfied to accept my arm, while we paraded the room, discussing the company after the most approved fashion.

The French have a proverb, "Bête comme une danseuse;" and I must say that my fair friend did not prove an exception. Her whole idea of life was limited to what takes place in rehearsal of a morning, or on the night of representation. She recounted to me her history from the time she had been a "Rat,"—such is the technical term at the Grand Opera of Paris,—flying through the air on a wire, or sitting perilously perched upon a pasteboard cloud. Thence she had advanced to the state of Fairy Queen, or some winged messenger of those celestials

who wear muslin trousers with gold stars, and always stand in the “fifth position.” Passing through the grade of Swiss peasant, Turkish slave, and Neapolitan market-girl, she had at last arrived at the legitimate drama of “legs,” yclept “ballet d'action;” and although neither her beauty nor abilities had been sufficient to achieve celebrity in Paris, she was accounted a Taglioni in the “provinces,” and deemed worthy of exportation to the colonies.

“Non contingit cuique ad ire Corinthum!” we cannot all have our “loges” at the “Grand Opéra;” and happy for us it is so, or what would become of the pleasure we derive from third, fourth, and fifth rate performances elsewhere? True, indeed, if truffles were a necessary of life, there would be a vast amount of inconvenience and suffering. Now, Mademoiselle Héloïse, whose pirouettes were no more minded in Paris, nor singled out for peculiar favor, than one of the lamps in the row of footlights, was a kind of small idol in the Havana. She had the good fortune to live in an age when the heels take precedence of the head, and she shared in the enthusiasm by which certain people in our day would bring back the heathen mythology for the benefit of the corps de ballet.

Alas for fame! in the very climax of her glory she grew fat! Now, flesh to a danseuse is like cowardice to a soldier, or shame to a lawyer,—it is the irreconcilable quality. The gauzy natures who float to soft music must not sup. Every cutlet costs an “entrechat”! Hard and terrible condition of existence, and proving how difficult and self-denying a thing it is to be an angel, even in this world!

So much for Mademoiselle Héloise; and if the reader be weary of her, so was I.

“You'll have to treat her to a supper,” whispered Falkoner, as he passed me.

“I've not a cent in my purse,” said I, thinking it better to tell the truth than incur the reproach of stinginess.

“Never mind, take mine,” said he, as he dropped a very weighty purse into my coat-pocket, and moved away before I could make any answer.

Perhaps the greatest flattery an individual can receive is to win some acknowledgment of confidence from an utter stranger. To know that by the chance intercourse of a few minutes you have so impressed another, who never saw you before, that he is impelled at once to befriend you, your self-esteem, so pleasantly gratified, immediately re-acts upon the cause, and you are at a loss whether most to applaud your own good gifts, or the ready wittedness of him who appreciated them so instantaneously.

I was still hesitating, revolving, doubtless, the pleasant sense of flattery aforesaid, when Falkoner came flying past with his partner. “Order supper for four,” cried he, as he whizzed by.

“What does he say, mon cher Comte?” said my partner.

I translated his command, and found that the notion pleased her vastly.

The dining-room by this time had been metamorphosed into a kind of coffee-room, with small supper-tables, at which parties were already assembling; and here we now took our places, to con over the bill of fare, and discuss scalloped oysters, cold lobster, devilled haddock, and other like delicacies.

Falkoner soon joined us, and we sat down, the

merriest knot in the room. I must have been brilliant! I feel it so, this hour; a kind of warm glow rushes to my cheeks as I think over that evening, and how the guests from the different parts of the room drew gradually nearer and nearer to listen to the converse at our table, and hear the smart things that came pattering down like hail! What pressing invitations came pouring in upon me! The great Mastodon himself could not have eaten a tithe of the breakfasts to which I was asked, nor would the grog-tub of a seventy-four contain all the rum-and-water I was proffered by skippers lying “in dock.”

Falkoner, however, pleased me more than the rest. There was something in his cordiality that did not seem like a passing fancy; and I could not help feeling that however corrupted and run to waste by dissipation, there was good stuff about him. He interested me, too, on another score: he had formerly made one of a Texan excursion that had penetrated even to the Rio del Norte, and his escapes and adventures amused me highly. The ladies, I believe, at last found us very ungallant cavaliers; for they arose, and left us talking over prairie life and the wild habits of the chase, till day began to shine through the windows.

“The 'Christobal' sails to-morrow,” said he, “for Galveston; but even she, smart sailer that she is, will scarce arrive in time to catch these fellows. Here we are at the fifth of the month: the eighth was to be the start; then that, supposing you to reach Galveston by the seventh, gives you no time to get your kit ready, look after arms, and buy a nag. What say you, then, if we make a party of our own,—charter one of these small craft?—a hundred dollars or so will do it. We can then take our time to pick up good cattle, look out for a couple of mules for our baggage, and a

spare mustang or so, if a horse should knock up."

I concurred at once; the plan was fascination itself. Adventure, liberty, novelty, enterprise, and a dash of danger to heighten all! Falkoner talked of dollars as if they macadamized the road to St. Louis; and I, glowing with punch and pride together, spoke of the expense as a mere trifle. To this hour, I cannot say whether I had really mystified myself into the notion that I possessed ample means, or was merely indulging the passing pleasure of a delightful vision. So was it, however; I smiled at the cheapness of everything, could scarcely fancy such a thing as a Mexican pony for eighty dollars, and laughed—actually laughed—at the price of the rifle, when all my worldly substance, at the moment, would not have purchased copper caps for it.

"Don't go too expensively to work, Cregan," cried he, "and, above all, bring no European servant. A Mexican fellow—or, better still, a half-breed—is the thing for the prairies. You have to forget your Old World habits, and rough it."

"So I can," said I, laughing good-humoredly; "I 'm in a capital mind for a bit of sharp work too. Just before I left the 90th, we made a forced march from St. John's through the forest country, and I feel up to anything."

"You'll not like the cattle at first, I'm afraid," said he. "They have that racking action the Yankees are fond of. There is a capital mare at Galveston, if we could get her. These fellows will snap her up, most likely."

"Butcher's mare," said I, hazarding a guess.

"Ah, you 've been looking after her already," said he, surprised. "Well, to tell you the truth, that was one of my objects in coming here to-night. I heard

that some of these skipper fellows had got the winning ticket: I paid twenty dollars to the office-clerk to see the number, and determine to buy it up. Here it is. Can you read these figures? for, hang me if the punch, or the heat, or the dancing, has not made me quite dizzy."

"Let me see: Number 438," said I, repeating it a couple of times over.

"Yes, that is it. If I could have chanced on it, I 'd have run down to-morrow by the 'Christobal.' She lies about a mile out, and will weigh with the ebb, at eight o'clock. That mare—she killed Butcher by a down leap over a rock, but never scratched herself—is worth at least a thousand dollars."

"I offered eight hundred for her on mere character," said I, sitting back, and sipping my liquid with a most profound quietude.

Falkoner was evidently surprised with this announcement; but more so from the rakish indifference it betrayed about money, than as bespeaking me rich and affluent. And thus we chatted away till the black waiter made his appearance to open the windows and prepare for the work of the day.

"Where are you stopping?" said Falkoner, as we arose from the table.

"At Condor House," said I, boldly giving the name of a very flash hotel. "But it's too noisy; I don't like it."

"Nor do I. It's confoundedly expensive, too. I wish you would come to Herrick's; it is not quite so stylish, perhaps, but I think the cookery is better, and you 'd not pay five dollars a bottle for Madeira, and eight for Champagne."

"That *is* smart," said I. "They 've not let me have

my bill yet; but I fancied they were costly folk."

"Well, come and dine with me at Herrick's to-morrow, and decide for yourself."

"Why not try the Condor with me?" said I.

"Another day, with all my heart; but I have a friend to-morrow, so come and meet him at six o'clock."

I agreed; and then we chatted on about London and town folks in a way that, even with all I had drunk, amazed me for the cool impudence in which I indulged.

"You knew De Courcy, of course," said he, after a long run of mutual friends had been disposed of.

"Jack?" cried I,—"Jack De Courcy, of the Coldstreams,—yes, I think I did. Jack and I were like brothers. The last steeplechase I rode in Ireland was for poor Jack De Courcy: a little chestnut mare with a good deal of the Arab about her."

"I remember her well,—an active devil, but she could n't go for more than half a mile."

"Well, I managed to screw a race out of her."

"You must tell me all about that to-morrow; for I find my unfortunate head is like a bell with the vibration of the last stroke of the hammer on it. Don't forget,—to-morrow, sharp six. You 'll meet nobody but Broughton."

"Dudley,—Sir Dudley Broughton?"

"The same. You know him, then, already? Poor fellow! he's terribly cut up; but he 'll be glad to see an old friend. Have you been much together?"

"A great deal. I made a cruise with him in his yacht, the 'Firefly.'"

"What a rare piece of fortune to have met you!" cried Falkoner, as he shook my hand once more. And

so, with the most fervent assurances of meeting on the morrow, we parted,—he, to saunter slowly towards his hotel; and I, to stand in the middle of the street, and, as I wiped the perspiration from my brow, to ask myself, had I gone clean mad.

I was so overwhelmed by the shock of my own impudence that I stood where Falkoner left me, for full five minutes, motionless and spell-bound. To have boasted of my intimacy with Captain De Courcy, although the Atlantic rolled between us, was bad enough, in all conscience; but to have talked of Sir Dudley—the haughty, insolent, overbearing Sir Dudley Broughton—as “my old friend,” was something that actually appalled me. How could my vain boastfulness have so far got the better of my natural keenness; how could my silly self-sufficiency have carried me so far? “Ah,” thought I, “it was not the real Con Cregan who spoke such ineffable folly; these were the outpourings of that diabolical 'Thumbo-rig.'”

While, therefore, I entered into a bond with myself to eschew that insidious compound in future, I also adopted the far more imminent and important resolve, to run away from New Orleans. Another sun must not set upon me in that city, come what might. With a shudder, I called to mind Sir Dudley's own avowal of his passion as a hater, and I could not venture to confront such danger.

I accordingly hastened to my miserable lodging, and, packing up my few clothes, now reduced to the compass of a bundle in a handkerchief, I paid my bill, and, on a minute calculation of various pieces of strange coinage, found myself the possessor of four dollars and a quarter,—a small sum, and something less than a cent for every ten miles I was removed from my native land. What meant the term

"country," after all, to such as me? He has a country who possesses property in it, whose interests tie him to the soil, where his name is known and his presence recognized; but what country belongs to him where no resting-place is found for his weary feet, whose home is an inn, whose friends are the fellow-travellers with whom he has journeyed? The ties of country, like those of kindred, are superstitions,—high and holy ones sometimes, but still superstitions. Believe in them if you can, and so much the better for you; but in some hour the conviction will come that man is of every land.

Thus pondering, I trudged along at a smart pace, my bundle on a stick over my shoulder, never noticing the road, and only following the way because it seemed to lead out of the city. It was a gorgeous morning; the sun glittered on the bright roofs, and lit up the gay terraces of the houses, where creepers of every tint and foliage were tastefully entwined and festooned, as these people knew so well to dispose. Servants were opening windows, displaying handsomely-furnished rooms, replete with every luxury, as I passed; busy housemaids were brushing, and sweeping, and polishing; and shining niggers were beating carpets and shaking hearthrugs, while others were raking the gravel before the doors, or watering the rich magnolias and cactuses that stood sentinel beneath the windows. Carriages, too, were washing, and high-bred horses standing out to be groomed,—all signs of wealth and of the luxuries of the rich men, whose close-drawn curtains portended sleep. "Ay," thought I, "there are hundreds here, whose weightiest evil would be that they awoke an hour earlier than their wont; that their favorite Arab had stood on a sharp stone; that some rude branch had

scratched the rich varnish on their chariot: while I wander along, alone and friendless, my worldly substance a few dollars." This disparity of condition of course occurs to the mind of every poor man; but it only is a canker to him who has had a glimpse, be it ever so fleeting, of a life of luxury and ease. For this reason, the servant-class will always be a great source of danger to our present social condition; seeing the weakness, the folly, and sometimes the worse than folly of those they serve, viewing, from a near point, the interior lives of those who, seen from afar, are reckoned great and illustrious,—they lose the prestige of respect for the distinguishing qualities of station, and only yield it to the outward symbols, —the wealth and riches. What Socialists are our butlers; what Democrats our footmen; what Red Republicans are our cooks; what a Leveller is the gardener! For all your "yellow plush," you are Sans-culottes, every man of you.

Now, I deem it a high testimony to my powers of judgment that I never entertained these views. On the contrary, I always upheld the doctrine that society, like a broken thigh-bone, did best on an "inclined plane," and I repudiated equality with the scorn a man six feet high would feel were he told that the human standard was to be four and a half. The only grudge I did feel towards the fortunate man of wealth was that I should lose so many brilliant years of life in acquiring—for acquire it I would—what I would far rather employ in dispensing. A guinea at twenty is worth a hundred at thirty, a thousand at forty, a million at sixty,—that's the geometrical mean of life. Glorious youth, that only needs "debentures" to be divine!

My head became clearer and my brain more unclouded as I walked along in the free air of the

morning, and I felt that with a cigar I should both compose my vagrant fancies, and cheat myself out of the necessity of a breakfast. Excellent weed! that can make dulness imaginative, and imagination plodding; that renders stupid men companionable to clever ones, and gives a meek air of thought to the very flattest insipidity!

I searched my pocket for the little case that contained my Manillas, but in vain; I tried another,—like result. How was it? I always carried it in my great-coat: had I been robbed? I could not help laughing at the thought, it sounded so ineffably comic. I essayed again, alas! with no better success. Could I have placed it in the breast-pocket? What! there is no breast-pocket! How is this, Con? Has Thumbo-rig its influence over you yet? I passed my hand across my brow, and tried to remember if the breast-pocket had only been a tradition of another coat, or what had become of it. Pockets do not close from being empty, like county banks, nor do they dry up, like wells, from disuse.

"No, no; there certainly was once one here." As I said this, what was my amazement to find that the pocket for which I had been searching had changed sides, and gone from left to right! "Oh, this is too bad!" thought I; "with a little more punch, I could have fancied that I had put my coat on wrong-sided. Here is a mystery!" said I, "and now, to solve it patiently;" and so I sat me down by the wayside, and, laying my bundle on the ground, began to reflect.

Reflection, I soon found, was of no use. Habit—the instinct of custom—showed me that my pocket had always been to the left; my right hand sought the spot with an almost mechanical impulse, whereas my left wandered about like a man in search of his

newly-taken lodging. As I came to this puzzling fact, my fingers, deeply immersed in the pocket, came in contact with a small leather case. I drew it forth; it was not mine,—I had never seen it before! I opened it; there was nothing within but a small piece of card, with the words, “Full Share Ticket,” on top, and, underneath, the figures, '438.”

From the card, my eyes reverted to the coat itself; and now I saw, with a surprise I cannot convey, that it was not my own coat, but another man's, I was wearing. The negro at the ordinary had assisted me to put it on. It was the only one, indeed, remaining, as I came away, and some other had carried off mine. So far, it was a fair exchange, of which I was not in any way accountable, seeing that I performed a mere passive part; taking—and even that unwillingly—what was left me. Certain threadbare symptoms about the cuffs, and a missing button or two, also showed me that I was no gainer by the barter. Was it worth while to go back? Were the chances of recovering my own equal to the risk of being myself discovered? I thought not. It was decidedly a shabby investment, and, now that I examined it more closely, a very miserable substitute for my own. I was vexed at the occurrence, and could not help reflecting, in very severe terms, upon the breach of honor such an act displayed. “Lie down with dogs, Master Con,” says the adage, “and see if you don't get up with fleas!” “Such company as you passed the evening with were assuredly not above a piece of roguery like this.” Falkoner it could not be; and I own that I was glad to know that, since he was much taller than me; nor could I remember one who was near enough my own size to make me suppose him the culprit; and so I ended by attributing the knavery to the negro, who probably had kept this

ancient vestment for a moment of substitution.

It may be inferred, from the difficulty of solution in the case of this very simple occurrence, that my faculties were not pre-eminently clear and lucid, and that the vapor of the Thumbo-rig still hung heavily over me; such, I am bound to own, was the fact. Every event of the previous night was as shadowy and imperfect as might be. It was only during the last half-hour of my conversation with Falkoner that I was completely conscious of all said and done around me. Previous to this, my mind had established a kind of Provisional Government over my rebellious ideas, and, like most such bodies, its edicts had little force, for they were based on but a weak prestige.

Now then came a question of this strange-looking piece of card, with the numbers on which, by some wonderful process, I seemed to myself perfectly familiar,—nay, I felt that they were, from some hidden cause, recorded facts in my memory. All I could remember of the night before threw little light upon the matter, and I wondered on, striving to pierce the dull mist of uncertainty that enveloped all my thoughts; by this time, I had reached the bank of the river, and could perceive, about half a mile off, down the stream, a tall-masted smack getting ready for sea,—her blue-peter fluttered at the mast-head, and the pleasant “yo-ho!” of the sailors kept time with the capstan-bars as they heaved at the anchor. The wind was a nor'-wester, and beat with impatient gusts the loose canvas that hung ready to be shaken out, while the stream rushed rapidly along her sides.

“Would I were to sail in you, wherever your voyage tended!” was my exclamation; and I sat down to watch the preparations, which the loud commands of the skipper seemed to hasten and press forward.

So occupied was I with the stir and bustle on board the craft, where everything was done with a lightning speed, that I did not remark a boat's crew who sat leaning on their oars beside the wall of the stream; and it was only when an accidental sound of their voices struck me that I saw them.

“That's a signal to come away, Ben!” said one of the men. “He 'll not wait no longer!”

“And why should he lose a tide for any land-lugger of them all? It's not every day, besides, we get a nor'-wester like this!”

“Well, what d'ye mean to do?” asked the former speaker.

“Give him ten minutes more, Ben,” cried another. “Let's have a chance of a dollar apiece, anyhow!”

“There goes a shot!” said the man called Ben, as he pointed to the smack, from whose bow-port the smoke was lazily issuing. “I'll not stay here any longer; shove her away, lads!”



CHAPTER XIX. ON BOARD THE 'CHRISTOBAL'

Without further delay, the men prepared to obey the summons. The boat's chain was cast off, and, as she swung out from the wall, I could see a small standard at her stern, carrying a little white flag, which, as the breeze wafted towards mer showed the enigmatical number 438.

I sprang to my legs and uttered a cry of surprise.

“Well, what is it, master?” said Ben, looking up, and probably expecting to see me take a header into the muddy stream.

“That's the number!” cried I, not knowing what I said. “That's the very number!”

“Very true, master, so it is, but you ha'n't got the counterpart, I guess!”

“Yes, but I have, though!” said I, producing the ticket from the pocket-book.

“Why, darn me if that a'n't himself!” cried the men; and they sung out three hearty cheers at the discovery.

“Were you there long, old fellow?” said Ben.

“About half an hour,” said I.

“Tarnation! and why did ye keep us a-waitin'? didn't you see the tide was on the ebb, and that Christy was making signals every five minutes or so?”

“I was waiting—waiting—”

“Waiting for what? I 'd like to know.”

“Waiting for my baggage,” said I, taking a long breath.

“An' it ain't come yet?”

“No; I 'm afraid they missed the road.”

“Be that as it may, master, I'll not stay longer. Come along without your kit, or stay behind with it, whichever you please.”

“Hang the traps!” said I, affecting a bold carelessness; “I've a few things there I left out loose, that will do. When shall we be there?” This was a leading question, for I did not yet know whither we were bound.

“At Galveston? Well, to-morrow evening or by

nightfall, I guess, if the wind hold. Sit down there and make yourself snug; there's always a little splash of a sea in this river. And now, lads, pull away,—all together!”

A second shot from the smack announced that her anchor was tripped, and we saw her now lurch over as her foresail filled.

The men pulled vigorously, and in about twenty minutes I stood upon the deck of the “Christobal,” making sundry excuses to her skipper for being late, and assuring him, on the faith of a gentleman, that I had utterly forgotten all about my voyage till the last moment.

“They only sent me the number from the office late last night,” said he, “and told me to look out for the gemman about the docks. But I war n't goin' to do that, I said. He's got a passage and grub to Galveston,—as good as ere a gemman can desire; he's won a nag they says is worth seven or eight hundred dollars, with furniture and arms for the new expedition; and I take it them things is worth a-looking arter,—so darn me blue if I gives myself no trouble about 'em.”

These scattered hints were all I wanted. The sea-breeze had restored me to my wonted clearness, and I now saw that “438” meant that I had won a free passage to Texas, a horse and a rifle when I got there; so far, the “exchange of coats” was “with a difference.” It was with an unspeakable satisfaction that I learned I was the only passenger on board the “Christobal.” The other “gentlemen” of the expedition had either already set out or abandoned the project, so that I had not to undergo any unpleasant scrutiny into my past life, or any impertinent inquiry regarding my future.

Old Kit Turrel, the skipper, did not play the grand inquisitor on me. His life had been for the most part passed in making the voyage to and from New Orleans and Galveston, where he had doubtless seen sufficient of character to have satisfied a glutton in eccentricity. There was not a runaway rogue or abandoned vagabond that had left the coast for years back, with whose history he was not familiar. You had but to give him a name, and out came the catalogue of his misdeeds on the instant.

These revelations had a prodigious interest for me. They opened the book of human adventure at the very chapter I wanted. It was putting a keen edge upon the razor to give *me* the "last fashions in knavery,"—not to speak of the greater advantage of learning the success attendant on each, since "Kit" could tell precisely how it fared with every one who had passed through his hands.

He enlightened me also as to these Texan expeditions, which, to use his own phrase, had never been anything better than "almighty swindles," planted to catch young flats from the north country, the Southerns being all too "crank" to be done.

"And is there no expedition in reality?" said I, with all the horror of a man who had been seduced from home, and family, and friends, under false pretences.

"There do be a dash now and then into the Camanche trail when buffaloes are plenty, or to bring down a stray buck or so. Mayhap, too, they cut off an Injian fellow or two, if he linger too late in the fall; and then they come back with wonderful stories of storming villages, and destroying war-parties, and the rest of it; but we knows better. Most of 'em 'ere chaps are more used to picklocks than rifles, and can handle a 'jemmy' better than a 'bowie-knife.'"

"And in the present case, what kind of fellows are they?"

He rolled a tobacco quid from side to side of his mouth, and seemed to hesitate whether he would speak out.

"There is no danger with me, Captain; I am an Englishman, a perfect stranger here, and have never seen or heard of a man amongst them."

"I see *that*," said he; "and your friends must be rank green 'uns to let you go and join this trail,—that's a fact."

"But what are they?"

"Well, they call 'emselves horse-dealers; but above Austin there, and along by Bexar, they call 'em horsestealers!" and he laughed heartily at the excessive drollery of the remark.

"And where do they trade with their cattle?"

"They sells 'em here, or up in the States away north sometimes; but they picks up the critters along the Chehuhua Line, or down by Aguaverde, or San Pueblo. I 've known 'em to go to Mexico too. When they don't get scalped, they 've rather good fun of it; but they squable a bit now and then among 'emselves; and so there's a Texan proverb that 'buffalo-meat in spring is as rare as a mustang merchant with two eyes!'"

"What does that mean?"

"They gouge a bit down there, they do,—that's a fact. I 've known two or three join the Redmen, and say Injians was better living with, than them 'ere."

"I own your picture is not flattering."

"Yes, but it be, though! You don't know them chaps; but I know 'em,—ay, for nigh forty year. I 'm a-livin' on this 'ere passage, and I've seen 'em all. I

knew Bowlin Sam, I did!" From the manner this was said, I saw that Bowlin Sam was a celebrity, to be ignorant of whom was to confess one's self an utter savage.

"To be sure, I was only a child at the time; but I saw him come aboard with the negro fellow that he followed up the Red River trail. They were two of the biggest fellows you could see. Sam stood six feet six-an'-a-quarter; the Black was six feet four,—but he had a stoop in his shoulders. Sam tracked him for two years; and many's the dodge they had between 'em. But Sam took him at last, and he brought him all the way from Guajaqualle here, bound with his hands behind him, and a log of iron-wood in his mouth; for he could tear like a juguar.

"They were both on 'em ugly men,—Sam very ugly! Sam could untwist the strongest links of an iron boat-chain, and t' other fellow could bite a man-rope clean in two with his teeth. 'The Black' eat nothing from the time they took him; and when they put him into the shore-boat, in the river, he was so weak they had to lift him like a child. Well, out they rowed into the middle of the stream, where the water is roughest among the 'snags,' and many a whirlpool dashing around 'atween the bows of the 'sawyers.' That's the spot you 're sure to see one of these young sharks,—for the big chaps knows better than to look for their wittals in dangerous places,—while the water is black, at times, with alligators. Well, as I was sayin', out they rowed; and just as they comes to this part of the stream, the black fellow gives a spring, and drives both his heavy ironed feet bang through the flooring-plank of the boat. It was past bailin'; they were half swamped before they could ship their oars; the minute after, they were all struggling in the river together. There were three

besides the nigger; but he was the only one ever touched land again. He was an Antigua chap, that same nigger; and they knows sharks and caymans as we does dog-fish: but, for all that, he was all bloody, and had lost part of one foot, when he got ashore."

"Why had he been captured? What had he done?" "What had n't he done! That same black murdered more men as any six in these parts; he it was burned down Che-coat's mill up at Brandy Cove, with all the people fastened up within. Then he run away to the 'washings' at Guajaqualle, where he killed Colonel Rixon, as was over the 'Placer.' He cut him in two with a bowie-knife, and never a one guessed how it happened, as the juguars had carried off two or three people from the 'washins '; but the nigger got drunk one night, and began a-cuttin' down the young hemlock-trees, and sayin', 'That's the way I mowed down Buckra' Georgy,'—his name was George Rixon. Then he bolted, and was never seen more. Ah, he was a down-hard 'un, that fellow Crick!"

"Crick,—Menelaus Crick!" said I, almost springing up with amazement as I spoke.

"Just so. You 've heard enough of him 'fore now, I guess."

The skipper went on to talk about the negro's early exploits, and the fearful life of crime which he had always pursued; but I heard little of what he said. The remembrance of the man himself, bowed down with years and suffering, was before me; and I thought how terribly murder is expiated, even in those cases where the guilty man is believed to have escaped. So is it; the dock, the dungeon, and the gallows can be mercies in comparison with the self-torment of eternal fear, the terror of companionship, or the awful hell of solitude! The scene at Anticosti

and the terrific night in the Lower Town of Quebec rose both together to my mind, and so absorbed my thoughts that the old skipper, seeing my inattention, and believing that I was weary and inclined for sleep, left me for the deck; and I lay still, pondering over these sad themes.

At last I roused myself and went on deck. The city had long since disappeared from view, and even the low land at the mouth of the river had faded in the distance; while, instead or the yellow, polluted flood of the Mississippi, the blue waves, shining and sparkling, danced merrily past, or broke in foam-sheets at the bow. The white sails were bent like boards, firm and immovable before the breeze, and the swift vessel darted her way onward as proudly as though her freight were something prouder and better than a poor adventurer, without one in the wide world who cared whether he won or lost the game with Fortune.

My spirits rose every mile we left New Orleans behind us; I felt, besides, that to bring my skill to such a market was but to carry “coals to Newcastle;” nor, from the skipper's account, did Texas offer a much more favorable field. However, it smacked of adventure; the very name had a charm for me; and I thought I should far rather confront actual danger than live a life of petty schemes and small expedients. But what a strange crucible is the human heart! here was I, placed in a situation to which an incident had elevated me,—of a kind which a more scrupulous sense of honor would have made some shudder at,—fancying, ay, and persuading myself too, that, in the main, I possessed very admirable sentiments and most laudable ambitions; that the occasional little straits to which I was reduced were only so many practical jokes played on me by “Fate,”

which took, doubtless, a high delight in the ingenuity by which I always fell on my feet,—while I felt certain that, were I only fairly treated, a more upright, honorable, straightforward young gentleman never lived than I should prove!

“Let Dame Fortune only deal me trumps,” said I, “and I'll promise never 'to look into my neighbor's hand.'” Gentle reader, you smile at my humility; well, then, it's clear you are neither a secretary of state nor a railway director,—that's all.

We dropped anchor off Galveston just as the sun was setting; and the evening being calm, and the reflection of the houses and steeples in the water sharp and defined, the scene was sufficiently striking. The city itself was more important as to size and wealth than I had anticipated, and the office of the “Texan Expedition,” held at the “Moon,” a great coffee-house on the Quay, impressed me most favorably with the respectability and pretensions of my “Co-expeditionaries.” Old Kit presented me to the secretary—a very knavish-looking fellow in spectacles of black gauze—as the winner of the great prize, which, to my excessive mortification, I learned was at Houston, about eighty miles farther up the Bay.

I apologized for my careless dress by stating that my baggage had been unfortunately left behind at New Orleans, and that in my haste I had been obliged to come on board with actually nothing but the few dollars I had in my pocket.

“That's a misfortune easily repaired, sir,” said the gauze-eyed secretary; “you can have your 'credit' cashed here just as liberally as at any town in the country.”

“I have no doubt of that,” responded I, somewhat

tartly, for I did not fancy this allusion to banks and bankers; “but all my papers are in my portmanteau.”

“Provoking, certainly,” said he, taking a long pinch of snuff,—“ain't it, Kit?”

But Kit only scratched his nose, and looked puzzled.

“Are your bankers Vicars and Bull, sir?”

“No,” said I, “my credits are all on a Northern house; but I fancy my name is tolerably well known. You 've heard of the Cregans, I suppose.”

“Cregan—Cregan,” repeated he a couple of times; then, opening a huge ledger at the letter C, ran his eye down a long column. “Crabtree—Crossley—Croxam—Crebell—Creffet—Cregmore. It is not Cregmore, sir?”

“No, Cregan is the name.”

“Ah, well, there's no Cregan. There was a Cregmore was 'lynched' here, I see by the mark in the book, and we have a small trunk waiting to be claimed, belonging to him.”

“That ain't the fellow as purtended to be winner of the wagon team that was lotteried here a twelvemonth since, is it?” said Kit.

“Yes, but it is, though. He made out he had the ticket all right and straight, when up comes one Colonel Jabus Harper, and showed the real thing; and the chaps took it up hotly, and they lynched Cregmore that evening.”

“Yes, sir, that's a fact,” quoth Kit.

“What was the penalty?” asked I, with a most imposing indifference.

“They hanged him up at Hall's Court yonder. I ain't sure if he be n't hanging there still.”

“And this packet,” said I, for the theme was

excessively distasteful, “when does she sail?”

“She starts to-night at twelve,—first cabin, two dollars; steerage, one-twenty.”

“Thank you,” said I, touching my hat with the condescending air one occasionally employs to humiliate an inferior, by its mingled pride and courtesy; and I turned into the street.

“You ain't a-going to Hall's Court, are you?” said Kit, overtaking me.

“Of course not,” responded I, indignantly. “Such sights are anything but pleasurable.”

“He ain't all right, that 'un,” said Gauze-eyes, as old Kit re-entered the office, and I stepped back to listen.

“Well, I don't know,” muttered the other; “I 'm a-think-ing it be doubtful, sir. He ha' n't got much clink with him, that's a fact.”

“I have half a mind to send Chico up in the boat to-night, just to dodge him a bit.”

“Well, ye might do it,” yawned the other; “but Chico is such an almighty villain that he'll make him out a rogue or a swindler, at all events.”

“Chico is smart, *that* I do confess,” said the other, with a grin.

“And he do look so uncommon like a vagabond, too; Chico, I don't like him.”

“He can look like anything he pleases, Chico can. I've seen him pass for a Pawnee, and no one ever disciver it.”

“He 's a rank coward, for all that,” rejoined the skipper; “and he can put no disguise upon *that*.”

The sound of feet, indicative of leaving, made me hasten from the spot, but in a mood far from comfortable. With the fate of my ingenious

predecessor in “Hall's Court” before me, and the small possibility of escaping the shrewd investigations of “Chico,” I really knew not what course to follow. The more I reflected, however, the less choice was there at my disposal; the bold line, as generally happens, being not a whit more dangerous than the timid path, since, were I to abandon my prize, and not proceed to Houston, the inevitable Chico would only be the more certain to discover me.

My mind was made up; and, stepping into a shop, I expended two of my four dollars in the purchase of a “revolver,”—second-hand, but an excellent weapon, and true as gold. A few cents supplied me with some balls and powder; and, thus provided, I took my way towards the wharf where the steamer lay, already making some indicative signs of readiness.

I took a steerage passage; and, not knowing where or how to dispose of myself in the interval before starting, I clambered into a boat on deck, and, with my bundle for a pillow, fell into a pleasant doze. It was not so much sleep as a semi-waking state that merely dulled and dimmed impressions,—a frame of mind I have often found very favorable to thought. One is often enabled to examine a question in this wise, as they look at the sun through a smoked glass, and observe the glittering object without being blinded by its brilliancy. I suppose the time I passed in this manner was as near an approach to low spirits as I am capable of feeling; for of regular downright depression, I know as little as did Nelson of fear.

I bethought me seriously of the “scrape” in which I found myself, and reflected with considerable misgivings upon the summary principles of justice in vogue around me; and yet the knavery was not of my own seeking. Like Falstaff's honor, it was “thrust

upon me." I was innocent of all plot or device. "Le diable qui se mêle en tout "—never was there a truer saying—would have it that I should exchange coats with another, and that this confounded ticket should be the compensation for worn seams and absent buttons.

I have no doubt, thought I, but that "Honesty is the best policy," pretty much upon the same principle that even a dead calm is better than a hurricane. But to him who desires "progress," on whose heart the word "onward" is written, the calm is lethargy, while the storm may prove propitious. I then tried to persuade myself that even this adventure could not turn out ill,—not that I could by any ingenuity devise how it should prove otherwise; but I knew that Fortune is as skilful as she is kind, and so I left the whole charge to her.

Is it my fault, I exclaimed, that I am not rich, and wellborn, and great? Show me any one who would have enjoyed such privileges more. Is it my fault that, being poor, ignoble, and lowly in condition, I have tastes and aspirations at war with my situation? These ought rather to be stimulants to exertion than caprices of Fortune. I like the theory better, too; and is it not hard to be condemned for the devices I am reduced to employ to combat such natural evils? If the prisoner severs his fetters with an old nail, it is because he does not possess the luxury of a file or a "cold chisel." As for me, the employment of small and insignificant means is highly distasteful; instead of following the lone mountain-path on foot, I'd drive "life's high road" four-in-hand, if I could.

The furious rush of the escape-steam, the quick coming and going of feet, the heavy banging of luggage on the deck, and all the other unmistakable signs of approaching departure, aroused me, as I lay

patiently contemplating the bustle of leave-taking, hand-shaking, and embracing, in which I had no share. A lantern at the gangway lit up each face that passed, and I strained my eyes to mark one, the only one in whom I was interested. As I knew not whether the ingenious Chico were young, old, short, slim, fat, or six-foot,—whether brown or fair, smooth-faced or bearded,—my observations were necessarily universal, and I was compelled to let none escape me.

At first, each passenger appeared to be “him;” and then, after a few minutes, I gave up the hope of detection. There were fellows whose exterior might mean anything,—large, loose-coated figures, with leather overalls and riding-whips, many of them with pistols at their girdles, and one or two wearing swords, parading the deck on every side. It needed not the accompaniment of horse-gear, saddles, holsters, halters, and cavessons to show that they belonged to a fraternity which, in every land of the Old World or the New, has a prescriptive claim to knavery. Although all of them were natives of the United States, neither in their dark-brown complexions, deep mustaches and whiskers, and strange gestures, was there any trace of that land which we persist in deeming so purely Anglo-Saxon. The prairie and the hunting-ground, the life of bivouac and the habit of danger, had imparted its character to their looks; and there was, besides, that air of swagger and braggadocio so essentially the type of your trafficker in horse-flesh.

If my attention had not been turned to another subject, I would willingly have studied a little the sayings and doings of this peculiar class, seeing that it might yet be my lot to form one of “the brotherhood;” but my thoughts were too deeply

interested in discovering “Chico,” whose presence in the same ship with me actually weighed on my mind like the terror of a phantom.

“Can this be him?” was the question which arose to my heart as figure after figure passed me near where I lay; but the careless, indolent look of the passenger as regularly negatived the suspicion. We were now under way, steaming along in still water with all the tremendous power of our high-pressure engines, which shook the vessel as though they would rend its strong framework asunder. The night was beautifully calm and mild, and, although without a moon, the sky sparkled with a thousand stars, many of which were of size and brilliancy to throw long columns of light across the bay.

The throb of the great sea monster as she cleared her way through the water, was the only sound heard in the stillness; for although few had “gone below,” the groups seated about the deck either smoked in silence, or talked in low, indistinct tones.

I lay gazing at the heavens, and wondering within myself which of those glittering orbs above me was gracious enough to preside over the life and adventures of Con Cregan. “Some dim, indistinct little spangle it must be,” thought I,—“some forgotten planet of small reputation, I 've no doubt it is. I should n't wonder if it were that little sly-looking fellow that winks at me from the edge of yonder cloud, and seems to say, 'Lie still, Con,—keep close, my lad; there's danger near.'” As I half-muttered this to myself, a dark object intervened between me and the sky, a large black disk, shutting out completely the brilliant fretwork on which I had been gazing. As I looked again, I saw it was the huge broad-brimmed hat of a Padre,—one of those felted coalscuttles which make the most venerable faces grotesque and

ridiculous.

Lying down in the bottom of the boat, I was able to take a deliberate survey of the priest's features, while he could barely detect the dark outline of *my* figure. He was thick and swarthy, with jet-black eyes and a long-pointed chin. There was something Spanish in the face, and yet more of the Indian; at least, the projecting cheek-bones and the gaunt, hollow cheeks favored that suspicion.

From the length of time he stood peering at me, I could perceive that it was not a passing impulse, but that his curiosity was considerable. This impression was scarcely conceived ere proved, as, taking a small lantern from the binnacle, he approached the boat, and held it over me.

Affecting a heavy slumber, I snored loudly, and lay perfectly still, while he examined my face, bending over me as I lay, and marking each detail of my dress and appearance.

As if turning in my sleep, I contrived to alter my position in such a manner that, covering my face with my arm, I could watch the Padre.

“Came on board alone, said you?” asked he of a little dirty urchin of a cabin-boy, at his side.

“Yes, Father; about two hours before we left the harbor.”

“No luggage of any kind?”

“A bundle, Father; that under his head, and nothing more.”

“Did he speak to you, or ask any questions?”

“Only at what time we should reach Houston, and if the 'White Hart' was near the Quay?”

“And then he lay down in the boat here?”

“Just so; I saw no more of him after.”

"That will do," said the Padre, handing the lantern to the boy.

That will do! thought I also. Master Chico, if you know me, I know *you* as well!

The game was now begun between us,—at least, so I felt it. I lay watching my adversary, who slowly paced backwards and forwards, stopping now and then to peep into the boat, and doubtless conning over in his own mind his plan of attack.

We were to land some passengers and take in some wood at a little place called Fork Island; and here I was half determined within myself that my voyage should end. That "Chico" had discovered me, was clear, the Padre could be no other than him; and that he would inevitably hunt me down at Austin was no less evident. Now, discovery and "lynching" were but links of the same chain; and I had no fancy to figure as "No. 2" in Hall's Court!

The silence on the deck soon showed that most of the passengers had gone below, and, so far as I could see in the uncertain light, "Chico" with them. I arose, therefore, from my hard couch to take a little exercise, which my cramped limbs stood in need of. A light drizzling rain had begun to fall, which made the deck slippery and uncomfortable, and so I took my stand at the door of the cook's galley, into which two or three of the crew had sought refuge.

As the rain fell the fog thickened, so that, standing close in to shore, the skipper slackened our speed, till at last we barely moved through the water. Not aware of the reason, I asked one of the sailors for an explanation.

"It's the dirty weather, I reckon," said he, sulky at being questioned.

"Impatient, I suppose, to get the journey over, my

young friend?" said a low, silky voice, which at once reminded me of that I had already heard when I lay in the boat. I turned, and it was the Padre, who, with an umbrella over him, was standing beside me.

"I 'm not much of a sailor, Father," replied I, saluting him respectfully as I spoke.

"More accustomed to the saddle than the poop-deck?" said he, smiling blandly.

I nodded assent, and he went on with some passing generalities about sea and land life,—mere skirmishing, as I saw, to invite conversation.

Partly weariness, partly a sense of discomfort at the persecution of this man's presence, made me sigh heavily. I had not perceived it myself, but he remarked it immediately, and said,—

"You are depressed in spirit, my son; something is weighing on your heart!"

I looked up at him, and, guided possibly by my suspicion of his real character, I saw, or thought I saw, a twinkling glitter of his dark eye, as though he was approaching the theme on which he was bent.

"Yes, Father," replied I, with a voice of well-feigned emotion, "my heart is indeed heavy; but"—here I assumed a more daring tone—"I must not despond, for all that!"

I walked away as I spoke, and, retiring, sat down near the wheel, as if to meditate. I judged that the Padre would soon follow me; nor was I wrong: I was not many minutes seated ere he stood at my side.

"I see," said he, in a mild voice,—"I see, from the respect of your manner, that you are one of our own people,—a good son of the Church. What is your native country?"

"Ireland, Father," said I, with a sigh.

“A blessed land indeed!” said he, benignly; “happy in its peaceful inhabitants,—simple-minded and industrious!”

I assented, like a good patriot, but not without misgivings that he might have been just as happy in another selection of our good gifts.

“I have known many of your countrymen,” resumed he, “and they all impressed me with the same esteem. All alike frugal, temperate, and tranquilly disposed.”

“Just so, sir; and the cruelty is, nobody gives them credit for it!”

“Ah, my son, there you are in error. The Old World may be, and indeed I have heard that it is, ungenerous; but its prejudices cannot cross the ocean. Here we estimate men, not by *our* prejudices, but by *their* merits. Here we recognize the Irishman as Nature has made him,—docile, confiding, and single-hearted; slow to anger, and ever ready to control his passions!”

“That's exactly his portrait, Father!” said I, enthusiastically. “Without a double of any kind,—a creature that does not know a wile or a stratagem!”

The priest seemed so captivated by my patriotism and my generous warmth that he sat down beside me, and we continued to make Ireland still our theme, each vying with the other who could say most in praise of that country.

It was at the close of a somewhat long disquisition upon the comparative merits of Ireland and the Garden of Eden,—in which, I am bound to say, the balance inclined to the former,—that the Padre, as if struck by a sudden thought, remarked,—

“You are the very first of your nation I ever met in a frame of mind disposed to melancholy! I have just

been running over, to myself, all the Irishmen I ever knew, and I cannot recall one that had a particle of gloom or sorrow about him."

"Nor had I, Father," said I, with emotion; "nor did I know what sorrow was, till three days back! I was light-hearted and happy; the world went well with me, and I was content with the world. I will not trouble you with my story; enough when I say that I came abroad to indulge a taste for adventure and enterprise, and that the New World has not disappointed my expectations. If I spent money a little too freely, an odd grumble or so from 'the governor' was the darkest cloud that shaded my horizon. An only son, perhaps I pushed that prerogative somewhat too far; but our estate is unencumbered, and my father's habits are the reverse of extravagant,—for a man of his class, I might call them downright rustic in simplicity. Alas! why do I think of these things? I have done with them forever."

"Nay, nay, you must not give way thus. It is very unlikely that one young as you are can have any real guilt upon his conscience."

"Not yet, Father," said I, with a shudder,—"not yet; but who can tell how it may be with me to-morrow or next day? What a different answer should I have to give your question then!"

"This is some fancy,—some trick of a warm and ill-regulated imagination, my son."

"It is the language my heart pours from my lips," said I, grasping his hand as if with irrepressible emotion. "I have a heavy crime here—here!" and I struck my breast violently; "and if it be as yet unaccomplished, the shadow of the guilt is on me already."

“Sit still, my son, sit still, and listen to me,” said he, restraining me, as I was about to rise. “To whom can you reveal these mysterious terrors more fittingly than to me? Be candid; tell me what weighs upon your heart. It may be that a mere word of mine can give you courage and calm.”

“That cannot be,” said I, firmly; “you speak in kindness, but you know not what you promise. I am under a vow, Father,—I am under a vow.”

“Well, my son, there are many vows meritorious. There are vows of penitence, and of chastity, and of abstinence—”

“Mine is none of these,” said I, with a low, guttural utterance, as if I was biting each word I spoke.

“Vows of chastisement—”

“Not that, not that either!” cried I; then, dropping my voice to a low whisper, I said, “I have sworn a solemn oath to commit a murder! I know the full guilt of what is before me, I see all the consequences, both here and hereafter: but my word is pledged,—I have taken the oath with every ceremony that can give it solemnity; and—I 'll go through with it!”

“There is a mystery in all this,” said the Padre; “you must recount the circumstances of this singular pledge, ere I can give you either comfort or counsel.”

“I look for neither,—I hope for neither!” said I, wringing my hands; “but you shall hear my story,—you are the last to whom I can ever reveal it! I arrived at New Orleans about a fortnight ago, on a yacht cruise with a friend of mine, of whose name, at least, you may have heard,—Sir Dudley Broughton.”

“The owner of a handsome schooner, the 'Firefly,'” said the Padre, with an animation on the subject not quite in keeping with his costume.

“The same; you are, then, acquainted with him?”

“Oh, no; I was accidentally standing on the wharf when his yacht came up the river at New Orleans.”

“You did n't remark a young man on the poop in a foraging-cap, with a gold band round it?”

“I cannot say I did.”

“He carried a key-bugle in his hand.”

“I did not perceive him.”

“That was me; how different was I then! Well, well, I 'll hasten on. We arrived at New Orleans, not quite determined whither next we should bend our steps; and hearing by mere accident of this Texan expedition, we took it into our heads we would join it. On inquiring about the matter, we found that a lottery was in progress, the prizes of which were various portions of equipment, horses, mules, baggage, negroes, and so on. For this—just out of caprice—we took several tickets; but as, from one cause or other, the drawing was delayed, we lingered on, going each day to the office, and there making acquaintance with a number of fellows interested in the expedition, but whose manner and style, I need scarcely say, were not good recommendations to intimacy. Broughton, however, always liked that kind of thing; low company, with him, had always the charm of an amusement that he could resign whenever he fancied. Now, as he grew more intimate with these fellows, he obtained admission into a kind of club they held in an obscure part of the town, and thither we generally repaired every evening, when too late for any more correct society. They were all, or at least they affected to be, interested in Texan expeditions; and the conversation never took any other turn than what concerned these objects; and if at first our Old World notions were shocked at their

indifference to life,—the reckless disregard of honor and good faith they evinced,—we came by degrees to feel that the moral code of the Prairies permitted many things which were never sanctioned in more cultivated latitudes.

“Broughton entered into all this with a most extraordinary interest. Nothing seemed too wild, too abandoned, and too outrageous for his notions; and, I shame to say it, he soon made me a convert to his opinions. His constant speech was, 'Be as virtuous as you please, my dear fellow, among ladies and gentlemen; but pray fight Choctaws, Pawnees, and half-breeds with their own weapons, which are either a trick or a tomahawk.' I never liked the theory; but partly from daily iteration, partly from a yielding pliancy of disposition, and in great measure from being shamed into it, I gave way, and joined him in all the pledges he gave, to go through with anything the expedition exacted. I must be brief; that light yonder is on Fork Island, where we stop to take in wood; and ere we reach it, I must make up my mind to one course or other.

“As the time for the starting of the expedition drew nigh, the various plans and schemes became the theme of nightly discussion; and we heard of nothing but guides and trails, where grass was to be found for the cattle, and where water could be had, with significant hints about certain places and people who were known or believed to be inimical to these excursions. Thus, on the map, were marked certain villages which might be put under contribution, and certain log-houses which should be made to pay a heavy impost: here, it was a convent to be mulcted; and there, a store or a mill to be burned! In fact, the expedition seemed to have as many vengeances to fulfil as hopes of gain to gratify; for each had a friend

who was maltreated, or robbed, or murdered, and whose fate or fortunes required an expiation.—But I weary you, Padre, with all this?"

"Not at all, my son; I recognize perfectly the accuracy of your account. I have heard a good deal about these people."

"There was one individual, however, so universally detested that you would suppose he must have been a kind of devil incarnate to have incurred such general hate. Every one had a grudge against him, and, in fact, there was a kind of struggle who should be allotted to wreak on him the common vengeance of the company. It was at last decided that his fate should be lotteried, and that whoever won the first prize—this mare of which you may have heard—should also win the right to finish this wretched man. I gained this infamous distinction; and here am I, on my way to claim my prize and commit a murder! Ay, I may as well employ the true word,—it is nothing less than a murder! I have not even the poor excuse of revenge. I cannot pretend that he ever injured me,—nay, I have not even seen him; I never heard of his name till two days ago; nor, even now, could I succeed in finding him out, if I were not provided with certain clews at Houston, and certain guides by whose aid I am to track him. My oath is pledged: I swore it solemnly that, if the lot fell upon me, I 'd do the deed, and do it I will; yet, I am equally resolved never to survive it."—Here I produced my revolver.—"If this barrel be for the unlucky Chico, this other is for myself!"

"What name did you say?" cried he, with a faltering voice, while his hand, as he laid it on my arm, shook like ague.

"Chico, the wretch is called," I said, fixing a cap on

my pistol.

“And why call him a wretch, my son? Has he ever injured you? How do you know that he is not some poor, kindly hearted creature, the father of five children, one of them a baby, perhaps? How can you tell the difficulties by which he gains his living, and the hazard to which he exposes his life in doing so? And is it to injure such a man you will go down to your own grave an assassin?”

“I'll do it,” said I, doggedly; “I'll keep my oath.”

“Such an oath never bound any man; it is a snare of Satan.”

“So it may,—I 'll keep it,” said I, beating the deck with my foot, with the dogged determination of one not to be turned from his purpose.

“Kill in cold blood a man you never saw before?”

“Just so; I am not going to think of him, when I set so little store by myself; I only wish the fellow were here now, and I'd show you whether I'd falter or not.”

“Poor Chico,—I could weep for him!” said he, blubbering.

“Keep your pity for *me*,” said I,—“I, that am bound by this terrible oath, and must either stamp myself a coward or a murderer. As for Chico, I believe a more worthless wretch never existed,—a poor, mean-spirited creature, whose trade is to be a spy, and by whose cursed machinations many a fine fellow has been ruined.”

“You are all wrong, sir,” said the Padre, warmly. “I know the man myself; he is an amiable, kind-hearted being, that never harmed any one.”

“He's the fellow to die, then!” said I, roughly.

“He has a small family, unprovided for.”

“They have the inheritance of his virtues,” said I, scoffingly.

“Can you have the heart for such cruelty?” cried he, almost sobbing.

“Come with me when I land at Houston, and see,—that's all!” said I. “A few minutes back, I was hesitating whether I would not land at this island and abandon my purpose. The weakness is now over; I feel a kind of fiendish spirit growing up within me already; I cannot think of the fellow without a sense of loathing and hatred!”

“Lie down, my son, and compose yourself for an hour or two; sleep and rest will calm your agitated brain, and you will then listen to my counsels with profit: your present excitement overmasters your reason, and my words would be of no effect.”

“I know it—I feel it here, across my temples—that it is a kind of paroxysm; but I never close my eyes that I do not fancy I see the fellow, now in one shape, now in another, for he can assume a thousand disguises; while in my ears his accursed name is always ringing.”

“I pity you from my heart!” said the other; and certainly a sadder expression I never saw in any human face before. “But go down below; go down, I beseech you.”

“I have only taken a deck-passage,” said I, doggedly; “I determined that I would see no one, speak to no one.”

“Nor need you, my son,” said he, coaxingly. “They are all sound asleep in the after-cabin; take *my* berth,—I do not want it; I am always better upon deck.”

“If you will have it so,” said I, yielding; “but, for your life, not a word of what I have said to you! Do not deceive yourself by any false idea of humanity.

Were you to shoot me where I stand, you could not save him,—*his* doom is spoken. If *I* fail, there is Broughton, and, after him, a score of others, sworn to do the work."

"Lie down and calm yourself," said he, leading me to the companion-ladder; "we must speak of this to-morrow."

I squeezed his hand, and slowly descended to the cabin. At first the thought occurred to me that he might give the alarm and have me seized; but then this would expose him so palpably to my recognition, should I chance to escape, it was unlikely he would do so. The stillness on deck showed me I was correct in this latter estimate, and so I turned into his comfortable berth, and, while I drew the counterpane over me, thought I had made a capital exchange for the hard ribs of the "long-boat."

If my stratagem had succeeded in impressing my friend Chico with a most lively fear, it did not leave my own mind at perfect tranquillity. I knew that he must be a fellow of infinite resources, and that the game between us, in all likelihood, had but commenced. In circumstances of difficulty, I have constantly made a practice of changing places with my antagonist, fancying myself in *his* position, and asking myself how I should act? This taking the "adversary's hand" is admirable practice in the game of life; it suggests an immense range of combinations, and improves one's play prodigiously.

I now began to myself a little exercise after this fashion: but what between previous fatigue, the warmth of the cabin, and the luxury of a real bed, Chico and I changed places so often, in my brain, that confusion ensued, then came weariness, and, at last sound sleep,—so sound that I was only awoke by

the steward as he popped his greasy head into the berth and said, “I say, master, here we are, standing close in: had n't you better get up?”

I did as he advised; and, as I rubbed the sleep from my eyes, said, “Where's the Padre, steward?—what's become of him?”

“He was took ill last night, and stopped at Fork Island; he 'll go back with us to-morrow to Galveston.”

“You know him, I suppose?” said I, looking at the fellow with a shrewd intelligence that he knew how to construe.

“Well,” cried he, scratching his head, “well, mayhap I do guess a bit who he is.”

“So do I, steward; and when we meet again, he 'll know *me*.” said I, with a look of such imposing sternness that I saw the fellow was recording it. “You may tell him so, steward. I 'll wait for him here till I catch him; and if he escape both myself and my friend Broughton,—Broughton; don't forget the name,—he is deeper than I give him credit for.”

As I was about to leave the cabin, I caught sight of the corner of a red handkerchief peeping out beneath the pillow of the berth. I drew it forth, and found it was Chico's travelling kit, which he preferred abandoning to the risk of again meeting me. It contained a small black skull-cap such as priests wear, a Romish missal, a string of beads, with a few common articles of dress, and eight dollars in silver.

“The spoils of victory,” quoth I, embodying the whole in my own bundle: “the enemy's baggage and the military chest captured.”

“Which is the White Hart?” said I, as I came on deck, now crowded with shore folk, porters, and waiters.

"This way, sir,—follow me," said a smart fellow in a waiter's dress; and I handed him my bundle and stepped on shore.



CHAPTER XX. THE LOG-HUT AT BRAZOS

I was all impatience to see my prize: and scarcely had I entered the inn than I passed out into the stable-yard, now crowded with many of those equestrian-looking figures I had seen on board the steamer.

"Butcher's mare here still, Georgie?" said a huge

fellow, with high boots of red-brown leather, and a sheepskin capote belted round him with a red sash.

“Yes, Master Seth, there she stands. You'll be getting a bargain of her, one of these days.”

“If I had her up at Austin next week for the fair, she 'd bring a few hundred dollars.”

“You 'd never think of selling a beast like that at Austin, Seth?” said a bystander.

“Why not? Do you fancy I 'll bring her into the States, and see her claimed in every town of the Union? Why, man, she's been stolen once a month, that mare has, since she was a two-year-old. I knew an old general up in the Maine frontier had her last year; and he rid her away from a 'stump meeting' in Vermont, in change of his own mule,—blind,—and never know'd the differ till he was nigh home. I sold her twice, myself, in one week. Scott of Muckleburg stained her off fore-leg white, and sold her back, as a new one, to the fellow who returned her for lameness; and she can pretend lameness, she can.”

A roar of very unbelieving laughter followed this sally, but Seth resumed,—

“Well, I'll lay fifty dollars with any gentleman here that she comes out of the stable dead lame, or all sound, just as I bid her.”

Nobody seemed to fancy this wager; and Seth, satisfied with having established his veracity, went on,—

“You 've but to touch the coronet of the off-foot with the point of your bowie,—a mere touch, not draw blood,—and see if she won't come out limping on the toe, all as one as a dead breakdown in the coffin joint; rub her a bit then with your hand,—she 's all right again! It was Wrecksley of Ohio taught her the trick; he used to lame her that way, and buy her

in, wherever he found her."

"Who's won her this time?" cried another.

"I have, gentlemen," said I, slapping my boot with my cane, and affecting a very knowing air as I spoke. The company turned round and surveyed me some seconds in deep silence.

"You an't a-goin' to ride her, young 'un?" said one, half contemptuously.

"No, he an't; the gent's willin' to sell her," chimed in another.

"He's goin' to ax me three hundred dollars," said a third, "an' I an't a-goin' to gi' him no more than two hundred."

"You are all wrong, every man of you," said Seth. "He's bringing her to England, a present for the Queen, for her own ridin'."

"And I beg to say, gentlemen, that none of you have hit upon the right track yet; nor do I think it necessary to correct you more fully. But as you appear to take an interest in my concerns, I may mention that I shall want a hack for my servant's riding,—a short-legged, square-jointed thing, clever to go, and a good feeder, not much above fourteen hands in height, or four hundred dollars in price. If you chance upon this—"

"I know your mark."

"My roan, with the wall-eye. You don't mind a walleye?"

"No, no! my black pony mare's the thing the gent's a lookin' for."

"I say it's nothing like it," broke in Seth. "He's a-wantin' a half-bred mustang, with a down-east cross, —a critter to go through fire and water; liftin' the fore-legs like a high-pressure piston, and with a jerk

of the 'stifle' like the recoil of a brass eight-pounder. An't I near the mark?"

"Not very wide of it," said I, nodding encouragingly.

"She 's at Austin now. You an't a-goin' there?"

"Yes," said I; "I shall be in Austin next week."

"Well, never you make a deal till you see my black pony," cried one.

"Nor the roan cob," shouted another.

"He 'd better see 'em 'fore he sees Split-the-wind, then, or he 'd not look at 'em arter," said Seth. "You 've only to ask for Seth Chiseller, and they 'll look me up."

"You an't a-goin' to let us see Butcher's mare afore we go?" said one to the ostler.

"I an't, because I have n't got the key. She's a double-locked, and the cap 'n never gives it to no one, but comes a-feedin' time himself, to give her corn."

After a few muttered remarks on this caution, the horse-dealers sauntered out of the yard, leaving me musing over what I had heard, and wondering if this excessive care of the landlord boded any suspicion regarding the winner of the prize.

"Jist draw that bolt across the gate, there, will ye," said the ostler, while he produced a huge key from his pocket. "I know 'em well, them gents. A man must have fourteen eyes in his head, and have 'em back and front too, that shows 'em a horse beast! Darn me coarse! if they can't gi' 'un a blood spavin in a squirt of tobacco! Let's see your ticket, young master, and I 'll show you Charcoal,—. that's her name."

"Here it is," said I, "signed by the agent at

Galveston, all right and regular.”

“The cap'n must see to that. I only want to know that ye have the number. Yes, that 's it; now stand a bit on one side. Ye 'll see her when she comes out.”

He entered the stable as he spoke, and soon re-appeared, leading a tall mare, fully sixteen hands high, and black as jet; a single white star on her forehead, and a dash of white across the tail, being the only marks on her. She was bursting with condition, and both in symmetry and action a splendid creature.



“An't she a streak of lightnin', and no mistake?” said he, gazing on her with rapture. “An't she glibber

to move nor a wag of a comet's tail, when he 's taking a lark round the moon? There's hocks! there's pasterns! Show me a gal with ankles like 'em, and look at her, here! An't she a-made for sittin' on?"

I entered into all his raptures. She was faultless in every point,—save, perhaps, that in looking at you she would throw her eye backwards, and show a little bit too much of the white. I remarked this to the ostler.

"The only fault she has," said he, shaking his head; "she mistrusts a body always, and so she's eternally a lookin' back, and a gatherin' up her quarters, and a holdin' of her tail tight in; but for that, she's a downright regular beauty, and for stride and bottom there ain't her equal nowhere."

"Her late master was unlucky, I've heard," said I, insinuatingly.

"He was so far unlucky that he could n't sit his beast over a torrent and a down leap. He would hold her in, and she won't bear it at a spring, and so she flung him before she took the leap; and when *she* lit, 't other side, with her head high and her hind legs under her, *he* was a sittin' with his 'n under his arm, and his neck bruck,—that was the way o' it. See now, master, if ever ye do want a great streak out of her, leave the head free a bit, press her wi' your calves, and give a right down reg'lar halloo,—ha! like a Mexican chap; then she'll do it!"

The ostler found me a willing listener, either when dwelling on the animal's perfections, or suggesting hints for her future management; and when at last both these themes were tolerably exhausted, he proceeded to show me the horse-gear of saddle, and bridle, and halter, and holsters, all handsomely finished in Mexican taste, and studded with brass

nails in various gay devices. At last he produced the rifle,—a regular Kentucky one, of Colt's making,—and what he considered a still greater prize, a bell-mouthed thing half horse-pistol, half blunderbuss, which he called “a almighty fine 'Harper's Ferry tool,' that would throw thirty bullets through an oak panel two inches thick.”

It was evident that he looked upon the whole equipment as worthy of the most exalted possession, and he gazed on me as one whose lot was indeed to be envied.

“Seth and the others leave this to-morrow a'ternoon,” said he; “but if ye be a-goin' to Austin, where the 'Spedeshin' puts up, take my advice, and get away before 'em. You 've a fine road,—no trouble to find the way; your beast will carry you forty, fifty, if you want it, sixty, miles between sunrise and 'down;' and you 'll be snug over the journey before they reach Killian's Mill, the half-way. An' if ye want to know why I say so, it's just because that's too good a beast to tempt a tramper wi', and them's all trampers!”

I gave the ostler a dollar for all his information and civility, and re-entered the inn to have my supper. The cap'n had already returned home, and after verifying my ticket, took my receipt for the mare, which I gave in all form, writing my name, “Con Cregan,” as though it were to a check for a thousand pounds.

I supped comfortably, and then walked out to the stable to see Charcoal. “Get her corn; you'll see if she don't, eat it in less than winkin',” said the ostler; “and if she wor my beast, she'd never taste another feed till she had her nose in the manger at Croft's Gulley.”

“And where is Croft's Gulley?”

“It's the bottoms after you pass the larch wood; the road dips a bit, and is heavy there, and it's a good baitin' place, just eighteen miles from here.”

“On the road to Austin?”

He nodded. “Ye see,” he said, “the moon's a risin'; there's no one out this time. Ye know what I said afore.”

“I'll take the advice, then. Get the traps ready; I'll pack the saddle-bags and set out.”

If any one had asked me why I was in such haste to reach Austin, my answer would have been, “To join the expedition;” and if interrogated, “With what object then?” I should have been utterly dumbfoundered. Little as I knew of its intentions, they must all have been above the range of my ability and means to participate in. True, I had a horse and a rifle; but there was the end of my worldly possessions, not to say that my title, even to these, admitted of litigation. A kind of vague notion possessed me that, once up with the expedition, I should find my place “somewhere,”—a very Irish idea of a responsible situation. I trusted to the “making myself generally useful” category for employment, and to a ready-wittedness never cramped nor restrained by the petty prejudices of a conscience.

The love of enterprise and adventure is conspicuous among the springs of action in Irish life, occasionally developing a Wellesley or a Captain Rock. Peninsular glories and predial outrage have just the same one origin,—a love of distinction, and a craving desire for the enjoyment of that most fascinating of all excitements,—whatever perils life.

Without this element, pleasure soon palls; without

the cracked skulls and fractured “femurs,” fox-hunting would be mere galloping; a review might vie with a battle, if they fire blank cartridge in both! Who 'd climb the Peter Bot, or cross the “petit mulets” of Mont Blanc, if it were not that a false step or a totter would send him down a thousand fathoms into the deep gorge below. This playing hide-and-seek with Death seems to have a great charm, and is very possibly the attraction some folks feel in playing invalid, and passing their lives amid black draughts and blue lotions!

I shrewdly suspect this luxury of tempting peril distinguishes man from the whole of the other animal creation; and if we were to examine it a little, we should see that it opens the way to many of his highest aspirings and most noble enterprises. Now, let not the gentle reader ask, “Does Mr. Cregan include horse-stealing in the list of these heroic darings?” Believe me, he does not; he rather regarded the act of appropriation in the present case in the light some noble lords did when voting away church property,—“a hard necessity, but preferable to being mulct oneself!” With many a thought like this, I rode out into the now silent town, and took my way towards Austin.

It is a strange thing to find oneself in a foreign land, thousands of miles from home, alone, and at night; the sense of isolation is almost overwhelming. So long as daylight lasts, the stir of the busy world and the business of life ward off these thoughts,—the novelty of the scene even combats them; but when night has closed in, and we see above us the stars that we have known in other lands, the self-same moon by whose light we wandered years ago, and then look around and mark the features of a new world, with objects which tell of another

hemisphere; and then think that we are there alone, without tie or link to all around us, the sensation is thrilling in its intensity.

Every one of us—the least imaginative, even—will associate the strangeness of a foreign scene with something of that adventure of which he has read in his childhood; and we people vacancy, as we go, with images to suit the spot in our own country. The little pathway along the river side suggests the lovers' walk at sunset as surely as the dark grove speaks of a woodman's hut or a gypsy camp. But abroad, the scene evokes different dwellers: the Sierra suggests the brigand; the thick jungle, the jaguar or the rattlesnake; the heavy plash in the muddy river is the sound of the cayman; and the dull roar, like wind within a cavern, is the cry of the hungry lion. The presence around us of objects of which we have read long ago, but never expected to see, is highly exciting; it is like taking our place among the characters of a story, and investing us with an interest to ourselves, as the hero of some unwrought history.

This is the most fascinating of all castle-building, since we have a spot for an edifice,—a territory actually given to us.

I thought long upon this theme, and wondered to what I was yet destined,—whether to some condition of real eminence, or to move on among that vulgar herd who are the spectators of life, but never its conspicuous actors. I really believe this ignoble course was more distasteful to me from its flatness and insipidity than from its mere humility. It seemed so devoid of all interest, so tame and so monotonous, I would have chosen peril and vicissitude any day in preference. About midnight I reached Croft's Gulley, where, after knocking for some time, a very sulky old

negro admitted me into a stable while I baited my mare. The house was shut up for the night; and even had I sought refreshment, I could not have obtained it.

After a brief halt, I again resumed the road, which led through a close pine forest, and, however much praised, was anything but a good surface to travel on. Charcoal, however, made light of such difficulties, and picked her steps over holes and stumps with the caution of a trapper, detecting with a rare instinct the safe ground, and never venturing on spots where any difficulty or danger existed. I left her to herself, and it was curious to see that whenever a short interval of better footway intervened, she would, as if to "make play," as the jockeys call it, strike out in a long swinging canter, "pulling up" to the walk the moment the uneven surface admonished her to caution.

As day broke, the road improved so that I was able to push along at a better pace, and by breakfast-time I found myself at a low, poor-looking log-house called "Brazos." A picture representing Texas as a young child receiving some admirable counsel from a very matronly lady with thirteen stars on her petticoat, flaunted over the door, with the motto, "Filial Affection, and Candy Flip at all hours."

A large, dull-eyed man, in a flannel pea-jacket and loose trousers to match, was seated in a rocking-chair at the door, smoking an enormous cigar, a little charmed circle of expectoration seeming to defend him from the assaults of the vulgar. A huge can of cider stood beside him, and a piece of Indian corn bread. He eyed me with the coolest unconcern as I dismounted, nor did he show the slightest sign of welcome.

“This is an inn, I believe, friend?” said I, saluting him.

“I take it to be a hotel,” said he, in a voice very like a yawn.

“And the landlord, where is he?”

“Where he ought to be,—at his own door, a smokin' his own rearin'.”

“Is there an ostler to be found? I want to refresh my horse, and get some breakfast for myself too.”

“There an't none.”

“No help?”

“Never was.”

“That's singular, I fancy.”

“No, it an't.”

“Why, what do travellers do with their cattle, then?”

“There bean't none.”

“No cattle?”

“No travellers.”



“No travellers! and this the high road between two considerable towns!”

“It an't.”

“Why, surely this is the road to Austin?”

“It an't.”

“Then this is not Brazos?”

“It be Upper Brazos.”

“There are two of them, then; and the other, I suppose, is on the Austin road?”

He nodded.

“What a piece of business!” sighed I; “and how far have I come astray?”

“A good bit.”

“A mile or two?”

“Twenty.”

“Will you be kind enough to be a little more

communicative, and just say where this road leads to; if I can join the Austin road without turning back again; and where?"

Had I propounded any one of these queries, it is just possible I might have had an answer; but, in my zeal, I outwitted myself. I drew my check for too large an amount, and consequently was refused payment altogether.

"Well," said I, after a long and vain wait for an answer, "what am I to do with my horse? There is a stable, I hope?"

"There an't," said he, with a grunt.

"So that I can't bait my beast?"

"No!"

"Bad enough! Can I have something to eat myself, —a cup of coffee—?"

A rude burst of laughter stopped me, and the flannel man actually shook with the drollery of his own thoughts. "It bean't Astor House, I reckon!" said he, wiping his eyes.

"Not very like it, certainly," said I, smiling.

"What o' that? Who says it ought to be like it?" said he, and his fishy eyes flared up, and his yellow cheeks grew orange with anger. "I an't very like old Hickory, I s'pose! and maybe I don't want to be! I'm a free Texan! I an't a nigger nor a blue-nose! I an't one of your old country slaves, that black King George's boots, and ask leave to pay his taxes! I an't."

"And I," said I, assuming an imitation of his tone, for experiment's sake, "I am no lazy, rocking-chair, whittling, tobacco-chewing Texan! but a traveller, able and willing to pay for his accommodation, and who will have it, too!"

"Will ye? Will ye, then?" cried he, springing up

with an agility I could not have believed possible; while, rushing into the hut, he reappeared with a long Kentucky rifle, and a bayonet a-top of it. “Ye han't long to seek yer man, if ye want a flash of powder! Come out into the bush and 'see it out,' I say!”

The tone of this challenge was too insulting not to call for at least the semblance of acceptance; and so, fastening my mare to a huge staple beside the door, I unslung my rifle, and cried, “Come along, my friend; I'm quite ready for you!”

Nothing daunted at my apparent willingness, he threw back the hammer of his lock, and said, “Hark ye, young un! You can't give me a cap or two? Mine are considerable rusty!”

The request was rather singular, but its oddity was its success; and so, opening a small case in the stock of my rifle, I gave him some.

“Ah, them 's real chaps,—the true 'tin jackets,' as we used to say at St. Louis!” cried he, his tongue seeming wonderfully loosened by the theme. “Now, lad, let's see if one of your bullets fit this bore; she's a heavy one, and carries twenty to the pound; and I 've nothing in her now but some loose chips of iron for the bears.”

Loose chips of iron for the bears! thought I; did ever mortal hear such a barbarian! “You don't fancy, friend, I came here to supply you with lead and powder, to be used upon myself, too! I supposed, when you asked me to come out into the bush, that you had everything a gentleman ought to have for such a purpose.”

“Well, I never seed the like of that!” exclaimed he, striking the ground with the butt end of his piece. “If we don't stand at four guns' length—”

“We 'll do no such thing, friend,” said I, shouldering my piece, and advancing towards him. “I never meant to offend *you*; nor have you any object in wounding, mayhap killing, *me*. Let me have something to eat; I 'll pay for it freely, and go my ways.”

“What on airth is it, eh?” said he, looking puzzled. “Why, that's one of Colt's rifles! you'd have picked me down at two hundred yards, sure as my name is Gabriel.”

“I know it,” said I, coolly; “and how much the better or the happier should I have been, had I done so?” I watched the fellow's pasty countenance as though I could read what passed in the muddy bottom of his mind.

“If it were not for something of this kind,” added I, sorrowfully, “I should not be here to-day. You know New Orleans?” He nodded. “Well, perhaps you know Ebenezer York?”

“The senator?”

“The same!” I made the pantomime of presenting a pistol, and then of a man falling. “Just so. His brothers have taken up the pursuit, and so I came down into this quarter till the smoke cleared off!”

“He was a plumper at a hundred and twenty yards. I seen him double up Gideon Millis, of Ohio.”

“Ah, I could recount many a thing of the kind to you,” said I, leading the way towards the hut, “but my throat is so dry, and I feel so confoundedly weary just now—”

“That's cider,” said he, pointing to the crock.

I did n't wait for a more formal invitation, but carried it to my lips, and so held it for full a couple of minutes.

“Ye *wor* drouthy,—that's a fact!” said he, peering into the low watermark of the vessel.

“You hav'n't got any more bread?” said I, appropriating his own.

“If I had n't, ye 'd not have got that so easy, lad!” said he, with a grin.

“And now for my mare; you see she's a good one —”

“Good as if she belonged to a richer master!” said he, with a peculiar leer of the eye. “I know her well! knowed her a foal! Ah, Charry, Miss! do you forget the way to take off your saddle with your teeth?” and he patted the creature with a nearer approach to kindness than I believed he was capable of.

I will not dwell upon the little arts I employed to conciliate my friend Gabriel, nor stop to say how I managed to procure some Indian corn-meal for my horse, and the addition of a very tough piece of dried beef to my own meagre breakfast. I conclude the reader will be as eager to escape from his society as I was myself; nor had I ever thrown him into such unprofitable acquaintanceship, were there other means of explaining how first I wandered from the right path, and by what persuasions I was influenced in not returning to it.

If Gabriel's history was not very entertaining, it was at least short, so far as its catastrophe went. He was a Kentucky “bounty man,” who had taken into his head to fight a duel with a companion with whom he was returning from New York. He killed his antagonist, buried him, and was wending his way homeward with the watch and other property of the deceased, to restore to his friends, when he was arrested at Little Rock, and conveyed to jail. He was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death, but made

his escape the night before the execution was to have taken place. His adventures from the Arkansas River till the time he found himself in Texas were exciting in a high degree, and, even with his own telling, not devoid of deep interest. Since his location in the One-star Republic, he had tried various things, but all had failed with him. His family, who followed him, died off by the dreadful intermittents of the bush, leaving him alone to doze through the remainder of existence between the half-consciousness of his fall and the stupid insensibility of debauch. There was but one theme could stir the dark embers of his nature; and when he had quitted *that*, the interest of life seemed to have passed away, and he relapsed into his dreamy indifference to both present and future.

How he contrived to eke out subsistence was difficult to conceive. To the tavern he had been almost the only customer, and in succession consumed the little stores his poor wife had managed to accumulate. He appeared to feel a kind of semi-consciousness that if “bears did not fall in his way” during the winter, it might go hard with him; and he pointed to four mounds of earth behind the log-hut, and said that “the biggest would soon be alongside of 'em.”

As the heat of midday was too great to proceed in, I learned from him thus much of his own story, and some particulars of the road to Bexar, whither I had now resolved on proceeding, since, according to his opinion, that afforded me a far better chance of coming up with the expedition than by following their steps to Austin.

“Had you come a few hours earlier to-day,” said he, “you could have joined company with a Friar who is travelling to Bexar; but you 'll easily overtake

him, as he travels with a little wagon and a sick woman. They are making a pilgrimage to the saints there for her health. They have two lazy mules and a half-breed driver that won't work miracles on the roads, whatever the Virgin may after! You'll soon come up with them, if Charry's like what she used to be."

This intelligence was far from displeasing to me. I longed for some companionship; and that of a Friar, if not very promising as to amusement, had at least the merit of safety,—no small charm in such a land as I then sojourned in. I learned besides that he was an Irishman who had come out as a missionary among the Choctaws, and that he was well versed in prairie life; that he spoke many of the Indian dialects, and knew the various trails of these pathless wilds like any trapper of them all.

Such a fellow-traveller would be indeed a prize; and as I saddled my mare to follow him, I felt lighter at heart than I had done for a long time previous. "And his name?" said I.

"It is half-Mexican by this. They call him Fra Miguel up at Bexar."

"Now then for Fra Miguel!" cried I, springing into my saddle; and with a frank "Good-bye," took the road to Bexar.

I rode along with a light heart, my way leading through a forest of tall beech and alder trees, whose stems were encircled by the twining tendrils of the "Liana," which oftentimes spanned the space overhead, and tempered the noonday sun by its delicious shade. Birds of gay plumage and strange note hopped from branch to branch, while hares and rabbits sat boldly on the grassy road, and scarcely cared to move at my approach. The crimson-winged

bustard, the swallow-tailed woodpecker, with his snowy breast, and that most beautiful of all, the lazuli finch, whose color would shame the blue waters of the Adriatic, chirped and fluttered on every side. The wild squirrel, too, swung by his tail, and jerked himself from bough to bough, in all the confidence of unmolested liberty; while even the deer, timid without danger, stood and gazed at me as I went, doubtless congratulating themselves that they were not born to be beasts of burden.

There was so much novelty to me in all around that the monotonous character of the scene never wearied; for, although as far as human companionship was concerned, nothing could be more utterly solitary and desolate, yet the abundance of animal life, the bright tints of plumage, and the strange concert of sound, afforded an unceasing interest.

Occasionally I came upon the charred fragments of firewood, with other signs indicative of a bivouac, showing where some hunting-party had halted; but these, with a chance wheel-track, were all the evidence that travellers had ever passed that way. The instincts of the human heart are, after all, linked to companionship, and although it was but a few hours since I had parted with “mine host” of Brazos, I began to conceive a most anxious desire for the society of a fellow-traveller. I had pushed Charcoal for some time, in the hope of overtaking the Friar; but not only without success, but even without coming upon any recent tracks that should show where the party passed. I could not have mistaken the road, since there was but one through the forest; and at last I became uneasy lest I should not reach some place of shelter for the night, and obtain refreshment for myself and my horse. From the time

that these thoughts crossed my mind, all relish for the scene and its strange associations departed. A scarlet jay might have perched upon my saddle-bow unmolested; a “whip-poor-will” might have chanted her note from my hat or my holsters unminded; the antlered stags did indeed graze me as they went, without my once remembering that I was the owner of one of “Colt's sharp bores,” so intent I had grown upon the topic of personal safety. What if I had gone astray? What if I fell in with the Choctaws, who often came within a few miles of Austin? What if Charcoal fell lame, or even tired? What if—But why enumerate all the suspicions that, when chased away on one side, invariably came back on the other? There was not an incident, from a sprained ankle to actual starvation, that I did not rehearse; and, like that respected authority who spent his days speculating what he should do “if he met a white bear,” I threw myself into so many critical situations and embarrassing conjectures that my head ached with overtaxed ingenuity to escape from them.

Æsop's fables have much to answer for. The attributing the gift of speech to animals, by way of characterizing their generic qualities, takes a wondrous hold upon the mind; and as for me, I held “imaginary conversations” with everything that flew or bounded past. From the green lizard that scaled the shining cork-trees, to the lazy toad that flopped heavily into the water, I had a word for all,—ay, and thought they answered me, too.

Some, I fancied, chirped pleasantly and merrily, as though to say, “Go it, Con, my hearty; Charry has stride and wind for many a mile yet!” Some, with a wild scream, would seem to utter a cry of surprise at the pace, as if saying, “Ruffle my feathers if Con 's not in a hurry!” An old owl, with a horseshoe wig,

looked shocked at my impetuosity, and shook his wise head in grave rebuke; while a fat asthmatic frog nearly choked with emotion as I hurled the small pebbles into his bath of duck-weed. How strange would life be, reduced to such companionship! thought I. Would one gradually sink down to the level of this animal existence, such as it appears now, or would one elevate the inferior animal to some equality of intelligence?

The solitude which a short time previous had suggested—I know not now many!—bright imaginings, presented now the one sad, unvarying reflection,—desolation; and it had almost become a doubtful point whether I should not at once turn my horse's head and make for Upper Brazos and its gruff host of the log-house, rather than brave a night “al fresco” in the forest. It was just at the moment that this question became mooted in my mind that I perceived the faint track of a wheel on the short grass of the pathway. I dismounted and examined it closely, and soon discovered its counterpart on the other side of the road; and with a little further search I could detect the footmarks of two horses, evidently unshod.

Inspired with fresh courage by these signs, I spurred Charry to a sharper stride, and for above two hours rode on, each turning of the road suggesting the hope of coming up with the Friar, who evidently journeyed at a brisker pace than I had anticipated. The sailor's adage says that “A stern chase is a long chase;” and so it is, whether it be on land or sea,—whether the pursuit be to overtake a flying Frenchman or Fortune!

The sun had sunk beneath the tops of the tall trees, and only streamed through, in chance lines of light, upon the road, when suddenly I found myself upon

the verge of an abrupt descent, at the bottom of which ran a narrow but rapid river. These great fissures, by which the mountain streams descend to join the larger rivers, are very common in Texas and throughout the region which borders on the Rocky Mountains, and form one of the greatest impediments to travelling in these tracts.

As I gazed upon the steep descent, to have scrambled down which, even on foot, would have been dangerous and difficult enough, I remembered that I had passed, about half an hour before, a spot where the road “forked” off into two separate directions, and at once resumed my march to this place, where I had the satisfaction of perceiving that the grass was yet rising under the recent passage of a wagon. A short and sharp canter down a gentle slope brought me once more in sight of the stream and of what was far nearer to my hopes, the long looked-for party with the Friar.

The scene I now beheld was sufficiently striking for a picture. About fifty feet beneath where I stood, and on the bank of a boiling, foaming torrent, was a wagon, drawn by two large horses; a covering of canvas formed an awning overhead, and curtains of the same material closed the sides. A large, powerful-looking Mexican stood beating the stream with a great pole, while the Friar, with his robes tucked up so as to display a pair of enormous naked legs, assisted in this singular act of flagellation, from time to time addressing a hasty prayer to a small image which I perceived he had hung up against the canvas covering. The noise of the rushing water and the crashing sound of the sticks prevented my hearing the voices, which were most volubly exerted all the while, and which, by accustoming myself to the din, I at last perceived were used in exhorting the horses

to courage. The animals, however, gave no token of returning confidence, nor showed the slightest inclination to advance. On the contrary, whenever led forward a pace or two, they invariably sprang back with a bound that threatened to smash their tackle or upset the wagon; nor was it without much caressing and encouragement that they would stand quiet again. Meanwhile, the Friar's exertions were redoubled at every moment, and both his prayers and his thrashings became more animated. Indeed, it was curious to watch with what agility his bulky figure alternated from the work of beating the water to gesticulating before “the Virgin.” Now, as I looked, a small corner of the canvas curtain was moved aside, and a hand appeared, which, even without the large straw fan it carried, might have been pronounced a female one. This, however, was speedily withdrawn on some observation from the Friar, and the curtain was closed rigidly as before.

All my conjectures as to this singular proceeding being in vain, I resolved to join the party, towards whom I perceived the road led by a slightly circuitous descent.

Cautiously wending my way down this slope, which grew steeper as I advanced, I had scarcely reached the river side when I was perceived by the party. Both the Friar and his follower ceased their performance on the instant, and cast their eyes upwards to the road with a glance that showed they were on “the look-out” for others. They even changed their position, to have a better view of the path, and seemed as if unable to persuade themselves that I could be alone. To my salutation, which I made by courteously removing my hat and bowing low, they offered no return, and looked—as I really believe they were—far too much surprised at my

sudden appearance to afford me any signs of welcome. As I came nearer, I could see that the Friar made the circuit of the wagon, and, as if casually, examined the curtains; and then, satisfied “that all was right,” took his station by the head of his beasts, and waited for my approach.

“Good day, Señhor Caballero,” said the Friar, in Spanish, while the Mexican looked at the lock of his long-barrelled rifle, and retired a couple of paces, with a gesture of guarded caution.

“Good evening, rather, Father,” said I, in English. “I have ridden hard to come up with you, for the last twenty miles.”

“From the States?” said the Friar, approaching me, but with no peculiar evidences of pleasure at hearing his native language.

“From your own country, Fra Miguel,” said I, boldly—“an Irishman.”

“And how are you travelling here?” said he, still preserving his previous air of caution and reserve.

“A mistake of the road!” said I, confidently; for already I had invented my last biographical sketch. “I was on the way to Austin, whither I had despatched my servants and baggage, when accidentally taking the turn to Upper Brazos instead of the lower one, I found myself some twenty miles off my track before I knew of it. I should have turned back when I discovered my error, but that I heard that a Friar, a countryman, too, had just set out towards Bexar. This intelligence at once determined me to continue my way, which I rejoice to find has been so far successful.”

To judge from the “Padre's” face, the pleasure did not appear reciprocal. He looked at me and the wagon alternately, and then he cast his eyes towards

the Mexican, who, understanding nothing of English, was evidently holding himself ready for any measures of a hostile character.

“Going to Austin,” at last said the Friar. “You are a merchant, then?”

“No,” said I, smiling superciliously; “I am a mere traveller for pleasure, my object being to make a tour of the prairies, and by some of the Mexican cities, before my return to Europe.”

“Heaven guide and protect you,” said he, fervently, with a wave of his hand like leave-taking. “This is not a land to wander in after nightfall. You are well mounted, and a good rider; push on, then, my son, and you 'll reach Bexar before the moon sets.”

“If that be your road, Father,” said I, “as speed is no object with me, I 'd rather join company with you than proceed alone.”

“Ahem!” said he, looking confused, “I am going to Bexar, it is true, Señhor; but my journey is of the slowest: the wagon is heavy, and a sick companion whom it contains cannot travel fast. Go, then, 'con Dios!' and we may meet again at our journey's end.”

“My mare has got quite enough of it,” said I, my desire to remain with him being trebled by his exertions to get rid of me. “When I overtook you, I was determining to dismount and spare my beast; so that *your* pace will not in the least inconvenience me.”

The Padre, instead of replying to me, addressed some words to the Mexican in Spanish, which, whatever they were, the other only answered by a sharp slap of his palm on the stock of his rifle, and a very significant glance at his girdle, where a large bowie-knife glittered in all the freedom of its

unsheathed splendor. As if not noticing this pantomime, I drew forth my “Harper's Ferry pistol” from the holster, and examined the priming,—a little bit of display I had the satisfaction to perceive was not thrown away on either the Friar or the layman. At a word from the former, however, the latter began once again his operations with the pole, the Friar resuming his place beside the cattle as if totally forgetful of my presence there.

“May I ask the object of this proceeding, Father?” said I, “which, unless it be a 'devotional exercise,' is perfectly unaccountable to me.”

The Padre looked at me without speaking; but the sly drollery of his eye showed that he would have had no objection to bandy a jest with me, were the time and place more fitting. “I perceive,” said he, at length, “that you have not journeyed in this land, or you would have known that at this season the streams abound with caymans and alligators, and that when the cattle have been once attacked by them, they have no courage to cross a river after. Their instinct, however, teaches them that beating the waters insures safety, and many a Mexican horse will not go knee-deep without this ceremony being performed.”

“I see that your cattle are unusually tired in the present case,” said I, “for you have been nigh half an hour here, to my own knowledge.”

“Look at that black marc's fore-leg, and you ll see why,” said he, pointing to a deep gash, which laid bare the white tendons for some inches in length, while a deep pool of blood flowed around the animal's hoof.

A cry from the Mexican here broke in upon our colloquy, as, throwing down his pole, he seized his

rifle, and dropped upon one knee in the attitude of defence.

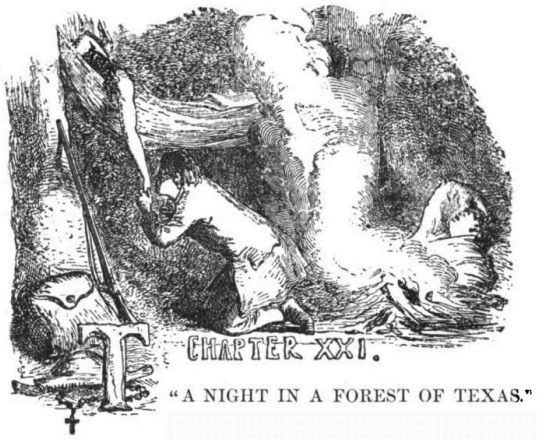
“What is it, Sancho?” cried the Friar.

A few words of guttural followed, and the Padre said it was a large alligator that had just carried off a chiguire—a wild pig—under the water with him. This stream is a tributary of the Colloredo, along the banks of which these creatures' eggs are found in thousands!

My blood ran cold at the horrid thought of being attacked by such animals, and I readily volunteered my assistance at the single-stick exercise of my companion.

The Friar accepted my offer without much graciousness, but rather as that of an unwelcome guest who could not be easily got rid of.

END OF VOL. I.



CHAPTER XXI. A NIGHT IN THE FOREST OF TEXAS

The friar ceased his efforts, and, calling the Mexican to one side, whispered something in a low, cautious manner. The other seemed to demur and hesitate, but, after a brief space, appeared to yield; when, replacing the poles beside the wagon, he turned the horses' heads towards the road by which they had just come.

“We are about to try a ford some miles farther up the stream,” said the Padre, “and so we commend you to the Virgin, and wish you a prosperous journey.”

“All roads are alike to me, holy Father,” said I, with a coolness that cost me something to assume.

“Then take the shortest, and you'll be soonest at your journey's end,” said he, gruffly.

“Who can say that?” rejoined I; “it's no difficult matter to lose one's way in a dense forest, where the tracks are unknown.”

“There is but one path, and it cannot be mistaken,” said he, in the same tone.

“It has one great disadvantage, Father,” said I.

“What is that?”

“There is no companionship on it; and, to say truth, I have too much of the Irishman in me to leave good company for the pleasure of travelling all alone.”

“Methinks you have very little of the Irishman about you, in another respect,” said he, with a sneer of no doubtful meaning.

“How so?” said I, eagerly.

“In volunteering your society when it is not sought for, young gentleman,” said he, with a look of steadfast effrontery,—“at least, I can say, such were not the habits of the land as I remember it some forty years ago.”

“Ah, holy Father, it has grown out of many a barbarous custom since your time: the people have given up drinking and faction-fighting, and you may travel fifty miles a day for a week together and never meet with a friar.”

“Peace be with you!” said he, waving his hand, but with a gesture it was easy to see boded more passion than patience.

I hesitated for a second what to do; and at last, feeling that another word might perhaps endanger the victory I had won, I dashed spurs into the mare's flanks, and, with the shout the ostler had recommended, rushed her at the stream. Over she went, “like a bird,” lighting on the opposite bank

with her hind-legs “well up,” and the next moment plunged into the forest.

Scarcely, however, had I proceeded fifty paces than I drew up. The dense wood effectually shut out the river from my view, and even masked the sounds of the rushing water. A suspicion dwelt on my mind that the Friar was *not* going back, and that he had merely concerted this plan with the Mexican the easier to disembarrass himself of my company. The seeming pertinacity of *his* purpose suggested an equal obstinacy of resistance on *my* part. Some will doubtless say that it argued very little pride and a very weak self-esteem in Con Cregan to continue to impose his society where it had been so peremptorily declined; and so had it been, doubtless, had the scene been a great city ruled and regulated by its thousand-and-one conventionalities. But the prairies are separated by something longer than mere miles from the land of kid-gloves and visiting tickets. Ceremonial in such latitudes would be as unsuitable as a court suit.

Besides, I argued thus: “A very underdone slice of tough venison, with a draught of spring water, constitute in these regions a very appetizing meal; and, for the same reason, a very morose friar and a still sulkier servant may be accepted as very tolerable travelling companions. Enjoy better when it can be had, Con, but prefer even the humblest fare to a famine,”—a rule more applicable to mental food than to material.

In a little self-colloquy after this kind, I crept stealthily back, leading Charry by the bridle, and halting at intervals to listen. What a triumph to my skill in divination as I heard the Friar's loud voice overtopping the gushing flood, while he exhorted his beasts in the most energetic fashion!

I advanced cautiously till I gained a little clump of brushwood, from which I could see the river and the group perfectly. The Friar had now mounted the wagon, and held the reins; the Mexican was, however, standing in the stream and leading the cattle, who appeared to have regained somewhat more of their courage, and were slowly proceeding, sniffing timidly as they went, and pawing the water fretfully.

The Mexican advanced boldly, till the water reached nigh the top of his great *botas vaqueras*, immense boots of buffalo hide, which, it is said, resist the bite of either cayman or serpent; and so far the horses went, doubtless from the encouragement. As soon, however, as the deepening flood warned the man to mount the wagon, they halted abruptly, and stood pawing and splashing the stream, while their ears flattened back, and their drawn-in tails evinced the terror that was on them.

Objurgations, entreaties, prayers, curses, menaces, were all in vain,—a step farther they would not budge. All that the Spanish contained of guttural was hurled at them without success; the cow-hide whip might welt their flanks and leave great ridges at every stroke, the huge pole of the Mexican might belabor them, with a running accompaniment of kicks, but to no purpose. They cared as little for the cow-hide as the “calendar;” neither saints nor thrashings could persuade them to move on. Saint Anthony and Saint Ursula, Saint Forimund of Cordova, with various others, were invoked, to no end. Saint Clement of Capua, to whom all poisonous reptiles, from boas to whip-snakes, owe allegiance, was called upon to aid the travellers; but the quadrupeds took no heed of these entreaties, but showed a most Protestant contempt for the whole

litany.

There was a pause; wearied with flogging, and tired out with vain exhortations, both Friar and Mexican, ceased, and as if in compensation to their long pent-up feelings, vented their anger in a very guttural round of maledictions upon the whole animal creation, and in particular on that part of it who would not be eaten by alligators without signs of resistance and opposition. Whether this new turn of events had any influence, or that the matter was more owing to “natural causes,” I cannot say; but, just then, the horse which had been already bitten, reared straight up, and with a loud snort plunged forward, carrying with him the other. By his plunge he had reached a deep part of the stream, where the water came half way up his body. Another spring smashed one of the traces, and left him free to kick violently behind him,—a privilege he certainly hastened to avail himself of. His fellow, whether from sympathy or not, imitated the performance; and there they were, lashing and plunging with all their might, while the wagon, against which the strong current beat in all its force, threatened at every instant to capsize. The Friar struggled manfully, as did his follower; but, unfortunately, one of the reins gave way, and by the violent tugging at the remaining one, the animals were turned out of their course, and dragged round to the very middle of the stream. About twenty yards lower down, the river fell by a kind of cascade some ten or twelve feet, and towards this spot now the infuriated horses seemed rushing. Had it been practicable, a strong man might, by throwing himself into the water, have caught the horses' heads and held them back; but the stream swarmed with poisonous reptiles, which made such an effort almost inevitable death.

It was now a scene of terrible and most exciting interest.

The maddened horses, alternately rising and sinking, writhed and twisted in agonies of pain. The men's voices mingled with the gushing torrent and the splashing water, which rose higher and higher at each plunge, while a shrill shriek from within the wagon topped all, and in its cadence seemed to speak a heart torn with terror. As I looked, the sun had set; and as speedily as though a curtain had fallen, the soft light of evening gave way to a gray darkness. I rode down to the bank, and as I reached it, one of the horses, after a terrific struggle to get free, plunged head foremost down and disappeared. The other, unable by himself alone to resist the weight of the wagon, which already was floating in the stream, swung round with the torrent, and was now dragging along toward the cataract. The dusky indistinctness even added to the terror of the picture, as the white water splashed up on every side, and at times seemed actually to cover the whole party in its scattering foam. The Friar, now leaning back, tore open one of the curtains, and at the same instant I saw a female arm stretch out and clasp him, while a shrill cry burst forth that thrilled to my very heart.

They were already within a few yards of the cataract; a moment or two more, they must be over it and lost! I spurred Charry forward, and down we plunged into the water, without the slightest thought of what was to follow. Half swimming, half bounding, I reached the wagon, which now, broadside on the falls, tottered with every stroke of the fast rolling river. The Mexican was standing on the pole, and endeavoring to hold back the horse; while the Friar, ripping the canvas with his knife, was endeavoring to extricate the female figure, who,

sunk on her knees, seemed utterly incapable of any effort for her own safety.

Whether maddened by the bite of some monster beneath the water, or having lost his footing, I know not, but the horse went over the falls, while the Mexican, vainly endeavoring to hold him, was carried down with him; the wagon, reeling with the shock, heeled over to the side, and was fast sinking, when I caught hold of the outstretched hand of the woman and drew her towards me. “Leap, spring towards him!” cried the Friar; and she obeyed the words, and, with a bound, seated herself behind me.

Breasting the water bravely, Charry bounded on, and in less than a minute reached the bank, which the Friar, by the aid of a leaping-pole, had gained before us.

Having placed the half-lifeless girl on the sward, I hastened to see after the poor Mexican. Alas! of him and the horse we never saw trace afterwards. We called aloud, we shouted, and even continued along the stream for a considerable space; but to no purpose, the poor fellow had evidently perished,—perhaps by a death too horrible to think of. The Friar wrung his hands in agony, and mingled his thanksgiving for his own safety with lamentations for his lost companion; and so intent was he on these themes that he never recognized me, nor, indeed, seemed conscious of my presence. At last, as we turned our steps towards where the girl lay, he said, “Is it possible that you are the caballero we parted with before sunset?”

“Yes,” said I, “the same. You were loth to accept of my company, but you see there is a fate in it, after all; you cannot get rid of me so readily.”

“Nor shall we try, Señhor,” said the girl,

passionately, but with a foreign accent in her words, as she took my hands and pressed them to her lips.

The Friar said something hastily in Spanish, which seemed a rebuke, for she drew back at once, and buried her face in her mantle.

“Donna Maria is my niece, Señhor, and has only just left the convent of the 'Sacred Heart.' She knows nothing of the world, nor what beseems her as a young maiden.”

This the Friar spoke harshly, and with a manner that to me sounded far more in need of an apology than did the young girl's grateful emotion.

What was to be done became now the question. We were at least thirty miles from Bexar, and not a village, nor even a log-hut, between us and that city. To go back was impossible; so that, like practical people, we at once addressed ourselves to the available alternative.

“Picket your beast, and let us light a fire,” said Fra Miguel, with the air of a man who would not waste life in vain regrets. “Thank Providence, we have both grass and water; and although the one always brings snakes, and the other alligators, it is better than to bivouac on the Red River, with iron ore in the stream, and hard flints to sleep on.”

Fastening my beast to a tree, I unstrapped my saddlebags and removed my saddle; disposing which most artistically in the fashion of an arm-chair for Donna Maria at the foot of a stupendous beech, I set about the preparation of a fire. The Friar, however, had almost anticipated me, and, with both arms loaded with dead wood, sat himself down to construct a species of hearth, placing a little circle of stones around in such a way as to give a draught to the blaze.

"We must fast to-night, Senhor," said he; "but it will count to us hereafter. Fan the fire with your hat, it will soon blaze briskly."

"If it were not for that young lady," said I, "whose sufferings are far greater than ours—"

"Speak not of her, Señhor; Donna Maria de los Dolores was called after our Mother of Sorrows, and she may as well begin her apprenticeship to grief. She is the only child of my brother, who had sent her to be educated at New Orleans, and is now returning home to see her father, before she takes the veil of her novitiate."

A very low sigh—so low as only to be audible to myself—came from beneath the beech-tree; and I threw a handful of dry chips upon the fire, hoping to catch a glimpse of the features of my fair fellow-traveller. Fra Miguel, however, balked my stratagem by topping the fire with a stout log, as he said, "You are too spendthrift, Señhor; we shall need to husband our resources, or we 'll not have enough for the night long."

"Would you not like to come nearer to the blaze, Senhora?" said I, respectfully.

"Thanks, sir, but perhaps—"

"Speak out, child," broke in the Father, "speak out, and say that you are counting your rosary, and would not wish to be disturbed. And you, Senhor, if I err not, in your eagerness to aid us have forgotten to water your gallant beast: don't lead him to the stream, that would be unsafe; take my sombrero: it has often served a like purpose before now. Twice full is enough for any horse in these countries." I would have declined this offer, but I felt that submission in everything would be my safest passport to his good opinion; and so, armed with the

“Friar's beaver,” I made my way to the stream.

Whatever his eulogies upon the pitcher-like qualities of his head-piece, to me they seemed most undeserved; for scarcely had I filled it, than the water ran through like a sieve. The oftener, too, was the process repeated the less chance did there appear of success; for, instead of retaining the fluid at all, the material became so saturated that it threatened to tear in pieces every time it was filled, and ere I could lift it was totally empty. Half angry with the Friar, and still more annoyed at my own ineptitude, I gave up the effort, and returned to where I had left him, confessing my failure as I came forward.

“Steep your 'kerchief in the stream, then, and wash the beast's mouth,” said he, upon his knees, where, with a great string of beads, he was engaged with his devotions.

I retired, abashed at my intrusion, and proceeded to do as I was directed.

“What if all these cares for my horse, and all these devotional exercises, were but stratagems to get rid of my company for a season?” thought I, as I perceived that scarcely had I left the spot, than the Friar arose from his knees, and seemed to busy himself about something in the trees. Full of this impression, I made a little circuit of the place; and what was my surprise to observe that he had converted his upper robe of coarse blanket-cloth into a kind of hammock for Donna Maria, in which, fastened at either end to the bough of a tree, she was now swinging to and fro, with apparently all the pleasure of a happy child.

“Don't you like it, Uncle, after all?” said she laughing. “It's exactly what one has read of in Juan Cordova's stories, to be bivouacking in a great forest,

with a great fire, to keep away the jaguars."

"Hush! and go to sleep, child. I neither like it for thee nor myself. There are more dangerous things than jaguars in these woods."

"Ah, you mean the bears, Uncle?"

"I do not," growled he, sulkily.

"As for snakes, one gets used to them; besides, they go into the tall grass."

"Ay, ay, snakes in the grass, just so!" muttered the Friar; "but this youth will be back presently, and let him not hear you talk such silly nonsense. Good night, good night."

"Good night," sighed she, "but I cannot sleep; I love so to see the fireflies dancing through the leaves, and to hear that rushing river."

"Hush! he's coming," said the Friar; and all was still.

When I came up, "the Friar" was again sunk in holy meditation, so that, disposing myself beside the fire, with my rifle at one side, and my pistols at the other, I lay down to sleep. Although I closed my eyes and lay still, I did not sleep. My thoughts were full of Donna Maria, of whom I weaved a hundred conjectures. It was evident she was young; her voice was soft and musical too, and had that pleasant bell-like cadence so indicative of a light heart and a happy nature. Why was she called the "Los Dolores"? I asked myself again and again what had she in her joyousness to do with grief and care; and why should she enter a convent and become a nun? These were questions there was no solving, and apparently, if I might judge from the cadence of her now deep sigh, no less puzzling to herself than to me. The more my interest became excited for her, the stronger grew my dislike to the Friar. That he was a surly old

tyrant, I perfectly satisfied myself. What a pity that I could not rescue her from such cruelty as easily as I saved her from the cataract!

Would that I could even see her! There was something so tormenting in the mystery of her concealment, and so, I deemed, must she herself feel it. We should be so happy together, journeying along day by day through the forest! What tales would I not tell her of my wanderings, and how I should enjoy the innocence of her surprise at my travelled wonders! And all the strange objects of these wild woods,—how they would interest and amuse, were there "two" to wonder at and admire them! How I wished she might be pretty; what a disappointment if she were not; what a total rout to all my imaginings if she were to have red hair,—how terrible if she should squint! These thoughts at last became too tantalizing for endurance, and so I tried to fall asleep and forget them; but in vain, they had got too firm a hold of me, and I could not shake them off.

It was now about midnight, the fire waxed low, and "the Friar" was sound asleep. What connection was there between these considerations and her of whom I was thinking? Who knows? I arose and sat up, listening with eager ear to the low long breathings of the Friar, who, with his round bullet-head pillowed on a pine-log, slept soundly; the gentle hum of the leaves, scarcely moved by the night wind, and the distant sound of the falling water, were lullabies to his slumber. It was a gorgeous night of stars; the sky was studded with bright orbs in all the brilliant lustre of a southern latitude. The fireflies, too, danced and glittered on every side, leaving traces of the phosphoric light on the leaves as they passed. The air was warm and balmy with "the rich odor of the cedar and the acacia,"—just such a night

as one would like to pass in “converse sweet” with some dear friend, mingling past memories with shadowy dreams, and straying along from bygones to futurity.

I crept over stealthily to where the Friar lay: a lively fear prevailed with me that he might be feigning sleep, and so I watched him long and narrowly. No, it was an honest slumber; the deep guttural of his mellow throat was beyond counterfeiting. I threw a log upon the fire carelessly and with noise, to see if it would awake him; but he only muttered a word or two that sounded like Latin, and slept on. I now strained my eyes towards the hammock, of which, under the shadow of a great sycamore-tree, I could barely detect the outline through the leaves.

Should I be able to discern her features, were I to creep over? What a difficult question, and how impossible to decide by mere reasoning upon it! What if I were to try? It was a pure piece of curiosity,—curiosity of the most harmless kind. I had been, doubtless, just as eager to scan the Friar's lineaments, if he had taken the same pains to conceal them from me. It was absurd, besides, to travel with a person and not see their face. Intercourse was a poor thing without that reciprocity which looks convey. I 'll have a peep, at all events, said I, summing up to myself all my arguments; and with this resolve I moved cautiously along, and, making a wide circuit, came round to the foot of the sycamore, at the side most remote from the Friar.

There was the hammock, almost within reach of my hand! It seemed to swing to and fro. I cannot say if this were mere deception; and so I crept nearer, just to satisfy my doubts. At last I reached the side, and peeped in. All I could see was the outline of a

figure wrapped in a mantle, and a mass of soft silky hair, which fell over and shaded the face. It was some time before my eyes grew accustomed to the deep shadow of the spot; but by degrees I could perceive the profile of a young and beautiful face resting upon one arm, the other hung negligently at one side, and the hand drooped over the edge of the hammock. The attitude was the very perfection of graceful ease, and such as a sculptor might have modelled. What a study, too, that hand, whose dimpled loveliness the starlight speckled! How could I help touching it with my lips?—the first time, with all the hallowed reverence a worshipper would vouchsafe to some holy relic; the second, with a more fervent devotion; the third, I ventured to take the hand in mine and slightly press it. Did I dream? Could the ecstasy be no more than fancy?—I thought the pressure was returned.

She turned gently around, and in a voice of surpassing softness whispered, “Tell me your name, Senhor Caballero?” I whispered low, “Con Cregan.”

“Yes, but what do your sisters call you?”

“I have none, Señhora.”

“Your brothers, then?”

“I never had a brother.”

“How strange! nor I either. Then how shall I call you?”

“Call me your brother,” said I, trying to repossess myself of the hand she had gently withdrawn from my grasp.

“And will you call me Maria?” said she, gayly.

“If you permit it, Maria. But how will Fra Miguel think of it?”

“Ah! I forgot that. But what can he say? You saved

my life. I should have been carried away, like poor Sancho, but for you. Tell me how you chanced to be here, and where you are going, and whence you come, and all about you. Sit down there, on that stone. Nay, you need n't hold my hand while talking."

"Yes, but I 'm afraid to be alone here in the dark, Maria," said I.

"What a silly creature it is! Now begin."

"I 'd rather talk of the future, Maria, dearest. I 'd rather we should speak of all the happy days we may spend together."

"But how so? Once at Bexar, I 'm to wait at the monastery till my father sends his mules and people to fetch me home; meanwhile, you will have wandered away Heaven knows where."

"And where do you call home, Maria?"

"Far away, beyond the Rio Grande, in the gold country, near Aguaverde."

"And why should I not go thither? I am free to turn my steps whither I will. Perhaps your father would not despise the services of one who has some smattering of knowledge upon many a theme."

"But a Caballero—a real Señhor—turn miner! They are all miners there."

"No matter; Fortune might favor me, and make me rich, and then,—and then,—who is to tell what changes might follow? The Caballero might bid adieu to the 'Placer,' and the fair 'Donna Maria' wave a good-bye to the nunnery—and, by the way, that is a very cruel destiny they intend for you."

"Who knows? I was very happy in the 'Sacred Heart.'"

"Possibly, Maria; but you were a child, and would

have been happy anywhere. But think of the future; think of the time when you will be loved, and will love in turn; think of that bright world of which the convent-window does not admit one passing glance. Think of the glorious freedom to enjoy whatever is beautiful in Nature, and to feel sympathies with all that is great and good; and reflect upon the sad monotony of the cloister,—its cold and cheerless existence, uncared for, almost unfelt."

"And when the Superior is cross!" cried she, holding up her hands.

"And she is always cross, Maria. That austere habit repels every generous emotion, as it defies every expansion of the heart. No, no; you must not be a nun."

"Well, I will not," said she.

"You promise me this, Maria?"

"Yes, upon one condition,—that you will come to the 'Placer,' and tell my father all that you have told to me. He is so good and so kind, he 'll never force me."

"But will he receive me? Will your father permit me so to speak?"

"You saved my life, Señhor," said she, half-proudly; "and little as you reckon such a service, it is one upon which Don Estavan Olares will set some store."

"Ah!" said I, sighing, "how little merit had I in the feat! It did not even cause me the slightest injury."

"I am just as gratified as though you had been eaten by an alligator, Señhor," said she, laughing with a sly malice that made me half suspect that some, at least, of her innocence was assumed.

From this we wandered on to speak of the journey

for the morrow, which I proposed she should make upon “Charry,” while Fra Miguel and myself accompanied her on foot. It was also agreed between us that we should preserve the most rigid reserve and distance of manner in the Friar's presence, rarely noticing or speaking with each other. One only difficulty existed, which was by what pretence I should direct my steps to Aguaverde. But here again Donna Maria's ready wit suggested the expedient, as she said, laughing, “Are you not making a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady 'des los Dolores '?”

“So I am,” said I. “Shame on me that I should have forgotten it till now!”

“Did you never tell me,” said she, archly, “that you intended to enter 'an order'?”

“Certainly,” said I, joining the merry humor; “and so will I, on the very same day you take the veil.”

“And now, holy man,” said she, with difficulty repressing a fresh burst of laughter, “let us say, 'Good night.' Fra Miguel will awake at daybreak, and I see that is already near.”

“Good night, sweet sister,” said I, once again pressing her fingers to my lips, and scarcely knowing when to relinquish them. A heavy sigh from the Friar, however, admonished me to hasten away; and I crept to my place, and lay down beside the now almost extinguished embers of our fire.

“What a good thought was that of the pilgrimage,” said I, as I drew my cloak around me; and I remembered that “Chico's” beads and his “book of offices” were still among my effects in the saddle-bags, and would greatly favor my assumption of the pious character. I then tried to recall some of my forgotten Latin. From this I reverted to thoughts of Donna Maria herself, and half wondered at the rapid

strides we had accomplished in each other's confidence. At last I fell asleep, to dream of every incongruity and încoherency that ever haunted a diseased brain. Nunneries, with a crocodile for the Abbess, gave way to scenes in the Placers, where Nuns were gold-washing, and Friars riding down cataracts on caymans. From such pleasant realities a rough shake of Fra Miguel aroused me, as he cried, “When a man laughs so heartily in his sleep, he may chance to keep all the grave thoughts for his waking. Rise up, Señhor; the day is breaking. Let us profit by the cool hours to make our journey.”

As day was breaking we set out for Bexar, in the manner I had suggested; Donna Maria riding, the Friar and myself, one either side of her, on foot. Resolved upon winning, so far as might be, Fra Miguel's confidence, I addressed my conversation almost exclusively to him, rarely speaking a word to my fair companion, and then only upon the commonest questions of the way.

As none of us had eaten since the day previous, nor was there any baiting-place till we reached Bexar, it was necessary to make the best of our way thither with all speed. The Fra knew the road perfectly, and by his skill in detecting the marks on trees, the position of certain rocks, and the course of the streams, gave me some insight into the acute qualities necessary for a prairie traveller. These themes, too, furnished the greater portion of our conversation, which, I am free to own, offered many a long interval of dreary silence. The Fra's thoughts dwelt gloomily on his late disaster, while Donna Maria and myself were condemned to the occasional exchange of a chance remark or some question about the road.

Once or twice Fra Miguel questioned me on the

subject of my own history; but ere I had proceeded any length in detailing my veracious narrative, an accidental word or remark would show that he was inattentive to what I was speaking, and only occupied by his own immediate reflections.

Why, then, trouble myself with biographical inventions which failed to excite any interest? And so I relapsed into a silence plodding and moody as his own.

At length the path became too narrow for us all to go abreast, and as my duties were to guide Charry by the bridle, I became the companion of Maria by force of circumstances; still, Fra Miguel kept up close behind, and however abstracted at other times, he now showed himself “wide awake” on the subject of our intercourse. Denied the pleasure of talking to each other, we could at least exchange glances; and this was a privilege no surveillance, however rigid, could deny us. These are small and insignificant details, which were of little moment at the time, and led to even less for the future; but I record them as the first stirrings of love in a heart which might have been deemed too intent upon its own cares to admit of others. And here let me observe that the taste for stratagem—the little wiles and snares inspired by a first passion—are among the strongest incentives to its origin. It was the secrecy of our meeting at night, the little difficulties of our intercourse by day, the peril of discovery as we spoke together, the danger of detection as we exchanged glances, that, by giving us a common object, suggested a common feeling. Both engaged in the same warfare, how could we avoid sympathizing with each other? Then, there was that little “dash of romance” about our first meeting, so auxiliary to the tender passion; and, again, we were wandering, side by side, in a silent forest, with only

one other near us. Would we could have disposed of him too! I shame to say it, but, in honest truth. I often wished that he had followed the Mexican!

We halted during the great heat of the day, and the Fra once more “rigging” out his capote for a hammock, Donna Maria lay down for the siesta, while I cut grass for Charry, and rubbed her down. Long fasting had made us all more disposed to silence, so that a few monosyllables were all that passed. When the time came to resume the road, I am proud to say that the Fra bore his privations with less equanimity than did we. His sighs grew heavy and frequent; any accidental interruption on the road evoked unmistakable signs of irritation; he even expostulated with certain saints, whose leaden images decorated his sombrero, as to the precise reasons for which his present sufferings were incurred; and altogether, as hunger pinched, showed a more rebellious spirit than his holy discourses of the preceding evening could have led me to suspect.

One time, he charged his calamities to the score of having eaten turtle, which was only half fish, on a Friday; at another, it was upon that unlucky day the journey had been begun; then he remembered that the Mexican was only a half-breed, who possibly, if baptized at all, was only an irregular kind of a Christian, admitted into the fold by some stray missionary, more trapper than priest. Then he bethought him that his patron, Saint Michel of Pavia, was of an uncertain humor, and often tormented his votaries, by way of trying their fidelity. These various doubts assumed the form of open grumblings, which certainly inspired very different sentiments in Donna Maria and myself than edification. As evening closed in, and darkness favored us, these ghostly lamentations afforded us

many a low, quiet laugh. A soft pressure of the hand, which now, by mere accident, of course, she had let fall near me, would sometimes show how we concurred in our sentiments, till at length as the thicker gloom of night fell around, such was our unanimity that her hand remained clasped in my own, without any further attempt to remove it.

If the Fra's gratitude burst forth eloquently as we came in sight of some spangled lights glittering through the gloom, our sensations were far more akin to disappointment.

“Bexar at last, praised be Saint Michel!” exclaimed he. “It has been a long and dreary journey.” Here I pressed Donna Maria's hand, and she returned the pressure.

“Two days of disaster and sore suffering!” Another squeeze of the Señhora's fingers.

“A time I shall never forget,” muttered he.

“Nor I,” whispered I to my fair companion.

“A season of trouble and distress!” quoth the Fra.

“Of love and happiness!” muttered I.

“And now, my worthy young friend,” said he, addressing me, “as we are so soon to part,—for yonder is Bexar,—how shall we best show our gratitude? Would you like a 'novena' to 'Our Lady of Tears,' whose altar is here? or shall we vow a candle to Saint Nicomedè of Terapia?”

“Thanks, holy Father, there is no need for either; mine was a slight service, more than requited by the pleasure of travelling in your company and that of this pious maiden. I have learned many a goodly lesson by the way, and will think over them as I wander on my future pilgrimage.”

“And whither may that tend, Señhor?”

“To the shrine of 'Our Lady of Sorrows' at Aguaverde, by the help of Saint Francis.”

“Aguaverde!” exclaimed Fra Miguel, with a voice that bespoke anything rather than pleasure; “it is a long and a dangerous journey, young man!”

“The greater the merit, Father!”

“Trackless wastes and deep rivers, hostile Indians and even more cruel half-breeds. These are some of the perils,” said he, in a voice of warning; but a gentle pressure from the Señhora's fingers was more than an answer to such terrors.

“You can make your penance here, young man, at the Convent of the Missions. There are holy men who will give you all good counsel; and I will myself speak to them for you.”

I was about to decline this polite intervention, when a quiet gesture from Donna Maria arrested my words, and made me accept the offer, with thanks.

Thus chatting, we reached the suburbs of Bexar, and soon entered the main street of that town. And here let me record a strange feature of the life of this land, which, although one that I soon became accustomed to, had a most singular aspect to my eyes on first acquaintance. It was a hot and sultry night of June, the air as dry and parched as of a summer day in our English climate; and we found that the whole population had their beds disposed along the streets, and were sleeping for the benefit of the cool night air,—al fresco. There was no moon, nor any lamplight, but by the glimmering stars we could see this strange encampment, which barely left a passage in the middle for the mule-carts.



Some of the groups were irresistibly droll: here was an old lady, with a yellow-and-red handkerchief round her head, snoring away, while a negro wench waved a plaintan-bough to and fro to keep off the mosquitoes, which thronged the spot from the inducement of a little glimmering lamp to the Virgin over the bed. There was a thin, lantern-jawed old fellow sipping his chocolate before he resigned himself to sleep. Now and then there would be a faint scream and a muttered apology as some one, feeling his way to his nest, had fallen over the couch of a sleeper. Mothers were nursing babies, nurses were singing others to rest; social spirits were recalling the last strains of recent convivialities; while others, less genially given, were uttering their “Carambas” in all the vindictive anger of broken slumber. Now and then a devotional attitude might be detected, and even some little glimpses caught of some fair form making her toilet for the night, and throwing back her dishevelled hair to peer at the passing strangers.

Such were the scenes that even a brief transit presented; a longer sojourn and a little more light had doubtless discovered still more singular ones.

We halted at the gate of a large, gloomy-looking building which the Friar informed me was the “Venta Nazionale,” the chief inn of the town; and by dint of much knocking, and various interlocutions between Fra Miguel and a black, four stories high, the gates were at length opened. Faint, hungry, and tired, I had hoped that we should have supped in company, and thus recompensed me for my share of the successful issue of the journey; but the Fra, giving his orders hastily, wished me an abrupt “good night,” and led his niece up the narrow stairs, leaving me and my mare in the gloomy entrance, like things whose services were no longer needed.

“This may be Texan gratitude, Fra Miguel,” said I to myself, “but certainly you never brought it from your own country.” Meanwhile the negro, after lighting the others upstairs, returned to where I was, and perhaps not impressed by any high notions of my quality, or too sleepy to think much about the matter, sat down on a stone bench, and looked very much as if about to compose himself to another doze. I was in no mood of gentleness, and so, bestowing a hearty kick upon my black “brother,” I told him to show me the way to the stable at once. The answer to this somewhat rude summons was a strange one, —he gave a kind of grin that showed all his teeth, and made a species of hissing noise, like “Cheet, cheet,” said rapidly,—a performance I had never witnessed before, nor, for certain reasons, have I any fancy to witness again.

“Do you hear me, black fellow?” cried I, tapping his bullet-head with the end of my heavy whip pretty much as one does a tavern-table to summon the waiter.

“Cheet, cheet, cheet,” cried he again, but with redoubled energy.

“Confound your jargon,” said I, angrily; “get up out of that, and lead the way to the stable.” This speech I accompanied by another admonition from my foot, given, I am free to own, with all the irritable impatience of a thirty hours' fast.

The words had scarcely passed my lips, ere the fellow sprang to his legs, and, with a cry like the scream of an infuriated beast, dashed at me. I threw out my arm as a guard, but, stooping beneath it, he plunged a knife into my side, and fled. I heard the heavy bang of the great door resound as he rushed out, and then fell to the ground, weltering in my blood!

I made a great effort to cry out, but my voice failed me; the blood ran fast from my wound, and a chill, sickening sensation crept over me, that I thought must be “death.” “'T is hard to die thus,” was the thought that crossed me, and it was the last effort of consciousness, ere I swooned into insensibility.



CHAPTER XXII. THE LAZARETTO OF BEXAR

Kind-hearted reader,—you who have sympathized with so many of the rubs that Fortune has dealt us; who have watched us with a benevolent interest in our warfare with an adverse destiny; who have marked our struggles, and witnessed our defeats,—will surely compassionate our sad fate when we tell you that when the curtain next rises on our drama, it presents us no longer what we had been!

Con Cregan, the light-hearted vagrant, paddling his lone canoe down life's stream in joyous merriment, himself sufficing to himself, his eyes ever upward as his hopes were onward, his crest an eagle's, and his motto “higher,” was no more. He had gone,—vanished, been dissipated into thin air; and in his place there sat, too weak to walk, a poor emaciated creature, with shaven head and shrunken

limbs, a very wreck of humanity, pale, sallow, and miserable as fever and flannel could paint him.

Yes, gentle reader, under the shade of a dwarf fig-tree, in the Leper Hospital of Bexar, I sat, attired in a whole suit of flannel, of a pale, brown tint, looking like a faded flea, all my gay spirits fled, and my very identity merged into the simple fact that I was known as “Convalescent, No. 303,”—an announcement which, for memory's sake, perhaps, was stamped upon the front of my nightcap.

Few people are fortunate enough not to remember the strange jumble of true and false, the incoherent tissue of fact and fancy, which assails the first moments of recovery from illness. It is a pitiable period, with its thronging thoughts, all too weighty for the light brain that should bear them. You follow your ideas like an ill-mounted horseman in a hunt; no sooner have you caught a glimpse of the game than it is lost again; on you go, wearied by the pace, but never cheered by success; often tumbling into a slough, missing your way, and mistaking the object of pursuit: such are the casualties in either case, and they are not enviable ones.

Now, lest I should seem to be a character of all others I detest, a grumbler without cause, let me ask the reader to sit beside me for a few seconds on this bench, and look with me at the prospect around him. Yonder, that large white building, with grated windows, jail-like and sad, is the Leper Hospital of Bexar, an institution originally intended for the sick of that one malady, but, under the impression of its being contagious, generously extended to those laboring under any other disease. The lepers are that host who sit in groups upon the grass, at cards or dice, or walk in little knots of two and three. Their shambling gait and crippled figures,—the terrible

evidence of their malady,—twisted limbs, contorted into every horrible variety of lameness, hands with deficient fingers, faces without noses, are the ordinary symbols. The voices, too, are either husky and unnatural, or reduced to a thin, reedy treble, like the wail of an infant. Worse than all, far more awful to contemplate, to him exposed to such companionship, their minds would appear more diseased than even their bodies: some evincing this aberration by traits of ungovernable passion, some by the querulous irritability of peevish childhood, and some by the fatuous vacuity of idiocy; and here am I gazing upon all this, and speculating, by the aid of a little bit of broken looking-glass, how long it is probable that I shall retain the “regulation” number of the human features.

Ah, you gentlemen of England, who live at home at ease, may smile at such miseries; but let me tell you that however impertinent you might deem him who told you “to follow your nose,” the impossibility of compliance is a yet heavier infliction; and it was with a trembling eagerness that, each morning as I awoke, I consulted the map of my face, to be sure that I was master of each geographical feature.

While all who may break a leg or cut a blood-vessel are reckoned fit subjects to expose to the risk of this contagion, the most guarded measures are adopted to protect the world without the walls from every risk. Not only is every leper denied access to his friends and family, but even written communication is refused him, while sentinels are stationed at short intervals around the grounds, with orders to fire upon any who should attempt an escape.

Here then was I in a jail, with the danger of a horrible disease superadded. Algebraically, my case

stood thus: letting the letter P represent a prison, L the leprosy, and N my nose, P + L—N being equal to any given number of deaths by torture. Such was my case, such my situation; while of the past, by what chain of events I came to be thus a prisoner, I knew nothing. A little memoir at the head of my bed set forth that I was “a case of punctured wound in the thorax,” with several accessory advantages, not over intelligible by my ignorance, but which I guessed to imply, that if the doctor didn't finish me off at once, there was every chance of my slipping away by a lingering malady,—some one of those “chest affections” that make the fortunes of doctors, but are seldom so profitable to the patients. One fact was, however, very suggestive. It was above four months since the date of my admission to the hospital,—a circumstance that vouched for the gravity of my illness, as well as showing what a number of events might have occurred in the interval.

Four months! and where was Donna Maria now? Had she forgotten me,—forgotten the terrible scene on the Collorado; forgotten the starlit night in the forest? Had they left me, without any interest in my future,—deserted me, wounded, perhaps dying?—a sad return for the services I had rendered them! That Fra Miguel should have done this, would have caused me no surprise; but the Señhora,—she who sprang by a bound into intimacy with me, and called me “brother”! Alas! if this were so, what faith could be placed in woman?

In vain I sought information on these points from those around me. My Spanish was not the very purest Castilian, it is true; but here, another and greater obstacle to knowledge existed: no one cared anything for the past, and very little for the future; the last event that held a place in their memory was

the day of their admission, the fell malady was the centre round which all thoughts revolved, and I was regarded as a kind of visionary, when asking about circumstances that occurred before I entered the hospital. There were vague and shadowy rumors about me and my adventure,—so much I could find out; but whatever these were, scarcely two agreed on,—not one cared. Some said I had killed a priest; others averred it was a negro; a few opined that I had done both; and an old mulatto woman, with a face like a target, the bull's-eye being represented by where the nose ought to be, related a more connected narrative about my having stolen a horse, and being overtaken by a negro slave of the owner, who rescued the animal and stabbed *me*.

All the stories tallied in one particular, which was in representing me as a fellow of the most desperate character and determination, and who cared as little for shedding blood as spilling water,—traits, I am bound to acknowledge, which never appeared to lower me in general esteem. Of course, all inquiries as to my horse, poor Charry, my precious saddle-bags, my rifle, my bowie-knife, and my “Harper's-ferry,” would have proved less than useless,—actually absurd. The patients would have reckoned such questions as little vagaries of mental wandering, and the servants of the house never replied to anything.

My next anxiety was, when I should be at liberty? The doctor, when I asked him, gave a peculiar grin, and said, “We cannot spare you, amigo; we shall want to look at your pericardium one of these days. *I* say it is perforated; Don Emanuel says not. Time will tell who 's right.”

“You mean when I'm dead, Señhor, of course?” cried I, not fancying the chance of resolving the

difficulties by being carved alive.

“Of course I do,” said he. “Yours is a very instructive case; and I shall take care that your heart and a portion of the left lung be carefully injected, and preserved in the museum.”

“May you live a thousand years!” said I, bowing my gratitude, while a chill crept over me that I thought I should have fainted.

I have already mentioned that sentries were placed at intervals round the walls to prevent escape,—a precaution which, were one to judge from the desolate and crippled condition of the inmates, savored of over care. A few were able to crawl along upon crutches, the majority were utterly helpless, while the most active were only capable of creeping up the bank which formed the boundary of the grounds, to look down into the moat beneath,—a descent of some twenty feet, but which, to imaginations such as theirs, was a gulf like the crater of a volcano.

Whenever a little group, then, would station themselves on the “heights,” as they were called, and gaze timidly into the depths below, the guards, far from dispersing them, saw that no better lesson could be administered than what their own fears suggested, and prudently left them to the admonitions of their terrors. I remembered this fact, and resolved to profit by it. If death were to be my lot, it could not come anywhere with more horrors than here; so that, happen what might, I resolved to make an effort at escape. The sentry's bullet had few terrors for one who saw himself surrounded by such objects of suffering and misery, and who daily expected to be one of their number. Were the leap to kill me,—a circumstance that in my weak and

wounded condition I judged far from unlikely,—it was only anticipating a few days; and what days were they!

Such were my calculations, made calmly and with reflection. Not that I was weary of life; were the world but open to me, I felt I should resume all my former zest in its sayings and doings,—nay, I even fancied that the season of privation would give a higher color to my enjoyment of it; and I know that the teachings of adversity are not the least useful accessories of him whose wits must point the road to fortune. True is it, the emergencies of life evoke the faculties and develop the resources, as the storm and the shipwreck display the hardy mariner. Who knows, Con, but good luck may creep in even through a punctured wound in the thorax!

As the day closed, the patients were always recalled by a bell, and patrol parties of soldiers went round to see if by accident any yet lingered without the walls. The performance of duty was, however, most slovenly, since, as I have already said, escape never occurred to those whose apathy of mind and infirmity of body had made them indifferent to everything. I lingered, then, in a distant alley as the evening began to fall, and when the bell rung out its dismal summons, I trembled to think—was it the last time I should ever hear it! It was a strange thrill of mingled hope and terror; Where should I be the next evening at that hour? Free, and at liberty,—a wanderer wherever fancy might lead me, or the occupant of some narrow bed beneath the earth, sleeping the sleep that knows no waking? And, if so, who could less easily be missed than he who had neither friend, nor family, nor fortune. I felt that my departure, like that of some insignificant guest, would meet notice from none: not one to ask what

became of him? when did he leave us? to whom did he say farewell?

If there was something unspeakably sad in the solitude of such a fate, there was that also which nerved the heart by a sense of Self-sufficiency,—the very brother of Independence; and this thought gave me courage as I looked over the grassy embankment, and peered into the gloomy fosse, which now, in the indistinct light, seemed far deeper than ever. A low, marshy tract, undrained and uninhabitable, surrounded the “Lazaretto” for miles; and if this insalubrious neighborhood assisted in keeping up the malaria of fever, it compensated, on the other hand, by interposing an unpopulated district between the sick and the healthy.

These dreary wastes, pathless and untrodden, were a kind of fabulous region among the patients for all kind of horrors, peopled, as the fancy of each dictated, by the spirits of departed “Léperos,” by venomous serpents and cobras, or by escaped galley-slaves, who led a life of rapine and murder. The flitting jack-o'-lantern that often skimmed along the surface, the wild cry of the plover, the dreary night wind sighing over miles of plain, aided these superstitions, and convinced many whose stubborn incredulity demanded corroboration from the senses. As for myself, if very far from crediting the tales I had so often listened to, the theme left its character of gloom upon my mind, and it was with a cold shudder that I strained my eyes over the wide distance, from which a heavy exhalation was already rising. Determined to derive comfort from every source, I bethought me that the misty fog would assist my concealment, as if it were worth while to pursue me through a region impregnated with all the vapors of disease! The bell had ceased, the bang of

the great iron wicket had resounded, and all was still. I hesitated, I know not why: a moment before, my mind was made up; and now, it seemed like self-destruction to go on! Here was life! a sad and terrible existence, truly; but was the dark grave better? or, if it were, had I the right to make the choice? This was a subtlety that had not occurred till now. The dull tramp of the patrol routed my musings, as in quick time a party advanced up the alley towards me. They were not visible from the darkness, but the distance could not be great, and already I could hear the corporal urging them forward, as the mists were rising, and a deadly fog gathering over the earth. Any longer delay now, and my project must be abandoned forever, seeing that my lingering outside the walls would expose me to close surveillance for the future.

I arose suddenly, and advanced to the very edge of the cliff: would that I could only have scanned the depth below, and seen where I was about to go! Alas! darkness was on all; a foot beneath where I stood, all was black and undistinguishable.

The patrol were now about thirty paces from me; another instant, and I should be taken! I clasped my hands together convulsively, and, with drawn-in breath and clenched lips, I bent my knees to spring. Alas, they would not! my strength failed me at this last moment, and instead of a leap, my limbs relaxed, and, tottering under me, gave way. I lost my balance, and fell over the cliff! Grasping the grassy surface with the energy of despair, I tore tufts of long grass and fern as I fell down—down—down—till consciousness left me, to be rallied again into life by a terrible “squash” into a reedy swamp at the bottom. Up to my waist in duck-weed and muddy water, I soon felt, however, that I had sustained no

other injury than a shock,—nay, even fancied that the concussion had braced my nerves; and as I looked up at the dark mass of wall above me, I knew that my fall must have been terrific.

Neither my bodily energy nor my habiliments favored me in escaping from this ditch; but I did rescue myself at last, and then, remembering that I must reach some place of refuge before day broke, I set out over the moor, my only pilotage being the occasionally looking back at the lights of the hospital, and, in sailor-fashion, using them as my point of departure. When creeping along the walks of the Lazaretto, I was barely able to move; and now, such a good ally is a strong “will,” I stepped out boldly and manfully.

As I walked on, the night cleared, a light fresh breeze dissipated the vapor, and refreshed me as I went, while overhead, myriads of bright stars shone out, and served to guide me on the trackless waste. If I often felt fatigue stealing over me, a thought of the Lazaretto and its fearful inmates nerved me to new efforts. Sometimes so possessed did I become with these fears that I actually increased my speed to a run, and thus, exerting myself to the very utmost, I made immense progress, and ere day began to break, found myself at the margin of the moor, and the entrance to a dense forest, which I remembered often to have seen of a clear evening from the garden of the Lazaretto. With what gratitude did I accept that leafy shade, which seemed to promise me its refuge! I threw my arms around a tree, in the ecstasy of my delight, and felt that now indeed I had gained a haven of rest and safety. By good fortune, too, I came upon a pathway: a small piece of board nailed to a tree bore the name of a village; but this I could not read in the half light; still, it was enough that I was

sure of a beaten track, and could not be lost in the dense intricacies of a pine-forest.

The change of scene encouraged me to renewed exertion. And I began to feel that, so far from experiencing fatigue, each mile I travelled supplied me with greater energy, and that my strength rose each hour as I left the Lazaretto farther behind me.

“Ah, Con, my boy, fortune has not taken leave of you yet!” said I, as I discovered that my severe exercise, far from being injurious, as I had feared, was already bringing back the glow of health to my frame, and spirit to my heart.

There is something unspeakably calming in the solitude of a forest, unlike the lone sensations inspired by the sea or the prairie; the feeling is one of peaceful quietude. The tempered sunlight stealing through the leaves and boughs entangled; the giant trunks that tell of centuries ago; the short, smooth, mossy turf through which the tiny rivulet runs without a channel; the little vistas opening like alleys, or ending in some shady nook, bower-like and retired,—fill the mind with a myriad of pleasant fancies. Instead of wandering forth over the immensity of space, as when contemplating the great ocean or the desert, the heart here falls back upon itself, and is satisfied with the little world around it.

Such were my reveries as I lay down beneath a tree, at first to muse, and then to sleep; and such a sleep as only a weary foot-traveller knows, who, stretched under the shade of a spreading tree, lies dreamless and lost. It must have been late ere I awoke; the sunlight came slanting obliquely through the leaves, and bespoke the decline of day. I rose. At first my limbs were stiff and rigid, and my sensations those of debility; but after a little time my strength

came back, and I strode along freely. Continuing the path, I came, after about three hours' fast walking, to a little open spot in the wood, where the remains of a hut and the charred fragments of firewood indicated a bivouac. Some morsels of black bread strewn about, and a stray piece of dried venison, argued that the party who had left them had but recently quitted the spot. Very grateful for the negligent abundance of their waste, I sat down, and, by the aid of a little spring,—the reason, probably, of the selection of the spot for a halt,—made a capital supper, some chestnuts that had fallen from the trees furnishing a delicious dessert. Night was fast closing in, and I resolved on passing it where I was, the shelter of the little hut being too tempting a refuge to relinquish easily. The next morning I started early, my mind fully satisfied that I was preceded by some foot party, the path not admitting of any other, with whom, by exertion, I should be perhaps able to come up. I walked from day to dawn with scarcely an interval of rest, but, although the tracks of many feet showed me my conjecture was right, I did not succeed in overtaking them. Towards evening I again came upon their bivouac-ground, which was even more abundantly provided than the preceding one. They appeared to have killed a buck; and though having roasted an entire side, had contented themselves with some steaks off the quarter. Upon this I feasted luxuriously, securing a sufficient provision to last me for the next two or three days.

In this way I continued to travel for eight entire days, each successive one hoping to overtake the party in advance, and, if disappointed in this expectation, well pleased with the good luck that had supplied me so far with food, and made my journey safe and pleasant; for it was both. A single beast of

prey I never met with, nor even a serpent larger than the common green snake, which is neither venomous nor bold; and as for pleasure, I was free. Was not that alone happiness for him who had been a prisoner among the “Léperos” of Bexar?

On the ninth day of my wandering, certain unmistakable signs indicated that I was approaching the verge of the forest: the grass became deeper, the wood less dense; the undergrowth, too, showed the influence of winds and currents of air. These, only appreciable by him who has watched with anxious eyes every little change in the aspect of Nature, became at last evident to the least observant in the thickened bark and the twisted branches of the trees, on which the storms of winter were directed. Shall I own it? My heart grew heavy at these signs, boding, as they did, another change of scene. And to what? Perhaps the bleak prairie, stretching away in dreary desolation! Perhaps some such tract of swampy moor, where forests once had stood, but now, lying in mere waste of rottenness and corruption; “clearings,” as they are called, the little intervals which hard industry plants amid universal wildness, I could not hope for, since I had often heard that no settlers ever selected these places, to which access by water was difficult, and the roads few and bad. What, then, was to come next? Not the sea-coast,—*that* must be miles away to the eastward; not the chain of the Rocky Mountains,—they lay equally far to the west.

While yet revolving these thoughts, I reached the verge of the wood; and suddenly, and without anything which might apprise me of this singular change, I found myself standing on the verge of a great bluff of land overlooking an apparently boundless plain. The sight thus unexpectedly

presented of a vast prairie—for such it was—was overwhelming in its intense interest. My position, from a height of some seven or eight hundred feet, gave me an uninterrupted view over miles and miles of surface. Towards the far west, a ridge of rugged mountains could be seen; but to the south and east, a low flat horizon bounded the distance. The surface of this great tract was covered for a short space by dry cedars, apparently killed by a recent fire; beyond that, a tall, rank grass grew, through which I could trace something like a road. This was, as I afterwards learned, a buffalo-trail, these animals frequently marching in close column when in search of water. The sun was setting as I looked, and gilded the whole vast picture with its yellow glory; but as it sunk beneath the horizon, and permitted a clearer view of the scene, I could perceive that everything—trees, grass, earth itself—presented one uniform dry, burnt-up appearance.

Not a creature of any kind was seen to move over this great plain; not a wing cleaved the air above; not a sound broke the stillness beneath. It was a solitude the most complete I ever conceived,—grand and imposing! How my heart sank within me as I sat and looked, thinking I was there alone, without one creature near me, to linger out, perhaps, some few days or hours of life, and die unseen, un-watched, uncared for! And to this sad destiny had ambition brought me! Were it not for the craving desire to become something above my station, to move in a sphere to which neither my birth nor my abilities gave me any title, and I should be now the humble peasant, living by my daily labor in my native land, my thoughts travelling in the worn track those of my neighbors journeyed, and I neither better nor worse off than they.

And for this wish—insensate, foolish as it was—the expiation is indeed heavy. I hid my head within my hands, and tried to pray, but I could not. The mind harassed by various conflicting thoughts is not in the best mood for supplication. I felt like the criminal of whom I had once read, that, when the confessor came to visit him the night before his execution, seemed eager and attentive for a while, but at last acknowledged that his thoughts were centred upon one only theme,—escape! “To look steadfastly at the next world, you must extinguish the light of this one;” and how difficult is that!—how hard to close every chink and fissure through which hope may dart a ray,—hope of life, hope of renewing the struggle in which we are so often defeated, and where even the victory is without value!

“Be it so,” sighed I, at last; “the game is up!” and I lay down at the foot of a rock to die. My strength, long sustained by expectation, had given way at last, and I felt that the hour of release could not be distant. I drew my hand across my eyes,—I am ashamed to own there were tears there—and just then, as if my vision had been cleared by the act, I saw, or I thought I saw, in the plain beneath, the glittering sparkle of flame. Was it the reflection of a star, of which thousands were now studding the sky, in some pool of rain-water? No! it was real fire, which now, from one red spark, burst forth into a great blaze, rolling out volumes of black smoke which rose like a column into the air.

Were they Indians who made it, or trappers? or could it be the party in whose track I had so long been following; and, if so, by what path had they descended? Speculation is half-brother to Hope. No sooner had I begun to canvass this proposition than it aroused my drooping energies, and rallied my

failing courage.

I set about to seek for some clew to the descent, and by the moonlight, which was now full and strong, I detected foot-tracks in the clayey soil near the verge of the cliff. A little after I found a narrow pathway, which seemed to lead down the face of the bluff. The trees were scratched, too, in many places with marks familiar to prairie travellers, but which to me only betokened the fact that human hands had been at work upon them. I gained courage by these, which at least I knew were not “Indian signs,” no more than the foot-tracks were those of Indian feet.

The descent was tedious, and often perilous; the path, stopping abruptly short at rocks, from which the interval to the next footing should be accomplished by a spring, or a drop of several feet, was increased in danger by the indistinct light. In the transit I received many a sore bruise, and ere I reached the bottom my flannel drapery was reduced to a string of rags which would have done no credit to a scarecrow.

When looking from the top of the cliff, the fire appeared to be immediately at its foot; but now I perceived it stood about half a mile off in the plain. Thither I bent my steps, half fearing, half hoping, what might ensue. So wearied was I by the fatigue of the descent, added to the long day's journey, that even in this short space I was often obliged to halt and take rest. Exhaustion, hunger, and lassitude weighed me down, till I went along with that half-despairing effort a worn-out swimmer makes as his last before sinking.

A more pitiable object it would not be easy to picture. The blood oozing from my wound, re-opened by the exertion, had stained my flannel dress, which,

ragged and torn, gave glimpses of a figure reduced almost to a skeleton. My beard was long, adding to the seeming length of my gaunt and lantern jaws, blue with fatigue and fasting. My shoes were in tatters, and gave no protection to my bleeding feet; while my hands were torn and cut by grasping the rocks and boughs in my descent. Half-stumbling, half-tottering, I came onward till I found myself close to the great fire, at the base of a mound—a "Prairie roll," as it is called—which formed a shelter against the east wind.

Around the immense blaze sat a party, some of whom in shadow, others in strong light, presented a group the strangest ever my eyes beheld. Bronzed and bearded countenances, whose fierce expression glowed fiercer in the ruddy glare of the fire, were set off by costumes the oddest imaginable.

Many wore coats of undressed sheepskin, with tall caps of the same material; others had ragged uniforms of different services. One or two were dressed in "ponchos" of red-brown cloth, like Mexicans, and some, again, had a kind of buff coat studded with copper ornaments,—a costume often seen among the half-breeds. All agreed in one feature of equipment, which was a broad leather belt or girdle, in which were fastened various shining implements, of which a small pickaxe and a hammer were alone distinguishable where I stood. Several muskets were piled near them, and on the scorched boughs of the cedars hung a little armory of cutlasses, pistols, and "bowies," from which I was able to estimate the company at some twenty-eight or thirty in number. Packs and knapsacks, with some rude cooking utensils, were strewn around; but the great carcase of a deer which I saw in the flames, supported by a chevaux-de-frise of ramrods, was the

best evidence that the cares of “cuisine” did not demand any unnecessary aid from “casseroles.”

A couple of great earthen pitchers passed rapidly from hand to hand round the circle, and, by the assistance of some blackhead, served to beguile the time while the “roast” was being prepared.

Creeping noiselessly nearer, I gained a little clump of brushwood scarcely more than half-a-dozen paces off, and then lay myself down to listen what language they were speaking. At first the whole buzz seemed one unmeaning jargon, more like the tongue of an Indian tribe than anything else; but as I listened I could detect words of French, Spanish, and German. Eager to make out some clew to what class they might belong, I leaned forward on a bough and listened attentively. A stray word, a chance phrase, could I but catch so much, would be enough; and I bent my ear with the most watchful intensity. The spot I occupied was the crest of the little ridge, or “Prairie roll,” and gave me a perfect view over the group, while the black smoke rolling upwards effectually concealed me from *them*.

As I listened, I heard a deep husky voice say something in English. It was only an oath, but it smacked of my country, and set my heart a-throbbing powerfully. I lay out upon the branch to catch what might follow, when smash went the frail timber, and, with a cry of terror, down I rolled behind them. In a second every one was on his legs, while a cry of “The jaguars! the jaguars!” resounded on all sides. The sudden shock over, their discipline seemed perfect; for the whole party had at once betaken themselves to their arms, and stood in a hollow square, prepared to receive any attack. Meanwhile, the smoke and the falling rubbish effectually shut me out from view. As these cleared

away, they caught sight of me, and truly never was a formidable file of musketry directed upon a more pitiable object. Such seemed their own conviction; for after a second or two passed in steady contemplation of me, the whole group burst out into a roar of savage laughter. “What is't?” “It's not human!” being the exclamations which, in more than one strange tongue, were uttered.

Unable to speak, in part from terror, in part from shock, I sat up on my knees, and, gesticulating with my hands, implored their mercy, and bespoke my own defencelessness. I conclude that I made a very sorry exhibition, for again the laughter burst forth in louder tones than before, when one, taking a brand of the burning firewood, came nearer to examine me. He threw down his torch, and, springing backward with horror, screamed out, a “lépero!” a “lépero!” In a moment every musket was again raised to the shoulder, and directed towards me.

“I'm not a lépero—never was!” cried I, in Spanish. “I'm a poor Englishman who has made his escape from the Lazaretto.” I could not utter more, but fell powerless to the earth.

“I know him; we were messmates,” cried a gruff voice. “Halt! avast there! don't fire! I say, my lad, crawl over to leeward of the fire. There, that will do. Dash a bucket of water over him, Perez.”

Perez obeyed with a vengeance, for I was soaked to the skin, and at the same time exposed to the scorching glare of the great fire, where I steamed away like a swamp at sundown.

“A'n't you Cregan, I say?” cried the same English voice which spoke before; “a'n't you little Con, as we used to call you?”

“Yes,” said I, overjoyed by the recognition, without

knowing by whom it was made, “I am the little Con you speak of.”

“Ah, I remembered your voice the moment I heard it,” said he. “Don't you remember me?”

“Caramba!” broke in a savage-looking Spaniard; “we 're not going to catch a leprosy for the sake of your reminiscences. Tell the fellow to move off, or I'll send a bullet through him.”

“And I 'll follow you.”

“And I; and I,” cried two or three more, who, suiting the action to the speech, threw back the pan of the flint-muskets to examine the priming.

“And shall I tell you what I 'll do?” said the Englishman. “I'll lay the first fellow's skull open with this hanger that fires a shot at him.”

“Will you so?” said a thin, athletic fellow, springing to his legs, and drawing a long, narrow-bladed knife from his girdle.

“A truce there, Rivas,” said another; “would you quarrel with the Capitan for a miserable lépero?”

“He's not a Capitan of my making,” said Rivas, sulkily.

“I don't care of whose making,” said the Englishman, in his broken Spanish; “I'm the leader of this expedition: if any one deny it, let him stand out and say so. If half a dozen of you deny it, come out one by one: I ask nothing better than to show you who's the best man here.”

A low muttering followed this speech, but whether it were of admiration or anger, I could not determine. Meanwhile my own resolve was formed, as, gathering my limbs together, I rolled upon one knee and said,—

“Hear me for one instant, Señhors. It would be

unworthy of you to quarrel about an object so poor and worthless as I am. Although not a lépero, I have made my escape from the Lazaretto, and travelled hither on foot, with little clothing and less food: an hour or two more will finish what fatigue and starving have all but accomplished. If you will be kind enough to throw me a morsel of bread, and give me time to move away, I'll try and do it; or, if you prefer doing the humane thing, you 'll come a few paces nearer and send a volley into me."

"I vote for the last," shouted one; but, strange to say, none seconded his motion. A change had come over them, possibly by the very recklessness of my own proposal. At last one called out, "Creep away some fifty yards or so, and burn those rags of yours: we 'll give you something to wear instead of them."

"Ay, just so," said another; "the poor devil doesn't deserve death for what he's done."

"That's spoken like honest fellows and good comrades," said the Englishman. "And now, my hearty, move down to leeward there, and put on your new toggery, and we 'll see if a hot supper won't put some life in you."

I could scarcely credit my own alacrity as this prospect of better days inspired me with fresh vigor; I recovered my feet at once, and, in something which I intended should resemble a trot, set out in the direction indicated, and where already a small bundle of clothes had been placed for my acceptance.

A piece of lighted charcoal and some firewood also apprised me of the office required at my hands, and which I performed with a most hearty good-will; and as I threw the odious rags into the flames, I felt that I was saying adieu to the last tie that bound me to the horrible Lazaretto of Bexar.

“Let him join us now,” said the Englishman; “though I think if the poor fellow has walked from Bexar, you might have been satisfied he could n't carry the leprosy with him.”

“I've known it go with a piece of gun-wadding from Bexar to the Rio del Norte,” said one.

“I saw a fellow who caught it from the rind of a watermelon a lépero had thrown away.”

“There was a comrade of ours at Puerta Naval took it from sitting on the bench beside a well on the road where a lépero had been resting the day before,” cried a third.

“Let him sit yonder, then,” said the Englishman “You 're more afeard of that disease than the bite of a cayman; though you need n't be squeamish, most of you, if it 'a your beauty you were thinking of.”

And thus amid many a tale of the insidious character of this fell disorder, and many a rude jest on the score of precaution against it, I was ordered to seat myself at about a dozen or twenty paces distant, and receive my food as it was thrown towards me by the others,—too happy at this humble privilege to think of anything but the good fortune of such a meeting.

“Don't you remember me yet?” cried the Englishman, standing where the full glare of the fire lit up his marked features.

“Yes,” said I, “you 're Halkett.”

“To be sure I am, lad. I 'm glad you don't forget me.”

“How should I? This is not the first time you saved my life.”

“I scarcely thought I had succeeded so well,” said he, “when we parted last; but you must tell me all

about that to-morrow, when you are rested and refreshed. The crew here is not very unlike what you may remember aboard the yacht: don't cross them, and you 'll do well with them.”

“What are they?” said I, eagerly.

“Gambusinos,” said he, in a low voice.

“Bandits?” whispered I, misconceiving the word.

“Not quite,” rejoined he, laughing; “though, I've no doubt, ready to raise a dollar that way if any one could be found in these wild parts a little richer than themselves;” with this, he commended me to a sound sleep, and the words were scarcely spoken ere I obeyed the summons.

Before day broke, I was aroused by the noise of approaching departure; the band were strapping on knapsacks, slinging muskets, and making other preparations for the march; Halkett, as their captain, carrying nothing beyond his weapons, and in his air and manner assuming all the importance of command.

The “Lépero,” as I was called, was ordered to follow the column at about a hundred paces to the rear; but as I was spared all burden, in compassion to my weak state, I readily compounded for this invidious position, by the benefits it conferred. A rude meal of rye-bread and cold venison, with some coffee, made our breakfast, and away we started; our path lying through the vast prairie I have already spoken of.

As during my state of “quarantine,” which lasted seven entire days, we continued to march along over a dreary tract of monotonous desolation,—nothing varying the dull uniformity of each day's journey, save the chance sight of a distant herd of buffaloes, the faint traces of an Indian war-party, or the

blackened embers of a bivouac,—I will not weary my readers by dwelling on my own reflections as I plodded on: enough, when I say they were oftener sad than otherwise. The uncertainty regarding the object of my fellow-travellers harassed my mind by a thousand odd conjectures. It was clear they were not merchants, neither could they be hunters, still less a "war-party,"—one of those marauding bands which on the Texan frontier of Mexico levy "black-mail" upon the villagers, on the plea of a pretended protection against the Indians. Although well armed, neither their weapons, their discipline, nor, still less, their numbers, argued in favor of this suspicion. What they could possibly be, then, was an insurmountable puzzle to me. I knew they were called Gambusinos,—nothing more. Supposing that some of my readers may not be wiser than I then was, let me take this opportunity, while traversing the prairie, to say in a few words what they were.

The Gambusinos are the gold-seekers of the New World,—a class who, in number and importance, divide society with the "Vaqueros," the cattle-dealers, into two almost equal sections. Too poor to become possessors of mines, without capital for enterprise on a larger scale, they form bands of wandering discoverers, traversing the least-known districts of the Sonora, and spending years of life in the wildest recesses of the Rocky Mountains. Associating together generally from circumstances purely accidental, they form little communities, subject to distinct laws; and however turbulent and rebellious under ordinary control, beneath the sway of the self-chosen leaders they are reputed to be submissive and obedient.

Their skill is, as may be judged, rude as their habits, they rarely carry their researches to any

depth beneath the surface; some general rules are all their guidance, and these are easily acquired. They are all familiar with the fact that the streams which descend from the Rocky Mountains, either towards the Atlantic or Pacific, carry in their autumnal floods vast masses of earth, which form deposits in the plains; that these deposits are often charged with precious ores, and sometimes contain great pieces of pure gold. They know, besides, that the quartz rock is the usual bed where the precious metals are found, and that these rocks form spurs from the large mountains, easily known, because they are never clothed by vegetation, and called in their phraseology “Crestones.”

A sharp short stroke of the “barreta,” the iron-shod staff of the Gambusino, soon shivers the rock where treasure is suspected; and, the fragments being submitted to the action of a strong fire, the existence of gold is at once tested. Often the mere stroke of the barreta will display the shining lustre of the metal without more to do. Such is, for the most part, the extent of their skill.

There are, of course, gradations even here; and some will distinguish themselves above their fellows in the detection of profitable sources and rich “crestones,” while others rarely rise above the rank of mere “washers,”—men employed to sift the sands and deposits of the rivers in which the chief product is gold-dust.

Such, then, is the life of a “Gambusino.” In this pursuit he traverses the vast continent of South America from east to west, crossing torrents, scaling cliffs, descending precipices, braving hunger, thirst, heat, and snow, encountering hostile Indians and the not less terrible bands of rival adventurers, contesting for existence with the wild animals of the

desert, and generally at last paying with his life the price of his daring intrepidity. Few, indeed, are ever seen as old men among their native villages; nearly all have found their last rest beneath the scorching sand of the prairie.

Upon every other subject than that of treasure-seeking, their minds were a perfect blank. For *them*, the varied resources of a land abounding in the products of every clime, had no attraction. On the contrary, the soil which grew the maize, indigo, cotton, the sugar-cane, coffee, the olive, and the vine, seemed sterile and barren, since in such regions no *gold* was ever found. The wondrous fertility of that series of terraces which, on the Andes, unite the fruits of the torrid zone with the lichens of the icy North, had no value in the estimation of men who acknowledged but one wealth, and recognized but one idol. *Their* hearts turned from the glorious vegetation of this rich garden to the dry courses of the torrents that fissure the Cordilleras, or the stony gorges that intersect the Rocky Mountains.

The life of wild and varied adventure, too, that they led was associated with these deserted and trackless wastes. To them, civilization presented an aspect of slavish subjection and dull uniformity; while in the very vicissitudes of their successes there was the excitement of gambling: rich to-day, they vowed a lamp of solid gold to the “Virgin,”—to-morrow, in beggary, they braved the terrors of sacrilege to steal from the very altar they had themselves decorated. What strange and wondrous narratives did they recount as we wandered over that swelling prairie!

Many avowed that their own misdeeds had first driven them to the life of the deserts; and one who had lived for years a prisoner among the Choctaws

confessed that his heart still lingered with the time when he had sat as a chief beside the war-fire, and planned stratagems against the tribe of the rival Pawnees. To men of hardy and energetic temperament, recklessness has an immense fascination. Life is so often in peril, they cease to care much for whatever endangers it; and thus, through all their stories, the one feeling ever predominated,—a careless indifference to every risk coupled with a most resolute conduct in time of danger.

I soon managed to make myself a favorite with this motley assemblage; my natural aptitude to pick up language, aided by what I already knew of French and German, assisted me to a knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese; while from a “half-breed” I acquired a sufficiency of the Indian dialect in use throughout the Lower Prairies. I was fleet of foot, besides being a good shot with the rifle,—qualities of more request among my companions than many gifts of a more brilliant order; and, lastly, my skill in cookery, which I derived from my education on board the “Firefly,” won me high esteem and much honor. My life was therefore far from unpleasant. The monotony of the tract over which we marched was more than compensated for by the marvellous tales that beguiled the way. One only drawback existed on my happiness; and yet that was sufficient to embitter many a lonely hour of the night, and cast a shade over many a joyous hour of the day. I am almost ashamed to confess what that source of sorrow was, the more as, perhaps, my kind reader will already fancy he has anticipated my grief, and say, “It was the remembrance of Donna Maria; the memory of *her* I was never to see more.” Alas, no! It was a feeling far more selfish than this afflicted me. The plain fact

is, I was called “The Lépero.” By no other name would my companions know or acknowledge me. It was thus they first addressed me, and so they would not take the trouble to change my appellation. Not that, indeed, I dared to insinuate a wish upon the subject; such a hint would have been too bold a stroke to hazard in a company where one was called “Brise-ses-fers,” another, “Colpo-di-Sangue,” a third, “Teufel's Blut,” and so on.

It was to no purpose that I appeared in all the vigor of health and strength. I might outrun the wildest bull of the buffalo herd; I might spring upon the half-trained “mustang,” and outstrip the antelope in her flight; I might climb the wall-like surface of a cliff, and rob the eagle of her young: but when I came back, the cry of welcome that met me was, “Bravo, Lépero!” And thus did I bear about with me the horrid badge of that dreary time when I dwelt within the Lazaretto of Bexar.

The very fact that the name was not used in terms of scoff or reproach increased the measure of its injury. It called for no reply on my part; it summoned no energy of resistance; it was, as it were, a simple recognition of certain qualities that distinguished me and made up my identity; and at last, to such an extent did it work upon my imagination that I yielded myself up to the delusion that I was all that they styled me,—an outcast and a leper! When this conviction settled down on my mind, I ceased to fret as before, but a gloomy depression gained possession of me, uncheered save by the one hope that my life should not be entirely spent among my present associates, and that I should yet be known as something else than “The Lépero.”

The prairie over which we travelled never varied in aspect save with the changing hours of the day.

The same dreary swell, the same yellowish grass, the same scathed and scorched cedars, the same hazy outlines of distant mountains that we saw yesterday, rose before us again to-day, as we knew they would on the morrow,—till at last our minds took the reflection of the scene, and we journeyed along, weary, silent, and footsore. It was curious enough to mark how this depression exhibited itself upon different nationalities. The Saxon became silent and thoughtful, with only a slight dash of more than ordinary care upon his features, the Italian grew peevish and irritable, the Spaniard was careless and neglectful, while the Frenchman became downright vicious in the wayward excesses of his spiteful humor. Upon the half-breeds, two of whom were our guides, no change was ever perceptible. Too long accustomed to the life of the prairie to feel its influence as peculiar, they plodded on, the whole faculties bent upon one fact,—the discovery of the Chihuahua trail, from which our new track was to diverge in a direction nearly due west.

Our march, no longer enlivened by merry stories or exciting narratives, had become wearisome in the extreme. The heavy fogs of the night and the great mist which arose at sunset prevented all possibility of tracing the path, which often required the greatest skill to detect, so that we were obliged to travel during the sultriest hours of the day, without a particle of shade, our feet scorched by the hot sands, and our heads constantly exposed to the risk of sunstroke. Water, too, became each day more difficult to obtain; the signs by which our guides discovered its vicinity seemed, to to me, at least, little short of miraculous; and yet if by any chance they made a mistake, the anger of the party rose so near to mutiny that nothing short of Halkett's own

authority could restore order. Save in these altercations, without which rarely a day passed over, little was spoken; each trudged along either lost in vacuity or buried in his own thoughts.



CHAPTER XXIII. THE PLACER

As for myself, my dreamy temperament aided me greatly. I could build castles forever; and certainly there was no lack of ground here for the foundation. Sometimes I fancied myself suddenly become the possessor of immense riches, with which I should found a new colony in the very remotest regions of the West. I pictured to myself the village of my

workmen, surrounded with its patches of cultivation in the midst of universal barrenness; the smiling aspect of civilized life in the very centre of barbarism; the smelting furnaces, the mills, the great refining factories, of which I had heard so much, all rose to my imagination, and my own princely abode looking down upon these evidences of my wealth.

Then, I fancied the influences of education diffusing themselves among the young, who grew up with tastes and habits so different from those of their fathers. How pursuits of refinement by degrees mingled themselves with daily requirements, till at last the silent forests would echo with the exciting strains of music, or the murmuring rivulet at nightfall would be accompanied by the recited verses of poetry.

The primitive simplicity of such a life as I then pictured was a perfect fascination; and when wearied with thinking of it by day, as I dropped asleep at night the thoughts would haunt my dreams unceasingly.

This castle-building temperament—which is, after all, nothing but hope engaged practically—may, when pushed too far, make a man dreamy, speculative, and visionary, but if restrained within any reasonable limits, cannot fail to support the courage in many an hour of trial, and nerve the heart against many a sore infliction. I know how it kept me up when others of very different thews and sinews were falling around me. Independently of this advantage, another and a greater one accompanied it. These self-created visions, however they may represent a man in a situation of greatness or power, always do so to exhibit him dispensing—what he imagines at least to be—the virtues of such a station! No one, I trust, ever fancied himself a monarch for

the sake of all the cruelties he might inflict, and all the tyrannies he might practise; so that, in reality, this “sparring against Fortune with the gloves on” is admirable practice, if it be nothing else.

It was on the seventeenth day of our wanderings that the guide announced that we had struck into the Chihuahua “trail”; and although to our eyes nothing unusual or strange presented itself, Hermose exhibited signs of unmistakable pride and self-esteem. As I looked around me on the unvarying aspect of earth and sky, I could not help remembering my disappointment on a former occasion, when I heard of the “Banks of Newfoundland,” and fancied that the Chihuahua trail might have some such unseen existence as the redoubtable “Banks” aforesaid, which, however familiar to codfish, are seldom visited by Christians.

“The evening star will rise straight above our heads to-night,” said Hermose,—and he was correct; our path lay exactly in the very line with that bright orb. The confidence inspired by this prediction increased as we found that an occasional prickly pear-tree now presented itself, with, here and there, a dwarf-box or an acacia. As night closed in, we found ourselves on the skirt of what seemed a dense wood, bordered by the course of a dried-up torrent. A great wide “streak” of rocks and stones attested the force and extent of that river when filled by the mountain streams, but which now trickled along among the pebbles with scarcely strength enough to force its way. Hermose proceeded for some distance down into the bed of the torrent, and returned with a handful of sand and clay, which he presented to Halkett, saying, “The rains have not been heavy enough; this is last year's earth.”

Few as were the words, they conveyed to me an

immense impression of his skill, who, in a few grains of sand taken at random, could distinguish the deposits of one year from those of another.

“How does it look, Halkett?” cried one.

“Is it heavy?” asked another.

“It is worthless,” said Halkett, throwing the earth from him. “But we are on the right track, lads, for all that; there 's always gold where the green snake frequents.”

It was a mystery at the time to me how Halkett knew of the serpent's vicinity; for although I looked eagerly around me, I saw no trace of one.

“I vow he's a-sarchin' for the Coppernose,” said a Yankee, as he laughed heartily at my ignorance.

“Do you see that bird there upon the bough of the cedar-tree?” said Halkett. “That's the 'Choyero;' and wherever he's found, the Coppernose is never far off.” The mystery was soon explained in this wise: the “Choyero” is in the habit of enveloping himself in the leaves of a certain prickly cactus called “Choya,” with which armor he attacks the largest of these green serpents, and always successfully,—the strong, thorny spines of the plant invariably inflicting death-wounds upon the snake. Some asserted that the bird only attacked the snake during his season of torpor, but others stoutly averred that the Choyero was a match for any Coppernose in his perfect vigor.

The approach of the long-sought-for “Placer” was celebrated by an extra allowance of rum, and the party conversed till a late hour of the night, with a degree of animation they had not exhibited for a long time previous. Stories of the “washings” resumed their sway,—strange, wild narratives, the chief interest in which, however striking at the time, lay in the manner of those who related them, and

were themselves the actors. They nearly all turned upon some incident of gambling, and were strong illustrations of how completely the love of gain can co-exist with a temperament utterly wasteful and reckless, while both can render a man totally indifferent to every feeling of friendship. There was mention, by chance, of a certain Narvasque, who had been the comrade of many of the party.

“He is dead,” cried one.

“Caramba!” cried another, “that is scarcely true; they told me he was at the Austin fair this fall.”

“You may rely on it he's dead,” said the first, “for I know it; he died on the Sacramento, and in this wise. We had had a two months' run of luck at the Crestones of Bacuachez,—such fortune as I only hope we may soon see again; none of your filthy wash and sieve work, nor any splintering of a steel barreta on a flint-rock, but light digging along the stream, and turning up such masses of the real shining metal as would make your heart leap to look at,—lumps of thirty,—thirty-five,—ay, forty pounds.”

“There, there, Harispe!” said an old fellow, with a long pipe of sugar-cane, “if we are to swallow what's a-comin', don't choke us just now.”

“What does an old trapper know of the diggin's?” said Harispe, contemptuously. “'T is a bee-huntin' and a birds'-nestin' you ought to be. Smash my ribs! if he ever saw goold, except on the breast of a gooldfinch.” Having silenced his adversary, he resumed:—

“We were all rich by the time we reached Aranchez. But what use is metal? One can't eat it, nor drink it, nor even sleep on't; and the fellows up there had got as much as we had ourselves. Everything cost twenty—no, but two hundred and

twenty times its value! I used to cut a goold button off my coat every morning for a day's grub, so that we had to make ourselves a kind of log-hut outside the village, and try to vittal ourselves as best we could. There war n't much savin' in that plan neither, for we drank brandy all day long, and it cost half an ounce of goold every bottle of it! Then we stayed up all night and played brag, and it was that finished Narvasque. He was a-betting with Shem Avery, and Shem, who felt he was in for a run of luck, layed it on a bit heavy like; and the end o' it was, he won all Narvasque's two months' diggin's, all to a twenty-eight 'ouncer' that he would n't bet for anybody,—no, nor let any one see where he hid it. Shem had his heart on that lump, and said, 'I 'll go fifty ounces against your lump, Narvasque;' and the other did n't take it at first, but up he gets and leaves the hut. 'Honor bright,' said he, 'no man follows me.' They all gave their words, and he went out a short distance into the wood, where he had a sheep's heart hanging near a rock, in the centre of which he had concealed his treasure. He was n't three yards from the spot, when a great spotted snake darts through the long grass, and, making a spring at the piece of meat, bolts it and away! Narvasque followed into the deep jungle, unarmed as he was; there a deadly combat must have ensued, for when his cries aroused us, as we sat within the hut, we found him bitten on every part of the body, and so near death that he had only time to tell how it happened, when he expired."

"And the snake?" cried several, in a breath.

"He got clear away; we gave chase for four days after him in vain. But a fellow with as much spare cash about him must have come to bad ere now."

"The Injians has ripped him open afore this, depend on't," said another. "There 's scarce a snake

of any size hasn't an emerald or splice of gold in him."

"There's more gold lies hidden by fellows that have never lived, or come back to claim it, than ye know of," said the old trapper; "and that's the kind of 'Placer' *I'd* like to chance upon, already washed and smelted."

"They talk of martyrs!" said a tall, sallow Spaniard, who had been educated for a priest: "let me tell you that those Injians, ay, even the negroes, have endured as much torture for their gold as ever did zealot for his faith. There was a fellow in my father's time up at Guajuaqualla, who, it was said, had concealed immense treasures, not only of gold, but gems, emeralds, diamonds, and rubies: well, he not only refused all offers from the Gobernador of the mines to share the booty, but he suffered his toes to be taken off by the smelting nippers, rather than make a confession. Then they tried him with what the miners call a 'nest-egg,' that is, a piece of gold heated almost red, and inserted into the spine of the back; but it was all to no use, he never spoke a word."

"I heard of him; that was a nigger called Crick," cried another.

As for me, I heard no more. The sound of that name, which brought up the memory of my night at Anticosti and all its terrors, filled my heart, besides, with a strange swelling of hope, vague and ill-defined, it is true, but which somehow opened a vision of future wealth and greatness before me. The name, coupled with the place, Guajuaqualla, left no doubt upon my mind that they were talking of no other than the Black Boatswain himself. If I burned to ask a hundred questions about him, a prudent

forbearance held me back. I knew that of all men living, none are so much given to suspicion and mistrust as the Gambusinos. The frauds and deceits eternally in practice among them, the constant concealments of treasure, the affected desertion of rich “Placers,” in order to return to them later and alone,—these and many like artifices suggest a universal want of confidence which is ever at work to trace motives or attribute intentions for every chance word or accidental expression. I retained my curiosity therefore; but from that hour forward, the negro and his hidden gold were ever before me. It mattered not where I was, in what companionship, or how engaged. One figure occupied the foreground of every picture. If my waking thoughts represented him exactly as I saw him at Anticosti, my sleeping fancies filled up a whole history of his life. I pictured him a slave in the “Barracoons” of his native land, heavily ironed and chained. I saw him on board the slaver, with bent-down head and crippled limbs, crouching between the decks. I followed him to the slave-market and the sugar plantation. I witnessed his sufferings, his sorrows, and his vengeance. I tracked him as he fled to the woods, with the deep-mouthed bloodhounds behind him; and I stood breathless while they struggled in deadly conflict, till, pale, bleeding, and mangled, the slave laid them dead at his feet, and tottered onward to stanch his wounds with the red gum of the liana. Then came an indistinct interval; and when I saw him next, it was as a gold-washer in the dark stream of the “Rio Nero,” his distorted limbs and mangled flesh showing through what sufferings he had passed.

Broken, incoherent incidents of crime and misery, of tortured agonies and hellish vengeance, would cross my sleeping imagination, amidst which one

picture ever recurred,—it was of the negro as I saw him at Anticosti, crouching beast-like on the earth, and while he patted the ground with his hand, throwing a stealthy, terrified glance on every side to see that he was not observed. That he fancied himself in the act of concealing the gold for which he had bartered his very blood, the gesture indicated plainly enough; and in the same attitude my fancy would depict him so powerfully, so truthfully, too, that when I awoke, I had but to close my eyes again, and the vision would come back with every color and adjunct of reality.

My preoccupation of mind could not have escaped the shrewd observation of companions, had not the unexpected discovery of gold in the sands of the river effectually turned every thought into another and more interesting channel. At first it was mere dust was detected; but, later on, small misshapen pieces of dusky yellow were picked up, which showed the gold in its most valuable form, in combination with quartz rock.

Up to the moment of that discovery, all was lassitude and indifference. A few only gave themselves the trouble to wet their feet, the greater number sitting lazily down upon the river's bank, and gazing on the “washers” with a contemptuous negligence. The failures they experienced, even their humble successes, were met with sneers and laughter; till at last Hermose held up aloft a little spicula of gold about the thickness of a pencil. No sooner had the brilliant lustre caught their eyes, than, like hounds at the sight of the stag, they sprung to their feet and dashed into the stream.

What a sudden change came over the scene! Instead of the silence of that dark river, through whose dull current three or four figures waded

noiselessly, while in lazy indolence their companions lay smoking or sleeping near, now, in an instant, the whole picture became animated. With plashing water and wild shouts of various import, the deep glen resounded, as upwards of thirty men descended into the river; and while some examined the bed of the stream with the “barretas,” others dived beneath the water to explore it with their hands, and bring up mingled masses of earth and dust, over which they bent with earnest gaze for many minutes together.

Then what cries of joy or disappointment broke forth at every instant! There seemed at once to come over that hardened, time-worn group of men all the changing fickleness of childhood,—the wayward vacillations of hope and despair, bright visions of sudden wealth, with gloomy thoughts of disappointment,—when, suddenly, one brought up from the bed of the stream something which he showed to his neighbor, then to another and another, till a knot had gathered close around him, among which I found myself. “What is it?” said I, disappointed at not seeing some great mass of yellow gold.

“Don't you see? It is the fossil bone of the antelope,” said Hermose; “and when the floods have penetrated deep enough to unbury that, there 's little doubt but we shall find gold enough.”

“Who says enough?” cried a Mexican, as, emerging half-suffocated from the water, he held aloft a pure piece of metal, nearly the size of a small apple. “Of such fruit as this, one never can eat to indigestion!”

Halkett's whistle was soon heard, summoning the whole party to a council on the bank; nor was the call long unanswered. In an instant the tanned and swarthy figures were seen emerging, all dripping as

they were, from the stream, ascending the banks, and then throwing themselves in attitudes of careless ease around the leader.

A short discussion ensued as to the locality upon which we had chanced, some averring that it was an unexplored branch of the “Brazo,” others that it was one of those wayward courses into which mountain streams are directed in seasons of unusual rain. The controversy was a warm, and might soon have become an angry, one, had not Halkett put an end to all altercation by saying, “It matters little how the place be called, or what its latitude; you know the Mexican adage, 'It's always a native land where there's gold.' That there is *some* here, I have no doubt; that there is *as much* as will repay us for the halt, is another question. My advice is, that we turn the river into another course, leave the present channel dry and open, and then explore it thoroughly.”

“Well spoken and true,” said an old white-headed Gambusino. “That is the plan in the Far West; and they are the only fellows who go right about their work.”

The proposal was canvassed ably on all sides, and adopted with scarcely anything like opposition; and then parties were “told off,” to carry into execution different portions of the labor. The section into which I fell was that of the scouts, or explorers, who were to track the course of the stream upwards, and search for a suitable spot at which to commence operations. Hermose took the command of this party, and named the “Lépero” as his lieutenant.

The “sierra” through which our path lay was singularly wild and picturesque. The rocks, thrown about in every fantastic shape, were actually covered

with the tendrils of the liana, whose great blue flowers hung in luxuriant clusters from every cliff and crag. Wild fig and almond trees—loaded with fruit, red guavas and limes, met us as we advanced, till at length we found ourselves in the very centre of a tract rich in every production of our gardens, and all growing in spontaneous freedom and wildness. The yellow-flowering cactus and the golden lobelia, that would have been the choicest treasures of a conservatory in other lands, we here broke branches off to fan away the mosquitoes and the gallinippers.

The farther we went, the more fruitful and luxuriant did the tract seem. Oranges, peaches, and grapes, in all the profusion of their wildest abundance, surrounded us, and even littered the very way beneath our feet. To feel the full enchantment of such a scene, one should have been a prairie traveller for weeks, long-wearied and heart-sore with the dull monotony of a tiresome journey, with fevered tongue and scorching feet, with eyeballs red from the glaring sun, and temples throbbing from the unshaded lustre. Then, indeed, the change was like one of those wondrous transformations of a fairy tale, rather than mere actual life. In the transports of our delight we threw ourselves down among the flowering shrubs, and covered ourselves with blossoms and buds; we bound the grape clusters on our foreheads like bacchanals, and tied great branches of the orange-tree round us as scarfs. In all the wantonness of children, we tore the fruit in handfuls, and threw it around us. The wasteful prodigality of nature seemed to suggest excess on our part, prompting us to a hundred follies and extravagances. As if to fill up the measure of our present joy by imparting the brightness of future hope, Hermose told us that such little spots of

luxuriant verdure were very often found in the regions richest with gold, and that we might be almost certain of discovering a valuable Placer in our immediate vicinity. There was another, and that no inconsiderable, advantage attending these “Oases” of fertility. The Indians never dared to intrude upon these precincts; their superstition being that the “Treasure God,” or the “Genius of the Mine,” always had his home in these places, and executed summary vengeance upon all who dared to invade them. This piece of red-man faith, however jocularly recorded, did not meet that full contempt from my comrades I could have expected. On the contrary, many cited instances of disasters and calamities which seemed like curious corroborations of the creed. Indeed, I soon saw how naturally superstitious credences become matter of faith to him who lives the wild life of the prairies.

“Then you think we shall have to pay the price of all this enjoyment, Hermose?” said I, as I lay luxuriously beneath a spreading banana.

“Quien sabe? who knows?” exclaimed he, in his Mexican dialect, and with a shrug of the shoulders that implied doubt.

Although each event is well marked in my memory, and the incidents of each day indelibly fixed upon my mind, it is needless that I should dwell upon passages, which, however at the time full of adventure and excitement, gave no particular direction to the course of my humble destiny. We succeeded in finding a spot by which the bed of the river might be changed; and after some days of hard labor we accomplished the task.

The course of the stream thus left dry for a considerable distance became the scene of our more

active exertions. The first week or two little was discovered, save gold dust, or an occasional “spicula” of the metal, heavily alloyed with copper; but as we followed up the course towards the mountain, a vein of richest ore was found, lying near the surface too, and presenting masses of pure gold, many of them exceeding twenty ounces in weight.

There could be no doubt that we had chanced upon a most valuable Placer; and now orders were given to erect huts, and such rude furnaces for testing as our skill stood in need of. A strict scale of profits was also established, and a solemn oath exacted from each, to be true and faithful to his comrades in all things. Our little colony demanded various kinds of service; for, while the gold-seeking was our grand object, it was necessary, in order to subsist the party, that a corps of trappers and hunters should be formed, who should follow the buffalo, the red-deer, and the wild hog over the prairies.

Many declined serving on this expedition, doubtless suspecting that the share of treasure which might be allotted to the absent man would undergo a heavy poundage. Hermose, however, whose adventurous spirit inclined more willingly to the excitement of the chase than the monotonous labor of a washer, volunteered to go, and I offered myself to be his companion. Some half-dozen of the youngest agreed to follow us, and we were at once named—The Hunters to the Expedition.

The rivalry between the two careers, good-natured as it was, served to amuse and interest us; and while *our* blank days were certain to obtain for us a share of scoffs and jibes, *their* unsuccessful ones did not escape their share of sarcasm. If one party affected to bewail the necessity of storing up treasure for a set of walking gentlemen who passed the day in pleasure-

rambles about the country, the other took care to express their discontent at returning loaded with spoils for a parcel of lazy impostors that lounged away their time on the bank of a river. Meanwhile, both pursuits flourished admirably. Practice had made us most expert with the rifle; and as we were fortunate enough to secure some of the “mustangs,” and train them to the saddle, our “chasse” became both more profitable and pleasant. By degrees, too, little evidences of superfluity began to display themselves in our equipment: our saddles, at first made of a mere wooden trestle, with a strip of buffalo hide thrown across it, were now ornamented with black bear-skins, or the more valuable black fox-skin; our own costume, if not exactly conformable to Parisian models, was comfortable and easy,—a brown deerskin tunic, fastened by a belt around the waist; short breeches, reaching to the knee-cap, which was left bare, for climbing; “botas vaqueras,” very loose at top, and serving as holsters for our pistols; and a cap of fox or squirrel, usually designed by the wearer, and exhibiting proofs of ingenuity, if not taste: such was our dress.

Our weapons of rifle, and bowie-knife, and pistols, giving it a character, which, on the boards of a minor theatre, would have been a crowning “success.” We were also all mounted,—some, Hermose and myself in particular, admirably so. And although I often in my own heart regretted the powers of strength and endurance of poor “Charry,” my little mustang steed, with his long forelock and his bushy moustaches,—a strange peculiarity of this breed,—was a picture of compactness and agility.

We had also constructed a rude wagon—so rude that I can even yet laugh as I think on it—to carry our spoils, which were far too cumbrous for a mere

horse-load, and when left on the prairies attracted such numbers of prairie-wolves and vultures as to be downright perilous. If this same wagon was not exactly a type for “Long Acre,” it was at least strong and serviceable; and although the wheels were far nearer oval than circular, they *did* go round; the noise they created in so doing might have been disagreeable to a nervous invalid, being something between the scream of a railway train and the yell of a thousand peacocks. But I believe we rather liked it,—at least, I know that when some luckless Sybarite suggested the use of a little bear's fat around the axle, he was looked on as a kind of barbarian to whom nature denied the least ear for music.

As for the “chasse” itself, it was glorious sport,—glorious in the unbounded freedom to wander whither one listed; glorious in the sense of mastery we felt that we alone of all the millions of mankind had reached this far-away, unvisited tract; glorious in its successes, its dangers, and its toils!

There was, besides, that endless variety of adventure prairie-hunting affords. Now, it was the heavy buffalo, lumbering lazily along, and tossing his huge head in anger as the rifle-ball pierced his dense hide. Now, it was the proudly antlered stag, careering free over miles and miles of waste. At another time the grizzly bear was our prey, and our sport lay in the dense jungle or among the dwarf scrub, through which the hissing rattlesnake was darting, affrighted at the noise. In more peaceful mood, the antelope would be the victim; while the wild turkey or the great cock of the wood would grace with his bright wavy feathers the cap of him whose aim was true at longest rifle range.

And these were happy days,—the very happiest of my whole life; for if sometimes regrets would arise

about that road of ambition from which I had turned off, to wander in the path of mere pleasure, I bethought me that no career the luckiest fortune could have opened to me would have developed the same manly powers of endurance of heat and cold and of peril in a hundred shapes. In no other pursuit could I have educated myself to the like life of toils and dangers, bringing me daily, as it were, face to face with Death, till I could look on him without a shudder or a fear.

I will not say that Donna Maria may not have passed across the picture of my mind-drawn regrets; but if her form did indeed flit past, it was to breathe a hope of some future meeting, some bright time to come, the recompense of all our separation. And I thought with pride how much more worthy of her would I be as the prairie-hunter,—the fearless follower of the bear and buffalo, accustomed to the life of the wild woods,—than as the mere adventurer, whose sole stock in trade was the subterfuge and deceit he could practise on the unwary.

It was strange enough all this while that I seemed to have lost sight of my old guide-star,—the great passion of my earlier years, the desire to be a “gentleman.” It was stranger still, but after-reflection has shown me that it was true, I made far greater progress toward that wished-for goal when I ceased to make it the object of my ambition.



CHAPTER XXIV. THE FATE OF A GAMBUSINO

“The life of the prairie,” with all its seeming monotony, was very far from wearisome. The chase, which to some might have presented the same unvarying aspect, to those who passionately loved sport abounded in new and exciting incidents. If upon one day the object of pursuit was the powerful bison bull, with his shaggy mane and short straight horns, on another, it was the swift antelope or the prairie fox, whose sable skin is the rarest piece of dandyism a hunter's pelisse can exhibit; now and then the wide-spread paw of a brown bear would mark the earth, and give us days of exciting pursuit; or, again, some Indian “trail”—some red-man “sign”—would warn us that we were approaching the hunting-grounds of a tribe, and that all our

circumspection was needed. Besides these, there were changes, inappreciable to the uninitiated, but thoroughly understood by us, in the landscape itself, highly interesting. It is a well-known fact that the shepherd becomes conversant with the face of every sheep in his flock, tracing differences of expression where others would recognize nothing but a blank uniformity; so did the prairie, which at first presented one unvarying expanse, become at last marked by a hundred peculiarities, with which close observation made us intimate. Indeed, I often wondered how a great stretching plain, without a house, a tree, a shrub, or a trickling brook, could supply the materials of scenic interest; and the explanation is almost as difficult as the fact. One must have lived the life of solitude and isolation which these wild wastes compel, to feel how every moss-clad stone can have its meaning,—how the presence of some little insignificant lichen indicates the vicinity of water,—how the blue foxbell shows where honey is to be found,—how the faint spiral motion of the pirn grass gives warning that rain is nigh at hand. Then with what interest at each sunset is the horizon invested, when the eye can pierce space to a vast extent, and mark the fog-banks which tower afar off, and distinguish the gathering clouds from the dark-backed herd of buffaloes or a group of Indians on a march. Every prairie “roll,” every dip and undulation of that vast surface, had its own interest, till at length I learned to think that all other prospects must be tame, spiritless, and unexciting, in comparison with that glorious expanse, where sky and earth were one, and where the clouds alone threw shadows upon the vast plain.

The habit of a hunter's life in such scenes, the constant watchfulness against sudden peril, inspire a

frame of mind in which deep reflectiveness is blended with a readiness and promptitude of action,—gifts which circumstances far more favorable to moral training do not always supply. The long day passed in total solitude, since very often the party separates to rendezvous at nightfall, necessarily calls for thought,—not, indeed, the dreamy revery of the visionary, forgetful of himself and all the world, but of that active, stirring mental operation which demands effort and will. If fanciful pictures of the future as we would wish to make it, intervene, they come without displacing the stern realities of the present, any more than the far distances of a picture interfere with the figures of the foreground.

Forgive, most kind reader, the prolix fondness with which I linger on this theme. Fortune gave me but scant opportunity of cultivation, but my best schooling was obtained upon the prairies. It was there I learned the virtue of self-reliance,—the only real independence. It was there I taught myself to endure reverses without disappointment, and bear hardships without repining. It was there I came to know that he who would win an upward way in life must not build upon some self-imagined superiority, but boldly enter the lists with others, and make competitorship the test of his capacity. They were inferior acquirements, it is true; but I learned also to bear hunger and cold, and want of rest and sleep, which in my after-life were not without their value. It would savor too much of a “bull” for him who writes his own memoirs to apologize for egotism; still, I do feel compunctions of conscience about the length of these personal details,—and now to my story.

While we pursued our hunting pastime over the prairies, the “expedition” was successful beyond all

expectation. No sooner was the bed of the river laid bare, than gold was discovered in quantities, and the "washers," despising the slower process of "sifting," betook themselves to the pick and the "barreta," like their comrades. It was a season of rejoicing, and, so far as our humble means permitted, of festivity; for though abounding in gold, our daily food was buffalo and "tough doe," unseasoned by bread or anything that could prove its substitute. If the days were passed in successful labor, the evenings were prolonged with narratives of the late discoveries, and gorgeous imaginings of the future as each fancied the bright vista should be. Some were for a life of unbounded excess and dissipation,—the "amende," as they deemed it, for all their toil and endurance; others anticipated a career of splendor and display in the Old World. The Frenchman raved of Paris and its cafés and restaurants, its theatres and its thousand pleasures. A few speculated upon setting forth on fresh expeditions with better means of success. Halkett alone bethought him of home and of an aged mother, in the far-away valley of Llanberris, whose remainder of life he longed to render easy and independent.

Nor was it the least courageous act of his daring life to avow such a feeling among such associates. How they laughed at his humility! how they scoffed at the filial reverence of the Gambusino! Few of them had known a parent's care. Most were outcasts from their birth, and started in life with that selfish indifference to all others which is so often the passport to success. I saw this, and perceived how affection and sympathy are so much additional weight upon the back of him "who enters for the plate of Fortune;" but yet my esteem for Halkett increased from that moment. I fancied that his

capacity for labor and exertion was greater from the force of a higher and a nobler impulse than that which animated the others; and I thought I could trace to this source the untiring energy for which he was conspicuous above all the rest. It was evident, too, that this “weakness,” as they deemed it, had sapped nothing of his courage, nor detracted in aught from his resolute daring,—ever foremost, as he was, wherever peril was to be confronted.

I ruminated long and frequently over this, to me, singular trait of character,—whole days as I rambled the prairies alone in search of game; the tedious hours of the night I would lie awake speculating upon it, and wondering if it were impulses of this nature that elevated men to high deeds and generous actions, and—to realize my conception in one word —made them “gentlemen.”

To be sure, in all the accessory advantages of such, Halkett was most lamentably deficient, and it would have been labor in vain to endeavor to conform him to any one of the usages of the polite world; and yet, I thought, might it not be possible that this rude, unlettered man might have within him, in the recesses of his own heart, all those finer instincts, all those refinements of high feeling and honor that make up a gentleman,—like a lump of pure virgin gold encased in a mass of pudding-stone. The study of this problem took an intense hold upon me; for while I could recognize in myself a considerable power for imitating all the observations of the well-bred world, I grieved to see that these graces were mere garments, which no more influenced a man's real actions than the color of his coat or the shape of his hat will affect the stages of an ague or the paroxysms of a fever.

To become a “gentleman,” according to my very

crude notions of that character, was the ruling principle of my life. I knew that rank, wealth, and station were all indispensably requisite; but these I also fancied might be easily counterfeited, while other gifts must be absolutely possessed,—such as a good address; a skill in all manly exercises; a personal courage ever ready to the proof; a steady adherence to a pledged word. Now I tried to educate myself to all these, and to a certain extent I succeeded. In fact, I experienced what all men have who have set up a standard before them, that constant measurement will make one grow taller. I fancied that Halkett and myself were on the way to the same object, by different roads. Forgive the absurd presumption, most benevolent reader; for there is really something insufferably ludicrous in the very thought; and I make the “confession” now only in the fulness of a heart which is determined to have no concealments.

That I rode my “mustang” with a greater air; that I wore my black fox pelisse more jauntily; that I slung my rifle at my back with a certain affectation of grace; that I was altogether “got up” with an eye to the picturesque,—did not escape my companions, who made themselves vastly merry at pretensions which, in their eyes, were so supremely ridiculous, but which amply repaid me for all the sarcasm, by suggesting a change of their name for me,—my old appellation, “Il Lépero,” being abandoned for “Il Condé,” the Count. It matters little in what spirit you give a man a peculiar designation: the world take it up in their own fashion, and he himself conforms to it, whether for good or evil.

As the “Condé,” I doubtless displayed many a laughable affectation, and did many things in open caricature of the title; but, on the other hand, the

name spurred me on to actions of most perilous daring, and made me confront danger for the very sake of the hazard; till, by degrees, I saw that the designation conferred upon me—at first in mockery—became a mark of honorable esteem among my comrades.

The prairie was fruitful in incidents to test my courage. As the season wore on, and game became more scarce, we were compelled to pursue the "bison" into distant tracks, verging upon the hunting-grounds of an Indian tribe called the Camanches. At first our "rencontres" were confined to meeting with a scout or some small outlying party of the tribe; but later on we ventured farther within their frontier, and upon one occasion we penetrated a long and winding ravine which expanded into a small plain, in the midst of which, to our amazement, we beheld their village.

The scene was in every way a striking one. It was a few minutes after sunset, and while yet the "yellow glory" of the hour bathed the earth, that we saw the cane wigwams of the "Camanches" as they stood at either side of a little river that, with many a curve, meandered through the plain. Some squaws were seated on the banks, and a number of children were sporting in the stream, which appeared too shallow for swimming. Here and there, at the door of the wigwams, an old man was sitting smoking. Some mustangs, seemingly fresh caught, were picketed in a circle, and a few boys were amusing themselves, tormenting the animals into bounds and curvets, the laughter the sport excited being audible where we stood. The soft influence of the hour, the placid beauty of the picture, the semblance of tranquil security impressed on everything, the very childish gambols,—were all images so full of home and

homelike memories that we halted and gazed on the scene in speechless emotion. Perhaps each of us at that moment had traversed in imagination half a world of space, and was once again a child! As for myself, infancy had been “no fairy dream,” and yet my eyes filled up, and yet my lip quivered, as I looked.

It was evident that the warriors of the tribe were absent on some expedition. The few figures that moved about were either the very old, the very young, or the squaws, who, in all the enjoyment of that gossiping, as fashionable in the wild regions of the West as in the gilded boudoirs of Paris, sat enjoying the cool luxury of the twilight.

Our party consisted of only four and myself; and standing, as we did, in a grove of nut-trees, were perfectly concealed from view: no sense of danger then interfered with our enjoyment of the prospect; we gazed calmly on the scene on which we looked.

“Senhor Condé,” whispered one of my party, a swarthy Spaniard from the Basque, “what a foray we might make yonder! Their young men are absent; they could make no defence. Caramba! it would be rare sport.”

“Condé mio!” cried a Mexican, who had once been a horse-dealer, “I see mustangs yonder worth five hundred dollars, if they are worth a cent; let us have a dash forward and carry them off.”

“There is gold in that village,” muttered an old Ranchero, with a white moustache; “I see sifting-sieves drying beside the stream.”

And so, thought I to myself, these are the associates who, a moment back, I dreamed were sharing my thoughts, and whose hearts, I fancied, were overflowing with softest emotions. One, indeed,

had not pronounced, and to him I turned in hope. He was a dark-eyed, sharp-featured Breton. “And you, Claude,” said I, “what are your thoughts on this matter?”

“I leave all in the hands of my captain,” said he, saluting in military fashion; “but if there be a pillage, I claim the woman that is sitting on the rock yonder, with a yellow girdle round her, as mine.”

I turned away in utter disappointment. The robber-spirit was the only one I had evoked, and I grew sick at heart to think of it. How is it that, in certain moods of mind, the vices we are conversant with assume a double coarseness, and that we feel repugnance to what daily habit had seemed to have inured us?

“Is it to be, or not?” growled the Spaniard, who, having tightened his girths and examined the lock of his rifle, now stood in somewhat patient anxiety.

“Since when have we become banditti,” said I, insultingly, “that we are to attack and pillage helpless women and children? Are these the lessons Halkett has taught us? Back to the camp. Let us have no more of such counsels.”

“We meet nothing but scoffs and jibes when we return empty-handed,” muttered the Spaniard. “It is seldom such an opportunity offers of a heavy booty.”

“Right-about,” said I, imperiously, not caring to risk my ascendency by debating the question further. They obeyed without a word; but it was easy to see that the spirit of mutiny was but sleeping. For some miles of the way a dreary silence pervaded the party. I tried all in my power to bring back our old good understanding, and erase the memory of the late altercation; but even my friend Narvasque held aloof, and seemed to side with the others. I was vexed and

irritated to a degree the amount of the incident was far from warranting; nor was the fact that we were returning without any success without its influence. Moody and sad, I rode along at their head, not making any further effort to renew their confidence, when suddenly a spotted buck started from the shelter of a prairie roll, and took his way across the plain. To unsling my rifle and fire at him was the work of half a minute. My shot missed; and I heard, or thought I heard, a burst of contemptuous laughter behind me. Without turning my head, I spurred my horse to a sharp gallop, and proceeded to reload my rifle as I went. The buck had, however, got a “long start” of me; and although my mustang had both speed and endurance, I soon saw that the chase would prove unrewarding; and, after a hot pursuit of half a mile, I pulled up and wheeled about. Where was my party? Not a trace of them was to be seen. I rode up a little slope of the prairie, and then, at a great way off, I could descry their figures as with furious speed they were hastening back in the direction of the Camanche village. I cannot express the bitterness of the feeling that came over me.

It was no longer the sense of outraged humanity which filled my heart. Selfishness usurped the ground altogether, and it was the injured honor of a leader whose orders had been despised. It was the affront to my authority wounded me so deeply. Then I fancied to myself their triumphant return to the camp, laden with the spoils of victory, and full of heroic stories of their own deeds; while I, the captain of the band, should have nothing to contribute but a lame narrative of misplaced compassion, which some might call by even a harsher name. Alas for weak principle! I wished myself back at their head a hundred times over. There was no atrocity that, for a

minute or two, I did not feel myself capable of; I really believe that if any other course were open to me, I had never turned my steps back toward the camp. Crest-fallen and sad indeed was I as I rode forward,—now cursing the insubordinate rabble that deserted me; now inveighing against my own silly efforts to change the ferocious instincts of such natures. In my bitterness of spirit I attributed all to my foolish ambition of being “the gentleman.” What business had such a character there? or what possible link could bind him to such companionship? In my discontent, too, I fancied that these “gentlemen” traits were like studding-sails, only available in fine weather and with a fair wind, but that for the storms and squalls of life such fine-spun canvas was altogether unsuited. Is it needful I should say that I lived to discover this to be an error?

To reach the camp ere nightfall, I was obliged to ride fast, and the quick stride of my “half-breed” did more to rally my spirits than all my philosophizings.

The slight breeze of sunset was blowing over the prairie, when I came in sight of the skirting of nut-wood which sheltered the camp to the “south'ard.” It was like home, somehow, that spot. The return to it each evening had given it that character, and one's instincts are invariably at work to make substitutes for all the “prestiges” that tell of family and friends. I experienced the feeling strongly now, as I entered the wood and spurred my nag onward, impatient to catch a glimpse at the watch-fires. As I issued from the copse, and looked up towards the little table-land where the camp used to stand, I saw nothing that spoke of my friends. There were no fires; not a figure moved on the spot. I pressed eagerly forward to ascertain the reason, my mind full of its own explanation of the fact, in which, I own it, fears were

already blending. Perhaps they had removed somewhat higher up the stream; perhaps the Camanches had been there, and a battle had been fought; perhaps—But why continue? Already I stood upon the spreading surface of tableland, and was nearing the spot where all our huts were built, and now a deep, booming noise filled my ears,—a hollow, cavernous sound, like the sea surging within some rocky cave. I listened; it grew fuller and louder, or seemed to do so, and I could mark sounds that resembled the crashing of timber and the splintering of rocks.

My suspense had now risen to torture, and my poor mustang, equally frightened as myself, refused to move a step, but stood with his ears flattened back, fore-legs extended, and protruded nostril, sniffing, in a very paroxysm of fright.

I dismounted, and, fastening his head to his fore-leg, in Mexican fashion, advanced on foot. Each step I made brought me nearer to the sounds, which now I perceived were those of a fast-rolling river. A horrid dread shot through my heart, my senses reeled as it struck me; but with an effort I sprang forward, and there, deep below me, in a boiling ocean of foam, rolled the river along the channel which we had succeeded in damming up, on the mountain side, and in whose dry bed all our labors had been followed. In an instant the whole truth revealed itself before me: the stream, swollen by the rain falling in the distant mountains, had overborne the barrier, and, descending with all its force, had carried away village, mines, and every trace of the ill-fated “Expedition.” The very trees that grew along the banks were at first undermined, and then swept away, and might be seen waving their great branches above the flood, and then disappearing forever, like

gigantic figures struggling in the agony of drowning. The rude smelting-house, built of heavy stones and masses of rock, had been carried down with the rest. Trees whose huge size attested ages of growth reeled with the shock that shook the earth beside them, and seemed to tremble at their own coming destiny.

The inundation continued to increase at each instant, and more than once the “yellowest” waves compelled me to retire. This it was which first led me to despair of my poor comrades, since I inferred that the torrent had burst its barrier only a short space before my arrival; and as the sunset was the hour when all the gold discovered during the day was washed, before being deposited in the smelting-house, I conjectured that my companions were overtaken at that moment by the descending flood, and that none had escaped destruction.

However the sad event took place, I never saw any of them after; and although I tracked the stream for miles, and spent the entire of two days in search of them, I did not discover one trace of the luckless expedition. So changed had everything become—such a terrible alteration had the scene undergone—that whenever I awoke from a sleep, short and broken as my feverish thoughts would make it, it was with difficulty I could believe that this was once the “Camp;” that where that swollen and angry torrent rolled, had been the dry, gravelly bed where joyous parties labored; that beneath those cedars, where now the young alligator stirred the muddy slime, we used to sit and chat in pleasant companionship; that human joys and passions and hopes once lived and flourished in that little space where ruin and desolation had now set their marks, and where the weariest traveller would not linger, so sorrow-struck and sad was every feature of the scene.

Poor Halkett was uppermost in my thoughts,—his remembrance of his old mother, his plans for her future happiness and comfort, formed, doubtless, many a long year before, and only realized to be dashed forever! How many a wanderer and outcast, doubtless, like him, have sunk into unhonored graves in far-away lands, and of whom no trace exists, and who are classed among the worthless and the heartless of their families; and yet, if we had record of them, we might learn, perhaps, how thoughts of home—of some dear mother, of some kind sister, of some brother who had been more than father—had spirited them on to deeds of daring and privation, and how, in all the terrible conflict of danger in which their days were spent, one bright hope, of returning home at last, glittered like a light-ship on a lonely sea, and shed a radiance when all around was dark and dreary.

The third day broke, and still found me lingering beside the fatal torrent, not only without meeting with any of my former comrades, but even of that party who had returned to the Indian village not one came back. In humble imitation of prairie habit, I erected a little cross on the spot, and with my penknife inscribed poor Halkett's name. This done, I led my horse slowly away through the tangled underwood till I reached the open plain, then I struck out in a gallop, and rode in the direction where the sun was setting.

The mere detail of personal adventures, in which the traits of character or the ever-varying aspects of human nature find no place, must always prove wearisome. The most “hair-breadth 'scapes” require for their interest the play of passions and emotions; and in this wise the perils of the lonely traveller amid the deserts of the Far West could not vie in

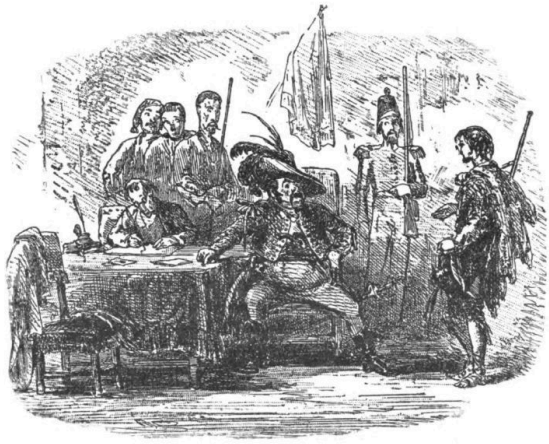
interest with the slightest incident of domestic life, wherein human cares and hopes and joys are mingled up.

I will not longer trespass on the indulgence of any one who has accompanied me so far, by lingering over the accidents of my prairie life, nor tell by what chances I escaped death in some of its most appalling forms. The “Choctaw,” the jaguar, the spotted leopard of the jungle, the cayman of the sand lakes, had each in turn marked me for its prey, and yet, preserved from every peril, I succeeded in reaching the little village of “La Noria,” or the “Well,” which occupies one of the opening gorges of the Rocky Mountains, at the outskirts of which some of the inhabitants found me asleep, with clothing reduced to very rags, nothing remaining of all my equipment save my rifle and a little canvas pouch of ammunition.

My entertainers were miners, whose extreme poverty and privation would have been inexplicable, had I not learned that the settlement was formed exclusively of convicts, who had either been pardoned during the term of their sentence, or, having completed their time, preferred passing the remainder of their lives in exile. As a “billet of conduct” was necessary to all who settled at the village, the inhabitants, with a very few exceptions, were peaceable, quiet, and inoffensive; and of the less well disposed, a rigidly severe police took the most effective charge.

Had there been any way of disposing of me, I should not have been suffered to remain; but as there was no “parish” to which they could “send me on,” nor any distinct fund upon which to charge me, I was retained in a spirit of rude compassion, for which, had it even been ruder, I had been grateful. The

“Gobernador” of the settlement was an old Mexican officer of Santa Anna's staff called Salezar, and whose “promotion” was a kind of penalty imposed upon him for his robberies and extortions in the commissariat of the army. He was not altogether unworthy of the trust, since it was asserted that there never was a convict vice nor iniquity in which he was not thoroughly versed, nor could any scheme be hatched, the clew to which his dark ingenuity could not discover.



I was summoned before him on the day of my arrival, and certainly a greater contrast could not have been desired than was the bravery of his costume to the rags of mine. A Spanish hat and feathers, such as is only seen upon the stage, surmounted his great red and carbuncled face; a pair of fiery red moustaches, twisted into two complete circles, with a tail out of them like an eccentric “Q;” a sky-blue jacket covered with silver buttons; tight pantaloons of the same color; and Hessian boots,—

made up the chief details of a figure whose unwieldy size the tightness of the dress did not by any means set off to advantage. He wore besides a quantity of daggers, pistols, and stilettos suspended around his person, and a huge Barcelona blade hung by two silver chains from his side, the rattle and jingle of which, as he spoke, appeared to give him the most lively pleasure. I was ordered to stand before a table at which he sat, with a kind of secretary at his side, while he interrogated me as to who I was, whence I came, the object of my journey, and so forth. My account of myself was given in the very briefest way I could devise,—totally devoid of all coloring or exaggeration, and, *for me*, with a most singular avoidance of the romantic; and yet, to my utter discomfiture, from the very announcement of my name, down to the last incident of my journey, he characterized every statement by the very short and emphatic word “a lie,” desiring the secretary to record the same in his “Ledger,” as his own firm conviction; “and add,” said he, solemnly, “that the fellow is a spy from the States of North America,—that he probably belonged to some exploring party into our frontier,—and that he will most certainly be hanged whenever the smallest offence is proved against him.” These benign words were most royally spoken, and I made my acknowledgments for them by taking off my tattered and greasy cap and, with a most urbane bow, wishing him health and happiness for half a century to come, to pronounce similar blessings upon many others.

The bystanders did look, I confess, somewhat terrified at my impromptu courtesy; but Salezar, upon whom my rags, and my grotesque appearance generally, produced a rather amusing effect, laughed heartily, and bade them give me something to eat.

The order, simple and intelligible as it was, at least to me, seemed to evoke the strangest signs of surprise and astonishment, and not unreasonably; for, as I afterwards came to know, no Lazarus eat of the crumbs which fell from this “rich man's table,” while from the poor herd of the settlers not a crust nor a parched pea could be expected, as they were fed by rations so scantily doled out as barely to support life. The order to feed me was therefore issued pretty much in the same spirit which made Marie Antoinette recommend the starving people to eat “brioche.” As no one was to be found, however, bold enough to express a doubt as to the facility of the measure, I was led away in silence.

A very animated little discussion arose in the street as to what I was to get, where to have it, and who to give it,—difficulties which none seemed able to solve by any explanation save the usual Mexican one of “Quien sabe?” or “Who knows?”—having uttered which in accents of very convincing embarrassment, each went his way, leaving me standing with an old mule-driver, the only one who had not delivered himself of this speech.

Now, it chanced that the well from which the village derived its name of “La Noria” had originally been worked by two mules, who having died off, their places were supplied by two miserable asses of the prairie breed,—creatures not much bigger than sheep, and scarcely stronger. These wretched beasts had been for years past stimulated to their daily labor by the assiduous persecutions of a fierce English bull-dog, who with bark and bite made their lives a very pretty martyrdom. Either worn-out by his unremitting exertions, or that asses' flesh (of which, from their hocks and hind quarters generally, he freely partook) disagreed with him, the animal

sickened and died, leaving the poor Mulero to his own unaided devices to drive the donkeys round the charmed circle. I believe that he did all that mere man was capable of,—in fact, in everything save using his teeth he imitated closely the practices of the illustrious defunct. But asses though they were, they soon discovered that the “great motive principle” was wanting, and betook themselves to a far easier and more congenial mode of doing the day's work.

Now, the Mulero was a man of thought and reflection, and it occurred to him that if asses, however inadequately, could yet, in some sort, perform the functions of mules, there was no reason why a man, even a very poor-looking and ragged one, should not replace a bull-dog. There was that hungry, half-starved look about me, too, that vouched my temper would not be of the sweetest; and he eyed me with the glance of a connoisseur. At last Mijo—for such was he called—made the proposal to me in all form, explaining that my predecessor had had his rations allowed him like a colonist, and was entitled to sleep under cover at the house of his former mistress, La Senhora Dias, “who,” he added, with a sly wink, “was my countrywoman.” Well knowing a Mexican never boggles at a lie, no matter how broad and palpable, I took no notice of what I at once concluded to be impossible, but proceeded to inquire as to the precise functions I might be expected to perform in my canine capacity.

“A mere nothing,” said he, with a shrug of his shoulders; “we harness the beasts at daybreak,—say three o'clock; by eight the water is all up; then you can sleep or amuse yourself till four of the afternoon, when the Commandante Salezar likes to have cool

water for his bath,—that only takes an hour; then you are free again till night closes in."

"And what then?" asked I, impatiently.

"You have your rounds at night."

"My rounds! where, and what for?"

"Against the prairie wolves, that now and then are daring enough to come down into the very settlement, and carry off kids and lambs,—ay, and sometimes don't stop there."

He winked with a terrible significance at the last words.

"So, then, I am not only to bark at the asses all day, but I am to bay the wolves by night?" said I, half indignantly.

"Lupo did it," responded he, with a nod.

"*He* was a dog, Señhor Mijo," said I.

"Ah, that he was!" added he, in a tone very different from my remark, accompanying it with a most disparaging glance at my ragged habiliments. I read the whole meaning of the look at once, and hung my head, abashed at the disparaging comparison.

He waited patiently for my reply, and, perceiving that I was still silent, he said, "Well, is it a bargain?"

"Agreed," said I, with a sigh; and wondering if Fortune had yet any lower depths in store for me, I followed him to his hut. Mijo proceeded to acquaint me with all the details of my office, and also certain peculiarities of the two beasts for whose especial misery I was engaged. If compassion could have entered into my nature, it might have moved me at sight of them. Their haunches and hocks were notched and scored with the marks of teeth, while their tails were a series of round balls, like certain

old-fashioned bell-ropes, the result of days of suffering.

“I am so accustomed to the name, I must call you 'Lupo,'” said Mijo; “you have no objection?”

“Not in the least,” said I; “if a 'dog in office,' why not a dog in name?”

That same day I was conducted to the “Tienda del Gato,” the shop of “The Cat,” at the sign of which animal La Señhora Dias resided. It was a small cottage at the very extremity of the village, in a somewhat pretty garden; and here a kind of canteen was held, at which the settlers procured cigars, brandy, and other like luxuries, in exchange for their “tickets of labor.”

Of the Señhora, some mystery existed: the popular rumor was, that she had been the favorite mistress of Santa Anna, whose influence, however, could not rescue her from the fate of a convict, to which she was sentenced for forgery. Her great patron contrived, however, to release her from the indignity of a penal settlement, and placed her at “La Noria,” where she had resided two years. Some said that it was to conceal herself from the prying curiosity of the vulgar; another, that it was to hide the brand of the letter “F,” burned with a hot iron in her forehead; others, again, that it was by Santa Anna's express order (but what the reason?) she always wore a black velvet mask, which, since her arrival at the village, none had seen her remove.

A hundred stories, one more absurd than another, were circulated about her high birth and condition, and the vast wealth she had once possessed; the only real clew I could discover to these narratives being the simple fact that her dog, a fierce English bull-dog,—my own predecessor, and who by peculiar

favor was permitted to accompany her,—used to wear a massive silver collar, richly chased and ornamented: fiction, indeed, had invested it with precious stones and gems; but these were purely imaginative ornaments. Even devoid of jewels, such was deemed an unequivocal proof of riches among those whose poverty was of the very lowest order, and La Señhora Dias bought her “millionnaire” character at a cheap price. To me, the most interesting part in her story was that which called her my countrywoman; and yet this seemed so unlikely, and was coupled with so much that I knew to be impossible, that I did not venture to believe it.

It was the hour of the siesta when we reached “The Cat,” so that I had no opportunity of seeing the Señhora. Mijo conducted me to a little building in the garden, originally built as a hut for a man who watched the fruit, but latterly inhabited by Lupo. There I was installed at once. Some chestnut-leaves were my bed; a small spring afforded me water; I was to receive eight ounces of maize bread each day, with half an ounce of coffee,—Lupo had “taken” the latter “out” in sausages. Of the fruit of the garden, consisting of limes, oranges, peaches, and mangoes, I was free of whatever fell to the ground,—a species of black-mail that never failed me at the dessert. These were my perquisites,—my duties I already knew; and so Mijo left me to recruit myself by one day's rest, and on “the morrow” to begin my labors.

I shall never forget the strange *mélange* of feelings, pleasurable and the reverse, which came over me as I first found myself alone, and had time to think over my condition. Many would perhaps have said that the degradation would have mastered all other thoughts, and that the life to which I was reduced would have tended to break down all self-respect and

esteem. Whether to my credit or otherwise, I know not, but I did not feel thus,—nay, I even went so far as to congratulate myself that a source of livelihood was open to me which did not involve me in forced companionship, and that I might devote so many hours of each day to my own undisturbed thoughts, as I wandered about that vast garden, in which no other than myself appeared ever to set foot.

Culture it had none, nor seemed to need, it; one of my duties was to pluck the ripe fruit every day, ere I issued forth to the “Well,” and place the baskets at the Señhora's door; and, save this, I believe all was left to nature. What a wilderness of rank luxuriance it was! The earth had become so fertilized by the fallen fruit left to rot as it fell, that the very atmosphere was loaded with the odor of peaches and oranges and pomegranates. A thousand gaudy and brilliant flowers, too, glittered among the tall grass that tried to overtop them; and insects and creatures of colors still more beauteous fluttered and chirped among the leaves, making a little chorus of sounds that mingled deliciously with the rippling stream that murmured near.



CHAPTER XXV.

LA SEÑHORA.

CHAPTER XXV. LA SEÑHORA

To this very hour I am unable to say how long I remained at the village of La Noria. Time slipped away unchronicled; the seasons varied little, save for about two winter mouths, when heavy snows fell, and severe cold prevailed; but spring followed these with a suddenness that seemed like magic, and then came summer and autumn, as it were, blended into one,—all the varied beauties of the one season vying with the other. This was all that was wanting to complete the illusion which the monotony of my daily life suggested; for me there was no companionship,—no link that bound me to my fellow-men; the “Sunday,” too, “shone no Sabbath-day for me.” The humble range of my duties never varied; nor, save with Mijo, did I ever exchange even a passing word. Indeed, the hours of *my* labor were

precisely those when all others slept; and whether I tracked the wayworn asses at their dreary round, or pursued my solitary path at night, my own was the only voice I ever heard. It was the “life of a dog;” but, after all, how many states of existence there are far less desirable! I had always wherewithal to subsist upon; I had no severe labor, nor any duty incompatible with health; and I had—greatest blessing of all—time for self-communing and reflection; that delicious leisure, in which the meanest hovel ever raised by hands become one's “Home.” I was happy, then, after my own fashion; various little contrivances to lighten my tasks amused and occupied my thoughts. To bring the garden into order was also a passion with me; and although necessitated to invent and fashion the tools to work with, I was not deterred by this difficulty, but manfully overcame it. I greatly doubted if Watt ever gazed at a new improvement in steam machinery with half the delight I looked upon my first attempt at a rake. Then, what pleasure did I experience as I saw the trim beds covered with blooming flowers, the clearly raked walks, the grass-plots close-shaven and weedless! How the thoughts of changes and alterations filled my mind as I wandered in the dreary night! What trellises did I not invent; what festoons of the winding vine-branches; what bowers of the leafy banana! Like the old gardener, Adam, I began at last to think that all these things were too beautiful for one man's gaze, that such ecstasies as mine deserved companionship, and that the selfishness of my enjoyment was the greatest blot upon its perfection. When this notion caught hold of me, I wandered away in fancy to the “Donna Maria de los Dolores;” and how fervently did I believe that, with her to share it, my present

existence had been a life of Paradise!

These thoughts at last exhausted themselves, and I fell a thinking why the Señhora Dias never had the curiosity to visit her garden, nor see the changes I had wrought in it. To be sure, it was true she knew nothing of them: how, then, was I to make the fact reach her ears? The only hours that *I* was at liberty were those when every close-drawn curtain and closed shutter proclaimed the "siesta."

It was clear enough that a whole life might slip over in this fashion without my ever seeing her. There was something in the difficulty that prompted a desire to overcome it; and so I set myself to plan the means by which I might make her acquaintance. Of the windows which looked towards the garden, the blinds were always closed; the single door that led into it as invariably locked; I bethought me of writing a humble and most petitionary epistle, setting forth my utter solitude and isolation; but where were pen and ink and paper to come from? These were luxuries the Gobernador himself alone possessed. My next thought was more practicable: it was to deposit each morning upon her basket of fruit a little bouquet of fresh flowers. But, then, would they ever reach her hands?—would not the servant purloin and intercept my offering?—ay, that was to be thought of.

By most assiduous watching, I at last discovered that her bedroom looked into the garden by a small grated window, almost hidden by the gnarled branches of a wild fig-tree. This at once afforded me the opportunity I desired, and up the branches of this I climbed each morning of my life, to fasten to the bars my little bouquet of flowers.

With what intense expectancy did I return home

the first morning of my experiment! what vacillations of hope and fear agitated me as I came near the garden, and, looking up, saw, to my inexpressible delight, that the bouquet was gone! I could have cried for very joy! At last I was no longer an outcast, forgotten by my fellows. One, at least, knew of my existence, and possibly pitied and compassionated my desolation.

I needed no more than this to bind me again to the love of life; frail as was the link, it was enough whereupon to hang a thousand hopes and fancies, and it suggested matter for cheering thought, where, before, the wide waste of existence stretched pathless and purposeless before me. How I longed for that skill by which I might make the flowers the interpreters of my thoughts! I knew nothing of this, however; I could but form them into such combinations of color and order as should please the senses, but not appeal to the heart; and yet I did try to invent a language, forgetting the while that the key of the cipher must always remain with myself.

It chanced that one night, when on my rounds outside the village, I suddenly discovered that I had forgotten the caps for my rifle. I hastened homeward to fetch them, and entered the garden by a small door which I had myself made, and of which few were cognizant. It was a night of bright moonlight; but the wind was high, and drifted large masses of cloud across the sky, alternately hiding and displaying the moon. Tracking, with an instinct too well trained to become deceptive, the walks of the garden, while a dark mass shut out the “lamp of night,” I reached my hut, when suddenly, on a little stone bench beside the door, I beheld a female figure seated. She was scarcely four yards from where I stood, and in the full glare of the moonlight as

palpable as at noonday. She was tall and elegantly formed; her air and carriage, even beneath the coarse folds of a common dress of black serge, such as bespoke condition; her hands, too, were white as marble, and finely and delicately formed; in one of them she held a velvet mask, and I watched with anxiety to see the face from which it had been removed, which was still averted from me. At last she turned slowly round, and I could perceive that her features, although worn by evident suffering and sorrow, had once been beautiful; the traits were in perfect symmetry; the mouth alone had a character of severity somewhat at variance with the rest, but its outline was faultless,—the expression only being unpleasing. The dark circles around the eyes attested the work of years of grief, bitter and corroding.

What should I do,—advance boldly, or retire noiselessly from the spot? If the first alternative presented perhaps the only chance of ever speaking to her, it might also prevent her ever again visiting the garden. This was a difficulty; and ere I had time to solve it, she arose to leave the spot. I coughed slightly: she halted and looked around, without any semblance of terror or even surprise, and so we stood face to face.

“You should have been on your rounds on this hour!” said she, with a manner of almost stern expression, and using the Spanish language.

“So I should, Señhora; but having forgot a part of my equipment, I returned to seek it.”

“They would punish you severely if it were known,” said she, in the same tone.

“I am aware of that,” replied I; “and yet I would incur the penalty twice over to have seen one of whom my thoughts for every hour these months past

have been full."

"Of me? You speak of me?"

"Yes, Señhora, of you. I know the presumption of my words; but bethink you that it is not in such a spirit they are uttered, but as the cry of one humbled and humiliated to the very dust, and who, on looking at you, remembers the link that binds him to his fellows, and for the instant rises above the degradation of his sad condition."

"And it is through *me*,—by looking at me,—such thoughts are inspired!" said she, in an accent of piercing anguish. "Are you an English youth?"

"Yes, Señhora, as much as an Irishman can call himself."

"And is this the morality of your native land," said she, in English, "that you can feel an elevation of heart and sentiment from the contemplation of such as I am? Shame, sir,—shame upon your falsehood, or worse shame upon your principle."

"I only know you as my day and night dreams have made you, lady,—as the worshipper creates his own idol."

"But you have heard of me?" said she, speaking with a violence and rapidity that betokened a disordered mind. "All the world has heard of me, from the Havannah to Guajuaqualla, as the poisoner and the forger!"

I shook my head dissentingly.

"It is, then, because you are less than human," said she, scoffingly, "or you *had* heard it. But mind, sir, it is untrue; I am neither." She paused, and then, in a voice of terrible emotion, said, "There is enough of crime upon this poor head, but not that! And where have you lived, not to have heard of La Señhora

Dias?" said she, with an hysteric laugh.

In a few words I told her how I had made part of a great gold-searching expedition, and been utterly ruined by the calamity which destroyed my companions.

"You would have sold yourself for gold wherewith to buy pleasure!" muttered she to herself.

"I was poor, lady; I must needs do something for my support."

"Then why not follow humble labor? What need of wealth? Where had you learned its want, or acquired the taste to expend it? You could only have imitated rich men's vices, not their virtues, that sometimes ennoble them."

The wild vehemence of her manner, as with an excessive rapidity she uttered these words, convinced me that her faculties were not under the right control of reason, and I followed her with an interest even heightened by that sad impression.

"You see no one, you speak to none," said she, turning round suddenly, "else I should bid you forget that you have ever seen me."

"Are we to meet again, Señhora?" said I, submissively, as I stood beside the door, of which she held the key in her hand.

"Yes—perhaps—I don't know;" and, so saying, she left me.

Two months crept over—and how slowly they went!—without my again seeing the Señhora. Were it not that the bouquets which each morning I fastened to the window-bars were removed before noon, I could have fancied that she had no other existence than what my dreamy imagination gave her. The heavy wooden "jalousies" were never

opened; the door remained close locked; not a foot-tread marked the gravel near it. It was clear to me she had never crossed the threshold since the night I first saw her.

I fell into a plodding, melancholy mood. The tiresome routine of my daily life, its dull, unvarying monotony, began to wear into my soul, and I ceased either to think over the past or speculate on the future, but would sit for hours long in a moody revery, actually unconscious of everything.

Sometimes I would make an effort to throw off this despondency, and try, by recollection of the active energy of my own nature, to stir up myself to an effort of one kind or other; but the unbroken stillness, the vast motionless solitude around me, the companionless isolation in which I lived, would resume their influence, and with a weary sigh I would resign myself to a hopelessness that left no wish in the heart save for a speedy death.

Even castle-building—the last resource of imprisonment—ceased to interest. Life had also resolved itself into a successsion of dreary images, of which the voiceless prairie, the monotonous water-wheel, the darkened path of my midnight patrol, were the chief; and I felt myself sinking day by day, hour by hour, into that resistless apathy through which no ray of hope ever pierces.

At last I ceased even to pluck the flowers for the Señhora's window. I deemed any exertion which might be avoided, needless, and taxed my ingenuity to find out contrivances to escape my daily toil. The garden I neglected utterly; and in the wild luxuriance of the soil the rank weeds soon effaced every sign of former culture. What a strange frame of mind was mine! Even the progress of this ruin gave me a

pleasure to the full as great as that once felt in witnessing the blooming beauty of its healthful vegetation. I used to walk among the rank and noisome weeds with the savage delight of some democratic leader who saw his triumph amid the downfall of the beautiful, the richly-prized, and the valued, experiencing a species of insane pleasure in the thought of some fancied vengeance.

How the wild growth of the valueless weed overtopped the tender excellence of the fragrant plant; how the noisome odor overpowered its rich perfume; how, in fact, barbarism lorded it over civilization, became a study to my distorted apprehension; and I felt a diabolical joy at the victory.

A little more, and this misanthropy had become madness; but a change was at hand. I was sitting one night in the garden: it was already the hour when my "patrol" should have begun; but latterly I had grown indifferent to the call of duty: as Hope died out within me, so did Fear also, and I cared little for the risk of punishment,—nay, more, a kind of rebellious spirit was gaining upon me, and I wished for some accident which might bring me into collision with some one. As I sat thus, I heard a footstep behind me: I turned, and saw the Señhora close to me. I did not rise to salute her, but gazed calmly and sternly, without speaking.

"Has the life of the dog imparted the dog's nature?" said she, scoffingly. "Why don't you speak?"

"I have almost forgotten how to do so," said I, sulkily.

"You can hear, at least?"

I nodded assent.

"And understand what you hear?"

I nodded again.

“Listen to me, then, attentively, for I have but a short time to stay, and have much to tell you. And, first of all, do you wish to escape from hence?”

“Do I wish it!” cried I; and in the sudden burst, long dried-up sources of emotion opened out afresh, and the heavy tears rolled down my cheeks.

“Are you willing to incur the danger of attempting it?”

“Ay, this instant!”

“If so, the means await you. I want a letter conveyed to a certain person in the town of Guajuaqualla, which is about two hundred miles distant.”

“In which direction?” asked I.

“You shall see the map for yourself; here it is,” said she, giving me a small package which contained a map and a mariner's compass. “I only know that the path lies over the prairie and by the banks of a branch of the Red River. There are villages and farmhouses when you have reached that region.”

“And how am I to do so, unmolested, Señhora? A foot-traveller on the prairie must be overtaken at once.”

“You shall be well mounted on a mustang worth a thousand dollars; but ride him without spurring. If he bring you safe to Guajuaqualla he has paid his price.” She then proceeded to a detail which showed how well and maturely every minute circumstance had been weighed and considered. The greatest difficulty lay in the fact that no water was to be met with nearer than eighty miles, which distance I should be compelled to compass on the first day. If this were a serious obstacle on one side, on the other

it relieved me of all apprehension of being captured after the first forty or fifty miles were accomplished, since my pursuers would scarcely venture farther.

The Señhora had provided for everything. My dress, which would have proclaimed me as a runaway “settler,” was to be exchanged for the gay attire of a Mexican horse-dealer,—a green velvet jacket and hose, all slashed and decorated with jingling silver buttons, pistols, sabre, and rifle to suit.

The mustang, whose saddle was to be fitted with the usual accompaniment of portmanteau and cloak, was also to have the leathern purse of the “craft,” with its massive silver lock, and a goodly ballast of doubloons within. Two days' provisions and a gourd of brandy, completed an equipment which to my eyes was more than the wealth of an empire.

“Are you content?” asked she, as she finished the catalogue.

I seized her hand, and kissed it with a warm devotion.

“Now for the reverse of the medal. You may be overtaken; pursuit is almost certain,—it may be successful; if so, you must tear the letter I shall give you to fragments so small that all detection of its contents may be impossible. Sell your life dearly; this I counsel you, since a horrible death would be reserved for you if taken prisoner. Above all, don't betray me.”

“I swear it,” said I, solemnly, as I held up my hand in evidence of the oath.

“Should you, however, escaping all peril, reach Guajuaqualla in safety, you will deliver this letter to the Señhor Estavan Olares, a well-known banker of that town. He will present you with any reward you think sufficient for your services, the peril of which

cannot be estimated beforehand. This done,—and here, mark me! I expect your perfect fidelity,—all tie is severed between us. You are never to speak of me so long as I live; nor, if by any sun of Fortune we should chance to meet again in life, are you to recognize me. You need be at no loss for the reasons of this request: the position in which I am here placed—the ignominy of an unjust sentence, as great as the shame of the heaviest guilt—will tell you why I stipulate for this. Are we agreed?"

"We are. When do I set out?"

"To-morrow by daybreak; leave this a little before your usual time, pass out of the village, and, taking the path that skirts the beech wood, make for the Indian ground,—you know the spot. At the cedar-tree close to that you will find your horse all ready, —the letter is here." Now for the first time her voice trembled slightly, and for an instant or two she seemed irresolute. "My mind is sometimes so shaken by suffering," said she, "that I scarcely dare to trust its guidance; and even now I feel as if the confidence I am about to place in an utter stranger, in an—"

"Outcast, you would say," said I, finishing what she faltered at. "Do not fear, then, one humbled as I have been can take offence at an epithet."

"Nor is it one such as I am who have the right to confer it," said she, wiping the heavy drops from her eyes. "Good-bye forever!—since, if you keep your pledge, we are never to meet again." She gave me her hand, which I kissed twice, and then, turning away, she passed into the house; and before I even knew that she was gone, I was standing alone in the garden, wondering if what had just occurred could be real.

If my journey was not without incident and

adventure, neither were they of a character which it is necessary I should inflict upon my reader, who doubtless ere this has felt all the wearisome monotony of prairie life, by reflection. Enough that I say, after an interesting mistake of the “trail” which led me above a hundred miles astray! I crossed the Conchos River within a week, and reached Chihuahua, a city of considerable size, and far more pretensions than any I had yet seen in the “Far West.”

Built on the narrow gorge of two abrupt mountains, the little town consists of one great straggling street, which occupies each side of a torrent that descends in a great tumbling mass of foam and spray along its rocky course. It was the time of the monthly market, or fair, when I arrived, and the streets were crowded with peasants and muleteers in every imaginable costume. The houses were mostly built with projecting balconies, from which gay-colored carpets and bright draperies hung down, while female figures sat lounging and smoking their cigarettes above. The aspect of the place was at once picturesque and novel. Great wooden wagons of melons and cucumbers, nuts, casks of olive-oil and wine; bales of bright scarlet cloth, in the dye of which they excel; pottery ware; droves of mustangs, fresh caught and capering in all their native wildness; flocks of white goats from the Cerzo Gorde, whose wool is almost as fine as the Llama's; piles of firearms from Birmingham and Liège, around which groups of admiring Indians were always gathered; parroquets and scarlet jays, in cages; richly ornamented housings for mule teams; brass-mounted saddles and a mass of other articles littered and blocked up the way so that all passage was extremely difficult.

Before I approached the city, I had been canvassing with myself how best I might escape from the prying inquisitiveness to which every stranger is exposed on entering a new community. I might have spared myself the trouble, for I found that I was perfectly unnoticed in the motley throng with which I mingled.

My strong-boned, high-bred mustang, indeed, called forth many a compliment as I rode past; but none had any eye, nor even a word, for the rider. At last, as I was approaching the inn, I beheld a small knot of men whose dress and looks were not unfamiliar to me; and in a moment after, I remembered that they were the Yankee horse-dealers I had met with at Austin, some years before. As time had changed me far more than them, I trusted to escape recognition, not being by any means desirous of renewing the acquaintance. I ought to say that, besides my Mexican costume, I wore a very imposing pair of black moustaches and beard, the growth of two years at “La Noria,” so that detection was not very easy.

While I was endeavoring to push my way between two huge hampers of tomatoes and lemons, one of this group, whom I at once recognized as Seth Chiseller, laid his hand on my beast's shoulder and said, in Spanish, “The mustang is for sale?”

“No, Señhor,” said I, with a true Mexican flourish, “he and all mine stand at your disposal, but I would not sell him.”

Not heeding much the hackneyed courtesy of my speech, he passed his hands along the animal's legs, feeling his tendons and grasping his neat pasterns. Then, proceeding to the hocks, he examined them carefully; after which he stepped a pace or two

backwards, the better to survey him, when he said, “Move him along in a gentle trot.”

“Excuse me, Señhor, I came here to buy, not to sell. This animal I do not mean to part with.”

“Not if I were to offer you five hundred dollars?” said he, still staring at the beast.

“Not if you were to say a thousand, Señhor,” said I, haughtily; “and now pray let me pass into the court, for we are both in need of refreshment.”

“He an't no Mexican, that 'ere chap,” whispered one of the group to Chiseller.

“He sits more like a Texan,” muttered another.

“He'll be the devil, or a Choctaw outright, but Seth will have his beast out of him,” said another, with a laugh; and with this the group opened to leave me a free passage into the inn-yard.

All the easy assurance I could put on did not convince myself that my fears were not written in my face as I rode forward. To be sure, I did swagger to the top of my bent; and as I flung myself from the saddle, I made my rifle, my brass scabbard, my sabretache, and my spurs perform a crash that drew many a dark eye to the windows, and set many a fan fluttering in attractive coquetry.

“What a handsome Caballero! how graceful and well-looking!” I thought I could read in their flashing glances; and how pleasant was such an imaginary *amende* for the neglect I had suffered hitherto.

Having commended my beast to the hands of the ostler, I entered the inn with all the swaggering assurance of my supposed calling, but, in good earnest, with anything but an easy heart at the vicinity of Seth and his followers. The public room into which I passed was crowded with the dealers of

the fair in busy and noisy discussion of their several bargains; and had I been perfectly free of all personal anxieties, the study of their various countenances, costumes, and manners had been most amusing, combining as they did every strange nationality,—from the pale-faced, hatchet-featured New Englander to the full-eyed, swarthy descendant of old Spain. The mongrel Frenchman of New Orleans, with the half-breed of the prairies, more savage in feature than the Pawnee himself, the shining negro, the sallow Yankee, the Jew from the Havannah, and the buccaneer-like sailor who commanded his sloop and accompanied him as a species of body-guard,—were all studies in their way and full of subject for after-thought.

In this motley assemblage it may easily be conceived that I mingled unnoticed, and sat down to my mess of “frijoles with garlic” without even a passing observation. As I ate on, however, I was far from pleased by remarking that Seth and another had taken their seats at a table right opposite, and kept their eyes full on me with what in better society had been a most impudent stare. I affected not to perceive this, and even treated myself to a flask of French wine, with the air of a man revelling in undisturbed enjoyment. But all the rich bouquet, all the delicious flavor, were lost upon me; the sense of some impending danger overpowered all else; and let me look which way I would, Seth and his buff-leather jacket, his high boots, immense spurs, and enormous horse-pistols rose up before me like a vision.

I read in the changeful expression of his features the struggle between doubt and conviction as to whether he had seen me before. I saw what was passing in his mind, and I tried a thousand little arts

and devices to mystify him. If I drank my wine, I always threw out the last drops of each glass upon the floor; when I smoked, I rolled my cigar between my palms, and patted and squeezed it in genuine Mexican fashion. I turned up the points of my moustache like a true hidalgo, and played Spaniard to the very top of my bent.

Not only did these airs seem not to throw him off the scent, but I remarked that he eyed me more suspiciously, and often conversed in whispers with his companion. My anxiety had now increased to a sense of fever, and I saw that if nothing else should do so, agitation alone would betray me. I accordingly arose, and called the waiter to show me to a room.

It was not without difficulty that one could be had, and that was a miserable little cell, whitewashed, and with no other furniture than a mattress and two chairs. At least, however, I was alone; I was relieved from the basilisk glances of that confounded horse-dealer, and I threw myself down on my mattress in comparative ease of mind, when suddenly I heard a smart tap at the door, and a voice called out, with a very Yankee accent, “I say, friend, I want a word with you.”

I replied, in Spanish, that if any one wanted me, they must wait till I had taken my “siesta.”

“Take your siesta another time, and open your door at once; or mayhap I 'll do it myself!”

“Well, sir,” said I, as I threw it open, and feigning a look of angry indignation, the better to conceal my fear, “what is so very urgently the matter that a traveller cannot take his rest, without being disturbed in this fashion?”

“Hoity-toity! what a pucker you're in, boy!” said he, shutting the door behind him; “and we old

friends too!”

“When or where have we ever met before?” asked I, boldly.

“For the 'where,'—it was up at Austin, in Texas; for the 'when,'—something like three years bygone.”

I shook my head, with a saucy smile of incredulity.

“Nay, nay, don't push me farther than I want to go, lad. Let bygones be bygones, and tell me what's the price of your beast, yonder.”

“I 'll not sell the mustang,” said I, stoutly.

“Ay, but you will, boy! and to me, too! And it's Seth Chiseller says it!”

“No man can presume to compel another to part with his horse against his will, I suppose?” said I, affecting a coolness I did not feel.

“There's many a stranger thing than *that* happens in these wild parts. I've known a chap ride away with a beast,—just without any question at all!”

“That was a robbery!” exclaimed I, in an effort at virtuous indignation.

“It war n't far off from it,” responded Seth; “but there 's a reward for the fellow's apprehension, and there it be!” and as he spoke he threw a printed handbill on the table, of which all that I could read with my swimming eyes were the words, “One Hundred Dollars Reward,”—“a mare called Charcoal,”—“taking the down trail towards the San José.”

“There was no use in carrying that piece of paper so far,” said I, pitching it contemptuously away.

“And why so, lad?” asked he, peering inquisitively at me.

“Because this took place in Texas, and here we are in Mexico.”

“Mayhap, in strict law that might be something,” said he, calmly; “but were I to chance upon him, why should n't I pass a running-knot over his wrists, and throw him behind me on one of my horses? Who's to say 'You sha' n't?' or who's to stop a fellow that can ride at the head of thirty well-mounted lads, with Colt's revolvers at the saddle-bow?—tell me that, boy!”

“In the first place,” said I, “the fellow who would let himself be taken and slung on your crupper, like a calf for market, deserves nothing better; and particularly so long as he owned a four-barrelled pistol like this!”—and here I drew the formidable weapon from my breast, and held it presented towards him, in a manner that it is rarely agreeable to confront.

“Put down your irons, lad,” said he, with the very slightest appearance of agitation in his manner; “we'll come to terms without burning powder.”

“I ask for nothing better,” said I, putting up my weapon; “but I 'll not stand being threatened.”

He gave a short, dry laugh, as though the conceit of my speech amused him, and said, “Now, to business: I want that mustang.”

“You shall have him, Seth,” said I, “the day he reaches Guajuaqualla, whither I am bound in all haste.”

“I am a-going north,” said Seth, gruffly, “and not in that direction.”

“You can send one of your people along with me, to fetch him back.”

“Better to leave him with me now, and take a hack for the journey,” said he.

This was rather too much for my temper; and I

ventured to say that he who was to receive a present should scarcely dictate the conditions accompanying it.

“It's a ransom, boy,—a forfeit,—not a present,” said he, gravely.

“Let us see if you can enforce it, then,” said I, instinctively

“There, now, you're angry again!” said he, with his imperturbable smile; “if we're to have a deal together, let us do it like gentlemen.”

Now, probably a more ludicrous caricature of that character could not have been drawn than either in the persons, the manners, or the subject of the transaction in hand; but the word was talismanic, and no sooner had he uttered it than I became amenable to his very slightest suggestion.

“Let me have the beast,—I want him; and I see your holsters and saddle-bags have a jingle in them that tells me dollars are plenty with you; and as to this,”—he threw the piece of paper offering the reward at his feet,—“the man who says anything about it will have to account with Seth Chiselier, that's all.”

“How far is it from this to Guajuaqualla?”

“About a hundred and twenty miles by the regular road; but there 's a trail the miners follow makes it forty less. Not that I would advise you to try that line; the runaway niggers and the half-breeds are always loitering about there, and they 're over ready with the bowie-knife, if tempted by a dollar or two.”

Our conversation now took an easy, almost a friendly tone. Seth knew the country and its inhabitants perfectly, and became freely communicative in discussing them and all his dealings with them.

“Let us have a flask of 'Aguadente,'” said he, at last, “and then we 'll join the fandango in the court beneath.”

Both propositions were sufficiently to my taste; and by way of showing that no trace of any ill-feeling lingered in my mind, I ordered an excellent supper and two flasks of the best Amontillado.

Seth expanded, under the influence of the grape, into a most agreeable companion. His personal adventures had been most numerous, and many of them highly exciting; and although a certain Yankee suspiciousness of every man and his motives tinged all he said, there was a hearty tone of good-nature about him vastly different from what I had given him credit for.

The Amontillado being discussed, Seth ordered some Mexican “Paquaretta,” of delicious flavor, of which every glass seemed to inspire one with brighter views of life; nor is it any wonder if my fancy converted the rural belles of the courtyard into beauties of the first order.

The scene was a very picturesque one. A trellised passage, roofed with spreading vines in full bearing, ran around the four sides of the building, in the open space of which the dancers were assembled. Gay lamps of painted paper and rude pine-torches lit up the whole, and gave to the party-colored and showy costumes an elegance and brilliancy which the severer test of daylight might have been ungenerous enough to deny. The olive-brown complexion—the flashing dark eyes—the graceful gestures—the inspiriting music—the merry voices—the laughter—were all too many ingredients of pleasure to put into that little crucible, the human heart, and not amalgamate into something very like enchantment,

—a result to which the Paquaretta perhaps contributed.

Into this gay throng Seth and I descended, like men determined, in Mexican phrase, to “take pleasure by both horns.” It was at the very climax of the evening's amusement we entered. The dance was the Mexican fandango, which is performed in this wise: a lady, stepping into the circle, after displaying her attractions in a variety of graceful evolutions, makes the “tour” of the party in search of the Caballero she desires to take as her partner. It is at his option either to decline the honor by a gesture of deferential humility, or, accepting it, he gives her some part of his equipment,—his hat, his scarf, or his embroidered riding-glove, to be afterwards redeemed as a forfeit; the great amusement of the scene consisting in the strange penalties exacted, which are invariably awarded with a scrupulous attention to the peculiar temperament of the sufferer. Thus, a miserly fellow is certain to be mulcted of his money; an unwieldy mass of fears and terrors is condemned to some feat of horsemanship; a gourmand is sentenced to a dish of the least appetizing nature; and so on: each is obliged to an expiation which is certain to amuse the bystanders. While these are the “blanks” in the lottery, the prizes consist in the soft, seductive glances of eyes that have lost nothing of Castilian fire in their transplanting beyond seas; in the graceful gestures of a partner to whom the native dance is like an expressive language, and whose motions are more eloquent than words,—in being, perhaps, the favored of her whose choice has made you the hidalgo of the evening; and all these, even without the aid of Paquaretta, are no slight distinctions.

Were the seductions less attractive, it is not a man

whose Irish blood has been set a-glowing with Spanish wine who is best fitted to resist them, nor assuredly ought Con Cregan to be selected for such self-denial. I stood in the circle with wondering admiration, delighted with everything. Oh, happy age! glorious hour of the balmy night! excellent grape-juice! how much of delicious enjoyment do I owe you all three! I suppose it is the case with every one, but I know it to be with me, that wherever I am, or however situated, I immediately single out some particular object for my especial predilection. If it be a landscape, I at once pitch upon the spot for a cottage, a temple, or a villa; if it be a house, I instantly settle in my mind the room I would take as my own, the window I would sit beside, the very chair I'd take to lounge in; if it be a garden, I fix upon the walk among whose embowering blossoms I would always be found: and so, if the occasion be one of festive enjoyment, I have a quick eye to catch her whose air and appearance possess highest attractions for me. Not always for me the most beautiful,—whose faultless outlines a sculptor would like to chisel,—but one whose fair form and loveliness are suggestive of the visions one has had in boyhood, filling up, in rich colors, the mind-drawn picture we have so often gazed on, and made the heroine of a hundred little love-stories, only known to one's own heart. And, oh, dear! are not these about the very best of our adventures? At least, if they be not, they are certainly those we look back on with fewest self-reproaches.

In a mood of this kind it was that my eye rested upon a slightly formed but graceful girl, whose dark eyes twice or thrice had met my own, and been withdrawn again with a kind of indolent reluctance —as I fancied—very flattering to me. She wore the

square piece of scarlet cloth on her head, so fashionable among the Mexican peasantry, the corners of which hung down with heavy gold tassels among the clusters of her raven locks; a yellow scarf, of the brightest hue, was gracefully thrown over one shoulder, and served to heighten the brilliancy of her olive tint; her jupe, short and looped up with a golden cord, displayed a matchless instep and ankle. There was an air of pride—"fierté," even—in the position of the foot, as she stood, that harmonized admirably with the erect carriage of her head, and the graceful composure of her crossed arms made her a perfect picture. Nor was I quite certain that she did not know this herself; certain is it, her air, her attitude, her every gesture, were in the most complete "keeping" with her costume.

She was not one of the dancers, but stood among the spectators, and, if I were to pronounce from the glances she bestowed upon the circle, not one of the most admiring there; her features either wearing an expression of passive indifference, or changing to a half smile of scornful contempt. As, with an interest which increased at each moment, I watched her movements, I saw that her scarf was gently pulled by a hand from behind; she turned abruptly, and, with a gesture of almost ineffable scorn, said some few words, and then moved proudly away to another part of the "court."

Through the vacant spot she had quitted I was able to see him who had addressed her. He was a young, powerfully built fellow, in the dress of a mountaineer, and, though evidently of the peasant class, his dress and arms evinced that he was well to do in the world; the gold drop of his sombrero, the rich bullion tassels of his sash, the massive spurs of solid silver, being all evidences of wealth. Not even

the tan-colored hue of his dark face could mask the flush of anger upon it as the girl moved off, and his black eyes, as they followed, glowed like fire. To my amazement, his glance was next bent upon me, and that with an expression of hatred there was no mistaking. At first, I thought it might have been mere fancy on my part; then I explained it as the unvanished cloud still lingering on his features; but at last I saw plainly that the insulting looks were meant for myself. Let me look which side I would, let me occupy my attention how I might, the fellow's swarthy, sullen face never turned from me for an instant.

I suppose something must have betrayed to my companion what was passing within me, for Seth whispered in my ear, “Take no notice of him,—he's a Ranchero; and they are always bad uns to deal with.”

“But what cause of quarrel can he have with me?” said I; “we never saw each other before.”

“Don't you see what it is?” said Seth. “It's the muchacha: she's his sweetheart, and she's been a-looking too long this way to please him.”

“Well, if the girl has got such good taste,” said I, with a saucy laugh, “he ought to prize her the more for it.”

“She *is* a neat un, that's a fact,” muttered Seth; and at the same instant the girl walked proudly up to where I stood, and, making a low courtesy before me, held out her hand. I suppose there must have been a little more than the ordinary enthusiasm in the manner I pressed my lips upon it, for *she* blushed, and a little murmur ran round the circle. The next moment we were whirling along in the waltz,—I, at least, lost to everything save the proud pleasure of what I deemed my triumph. The music suddenly

changed to the fandango, of which dance I was a perfect master; and now the graceful elegance of my partner and the warm plaudits of the company called forth my utmost exertions. As for her, she was the most bewitching representative of her native measure it is possible to conceive, her changeful expression following every movement of the dance: now retiring in shrinking bashfulness, now advancing with proud and haughty mien, now enticing to pursuit by looks of languishment, now, as if daring all advances, her flashing eyes would almost sparkle with defiance.

What a terrible battery was this to open upon the defenceless breastwork of a poor Irishman! How withstand the showering grape-shot of dark glances? —how resist the assault of graces that lurked in every smile and every gesture? Alas! I never attempted a defence; I surrendered, not “at,” but “without,” discretion; and, tearing off the great embroidered scarf which I wore, all heavy with its gold fringe, I passed it round her taper waist in a very transport of enthusiasm.

While a buzz of approbation ran round the circle, I heard the words uttered on all sides, “Destago!” “A forfeit!”

“I'll try his gallantry,” said the girl, as, darting back from my arms, she retired to the very verge of the circle, and, holding up the rich prize, gazed at it with wondering eyes; and now exclamations of praise and surprise at the beauty of the tissue broke from all in turn.

“The muchacha should keep the 'capotillo,'” said an old lynx-eyed duenna, with a fan as large as a fire-board.

“A Caballero rich as that should give her a

necklace of real pearls," said another.

"I 'd choose a mustang, with a saddle and trappings all studded with silver," muttered a third in her ear.

"I 'll have none of these," said the girl, musing; "I must bethink me well if I cannot find something I shall like to look at with pleasure, when mere dress and finery would have lost their charm. I must have that which will remind me of this evening a long time hence, and make me think of him who made it a happiness; and now what shall it be?"

"His heart's blood, if that will content you!" cried the mountaineer, as, springing from his seat, he tore the scarf from her hands and dashed it on the ground, trampling it beneath his feet, and tearing it to very rags.

"A fight—a fight!" shouted out a number of voices; and now the crowd closed in upon the dancing space, and a hundred tongues mingled in wild altercation. Although a few professed themselves indignant that a stranger should be thus insulted, I saw plainly that the majority were with their countryman, whom they agreed in regarding as a most outraged and injured individual. To my great astonishment, I discovered that my friend Seth took the same view of the matter, and was even more energetic than the others in reprobation of my conduct.

"Don't you see," cried he to me, "that you have taken his sweetheart from him? The muchacha has done all this to provoke his jealousy."

"Oui, oui," said a thin, miserable-looking Frenchman, "vous avez tiré la bouteille; il faut payer le vin."

In all probability, had not the crowd separated us

most effectually, these comments and counsels had been all uttered “after the fact;” for I dashed forward to strike my antagonist, and was only held back by main force, as Seth whispered in my ear, “Take it coolly, lad; it must be a fight now, and don't unsteady your hand by flying into a passion.”

Meanwhile the noise and confusion waxed louder and louder; and from the glances directed towards me there was very little doubt how strongly public opinion pronounced against me.

“No, no!” broke in Seth,—in reply to some speech whose purport I could only guess at, for I did not hear the words,—“that would be a downright shame. Let the lad have fair play. There's a pretty bit of ground outside the garden, for either sword or pistol-work, whichever you choose it to be. I 'll not stand anything else.”

Another very fiery discussion ensued upon this, the end of which was that I was led away by Seth and one of his comrades to my room, with the satisfactory assurance that at the very first dawn of day I was to meet the Mexican peasant in single combat.

“You have two good hours of sleep before you,” said Seth, as we entered my room; “and my advice is, don't lose a minute of them.”

It has been a mystery to me, up to the very hour I am writing in, how far my friend Seth Chiseller's conduct on this occasion accorded with good faith. Certainly, it would have been impossible for any one to have evinced a more chivalrous regard for my honor, and a more contemptuous disdain for my life, than the aforesaid Seth. He advanced full one hundred reasons for a deadly combat, the results of which, he confessed, were speculative matters of a

most dreamy indifference. Now, although it has almost become an axiom in these affairs that there is nothing like a bold, decided friend, yet even these qualities may be carried to excess; and so I began to experience.

There was a vindictiveness in the way he expatiated upon the gross character of the insult I had received, the palpable openness of the outrage, that showed the liveliest susceptibility on the score of my reputation; and thus it came to pass, I suppose, from that spirit of divergence and contradiction so native to the human heart that the stronger Seth's argument ran in favor of a most bloody retribution, the more ingenious grew my casuistry on the side of mercy; till, grown weary of my sophistry, he finished the discussion by saying: “Take your own road, then; and if you prefer a stiletto under the ribs to the chance of a sabre-cut, it is your own affair, not mine.”

“How so? Why should I have to fear such?”

“You don't think that the villano will suffer a fellow to take his muchacha from him, and dance with her the entire evening before a whole company, without his revenge? No! no! they have different notions on that score, as you 'll soon learn.”

“Then what is to be done?”

“I have told you already, and I tell you once more: meet him to-morrow,—the time is not very distant now. You tell me that you are a fair swordsman: now, these chaps have but one attack and one guard. I 'll put you up to both; and if you are content to take a slight sabre-cut about the left shoulder, I'll show you how to run him through the body.”

“And then?”

“Why, then,” said he, turning his tobacco about in

his mouth, “I guess you'd better run for it; there'll be no time to lose. Mount your beast, and ride for the Guajuaqualla road, but don't follow it long, or you'll soon be overtaken. Turn the beast loose, and take to the mountains, where, when you 've struck the miner's track, you 'll soon reach the town in safety.”

Overborne by arguments and reasons, many of which Seth strengthened by the pithy apothegm of “Bethink ye where ye are, boy! This is not England, nor Ireland neither!” all my scruples vanished, and I set about the various arrangements in a spirit of true activity. The time was brief, since, besides taking a lesson in the broadsword, I had to make my will. The reader will probably smile at the notion of Con Cregan leaving a testament behind him; but the over-scrupulous Seth would have it so, and assured me, with much feeling, that it would “save a world of trouble hereafter, if anything were to go a bit ugly.”

I therefore bequeathed to the worthy Seth my mustang and his equipments of saddle, holsters, and cloak-bag; my rifle and pistols and bowie-knife were also to become his, as well as all my movables of every kind. I only stipulated that, in the event of the “ugly” termination alluded to, he would convey the letter with his own hands to Guajuaqualla,—a pledge he gave with the greater readiness that a reward was to be rendered for the service. There was some seventy dollars in my bag, which, Seth said, need not be mentioned in the will, as they would be needed for the funeral. “It 's costly hereabouts,” said he, growing quite lively on the theme. “They put ye in a great basket, all decked with flowers, and they sticks two big oranges or lemons in your hands; and the chaps as carry you are dressed like devils or angels, I don't much know which,—and they do make such a cry! My eye for it, but if you was n't dead, you 'd not

lie there long and listen to 'em!”

Now, although the subject was not one half so amusing to me as it seemed to Seth, I felt that strange fascination which ever attaches to a painful theme, and asked a variety of questions about the grave and the ceremonies and the masses, reminding my executor that, as a good Catholic, I hoped I should have the offices of the Church in all liberality.

“Don't distress yourself about that,” said he; “I 'll learn a lot of prayers in Latin myself,—' just to help you on,' as a body might say. But, as I live, there goes the chaps to the 'Molino';” and he pointed to a group of about a dozen or more, who, wrapped up in their large cloaks, took the way slowly and silently through the tall wet grass at the bottom of the garden.

I have ever been too candid with my kind reader to conceal anything from him. Let him not, therefore, I beg, think the worse of me if I own that, at the sight of that procession, a strange and most uncomfortable feeling pervaded me. There seemed something so purpose-like in their steady, regular tramp. There was a look of cold determination in their movement that chilled me to the heart. “Only to think!” muttered I, “how they have left their beds on this raw, damp morning, at the risk of colds, catarrhs, and rheumatism, all to murder a poor young fellow who never injured one of them!”

Not a thought had I for the muchacha,—the cause of all my trouble; my faculties were limited to a little routine of which I myself was the centre, and I puzzled my brain in thinking over the human anatomy, and trying to remember all I had ever heard of the most fatal localities, and where one could be carved and sliced with the fullest impunity.

“Come along!” said Seth; “we 've no time to lose. We must look out for a cheap mustang to wait for you on the Guajuaqualla road, and I have to fetch my sword; for this thing of yours is full eight inches too short.” Seth now took my arm, and I felt myself involuntarily throwing a glance at the little objects I owned about the room,—as it were a farewell look.

“What are you searching for?” said he, as I inserted my hand into my breast-pocket.

“It's all right,” said I; “I wanted to see that I had the Señhora's letter safe. If—if—anything—you understand me—eh?”

“Yes, yes; I'll look to it. They sha' n't bury you with it,” said he, with a diabolical grin which made me positively detest him, for the moment.

If Mr. Chiseller was deficient in the finer sympathies of our nature, he was endowed with a rare spirit of practical readiness. The “mustang” was found in the very first stable we entered, and hired for a day's pleasure,—so he called it,—for the sum of two crowns. A mountain lad was despatched to hold him for my coming, at a certain spot on the road. The sabre was fetched from his chamber, and in less than five minutes we were on our way to the Molino, fully equipped and “ready for the fray.”

“Don't forget what I told you about the face-guard: always keep the hilt of your weapon straight between your eyes, and hold the elbow low.” This he kept repeating continually as we went along, till I found myself muttering the words after him mechanically,—without attaching the slightest meaning to them. “The villain is a strong muscular chap, and perhaps he 'll be for breaking down your guard by mere force, and cleaving you down with a stroke. If he tries it, you 've only to spring actively to

one side and give him your point, anywhere about the chest." From this he proceeded to discuss a hundred little subtleties and stratagems the Mexicans are familiar with, so that at last I regretted, from the very bottom of my soul, that the gage of battle had not fallen upon Seth himself, so much more worthy in every way of the distinction.

If I seemed full of attention to all he was saying, my thoughts, in truth be it spoken, were travelling a vastly different road. I was engaged in the performance of a little mental catechism, which ran somewhat in this wise: "If you escape this peril, Master Con, will it not be wise to eschew fandangoes in future,—or, at least, not indulge in them with other men's sweethearts? Beware, besides, of horse-dealers, of Xeres and Paquaretta; and, above all, of such indiscretions as may make the 'Seth Chisellers' of this world your masters!" Ay, there was the sum and substance of my sorrows: that unlucky step about "Charry" and the lottery-ticket placed me in a situation from which there was no issue. I now saw, what many have seen before, and many will doubtless see again, that crime has other penalties besides legal ones, and that the difficulty of conforming to an assumed good character, with even *one* lapse from the path of honesty, is very considerable.

"Are you attending to me, lad?" cried Seth, impatiently. "I was telling you about the cross-guard for the head."

"I have not heard one word of it," said I, frankly; "nor is it of the least consequence. All the talk in the world could n't make a swordsman, still less would a few passing hints like those you give me. If the villano be the better man, there's an end of the matter."

Seth, less convinced by my reasonings than offended at them, spoke no more, and we approached the Molino in silence. As we neared the spot, we perceived the party seated in a little arbor, and by their gestures, as well as by a most savory odor of garlic, evidently eating their breakfast.

“The fellows are jolly,” said Seth: “had we not better follow their example? Here is a nice spot, and a table just at hand.” At the same time he called out, “Muchacho, pan el vino en la mesa, and we 'll think of somewhat to eat.”

I tried to play indifferent, and seem at my ease; but it was no use. The vicinity of the other group, and, in particular, of a certain broad-shouldered member of it whom I could detect through the leaves, and who certainly did not eat with the air of a man who felt it to be his last breakfast, spoiled all my efforts, and nipped them even as they budded.

“You don't eat,” said Seth; “look at the villano yonder.”

“I see him,” said I, curtly.

“See how he lays in his prog!”

“Let him show that he can be as dexterous with the broadsword as with a carving-knife,” said I, with a tremendous effort.

“Egad! I'll tell him that,” cried Seth, jumping up, and hastening across the garden. I had not long to wait for the effect of the speech. Scarcely had Chiseller uttered a few words than the whole party arose, and such a volley of “Maledicion!” and “Caramba!” and other like terms I never heard before or since.

“I knew that would make 'em blaze up,” said he; “they're all ready now,—follow me.” I obeyed, and walked after him into a little paddock, which, from

the marks of feet and other signs, seemed to be a spot not chosen for the first time for such an amusement. The others entered by an opposite gate, and, taking off their cloaks, folded them carefully and laid them on the benches. They were armed to the very teeth, and really did look amazingly like the troop of brigands Drury Lane would produce in a new melodrama.

One of the party advanced towards Seth to arrange preliminaries, while the rest lighted their cigars and began smoking,—an example I deemed it wise to imitate; at least, it looked cool.

As I sat, affecting to admire the landscape, and totally careless of what was going on behind me, I overheard Seth in a warm altercation on the subject of my sabre, which the villano's friend insisted was at least eight or nine inches too long. Seth, however, was equally obstinate in asserting that I had always used it, had fought repeated duels with it; and if we could not call the principals as witnesses, it was for certain cogent reasons that need not be mentioned. How I chuckled at this bit of boastfulness! how I prayed that it might terrify the enemy! Nothing of the kind; the semi-savage stepped out into the circle, with his shirt-sleeve rolled up to the shoulder, displaying an arm whose muscular development was like knotted cordage. As if to give a foretaste of what he intended for me, he clove down the stout branch of an elm-tree with a single stroke and with the ease of a man slicing a cheese. Never did I think so meanly of a fandango as at that moment; never was I in a mood less lenient to female coquetry!

“All's ready, Con, my hearty,” whispered Seth, leaning over my shoulder; “here's the tool.”

If I had followed the instinct then strongest, I

should have treated my “friend” Seth to the first of my maiden sword. But for him—But it was too late for regrets; and already the group had retired, leaving the villano standing in a position of formidable defence alone in the circle.



I can remember that I walked calmly and slowly forward to the spot assigned me. I can remember the word being given to draw swords, and I even yet can see the flashing steel as it glistened, and hear the clang of the scabbards as we flung them from us; but of the encounter itself I have only the vaguest impression. Cuts, thrusts, parries, advances and retirings, feints and guards, are all blended up with the exclamations of the bystanders as, in praise or censure, they followed the encounter. At last, without knowing why, after a warm rally, my antagonist uttered a faint cry, and tottering a few paces back, let fall his sword, and sank heavily to the earth. I sprang forward in dread anxiety; but two of the others held me back while they cried out, “Basta —Basta, Señhor!” I tried to force my way past them, but they held me fast; and all that I could see was one of the group take up the villano's arm and let it go again, when it fell heavily to the ground with a dull bang I shall never forget! They then threw his cloak over him, and I saw him no more.

“What are ye waitin' for, lad?” whispered Seth. “You don't want to attend his funeral, I reckon?”

“Is he—is he———?” I could n't get the word out for worlds.

“By course he is; and so will you be, if ye don't make a bolt of it.”

I have some recollection of an angry altercation between Seth and myself,—I refusing, and he insisting on my instant flight; but it ended somehow in my finding myself galloping along the Guajuaqualla road at a furious pace, and, to my extreme surprise, feeling now as eager about my safety as before I had been indifferent to it.

I became conscious of this from the sense of uneasiness I experienced as each horseman neared me, and the danger of pursuit aroused in me the instinct of self-preservation.

A rude sign-post at the foot of a rugged mountain path apprised me where the “miners' trail” led off to Guajuaqualla; so, dismounting from my “mustang,” now wearied and blown by a pretty sharp pace for above seven miles, I turned the animal loose and set off on foot. I know of no descent so great in life as from the “saddle” to the “sole!” from the inspiriting pleasure of being carried along at will, to the plodding slowness of mere pedestrianism. In the one case you “shoot your sorrows flying;” in the other, they jog alongside of you all the way, halting with you when you lie down at noon, and taking share of the spring from which your parched lips are refreshed. Like an underbred acquaintance, they will not be denied; they are always “going *your* way;” and in their cruel civility they insist on bearing you company.

At a little cabaret of the very humblest order, I obtained some breakfast and made purchase of a stock of bread and a gourd of wine, as I learned that nothing was to be had before I reached “Sanchez,” the hut of an old miner, which was reckoned halfway

to Guajuaqualla. This done, again I set forth on my journey.

The scenery was wild, without being grand. There was bareness and desolation, but no sublimity. It was evidently a tract of such inferior fertility that few in a land so rich as this would select it for a resting-place; and, accordingly, I came upon no signs of habitation other than the shealings the shepherds raise at certain seasons when migrating with their flocks among the mountains.

It was exactly the character of landscape likely to increase and thicken the gloom of sad thoughts; and, indeed, mine wanted little assistance. This last exploit left a weight like lead upon my heart. All my sophistry about self-defence and wounded honor, necessity, and the like could not cover the fact that I had taken away a man's life in a foolish brawl, from the very outset of which the whole fault lay on *my* side.

“So much,” said I, “for trying to be a 'gentleman'. Every step in this disastrous pursuit would seem to have a penalty attached to it; and, after all, I am just as far from the goal as when I set out.”

That day seemed a year in length; and were I to attempt to chronicle it, the reader would confess himself convinced before I had half finished; so that, for both our sakes, I 'll not “file my bill of particulars,” as my respected father would have said, but at once come to the hour when the sun approached the horizon, and yet not anything like a human dwelling came in sight; and I still plodded along, sad and weary, and anxious for rest. If the events which I am about to record have little in them of extraordinary interest, they at least were the turning-points in my humble destiny, and therefore,

kind reader, with your permission, we 'll give them a chapter to themselves.



CHAPTER XXVI. THE DISCOVERY

I had walked now for nearly twelve hours without discovering any appearance of Sanchez's cabin, in which I had hoped to pass the night. My prairie experience assured me that I had not lost the “trail,” and yet if any light were burning for miles around, the elevated spot on which I stood should make it visible. Although much fatigued, there was nothing

for it but to proceed, and at length I found myself in a narrow valley which Seth had heard described as the situation in which the miner's hut stood. It was dark and gloomy; but the hope that I was nearing the spot cheered me, and I walked on, footsore and tired as I was. Once or twice I thought I heard the bark of a dog. I stopped to listen; I shouted aloud, I whistled, but to no end. After an interval, however, the sounds were repeated, and now I could detect,—not the bark,—but the low, plaintive wail of an animal seemingly in pain. As it not unfrequently happens that the sheep-dogs are attacked by wolves, it immediately occurred to me such might be the present case; so I looked to the caps of my revolver, and hastened on in the direction of the cries.

The wailing sounds grew fuller and louder as I advanced, and now I could distinguish that they were the cries of an animal in grief, and not of one in bodily pain. I increased my speed to the utmost, and suddenly I felt the warm tongue of a dog touch my hand, and his tail brush my legs, in sign of friendly welcome. I stopped to pat and caress him, but the poor creature uttered another cry so full of sorrow that all other thoughts were routed on the instant.

He now preceded me, turning at each moment as if to see that I followed, and whining in a low, faint tone, as before. We had not long proceeded thus, when he stopped suddenly, and set up a cry the most shrill and heart-thrilling. I saw that we were in front of a miserable shealing, the door of which lay open; but all was dark within. I struck a light with my flint, and lighted a little taper. To my surprise, the hut contained several articles of furniture; but I had not more than time to notice them, when the dog, darting forward, placed his fore-paws upon a low settle-bed, and gave a dismal howl. I turned and

beheld the figure of a very old man, his white beard hanging down to his chest, as he lay in what seemed a heavy sleep. I touched him; he was cold. I placed my hand on his heart; it was still. I tried to detect breathing; there was none—he was quite dead!

The poor dog appeared to watch me with intense interest, as, one by one, I tried these different signs of life; but when he saw the hand fall heavily from my own, he again set up his cries, which now lasted for several minutes. The scene was a sad and touching one. The poor old miner,—for such his dress and the scattered implements of the craft bespoke him,—forgotten by all the world save by his dog, lay in all the seeming calm of sleep. A cup of water stood near him, and a little wooden crucifix lay on the bed, where probably it had fallen from his fingers. Everything around betokened great poverty. The few articles of furniture seemed as if they had been fashioned by himself, being of the rudest workmanship: his lamp was a dried gourd, and his one chair had been a stump, hollowed out with a hatchet. The most striking feature of all was a number of printed paragraphs cut from old newspapers and magazines and nailed against the planking of the hut; and these seemed to convey a little history of the old miner, so far, at least, as the bent and object of his life were implied. They were all, without exception, exaggerated and high-flown accounts of newly discovered “Placers,”—rich mines of gold,—some in the dark plains of the Ukraine, some in the deep forests of Mexico, some in the interior of Africa and on the far-away shores of the Pacific. Promises of golden harvest, visions of wealth rolling in vast abundance, great oceans of gain before the parched and thirsting lips of toil and famine! Little thought they who, half in the

wantonness of fancy, colored these descriptions, what seeds they were sowing in many a rugged nature! what feverish passions they were engendering! what lures to wile men on and on, through youth and manhood and age, with one terrible fascination to enslave them!

If many of these contained interesting scraps of adventure and enterprise in remote and strange countries, others were merely dry and succinct notices of the discovery of gold in particular places, announcements which nothing short of an innate devotion to the one theme could possibly have dwelt upon; and these, if I were to judge from the situations they occupied, were the most favored paragraphs, and those most frequently read over; they were the daily food with which he fed his hope, through, doubtless, long years of suffering and toil. It was the oil which replenished the lamp when the wick had burned to the very socket!

How one could fancy the old Gambusino as he sat before his winter fire, half dozing in the solitude of his uncompanionable existence, revelling in all the illusions with which his mind was filled! With what sympathy must he have followed his fellow-laborers in every far-away quarter of the globe! how mourned over their disappointments, how exulted in their successes! These little scraps and sentences were the only links that tied him to the world—they were all that spoke to him of his own species!

As I went about the hut, the appearance of the greatest poverty and privation struck me on every side: his clothing, worn to very tatters, had been mended by skins of beasts and patches of canvas; the tools with which he worked showed marks of rude repair that proved how “he to himself sufficed,” without aid from others.

I passed the night without sleep, my mind full of the melancholy picture before me. When day broke, I walked forth into the cool air to refresh myself, and found, to my astonishment, that the spot had been a Placer of once great repute,—at least so the remains around attested. The ruined framework of miners' huts; the great massive furnaces for smelting; huge cradles, as they are called, for gold-sifting; long troughs, formed of hollowed trunks, for washing,—lay scattered on all sides. The number of these showed what importance the spot had once possessed, and the rotten condition in which they now were proved how long it had been deserted by all save him who was now to take his rest where, for many a weary year, he had toiled and labored.

A little cross, decorated with those insignia of torture so frequently seen in Catholic countries,—the pincers, the scourge, and the crown of thorns,—showed where Piety had raised an altar beside that of Mammon; and underneath this I resolved to lay the poor old Gambusino's bones, as in a Christian grave. I could not divest my mind of the impression that some power, higher than mere chance, had led me to the spot to perform those last offices to the poor outcast. Having eaten my breakfast, which I shared with the dog, I set to work to fashion something that should serve as a coffin. There was timber in abundance, and the old miner's tools sufficed for all I needed. My labor, however, was only completed as night closed in, so that I was obliged to wait for morning to finish my task.

Wearied by my exertions, I slept soundly, and never awoke till the bright sunbeams pierced through the chinks of the log-hut, and streamed in amidst its dusky atmosphere; then I arose, and placed the old man in his coffin. I sat down beside it,

and as I looked at the calm, cold features I could not help reflecting that even he had not been more an outcast from his fellows than I was myself. If fate had cast *his* lot in the solitude of this dreary region, he was not more alone in the world than *I*, who had neither home nor family. How strange was it, too, that it should have devolved upon *me* to pay him these last rites. No, no; this could not be accident. The longer I dwelt upon this theme, the more strongly was I impressed by this one conviction; and now, looking back, after the lapse of years, that feeling is but more confirmed by time.

Taking the shovel and the pick, I set forth to dig the grave, the poor dog following at my heels, as though knowing in what cause I was laboring. The earth was hard and stony, so that at first I made but little progress; but soon I reached a clayey soft soil, which again was succeeded by a dense, firm stratum of stones, impacted closely together, like a pavement made by hands; indeed, it was difficult to conceive it otherwise, the stones being so nearly of the same size, and laid down with a regularity so striking and purposelike. I proceeded to loosen them with the barreta, but, to my surprise, no sooner had I displaced this layer than another exactly similar displayed itself underneath. If this be “Nature's handiwork,” thought I, “it is the strangest thing I ever saw.” I labored hard to remove this second tier, and now came down upon a light gravelly soil, into which the barreta passed easily. Shall I own that it was with a sense of disappointment that I perceived this? It was not that my expectations had taken any distinct or palpable form, but their vagueness somehow had not excluded hope!

As I struck down the iron barreta into the light earth, I sat down and fell into a musing fit, from

which the dog aroused me by licking my hands and looking up into my face, as though reproaching me for deserting my task. I arose at once, and set to work in right earnest. The grave was now full five feet in depth, and needed only to be made a little longer. It was after about an hour's hard labor, and my task was all but completed, when the barreta struck a stone which it was requisite to move; it was a large and heavy one, and much more firmly impacted in the earth than I at first supposed, and it was only by splintering it with the iron “crow” that I was able to succeed. As I lifted the fragments and threw them away, my hands came in contact with a soft substance underneath, that, to the feel, at least, resembled the skin of a beast with the wool or hair on. I cleared away the earth, and saw to my astonishment what I at once knew to be a piece of buffalo hide, smeared over with a peculiar oil the Indians use to prevent rotting or decomposition. I drew forth my knife and ripped it open; a strong skin of undressed buck was now laid bare; again I applied my knife vigorously to this, and as the sharp steel ran freely along, a glittering heap of gold disclosed itself before me, and rolled in fragments to my feet!

I cannot attempt to describe the emotions of that moment, as, with a heart bursting with delight, I ran my fingers through the heaps of shining metal, many of them larger than my closed fist. I pulled off my cap and filled it; I opened my handkerchief, and in a few moments that also was crammed; I stuffed my pockets; but the treasure seemed inexhaustible. I arose, and hastened to the hut for the great canvas bag in which the poor miner used to keep his chestnuts, and, oh, the terror that came over me now, lest I should be seen, lest any other should discover me! With the speed that fear alone can

supply I soon filled the sack, not alone with gold, but also with several little leather bags, which I discovered contained gems and precious stones, emeralds principally, with opals, sapphires, and rubies, some of a size and color I had never seen equalled before. There were eight of these bags, marked with some enigmatical letters, of which I did not know the meaning, nor, in good truth, did I puzzle myself to discover. The wealth, unbounded as it seemed, needed no explanation; there it lay glittering upon the grass beneath the morning sun, and there I sat amidst it, as Aladdin might have sat amidst the treasures of his mine.

As I opened the bags one after another, in eager impatience, I came upon one filled with papers, and these I quickly discovered were receipts for deposits of large sums placed at various times in the hands of Don Xafire Hijaros, banker, at Guajuaqualla, by Menelaus Crick! Yes, these were the hidden treasures for which the Black Boatswain of Anticosti had endured the tortures of the burning iron and the steel, the terrible agonies of the flesh pincers, and the slow, lingering pains of paralysis. These, then, were the visions that haunted his dotage in the very night I had seen him, as he struggled in some imaginary conflict, and patted the ground in some fancied act of concealment! A sudden chill ran through me as I thought by what horrible deeds of crime and blood all this treasure might—nay, must—have been amassed! What terrible acts of murder and assassination! Many of the gems were richly set, and showed that they had been worn. Some of the emeralds had been extracted from ornaments, or taken from the hilts of daggers or swords. Violence and blood had stained them all, there could not be a doubt of it; and now there arose within me a strange

conflict, in which the thirst for wealth warred with a feeling of superstition that whispered, “No luck could go with gain so bought!” The perspiration rolled in great drops down my face; my heart swelled and throbbed with its emotions; the arteries of my temples beat with a force that seemed to smite the very brain as I canvassed this vital question, “Dare I touch wealth so associated with deeds of infamy?”

If my wishes arranged themselves on one side, all my fears were marshalled on the other; and what foes can wage a more terrible conflict! The world, with its most attractive pleasures, its thousand fascinations, all the delusions that gold can buy and convert into realities, beckoned here. Horrible fancies of an unknown vengeance, a Nemesis in crime unexpiated, menaced there! May I never have to preside in a court where the evidence is so strongly opposed, where the facts are so equally balanced! If, at one instant, I beheld myself the gorgeous millionnaire, launching forth into the wide ocean of unexplored enjoyment, at the next I saw myself crawling upon the earth, maimed and crippled like the old negro slave; a curse upon me; the cries of widowed mothers ringing in my ears; the curses of ruined fathers tracking me wherever I went! I cannot tell what verdict my poor empanelled conscience might have brought in at last, but suddenly a new witness appeared in the court and gave a most decided turn to the case. This was no less than “the Church,” whose testimony gently insinuated that if the matter were one of difficulty, it was not yet without a solution. “It is true, Master Con,” whispered she, “that these treasures have an odor of rapine; but let us see if the Church cannot purify them. A silver lamp to the Virgin can throw a lustre upon deeds that have not 'loved the light.' An

embroidered petticoat can cover a great many small sins, and the incense that rises from a gold censer, offered by pious hands, will do much to correct the pungency of even the saltest tears."

Build a chapel, Con; endow a nunnery,—or, if you don't like shutting up young ladies, let it be a "monkery;" make an investment in hair-cloth shirts and cord girdles; buy shares in the grand Purgatory scheme, and take out "next world scrip," in the shape of masses, jubilees, and novenas. You can keep a bishop, without feeling the cost, and have a whole candle manufactory perpetually at the service of "Our Lady," without being obliged to curtail one of your own wax-lights. What a revulsion did this bright thought give to all my previous doubtings! not only satisfying my scruples here, but suggesting very comfortable associations for hereafter. By this proceeding, Con, thought I, you are "hedging against hereafter;" you may be a Sardanapalus while you live, and a saint after death: it's betting upon the "double event," with all the odds in your favor.

I must say, for the sake of my credit, that I resolved to "do the thing handsomely." I determined that a finer virgin should not be seen than mine, and that if a "Saint Cregan" could be discovered in the catalogue, I'd adopt him as my patron, at any cost. Neither would I forget the poor old miner in my pious offerings: he should have masses said for him for a full twelvemonth to come, and I 'd offer a silver pickaxe to any of the calendar who would deign to accept it. In a word, there was nothing that money could do (and what can it not?) that I would not engage to perform, so that the Church should consent to take me into partnership.

Never was a poor head exposed to such a conflict of discordant thoughts. Plans of pleasures and

pilgrimages; gorgeous visions of enjoyment warring with fancies of sackcloth and scourges; sumptuous dinners, equipages, theatres, balls, and festivities mingling with fastings, processions, and mortifications, made up a chaos only a shade above downright insanity.

The day wore on, and it was late in the afternoon ere I bethought me of the poor Gambusino, beside whose open grave I still sat, lost in speculation. “Poor fellow!” said I, as I hoisted his coffin on my shoulder, “you have got a rich pall-bearer for one who died in such poverty; you little thought you would be borne to the grave by a millionnaire!” As I said this—I shame to own it—there was a tinge of self-commendation in the notion, as though inferring, “See what a noble fellow I am! with gold and gems such as an emperor might envy, and yet look at me, carrying a poor old miner's body to the grave just as if we were equals!”

“It's very handsome of you, Con,—that I must say!” whispered I to myself; but, somehow, the poor dog did not appear to take the same exalted notion of my magnanimity, but was entirely engrossed by his sorrow; for he lay crouching upon the earth, uttering cries the most piteous and heartrending at each shovelful I threw in the grave.

“Cheer up, poor fellow!” said I, patting him, “you shall have a gold collar and a clasp of real emerald.” How naturally does a rich man recur to wealth as the cure for every affliction! How difficult for him to believe that gold is not a sovereign remedy for all disorders!

As for the dog, poor brute! he took no more heed of my consolation than he noticed my altered condition,—of which, by his familiarity, he showed

himself totally unconscious. How differently had he behaved, thought I, had he been a man! What sudden respect had he felt for me; what natural reluctance to obtrude himself on me; how honored by my notice, how distinguished by my favor! It is plain the dog is a very inferior animal; his perceptions are not fine enough to distinguish between the man of wealth and the pauper!

These and very similar reflections engaged me while I completed my task, after which I carried my precious burdens off, and deposited them within the hut. By this time I was very hungry, but had nothing to eat save the fragments that remained from my breakfast,—a singular meal for one who, in a fitting place, could have dined sumptuously and off vessels of gold and silver! I had the appetite of a poor man, however, and eat heartily; and then, taking my gourd of wine, sat down beside a little spring that issued from the rock, to think over my future.

Perhaps my whole life—not wanting in hours of pleasure and enjoyment—never presented anything so truly delightful as that evening.

The season of gratification which I had dreamed of, sighed, panted, and prayed for, was now to be mine. I was at last to be a “gentleman,”—so far, at least, as immense wealth and a very decided taste for spending it could make me. But were these, I flatteringly asked myself, all my qualifications? Was I not master of three or four languages? Had I not become an expert shot, an excellent rider, a graceful dancer, with some skill upon the guitar and the mandolin? Could I not contend in most exercises where strength and activity were required, with any? Had I not travelled and seen something of the world and its ways? Ay, marry, and a little more of both than was usual for young gentlemen of fortune!

Of personal advantages it might not become me to speak; but the truth requires me to say that Nature had dealt very handsomely by me. And now I ask of the fair reader,—the unfair one I put out of court on the occasion,—"Are not these very pretty chances with which to woo fortune?" Less sanguine spirits would perhaps have sighed for more, and asked for a hundred gifts, of whose use and value I knew nothing,—such as birth, family influence, and the like. As for me, I was content with the "hand of trumps" Fate had dealt me; I owned frankly that if I lost the game, it must be for lack of skill, and not of luck.

My plans were very simple. Once at Guajuaqualla, I should find out where Donna Maria de los Dolores lived, and then, providing myself with a suitable equipage and servants, I should proceed to pay my addresses in all form, affecting to have resumed my real rank and station, from which, on our first acquaintance, a passing caprice had withdrawn me. I anticipated, of course, very shrewd inquiries as to my family and fortune; but I trusted to "native wit" to satisfy these, secretly resolving at the time that I would avoid lying for the future. And *à propos* of this propensity, I had never indulged in it, save from that vagrant impulse that tempts a child to scamper over the flower-plat of a garden, instead of keeping to the gravel,—the great charm being found in the secret that it "was wrong." And, oh, ye dear, good, excellent souls whose instincts are always correct, who can pass knockers on doors and not wish to wring them off; who see gas-lamps in lonely spots, and never think of breaking them; who neither "humbug" the stupid, nor mistify the vain; who "take life" seriously,—forgive the semi-barbarism of our Celtic tastes, which leads us to regard "fun" as the

very honey of existence, and leads us to extract it from every flower in life's path!

When I “lied,”—as only the great “Pinto” ever lied more atrociously,—I was more amused by my own extravagances than were my listeners. I threw out my inventions among stupid folk as a rich man flings his guinea among a group of beggars, to enjoy the squabbling and contending for such an unlooked-for prize.

And now I was going to abandon the habit, as one unsuited to the responsibilities of a rich man's station! Oh, dear, what a sigh honest Jack Falstaff must have heaved when he swore “he would eschew sack and low company, and live cleanly.”

I now addressed myself more practically to my work, and, seeing that it would be quite impossible for me to carry the great bulk of my treasure to Guajuaqualla, I replaced the canvas sack, with the gold and some of the larger bags of the gems, in the ground, and merely took those that contained the paper securities, and some of the more valuable emeralds, along with me.

In parting with my wealth, even for a short absence, I confess my feelings were very poignant. A thousand fears beset me, and I turned to survey the spot beneath which it lay, wondering if there was any indication to mark the concealed riches below. All, however, looked safe and plausible; and I proceeded on my way, with a heart as easy as, I suppose, rich men's hearts are permitted to be!

I believe the road along which I journeyed lay in the midst of a fertile and pleasing tract,—I believe, I say; for I own I saw nothing of it. The river along which Ï walked seemed silver, molten silver, to me; the fruit-trees bore apples of pure gold; the stars

which studded the morning sky seemed sapphires and diamonds; the dewdrops on the grass were opals all. If I sat down to rest myself, I instantly took one of my precious bags from my pocket, to gaze at the bright treasures it contained, and feast my eyes with brilliancy.

At last I found myself on the great high road, and, as the sign-post told me, only “très léguas”—three leagues—from Guajuaqualla. For a few copper coins I obtained a seat upon a peasant's “carro,” and journeyed along more agreeably, secretly laughing to myself at the strange conveyance that carried “Cæsar and his fortunes.”

The peasant was an old man who lived by selling watermelons, gourds, and cucumbers in the city, and knew most of its well-known inhabitants. It was, therefore, a good opportunity for me to learn something of those in whom I was interested. He told me that the banker Don Xafire Hijaros had died several years ago, but that his son Manuel carried on the business, and was reputed to be the richest man in Guajuaqualla. It was said that the great wealth of the house had been accumulated in ways and by means that would not bear too close scrutiny. Large sums had been, it was alleged, lodged in his hands by negroes and Indians working at the mines, the owners of which were often made away with,—at least, few of those who made large deposits ever lived to claim them. The peasant told me several stories in illustration of this suspicion; but although they certainly did make an impression upon me, I attributed much to the exaggeration so common to every piece of local gossip, and I had seen enough in the world to know how frequently successful industry meets disparagement.

As for Don Estaban Olarez, the old man told me

that he had once been extremely rich, but that certain speculations he had entered into having proved unfortunate, he had lost the greater part of his fortune, and lived now in a state of comparative retirement about a league from Guajuaqualla. This piece of news had not the depressing effect upon me it might be supposed, since I augured that a rich son-in-law would be less scrupulously interrogated by the broken merchant than by the millionnaire. I even speculated on the manner I should adopt to dazzle him by my splendor, and with what cold and cutting irony I would address the Fra Miguel, and thank him for the considerate kindness with which he had repaid my services. Haughty and proud, with a dash of condescension,—"that must be my tone," said I; and so I went on, like my prototype in the Eastern tale, ruminating upon my power and my merciful disposition, till I had warmed my blood to a very good tyrant pitch, from which state I was aroused by the guard at the gate of the town asking if I had anything with me which should pay custom.

"A poor traveller with his knapsack," said I, "may surely pass freely."

"Vaya con Dios," said he, carelessly, and I entered the city.

Although the little plain in which Guajuaqualla stands is more favorable as a site than the narrow gorge where Chihuahua is situated, the city itself is inferior to the latter. Built irregularly, not only as chance or caprice directed, but sharing in all the vicissitudes of speculation which the mines afforded, great palaces stand by the side of mean hovels, and gorgeous churches are flanked by abodes of squalid poverty. Streets, properly speaking, there were none. Each choosing the spot for his house at will, and as the city was founded in troubled times, when lawless

violence was unrestrained,—the fortress-like character of the buildings was often conspicuous. Massive iron bars and stanchions protected the windows of the ground-floors; heavy fastenings secured the doors, whose surface was a fretwork of iron. Loop-holes for musketry usually guarded each side of the entrance, and a "grille," like that of a convent, showed that no stranger could be admitted uninterrogated. Many of the houses were surrounded by regular outworks of moat and bastion, while here and there an old rusty cannon, half hid among the weeds, would show more pretentious, though possibly not very efficient, means of defence.

Of shrines, holy wells, and altars there was no end. The superstitious character of the Gambusino life had been adroitly laid hold of by the priests, who rarely fail to turn each phase of existence to their own profit, and, in this spot, the priestly hierarchy appeared to have nothing so near at heart as the success of the "Placers." Here were pictured virgins, looking blandly down at a group of very ill-favored half-breeds, at a washing; there was an old negro presenting a massive lump of gold to St. Joseph, who, with a sly look, seemed to promise not to forget the donor. St. Francis himself, pick in hand, was seen laboring at the head of a sturdy gang of workmen, and angels of all sizes appeared to busy themselves in gold-seeking, as though it were their natural pastime.

Upon several of the altars, pieces of solid gold and silver lay, in a security that said much for the religious zeal of the inhabitants, while lamps of pure silver hung in a profusion on every side,—surrounded by votive offerings of the same metal,—such as shovels, barretas, picks, and sieves. Nor did piety limit itself merely to incentives to "stand well

with the saints;" some most terrible examples of the opposite line of conduct were conspicuously displayed. Pictures representing dreadful catastrophes, by falling masses of rock, irruptions of torrents, and down-pouring cataracts, showed what fates were ever in store for those who "forgot the Church." And, as if to heighten the effect, whenever a cayman or a jaguar was "sloping off" with a miner in his mouth, a respectable saint was sure to be detected in the offing, wiping his eyes in compassion, but not stirring a finger to his assistance.

I will not say that these specimens of pictorial piety induced any strong religious feeling to my mind, but they certainly amused me highly; and although hungry from a long fast, I stopped full twenty times on my way to the Posada to gaze and wonder at them.

At the "Mono" (the "Ape"), a beast which at first *I* mistook for a certain historical character to whom popular prejudice always vouchsafes a tail, I put up, and having discussed a very sumptuous breakfast, sent for the landlord, a little dark-visaged Jew from Pernambuco.

"I hear," said I, arranging myself in an attitude of imposing elegance, "I hear, Señhor Maestro, that my people and equipages have not arrived yet, and I begin to feel a great anxiety for their safety. Can you learn from any of the Muleros if they have seen two carriages, with four mules each, on the Chihuahua road?"

"I have just inquired," said the Jew, with a sly, almost impertinent leer, "and his Excellency's suite have not been seen."

"How provoking!" said I, impatiently. "This comes of indulging that capricious taste for adventure

which always inclines me to a solitary ramble among mountains. And now, here I am, without clothes, baggage, horses, servants,—in fact, with nothing that a person of my condition is accustomed to have about him."

The Jew's face changed its expression during this speech, and, from a look of droll malice which it wore at first, assumed an air of almost open insolence as he said,—

"Señhor Viajador, I am too old to be imposed upon by these fooleries. The traveller who enters an inn on his feet, with ragged clothes and tattered shoes, takes too high a flight when he raves of equipage and followers."

I bethought me of the lesson I once gave the mate of the transport ship at Quebec, and I lay back indolently in my chair and stared coolly at the Jew. "Son of Abraham," said I, with a slow intonation, "take care what you say. I indulge in a vast variety of caprices, some of which the severe world calls follies; but there is one which I never permit myself,—namely, to suffer the slightest liberty on the part of an inferior. I give you this piece of information for your guidance, since it is possible that business with the banker Don Manuel Hijaros may detain me a few days in this place, and I desire that the lesson be not lost upon you."

The Jew stood, while I delivered these words, a perfect ideal of doubt and embarrassment. The pretentious tone, contrasted with the ragged apparel, the air of insufferable pride, with all the semblance of poverty, and the calm composure of confidence, seemed to him singular features in one whose apparent destitution might have suggested humility.

"I see your embarrassment," said I, "and I forgive

your error; and now to business. I have several visits to pay in this neighborhood; my people may not arrive for a day or two; and I cannot afford the delay of waiting for them. Can you tell if there be anything suitable in the way of equipage for a man of rank to be had here? Something simple, of course, as befitting the place,—a plain carriage, with four mules,—if Andalusian, all the better; two lazadores, or outriders, will be sufficient, as I wish to avoid display; the liveries and equipment may be plain also."

"There is at this moment, Señhor, the open carriage of the late Gobernador of Guajuaqualla to be sold,—he had not used it when he was called away by death: that and his six mules,—not Andalusian, it is true, but of the black breed of the Habannah,—are now at your Excellency's disposal."

"And the price," said I, not seeming to notice the half-impertinent smile that curled his lip as he spoke.

"Three thousand crowns, Señhor,—less than half their cost."

"A mere trifle," said I, carelessly, "if the carriage please me.

"Your Excellency can see it in the court beneath."

I followed the Jew as he led the way into the open "cour," and, after passing across it, we entered a spacious building, where, amidst a whole hospital of ruined and dilapidated calèches, carres, and wagons, stood a most beautiful britscka, evidently imitated from some London or Parisian model. It was of a dark chocolate color, with rich linings of pale-blue silk. The arms of the late Gobernador were to have been painted on the doors, but fortunately were not begun when he died, so that the "carroza" seemed in every respect a private one. The Jew next showed me

the team of mules, magnificent animals of fifteen and half hands in height, and in top condition. The harness and housings were all equally splendid and suitable.

“If your Excellency does not deem them unworthy of you,” said he, with a smile of most treacherous meaning, “they are certainly a great bargain. I have myself advanced fifteen hundred piastres upon them.”

“I'll take them,” said I, curtly; “and now for the servants.”

“The coachman and a few lacqueys are here still, your Excellency; but their liveries had not been ordered when the sad event occurred.”

“Send the first tailor in the place to my apartment,” said I; “and if there be a diamond merchant or a gem valuer here, let him come also.”

“I am myself a dealer in precious stones, your Excellency,” replied the Jew, with a more submissive air than he had yet exhibited.

“Come with me then,” said I; “for I always carry some of my less valuable trinkets about with me, as the least cumbrous mode of taking money.” Leaving the landlord in the sitting-room, I passed into my chamber, and speedily re-entered with a handsome emerald ring upon my finger, and a ruby brooch of great size in my breast.

The Jew's eyes were lit up with a lustre only inferior to that of the gems as he saw them, and in a voice tremulous with eagerness he said, “Will your Excellency dispose of these?”

“Yes,” said I, carelessly; “there are others also, which I am determined to turn into cash. What value would you put upon this ring?”

“Five hundred crowns, Señhor, if it be really as pure as it seems.”

“If that be your valuation, friend,” rejoined I, “I would be a purchaser, not a seller, in this city. That gem cost me six thousand piastres! To be sure, something of the price must be laid to the charge of historical associations. It was the present of the Sultan Al Hadgid ak Meerun-ak-Roon to the Empress Matilda.”

“Six thousand piastres!” echoed the Jew, whose astonishment stopped short at the sum, without any regard for the great names I had hurled at him.

“I believe I may have paid a trifle too much,” said I, smiling; “the Prince of Syracuse thought it dear! But then here is a much more valuable stone, which only cost as much;” and, so saying, I took from my pocket an immense emerald, which had once formed the ornament of a dagger.

“Ah, Dios! that is fine,” said the Jew, as he held it between him and the light; “and, were it not for the flaw, would be a rare prize!”

“Were it not for the flaw, friend,” said I, “it would still be where it stood for upwards of eight hundred years,—in the royal crown of Hungary, in the 'Schatzkammer' of Presburg. The Emperor Joseph had it mounted in his own poignard; from his hands it reached the Caltons of Auersberg; and then, at the value of six thousand piastres, by a wager, came into my own.”

“And at what price would you now dispose of it?” asked he, timidly.

“A friend might have it for ten thousand,” said I, calmly; “to the world at large the price would be twelve.”

“Ah, your Excellency, such sums rest not in our

humble city! You must go to Madrid or Grenada for wealth like that."

"So I suspect," said I, coolly. "I will content myself with depositing them with my banker for the present; to sell them here would be a needless sacrifice of them."

"And yet, Señhor, I would willingly be the purchaser of that gem," said he, as he stood, fascinated by the lustre of the stone, from which he could not take his eyes. "If six thousand five hundred piastres—"

"I have said ten to a friend, my honest Israelite," interrupted I.

"I am but a poor man, your Excellency,—a poor struggling, hard-working man,—content if he but gain the humblest profit by his labor; say, then, seven thousand piastres, and I will sell my mules to make up the amount."

"I will say twelve, and not a doubloon less," Señhor Judio; "but a friend may have it for ten."

"Ah, if your 'Alteza' would but say eight! Eight thousand piastres counted down upon the table in honest silver," said he; and the tears stood in his eyes as he supplicated.

"Be it so," said I, "but upon one condition. Should you ever reveal this, or should you speak of the transaction in any way, there is no manner of evil and mischief I will not work you. If it cost me half my fortune, I will be your ruin; for I refused to part with that same to the Primate of Seville, and he would never forgive me if the story should reach his ears."

The Jew wished the Patriarchs to witness his oath of secrecy; and though each of us was well aware that the other was lying, somehow we seemed

satisfied by the exchange of our false coinage. I suppose we acted on the same principle as the thieves who could not keep their hands out of each other's pockets, although they knew well there was nothing there.

Whatever the Jew's suspicion of the means by which I had become possessed of such wealth, he prudently thought that he might reap more profit by falling in with my plans than by needlessly scrutinizing my character; and, so far, he judged wisely.

The contract for the carriage I completed on the spot, and having engaged the servants and ordered their liveries,—plain suits of brown, with gold tags, aiguilettes,—I gave directions for my own wearing apparel, in a style of costly magnificence that confirmed me in the title of “Alteza,” given by all who came in contact with me. These occupations occupied the entire morning, and it was only late in the afternoon that I had spare time to recreate myself by a walk in the garden of the inn before dinner,—a promenade which, I am free to own, was heightened in its enjoyment by the rich rustling sounds of my heavy silk robe-dè-chambre, and the soft, downy tread of my velvet slippers on the smooth turf. It was a delicious moment! the very birds seemed to sing a little paean of rejoicing at my good luck; the flowers put forth their sweetest odors as I passed; and I felt myself in ecstasy with the whole creation, and in particular with that segment of it called Con Cregan. And there be folk in this world would call this egotism and vanity; ay, and by worse names too! As if it was not the very purest philanthropy—as if my self-content did not spring from the calm assurance that the goods of fortune were bestowed in the right direction, and that the goddess whom men call

“fickle” was in reality a most discriminating deity!

There are no two things in creation less alike than a rich man and a poor one! Not only do all their thoughts, feelings, and affections run in opposite channels, but their judgments are different; and from the habit of presenting particular aspects to the world, they come at last to conform to the impressions conceived of them by the public. The eccentricities of wealth are exalted into fashions,—the peculiarities of poverty are degraded to downright vices.

“Oh, glorious metal!” exclaimed I, as I walked along, “that smooths the roughest road of life, that makes the toughest venison savory, and renders the rudest associates civil and compliant, what insolence and contumely had I not met with here, in this poor 'Posada,' had I only been what my humble dress and mean exterior denoted; and now, what is there that I cannot exact, what demands can I make, and hear that they are impossible!”

“His Excellency's dinner is served,” said the host, as he advanced, with many a low and obsequious salutation, to announce my dinner.

I suppose that the cookery of the “Mono” was not of the very highest order, and that if presented before me now, it would meet but sorry acceptance from my more educated palate; but at the time I speak of, it seemed actually delicious. There appeared to arise faint odors, of savory import, from dishes whose garlic would now almost suffocate me, and I luxuriated in the flavor of wine, every glass of which would, at this day, have put my teeth on edge. If my enjoyment was great, however, I took care not to let it appear too palpable; on the contrary, I criticised and condemned with all the fastidiousness

of a spoiled nature, and only condescended to taste anything on the perpetual assurance of the host that “though very different from what his Excellency was used to, it was exactly to the taste of the late 'Gobernador.'”

I felt all the swelling importance of wealth within me as I beheld the cringing lacqueys and the obsequious host, who never dared to carry himself erect in my presence; the very meats seemed to send up an incense to my nostrils. The gentle wind that shook the orange-blossoms seemed made to bear its odors to my senses; all Nature appeared tributary to my enjoyment. And only to think of it! all this adulation was for poor Con Cregan, the convict's son; the houseless street-runner of Dublin; the cabin-boy of the yacht; the flunkey at Quebec; the penniless wanderer in Texas; the wag of the “Noria,” in Mexico. What a revulsion, and how sudden and unexpected!

It now became a matter of deep consideration within me how I should support this unlooked-for change of condition, without betraying too palpably what the French would call my “antecedents.” As to my “relatives,”—forgive the poor pun,—they gave me little trouble. I had often remarked in life that vulgar wealth never exhibits itself in a more absurd and odious light than when indulging in pleasures of which the sole enjoyment is the amount of the cost. The upstart rich man may sit in a gallery of pictures where Titian, Velasquez, and Vandyck have given him a company whose very countenances seem to despise him, while he thinks of nothing save the price. If he listen to Malibran, the only sense awakened is the cost of her engagement; and hence that stolid apathy, the lustreless gaze, the unrelieved weariness, he exhibits in society, where it is the

metal of the “mind” is clinking, and not the metal of the “mint.” To a certain extent I did not incur great danger on this head: Nature had done me some kind services, the chief of which was, she had made me an Irishman!

There may seem—alas! there is too great cause that there should seem—something paradoxical in this boast, now, when sorrow and suffering are so much our portion; but I speak only of the individuality which, above every other I have seen or heard of, invests a man with a spirit to enjoy whatever is agreeable in life. Now, this same gift is a great safeguard against the vulgarity of purse-pride, since the man who launches forth upon the open sea of pleasure is rarely occupied by thoughts of self.

As for me, I felt a kind of gluttony for every delight that gold can purchase. What palaces I would inhabit; what equipages I would drive; what magnificent fêtes I would give; what inimitable little dinners, where beauty, wit, and genius alone should be gathered together; what music should I possess in “my private band;” what exotics in my conservatory; and how I should dispense these fascinations; what happiness would I diffuse in the circle in which I moved, and what a circle would that be! It was to this precise point my buoyant fancy had brought me, as the second flask of champagne, iced almost to a crystal, had warmed me into a glow of imaginative enthusiasm. I fancied myself in a gilded saloon, where, amid the glare of a thousand wax-lights, a brilliant company were assembled. I thought that at each opening of the folding-door a servant announced some name, illustrious from position or great in reputation, and that around me, as I stood, a group was gathered of all that was distinguished in the world of fashion or celebrity. “Your Royal

Highness has made this the proudest day of my life," said I, rising, and bowing reverentially before a faded old arm-chair. "May I offer your Eminence a seat," continued I to a red sofa-cushion I mistook for a cardinal. "Your Excellency is most heartily welcome," said I to an empty decanter. And so did I convert every adjunct of the chamber into some distinguished personage, even, to my fast expiring lamp, which, with a glimmering flame and a nauseous odor, was gradually dying away, and which I actually addressed as a great ambassador!

After this, I conclude that I must have imagined myself in the East,—possibly taking a cup of sherbet with the Sultan, or a chibouk with the Khan of Tammerkabund; for when I became conscious once more, I found myself upon the hearthrug, where I had been enjoying a delicious sleep for some hours.

"Would his Excellency desire to see his chamber?" asked the landlord, as, with a branch of candles, he stood in the doorway.

I waved my hand in sign of assent, and followed him.



CHAPTER XXVII.
GUAJUAQUALLA

There are few things in this world gold cannot buy: but one among their number assuredly is—"a happy dream." Now, although I went to sleep in a great bed with damask hangings and a gilt crown upon it, my pillow fringed with deep lace, my coverlet of satin edged with gold, I dreamed the whole night through of strifes, combats, and encounters. At one time my enemy would be an Indian; at another, a half-breed; now, a negro; now, a jaguar or a rattlesnake: but with whom, or whatever the struggle, it was always for money! Nothing else seemed to have any hold upon my thoughts. Wealth, and wealth alone, appeared the guiding principle of my being; and, as the penalty, I was now to learn the ceaseless anxieties, the torturing dreads, this passion begets.

With daylight, however, I awoke, and the bright

sun, streaming in, brought the glorious reality of my happy lot before me, and reminded me of the various duties my high state imposed. My first care was to ascertain the amount and security of my riches; and I resolved to proceed regularly and in the most business-like manner in the matter. To this end I ordered my carriage, and proceeded to pay my visit to the banker, Don Xafire.

I had devised and demolished full fifty ingenious narratives of myself when I drove into the courtyard where the banker resided, and found myself actually without one single satisfactory account of who I was, whence I came, and by what means I became possessed of the formidable papers I carried. “Let circumstances pilot the event” was my old maxim; and, so saying, I entered.

The rattling tramp of my six mules, the cracking of whips, and the crash of the wheels, brought many a head to the windows of the old jail-like palace when my carriage drove up to the door, and the two outriders stood in “a salute” at each side while I descended. “Sua Eccelenza El Condé de Cregano” resounded through the arched hall and passages, as an old servant in a tawdry suit of threadbare livery led the way to Don Xafire's private apartment.

After a brief wait in a large but meagrely furnished chamber, an old man—or a middle-aged one, with a look of age—entered, and, with a profusion of ceremonial, in which he assured me that his house, his wife, his oxen, his mules, his asses, and in fact everything “that was his,” stood at my disposal, asked to what fortunate event he owed the honor of my visit.

“I am the representative, Señhor Xafire,” said I, “of the great house of Cregan and Company, of which

doubtless you have heard, whose ships walk the waters of the icy seas, and lay at anchor amid the perfumes of the spice islands, and whose traffic unites two hemispheres."

"May they always be prosperous!" said the polite Spaniard, bowing.

"They have hitherto enjoyed that blessing," responded I, almost thankfully. "Even as the youngest member of the firm, I have nothing to complain of on the score of prosperity." I smiled, took forth a most gorgeous snuff-box, all glittering with brilliants, and, presenting it to the Spaniard, laid it carelessly on the table. After a brief pause, to let the splendor settle down into his heart, I proceeded to inform him that in the course of commercial transactions a vast number of bills, receipts for deposits and other securities, had fallen into our hands, upon many of which we had advanced large sums, seeing that they bore the name of that most respectable house, the Bank of Don Xafire, of Guajuaqualla. "These would," I added, "have been dispersed through the various channels of trade, had it not been the wish of my partners to open distinct relations with your house, and consequently they have retained the papers until a favorable occasion presented itself of personally making the proposition. This happy opportunity has arisen by our recent purchase of the great gold mines of the 'Arguareche' for seventy millions of piastres, of which you may have read in the 'Faros de la Habanas.'"

He bowed a humble negative; and I went on to state that, our mining operations requiring co-operation and assistance, we desired to open relations with the great house of Don Xafire, whose good fame was well established on the 'Change of

Liverpool.

“You spoke of paper securities and such like, Señhor; may I ask of what nature they are?”

“You shall see them, Don Xafire,” said I, opening a very magnificent pocket-book, and presenting first a receipt, dated forty-eight years back, for the sum of twelve thousand piastres in silver, and four bags, weighing two hundred and eighty pounds of gold dust, from the hands of Menelaus Crick, of the mines of Hajoras, near Guajuaqualla. The Spaniard's dark cheek trembled, and a faint tinge of sickly yellow seemed to replace the dusky olive of his tint, as he said, “This is but waste paper, Señhor, and I trust your excellent house has advanced nothing on its credit.”

“On the contrary, Señhor Banquiero,” responded I, “we have given the full sum, being much advised thereto by competent counsel.”

The battle was now opened, and the combat begun.

It is needless I should weary my reader by recapitulating the tissue of inventions in which, as in a garment, I wrapped myself. I saw quickly that if *I* was a rogue, so was my antagonist, and that for every stratagem *I* possessed, *he* was equally ready with another. At last, pushed hard by his evasions, equivocations, and subterfuges, I was driven to utter a shadowy kind of menace, in which I artfully contrived to mix the name of the General Santa Anna,—a word, in those days, of more than talismanic power.

“And this reminds me,” said I, “that one of my suite who lost his way, and was taken prisoner in the Rocky Mountains, committed to my charge a letter, in which I fancy the General is interested.” This was

a random shot, but it struck the bull's-eye through the very centre. The Señhora Dias's letter was enclosed in an envelope, in which a few words only were written; but these, few as they were, were sufficient to create considerable emotion in Don Xafire, who retired into a window to read and re-read them.

Another shot, thought I, and he's disabled! “It is needless, then, Don Xafire, to prolong an interview which promises so little. I will therefore take my leave; my next communication will reach you through the General Santa Anna.”

“May I not crave a little time for consideration, Señhor?” said he, humbly. “These are weighty considerations; there may be other demands still heavier in store for us of the same kind.”

“You are right, Señhor; there are other and still heavier claims, as you very properly opine. Some of them I have here with me; others are in the hands of our house; but all shall be forthcoming, I assure you.”

“What may be the gross amount, Señhor?” said the banker, trying, but very ineffectually, to look at his ease.

“Without pretending to minute accuracy, I should guess the sum at something like seven hundred thousand piastres,—this, exclusive of certain claims for compensation usual in cases of inquiry. You understand me, I believe.” The last menace was a shot in the very centre of his magazine, and so the little usurer felt it, as he fidgeted among his papers and concealed his face from me.

“Come, Señhor Xafire,” said I, with the air of a man who means to deal mercifully, and not to crush the victim in his power, “I will be moderate with

you. These bills and receipts shall be all placed in your hands on payment of the sums due, without any demand for interest whatever. We will not speak of the other claims at all. The transaction shall be strictly in honor between us, and nothing shall ever transpire to your disadvantage regarding it. Is this enough?"

The struggle in the banker's mind was a difficult one; but after several hours passed in going over the papers, after much discussion, and some altercation, I gained the day; and when I arose to take my leave, it was with my pocket-book stuffed full of bills on Pernambuco, Mexico, Santa Cruz, and the Havannah, with letters of credit, bonds, and other securities; the whole amounting to four hundred thousand piastres. The remaining sum of three hundred thousand, I had agreed to leave in Don Xafire's hands at reasonable interest. In fact, I was but too happy in the possession of so much to think twice about what became of the remainder.

I presented my friend Xafire with my ruby brooch, as a souvenir,—not, indeed, that he needed anything to remind him of our acquaintance; and we parted with all the regrets of brothers about to separate.

"You will stay some days with us here, I hope?" said he, as he conducted me to my carriage.

"I intend a short visit to some of the old 'Placers' in your neighborhood," replied I, "after which I mean to return here;" and so, with a last embrace, we parted.

My next care was to pay a visit to Don Estaban, for I was burning with anxiety to see Donna Maria once more, and to open my campaign as a rich suitor for her hand. The day chosen for this expedition seemed a fortunate one, for the road, which led through a

succession of vineyards, was thronged with townspeople and peasants in gay holiday dresses, all wending their way in the same direction with ourselves. I asked the reason, and heard that it was the *fête* of the Virgin de los Dolores, whose chapel was on the estate of Don Estaban. I bethought me of the time when I had planned a pilgrimage to that same shrine,—little suspecting that I was to make it in my carriage, with six mules and two outriders!

In less than an hour's drive we came in sight of Don Estaban's villa, built on the side of a richly wooded mountain, and certainly not betraying any signs of the reduced fortune of which I had heard. A series of gardens, all terraced in the mountain, lay in front, among which fountains were playing and *jets d'eau* springing. A small lake spread its calm surface beneath, reflecting the whole scene as in a mirror, with its feathery palm-trees and blossoming mimosas, beneath whose shade hundreds of visitors were loitering or sitting, while the tinkling sounds of guitar and mandolin broke the stillness.

It was a strange and curious sight; for while pleasure seemed to hold unbounded sway on every side, the procession of priests in rich vestments, the smoke of censers, the red robes of acolytes, mingled with the throng, and the deep chanting of the liturgies was blended with the laughter of children and the merry sounds of light-hearted joy. “I have come in the very nick of time,” thought I, “to complete this scene of festivity;” and finding that my carriage could only advance slowly along the crowded avenue, I descended, and proceeded on foot, merely attended by two lacqueys to make way for me in front.

A lively controversy ran among the spectators at each side of me, of which I was evidently the subject,

some averring that I was there as a portion of the pageant, an integral feature in the procession; others, with equal discrimination, insisting that my presence was a polite attention on the part of Our Lady de "Los Dolores," who had sent an illustrious personage to grace the festival as her representative. On one point all were agreed,—that my appearance amongst them was a favor which a whole life of devotion to me could not repay; and so rapidly was this impression propagated that it sped up the long approach through various groups and knots of people, and actually reached the villa itself long before my august person arrived at the outer court.

Never was dignity—at least such dignity as mine—intrusted to better hands than those of my "Caçadores." They swaggered along, pushing back the crowds on each side as though it were a profanation to press too closely upon me. They flourished their great gold-headed canes as if they would smash the skulls of those whose eager curiosity outstepped the reverence due to me; and when at length we reached the gates of the court-yard, they announced my name with a grandeur and pomp of utterance that, I own it frankly, actually appalled myself! I had not, however, much time given me for such weaknesses, as, directly in front of the villa, at a table spread beneath an awning of blue silk, sat a goodly company, whose splendor of dress and profusion of jewellery bespoke them the great guests of the occasion. The host—it was easy to detect him by the elevated seat he occupied—rose as I came forward, and, with a humility I never can praise too highly, assured me that if any choice were permitted him in the matter, he would prefer dying on the spot, now that his worldly honors could never exceed the triumph of that day; that all the happiness

of the festivity was as gloom and darkness to his soul, compared to the brilliancy my presence diffused; and not only was everything he owned mine from that moment forth, but, he ardently hoped he might have a long line of grandchildren and great-grandchildren to be my slaves in succeeding generations.

While the worthy man poured forth these “truths” in all the flourish of his purest Castilian, and while I listened to them with the condescending urbanity with which a sovereign may be presumed to hear the strains of some national melody in their praise, as pleasant, though somewhat stale, another individual was added to the group, whose cunning features evinced nothing either of the host's reverence or of my grandeur. This was Fra Miguel, the Friar, who, in a costume of extraordinary simplicity, stood staring fixedly at me.

“Il Condé de Cregauo!” repeated Don Estaban. “I have surely heard the name before. Your highness is doubtless a grandee of Spain?”

“Of the first class!” said I, with a slight cough; for the confounded Friar never took his eyes off me.

“And we have met before, Señhor Condé,” said he, with a most equivocal stress upon the last words. “How pleasant for me to thank the Condé for what I believed I owed to the mere wayfarer.” These words he uttered in a whisper close to my own ear.

“Better that, than ungratefully desert a benefactor!” said I, in the same low tone; then, turning to Don Estaban, who stood amazed at our dramatic asides, I told him pretty much what I had already related to the banker at Guajuaqualla; only adding that during an excursion which it was my caprice to make alone and unaccompanied, I had

been able to render a slight service to his fair daughter, Donna Maria de Los Dolores, and that I could not pass the neighborhood without inquiring after her health, and craving permission to kiss her hand.

“Is this the Señhor Cregan of the 'Rio del Crocodielo '?” cried Don Estaban, in rapture.

“The same whom we left in safe keeping with our Brothers of Mercy, at Bexar!” exclaimed the Friar, in affected amazement.

“The very same, Fra Miguel, whom you humanely consigned to the Lazaretto of Bexar,—an establishment which has as little relation to 'mercy' as need be; the same who, having resumed the rank and station that belong to him, can afford to forget your cold-hearted desertion.”

“San Joachim of Ulloa knows if I did not pay for masses for your soul's repose!” exclaimed he.

“A very little care of me in this world,” said I, “had been to the full as agreeable as all your solicitations for me in the next; and as for San Joachim,” added I, “no witness can be received as evidence who will not appear in court.”

“It is a pleasure to see your Excellency in the perfect enjoyment of your faculties,” said the Fra, with a deceitful smile; but I paid little attention to his sneer, and turned willingly to Don Estaban, whose grateful acknowledgments were beyond all bounds. He vowed that he owed his daughter's life to my heroism, and that he and she, and all that were theirs, were mine.

“Very gratifying tidings these,” thought I, “for a man who only asks for an 'instalment of his debt,' and will be satisfied with the lady.”

“Maria shall tell you so herself,” added Don

Estaban, in a perfect paroxysm of grateful emotion. “Don Lopez y Cuesta y Goloso can never forget your noble conduct.” Not caring much how retentive the memory of the aforesaid hidalgo might prove,—whom I at once set down as an uncle or a godfather,—I hastened after the host to where his daughter sat at the table. I had but time to see that she was dressed in black, with a profusion of diamonds scattered, not only through her hair, but over her dress, when she arose, and, ere I could prevent it, fell at my feet and covered my hands with kisses, calling me her “Salvador,” in a voice of the wildest enthusiasm,—an emotion which seemed most electrically to seize upon the whole company; for I was now laid hold of by every limb, and hugged, kissed, and embraced by a score of people, the large majority of whom, I grieve to say, were the very hardest specimens of what is called the softer sex.



One member of the company maintained a look of cold distrust towards me, the very opposite of all this cordiality. This was Don Lopez, who did not need this air of dislike to appear to my eyes the ugliest

mortal I had ever beheld. He was exceedingly short of stature, but of an immense breadth; and yet, even with this, his head was far too big for his body. A huge spherical mass, party-colored with habits of debauch, looked like a terrestrial globe, of which the mouth represented the equator. His attempts at embellishment had even made him more horrible; for he wore a great wig, with long curls flowing upon his shoulders, and his immense moustachios were curled into a series of circles, like a ram's horn. His nose had been divided across the middle by what seemed the slash of a cutlass, the cicatrix remaining of an angry red color, amid the florid hue of the countenance.

The expression of these benign features did not disgrace their symmetry. It was a cross between a scowl and a sneer; the eyes and brow performed the former, the mouth assuming the latter function.

Blushing with shame and trembling with emotion, Maria led me towards him, and, in accents I can never forget, told how I had rescued her in the passage of the Crocodile River. The wretch scowled more darkly than before, as he listened, and when she ended, he muttered something between his bloated lips that sounded marvellously like “Picaro!”

“Your godfather scarcely seems so grateful as one might expect, Señhora,” said I.

“Muerte de Dios!” he burst out, “I am her husband.”

Whether it was the simple fact so palpably brought forward, the manner of its announcement, or the terrible curse that involuntarily fell from my lips, I know not, but Donna Maria fell down in a swoon. Fainting, among foreigners, I have often found, is regarded next door to actually dying; and so it was

here. A scene of terror and dismay burst forth that soon converted the festivity into an uproar of wild confusion. Every one screamed for aid, and dashed water in his neighbor's face. The few who retained any presence of mind filled out large bumpers of wine, and drank them off. Meanwhile, Donna Maria was sufficiently recovered to be conducted into the house, whither she was followed by her “marido,” Don Lopez, whose last look as he passed me was one of insulting defiance.

The cause of order having triumphed, as the newspapers say, I was led to one side by Don Estaban, who in a few words told me that Don Lopez was a special envoy from the Court of Madrid, come out to arrange some disputed question of a debt between the two countries; that he was a Grandee d'Espana, a Golden Fleece, and I don't know what besides; his title of Donna Maria's husband being more than enough to swallow up every other consideration with me. The ceremony had been performed that very morning. It was the wedding breakfast I had thrown into such confusion and dismay.

Don Estaban, in his triumphal narrative of his daughter's great elevation in rank, of the proud place she would occupy in the proud court of the Escurial, her wealth, her splendor, and her dignity, could not repress the fatherly sorrow he felt at such a disproportioned union; nor could he say anything of his son-in-law but what concerned his immense fortune. “Had it been you, Señhor Condé,” cried he, throwing himself into my arms,—“you, young, handsome, and well-born as you are, I had been happy.”

“Is it too late, Don Estaban?” said I, passionately. “I have wealth that does not yield to Don Lopez, and

Maria is not—at least, she was not—indifferent regarding me."

"Oh, it is too late, far too late!" cried the father, wringing his hands.

"Let me speak with Maria herself. Let me also speak with this Don Lopez. I may be able to make him understand reason, however dull his comprehension."

"This cannot be, Señhor Caballero," said another voice. It was Fra Miguel, who, having heard all that passed, now joined the colloquy. "Nothing short of a dispensation from the Holy See could annul the marriage, and Don Lopez is not likely to ask for one."

"I will not suffer it," cried I, in desperation. "I would rather carry her away by force than permit such a desecration."

"Hush! for the love of the Virgin, Señhor," cried Don Estaban. "Don Lopez is captain of the Alguazils of the Guard, and a Grand Inquisitor."

"What signifies that in Mexico?" said I, boldly.

"More than you think for, Señhor," whispered Fra Miguel. "We have not ceased to be good Catholics, although we are no longer subjects of Old Spain." There was an air of cool menace in the way these words were spoken that made me feel very ill at ease. I soon rallied, however, and, drawing the Friar to one side, said, "How many crowns will buy a candelabrum worthy of your chapel?"

He looked at me fixedly for a few seconds, and his shrewd features assumed a character of almost comic cunning. "The Virgin de los Dolores is too simple for such luxuries, Señhor Condé," said he, with a sly drollery.

"Would she not condescend to wear a few gems in

her petticoat?" asked I, with the easy assurance of one not to be balked.

"She has no pleasure in such vanities," said the Fra, with an hypocritical casting down of his eyes.

"Would she not accept of an embroidered handkerchief," said I, "to dry her tears? I have known one of this pattern to possess the most extraordinary powers of consolation;" and as I spoke I drew forth a bank-note of some amount, and gently drew it across his knuckles.

A slight tremor shook his frame, and a short, convulsive motion was perceptible in the hand I had "galvanized;" but in an instant, with his habitual calm smile and mellow voice, he said, "Your piety will bring a blessing upon you, Señhor, but our poor shrine is unused to such princely donations."

"Confound the old hypocrite," muttered I to myself; "what is he at?—Fra Miguel," said I, assuming the business-like manner of a man who could not afford to lose time, "the Virgin may be, and doubtless is, all that you say of her; but there must needs be many excellent and devout men here, yourself doubtless among the number, who see numberless objects of charity, for whom their hearts bleed in vain. Take this, and remember that he who gave it, only asks as a return your prayers and good wishes."

The Friar deposited the present in some inscrutable fold of his loose garment, and then, drawing himself proudly up, said, "Well, now what is it?"

"Am I too late?" asked I, with the same purpose-like tone.

"Of course you are; the ceremony is finished, the contracts are signed and witnessed. In an hour they will be away on their road to the Havannah."

"You have no consolation to offer me,—no hope?"

"None of an earthly character," said he, with a half-closed eye.

"Confound your hypocrisy!" cried I, in a rage.

"Don't be profane," said he, calmly. "What I have said is true. Heaven will some day take Don Lopez,—he is too good for this wicked world; and then, who knows what may happen?"

This was but sorry comfort, waiting for the bride to become a widow; but, alas, I had no better! Besides it had cost me a heavy sum to obtain, and accordingly I prized it the more highly.

If *my* anxieties were acute, apparently Don Lopez's mind was not in a state of perfect serenity. He stormed and raved at everybody and everything. He saw, or, what was pretty much the same thing, he fancied he saw, a plot in the whole business, and swore he would bring the vengeance of the Holy Office upon everybody concerned in it. In this blessed frame of mind the departure of the newly wedded pair took place in spite of all my entreaties; Don Lopez drove away with his young bride,—the last I beheld of her was a white hand waving a handkerchief from the window of the carriage. I looked, and—she was gone!

If some were kind-hearted enough to pity me, the large majority of the company felt very differently, and bore anything but friendly feelings to one who had marred the festivities and cut short—Heaven could only tell by what number of days—the eating, dancing, singing, and merriment.

The old ladies were peculiarly severe in their comments, averring that no well-bred man would have thought of interfering with a marriage. It was quite time enough to talk of his passion when the

others were six or eight months married!

Of the younger ladies, a few condoled with me, praised my heroism and my constancy, and threw out sly hints that when I tried my luck next, fortune might possibly be more generous to me. Don Estaban himself appeared to sympathize sincerely with my sorrow, and evinced the warmest sense of gratitude for the past. Even the Fra tried a little good-nature; but it sat ill upon him, and it was easy to see that he entertained a great mistrust of me.

From the brief experience of what I suffered in these few days, I am decidedly of opinion that rich men are far more impatient under reverses and disappointments than poor ones! It was a marvellous change for one like me, whose earlier years, it is unnecessary to remind the reader, were not passed in the lap of that comfortable wet nurse called “affluence;” and yet with all this brilliant present and still more fascinating future, at the very first instance of an opposition to my will, I grew sad, dispirited, and morose. I should have been very angry with myself for my ingratitude, but that I set it all down to the score of love; and so I went about the house, visiting each room where Donna Maria used to sit, reading her books, gazing at her picture, and feeding my mind with a hundred fancies which the next moment of thought told me were now impossible.

Don Estaban, whose grief for the loss of his daughter was in a manner divided with mine, would not suffer me to leave him; and although the place itself served to keep open the wound of my regret, and the Fra's presence was anything but conciliatory, I passed several days at the villa.

It would have been the greatest relief to me could I have persuaded myself to be candid with Don

Estaban, and told him frankly the true story of my life. I felt that all the consolations which he offered me were of no avail, simply because I had misled him! The ingenious tissue of fiction in which I enveloped myself was a web so thin that it tore whenever I stirred, and my whole time was spent, as it were, in darning, patching, and piecing the frail garment with which I covered my nakedness.

A dozen times every day I jumped up, determined to reveal my humble history; but as regularly did a sentiment of false shame hold me back, and a dread of old Fra Miguel's malicious leer, should he hear the story. Another, and a strange feeling, too, influenced me. My imaginary rank, birth, and station had, from the mere force of repetition, grown to be a portion of myself. I had played the part with such applause before the world that I could not find in my heart to retire behind the scenes and resume the humble dress of my real condition.

By way of distracting my gloomy thoughts, I made little excursions in the surrounding country, in one of which I contrived to revisit the “placer,” and carry away all the treasure which I had left behind me. This was much more considerable than I had at first believed, the gems being of a size and beauty far beyond any I had ever seen before; while the gold, in actual coined money, amounted to a large sum.

Affecting to have changed my original intention of investing a great capital in the mines of Mexico, and resolved instead to return to Europe, I consulted Don Estaban as to the safest hands in which to deposit my money. He named a certain wealthy firm at the Havannah, and gave me a letter of introduction to them, requesting for me all the attention in their power to bestow; and so we parted.

It was with sincere sorrow I shook his hand for the last time; his cordiality was free-hearted and affectionate; and I carry with me, to this hour, the memory of his wise counsels and honest precepts, as treasures, not the least costly, I brought away with me from the New World.

I arrived safely at the Havannah, travelling in princely state with two carriages and a great baggage-wagon guarded by four mounted "carabinieros" who had taken a solemn oath at the shrine of a certain Saint Magalano to eat any bandits who should molest us,—a feat of digestion which I was not sorry their devotion was spared.

The bankers to whom Don Estaban's letters introduced me were most profuse in their offers of attention, and treated me with all the civilities reserved for the most favored client. I only accepted, however, one invitation to dinner, to meet the great official dignitaries of the place, and the use of their box each evening at the opera, affecting to make delicacy of health the reason of not frequenting society,—a pretext I had often remarked in use among people of wealth and distinction, among whose privileges there is that of being sick without suffering.

There was a French packet-ship to sail for Malaga in about ten days after my arrival; and as I knew that Don Lopez intended to leave that port for Europe, I quietly waited in the Havannah, determined to be his fellow-traveller. In preparing for this voyage, every thought of my mind was occupied, resolved to outdo the old Spaniard in luxury and magnificence. I ordered the most costly clothes, I engaged the most accomplished servants, I bespoke everything which could make the tediousness of the sea less irksome, even to the services of a distinguished performer on

the guitar, who was about to visit Europe, and engaged to begin his journey under such distinguished patronage as that of the Condé de Cregano.

What wonderful speculations did I revel in as I pictured to myself Don Lopez's ineffectual rage, and his fair wife's satisfaction, when I should first make my appearance on deck,—an appearance which I artfully devised should not take place until we were some days at sea! What agonies of jealousy should I not inflict upon the old Castilian! what delicate flatteries should I not offer up to the Donna! I had laid in a store of moss-rose plants, to present her with a fresh bouquet every morning; and then I would serenade her each night beneath the very window of her cabin. So perfectly had I arranged all these details to my own satisfaction that the voyage began to appear a mere pleasure excursion, every portion of whose enjoyment originated with me, and all whose blanks and disappointments owed their paternity to Don Lopez; so that, following up these self-created convictions in my usual sanguine manner, I firmly persuaded myself that the worthy husband would either go mad or jump overboard before we landed at Malaga. Let not the reader fall into the error of supposing that hatred to Don Lopez was uppermost in my thoughts,—far from it; I wished him in heaven every hour of the twenty-four, and would willingly have devoted one-half of my fortune to make a saint of him in the next world, rather than make a martyr in this.

I was walking one evening in my banker's garden, chatting pleasantly on indifferent topics, when, on ascending a little eminence, we came in view of the sea. It was a calm and lovely evening, a very light land breeze was just rippling the waters of the bay,

fringing the blue with white, when we saw the graceful spars of a small sloop of war emerge from beneath the shadow of the tall cliffs and stand out to sea.

“The 'Moschetta,'” said he, “has got a fair wind, and will be out of sight of land by daybreak.”

“Whither is she bound?” asked I, carelessly.

“For Cadiz,” said he; “she came into port only this morning, and is already off again.”

“With despatches, perhaps?” I remarked, with the same tone of indifference.

“No, Señhor; she came to convey Don Lopez y Geloso, the Spanish ambassador, back to Madrid.”

“And is he on board of her now?” screamed I, in a perfect paroxysm of terror. “Is *she* too?”

“He embarked about an hour ago, with his bride and suite,” said the astonished banker, who evidently was not quite sure of his guest's sanity.

Overwhelmed by these tidings, which gave at once the death-blow to all my plans, I could not speak, but sat down upon a seat, my gaze fixed upon the vessel which carried all my dearest hopes.

“You probably desired to see his Excellency before he sailed?” said the banker, timidly, after waiting a long time in the expectation that I would speak.

“Most anxiously did I desire it,” said I, shrouding my sorrow under an affectation of important state solicitude.

“What a misfortune,” exclaimed he, “that you should have missed him! In all likelihood, had you seen him, he would have agreed to our terms.”

“You are right,” said I, shaking my head sententiously, and neither guessing nor caring what he alluded to.

"So that he would have accepted the guarantee," exclaimed the banker, with increased excitement.

"He would have accepted the guarantee," echoed I, without the remotest idea of what the words could mean.

"Oh, Madré de Dios, what an unhappy mischance is this! Is it yet too late? Alas! the breeze is freshening,—the sloop is already sinking beyond the horizon; to overtake her would be impossible! And you say that the guarantee would have been accepted?"

"You may rely upon it," said I, the more confidently as I saw that the ship was far beyond the chance of pursuit.

"What a benefactor to this country you might have been, Señhor, had you done us this service!" cried the banker, with enthusiasm.

"Well, it is too late to think of it now," said I, rather captiously; for I began to be worried with the mystification.

"Of course, for the present it is too late; but when you arrive in Europe, Señhor Condé, when you are once more in the land where your natural influence holds sway, may we entertain the hope that you will regard our case with the same favorable eyes?"

"Yes, yes," said I, with impatience, "if I see no reason to change my opinions."

"Upon the subject of the original loan there can be no doubt, Señhor Condé."

"Perhaps not," said I; "but these are questions I must decline entering upon. You will yourself perceive that any discussion of them would be inconvenient and indiscreet."

The diplomatic reserve of this answer checked the

warmth of his importunity, and he bashfully withdrew, leaving me to the undisturbed consideration of my own thoughts.

I sat till it was already near midnight, gazing on the sea, my eyes still turned to the track by which the vessel had disappeared, and at last rose to retire, when, to my amazement, I perceived my friend the banker, accompanied by another person, approaching towards me.

“Señhor Condé,” said he, in a mysterious whisper, “this is his Excellency the Governor;” and with these words, uttered in all the reverence of awe, he retired, leaving me face to face with a tall, dignified-looking personage, whose figure was concealed in the folds of a great cloak.

In all the formal politeness of his rank and country, the Governor begged I would be seated, and took his place beside me. He explained how the banker, one of the richest and most respected men in the Havannah, had informed him of my gracious intentions respecting them, and the sad mishap by which my mediation was foiled. He entered at length into the question of the debt, and all its financial difficulties,—which, even had they been far less intricate and complicated, would have puzzled a head which never had the bump arithmetical. How he himself saw his way through the labyrinth, I know not; but had the sum been a moderate one, I vow I would rather have paid it myself than investigate it any farther, such an inextricable mass of complications, doubles, and difficulties did it involve.

“Thus, you perceive,” said he, at the close of a formidable sum of figures, “that these eighteen millions made no part of the old loan, but were, in

fact, the first deposit of what is called the 'Cuba debt;' not that it ever should have had that name, which more properly belonged to the original Poyais three-and-a-half—You understand me?"

"Perfectly; proceed."

"That being the case, our liability is reduced to the sum of twenty-seven millions on the old four-and-a-quarters."

"Clearly so."

"Now we approach the difficult part of the matter," said he, "and I must entreat your most marked attention; for here lies the point which has hitherto proved the stumbling-block in the way of every negotiation."

I promised the strictest attention, and kept my word till I found myself in a maze of figures where compound interest and decimal fractions danced a reel together, whose evolutions would have driven Mr. Babbage distracted; while the Governor, now grown "warm in the harness," kept exclaiming at every instant, "Do you see how the 'Ladrones' want to cheat us here? Do you perceive what the Picaros intend by that?"

If I could not follow his arithmetic, I could at least sympathize in his enthusiasm; and I praised the honor of the Mexicans, while I denounced "the cause of roguery" over the face of the globe, to his heart's content.

"You are satisfied about the original debt, Señhor Condé?" at last said he, after a "four-mile heat" of explanation.

"Most thoroughly," said I, bowing.

"You'd not wish for anything farther on that head?"

“Not a syllable.”

“And as to the Cuba instalment, you see the way in which the first scrip became entangled in the Chihuahua 'fives,' don't you?”

“Plain as my hand before me.”

“Then, of course, you acknowledge our right to the reserve fund?”

“I don't see how it can be disputed,” said I.

“And yet that is precisely what the Madrid Government contest!”

“What injustice!” exclaimed I.

“Evident as it is to your enlightened understanding, Señhor Condé, you are, nevertheless, the first man I have ever found to take the right view of this transaction. It is a real pleasure to discuss a state question with a great man.”

Hereupon we both burst forth into an animated duet of compliments, in which, I am bound to confess, the Governor was the victor.

“And now, Señhor Condé,” said he, after a long volley of panegyric, “may we reckon upon your support in this affair?”

“You must understand, first of all, Excellenza,” replied I, “that I am not in any way an official personage. I am,”—here I smiled with a most fascinating air of mock humility,—“I am, so to speak, a humble—a very humble—individual, of unpretending rank and small fortune.”

“Ah, Señhor Condé,” sighed the Governor, for he had heard of my ingots from the banker.

“Being as I say,” resumed I, “my influence is naturally small. If I am listened to in a matter of political importance, I owe the courtesy rather to the memory of my family's services than to any

insignificant merits I may possess. The cause of justice is, however, never weak, no matter how humble the means of him who asserts it. Such as I am, rely upon me."

We embraced here, and the Governor shed a few official tears at the thought of so soon separating from one he regarded as more than his brother.

"We feel, Señhor Condé," said he, "how inadequate any recognition of ours must be for services such as yours. We are a young country and a Republic; honors we have none to bestow,—wealth is already your own; we have nothing to offer, therefore, but our gratitude."

"Be it so," thought I; "the burden will not increase my luggage."

"This box will remind you, however, of an interview, and recall one who deems this the happiest, as it is the proudest, hour of his life;" here he presented me with a splendid gold snuff-box containing a miniature of the President, surrounded by enormous diamonds.

Resolving not to be outdone in generosity, and at least not to be guilty of dishonesty before my own conscience, I insisted upon the Governor's acceptance of my watch,—a very costly repeater, studded with precious stones.

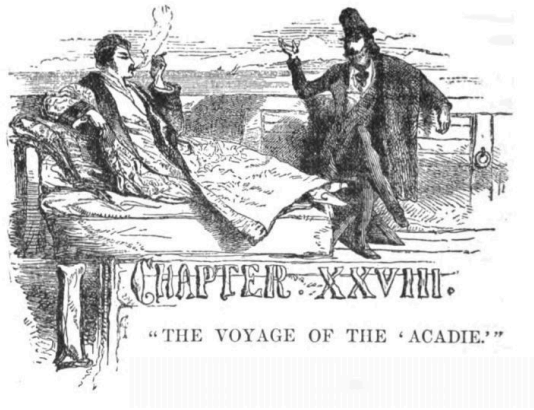
"The arms of my family—the Cregans are Irish—will bring me to your recollection," said I, pointing to a very magnificent heraldic display on the timepiece, wherein figured the ancient crown of Ireland over a shield, in one compartment of which was an "eye winking," the motto being the Gaelic word "Nabocklish," signifying "Maybe not," ironically.

I will not dwell upon the other particulars of an

interview which lasted till nigh morning. It will be sufficient to mention that I was presented with letters of introduction and recommendation to the Mexican Ministers at Paris and Madrid, instructing them to show me every attention, and desiring them to extend to me their entire confidence, particularly to furnish me with introductions to any official personages with whom I desired to be acquainted. This was all that I wanted; for I was immensely rich, and only needed permission to pass the door of the "great world," to mingle in that society for which my heart yearned and longed unceasingly.

Some of my readers will smile at the simplicity which believed these passports necessary, and was ignorant that wealth alone is wanting to attain any position, to frequent any society, to be the intimate of any set in Europe, and that the rich man is other than he was in classic days,—"Honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum."

I have lived to be wiser, and to see vulgarity, coarseness, meanness, knavery, nay, even convicted guilt, the favored guests of royal saloons. The moral indictments against crime have to the full as many flaws as the legal ones; and we see, in every society, men, and women too, as notoriously criminal as though they wore the red-and-yellow livery of the galleys. Physicians tell us that every drug whose sanitary properties are acknowledged in medicine, contains some ingredients of a noxious or poisonous nature. May not something similar exist in the moral world? and even in the very healthiest mixture, may not some "bitter principle" be found to lurk?



CHAPTER XXVIII. THE VOYAGE OF THE 'ACADIE'

I was not sorry to leave the Havannah on the following day. I did not desire another interview with my “friend” the Governor, but rather felt impatient to escape a repetition of his arithmetic and the story of the “original debt.”

Desirous of supporting my character as a great personage, and at the same time to secure for myself the pleasure of being unmolested during the voyage, I obtained the sole right to the entire cabin accommodation of the “Acadie” for myself and suite; my equipages, baggage, and some eight or ten Mexican horses occupying the deck.

A salute of honor was fired as I ascended the ladder, and replied to by the forts,—a recognition of

my dignity at which I took occasion to seem offended; assuring the captain that I was travelling in the strictest incognito; leaving it to his powers of calculation to compute what amount of retinue and followers I should have when journeying in the full blaze of acknowledged identity.

I sat upon the poop-deck as they weighed the anchor, contrasting in my mind my present condition with that of my first marine experiences on board the "Firefly." I am richer, thought I. Am I better? Have I become more generous, more truthful, more considerate, more forgiving?

Has my knowledge of the world developed more of good in me, or of evil; have my own successes ministered rather to my self-esteem than to my gratefulness; and have I learned to think meanly of all who have been beaten in the race of fortune? Alas! there was not a count of this indictment to which I dared plead "Not guilty." I had seen knavery thrive too often, not to feel a kind of respect for its ability; I saw honesty too often worsted, not to feel something like contempt for its meekness. It was difficult to feel a reverence for poverty, whose traits were frequently ridiculous; and it was hard to censure wealth, which dispensed its abundance in splendid hospitalities. Oh, the cunning sophistries by which we cover up our real feelings in this life, smothering every healthy impulse and every generous aspiration, under the guise of some "conventionality."

My conscience was less lenient than I expected. I cut but a sorry figure "in the dock," and was obliged to throw myself upon the mercy of the court. I will be more considerate in future, said I to myself; I will be less exacting with my servants, and more forgiving to their delinquencies; I will try and

remember that there is an acid property in poverty that sours even the sweetest “milk of human kindness.” I will be trustful, too,—a “gentleman” ought not to be suspicious; it is eminently becoming a Bow Street officer, but suits not the atmosphere of good society. These excellent resolutions were to a certain extent “à propos;” for just as “the foresail began to draw,” a boat came alongside and hailed the ship. I did not deign any attention to a circumstance so trivial to “one of my condition,” and never noticed the conversation which in very animated tones was kept up between the captain and the stranger, until the former, approaching me with the most profound humility, and asking forgiveness for the great liberty he was about to take, said that a gentleman whom urgent business recalled to Europe humbly entreated permission to take his passage on board the “Acadie.”

“Are you not aware it is impossible, my good friend?” said I, listlessly. “The accommodation is lamentably restricted, as it is; my secretary's cabin is like a dog-kennel, and my second cook has actually to lie round a corner, like a snake.”

The captain reddened, and bit his lip in silence.

“As for myself,” said I, heroically, “I never complain. Let me have any little cabin for my bed, a small bath-room, a place to lounge in during the day, with a few easy sofas, and a snug crib for a dinner-room, and I can always rough it. It was part of my father's system never to make Sybarites of his boys.” This I asserted with all the sturdy vehemence of truth.

“We will do everything to make your Excellency comfortable,” said the captain, who clearly could not see the reasons for my self-praise. “And as to the

Consul, what shall we say to him?"

"Consul, did you say?" said I.

"Yes, Señhor Condé, he is the French Consul for the Republic of 'Campecho.'" That this was a State I had never heard of before, was quite true; yet it was clearly one which the French Government were better informed upon, and deigned to recognize by an official agent.

"Hold on there a bit!" shouted out the captain to the boat's crew. "What shall I say, Señhor Condé? The Chevalier de la Boutonerie is very anxious on the subject."

"Let this man have his passage," said I, indolently, and lighted a cigar, as if to turn my thoughts in another direction, not even noticing the new arrival, who was hoisted up the side with his portmanteau in a very undignified fashion for an official character. He soon, however, baffled this indifference on my part, by advancing towards me, and, in a manner where considerable ease and tact were evident, thanked me for my polite consideration regarding him, and expressed a hope that he might not in any way inconvenience me during the voyage.

Now, the Chevalier was not in himself a very prepossessing personage, while his dress was of the very shabbiest, being a worn-out suit of black, covered by a coarse brown Mexican mantle; and yet his fluency, his quiet assurance, his seeming self-satisfaction, gained an ascendancy over me at once. I saw that he was a master in a walk in which I myself had so long been a student, and that he was a consummate adept in the "art of impudence."

And how mistaken is the world at large in the meaning of that art! How prone to call the unblushing effrontery of every underbred man

impudence! The rudeness that dares any speech, or adventures upon any familiarity; the soulless, heartless, selfish intrusiveness that scruples not to invade any society,—these are not impudence, or they are such specimens of the quality as men only possess in common with inferior animals. I speak of that educated, cultivated “impudence” which, never abashed by an inferiority, felt acutely, is resolved to overbear worldly prejudices by the exercise of gifts that assert a mastery over others,—a power of rising, by the expansive force of self-esteem, into something almost estimable. Ordinary mortals tell lies at intervals, *per saltum*, as the doctors say; but these people's whole life is a lie. The Chevalier was a fine specimen of the class, and seemed as indifferent to a hundred little adverse circumstances as though everything around him went well and pleasantly.

There was a suave dignity in the way he moved a very dubious hand over his unshaven chin, in the graceful negligence he exhibited when disposing the folds of his threadbare cloak, in the jaunty lightness with which, after saluting, he replaced his miserable hat on the favored side of his head, that conveyed the whole story of the man.

What a model for my imitation had he been, thought I, if I had seen him in the outset of life! what a study he had presented! And yet there he was, evidently in needy circumstances, pressed on by even urgent want, and I, Con Cregan, the outcast, the poor, friendless street-runner, had become a “millionnaire.”

I don't know how it was, but certainly I felt marvellously ill at ease with my new friend. A real aristocrat, with all the airs of assumption and haughtiness, would have been a blessing compared with the submissive softness of the “Chevalier.”

Through all his flattery there seemed a sly consciousness that his honeyed words were a snare, and his smile a delusion; and I could never divest myself of the feeling that he saw into the very secret of my heart, and knew me thoroughly.

I must become his dupe, thought I, or it is all over with me. The fellow will detect me for a “parvenu” long before we reach Malaga!

No man born and bred to affluence could have acquired the keen insight into life that I possessed. I must mask this knowledge, then, if I would still be thought a “born gentleman.” This was a wise resolve, —at least, its effects were immediately such as I hoped for. The Chevalier's little sly sarcasms, his half-insinuated “équivoques,” were changed for a tone of wonder and admiration for all I said. How one so young could have seen and learned so much! —what natural gifts I must possess!—how remarkably just my views were!—how striking the force of my observations!—and all this while I was discoursing what certainly does not usually pass for “consummate wisdom.” I soon saw that the Chevalier set me down for a fool; and from that moment we changed places,—*he* became the dupe versus *me*. To be sure, the contrivance cost me something, as we usually spent the evenings at piquet or écarté, and the consul was the luckiest of men; to use his own phrase, applied to one he once spoke of, “savait corriger la fortune.”

Although he spoke freely of the fashionable world of Paris and London, with all whose celebrities he affected a near intimacy, he rarely touched upon his New World experiences, and blinked all allusion whatever to the republic of “Campecho.” His own history was comprised in the brief fact that he was the cadet of a great family of Provence,—all your

French rogues, I remark, come from the South of France,—that he had once held a high diplomatic rank, from which, in consequence of the fall of a ministry, he was degraded, and, after many vicissitudes of fortune, he had become Consul-General at Campecho. “My friends,” continued he, “are now looking up again in the world, so that I entertain hopes of something better than perpetual banishment.”

Of English people, their habits, modes of life, and thought, the Chevalier spoke to me with a freedom he never would have used if he had not believed me to be a Spaniard, and only connected with Ireland through the remote chain of ancestry. This deceit of mine was one he never penetrated, and I often thought over the fact with satisfaction. To encourage his frankness on the subject of my country, I affected to know nothing, or next to nothing, of England; and gradually he grew to be more communicative, and at last spoke with an unguarded freedom which soon opened to me a clew of his real history.

It was one day as we walked the deck together that, after discussing the tastes and pursuits of the wealthy English, he began to talk of their passion for sport, and especially horse-racing. The character of this national pastime he appeared to understand perfectly, not as a mere foreigner who had witnessed a Derby or a Doncaster, but as one conversant with the traditions of the turf or the private life of the jockey and the trainer.

I saw that he colored all his descriptions with a tint meant to excite an interest within me for these sports. He drew a picture of an “Ascot meeting,” wherein were assembled all the ingredients that could excite the curiosity and gratify the ambition of a wealthy, high-spirited youth; and he dilated with

enthusiasm upon his own first impressions of these scenes, mingled with half-regrets of how many of his once friends had quitted the “Turf” since he last saw it!

He spoke familiarly of those whose names I had often read in newspapers as the great leaders of the “sporting world,” and affected to have known them all on terms of intimacy and friendship. Even had the theme been less attractive to me, I would have encouraged it for other reasons, a strange glimmering suspicion ever haunting my mind that I had heard of the worthy Chevalier before, and under another title; and so completely had this idea gained possession of me that I could think of nothing else.

At length, after we had been some weeks at sea, the welcome cry of “Land!” was given from the mast-head; but as the weather was hazy and thick, we were compelled to shorten sail, and made comparatively little way through the water; so that at nightfall we saw that another day must elapse ere we touched mother earth again.

The Chevalier and the Captain both dined with me; the latter, however, soon repaired to the deck, leaving us in *tête-à-tête*. It was in all likelihood the last evening we should ever pass together, and I felt a most eager longing to ascertain the truth of my vague suspicions. Chance gave me the opportunity. We had been playing cards, and luck—contrary to custom, and in part owing to my always shuffling the cards *after* my adversary—had deserted *him* and taken *my* side. At first this seemed to amuse him, and he merely complimented me upon my fortune, and smiled blandly at my success. After a while, however, his continued losses began to irritate him, and I could see that his habitual command of temper was yielding to a peevish, captious spirit he had

never exhibited previously.

“Shall we double our stake?” said he, after a long run of ill-luck.

“If *you* prefer it, of course,” said I. And we played on, but ever with the same result.

“Come,” cried he, at last, “I 'll wager fifty Napoleons on this game.” The bet was made, and he lost it! With the like fortune he played on and on, till at last, as day was dawning, he had not only lost all that he had won from me during the voyage, but a considerable sum besides, and for which he gave me his check upon a well-known banker at Paris.

“Shall I tell you your fortune, Monsieur le Comte?” said he, in a tone of bitterness that almost startled me.

“With all my heart,” said I, laughing. “Are you skilful as a necromancer?”

“I can at least decipher what the cards indicate,” said he. “There is no great skill in reading, where the print is legible.” With these words, he shuffled the cards, dividing them into two or three packets; the first card of each he turned on the face. “Let me premise, Count,” said he, “before I begin, that you will not take anything in bad part which I may reveal to you, otherwise I'll be silent. You are free to believe, or not to believe, what I tell you; but you cannot reasonably be angry if unpleasant discoveries await you.”

“Go on fearlessly,” said I; “I'll not promise implicit faith in everything, but I 'll pledge myself to keep my temper.”

He began at once drawing forth every third card of each heap, and disposing them in a circle, side by side. When they were so arranged, he bent over, as if to study them, concealing his eyes from me by his

hand; but at the same time, as I could perceive, keenly watching my face between his fingers. “There is some great mistake here,” said he at length, in a voice of irritation. “I have drawn the cards wrong, somehow; it must be so, since the interpretation is clear as print. What an absurd blunder, too!” and he seemed as if about to dash the cards up in a heap, from a sense of angry disappointment.

“Nay, nay,” cried I, interposing. “Let us hear what they say, even though we may dispute the testimony.”

“If it were less ridiculous it might be offensive,” said he, smiling; “but being as it is, it is really good laughing-matter.”

“I am quite impatient,—pray read on.”

“Of course it is too absurd for anything but ridicule,” said he, smiling, but, as I thought, with a most malicious expression. “You perceive here this four of clubs, which, as the first card we turn, assumes to indicate your commencement in life. Now, only fancy, Monsieur le Comte, what this most insolent little demon would insinuate. Really, I cannot continue. Well, well, be it so. This card would say that you were not only born without rank or title, but actually in a condition of the very meanest and most humble poverty. Isn't that excellent?” said he, bursting out into a fit of immoderate laughter, in which the spiteful glance of his keen eyes seemed to pierce through and through me.

As for me, I laughed too; but what a laugh it was! Never was a burst of natural sorrow so poignant in suffering as that forced laugh, when, covered with shame, I sat there, beneath the sarcastic insolence of the wretch, who seemed to gloat over the tortures he was inflicting.

"I can scarcely expect that this opening will inspire you with much confidence in the oracle," said he; "the first step a falsehood, promises ill for the remainder of the journey."

"If not very veracious," said I, "it is at least very amusing. Pray continue."

"What would the old counts of your ancestry have said to such a profanation?" cried the Chevalier. "By Saint Denis, I would not have been the man to asperse their blood thus, in their old halls at Grenada!"

"*We* live in a less haughty age," said I, affecting a smile of indifference, and motioning to him to proceed.

"What follows is the very commonest of that nonsense which is revealed in all lowly fortunes. You are, as usual, the victim of cold and hunger, suffering from destitution and want. Then there are indications of a bold spirit, ambitious and energetic, bursting out through all the gloom of your dark condition, and a small whispered word in your ear, tells you to hope!" While the Chevalier rattled out this "rodomontade" at a much greater length than I have time or patience to repeat, his eyes never quitted me, but seemed to sparkle with a fiend-like intelligence of what was passing within me. As he concluded, he mixed up the cards together, merely muttering, half aloud, "adventures and escapes by land and sea. Abundance of hard luck, to be all compensated for one day, when wealth in all its richest profusion is showered upon you." Then, dashing the cards from him in affected anger, he said, "It is enough to make men despise themselves, the way in which they yield credence to such rank tomfoolery! but I assure you, Count, however

contemptible the oracle has shown herself to-day, I have on more than one occasion been present at the most startling revelations,—not alone as regarded the past, but the future also."

"I can easily believe it, Chevalier," replied I, with a great effort to seem philosophically calm. "One must not reject everything that has not the stamp of reason upon it; and even what I have listened to to-day, absurd as it is, has not shaken my faith in the divination of the cards. Perhaps this fancy of mine is the remnant of a childish superstition, which I owe in great part to my old nurse. She was a Moor by birth, and imbued with all the traditions and superstitions of her own romantic land."

There was a most sneering expression on the Chevalier's face as I uttered these words. I paid no attention to it, however, but went on: "From the venerable dame I myself attained to some knowledge of 'destiny reading,' of which I remember once or twice in life to have afforded very singular proofs. *My* skill, however, usually preferred unravelling the 'future' to the 'present.'"

"Speculation is always easier than recital," said the Chevalier, dryly.

"Very true," said I; "and in reading the past I have ever found how want of sufficient skill has prevented my giving to the great fact of a story the due and necessary connection; so that, indeed, I appear as if distinct events alone were revealed to me, without clew to what preceded or followed them. I see destiny as a traveller sees a landscape by fitful flashes of lightning at night, great tracts of country suddenly displayed in all the blaze of noonday, but lost to sight the next moment forever! Such humble powers as these are, I am well aware, unworthy to

bear competition with your more cultivated gifts; but if, with all their imperfections, you are disposed to accept their exercise, they are sincerely at your service."

The Chevalier, I suspect, acceded to this proposal in the belief that it was an effort on my part to turn the topic from myself to *him*, for he neither seemed to believe in my skill, nor feel any interest in its exercise.

Affecting to follow implicitly the old Moorish woman's precepts, I prepared myself for my task by putting on a great mantle with a hood, which, when drawn forward, effectually concealed the wearer's face. This was a precaution I took the better to study his face, while my own remained hid from view.

"You are certainly far more imposing as a prophet than I can pretend to be," said he, laughing, as he lighted a cigar, and lay back indolently to await my revelations. I made a great display of knowledge in shuffling and arranging the cards, the better to think over what I was about; and at last, disposing some dozen in certain mystic positions before me, I began.

"You startled *me*, Chevalier, by a discovery which only wanted truth to make it very remarkable. Let me now repay *you* by another which I shrewdly suspect to be in the same condition. There are four cards now before me, whose meaning is most positive, and which distinctly assert that you, Chevalier de la Boutonerie, are no chevalier at all!"

"This is capital." said he, filling out a glass of wine and drinking it off with the most consummate coolness.

"And here," said I, not heeding his affected ease, —"here is another still stranger revelation, which says that you are not a Frenchman, but a native of a

land which latterly has taken upon it to supply the rest of the world with adventurers,—in plain words, a Pole."

"It is true that my father, who held a command in the Imperial army, lived some years in that country," said he, hastily; "but I have yet to learn that he forfeited his nationality by so doing."

"I only know what the cards tell me," said I, spreading out a mass of them before me, and pretending to study them attentively; "and here is a complication which would need a cleverer expositor than I am. Of all the tangled webs ever I essayed to unravel, this is the knottiest. Why, really, Chevalier, yours must have been a life of more than ordinary vicissitude, or else my prophetic skill has suffered sadly from disuse."

"Judging from what you have just told me, I rather lean to the latter explanation," said he, swallowing down two glasses of wine with great rapidity.

"I suspect such to be the case, indeed," said I, "for otherwise I could scarcely have such difficulty in reading these mystic signs, once so familiar to me, and from which I can now only pick up a stray phrase here and there. Thus I see what implies a high diplomatic employment, and yet, immediately after, I perceive that this is either a mistake of mine, or the thing itself a cheat and a deception."

"It surely does not require divination to tell a diplomatic agent that he has served on a foreign mission," said the Chevalier, with a sneer.

"Perhaps not, but I see here vestiges of strange occurrences in which this fact is concerned. A fleeting picture passes now before my eyes: I see a race-course, with its crowds of people and its throng of carriages, and the horses are led out to be saddled,

and all is expectation and eagerness, and—what! This is most singular! the vision has passed away, and I am looking at two figures who stand side by side in a richly furnished room, a man and a woman. *She* is weeping, and *he* consoling her. Stay! He lifts his head—the man is yourself, Chevalier!"

"Indeed!" said he; but this time the word was uttered in a faint voice, while a pallor that was almost lividness colored his dark features.

"She murmurs a name; I almost caught it," exclaimed I, as if carried away by the rapt excitement of prophecy. "Yes! I hear it now perfectly, —the name is Alexis!"

A fearful oath burst from the Chevalier, and with a bound lie sprung to his feet, and dashed his closed fists against his brow. "Away with your jugglery, have done with your miserable cheat, sir,—that can only terrify women and children. Speak out like a man: who are you, and what are you?"

"What means this outrage, sir? How have you forgotten yourself so far as to *use* this language to *me?*" said I, throwing back the mantle and standing full before him.

"Let us have no more acting, sir, whether it be as prophet or bully," said he, sternly. "You affect to know *me*, who I am, and whence I have come. Make the game equal between us, or it may be worse for you."

"You threaten me, then," said I, calmly.

"I do," was the answer.

"It is therefore open war between us?"

"I never said so," replied he, with a most cutting irony of manner; "but whatever secret malice can do, —and you shall soon know what it means,—I pledge

myself you will not find yourself forgotten."

"Agreed, then; now leave me, sir."

"I am your guest, sir," said he, with a most hypocritical air of deference and courtesy. "It is surely scant politeness to drive me hence when I am not in a position to find another shelter; we are upon the high seas; I cannot walk forth and take my leave. Believe me, sir, the character you would fain perform before the world would not act so."

Notwithstanding the insult conveyed in the last words, I determined that I would respect "him who had eaten my salt;" and with a gesture of assent, for I could not speak, I moved away.

No sooner was I alone than I repented me of the rash folly into which, for the indulgence of a mere petty vengeance, I had been betrayed. I saw that by this absurd piece of malice I had made an enemy of a man whose whole career vouched for the danger of his malevolence.

How could he injure me? What species of attack could he make upon me? Whether was it more likely that he would avoid me as one dangerous to himself, or pursue me wherever I went by his vengeance? These were hard questions to solve, and they filled my mind so completely that I neither heeded the bustle which heralded the arrival on board of the pilot, or the still busier movement which told that we were approaching the harbor. At last I went on deck and approached the bulwark, over which a number of the crew were leaning, watching the course of a boat that, with all her canvas spread, was making for land. "The pilot-boat," said the captain, in reply to my glance of inquiry; "she is lying straight in, as the consul is anxious to land at once."

"Is he on board of her?" said I, with an anxiety I

could not conceal.

“Yes, Señhor Condé, and your Excellency's secretary too.”

Was it my fear suggested the notion, or was it the simple fact, but I thought that the words “Count” and “Excellency” were articulated with something like a sneer? I had no opportunity to put the matter to the test, for the captain had already quitted the spot, and was busy with the multifarious cares the near approach to land enforces. My next thought was, Why had my secretary gone ashore without my orders? Was this a piece of zeal on his part to make preparations for our disembarking, or might it be something worse? and, if so, what? Every moment increased the trouble of my thoughts. Certainly, misfortunes do cast their shadows before them, for I felt that strange and overwhelming sense of depression that never is causeless. I ran over every species of casualty that I could imagine, but except highway robbery, actual “brigandage,” I could not fancy any real positive danger to be anticipated from the Chevalier.

How different was my mood from what I expected it would have been on nearing shore! Where were all my visions of pomp and splendor? Where the proud circumstances of my more than princely state? Alas! I would have given a full fourth of my wealth to be landed unostentatiously and quietly, and to have my mind relieved from all dread of the cursed Chevalier.

That I did not overrate the peril before me, events soon proved.



CHAPTER XXIX. THE CARCEL MORENA AT MALAGA

As we sailed proudly into the harbor of Malaga, my attention—at first directed to the striking features of the shore, where lay a city actually embowered amid orange-groves—was soon drawn off by the appearance of a boat, rowed by twelve men, which approached the ship. The national flag of Spain floated from a standard in her stern, and I could mark the glitter of arms and uniforms on board of her.

"The officers of health, I suppose?" said I,

carelessly, to the captain.

"No, Señhor, these are soldiers of the garrison."

"Ah, I understand," said I, "they are on the alert as to whom they land in these troublous times; for it was the period of the great Carlist struggle.

"Possibly," was his dry remark, and he moved away.

A hoarse challenge from the boat was answered by something from the ship; and the "accommodation-ladder" was immediately lowered, and an officer ascended to the deck, followed by two of his men, with their side-arms.

Some of the ordinary greetings being interchanged between the captain and the officer, the latter said, "My business here is with the person styling himself the Condé de Cregano. Where is he?"

"That is my name, Señhor," said I, with a studious admixture of civility and condescension.

"Please to walk this way, sir," said the officer, leading towards the poop cabin, and preceding me with a degree of assurance that boded ill for his impression of my dignity.

As we entered the cabin, I could hear the two soldiers taking up their places as sentries at the door.

"I wish to see your passport, Señhor," said he, as he seated himself at the table.

"My passport shall be produced at the fitting time," said I, "when I arrive on shore. Here I have no need of any."

"You are wrong, sir; once within that circle of buoys, at the mouth of the port, you are within the limits of the shore authorities; but were it even otherwise, these are not the times for scruples, and I, for one, would not hesitate to arrest you on the

information I have received."

"Information you have received, sir!" exclaimed I, in terror and amazement.

"Yes, sir; I may as well tell you that Malaga is not in the possession of your friends,—you will not find a Carlist garrison ready to give you a salute of honor at your landing. Far less formal, but not less peremptory attentions await you. But produce your papers, for I have no time to lose."

I saw at a glance that my position was most perilous, and as rapidly resolved to make an effort for safety. "Señhor Capitana," said I, placing an open pocket-book stuffed with bank-notes before him, "please to accept my passport, and to keep it in your own safe possession. I shall put to sea again, and order the captain to land me at some port in Italy."

"It is too late," said he, with a sigh, as he pushed the pocket-book away; "the informations against you are already transmitted to Madrid."

"Great heavens! and for whom do they take me?" cried I.

"I cannot tell; I never heard. I only know that I have the order for your arrest as the person assuming to be 'the Condé Cregano.'"

"What crime is laid to my charge? Have I defrauded any one? What is alleged against me?"

"Show me your passport," said he again.

"There it is," said I, producing the document which by Don Estaban's intervention I had obtained from the authorities of Guajuaqualla, and wherein I was called a native of Grenada and a noble of Spain.

"And all this is true as set forth?" said the officer.

"It is a principle of law in my native land that no prisoner is called upon to criminate himself," said I.

“In that case you are no Spaniard,” said the officer, shrewdly, “nor, indeed, does your accent so bespeak you. You are now under arrest.” He opened the door as he said this, and, pointing me out to the two sentries, whispered something too low for me to overhear. This done, he left the cabin and went upon deck.

I looked up from the chair where I sat, into the faces of my two guardians, and a more ill-favored pair of gentlemen I never beheld. Ill-fed but dissipated-looking rascals, they seemed more like highwaymen than soldiers. Still, even a chance was not to be thrown away, and so I whispered in a soft voice: “My worthy friends, in that writing-case yonder there are bank-notes to a very large amount. In a few moments they will be taken away from me, never to be restored. I may as well have the satisfaction of knowing that two brave but poor men are benefited by them. Bring me the desk, and I'll give them to you.” They looked at each other and they looked at me; they then looked towards the door and the skylight, and although without speaking, it was plain enough to see what was passing in their minds.

“Remember,” said I, “I ask nothing in return from you. I shall not attempt to escape, nor, were I to do so, could you aid me in any way. I merely wish to assist two worthy fellows who certainly do not look like the 'spoiled children of fortune.'”

They hesitated and seemed afraid, and at last they whispered for a few seconds together; and then one of them went over, and, taking up the desk, laid it down before me. “You can make a fair division at another time,” said I; “it is better not to waste precious moments now, but at once conceal the money about your persons. Here are some eight or

ten thousand piastres,—and here, fully as much more for you. These are Mexican notes for a large sum, and these are bills on Amsterdam and Hamburgh for great amounts. That's right, my lads, make short work of it,—in your boots, in your shakos; anywhere for the present, only be quiet!”

Truly they merited all my encomiums! To “stow away” plunder, I 'd back them against any pair who ever stopped a diligence on the high road; nor was it without some little difficulty I could persuade them to leave any money in the desk, as a precaution to prevent the suspicion of what had actually occurred. As I aided them in the work of concealment, I artfully contrived to possess myself of one paper,—the Havannah banker's receipt for the large deposits I had left in his hands; and this I managed to slip within the lining of my travelling-cap. It was a last anchor of hope, if ever I were to weather the storm around me!

Our work had scarcely been completed, and the desk replaced in its former situation, when the officer returned. He briefly informed me that seals had been placed on all my effects, that my household was placed under an arrest similar to my own, and that when I had pointed out the various articles of my property in the cabin, there was nothing more for me to do but to accompany him on shore.

As I was not suffered to take any portion of my baggage with me, even of my clothes, I was soon in the boat and pulling rapidly for the land. The quays and the jetty were crowded with people whose curiosity I at once perceived had no other object than myself; and although some did not scruple to exhibit towards me signs of dislike and dissatisfaction, I could remark that others regarded me with a compassionate, and even a kindly look. All

were, however, scrupulously silent and respectful, and touched their hats in salutation as I ascended the stairs of the landing-place.

This feeling, to my considerable astonishment, I perceived extended even to the soldiery, one or two of whom saluted as I passed. In any case, thought I, it is for no insignificant offender I am taken; and even that is some comfort, provided my crime be not high treason.

I was conducted straight to the “Carcel Morena,” a large, sombre-looking building which was at once fortress, prison, and residence of the Governor, exhibiting a curious mixture of these incongruous functions in all its details.

The apartment into which I was ushered was a large saloon, dimly lighted by narrow windows piercing the thick walls. The furniture had once been handsome, but from time and neglect had become worn and disfigured. A small table, spread with a very tolerable breakfast, stood in one of the windows, at which I was invited to seat myself, and then I was left alone to my own lucubrations. Hunger prevailed over grief, I ate heartily; and having concluded my meal, amused myself by studying the Trojan war, which was displayed upon the walls in a very ancient tapestry.

I had traced the fortunes of Greeks and Trojans on the walls till I was well-nigh wearied. I had even gazed upon the little patches of brown grass beneath the windows till my eyes grew dim with watching; but no one came to look after me, and, in the unbroken silence around, I half feared that I should be utterly forgotten, and left, like the old tapestry, to die of moths and years; but at last, as day was declining, I heard something like the clank of arms

and the tramp of soldiery, and soon the sounds were more distinctly marked, approaching my door. Suddenly the two leaves of the folding-door were thrown wide, and an elderly man, in a general's uniform, followed by two other officers, entered.

Without taking any notice of the salute I made him, he walked towards the fireplace, and, standing with his back to it, said to one of his aides-de-camp, “Read the 'procès-verbal,' José.”

José bowed, and, taking from his sabretache a very lengthy roll of paper, began to read aloud, but with such rapidity and such indistinctness withal that I could only, and with the greatest difficulty, catch a stray word here and there. The titles of her Majesty the Queen appeared to occupy full ten minutes, and an equal time to be passed in setting forth the authority under whose jurisdiction I then stood. These over, there came something about an individual who, born a Mexican or a native of Texas, has assumed the style, title, and dignity of a Count of Spain, such rank being taken for purposes of deception, and the better to effect certain treasonable designs, to be set forth hereafter. After this there came a flourish about the duties of loyalty and fidelity to the sovereign, whose private virtues came in by parenthesis, together with a very energetic denunciation on all base and wicked men who sought to carry dissension into the bosom of their country, and convulse with the passions of a civil war a nation proverbially tranquil and peace-loving.

Nothing could be less interesting than the style of this paper, except the manner of him who recited it. State truisms, in inflated language, and wearisome platitudes about nothing, received no additional grace from a snuffling nasal intonation and a short cough.

I listened at first with the anxiety of a man whose fortunes hung on the issue; then, as the vague, rambling character of the document diminished this interest, I heard with more indifference; and, lastly, completely wearied by the monotony of the voice, and the tiresome iterations of the style, I could not prevent my thoughts from wandering far from the affair in hand.

What fearful crimes were alleged against me,—what dire offences I was charged with,—I was not to hear, since, lost in the pleasant land of day-dreams, I fancied myself strolling in the shade of a forest, with Donna Maria beside me, while I poured out a most impassioned narrative of my love and fidelity. Nor was it till the reading was concluded, and a loud "Hem!" from the General resounded through the chamber, that I remembered where I was.

"Prisoner!" said he, in a stern, authoritative tone, "you have now heard the nature of the charge against you, and the reasons of your arrest; you will answer certain questions, the replies to which, if not in accordance with truth, constitute the crime of 'Traicion,' the penalty being death. What is your name?"

"Con Cregan."

"Native of what country?"

"Ireland."

"What rank and position do you hold in society?"

"A variable one,—as luck favors me."

"What trade or profession do you follow?"

"Whatever seems most convenient at the moment."

"Have you served?"

"I have."

"In the land or sea service?"

“In both.”

“With what grade?”

“Nothing very distinguished.”

“Have you ever held the command of an expedition?”

“I have.”

“With what object, and where?”

“In the prairies of South America, to shoot red-deer.”

“Remember, sir,” said the General, “this is no occasion for untimely jest; these sallies may cost you more dearly than you think for.”

“If I am to speak the truth,” said I, boldly, “I must answer as I have done. If you want fiction, I 'm ready for you at a moment's notice.”

“Make a note of that, José!—' says that he is perfectly indifferent whether he tells truth or falsehood.'”

“And add, by way of parenthesis,” said I, “that the General is precisely of my own way of thinking.”

“Write down,' insults the commission,'” said the General, boiling with rage.

The paragraph seemed a full one, for the interrogating was not resumed for some minutes.

“Now, sir,” resumed the General, “state your object in coming to the country.”

“To get out of it as fast as I could.”

“For whose use were the arms provided,—the horses and horse equipage with which you embarked?”

“My own.”

“Name the agent or agents of Don Carlos with whom you have held correspondence?”

“None. I never knew any.”

“By whose hands were the large sums of money in your possession intrusted to you?”

“I found them.”

“How, and where?”

“In a hole.”

The General's face grew purple; and more than once I could see the struggle it cost him to repress his bursting indignation. And in the mutterings he let fall to his secretary, it was easy to mark that his comments on the evidence were not too favorable.

“Were you acquainted with Brigadier Hermose Gonzillos?”

“No.”

“Nor with his brother, the Canon Gonzillos?”

“No.”

“When did you first meet Señhor Ruy Peres Y' Hacho?”

“Never saw him in my life.”

“Nor held intercourse with him?”

“Never.”

“Were not much in his company, nor intrusted to him the secret details of the expedition?”

“I know nothing of what you're talking about.”

“Produce Ruy Peres,” said the General; and the door opened, and the Chevalier, dressed in a military uniform and with several decorations of foreign orders, entered.

“Do you know this gentleman?” said the General, dryly.

“I know him for a Pole whose name is Alexis Radchoffsky—at least, under such a name he once

lived in London, and is well known to the police there."

"Go on," said the General to the secretary. "On being confronted with the Señhor Ruy Peres, the prisoner became suddenly abashed, and at once confessed that he had known him intimately several years before in London."

"Is that man a witness against me?" asked I, eagerly.

"Attend to me, sir," said the General, while he made a sign to the Chevalier to retire. "Neither subterfuge nor insolence will avail you here. You are perfectly well known to us,—your early history, your late intrigues, your present intentions."

"With such intimate knowledge of all about me, General," said I, coolly, "have n't we been wasting a great deal of valuable time in this interrogatory?"

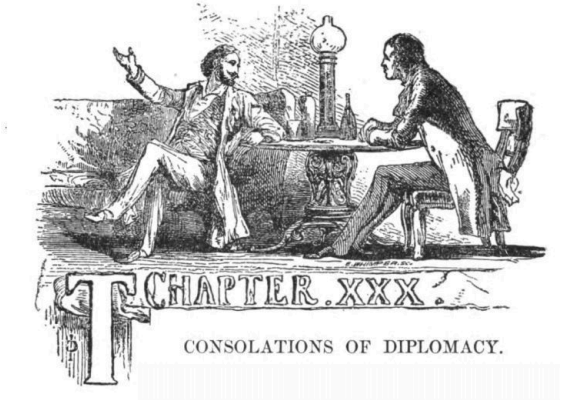
"And, notwithstanding repeated admonitions, persisted in using the most indecorous language to the commission." These words the General dictated in a loud voice, and they were immediately taken down by his secretary.

"Señhor Concregan," said he, addressing me, "you stand now committed, by virtue of a royal warrant, a copy of which, and of the charges laid against you, will be duly transmitted to you. Whenever the authorities have decided whether your offence should be submitted to a civil or military tribunal, you will be brought up for trial."

"I am an English subject, sir," said I; "I belong to a nation that never permits its meanest member to be trampled on by foreign tyranny, far less will it suffer his liberty or life to be sacrificed to a false and infamous calumny. I claim the protection of my ambassador, or at least of such a representative of

my country as your petty locality may possess. I desire—" What I was about to demand as my birthright was not destined to be made public on this occasion, since at a signal from the General the door opened, and two soldiers, advancing, adjusted handcuffs on my wrists, and led me away even before I had recovered from the surprise the whole proceeding occasioned me.

Whether it was that I enjoyed the prerogative of a State prisoner, or that the authorities were not quite clear that they were justified in what they were doing, I cannot say; but my prison discipline was of the very mildest order. I had a most comfortable room, with a window looking seaward over the beautiful bay of Malaga, taking a wide range along shore, where gardens and villas and orange-groves extended for miles. The furniture was neat, and with some pretensions to luxury; and the fare, I am bound to own, was excellent. Books, and even newspapers, were freely supplied to me, and, save that at certain intervals the clank of a musket, and the shuffling of feet in the corridor without, told that the sentry of my guard was being relieved, I could have fancied myself in some homely inn, without a restriction upon my liberty. My handcuffs had been removed the moment I had entered my chamber, and now the iron stanchions of my window were the only reminders of a jail around me.



CHAPTER XXX. CONSOLATIONS OF DIPLOMACY

The first revulsion of feeling over, the terrible shock of that fall from the pinnacle of wealth and greatness to the lowly condition of a prisoner unfriended and destitute,—I actually began to enjoy my life, and feel something wonderfully like happiness. I do not pretend to say that my disappointment was not most acute and painful, or that I suffered little from the contemplation of my ruined hopes. No, far from it; but my grief, like the course of a mountain torrent, soon ran off, and left the stream of my life clear and untroubled as ever. It is true, thought I, this is a terrible contrast to what I was a week ago; but still, is it not a long way in advance of what my original condition promised? I am a prisoner in a Spanish fortress: is not even that better than a peasant in an Irish hovel? The very cares with which I am surrounded bespeak a certain

consequence pertaining to me; I am one whom ministers of State think and speak about, whose name is often on their lips, whose memory haunts them in their half-waking moments. Is not this something? Is it not a great deal to one whose whole ideal was to avoid the bypaths of life, and take his course in its very widest and busiest thoroughfares?

The occupations in which I passed my days greatly contributed to sustain this pleasant illusion. I was eternally writing letters, memorials, statements of facts, and what not, of interminable narratives, to all our ministers and consuls, invoking their aid, and protesting in the name of the British nation against the unwarrantable tyranny of my imprisonment. It is quite true that these lengthy documents of mine seemed to meet but sorry acceptance. For a length of time no acknowledgment of their reception ever reached me; but at last the following dry epistle informed me that my memorials had reached their destination:—

> "Sir,—I am directed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to acknowledge the receipt of your memorials dated the 9th, 12th, 18th, 23rd, and 25th of last month, together with various letters bearing on the same subjects since that time, and to state, in reply, that the matter of your complaint is at present under investigation with the authorities of the Spanish Government.
>
> "His Lordship the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs desires me to add his regrets that even in the event of your liberation he can hold out no prospect whatever that any compensation will be made to you for the loss of property you allege to have suffered, and which, of course, was incurred as one of the

many risks natural to the course of such an expedition as you were engaged in.

"I have the honor to be, sir,

"F. O., London,

"Your most obedient servant,

"Oct. 18—.

"Joseph Backslip.

"To Cornelius Cregan, Esq."

This was a sad damper! To think that I was to lose the immense amount of property with which I had embarked,—the gems and jewels, the rare objects of art, the equipages, the beautiful horses of purest Mexican blood! not to speak of that far greater loss, —the large sum in actual money! But, then, what a consolation to remember that a Secretary of State was mingling his sorrows with my own on the subject; that he actually gave an official character to his grief, by desiring the Under-Secretary to convey "his regrets" in a despatch! his regrets—to me, Con Cregan! What inestimable words! That ever I should live to know that the Right Honorable Lord Puzzleton, the adored cherub of fashion, the admired of *coteries*, the worshipped of "the Commons," the favored guest of Windsor, should, under the big seal of his office, assure me of his heartfelt sympathy!

I closed my eyes as I read the paragraph, and imagined that we were weeping together, like the "Babes in the Wood." "How they wrong this man," thought I, "in England; what calumnies they circulate about his levity, his heartlessness, and so forth; and see! look at him here mingling in the private sorrows of an individual, and taking part in all the private woes of Con Cregan." By this beautiful artifice I contrived to raise the aforesaid Con to a very considerable elevation in his own esteem; and thus,

worthy reader, by pleasant fancies and ingenious illusions,—wares that every man can fashion at will,—did I contrive to make my prison at Malaga a most endurable resting-place, and even now to make its retrospect full of sweet memories.

Nor were my imaginings limited to such visions as these, for I loved to compare my condition with that of other exalted prisoners, and fancy how *my* conduct would read by the side of *theirs*. If I were less piously resigned, less submissive, than Silvio Pellico, assuredly I showed more dignity in my fall than the Exile of St. Helena. I bore all the little vexations of my lot with a haughty reserve that entirely subdued every sign of a querulous nature, and seemed to say, “My time will come yet!”

At last it appeared either as if my memorials were never opened, or, if opened, never read. No answer came whatever! and even the Malaga newspapers, which, in the dearth of shipping intelligence, would often insert some little notice of me, stating how “the 'Conde' walked yesterday for an hour upon 'the leads';” “the 'Condé' partook with an appetite of a partridge, and conversed freely with the officer on duty,” and so on,—now they never by any chance alluded to me; and I seemed, for all the interest the world manifested about me, to have suffered a species of moral decease. It was the unhealthy season of the year, and the Consul had absented himself, leaving his functions to his “Vice,” who, having also a “constitution,” had departed likewise, bequeathing the traditions and cares of office to his Dutch colleague, who neither spoke nor read any other tongue than that muddy language begotten of dikes and fogs. Wearied possibly by the daily arrival of half a quire of my remonstrances, or curious to see the machine by which these broad sheets were struck

off with such unfailing celerity, this official arrived one day at the prison with an order from the Governor, permitting him to see the “Condé.”

I was, as usual, writing away, when the turnkey announced his Excellency (every official is Excellency if too low for Highness), Mynheer van Hoagendrius, and a very short and immensely fat personage, dressed in a kind of black-and-white plaid jacket and trousers, entered. He looked like a huge chess-board set on legs. A grunt, a snort, a thick sound like a struggle between choking and gurgling, ensued, which I concluded to be something in Dutch, and he seated himself opposite me.

I made my compliments to him, polyglot-wise, in French, English, Spanish, and at last German,—the last evidently striking a spark out of the embers of his cold intelligence, for he fixed his dull eyes upon me, and seemed as though he would soon wake up. Animated by this hope, I proceeded in my very best “Deutsch” to expound my sorrows to him. Fortunately for me, my German had been acquired in the low companionship of “skippers” and sailors, and consequently bore a nearer resemblance to its half-brother of Holland than the more cultivated tongues of professors and philosophers.

I cannot, to this hour, say whether it arose from any interest in the narrative, or whether proceeding from the laudable desire to come at the truth in a question of much difficulty, but the Mynheer now came to me each morning, and usually stayed two hours, during which I talked and he smoked incessantly. Often, when he left me, have I asked myself “what progress I had made in his good opinion? how far had I made him master of my case?” but the question remained without an answer; for if occasionally a stray flash of intelligence would

light up his dull features, on following the direction of his eyes I could perceive that the animation arose from the sight of some fishing-boat returning loaded with turbot, or that the savory odor of salt cod had saluted him from the shore. I felt at length as though I were sailing without a log-line,—nothing to mark my progress or say in what latitude I cruised.

My Dutch friend had now been visiting me for above six weeks, during which, if he had not supplied himself with every detail of my calamity, he had at least smoked all the choice tobacco which, as a favor from the Governor, I was permitted to land for my own use; and as yet he had given no signs of life other than the act of fumigation aforesaid. I was half angry, half amused, at the little act of dexterity with which he emptied the last remnant of my pure Havannah into his pipe, and heard, with a kind of malicious satisfaction, the little sigh with which he pushed the empty canister from him.

He seemed lost for some time in the slough of his Dutch reflections, but at length he fixed his eyes upon me, and in a low, suffocating tone said, “Hast a file?”

“No,” said I.

“There, then,” said he, giving me a small parcel tightly tied up in paper. “Farewell!” and he moved towards the door before I could recover from my surprise to thank him. As he reached it, he turned about, and in a very significant voice said, “Der bood est hardt,”—a species of Plat-Deutsch I might not have understood if unaccompanied by a gesture which implied that the ground was hard beneath my window, as a caution to me in the event of a leap.

No sooner was I alone than I opened my precious packet, which, besides two files, contained a small

phial of aquafortis and another of oil,—the latter a useful adjunct to prevent the grating noise being heard. Having concealed the implements in a rat-hole, I proceeded to examine the iron bars of the window, which, although seemingly of great size and strength, were in reality coated with a rust of more than half their actual thickness. This was a most inspiriting discovery, and at once animated me with glowing hopes of success.

As I could only work during the night, I affected illness as a reason for keeping my bed during the day, when I slept profoundly and refreshingly.

The non-success of all my efforts to interest diplomacy in my cause was just beginning to impress me with a sense of gloom and despondency, when this new incident occurred to rally my drooping courage. Life had now an object; and that, if not always enough for happiness, is sufficient at least to rouse those energies which, when stagnant, produce despair. How I longed for night to come, that I might resume my labor! with what resolute industry I worked on during the dark hours, only ceasing when the change of the sentries brought the guard close beneath my window, and even grudging the few seconds thus wasted! With what delight I used to measure the fissure which, at first only deep enough for my nail, was now sufficient to cover the file! This I used to conceal each morning with bread colored by the rusty powder that fell from the filing, so that, to all seeming, everything was in its usual order.

This was almost the only period of my life in which I remembered my father: from some similarity in our condition, perhaps, he was now seldom out of my thoughts. I used to wonder if he were still alive, and how situated; whether he was yet a convict going forth in chains to daily toil, or a “ticket-of-

leave" man working at some settlement in the "Bush." Did he ever think of me? Did he ever dream of his native land, or wish to return to it? And what prospect of escape did fortune hold out to him? That, after all, was the great link which bound him to my thoughts! Was there any silent and sympathizing Dutchman to take pity on his captivity?

At the close of the fifth week, I had the inestimable pleasure of "reporting the breach practicable," or, in less sounding phrase, of assuring myself that the middle bar of the window was removable at will, and thus a free egress was permitted me to an extensive terrace, which, with a low parapet, overlooked the bay for miles. This was about five-and-twenty feet from the ground, and was guarded beneath by a sentry, one of a chain of sentinels, whose "watch" extended around the entire fortress. The descent and the guard were then the only difficulties which now remained to be overcome,—so far, at least, as mere liberation from the prison walls extended. I am sure I invented at least fifty choice stratagems which afterthought always showed were perfectly worthless. I bethought me of bribing the sentry with the few gold pieces which I still possessed; but what security had I that he might not resist the seduction, or betray me even after receiving the money?

The fall, too, was considerable; nor was there anything to which I could attach my bedclothes to lower myself to the ground. It must be "a drop;" and what a situation should I be in were I to break a bone, or even sprain my ankle in the effort! Alas! I now perceived that although the most laborious portion of my work was accomplished, the most difficult still remained to be done.

The obstacles to mere escape were sufficiently great to prevent me even thinking of the course to be

pursued after I reached the ground in safety, for I was without friend, shelter, passport, or any means of disguise or concealment whatever.

I pondered long and carefully over the question; and already had two dreary weeks passed over since I had cut through the bar, and yet, so far as I could see, no nearer to liberation than when the solid iron enclosed me. My mind began to sink under the fatigue of unceasing contrivance, and a dreamy, dreary sense of hopelessness seemed gaining on me. It had been a dark, cloudy day, with gusts of wind, followed by intervals of calm. The air was moist and heavy, and charged with the depressing influences which the “mestrale,” that sickliest of all winds, ever brings. Masses of leaden-colored clouds floated low over the sea, which was broken into a short angry “jobbe,” as if after a storm.

All betokened the approach of a gale of wind, and, as night set in, the signs of bad weather thickened. Scarcely had the sun set, when it became dark as pitch; the wind, which had lulled for a brief space previous, now sprung up, and the sea fretted and chafed against the rocks with that peculiar sharp chirping sound that presages “wind.” The clank of chain cables, the plashing noise of falling anchors, the loud shouts of the sailors as they prepared to meet the gathering storm, even now heard, while in the changing position of the different lights of the bay I could discern the movements of the various vessels as they sought shelter or made ready for sea, in expectation of the “gale.” The impenetrable darkness, the roaring wind, the flashing of the lights, the cries of the seamen, the hurrying of feet along the quays, and the sounds of different boats' crews departing in haste,—all gave a charm to a scene of which the obscurity increased the interest. A large

French steamer was to have sailed that night for Marseilles; but I overheard a voice from the street foretelling that the “Gazonne” might leave without her passengers, “as no one would go on board of her on such a night.” A red lantern at the peak indicated the vessel, and I could see that she had changed her position and “taken up a berth” farther out in the bay.

I cannot tell by what instinct I selected her as a peculiar object of my interest, but so it was. I watched her unceasingly, and rarely took my eyes from the quarter where she lay; and when the heaving motion of the “red light” showed that she was tossing in a heavy sea, I listened too with eagerness to catch anything from those that passed beneath that might concern this vessel, which now engrossed all my sympathy. “Were I once but on board of her,” thought I, “the wildest hurricane that ever blew would be sweeter to me than all the balmy airs that ever bore the odor of orange-blossom through my barred window!” I would have braved the stormiest seas, the maddest gale, shipwreck itself, rather than longer remain the helpless, hopeless thing a life of imprisonment was making of me. “Would that the alternative were given me,” said I to myself: “the free choice to change these four walls for the deck over which the waves are dancing in foamy sheets! with what a thankful heart would I take the offer!”

The last visit of the turnkey, who came to see all safe, broke in for a moment upon these musings; and now the double-locked door, and his retiring footsteps, told me that no further molestation was to be feared, and that I was, at least till daybreak, the undisturbed master of my own reveries. I opened the window, pushed back the iron stanchion, and walked

out upon the terrace. It was a night of storm and wild hurricane. The rain swept by in great plashes, increasing the darkness, and mingling its hissing noise, with the breaking crash of the sea, as it beat furiously against the rocks. The dancing, bobbing motion of the lights on board the different craft showed what “a sea” was raging in the bay; while, even in the city itself, the clatter of falling tiles and chimneys told the violence of the gale. I stood upon the terrace; and as the rain penetrated my frail garment, and the wind wafted my wet hair across my cheeks, I felt a sense of ecstasy that nothing in all my previous life had ever equalled. It was the sensation of freedom; it was the burst of delight with which the captive welcomes the long-lost liberty. “Better this,” thought I, “than the snuggest chamber that ever called itself a prison.”

It was past the hour when any further visit from the turnkey might be expected. Already the outer door of my chamber had been locked and barred with all that scrupulous attention to noise and clank that are supposed only essential in a melodrama. The sentry had just been relieved on the esplanade beneath the terrace, so that I might consider myself disencumbered from all fear of interruption in any quarter. I sat down upon the parapet, and peered into the dark depth below me, where the hazy glimmer of the sentry's lamp served to mark the height. At first it seemed a terrific drop; but after a while I began to satisfy myself that the darkness contributed to this effect; and as my sight grew more accustomed to the gloom, I was able to trace different objects,—among others, the conical roof of the sentry-box, at a distance of scarcely more than fifteen feet beneath me.

Thus far I could reach by making a rope of my

bed-clothes, and attach one end to a portion of the battlement of the parapet; but how should I venture on a descent in such a place? how risk the almost certainty of recapture by the sentry himself? This was a formidable difficulty, and demanded much consideration; and yet, were I to select any other spot, I might chance to be disabled by the fall, and then all my efforts were fruitless, since a broken bone, or even a sprained ankle, would be certain ruin.

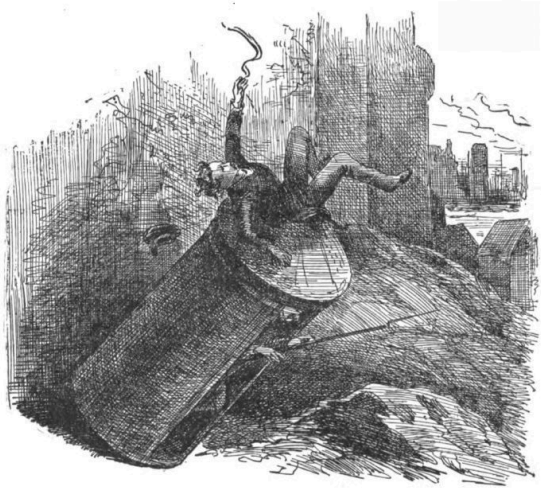
Never was a knotty point more canvassed, nor the clew to a difficulty more zealously searched for! As generally happens in such cases, first thoughts are best, and the bold course the safest. By descending on the sentry-box, I should at least reach the ground without injury; and if I were to have a “tussle” for it with the guard, it would be without the disadvantage of a previous damage. Besides this, the incessant noise of the tempest, the crashing of the sea, and the deep booming of the thunder gave hopes that my descent might be unheard. Nay, more, the sound of my heavy body over his head would be rather an admonition to stay quietly within than risk himself outside, to the danger of tumbling tiles or masses of masonry from the parapet. The more I reflected upon this, the clearer I saw that the storm was a Heaven-sent accident for me; that the darkness, the tumult, and the deserted streets were all accessories the most favorable; that to neglect such an occasion of escape would be downright madness. If I took some time to arrive at this conclusion, I made up for the delay by the rapidity of my subsequent movements. I hastily returned to my room; and had I been bred a ropemaker, my two sheets and counterpane could not have been fashioned into a three-stranded rope more handily; and, my sailor's experience favoring, I

adjusted the cord in a “timber hitch” round one of the battlements, and well satisfied myself that I might trust to the other extremity,—“Con Cregan and his fortunes.”

I then took a hurried survey of my room, trimmed my lamp that it might burn till morning, secured the three or four papers of value which still remained to me, and then issued forth to my enterprise.

A cannon-shot from the bay rung out as I again stepped upon the terrace, and I accepted the augury as an omen of welcome. I will not deny that my hands trembled as I examined, for the last time, the fastening of the cord; nor do I seek to conceal that as I buttoned my coat, the beating of my heart smote heavily against my fingers. I even hesitated for an instant; and during that instant, brief as it was, I could have faced death itself rather than the uncertainty before me. The weakness passed quickly away, and, with a short but fervent prayer, I grasped the rope and slipped noiselessly over the parapet.

A sudden gust of wind swept past at the moment, and swung me out from the wall as though I had been a thing of no weight, calling for all my strength to prevent me from being blown away! And now I was buffeted about, tossed here and thrown there, with a violence that almost dislocated every joint in my body. The jerking motion and the chafing of my rope on the parapet made me tremble for my security, and not without cause; for in one great swing, in which I described an arc no other pendulum, living or dead, ever compassed before, I came back with such force against the roof of the sentry-box, striking it with both my feet together at the same instant, that my cord snapped short in the very centre.



The force of my fall, added to the previous blow, capsized the sentry-box, and I came to the ground along with it, in a state of fright that even to this very hour I cannot recall without shuddering. Half-stunned by the fall, bruised and almost lifeless from terror, I sat there waiting for the moment when the sentry would issue forth and seize me; nor was it till after the lapse of several minutes that I perceived that the soldier was in a trap, the weighty sentry-box had fallen over on the front, and effectually debarred him from any chance of self-extrication.

I stooped over to listen, but all was still; he never spoke a word,—probably stunned by the shock, or he might have fainted from terror. Whatever the cause, neither my humanity nor my curiosity cared to explore further, but, rising to my feet, and ascertaining, to my inexpressible delight, that I was uninjured, I set off at full speed toward the shore. The sea suggested escape, and thither I bent my way,

without thinking more on the matter.

I could see, from the hurried movement of lights along the pier, that boats were rapidly leaving for the various ships in the harbor. To get on board any of these, no matter what, or whither bound, was all my object,—a Tunis pirate or a Malay prow would have been a happy exchange for the black prison at Malaga.

I had almost run myself out of breath, when I came up with a knot of some dozen people who were hastening onward as fast as they could. Two heavily laden barrows with luggage, and a multitude of cloaks, shawls, and mantles, pronounced them to be travellers; and I soon collected, from the expressions dropped by the boatmen, that they were about to embark in the French steamer for Leghorn. Mingling with the group, which the darkness freely permitted, I heard a voice say, in English, something about the weather; and now, listening more attentively, I picked up that they were an English family hurrying to Pisa to see a son whose failing health gave them no time for delay. I gathered, too, that the packet, which should not have started till the next day, was now leaving suddenly; the captain haviug sent a message to say that he had determined to put to sea rather than ride out the gale so near shore.

The travellers were mingling their complaints at this peremptory summons, with others over the absence of their courier, who had got leave to see some of his friends about a league away, and must now inevitably be left behind. In the course of their lamentings, I could learn that they had only engaged the man the evening before at the recommendation of the landlord, and had scarcely seen him above a couple of times.

In fact, except that he was an Italian, and his name Raffaello, they knew nothing about him. At last they reached the jetty where the boat lay, and now I could hear their discussion, whether it were better to leave the courier's effects behind, or take them on, in the hope that he might yet come up.

“He's a smart fellow, and depend upon it he 'll be here before we sail,” said a young man of the party.

“No, no,” cried another, “he 'll never hear a word of the packet till she's half way to Leghorn.”

“What did you tell him, William?” asked an elderly lady.

“To be back by six o'clock to-morrow morning,” said the first speaker.

“Ay, but in what language did you speak?”

“I spoke Italian, and afterwards I said it in French; for he does n't know one word of English.”

This was all I wanted; I slipped noiselessly away, and, retiring to some distance behind the party, waited till I saw them descend the stairs to the boat. This occupied some time, for the party were numerous, and their trunks and portmanteaus were without end. At last, just as the word to shove off was given, I dashed forward at the top of my speed, crying out in Spanish, “Hold fast there! wait for the courier!”

“What's the matter?” asked one of the Englishmen.

“A courier, Señhor,” said a sailor, “wants to come with us.”

“Oh, Raffaello, by George!” exclaimed the other; “I knew he 'd be up. Put back, men; he belongs to us.”

“Pardon, signori,” said I, stepping lightly over the gunwale, “I have had a sharp run for it;” and away we went! Seated on a great-coat of black sheepskin,

which from its style and cut I knew must have belonged to my predecessor, Raffaello, I could see the rapid passage of lights on the shore in the direction of my late prison, and at last could detect one glimmering from a part of the building where my cell stood. The roll of drums beating to arms was soon heard, and it was evident to me that my escape had become known,—that the garrison of the fortress was on the alert to recapture me. Although fully a mile from land, and rowing with all the vigor of twelve stout sailors towards a vessel whose steam was already whizzing through the escape funnel, my heart almost sunk within me from very fear; and rather than be retaken I would have jumped into the boiling tide that swelled and broke around me.

The sailors more than once relaxed their efforts to watch what was going forward on shore; and how fervently did I, in silence, curse their curiosity! Externally, however, I maintained my calm demeanor, and even ventured to conjecture that a fire must have broken out in the fortress, such was the commotion and excitement discernible in that quarter.

Another suggested the possibility of its being some prisoner that had made his escape,—a notion which I took occasion to ridicule, by averring that the Carcel was reputed to be the strongest prison in Spain, and an instance of evasion altogether unknown.

Thus chatting, we reached the steamer. To my intense delight, the anchor was already weighed; and scarcely had we mounted the ladder than she broached round, head to sea, and clove through the water like a fish.

Every plunge of the great ship shook the strong timbers and made her huge framework tremble,

sending a thrill of pleasure through me. With each mountain wave that rolled past, I saw my chance of safety increase, and knew that no boat—manned by Spaniards, at least—would dare pursuit in such a storm. I had abundant leisure for these reflections, since my “masters” had only time to get on board when they retired to their berths, overcome by sea-sickness, so that I was at full liberty to indulge my own thoughts, and dispose of myself without the slightest interruption. From a smart little French maid I learned that the family was called Grimes; that they had recently come from England by way of Gibraltar, where one of the sons, now with them, was quartered with his regiment; that the party consisted of a widow lady with three daughters and two sons, a third being the invalid at Pisa. They were rich, good sort of folks, very ignorant of the Continent, very credulous, and altogether a satisfactory kind of connection for a cunning French *femme-de-chambre* and a roguish courier to fall in with. This latter fact Mademoiselle Virginie insisted upon with no small degree of self-gratulation, giving me to understand that we might have a very thriving career as fellow-laborers in the same vineyard.

Her sketches of English life, manners, and prejudices were not a little amusing, while the rules she laid down for the due management and control of her masters were a perfect chapter in domestic machiavelism. There had once been a time when I would have enlisted willingly under such a banner,—glad to reach the upper story of life, even by such a back stair; but now that I had tasted the glorious supremacy of command myself, that I had revelled in the mastery of a great household, that I had rolled along in my own chariot, clothed in fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, I felt my return to a

menial situation a degradation unendurable. I determined that, once in Italy, I would escape from the thraldom of such servitude, come what might of it.

By long dwelling on the theme, I had contrived to impress myself with the most profound conviction that I was a much-injured individual, that my case, if not sufficient for a war with Spain, was a fair ground for a parliamentary “flare-up,” angry diplomatic notes, and Heaven knows what threats of our outraged Foreign Office. That a man with such a glorious grievance should sink down into a courier, to wrangle with landlords, bully waiters, and flirt with the “maid in the rumble,” was not to be thought of. I felt that I was sworn at Highgate, and destined for the inside of the travelling-carriage, and not the “out.”

Scarcely were we arrived at Leghorn, and installed at the San Marco, than I began to prepare for my emancipation,—a bold step, considering that all the available resources I possessed was a ruby ring set round with brilliants, which I had concealed in my cap along with my papers. I was admonished to lose no time in my departure, by remarking that another packet from Malaga was expected within a week, which probably would convey the rightful courier, in search of his missing baggage, and I was by no means desirous of being confronted with the real Simon Pure.

I am not sure that this latter consideration did not weigh most with me in the matter, since the novelty of my situation and the sense of its creature-comforts might have induced me to linger a little longer in a capacity even as humble. With such people as the Grimes's, the courier was supreme, and his rule despotic. From the hour at which they were to dine,

to what they were to eat,—how they were to spend the day, what to see, and what to avoid,—were all at his dictation; while from the landlord came a perfect volley of civilities that plainly showed who was the real personage to whom adulation was due. If my masters dined on a chicken, *I* fed upon ortolans; while *they* made wry faces over their "Chianté," I luxuriated on Château La Rose or Chambertin. For *my* table were reserved the oysters of Venice, the fresh "sardines" of Gorgona, the delicate mutton of Pistoja, the delicious Becafica of the Vai d'Arno, while Piscia was ransacked for my dessert, till I saw myself surrounded with rarities that even in my great days I scarcely dreamed of.

There was a kind of "abandon," too, in this mode of life that pleased me well,—a delightful sense of irresponsibility pervaded everything I did or imagined.

The courier knows nothing of that hesitation which besets his master at the thought of some costly indulgence. *He* neither doubts nor denies himself. The Emperor of Russia may have bespoke the post-horses, but *he* knows how to bribe even against the Czar himself, and would intrigue for the fish intended for a cardinal's Friday dinner. He is perhaps the only traveller who is indifferent to the bill,—nay, he even glories in its extravagance, as increasing his own percentage. I was beginning to see and appreciate all these advantages when caution admonished me to escape. The real Raflfaello was doubtless already at sea, and might arrive ere I had evacuated the territory.

I only waited, then, to see "my family" snugly housed at Pisa, when I proceeded to tender my resignation. It was very flattering to my vanity to see the distress my announcement created; they

evidently felt like a crew about to be deserted by the pilot in a difficult navigation. They were but indifferent linguists, and worse travellers; and I almost repented of my resolve as I perceived the dismay it occasioned, the full measure of which I was admitted to witness, since—from my supposed ignorance of English—they discussed the question very freely in my presence.

“Does he say he 's dissatisfied with his situation?” asked the old lady.

“It is difficult to make out what he means, Mamma,” replied a daughter.

“These fellows are always intriguing for higher wages,” observed the subaltern.

“Or to engage with people of greater consequence,” remarked the second son.

“We had better send for the tutor, Mamma; he speaks French better than we do.”

This proposition—albeit not accepted as a compliment to themselves by the two brothers—was at last acceded to, and, after a brief delay, the individual in question made his appearance. To avoid any semblance of understanding what went forward, I stood in patient silence, not even turning my head in the direction where the family were now grouped around the “Dragoman.”

“You are to find out what he wants,” said the old lady, eagerly. “Say that we are perfectly satisfied with him; and if it be an increase—”

“That he 'll not get a sou more with my consent,” broke in the sub. “He receives already more than a captain in the line.”

“I only know that I never had as much to spend at Cambridge,” echoed the other.

“They are always extravagantly paid,” said the elder daughter.

“The creatures give themselves such airs,” observed number two.

“And when they are at all well-looking they're intolerable,” broke in number three, who had been coolly scanning me through her eyeglass.

The tutor by this time had evidently received his instructions in full, and beckoned me to follow him into a small room adjoining the saloon. I obeyed; and scarcely had the door closed upon us than I started, and broke out into an involuntary exclamation of surprise. The individual before me was no other than my first friend, the kind youth who had taken me by the hand at the very outset of my career, the student of Trinity, Dublin, named Lyndsay.

As I perceived that he did not recognize me, I had time enough to observe him well, and mark the change which more than twelve years had wrought upon him. Though still young, anxiety and mental exertion had worn him into premature age. His eye was dulled, his cheeks pale and sunken, and in his manner there was that timid hesitation that stood abashed in the presence of my own cool effrontery. I could see easily that the man of thought and reflection was succumbing before the man of action and of the world, and I was selfish enough to revel in the triumph.

In a low, diffident voice he proceeded to ask me if there was anything in the nature of my situation that induced me to quit a service where I had given the fullest satisfaction.

I replied by an easy caress of my long black moustache, and a certain expressive gesture of the shoulders, meant to convey that my objections were

of a nature that did not admit exactly of discussion,—rather questions of delicate personal feeling than of actual difficulty. Hinted that I had rarely served anything less than a royal highness, and feared that I should be likely to injure myself,—of degenerating into an easy and familiar manner, by associating with those so nearly of my own level.

I saw the blood mantle in the pale cheek of the student as he listened to this impertinence, and thought that I could mark the struggle that was passing within him, while, in a calm, collected tone, he said that those were questions on which he could not give any opinion, and that if I desired to leave, of course no further objections would be offered. “Might I ask,” added he, with a manner where a most courteous politeness prevailed,—“might I ask what are the qualifications of a person in your condition of life?”

“I think,” replied I, “that I appreciate the meaning of your question. You would ask by what right a man humbly born, educated to mere menial duties, can aspire to the position and the pay a courier claims. I am willing to tell you. To begin, then: He must be familiar with the geography of Europe,—I speak here of the merely Continental courier,—he must know the boundaries, the high roads, the coinage, the customs, the privileges of every petty State, from the smallest principality of Germany to the greatest sovereignty of a Czar. He must know the languages, not as scholars and grammarians know them, but in all their dialects and 'patois.' It is not enough that he has learned the tongue in which Dante wrote, or Metastasio sung, he must speak Venetian and Milanese, Neapolitan and Piedmontese. He should know the Low German of the Black Forest, the Wiener dialect of the Austrian, and talk every

gradation of French, from the frontiers of Flanders to the vine-groves of Provence and Auvergne. He must be as familiar with every city of Europe as though it were his birthplace; with the churches, the galleries, their monuments, and their history. He must know the delicacies of each land, and every rarity it can produce for the palate of the epicure. He must be a connoisseur in wine, pictures, china, cuisine, statuary, engravings, armor, ancient furniture, manuscripts, horseflesh, the drama, and Bohemian glass; able to pack a trunk, or expatiate upon a Titian; to illustrate a fresco, to cheat a custom-house, to bully a prefect, make an omelette, ride postilion. These, with a running knowledge of international law and the Code Napoléon, and some skill in all the minor operations of surgery,—these are a brief summary of a courier's qualifications."

"And do you tell me, friend," said he, earnestly, "that you can do all this?"

"Indifferent well," said I, carelessly. "There are, doubtless, others who have gained a higher proficiency in the craft; but as I am still young, I'll not despair of future eminence."

He heaved a deep sigh, and leaned his head upon his hand.

I fancied I could read what was passing in his mind, and, at a haphazard, said, "You are contrasting the catalogue with that of your own acquirements, and perhaps asking yourself, to what end all the midnight toil of scholarship? Why have I labored hard, with aching brow and fevered heart, when one with vulgar attainments like these,—the scattered fragments, the crumbs that fall from the table of real knowledge,—can secure a better livelihood and more real independence than myself; and the reason is,

mine are marketable wares that find purchasers in every class, and among every gradation of society. 'My lord' must have his courier; so must the rich cotton-spinner or the barrister on his wedding-tour. The wealthy dowager, the blooming widow, the ex-minister travelling for 'distraction' the young heir journeying for dissipation, the prelate, the banker, the ruined duke, the newly enriched mill-owner,—all, however differing in other points, agree in this one want, and must have one who will think for them and speak for them, bargain and bully for them, assert their rank and importance wherever they appear; so that of the obstacles of travel, its difficulties and contrarieties, they should know as little as though their road lay between London and Croydon."

"Still, it is a puzzle to me," sighed the young man, "how these people achieve the attainments you speak of. Even a smattering of such knowledge would seem to require both time and study."

"They have but a smattering," said I; "yet it is gained exactly in the very school where such small proficiency goes farthest,—'the world'—and which you will one day discover has its sources of knowledge, its tests of ability, ay, and its degrees of honor, marked out as palpably as Oxford and Cambridge. There is this advantage, too, sir, over the university,—the track in which you are to travel is marked out for you; you must not stray to the right or to the left,—while in 'the world' the field of direction is wide, open, and expanded; there's a path for every one, if they 'll only look for it."

He started as I said these words; and as his cheeks flushed up, he said, "I remember once upon a time hearing those very words from a poor friendless boy in my own country. He was setting out, as he said, to

seek his fortune, and his whole stock in life was the hope inspired by that sentiment."

"And what became of him?"

"I never could learn. He disappeared suddenly; and whether he enlisted into some regiment abroad, or died at home, I never ascertained."

"Then I can tell you, sir,—he now stands before you, the same whom once you so kindly succored! the houseless, friendless child whom you protected and sheltered. I am Con Cregan."

It would be difficult to describe the bewilderment of poor Lyndsay as I said this; he sat down, closed his eyes, opened them again, rubbed them, stared at me, tried to speak, and at last, rising up, grasped my hand warmly, and cried, "Then, of course, you remember *my* name?"

"I could never forget it, Mr. Lyndsay," said I, affectionately.

This was enough, and he now shook me by both hands with all the warmth of old friendship.

As he was madly eager to learn the story of my life, and as I was bent on my departure by the morning mail for Genoa, we agreed to meet at an hour when the household had retired to bed; meanwhile, he was to charge himself with the office of making an explanation to the family, and informing them that matters of urgency required my presence at Paris without delay. This agreed upon, we separated.

The entire night we passed in talking, for he insisted upon hearing my adventures from the very hour we had parted company in Dublin, down to the moment we were then seated together. It was evident, at times, from the tone of questioning, that he accepted several of my statements at least as

doubtful; but gradually, as he discovered my acquaintance with various languages, the knowledge I possessed of different remote countries, their habits and natural productions, this incredulity gave way; and when finally I produced the letters of the Havannah banker, with the receipts for my instalments, he showed that every shade of hesitation had vanished, and that he no longer entertained a doubt of my veracity.

As the hour of separating drew nigh, he turned the subject to my own immediate requirements; and although I assured him that my ring, which I had already disposed of, was sufficient for all immediate wants, he insisted upon my accepting a loan of one hundred dollars, to be repaid, as he himself said, “when I resumed my countship.” These were his parting words as I ascended to the roof of the diligence.



CHAPTER . XXXI .

“A NEW WALK IN PROGRESSIVE LIFE.”

CHAPTER XXXI A NEW WALK IN PROGRESSIVE LIFE

I will not trespass on my reader's patience with the details of my journey, nor ask him to form acquaintance with any of those pleasant travelling companions whose whims, caprices, and merry fancies lightened the road. The company of a diligence is a little world in all its features of selfishness, apathy, trustfulness, credulity, and unbelief. It has its mock humilities and absurd pretensions even more glaringly displayed than every-day life exhibits them. Enough, then, if I say ours were fair specimens of the class; and when, on arriving at the Messageries Royales, the heavy "conveniency" deposited us in the court, we shook hands all round ere separating, like people who were well pleased when together, but yet not broken-hearted at the thought of parting.

And now I found myself at Paris, that glorious capital, whose very air is the champagne of atmospheres, and where, amid the brilliant objects so lavishly thrown on every side, even the poor man forgets his poverty, and actually thinks he has some share in the gorgeous scene around him. I heaved one heavy sigh from the very bottom of my heart as I thought what might have been the condition in which I could once have rolled along these same streets; and with this brief tribute to the past, I trudged along towards the Embassy. All my hope lay in the prospect of an interference on the part of the English Government, and the demand of an indemnification for my loss.

After some little delay, and a slight catechizing on the part of a bulky porter in scarlet livery, I was

admitted to a room where a number of people, chiefly couriers and “Laquais de Place,” were assembled, to obtain signatures or passports, and who were summoned from time to time to enter an inner chamber where the official sat. *My* turn came at length, and, with a heart almost swelling to suffocation, I entered.

“For England, I suppose,” said a pale young gentleman, with black moustaches, not looking up from the table, where he sat reading his “Galignaui.”

“No, sir, mine is not a passport case. I am here to make a charge against the Spanish Government for false imprisonment and spoliation.”

The young gentleman raised his head, and stared at me fixedly for a couple of seconds, and then, in the most silvery of accents, said, “Be good enough to repeat what you have said.”

I did so; adding, “As my case has occupied the attention of the Foreign Office for some time back, you may possibly have heard of my name,—Count Cregan.”

The youth sprang up from his chair, and hastened into another room, whence I could hear loud shouts of laughter immediately proceeding.

“No, no, Barrington,” said a deeper and an older voice; “I don't want to see the fellow, and I advise you to get rid of him at once. He 'll be a bore to us every day of the week, if you give him the slightest encouragement.”

“But is there really nothing in his case?”

“Nothing whatever; he is a downright impostor.”

“But Puzzleton certainly corresponded with him."

“Of course he did, to prevent the Opposition making a handle of his case in 'the House;' but he

soon saw the whole thing was a trumped-up charge, and as we want to go on smoothly with the Madrid Government, it would be absurd to disturb our relations for the sake of a fellow like this."

"Oh, that's it," said the *attaché*, catching a faint glimmering of the secret machinery of diplomacy.

"To be sure," added the other; "if we wanted a grievance, that man's would do as well as another; but there is no need to hold him over, we can always catch the Spaniards tripping when we want it. My advice is, therefore, get rid of him. Say that he must embody his statement in the form of a memorial, supported by whatever he can adduce in the way of evidence; that a personal interview can lead to nothing; and, in fact, dismiss him in the usual way."

And with these lucid instructions,—given in a tone far too loud to be diplomatic,—the *attaché* returned to the room where I waited.

"You 'll have to reduce this to writing, Count Cregan," said he, standing with his back to the fire, and assuming an air that he fancied was quite that of a Talleyrand,—"something in the form of a memorial, you understand."

"I have already done so, unsuccessfully," said I, shortly.

"Ah, wasn't aware," sighed the young gentleman, stroking his moustache.

"The Secretary of Foreign Affairs acknowledged the receipt of my statement, and at one time held out some hope of redress."

"Ah, indeed!" echoed the other.

"The state of our relations with Spain, however," added I, "not requiring a grievance just then, my case was naturally shelved."

He started, bit his lip, and evinced unmistakable signs of being ill at ease. “In fact,” resumed I, growing warmer as I proceeded, “no further notice was taken of me than what barely sufficed to take my case out of the hands of Opposition members. I was assumed to be an impostor, because the moment was not favorable to believe me honest. Good diplomacy, perhaps, but rather lax morality. Now, sir, I have lost *my* cause,—that is quite evident; let us see if *you* have gained *yours*. The press is the great vindicator of individual wrongs, and I 'll make its columns the arena in which this struggle shall be decided.”

“Be good enough to wait one instant,—take a seat, Count,” observed the young gentleman, in his very politest of tones, while he hastily retired into the inner room once more. This time the conversation was so low that not a whisper reached me. After a few seconds he re-entered.

“Your case will be inquired into, Count, and representation made to the Spanish minister at this court. May I ask where you are staying here?”

“I have not yet taken up my residence at Paris.” “Your passport is of course with the police?” I bowed an assent, while a sudden thought flashed across me. “They mean to send me out of the country!” The *attaché* had twice said “Good morning,” ere I remarked it, and with a hurried leave-taking I quitted the room, well aware of the folly into which a momentary fit of passion had betrayed me.

It was palpable enough,—my passport would at once offer a ground for my expulsion: I was an English subject, travelling on a Spanish passport. I must, of course, expect to be disowned by the Spanish minister, and not acknowledged by my own.

This was a sorry beginning, and I sauntered out into the streets in a very depressed state of mind. What was I to do? My funds were at a low ebb,—I had not above four hundred francs in the world. Into what career could I throw myself, and, while obtaining a livelihood, avoid discovery? I knew various things, in that smattering sort of way which, by the aid of puffing and notoriety, often succeeds with the world; but yet notoriety was the very thing I most dreaded! There was nothing for it but to change my name. Many would doubtless say that this was not any great sacrifice,—need not have cost me any very poignant sufferings; but they would be wrong. I had clung to my name through all the changes and vicissitudes of my fortune, as though it embodied my very identity. It was to make that humble name a great one that I had toiled and struggled through my whole life. In that obscure name lay the whole impulse of my darings. Take that from me, and you took away the energy that sustained me, and I sunk down into the mere adventurer, living on from day to day, and hour to hour, without purpose or ambition. I had borne my name in the very lowest passages of my fortune, hoping one day or other to contrast these dark periods with the brilliant hours of my destiny. And now I must abandon it! “Well, be it so,” thought I, “and, by way of compromise, I 'll keep half of it, and call myself Monsieur Corneille; and as to nationality, there need be little difficulty. Whenever a man talks indifferent Spanish, he says he is from the Basque. If he speaks bad German, he calls himself an Austrian. So I, if there be any irregularities in my regular verbs, will coolly assert that I am a brave Belge and a subject of King Leopold; and if humility be a virtue, this choice of a native land ought to do me credit.”

I raised my head from my musings at this moment, and found myself at the corner of the Rue Goguenarde, exactly opposite a house covered with placards and announcements, from the street to the third story, a great board with gilt letters, over the entrance, proclaiming it the "Bureau des Affiches" for all nations. Nor was the universality a mere pretence, as a single glance could show the range of advertisements, taking in everything, from an estate in Guadaloupe to a neat chamber in the Marais; from a foundry at Lyons to the sweeping of a passage in the Rue Rivoli. All the nostrums of medicine, all the cheap appliances of the toilet, remedies against corpulence, perventives to extreme emaciation, how to grow hair, how to get rid of it, governesses, ballet-dancers, even ladies "with suitable portions and great personal attractions," were all at the command of him rich enough to indulge his indolence. "There must surely be something applicable to me in all those varied wants," thought I; and I entered a great room where several knots of men and women, of different ranks and conditions, were gathered around large tablets of advertisements.

Some were in search of lost articles of dress or jewelry, a runaway child or a missing spaniel; some inquiring for cheap apartments, or economical modes of travel with others going the same road: but the greater number were in pursuit of some means of livelihood,—and what a host they were! Professors of every art, science, and language; journalists, poets, tenors, gardeners, governesses, missionaries, rope-dancers, frail little damsels who performed as goddesses in a pantomime, and powerful fellows who performed the "life-models" of academies, together with a number of well-dressed gentlemen of a certain age who announced themselves as "discreet friends

to any party engaged in a delicate and difficult transaction."

My heart sunk within me as I saw the mass of capability by which I was surrounded. "What could the world want with me," thought I, "in such a glut of acquirements as I see here?" And I was about to turn away, when my attention was drawn to a very little elderly man who was most importunately entreating one of the clerks to do him some service or other. The old man's eagerness was actually painful to witness. "I will sell it for a mere nothing," said he, "although it cost me five hundred francs!"

"You'll be fortunate if you get one hundred for it," said the clerk.

"I would accept of even one hundred,—nay! I'd take eighty," sighed the old man.

"So you ought," said the other. "These things are all at a discount now; men like more active and energetic situations. Retirement is not the taste of our day."

"Retirement!" thought I; "that may be exactly what would suit *me* at this moment," and I drew near to listen.

"Find me a purchaser with seventy francs," ejaculated the old man, "and I'll close with him."

"What is it, Monsieur?" said I, bowing civilly to both.

"A 'quatorzième,' sir," said the clerk, interposing, that he might earn his commission, in the event of a deal. "A quatorzième; and I am bound to say one of the best in this quarter of Paris. It takes in the Rue de la Chuine, the Place de la Boucherie, with a very large sweep of the Boulevard Mont Parnasse."

"A quatorzième!" cried I, in amazement; "I never

heard of any one living so high up. Are there really houses in Paris fourteen stories high?"

They both burst into a fit of laughter as I said this, and it was some time ere the clerk could recover his gravity sufficiently to reply; at last he said, "I perceive that Monsieur is a stranger to Paris and its ways, or he would know that a quatorzième is not an apartment fourteen stories high, but an individual who holds himself always in readiness at the dining-hours of his neighborhood, to make the fourteenth at any table, where, by accident, the unlucky number of thirteen should be assembled,—a party which every well-informed person would otherwise scruple to sit down with. This, sir, is a quatorzième; and here is a gentleman desirous of disposing of his interest in such an enviable property."

To my question as to what were the necessary qualifications, they both answered in a kind of duet, by volubly recapitulating that nothing was needed but a suit of black, and clean gloves; unobtrusive demeanor and a moderate appetite being the certain recommendations to a high professional success. I saw the chief requirement well,—to eat little, and to talk less; to come in with the soup, and go out with the salad; never to partake of an *entrée*, nor drink save the "ordinaire:" these were the duties; the reward was ten francs. "It used to be a Napoleon, Monsieur," said the old mau, wiping his eyes. "In the time of Charles the Tenth it was always a Napoleon; but these 'canailles' nowadays have no reverence for anything; I have known even the ministry dine thirteen on a Friday,—to be sure, the king was fired at two days afterwards for it; but nothing can teach them."

The old gentleman grew most communicative on the subject of his "walk," which he was only

abandoning in consequence of the rheumatism, and the difficulty of ascending to dinner-parties on a high elevation. He depicted with enthusiasm the enjoyments of a profession that demanded, as he observed, so little previous study, was removed from all the vicissitudes of commerce, pleasant in practice, and remunerative in pay. He also insinuated the possible advantages to a young and handsome man, who could scarcely fail to secure a good marriage, by observing a discreet and decorous demeanor; and, in fact, he represented his calling in such a light as at least to give me the liveliest curiosity to enter upon it for a brief space, and while meditating what future steps I should take in life.

That same afternoon I saw myself announced at the porter's window of a very shabby-looking house in the Rue de la Forge as “Monsieur de Corneille,”—the “de” being advised by my predecessor,—“Quatorzième prêt à toute heure,” and thus opened my professional career. I was told that it was all important in my vocation that I should not be seen much abroad in the world. There should be a certain mysteriousness about me, when I appeared at a dinner-table, that might permit the host to speak of me—to strangers—as his old friend the Baron de So-and-so, who rarely ventured out even to dine with him. In fact, I should be as guarded against publicity as though I were a royal personage. This was not a hard condition at the time, since I was desirous of escaping notice. I passed all my mornings, therefore, in writing—sometimes memorials to a minister, sometimes statements for the press; now, they were letters to the banker at Guajuaqualla, or to Don Estaban, or to the great firm at the Havannah. The cost of postage deterred me from despatching most of them, but I continued to write them, as though to

feed the cravings of my hope. When evening drew nigh, I abandoned the desk for the toilet; and having arrayed myself in most austere black, waited for the summons which should invite me to some unknown feast. I have often perused records of the early struggles of a professional life,—the nervous vacillations between hope and fear which haunt him who watches day after day, for some time, that he is not forgotten of the world; the fretful jealousies of the fortunate rival; the sad depression over his own failures; the eager watching lest the footfall on the stairs stop not at his door, and the wearisome sinking of the heart as the sounds die away in the distance, and leave him to the silence of his own despair. If I had not to feel the corroding regrets of him who has toiled long and ardently for the attainment of a knowledge that now lies in rust, unused, unasked for, unwanted, I had to learn what are his tortures who waits till the world call him.

There I sat in all my “bravery.” What a contrast between my sleek exterior and the half-famished creature within! Sometimes my impatience would break out into a fit of passion, in which I railed at the old knave who had entrapped me, at fortune that deserted me, at myself, who had grown indolent, and void of enterprise. Sometimes I became almost stupid by long reflection, and would sit to a late hour of the night, unconscious of everything; and sometimes I would actually laugh outright at the absurdity of my assumed calling, wondering how I ever could have been fool enough to embrace it.

The world had evidently grown out of its superstitions; republicanism and socialism, and all the other free and easy notions by which men persuaded themselves that the rich are thieves, and the poor the just inheritors of the gains, had knocked

down many a mock idol besides monarchy. Men no longer threw a pinch of salt over their left shoulder when they upset the salt-cellar; did n't pierce their egg-shell, lest the fairies might make a boat of it; and so, among many other remains of the custom of our ancestors abandoned, they sat down to dinner, careless whether the party were thirteen or thirty.

"I might as well try and revive astrology," thought I, "as seek to trade upon superstition in this unbelieving age! I doubt if all Paris contains another quatorzième than myself; the old villain knew the trade was ruined, when he sold me his 'goodwill' of the business."

I was in the very deepest and darkest abyss of these gloomy thoughts one evening, when a heavy down-pour of rain, and the sorrowful moan of a December wind, added melancholy to my wearied spirit. It was such a night that none would have ventured out who could have claimed the humblest roof to shelter him. The streets were perfectly deserted, and, early as it was, the shops were already closed for the night. The very lamps that swung to and fro with the wind, looked hazy and dim amid the sweeping rain, and the chains clanked with the dreary cadence of a gibbet.

I knew it was needless to go through the ceremony of dressing on such a night. "Better face all the imaginary terrors of a thirteen party than brave the real danger of a storm like this,"—so I reasoned; and, in all the freedom of my tattered dressing-gown, I paced my room in a frame of mind very little above despair. "And this in Paris," cried I; "this the city where in some hundred gilded saloons,—at this very moment—are met men brilliant in all the gifts of genius, and women more beautiful and more fascinating than the houris of Paradise. Wit and

polished raillery, bright glances and soft smiles, are now mingling amid the glitter of stars, and crosses, and diamonds; while some thousands, like me, are actually famishing with hunger,—too poor even to have a fire to thaw the icicles of despair that are gathering around the heart!"

Had it not been better for me if I had lived on in the same humble condition to which I was born, than have tasted of the fascinations of riches, to love and pine after them forever? No! this I could not agree to. There were some moments of my glorious prosperity that well repaid me for all I had, or all I could suffer for them; and to whatever depth of evil destiny I might yet be reserved, I should carry with me the delicious memory of my once happiness. Con Cregan—the light-hearted—was himself again! Con, —the vagrant, the passionate lover of whatever life offered of pleasure, of beauty, and of splendor,—who only needed a good cash account with Coutts to make his existence a "fairy tale"! I forgot for a moment that I lived in a mean chamber with a broken window, a fireless grate, a table that never was graced with a meal! a bed that resembled a "board," and a chair, to sit upon which without smashing, required the dexterity of a juggler!

A sharp knocking at my door cut short these meditations, and a voice at the same time cried out my name. "Come in," said I, authoritatively. I fancied it might be the landlord, and was not sorry to brave him—by the darkness. The door opened, and a figure, which even in the gloom I could perceive was that of a stranger, entered. "Monsieur de Corneille lives here?" said he.

"I have the humble honor to be that individual," responded I.

“Have you got no light? I have smashed my shins across a confounded chair,” said he, querulously.

“You 're all safe now,” said I; “keep round by the wall, but take care of the rat-trap near the corner.”

“Let's have a light, mon cher,” said the other, half coaxingly.

“I never have a light,” said I; “I detest glare, hate snuffing a candle, and can't endure the thought of patronizing Russia and her tallow.”

“Could n't we have a bit of fire, then?” asked he.

“Fire before Christmas!” exclaimed I. “Are we in Tobolsk? What Sybarite talks of fire in Paris at this season?”

“I really am ambitious of seeing you, Monsieur,” said the other: “can we not compass this object without any violence to your feelings?”

“Have you a cigar-case?” said I.

“Yes.”

“Well, strike a light; and here 's a letter which you may set fire to: you can thus make an inspection of me by 'inch of paper.'”

He laughed pleasantly at the conceit, and lighted the letter, by the aid of which, as he held it above his head, he took a rapid survey of the chamber and its contents, myself being the chief movable it boasted.

“Of a truth, my friend,” said he, “this apartment has nothing superfluous about it.”

“Cool and airy,” said I, calmly, “with a magnificent view of red-tiled roofs and chimney-pots.”

“And you—would it be an impertinence to ask if you ever condescend to the restriction of anything more limited than that very graceful dressing-room?”

“Oh, certainly!” exclaimed I; “only be good enough

to say why you ask the question." By this time the stranger's torch had burned down so close to his fingers as to cause an exclamation of pain as he threw it on the ground, and thus were we once more in the dark.

"Not from mere motives of idle curiosity, Monsieur," said he, "did I ask, but simply, having come here to request the pleasure of your company at dinner to-day. I made the inquiry with a direct object. My name is Paul de Minérale."

"Not the distinguished writer, the inimitable novelist, the delightful composer of the 'Curate's Niece,' 'The Path through the Vineyard,' 'The Rose of Auteuil'?"

"I am much flattered," said he, cutting short my enumeration, "to discover so ardent an admirer of my poor productions; but, as time presses, will you be good enough to hasten your toilet, for my 'cottage' is near Belleville, and will take us nigh an hour to reach."

I proceeded accordingly to array myself in cleaner costume, while my visitor kept up an agreeable conversation, chiefly bearing upon my line of life, the changeful passages of which, he seemed to think, ought to offer much amusement; nor could he conceal his astonishment on learning that he himself was my first and only client. "What an age we live in I" cried he; "where is that 'ancient faith' departed? Can men so openly disparage the gods?"

"Though my theology has been changed," said I, "that's all. The Bourse and the Ballet are the modern deities, and he must be a rare sceptic who refuses to believe in them."

"You are a philosopher, I perceive," said he.

"Only before dinner," replied I. "I am speculative

with the soup, and grave with my 'petit pâté;' reserved with the first entrée; blandly communicative after the pièce de résistance; playful over the asparagus or the peas; soothing with the rôti; and so descend into a soft and gentle sadness as the dessert appears. I leave digestion to take its course, waiting for my mocha and maraschino. In the drawing-room I blaze forth in all the vividness of agreeability."

"What could have induced one so evidently intended for a foreground figure to prefer the humble and shadowy part of a 'quatorzième '?" said he, in surprise.

"The 'Res Dura' that crosses every man's destiny, and a spice of that spirit of investigation which teaches one to explore very unwholesome depths and very unrewarding regions,—a blending of that which made the Czar a carpenter, and Louis Philippe a teacher of mathematics."

"Ah! that reminds me," interposed he, "that I ought to put you on your guard. To-day a Royal Prince will honor us with his company. There are a couple of ministers and a general. The rest of the party are of the artiste class, whose susceptibilities you cannot wound; authors, actresses, journalists, and danseuses, however touchy in the great world, are angels of good temper in small societies." With this he proceeded to give me a nearer insight into the kind of company into which I was to be introduced, —a society, so far as I could learn, that a rigid moralist might have deemed "more fair than honest." I learned, too, that I owed the distinction of my invitation to a wager between his Royal Highness the Duc de St. Cloud and my host; the bet being that De Minérale was to find out a "quatorzième" and bring him to dinner, his search for one not to begin till

after five o'clock p.m.; the Prince being fully convinced that no regular practitioner in that walk any longer existed. “Your presence, my dear sir,” continued he, “is worth, independent of the charm of your conversation, fifty Napoleons; one-half of which I must beg you to accept;” saying which, he gracefully presented me with a purse, whose pleasant weight descended into my palm with a sensation indescribably soft and soothing.

All this time we were rattling along towards Belleville at a rapid pace; and although the rain swept past in torrents, the lightning flashed, and the wind tore the strong trees from their roots, and strewed the ground with their gigantic limbs, I sat in a revery of sweet and delightful fancies, the only alloy to my ecstasy being a passing fear that at each moment shot through me: Can this be real? Am I awake? or has long fasting so weakened my faculties that this is but a delusion; and instead of hastening to a dinner-party with a royal guest, I am speeding onwards to a prison, or, mayhap, a madhouse. These fancies, at first but fitful and at intervals, became at length so distressing that I was on the very point of communicating them to my companion, and asking for his counsel and comfort, when we drove into a small avenue, and then almost immediately drew up in front of a porch, where, amid a blaze of light, stood three or four servants in gaudy liveries, awaiting our arrival.

“Well, Paul!” cried a young, fashionable-looking fellow, with a very imposing black beard, “what success?”

“I 've won,—here he is!” cried my companion. “Have I much time to spare?”

“Something less than two minutes,” said the other,

as he coolly surveyed me through his glass. “Present me, Paul.”

“Mons. Alphonse de Langeron—Mons. de Corneille.”

“The author of the 'Fancies by Starlight,'” said I, bowing with a most respectful devotion.

“Guilty, sir! and of fifty other indiscretions to the full as great,” said he, laughing.

“Ah, sir, I know it by heart; that stanza on the 'Waled Letty' haunts me like a dream.”

“Sharp fellow, our friend the 'quatorzième'!” whispered Alphonse to Paul as we walked along towards the drawing-room.

How I should like to dwell upon the details of that dinner, the most delightful entertainment of my whole life! It needed not the sudden transition from the dark and dreary chamber I inhabited to the gilded saloon, all in a blaze with wax-lights, to make me feel it such. The “service” was splendid—the cookery perfection—the wines the rarest of every vintage—the apartment itself had all the chastened grandeur of a mediaeval chamber, with the gorgeous splendor contributed by a magnificent beauffet of silver;—and the guests! what beauty and fascination of female loveliness—what charm of wit and agreeability among the men! The great damper upon my enjoyment was my actual doubt of the reality of the whole scene. It was not, alone, that all the splendor appeared so wonderful—that the glitter of gold and the beauty of porcelain dazzled the eye; but the very names of the illustrious guests themselves suggested incredulity. What wonder if I could not credit my senses, as I heard the first names in all the genius of France on every side of me! Here, the great historian, and philosopher, and statesman; there, the

delightful lyric poet; yonder, the first novelist of Europe; and next to him the distinguished painter, whose great battle-piece was in commemoration of the young Prince beside him, a hero of “two-and-twenty.”

Nothing could be more easy or familiar than the tone of conversation,—that happy pleasantry that tickles but never wounds, so unlike the English propensity for “quizzing”—that vulgar version of Gallic “badinage;” and then how eloquent, without pedantry, how sparkling, and how suggestive! Ah, my kind reader, I see the rippling smile over the broad Atlantic of your countenance. You have guessed all the secret of my enthusiasm, and you know the mystery of my admiration. Be it so; I am ready to confess all. It was my own success that made the chief enchantment of the scene. I was the lion of the evening. Not a theme on which I did not hold forth, not a subject I did not discuss,—politics, bull-fighting, cookery, dress, literature, duelling, the ballet, horse-racing, play, scandal, naval tactics, colonization, cotton-spinning, music, railroads, and the “dry-rot.” I was profound, playful, serious, jocose, instructive, and amusing by turns. Madmlle. de la Bourdonaye, the first actress of the “Français,” was charmed with my dramatic criticism; the poet—enthusiastic at my recital of a stanza of his own; the general pronounced me the very best judge of cavalry evolutions he had ever met; the great painter begged the favor of a visit from me at his studio; and the Prince's aide-de-camp—himself a distinguished soldier—told me, in a whisper, to hold myself disengaged for the following Wednesday.

These were, after all, but the precursors of greater triumphs in the drawing-room, where I played and sang several Mexican ballads; danced the Bollero

with Madmlle. Rose Jasmin, of the Grand Opéra; and lassoed a Mount St. Bernard mastiff with the bell-rope. After this, beat the statesman at chess; rolled up Indian cigarettes for the ladies, whom I taught to sit squaw fashion; told various anecdotes of my prairie adventures; and wound up all by concocting a bowl of "ponch à l'Américaine," at once the astonishment and the delight of all. I must not suffer myself to dwell longer on this theme, nor speak of that supper, with its champagne and culembourgs, its lyrics and its lobster salads, with ortolans, epigrams, seductive smiles, and maraschino jelly. Enough. The orgies—for it was no less—lasted till nigh morning; and when we arose from table, a pale streak of coming day was struggling between the margins of the curtains.

"His Royal Highness will set you down, Mons. de Corneille," said the aide-de-camp, advancing to me.

Blushing with pleasure and shame together, I accepted what could not be declined, and proceeded to take leave of my kind host and his friends. Cordial greetings, and flattering wishes soon to meet again, met me on every side, and I retired actually overwhelmed with civil attentions.

"Do we pass by your quarter, Monsieur?" said his Royal Highness, as I took my seat in the carriage.

I would have given all my worldly wealth, and expectations to boot, to be able to say that I lived in the Place Vendôme or the Rue Royale; but there was no help for it, the murder would out one day, since my host knew my address; and with an easy, unabashed air, I said that I lodged in the Rue de la Forge, near the Mount St. Parnasse.

The Prince bowed, and took no notice of the announcement; but I thought that I could read a very

peculiar twinkle in the eye of the aide-de-camp. I might have easily been mistaken, however, for I felt myself on my trial, and thought everything an accusation. How gratuitously I tortured myself, subsequent knowledge of life has repeatedly convinced me; for while to some upstart rich man, the acknowledgment of my humble abode would have been a shock sufficient to sever us forever, to the Prince the matter had no other significance than that it suited my means, with which, whether ample or the reverse, he had no right to meddle. Indeed, I was not sorry to remain in doubt upon the fact, since in the difficult negotiation between the aide-de-camp and the coachman, who had never so much as heard of my unhappy street, his Royal Highness never evinced any surprise whatever, but sat patiently to the end of the discussion, without vouchsafing even a word upon the subject.

“This must be the house, number 21,748,” said the chasseur, at length; and we drew up at the well-known door, where the old porter sat reading on one side, while his wife was peeling carrots at the other.

It was the first moment of confusion I suffered, since I had left the same spot; but my cheek was in a flame as the lacquey let down the steps, and offered me his arm to descend. The lowly veneration of the old porter, as he stared at the royal liveries and the emblazoned panels of the carriage, was but a sorry compensation for the mock servility of the chasseur, whose eyes seemed to look through into my very heart, so that I actually did not hear the parting words of the Prince as the equipage drove away.

Curious anomaly! the half-insolent glances of the lacqueys sank deeper into my spirit than the flattering smile of the Prince's adieu. How much more alive is our nature to the pang of scorn than to

the balm of kindness! These were my reflections as I entered my humble chamber, every portion of which seemed doubly miserable to me now. “Is it possible,” thought I, “that I have endured this hitherto? Have I really sat in that crazy old chair, and stretched my limbs upon that wretched pallet? Can it be real? or which is the delusion,—my recent splendor, or my present squalor?” Although up all night, I was far too much excited for sleep, even could I have persuaded myself to seek it on so humble a couch. I therefore set myself to think over the future, and wonder whether the brilliant scene in which I had so lately mixed would remain in its isolated brightness amid the desolation of my life, or be the guide-star to future greatness and distinction. My late success emboldened me to think that Fortune had not yet deserted me. “Who knows,” thought I, “but the Spaniards may behave handsomely yet, and make restitution of my property; or what if the Mexican banker should be a true man, and acknowledge my claim upon him?” “If I could but enlist the Prince in my cause,” thought I again, “how certain should I be of the issue! French influence always was powerful in Spain. Napoleon used to say, 'There were no Pyrenees;' I should be content if there were only a good road over them to convey the despatches that might assert my just right.”

A quick step upon the stairs at that instant caught my ear; few ever ascended so high up as my story, so I listened, and almost at once my door was thrown open, and my host of the preceding evening rushed into the room. Having shaken hands with me cordially, he said, “Corneille, mon ami! I have made another wager about you; and although the sum is a trifling one, I am curious to ascertain if I am the winner. Jules de Montserrat and Emile de Gency and

myself had a dispute last night about your nationality, which ended in a bet. I am bound in honor not to tell you what our several opinions and guesses were, but still at liberty to ask you, what is your native country?"

"I am an Irishman, and derive my name from the ancient family of Cregan. Cornelius is but my Christian name, which I assumed to cover the disgrace of my altered fortune."

"As to our wager, then, we were all in error,—none of us guessed Ireland. As to your being a man of birth and station, I need scarcely say, we were all agreed."

"Would it were otherwise," said I, with a deep sigh; "a humble position might be endured well enough, if unalloyed by the regrets of a condition forfeited forever. If you are curious to hear a very unhappy story, I am willing to relate it."

"You couldn't do me a greater favor," said he, seating himself like one eager to listen.

"First, then, we'll have some breakfast," said I; "and then, with a good fire and no fear of interruption,—for I have not one acquaintance in Paris,—you shall hear my history from beginning to end."

Chocolate and cutlets, champagne and devilled kidneys, brioches, sardines, and coffee, made their appearance as rapidly as though such delicacies were in the habit of daily mounting these steep stairs; and a cheerful blaze glowed once more in a grate where the oldest inhabitant had never beheld a fire.

These preparations being made, we began our meal, and I opened my narrative. The reader must not feel offended with me if I ventured to draw upon my imagination for the earlier facts of my history.

Nature had not been generous to me in the article of a father: what great harm if I invented one for myself? Fortune had placed my birth beneath the thatched roof of an Irish cabin: was it not generous of me to call it the ancient baronial seat of the Cregans? She started me poor and in rags: I was above repining, and called myself rich and well-nurtured. But why weary my reader with such a recital? If it was necessary to raise the foundation on fiction, the after-events of my career I was satisfied to state pretty nearly as they happened, merely altering the reasons for my journey to the New World, which I ascribed to my search after a great inheritance belonging to my family, who were originally from Andalusia, and grandees of Spain.

"And this of course you failed in," said my friend, who rather felt this portion of my story less interesting than certain other and more stirring passages.

"On the contrary," said I, "I succeeded perfectly. I not only discovered the banker in whose hands my family wealth was deposited, but established my claim most satisfactorily, and received a very large sum in gold, with bills to a high amount on various mercantile houses, besides leaving in his hands an important balance, for which I had no immediate necessity." After a slight sketch of my Mexican progress,—very little embellished or exaggerated,—I narrated my voyage to Europe and my capture at Malaga exactly as they occurred, circumstantially recording every detail of name and date I could remember down to the very moment of my reaching Paris.

"One question more, my dear friend," said M. Paul, after some fifty very searching interrogatories, as closely argued as the cross-examination of a counsel

at law. “One question more, and I have done. I know you 'll not be offended at the liberty I am about to take,—nay, I feel you 'll be even gratified with my candor. Tell me frankly, as between man and man, is there one word of truth in all this, or is it not downright moonshine,—sheer invention from beginning to end?”

I started to my legs, my face crimson with anger, but, as suddenly recovering myself, said, “You were right, sir, to bespeak a degree of command over my feelings before you ventured upon this freedom, which if I cannot altogether pardon, yet I will not resent.”

“So it is true, then,” said he, with a degree of melancholy in his voice I could not fathom.

“Of course it is,” rejoined I.

“Sorry to hear it; deeply, sincerely sorry,—that's all,” replied he, in the self-same manner; “I cannot express to you one-half of my disappointment.”

“Sorrow! disappointment!” exclaimed I. “May I ask what possible interest you could have in supposing me to be an impostor and a cheat?”

“Hard names these,” said he, laughing, “but I will explain myself. If the story that you have just told me were fiction, I could give you three hundred francs a day to write feuilletons for the 'Débats.' If one-half of it were even invention, you 'd be worth two hundred on the 'Siècle' or the 'Presse;' say you stole the material, and you 'd still do admirably for the 'Mode.'

“Are you—so conversant with a hundred thousand things—ignorant that the grand principle of division of labor has extended itself from the common arts of manufacture to the operations of genius; and that, nowadays, no man would think of composing an

entire work himself, any more than he would of turning mason, carpenter, slater, locksmith, and glazier, were he about to build a house? On the contrary, having fixed upon the site, and determined the proportions of his future edifice, he surrounds himself with competent and skilful hands in all the several walks of constructiveuess, reserving to himself that supervision and direction which could not be practicable were he engaged in actual labor. Thus is he a master-builder in fiction, selecting his artificers, storing his materials, apportioning the quantity, keenly watching the variations in public taste, and producing at last a mass and variety that no one brain—however fertile and assiduous—could be capable of. This," said he, drawing himself up proudly, "this is my walk. By the aid of this discovery,—for it is mine, and mine only,—I am enabled to draw tears in the 'Débats,' and convulse with laughter in the 'Constitutionnel;' and while writing of the torrid zone in one journal, I have an Icelander as my hero in another. Men stare at the range of my knowledge of life under aspects so various and discordant; and well may they wonder, were I to draw upon my own unassisted faculties. But it is men like you, Cregan, I want,—shrewd, sharp, ready-witted dogs; quick to remark, and quicker to report. What say you, then, will you join my corps in the fiction-foundry over which I preside?"

"Were I but capable—"

"You are eminently so. We need no literary ability, no craft of authorship,—no more than the child who picks the wool in the factory is called on to direct the loom that weaves it into cloth. Let me finish the article; I 'II give it the gloss for sale! What say you? Five thousand francs a year, free admission to every

theatre in Paris, and a dinner at 'La Trou aux Bois '—where you dined yesterday—every Sunday?"

"A bargain," cried I, in ecstasy.

"Concluded by both parties, who thus acknowledge their hand and seal," cried he, tossing off a glass of champagne; and then, rising from the table, he prepared to take his leave. "I conclude," said he, "that you 'll not continue your residence here much longer. Seek out some quarter less near to heaven, and more accessible to poor human nature."

I promised to follow the advice, and we separated: he to repair to his haunts,—the cafés, the editorial snuggeries, and other gossip shops of Paris; and I to seek out a more congenial abode, and one more befitting the favorable turn which Fate had now imparted to my fortune.

The afternoon of that same day saw me installed in a pleasant little apartment overlooking the garden of the Luxembourg, and where, from a little terrace, I could inhale the odor of the orange blossoms, and see the children at play amid the plashing of fountains and the waving of the tall grass. It was, as I discovered, the quarter of the whole artiste class,—poets, painters, actors, sculptors, feuilletonists, and caricaturists; nor was it difficult to ascertain the fact, as a certain extravagance of beard, various modifications of hat, and peculiarly cut coats and trousers presented themselves at every moment. Resolving to don "the livery of my race," I made my appearance in a suit of coffee-brown, hat and russet boots to match; as for beard, a life of seclusion for several weeks had only left me the task of retrenchment; and the barber whose services I invoked had but to ask my career to impress me with that artiste stamp that makes every full-faced man a

mock “Holbein,” and every thin one a bad Vandyke.

“The novelists wear it straight across, and square below the chin, sir,” said he. “This is a plate of Monsieur Eugène Sue; but there is a certain dash of energy about Monsieur's eyes—a kind of 'beauté insolente,' if I may be pardoned the phrase—that would warrant the beard to be pointed. May I venture to trim Monsieur as Salvator Rosa?”

“Use your own discretion, Monsieur Palmyre,” said I; “the responsibility is great, and I will not clog it by even a suggestion.”

To say that I could not have known myself on arising from his hands is no exaggeration, so perfectly changed had my features become in their expression. As a disguise, it was perfect; and this alone was no small recommendation.

As I walked the alleys of the Luxembourg, where at every instant men travestied like myself came and went, I could not help recalling the classical assertion that “no two augurs could meet face to face without laughing,” and I wondered excessively how we artistes surveyed each other and preserved even a decent gravity.

My career as a *litterateur* began the next day, and I received a short editorial summons from the office of “La Tempête” to furnish a feuilleton of a hundred and twenty-four lines; the postscript adding that as Admiral Du Guesclin had just arrived from Macao, some “esquisses des moeurs Chinoises” would be well timed. Of China I only knew what a lacquered tea-tray and the willow pattern could teach me; but I set to work at once, and by assuming my sketches to be personal adventures and experiences, made up a most imposing account of Chinese domesticity.

The article had an immense success: the air of

veracity was perfect; and the very officers of the fleet were so deluded by the imposition as to believe they must have frequently met me at Shang-kee-shing or Fong-wong-loo.

Thus was I launched into a career, of all others the most amusing, the most exciting, and, I must also add, the most dissipated. Living apart from all mankind in a little circle of our own, where we only recognized the world as we ourselves were pleased to paint it, our whole lives were one long scoff and sneer at everybody and everything. Friendship meant the habit of meeting at dinner; the highest nobility of soul was his who paid the reckoning.

If there was little actual happiness among us, there was certainly no care nor any touch of sorrow. A great picture condemned, a poem cut to pieces, a play hissed off, only suggested a “souper de consolation,” when the unlucky author would be the first to cut jokes upon his own failure, and ridicule the offspring of his own brains. Who could look for sympathy where men had no feeling for themselves? Even thieves, the proverb tells us, observe “honor” with each other; but we were worse than thieves, since we actually lived and grew fat upon each other's mishaps. If one exhibited a statue at the Louvre, another was sure to caricature it for the Passage de l'Opéra. If one brought out a grand drama at the Français, a burlesque was certain to follow it at the Palais-Royal. Every little trait that near intercourse and familiarity discloses, every weakness that is laid bare in the freedom of friendly association, were made venal, and worth so much a line for “Le Voleur” or “L'Espion.”

As to any sulking, or dreaming of resenting these infractions, he might as well try to repress the free-and-easy habits of a midshipman's berth. They were

the “masonry of the craft,” which each tacitly subscribed to when he entered it.

All intercourse was completely gladiatorial, not for display, but for defence. Everlasting badinage on every subject and on everybody was the order of each day; and as success was to the full as much quizzed as failure, any exhibition of vanity or self-gratulation met a heavy retribution. Woe unto him whose romance went through three editions in a fortnight, or whom the audience called for at the conclusion of his drama!

As for the fairer portion of our guild, being for the most part ostracized in general society, they bore a grudge against their sex, and affected a thousand airs of mannishness. Some always dressed in male attire; many sported little moustaches and chin-tufts, rode man-fashion in the Bois de Boulogne, fought duels; and all smoked. Like other converts, they went farther in their faith than the old believers, and talked Communism, Socialism, and Saint Simonianism, with a freedom that rose high above all the little prejudices ordinary life fosters.

If great crimes, such as shock the world by their enormity, were quite unknown among us, all the vices practicable within the Law and the Code Napoléon were widely popular; and the worst of it all was, none seemed to have the remotest conception that he was not the beau-ideal of morality. The simple fact was, we assumed a very low standard of *right*, and chose to walk even under *that*.

With Paris and all its varied forms of life I soon became perfectly familiar,—not merely that city which occupies the Faubourg St. Honoré, or St. Germain, not the Paris of the Boulevards or the

Palais-Royal only, but with Quartier St. Denis, the Batignolles, the Cité, and the Pays Latin. I knew every dialect, from the slang of fashion to the conventional language of its lowest populace. I heard every rumor, from the cabinet of the Minister down to the latest gossip of the “Coulisses:” what the world said and thought, in each of its varying and dissimilar sections; how each political move was judged; what was the public feeling for this or that measure; how the “many-headed” were satisfied or dissatisfied, whether with the measures of the Ministry, or the legs of the new danseuse; and thus I became the very perfection of a feuilletoniste. There is but one secret in this species of literature,—the ever-watchful observation of the public; and when it is considered that this is a Parisian public, the task is not quite so easy as some would deem it. This watchfulness, and a certain hardihood that never shrinks from any theme, however sacred to the conventional reserves of the general world, are all the requisites.

I have said it was a most amusing life; and if eternal excitement, if the onward rush of new emotions, the never-ceasing flow of stimulating thoughts, could have sufficed for happiness, I might have been, and ought to have been, contented. Still, the whole was unreal. Not only was the world we had made for ourselves unreal, but all our judgments, all our speculations, our hopes, fears, anticipations, our very likings and dislikings! Our antipathies were mock, and what we denounced with all the pretended seriousness of heartfelt conviction in one journal, we not unfrequently pronounced to be a heaven-sent blessing in another. Bravos of the pen, we had no other principle than our pay, and were utterly indifferent at whom we struck, even

though the blow should prove fatal. That we should become sceptical on every subject; that we should cease to bestow credence on anything, believing that all around was false, hypocritical, and unreal as ourselves, was natural enough; but this frame of mind bears its own weighty retribution, and not even the miserable victim of superstitious fear dreads solitude like him whose mind demands the constant stimulant of intercourse, the torrent of new ideas, that whirls him along, unreflecting and unthinking.

It will be easily seen that all my narrative of myself met but little faith in such company. They unhesitatingly rejected the whole story of my wealth; and my future restoration to rank and riches used to be employed as a kind of synonym for the Greek calends. The worst of all this was, their disbelief infected even me, and I gradually began to look upon myself as an impostor. My hope—the guide-star that cheered me in many a dark and gloomy period—began to wane, and I felt that ere long all those aspirations which had spirited me on in life would lie cold and dead within me, and that my horizon, would extend no further than where each daily sun sunk to rest. To show any discontent with my walk, to evince in the slightest degree any misgivings that we of “La petite Presse” did not give laws to taste, morals, jurisprudence, and legislation, would have been high treason. To imply a doubt that we held in our hands, not alone the destinies of Paris, but of Europe,—of all civilization,—would have been a rank and outrageous heresy. Like the priest, the journalist can never unfrock himself. The mark of the ink, more tenacious than the blood on Lady Macbeth's fingers, will “never out.” What, then, could I do? For, wearied of my calling, I yearned for a little truth, for a new glimpse of reality, however

short and fleeting.

Full of these thoughts, I repaired one morning to the Trou-aux-Bois, where fortunately I found my friend Paul alone,—at least, except three secretaries, to whom he was dictating by turns, he had no one with him! “Wait till I have finished this 'Attack of Wolves on a Caravan,'” said he, “and the 'Death of Jules de Tavanne by Poison,' and I 'm your man. Meanwhile, step into my study; there are masses of newspapers and letters which you can read freely.”

He did not detain me long. Apparently the wolves were weak, and soon beaten off, and the poison was strong, and soon did its work; for he joined me in less than half an hour.

My explanation was listened to patiently, and, what surprised me more, without astonishment. He saw nothing exaggerated or high-flown in the difficulties I started, and even went the length of confessing that many of my objections had occurred to his own mind. “But then,” said he, “what is to be done? If you turn soldier, are you always certain that you will concur in the justice of the cause for which you fight? Become a lawyer, and is not half your life passed in arraigning the right and defending the wrong? Try medicine; and where will be your 'practice' if you only prescribe for the really afflicted, and do not indulge the caprices and foster the complainings of the 'malade imaginaire '? As an apothecary, you would vend poisons; as an architect, you would devise jails and penitentiaries; and so to the end of the chapter. Optimism is just as impracticable as it is dangerous. Accept the world as you find it, not because it is the best, but because it is the only policy; and, above all, be slow in changing a career where you have met with success. The best proof that it suits you is, that the public

think so."

Being determined on my course, I now affected a desire to see life in some other form, and observe mankind under some other aspect. To this he assented freely, and, after a few moments' discussion, suddenly bethought him of a letter he had received that very morning. "You remember the Duc de St. Cloud, whom you met at dinner the first day you spent here?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, he was, as you are aware, ordered off to Africa, to take a high military command a few days after, and has not since returned to France. This day I have received a letter from him, asking me to recommend some one among my literary acquaintances to fill the office of his private secretary. You are exactly the man for the appointment. The duties are light, the pay liberal, the position agreeable in every way; and, in fact, for one who desires to see something of the world which the Boulevard du Gent and the Café de Paris cannot show him, the opportunity is first rate."

The proposal overjoyed me! Had I been called on to invent a post for myself, this was exactly the thing I should have fancied. A campaign against the Arabs; the novelty of country, people, and events; a life of adventure, with a prince for my companion,—these were the very crowning desires of my ambition.

"I 'll write about it this very day: there will be a mail for Algiers made up this evening, and not a moment shall be lost in making the application."

I could not express one half my gratitude for this opportune kindness; and when I again turned my steps toward Paris, my heart had regained the buoyant elasticity which had so often lifted me above

all the troubled waves of life.



CHAPTER XXXII. MOI ET MON PRINCE

In less than a fortnight after the interview I have just recorded, I received a letter from De Minérale, enclosing another, addressed to himself, and whose royal seal at once proclaimed the writer. De Minérale's was only a few lines, thus:—

> "Dear C,—I forward you the 'Duke's' reply to my note, by which you will see that we have been in time, and fortunate enough to secure your appointment. Lose not a moment in fulfilling the instructions contained in it, and

dine with me to-day at the 'Frères,' at seven.

“Yours,

“P. deM.”

The Duke's epistle, almost equally brief, was to the effect:

“Headquarters, Oran.

“My Dear De Minérale,—Of course I remember perfectly our friend the 'Quatorzième,' whose lucubrations in the journals I have since been much amused with. In some respects he would suit me well, being a fellow of high animal spirits, great readiness, and, if I mistake not, well fitted for the rough usage of a campaign. But it strikes me that if his position be such as you represent it, the exchange would be anything but profitable. This is a land of few pleasures and no luxuries. Tell him that we never see truffles, that champagne is only a tradition, and, except Moorish damsels, who never show us more of their faces than a pair of eyes,— —darting fire and anger,—we have no beauties. Yet if, despite all these drawbacks, he be still willing to tempt his fortune, and trust to 'a razzia' for the rest, let him call on Count du Verguoble, at the 'Ministère de la Guerre,' where he will find everything in readiness for his appointment.

“Should he desire it, he can also receive his commission in my own regiment, the 13th Chasseurs-à-cheval; and as he will not be called on for duty, he might as well accept an appointment that will at least give him forage for his horses and some other advantages.

“Send me all the new things that are out, and tell me what you and Alphonse are doing. 'Mes

amitiés' to our fair friend in the Rue Ponchaule, and the like—indiscriminately— to all the others.

"Yours affectionately,

M. dk St. C.

"You call him 'Le Comte de Creganne,' and so I have written it for the Minister: is this right?"

I read and re-read the letter till I knew every sentence of it by heart; and then, dressing myself with a degree of care the importance of the occasion suggested, I drove off for the Minister's office. It was not the hour of his usual reception; but on sending in my name, which I did as Le Comte de Creganne, I was at once admitted.

His Excellency was all smiles and affability, praised his Royal Highness's selection of a name so greatly honored in literature, and paid me many flattering compliments on my writings,—which, by the way, he confounded with those of half-a-dozen others; and then, after a variety of civil speeches, gently diverged into a modest inquiry as to my native country, rank, and fortune. "We live in days, mon cher Comte," said he, laughing, "in which high capacity and talent happily take precedence of mere lineage; but still, an illustrious personage has always insisted upon the necessity of those immediately about the person of the princes being of noble families. I am quite aware that you can fulfil every condition of the kind, and only desire such information as may satisfy his Majesty."

I replied by relating the capture of my property at Malaga, which, among other things, contained all the title-deeds of my estates, and the patent of my nobility. "These alone," said I, producing the banker's letters addressed to me as Condé de

Cregano, “are all that remain to me now to remind me of my former standing; and although, as born a British subject, I might at once apply to my minister to substantiate my claims, the unhappy events of Ireland which enlisted my family in the ranks of her patriots have made us exiles,—proscribed exiles forever.”

This explanation went further than my previous one. The old French antipathy to England found sympathy for Irish rebellion at once; and after a very brief discussion, my appointment was filled up, and I was named Private Secretary to the Duc de St. Cloud, and Lieutenant in the 13th Regiment of Chasseurs-à-cheval.

A new career had now opened before me, and it was one of all others the most to my choice. The war in Africa had become by that time a kind of crusade; it was the only field where Frenchmen could win fame and honor in arms, and the military fever of the nation was at its height. Into this enthusiasm I threw myself ardently; nor did it need the stimulation derived from a new and most becoming uniform to make me fancy myself a very Bayard in chivalry.

A truly busy week was spent by me in preparations for departure: as I had to be presented at a private audience of the Court, to wait upon various high official personages, to receive instructions on many points, and, lastly, to preside at a parting dinner which I was to give to my literary brethren, before retiring from the guild forever.

Last dinners and leave-takings are generally sad affairs; this of mine was, however, an exception: it was a perfect orgie of wild and enthusiastic gayety. All the beauty which the theatres and the “artiste” class generally could boast, was united with the

brilliancy and convivial excellence of the cleverest men in Paris,—the professional sayers of smart things, the ready-witted ones, whose epigrams were sufficient to smash a cabinet, or laugh down a new treaty; and all in high spirits, since what promoted me, also left a vacancy in the corps that gave many others a step in the ranks of letters.

What speeches were made in my honor, what toasts, prefaced by all the exaggeration of praise that would have been fulsome, save for the lurking diablerie of fun that every now and then burst forth in the midst of them! And then there were odes, and sonnets, and songs, in which my future achievements were pictured in a vein half-flattering, half-satirical, —that peculiar eau sucré, with a squeeze of lemon, that only a Frenchman knows how to concoct!



During one of my most triumphant moments, when two of the very prettiest actresses of the "Odéon" were placing a laurel crown upon my brow, a cabinet-messenger was announced, and presented me with an order to repair at once to the Tuileries with my official letter of appointment, as his Majesty, by some accident, had forgotten to append to it his signature. Apologizing to my worthy friends for a brief absence, which they assured me should be devoted to expatiating on those virtues of my character which my presence interdicted them from enlarging upon, I arose, and left the room. It was necessary to arrange the disorder of my dress and appearance, and I made a hurried dressing, bathing my temples in cold water, and composing myself, so far as might be, into a condition fit to meet the eyes of royalty,—two of my friends accompanying me the while, and lending their assistance to my toilet. They at length pronounced me perfect, and I drove off.

Although already past midnight, the King, with

several members of the royal family, were seated at tea: two of the ministers, a few general officers, and a foreign ambassador being of the party.

Into this circle, in which there was nothing to inspire awe, save the actual rank of the illustrious personages themselves, I was now introduced by the Minister of War. “Le Comte de Creganne, please your Majesty,” said he, twice, ere the King heard him.

“Ah, very true,” said the King, turning round, and, with a smile of most cordial expression, adding, “My dear Count, it seems I had forgotten to sign your appointment,—a mistake that might have caused you some inconvenience and delay at Algiers. Pray let me amend this piece of forgetfulness.”

I bowed respectfully, and deposited before him the great square envelope, with the huge official seal annexed, that contained my nomination.

“The Princess de Verneuil will be happy to give you some tea, Count,” said the King, motioning me to sit down; and I obeyed, while my heart, beating violently at my side, almost overpowered me with emotion. Only to think of it!—the son of an Irish peasant seated at the family tea-table of a great sovereign, and the princess herself, the daughter of a king, pouring out his tea!

If nothing short of the most consummate effrontery can maintain a cool, unaffected indifference in presence of royalty, there is another frame of mind, indicative of ease and self-possession, perfectly compatible with a kingly presence; and this is altogether dependent on the manner and tone of the sovereign himself. The King—I have heard it was his usual manner—was as free from any assumption of superiority as would be any private gentleman under his own roof; his conversation was maintained in a

tone of perfect familiarity with all around him, and even when differing in opinion with any one, there was a degree of almost deference in the way he insinuated his own views.

On this occasion he directed nearly all his attention to myself, and made Ireland the subject, asking a vast variety of questions, chiefly regarding the condition of the peasantry, their modes of life, habits of thinking, education, and future prospects. I saw that my statements were all new to him, that he was not prepared for much that I told him, and he very soon avowed it by saying, “These, I must own, are not the opinions I have usually heard from your countrymen, Count; but I conclude that the opportunities of travel, and the liberalism of thought which intercourse with foreign countries begets, may lead you to take views not quite in accordance with mere stay-at-home politicians.” I could have given him another and more accurate explanation of the difference. It was the first and only time that his Majesty had conversed with the son of a peasant,—one, himself born and bred beneath the thatch of a cabin, and who had felt the very emotions which others merely draw from their imaginations. As it grew late, his Majesty arose, and the Ministers one by one retired, leaving me the only stranger present. “Now, Count, I must not detain you longer; you leave Paris early to-morrow morning, and I should have remembered how large a portion of your night I have monopolized. This paper,—where is it?”

I at once took up the envelope, and drew forth a document; but conceive my horror when I discerned that it was a piece of verse,—a droll song upon my new dignity that one of my villanous companions had stuffed into the envelope in place of my official letter of appointment. Crushing it in my hand, I

pulled out another. Worse again! It was the bill-of-fare of our dinner at Very's, where “entrées” and “hors-d'ouvres, salmis and macédoines,” figured in imposing array. One document still remained, and I drew it out; but as his Majesty's eyes were this time bent upon me, I had not a moment to see what might be its contents,—indeed, I half suspected the King saw my indecision; and, determining to put a bold face on the matter, I doubled down a blank piece of the paper, and placed it for his Majesty. Apparently his thoughts were wandering in some other direction, for he took up the pen abstractedly, and wrote the words, “Approved by us,” with his name in a routine sort of way that showed he gave no attention to the act whatever.

It was all I could do! To avoid any indecent show of haste in enclosing the paper within the envelope, my hand trembled so that I could scarcely accomplish it. When I had replaced it in my pocket, I felt like a drowning man at the moment he touches land.

The King dismissed me with many flattering speeches, and I returned to Very's, where my friends were still at table. Resolved not to gratify the triumph of their malice, I affected to have discovered the trick in time to remedy it, and to replace my appointment in its enclosure. Of course the possibility of what might have occurred gave rise to many a droll fancy and absurd conceit, and I plainly saw how very little compunction there would have been for my disaster if a ludicrous scene had ensued between the king and myself.

We separated now, with all the testimonies of sincere affection,—some of my fair friends even wept; and our parting had all the parade and about the same amount of sincerity as a scene in a drama.

Paul alone showed any real feeling: he liked me probably because he had served me,—a stronger bond of affection than many people are aware of. “Tell me one thing, Creganne,” cried he, as he shook my hand for the last time,—“we are perhaps never to meet again, life has so many vicissitudes,—tell me frankly, then, if your Mexican history, your riches and gems and gold, your diamonds, your rubies, your doubloons, and your moidores, are not all a humbug, together with your imprisonment in Malaga, and all its consequences?”

“True, every word of it,” said I, impressively.

“Come, come, now, your secret is safe with *me*. Be open and above-board; say honestly that the whole was a 'get up.' I promise you fairly that, if you do, I 'll have a higher value for your talents at an episode than I now place upon your lost wealth and your countship to boot.”

“I'm sorry for it,” replied I; “there are few men whose esteem I set more store by. If I could oblige you by becoming a cheat, my regard for you might possibly overmaster my better judgment; but, unhappily, I am what I represent myself, and what I trust one day yet to convince you.” With this we parted. As the diligence drove away, I could see Paul still standing in the same place, evidently unable to resolve the difficult problem of my veraciousness.

And now I am approaching a chapter of my history whose adventures and chances are alone a story in themselves. The varied fortunes of a campaign in a strange land, with strange enemies, new scenes and climate, of course were not without incidents to diversify and interest them; and although I could probably select more passages of curious adventure from this than from any other portion of my life, I

am forced to pass by all in silence; and for these reasons: first, the narrative would lead me to a greater length than I have any right to presume upon in this history, or to believe that my reader would be a willing party to; and, secondly, the recital would entail the acquaintance with a vast variety of characters, not one of whom ever again occurred to me in life, and of whom, when I quitted Africa, their very names never were heard by me more. And here I may be pardoned for saying that I have been sadly constrained, in these my Confessions, to avoid, upon the one hand, any mention of those persons who merely exercised a passing influence on my fortunes, and yet to show by what agencies of personal acquaintanceship my character became formed and moulded. In a novel, the world would seem to consist of only the very characters introduced, or, rather, the characters serve as abstractions to represent certain qualities and passions of mankind; but in real life is this the case? Nay, is it not precisely the reverse? Do not the chance intimacies we form in the steamboat or the diligence very frequently leave deep and lasting impressions behind them? Are not phrases remembered, and words treasured up as axioms, that we have heard passingly from those we are never to see again? Of how many of our strongest convictions the origin was mere accident,—ideas dropped like those seeds of distant plants that are borne for thousands of miles upon the wind, and let fall in some far-away land to take root and fructify? And are these the agencies to be omitted when a man would give a “confession” to the world? Why are the letters of an individual his best biography, save as recording his judgment upon passing events or people, with whom, in all likelihood, he has little subsequent connection? But enough of this; I have

said sufficient for apology to those who see the difficulty of the case. To those who do not, I have been prolix without being profitable.



Of Africa, then, I must not speak. Three years of its burning sun and parched soil—the life of bivouac and battle—had done the work of ten upon my constitution and appearance. I was bronzed almost to a Moorish tint; a few straggling hairs of gray showed themselves in my dark beard and moustache; while emergencies and hazards of different kinds had imparted a sterner character to my features, that little resembled the careless gayety of my earlier days. In addition to this, I was wounded: a sabre cut received in defending the Prince from an attack of Arab horsemen had severed the muscles of my right arm; and although encouraged to believe that I should yet recover its use, I was for the time, at least, totally disabled, and as incompetent to wield a sword as a pen. A very flattering mention of me in “general orders,” my name recorded in a despatch, and the ribbon of the “Legion,” well rewarded me for these

mishaps; and now, as a season of peace intervened, I was about to return to France with the rank of “Chef d'Escadron” and the fame of a distinguished officer. As the Prince, my master, was to make a tour in the provinces before his return to Paris, permission was given me to visit Italy, whither the physician advised me to repair to recruit my strength, before adventuring upon the trials of a more northern climate. The “Duc” overwhelmed me with kind protestations at parting, and gave me a letter to the French Minister at Naples, especially commending me to his friendship, and speaking of my services in terms that my modesty cannot permit me to repeat. Thus was Fortune once more my friend; and could I have but obliterated all memory of the past, and of those fatal riches,—the brief enjoyment of which had given an impulse to all my desires,—I might now have been well contented. High character as a soldier, a certain rank in the service, and the friendship of a Royal Prince, were not trifling advantages to one who had often sued destiny with success, even “*in forma pauperis*;” still, the “great game” I should have played, as the man of large fortune, was never out of my thoughts, and in secret I resolved to return to Mexico, and, as the phrase has it, “look after my affairs.”

This determination grew more fixed the longer I considered it; and here I may remark that the document to which the King had appended his signature and approval was a statement of my claims on Spain, drawn up by myself,—one of those hundred representations which I made, in idle hours, to while away time and amuse hope. If I was well aware that the signature was obtained by a mere accident, and without knowledge of the contents, I was not deterred from speculating as to what useful

purpose it might be employed,—scruples of conscience being of all things in the world those I best knew how to dispose of.

On reaching Naples I discovered that the Envoy to whom my letter was addressed had just been recalled, and in his place a young Secretary of Embassy was officiating,—one of those admirably dressed and inimitably gloved young gentlemen whom France despatches to foreign countries as representatives of her skill in neckcloths and waistcoats, and her incomparable superiority in lacquered leather. Monsieur de Bussenaç was a veritable type of Paris dandyism,—vain, empty, and conceited, with considerable smartness in conversation, and unquestionable personal courage; his life was passed in abusing England and affecting the most ludicrous imitation of all that was English, —in dress, equipage, and livery.

Although my name was not unknown to him, he received me with the condescending courtesy the diplomatist usually assumes in his intercourse with the soldier: protested his regret that the gay season was over, that Naples was thinning every day, that he hardly knew where, or to whom, to present me.

I assured him that pleasure was not among the ambitions of an invalid like myself; but, next to the care of my health, one of my objects in Naples was to press a claim upon the Spanish Government, to which the residence of a Spanish Minister of high rank at that court gave a favorable opportunity; and with this preface I gave a brief history of my loss and imprisonment. The young Chargé d'Affaires looked horridly bored by my story, of which, it was clear, he only heard a very small part; and when I concluded, he made a few notes of my statement, and promised to see the Spanish Ambassador upon it that very day.

I believe that my experience is not a singular one; but from the moment that I announced myself as a person claiming the aid of the "Mission," the doors of the Embassy were hermetically sealed against me. If I called, "His Excellency" (everything is Excellency to an embassy porter) was either in conference with a colleague, or replying to a despatch, or with the court. If I wrote, my answer was always a polite acknowledgment of my note, and no more. Even when we met passingly in the street, his salute was cold and markedly distant; so that I began to suspect that either he had heard something to my disadvantage among his colleagues, or that he had received some hint respecting me.

I knew if I were to address the Duc de St. Cloud on the subject, that my essenced friend would at once receive a check, and possibly a heavy reprimand; but I was too proud to descend to this, and resolved to right myself without calling in the aid of others. With this intention, I repaired one day to the Mission, and having waited for some time, till I saw a person leave the cabinet, from whom I learned that the Envoy was at home, I advanced to the door. "Out, sir," said the porter, barring the way. I pushed him aside, with the air of one who was not to be trifled with, and, opening the door, walked in.

Whether it was that the suddenness of my appearance unmanned him, or that something in my manner showed there was no time for further deception, he arose to receive me, and handed me a chair.

"I have come, sir," said I, calmly but resolutely, "to ask if, in the matter which I intrusted to your hands, any progress has been made, or if I am still to be the patient recipient of notes which tell me nothing?"

"What if there be nothing to tell, sir?" said the young diplomatist, now recovering his self-possession, and standing with his back to the fire, in the very easiest of attitudes.

"I will beg of you to be more explicit," said I.

"You shall not have to complain of me on that score, sir," said he, with a most affected air of courtesy; "and, as brevity is the very essence of clearness, I may as well state that on representing the case of El Condé de Cregano to the Minister of Spain, he very gravely assured me that I was inventing a personage, for that no such name existed among the nobility of his land. The dignity may be recognized in Mexico," added he, "but the Mexician Minister is equally perverse, and disclaims having so much as heard of you. I spoke of your wealth and great treasures, and they actually were rude enough to laugh,—not at you, sir, don't be angry,—but at *me*. The Spanish Ambassador, indeed, said that nothing was more common than for Carlist agents of inferior station to assume styles and titles which might entitle them to greater consideration if taken prisoner, and that in this wise you might have succeeded to your countship; but that to real rank, he persisted in asserting you had no claim whatever. This you must allow, sir, is awkward."

"For you, certainly, it will prove so," said I, haughtily. "You may rely upon it, sir, that your career as a diplomatist will end where it begun. You have dared to insult one whose slightest word could crush you, did he not feel that such an exercise of influence would be ludicrously disproportioned to the object it was directed against. There, sir, there is a written statement of my claim; there a full and explicit demand for reparation; and there, the signature of your master the King, at the foot of it.

You cannot be ignorant of the hand, nor can you dare to pretend it is a forgery."

If my insulting language had brought the flush of anger to his cheek, this "damning proof" completely overcame all his presence of mind, and left him in a state of confusion and perplexity that any one, save myself, must have pitied.

"The writing is certainly in the King's hand," said he, "and therefore I am obliged to concede the fact that your claim possesses features I was not previously aware of; with your leave, then, I will lay this document before the Spanish Minister—"

"You shall do no such thing, sir," said I, haughtily; "my asserted right is just what it was before I showed you that paper; nor shall I stoop to any corroborative testimony of my claim, even from the hand of royalty;" and with this impertinent speech I advanced towards the grate and thrust the paper into the fire, pressing it down into the blaze with my foot, and watching till I saw it consumed.

The diplomatist watched me narrowly throughout this brief proceeding, and I half feared that he had seen through my stratagem, as he said, "Well, Count, as not a shadow of doubt can exist now as to the authentic character of your demand, the best course will be to have a personal interview with the Spanish Ambassador. He 'receives' this evening at his palace, and, with your leave, we will wait upon him together. Of course the time and place will not admit of any discussion of this claim, but you can be presented,—a necessary preliminary to the intercourse that will follow."

This all looked marvellously like a trap; but as any doubt or indecision now would be ruin, I affected to be much pleased with the proposal, and we parted.



CHAPTER XXXIII. A SOIRÉE IN THE GREAT WORLD

It was not without considerable trepidation and great misgiving that I awaited the evening. What subtlety might be in store for me, I could not guess; but it seemed clear that the young secretary meditated a heavy vengeance upon me, and would not lightly pardon the insult I had passed upon him.

"I have it," thought I, after long and deep pondering: "his plan is to introduce me into a great and crowded assembly, with ministers, ambassadors, and generals, and then, in the face of a distinguished

company, to proclaim me a cheat and impostor. He has doubtless the train all laid, only waiting for the match; and as the outrage will be inflicted conjointly and diplomatically, any demand for personal satisfaction will be vain, while a very slight hint at the Prefecture would suffice to have me expelled from the country."

Should I confront this danger, or hazard the risk of such an exposure, or should I suffer judgment to be given against me by default? What a trying alternative! In the one case, a peril the greater for its shadowy, ill-defined consequences; in the other, certain and irretrievable disgrace! How often did I curse my ambitious yearning after wealth, that had not left me contented with my own fortune,—the hard-won, but incontestable, rewards of personal distinction. As the gallant officer who had gained each step upon the field of battle, and whose services had claimed the especial notice of his prince, I ought to have rested satisfied.

My promotion would have been certain and rapid, and what higher condition should I dare to aspire to than the command of a French regiment, or possibly some brilliant staff appointment? Why will not men look downward as they climb the mountain of life, and see the humble abyss from which they have issued? Were they but to do so, how many would be convinced that they had done enough, and not risk all by striving to mount higher! The son of the poor peasant a General of Division!—one among that decorated group surrounding the sovereign of a great nation!—was not this sufficient? And so much assuredly was within my reach, merely by length of life and the ordinary routine of events! And yet all this must I jeopardize for the sake of gold! And now what course should I adopt? My whole philosophy

through life had been comprised in that one word which summed up all Marshal Blucher's "tactics,"—"Forwards!" It had sufficed for me in many a trying emergency,—it had cut the black knot of many a tangle;—should I not still abide by it? Of course. This was not the moment to abandon the bold policy.

From the "host of mine inn" I learned that the Spanish minister, whose receptions were little less splendid than those of the court itself, occupied a position which in countries of more rigid morality would have left his salons less crowded. In fact, it was asserted that he owed his eminent station to his having consented to marry a lady who had once been the rival of royalty itself in Spain, and whose banishment had been thus secured. Being still in the full pride of her beauty, and possessing great wealth, the "scandal" only added to her claim, in a society where notoriety of any kind is regarded as a distinction.

She was the reigning belle of the capital. Her word was law on every theme of fashion and taste; her opinions exerted a considerable influence on matters of high political bearing; and despite the ambiguity of her position, she was the arbitress of every claim to admission into that society which arrogated to itself the name of being "the best."

It is needless to say that a station of the kind engenders a species of tyranny to which the world responds by inventing all manner of stories and strange histories; and thus the Marchesa de la Norada was by some proclaimed a natural daughter of the Emperor Napoleon,—by others, of an English Royal Duke. She was a widow, and the wife of half-a-dozen personages together. There was not an European court into which she had not brought

discord,—not a cabinet where she had not sown intrigue. Her beauty had seduced, her gold corrupted, and her wiles entrapped half the great statesmen of the age; while there was scarcely a crime within the red catalogue of the law that was not laid to her charge; and yet, with all these allegations against her, she was more sovereign in that capital than the rightful queen of the land. This was the presence into which I was to be introduced to-night, and—I frankly own it—I would have rather confronted the searching scrutiny of the most penetrating of men than meet the careless, half-bestowed glances of that woman! nor was it at all unlikely that to such a test they wished now to subject me and my pretensions.

It is far easier for many men to confront a personal danger, the peril of life or limb, than to meet the trying difficulty of a slight before the world. To myself, the former would be as nothing in comparison. I could face any amount of peril in preference to the risk of a public mark of depreciation, and from a woman, too! where redress was as impossible as reply was useless.

It was already midnight ere I could muster courage to set out,—not that the hour was inappropriate, for the Marchesa's receptions only began when the opera was over. As I drove along the Chiaia, the crowd of carriages told that this was a night of more than ordinary attraction, and more than one equipage of the Court passed by, showing that some members of the royal family would be present. This again terrified me. Was royalty to be among the witnesses of my shame? When a man's thoughts do take the turn of self-tormenting, what ingenuity will they not exhibit,—what astonishing resources of annoyance! I am convinced that my greatest enemy in life could

never have inflicted a tenth part of that suffering which now I experienced from my own fancies! Among the thoughts which crossed my mind, one kept continually recurring, and made an impression that my memory will probably never lose,—it was my doubt whether I ought not to return and exchange my uniform for plain clothes, and thus avoid exposing the epaulette of a French officer, and the proud cordon I wore, to the chances of open insult.

This question was yet unsolved in my mind as I drove into the court-yard of the palace. The turmoil and confusion of the scene—carriages interlocked, poles smashing panels, and horses rearing—was an actual relief to me, and I would have felt a heart-warm gratitude for any accident that might have upset half the company, and broken up the reception in disorder. Such “good-luck” was, however, not in store for me. My calèche at length drew up at the door, and I handed my card with my name to the major-domo, who stood at the top of the stairs with an army of liveried lacqueys around him. “Le Comte de Creganne!” resounded now through the spacious antechamber, and the voices of others took it up, and the echo without repeated it, every syllable falling upon my heart like the bang of a death-bell!

Although our progress was soon arrested by the dense crowd, and all chance of moving farther, for a time at least, out of the question, the lacquey continued to call my name aloud, with what I deemed a most needless importunity of announcement. At last he ceased, leaving me to the enjoyment of a momentary tranquillity in mixing with the crowd. It was indeed but momentary; for the young attaché had made his way through the throng, and whispered in my ear, “Let us retire this

way, and I 'll lead you by another passage, otherwise you will run a great risk of never being presented to the Marchesa." I could have told him that I would have borne even this misfortune like a man; but I did not, and merely followed him as he led the way through a suite of rooms, of which only one was occupied, and that by a card-party.

The buzz and hum of voices apprised me that we were again approaching the company, and suddenly, on opening a door, we found ourselves in a small but gorgeously furnished chamber, where three or four ladies and about a dozen men were assembled, while the main body of the guests passed through in defile, each stopping to salute and say a few words to a lady who did the honors of the reception. As her back was towards me, I could only mark that she was tall, and of an air that was queenly in state and dignity. The stars and decorations around her showed that some of the party were princes of the blood, and others, ambassadors and ministers of state.

"Wait where you are," whispered my companion; and he moved forward and entered the crowd. I stood an eager spectator of the scene, in which, despite all my anxieties, I could not but feel interested. It was the first great review I had ever witnessed of that fashionable world whose recognition and acceptance I so ardently coveted. Its slightest gestures, its least and most insignificant observances, were all matters of study to me. Every deep reverence, each motion of respectful courtesy, were things to mark and imitate, and I was storing up many a hint for future guidance, when I observed that a gentleman, whom I had rightly conjectured to be a royal prince, appeared to press some remark upon the "Marchesa," to which at last she replied, "I believe I must follow your Royal Highness's counsel,

and take a few minutes' rest;" and, so saying, she dropped back from the group, and retired within a few paces of where I stood.

"May I beg you to hand that chair, sir," said the Prince to me, and in a tone in which I own a certain haughtiness seemed to rebuke my want of thoughtfulness in not presenting it unbidden. I hastened to perform this service. The lady turned to acknowledge it; our eyes met, and we stood fixed and rooted to the spot, each speechless and pale with emotion. In those few seconds I felt as if I had lived years.

"La Senhora Dias," murmured I, unconsciously to myself.

"Lupo!" ejaculated she, as if in answer, and she trembled from head to foot.

"You have really over-exerted yourself," said the prince, as, taking her hand, he pressed her down into a seat.

Her eyes never quitted me for an instant, and the expression of her features became almost that of agonizing pain as she motioned me to approach her. "Is it possible that I see before me my old friend the Duke of———?" She stopped, and, with a look of entreaty I can never forget, intimated that I should fill up the blank.

"Le Comte de Creganne, Madame," said I, coming to the rescue, "who is but too happy to find himself remembered by the Marchesa de la Norada."

"Very true, Comte; I was confounding you with your constant companion, the Duke de la Breanza; I hope he is well, and the dear duchess. And you,—when did you arrive from the Brazils? I trust very lately, or you have treated me shamefully."

Rapidly as these words were uttered, they were

enough to give me the “consigne” of what rank my intimate friends held, in what class we met, and from whence I came. While I replied to her questions, she motioned me to a seat beside her, and, with a smile and a courteous apology to the prince for devoting herself to the old friend who had so unexpectedly presented himself, she dropped her voice to a whisper and said, “Not now, nor here, but to-morrow we will speak together.”

“Enough,” said I, rapidly; “I am your old and esteemed friend the Comte de Creganne; you are not compromised in calling me so.”

“Nor can your memory fail to recall me as a Lady of Honor at the Brazilian court!”

And now some of the company had gathered around us, to most of whom she presented me, always adding some few courteous expressions, indicative of our ancient friendship, and of the pleasure she felt at our unexpected meeting. If I have occasionally given way to those erratic flights of fancy which led me to believe myself a scion of a noble house, well born and nurtured, with wealth at my command and a high station in store, all these delusions were nothing to the creative efforts of *her* imagination, who commenced by reminding me of a hundred people who never existed, and places and incidents which were all as unreal. How we did bewail the death of some, rejoice over the good fortune of other “dear, dear friends” who had never breathed! and with what pleasant laughter we remembered eccentricities and oddities that once used to amuse us so much!

Never can I forget the look of astonishment of the young attache as he came up and found me seated on the ottoman beside the Marchesa, with her pet

spaniel upon my lap, while my whole air was redolent of that triumphant expression so unmistakably denoting security.

"I perceive," said he, with difficulty repressing his ill-humor, "that Madame la Marchesa is acquainted with the Comte de Creganne."

"For many years, sir, the Comte and I have known each other, and I have only to own my surprise that none of my friends at Naples ever mentioned to me the arrival of one in every way so distinguished. But here is the Marquese; I must present you, Comte." So saying, she introduced me to a tall, pompous-looking elderly gentleman, who, it is but fair to add, did not evince half so much satisfaction at sight of me as his wife showed. And now was I the lion of the evening. I, who had walked the Chiaia every day for weeks back without notice or recognition, and who might, had the idea occurred to me, have fallen down and died without one to pity me,—I became all of a sudden a most "interesting personage"! My African campaign was exalted into a perfect career of glory, and even *my* modesty was pushed hard to accept the praises most lavishly bestowed upon acts of heroism of which I had not even heard.

The Duke of Vallabretta, the younger brother of the king, was certain he had often heard of me from his "friend De St. Cloud." He was quite positive that I was the officer of dragoons who, with one squadron of horse, captured "a Smala" defended by twelve hundred Arabs, while fully one half of the illustrious cruelties of the Oran war was generously laid to my charge. A dash of atrocity adds immensely to the charm of heroism in Italian estimation; and so I discovered that various acts of roasting prisoners, sending a cargo of noses to Toulon, and such like, were exceedingly popular with the ladies, who

regarded me as a modern “Bayard.”

Not all these sensations of triumph, however, gave me one half the pleasure that I felt in trampling upon the little French attaché, whom I persecuted with a proud disdain that nearly drove him mad. All my ignorance of Neapolitan society, the obscurity in which I had lived hitherto, I laid at his door. I deplored most feelingly to the prince the inefficient mode in which we were represented at his court, and promised to use my influence in effecting a change. I fear my disposition is not so angelic as I usually conceive it, for I actually taxed my ingenuity for little subjects of attack against the unlucky diplomatist, and saw him at length retire from the salons crushed, crest-fallen, and miserable.

Another consideration, perhaps, added venom to my malignity: I knew not how short-lived might be my power, and determined to “make my running while the course was free.” The vicissitudes of fortune had often reversed in one short day all the prospect I trusted to be the most stable and certain; and, for the future, I was fully resolved never to forego the stroke to-day for which my arm might be too weak to-morrow. As I saw him depart, I felt like a naval hero when his enemy has struck, and, in the pride of victory, abandoned myself to pleasure.

If the Marchesa watched me at first with an uneasy and anxious eye, doubtful, perhaps, how I should acquit myself in that high and polished world, I soon saw that her fears were allayed as she saw the easy quietude of my manner, and that tranquil self-possession which is supposed to be only acquired by long admixture with the world of fashion. It was evident, too, that if any failure on my part would entail disgrace, success was just as certain to do her honor and credit, since I was a strong rebutting

evidence against all those who denied that the Marchesa was ever known or recognized before in the high circles of a court.

“To-morrow, at noon,” said she, as I made my bow at parting; and it was not likely I should forget the appointment.

It was with very different feelings I drove up to the palace of the Marchesa on the day following, from those I had experienced on approaching it on the evening of the reception; nor was I long without perceiving that my confidence was well founded. The Groom of the Chambers received me with his most bland courtesy, and by his manner showed that he expected my arrival.

Preceding me through a suite of rooms whose magnificence I had not time to observe on the previous evening, he ushered me into a small chamber leading into a conservatory, from which the view extended over the wide Bay of Naples, and presented Vesuvius from base to summit. As I was left by myself here for some minutes, I had leisure to notice the varied elegance by which I was surrounded. Rare plants and flowers in jars of costly porcelain; alabaster statues and rich bronzes appeared amid the clustering foliage; and in the midst of all, two tiny swans, of the rare breed of Morocco, lay tranquilly in a little basin, whose water spouted from a silver fountain of most elaborate workmanship.

While yet gazing on the tasteful objects around, the Marchesa had entered, and so noiselessly that she was at my side ere I knew it. Paler than on the previous evening, she looked even handsomer; but in the sunken eye and the wearied expression of the mouth I could see that she had passed a sleepless

night.

Having taken a seat upon a sofa, and motioned me to seat myself beside her, she looked fixedly at me for several minutes without a word. At last, in a voice of deep feeling, she said, “Do you remember the pledge with which we parted? Do you recollect the oath by which you bound yourself?'

“Perfectly, Señhora!” said I; “nor was I aware yesterday, till the very moment of our meeting, in whose presence I was standing.”

“But you had heard of me here?”

“Only as the Marchesa de la Norada, not as the Señhora.”

“Hush! let that name never escape your lips; I believe you and trust you. The commission I gave you was well and faithfully executed: were it otherwise, and did I deem you false, it would not be difficult for me to rid myself of the embarrassment. We live in a city where such things are well understood.” My blood ran cold at this threat, for I remembered the accusation which hung over her, in Mexico. She saw what was passing in my mind, and added, “You have nothing to fear; we shall be good friends while you remain here; but that time must be brief. I cannot, I will not, live a life of terror; a moment of impatience, an unguarded word, a hasty expression of yours, might compromise me, and then —When can you leave Naples?”

“To-morrow—to-day, if you desire it.”

“That would be too hurried,” she said thoughtfully. “We must not encourage suspicion. Why are you here?”

I gave the restoration of my health as the reason, and then alluded to the circumstances of my Spanish claim, which I had hoped Naples would have proved

a suitable place for pressing.

“Who knows of this transaction? What evidence have you of its truth?” said she, hurriedly.

“The minister by whose order I was imprisoned, the Governor of Malaga, his official underlings, all know of it.”

“Enough. Now, by whom was the information given on which you were arrested?”

“A man who called himself the Consul at Campecho, and to whose early history I am disposed to suspect I have the clew, but to whom, unfortunately, in a hasty moment, I betrayed that secret knowledge.”

“And thus he dreads and hates you,” said she, fixing her dark eyes sternly on me.

“He rather fears me without reason,” said I.

“But still you would have traded on that fear, had it served your purpose?” reiterated she, with a pointedness that showed how the application to her own case was uppermost in her thoughts.

“You are less than just to me, Señhora!” said I, proudly. “A variety of circumstances led me to connect this man with a very unhappy incident which took place years ago in England, and wherein his conduct—supposing him to be the same—was base to the last degree. This suspicion I was weak enough to let escape me. His enmity was the consequence, and from it followed all the misfortunes I have suffered.”

“Was he a murderer?”

“No,—not that.”

“Nor a forger?—for methinks in English esteem such is the parallel offence.”

“In the case I speak of, forgery was the least of his

crimes: he seduced the wife of his friend and benefactor."

"Oh, the wretch!" exclaimed she, with a derisive smile that gave her features—beautiful as they were—an almost demoniac expression. "I trust he never prospered after such iniquity."

Not heeding the tone of sneer in which she uttered this, I replied, "You are right, Señhora; he lived a life of terror and misery. He was a coward; and the man he had injured never ceased to track him from country to country. Over sea and land he followed him; the thirst for vengeance stimulating a heart dead to every other emotion. Accident, when I was a mere boy, brought me into close relation with poor Broughton."

"With whom?" said she, grasping my wrist, while her eyes strained till the very blood started in them.

"Sir Dudley Broughton," said I; but the words were not out ere she fell senseless on the floor. I raised her, and placed her on a sofa; and then, dipping her handkerchief in the fountain, bathed her temples and her lips. But she gave no sign of returning animation; her arms dropped powerless at either side; she did not even seem to breathe. What was I to do? I knew not where to find a bell to summon the servants, even should I dare to leave her. In my excitement, I believed that she was dead, and that I had killed her; aud then there darted through my brain the terrible conviction that this could be no other than Lady Broughton herself,—the unhappy Lydia Delmar. With a long-drawn sigh she at length awoke, and, opening her eyes, looked up at me. A convulsive shudder speedily followed, and she closed them again, and remained still, with her hands clasped tightly over her heart.

"Have I been dreaming a terrible dream," said she, at last, in a weak and broken voice, "or are my dreadful thoughts realities? Tell me of what were we speaking?"

I did not answer. I could not tell her of the sad theme, nor did I dare to deceive her. In this dilemma I became silent; but my confusion did not escape her, and with a voice, every syllable of which struck deep into my heart, she said, "Is this secret your own, or have you ever revealed it to another?"

"I have never told it, nor, indeed, till now, was the full mystery known to myself."

These few words, which served to confirm her own wavering terrors, at the same time that they showed how she herself had betrayed her dreadful secret, increased her suffering, and for a space she seemed overwhelmed by affliction.

"Let us speak of this no more," said she at last, in the same hurried voice which once before had made me suspect the soundness of her intellect. "I cannot, I dare not, trust myself to dwell upon this theme; nor will I suffer any one to usurp an ascendency over me from terror. No, sir; you shall not deceive yourself by such a delusion. I have friends—great and powerful friends—who will protect me. I have money, and can buy the aid that outstrips patronage. Beware, then, how you threaten me!"

"You are unjust to me, lady," said I, calmly, but resolutely. "I never meant to threaten. A mere accident hae put me in possession of a secret which, while you live, none shall ever hear from my lips; nor need you fear any allusion to it will ever escape me, to yourself."

"Then let us part. Let us see each other no more," said she, rising, and approaching a small ivory

cabinet which she unlocked. “See, here is enough to satisfy the desire for mere money, if your heart be so set upon wealth that it has no other idol. Take these, and these, and these; they are gems of price, and taken from a royal crown. That necklace of rubies once graced the shoulders of an empress; and here are rings, whose value will buy long years of dissipation and excess.”

“I must interrupt you, Señhora,” said I, offended at the tone she assumed towards me. “There is no need to 'buy me off;' I am ready to take my leave,—to quit Naples within an hour,—and I pledge myself that we shall never meet again, or if we do, as utter strangers to each other.”

“These were the terms of our contract once before,” said she, fixing her gaze steadfastly on me.

“And by whom broken, and how?” said I.

“True,—too true!” exclaimed she, in a voice of deep emotion. “Fate, that did this, has doubtless other punishments in store for me! It is plain, then, that I must trust you,—I, who can feel confidence in none!”

“I do not seek for it, Señhora,” replied I; “my offer is to leave this city, where already I see but little prospect of urging my suit with success. Why should we meet again in life, when both of us are travelling opposite roads?”

“This suit of yours is, then, a real demand, founded upon an actual loss,—matter of fact throughout?” This, although said in these few words, had nothing offensive in its tone, and I replied by an assurance of my good faith and veracity.

“Send me the memorial this evening; to-morrow, or the day after at farthest, you shall have an answer. As for your demand upon the Havannah, the banker

is my own, and I can answer for your being honorably dealt with; all your property in his keeping, I will guarantee."

"If that be so, Señhora, I am indifferent about the Spanish Minister's reply; I shall have wealth more than enough for all my desires, without him."

"How do you call yourself in these papers?" asked she, hurriedly.

"El Condé de Cregano."

"And you were known by that title in Mexico?"

"Certainly; I have no other."

She stared at me fixedly for a minute or two, and then muttered to herself, "By what pretension should *I* question his rank!" then, turning to me, said, "Señhor el Condé de Cregano, I receive the world at large every evening save Saturday; that night I reserve for my friends. Come as often as you can during the week, but never omit a Saturday; visit me at the opera frequently; speak to me always when we meet in public places; be my intimate friend, in fact, but not more,—you have too much tact to be my admirer." With this she gave me her hand, which I pressed respectfully to my lips, and bowing deeply, moved towards the door.

"We understand each other," said she, calmly.

"Perfectly, Madame," replied I.

"Then never say, sir," resumed she, in a stern, determined voice, "never say that you are not an adventurer; never dare to tell me that one who so quickly assumes a part is not a professed actor on the great boards of life, ready to take the character assigned him, be it broad farce or comedy,—ay, or even tragedy, if needs were. Do not deny or seek to contradict me; I did not care that your countship had

fourteen quarterings behind it,—nay, I like you even better as you are. There, now you look natural and at your ease. Adieu, Monsieur le Comte."

"Adieu, Madame la Marquise," said I putting as much irony into my accent as might repay her; and then we parted. Whatever her feelings, I know not,—mine, I own, were scarcely of the pleasantest; prompting me to make my residence at Naples as brief as might be, and to see no more of my "dear friend of former years" than was absolutely indispensable.

Were I to dwell upon those portions of my history which afforded me the highest amount of enjoyment, while passing I might linger upon the weeks I spent in Naples as perhaps the very pleasantest of my life. The world of fashion was new to me. All those fascinations to which habit renders men either apathetic or indifferent, came fresh upon *me*. The outward show of splendor in dress and jewels, gorgeous saloons, rare flowers, exquisite pictures and statues, soon cease to astonish and amaze; but it takes a long while ere the charm of intercourse with really brilliant society begins to wear off, and ere a man recognizes a degree of sameness in the pleasures and amusements of his fashionable friends.

I am not sure that the society which I frequented had not more power of captivation than a more rigidly scrupulous circle, since, while exacting all the observances of polished life, it yet admitted a degree of liberty, almost of familiarity, among its members, that I have since remarked is not common in the wider intercourse of the world.

Pretty women were not ashamed to look their best, and dress the most becomingly; witty men were not chary of their smartness; courtiers were confidential;

statesmen were candid; men of the world unbent, as if in a circle where their freedom would not be misinterpreted, and said a hundred things that in other societies would have been, to say the least, indiscreet. It is true that individuals were more discussed than events, and that characters, not facts, formed the staple of the talk; but how amusing was it, what stores of anecdote were opened, what strange histories and curious illustrations of life unfolded! Pretension was ridiculed, vulgarity exposed, stupidity laughed at, awkwardness criticized, and want of tact condemned, with most unsparing ridicule; but I am bound to own that there were few commendations reserved for virtuous conduct or honorable action. The debtor side of the account was full, but the credit had not an item on it!

No rank, however exalted, could escape the judgments of a “set” who, with all the exclusiveness of fashion, affected a most democratic spirit of equality. It was, however, a “communism” that assumed to start on the basis of every one haviug at least ten thousand a year,—not so bad a theory, were it only practicable.

I must not linger longer on this subject, on which I have only touched to remark that here it was where I acquired that knowledge of forms and conventionalities which constitute the tactique of life,—those “gambits” and “openings,” to use a chess phrase, by which you at once obtain an advantage over an equal adversary, and secure yourself against injury with even a superior player. I learned when to use an illustration or a story; when to become a mere listener; how to assist a slow man without his detecting the aid; and how to close a discussion with an epigram,—and all this without the faintest show

of premeditation or the very slightest sign of forethought. While my education as a man of the world was progressing, my material fortune was also advancing. The Spanish Ambassador, who had referred my case to his court, ascertained that I had been most infamously treated; that not alone my rank and fortune were indisputable, but that the individual on whose affirmation I was arrested was himself a Carlist spy, and the noted agent of a great Northern power. In fact, so manifold were his infractions against law, in every country in Europe, that the only difficulty was to what particular power to hand him over, so many laying claim to the honor of punishing him. In the end, Naples obtained this distinction! and at the very period I was enjoying the luxurious pleasures of that capital, “my friend the Consul” was expanding his chest and his faculties in the less captivating career of a galley-slave. “Fortune is just,” said I, as I arranged my cravat at the window which overlooked the Bay, on whose glassy surface some half-dozen boats moved sluggishly, as the red and yellow rowers kept time to the “stroke” by the clanking of their fetters.

Governments move slowly, particularly when the case is one of refunding a previous spoliation; meanwhile they admitted my claim; and by way of keeping me in good-humor, they sent me a cross of the Order of Isabella, of the first class,—a very gratifying recognition of my noble birth and merits. My intimacy with the Duke of Medina—the brother of the king—obtained for me the Neapolitan Order; and thus was I decorated with three very distinguished cordons, which I wore in my button-hole as a “tricolor,”—a fact insignificant in itself; but I mention it here, as many of my imitators have since that affected to be the inventors of the method.

Periods of expectancy are generally deemed great trials, making inroads upon the health, and sapping the energies of the mind. Such was not my case here; I waited like one who loiters in some delicious garden, surrounded with blooming flowers and sweet odors. The delays and procrastinations of cabinets—for which the most profuse apologies were made—I bore with a degree of calm equanimity that won for me the appellation of a most finished gentleman; and thus was I almost unconsciously perfecting myself in that grand element of breeding whose triumph is "impassiveness."

There were moments when I actually dreaded the termination of my cause, so agreeable had Naples become to me; but as the rich gamester is certain to win, while the poor player is luckless ever, successes crowded on me, because I was half indifferent to them.

Six months had now nearly elapsed since my arrival at Naples, and I was paying a morning visit to the Marchesa, whom I was engaged to accompany to a grand *déjeuner*, to be given on board of a British ship of war in the Bay. It was one of those gorgeous days of brilliant coloring, which, in Italy, seem to exaggerate the effect of landscape, and defy all efforts of art to imitate; the scene was heightened, too, by the objects moving across the bay. The various boats, with ensigns floating and music playing; the swift "La-teeners," skimming along the glassy surface, almost without a breath of wind; and then the great three-decker herself, in all the pride of her majestic size, with flags of every nation fluttering from her halyards,—were splendid adjuncts to the picture.

"Here are three letters for you, Monsieur le Comte," said the Marchesa, "they came in the

Spanish Minister's bag this morning; but I suppose there is nothing sufficiently interesting in them to withdraw your thoughts from that magnificent panorama."

Of course I affected concurrence in the sentiment, and thrust them into my pocket with assumed indifference. The room soon after filled with arriving visitors, and among the rest the Spanish Ambassador.

"Ha, Señhor Condé," said he, approaching me, "let me offer my warmest felicitations. How happy am I to be the means through which your good tidings have reached you!"

I bowed, smiled, and seemed charmed, without the slightest notion wherein lay my good fortune. His practised eye, however, soon detected my game, and he said, "You have received your letters, I hope?"

"Yes," replied I, carelessly; "the Marchesa has been kind enough to give them to me."

"And you have read them?" asked he again.

"Not yet," said I; "I make it a rule never to risk the pleasure of a happy day by opening a letter at hazard."

"What if its contents were but to increase the enjoyment; what if the tidings were to fill up the very measure of your wishes, Señhor?"

"In that case," rejoined I, as coldly as before, "they will be very acceptable to-morrow morning; and thus I shall have gained two days of happiness, *vice* one."

"Admirable philosophy, indeed," said he. "Still, I must be pardoned for interfering with its exercise. I shall therefore take upon me to inform the honorable company that her Majesty, my royal mistress, has named the Count de Cregano a Grand Cordon of the Fleece, in consideration of his distinguished services

in arranging the Mexican debt; that all his property, taken from him under a false and traitorous imputation, shall be at once restored; that any additional recompense he may demand for his imprisonment and other inconveniences incurred shall be immediately accorded; and that all Envoys and Ministers of the Court of Spain are instructed to receive the Count de Cregano with every honor and distinction, affording him every protection, and facilitating him in the prosecution of any project in which he may be interested."

This speech, delivered in a very imposing manner, was followed by a round of felicitation from the assembled company the Marchesa offering me her hand in congratulation, and whispering the words, "How soon?"

"To-morrow, if I must," replied I, sorrowfully.

"To-morrow be it," said she, and turned away hastily.

The information conveyed to me by the Ambassador was what formed the substance of two of the letters; the third I contrived to peep into unobserved, was a formal notification from the Havannah that my bills for the amount in the bankers' hands would be accepted and negotiated at a well-known house in Paris. Thus, then, and in one moment, was I once more rich,—the possessor of immense wealth, and not alone of mere fortune, but of all the honors and dignities which can grace and adorn it. Of course I became the hero of the day. To me was intrusted the arm of the Marchesa as we descended to the pier; to me was accorded the seat of honor beside her in the boat. All the pleasant flatteries that are reserved for rich men were heaped upon me, and I felt that life had but one prize more

with which to fill up the most ambitious of my cravings. That, alas! could never be,—Donna Maria was the wife of another; and thus should I learn that complete happiness is never to be the lot of any mere mortal!

The fête on board the "Tariffa" was very splendid; but it had another charm still more rarely met with,—I mean that hearty cordiality which graces every entertainment where British sailors are the hosts, their courtesy being blended with an actual warmth of hospitality that wins even upon the coldest guest, and gives a tone of friendliness to the most promiscuous gathering.

Every one appeared to experience the influence of this peculiar magic, and all gave way to the impulse that suggested the fullest enjoyment of the hour.

To waltzes had succeeded the manolo and the bolero; dances of the wild regions of Calabria and Sicily were performed by men of noble birth, the petty princes of those countries; and all were vying who should introduce something new and unknown to the rest, when, suddenly, the distant sound of the church bells of the city was borne along the water, announcing the "Vinti quatro," as it is called,—the hour of evening prayer. In a moment a sudden air of devotional seriousness spread itself over the company, and most bent their heads in pious reverence while they recited to themselves the words of the "Angelus." If there seemed, to the sense of English Protestantism, something strange and unnatural in this great revulsion, there was a degree of earnestness and sincerity in the features of the worshippers that showed their piety to be unfeigned; and here I might leave the theme, were it not for an incident which, taking place at the same moment, will remain forever associated in my mind with that

brief interval of prayer.

The hour of sunset, or, as the Neapolitans term it, the “Vinti quatro,” is that in which the galley-slaves, employed from dawn of day at convict labor, return to their prisons; and while the streets at that period exhibit long lines of men whose terrible appearance needs not the heightening accessories of a shocking dress and a heavy lumbering chain to pronounce them criminals, over the bay are seen boats moving in sad procession, the clanking of the fetters creaking mournfully upon the ear, and sounding like the wail of hopeless captivity.

No scene of pleasurable enjoyment can stand the contrast of such a sight; the revulsion is too sudden and too painful from the light frivolity of mirth to the terrible reality of suffering and sorrow. To escape, therefore, from the gloomy picture, the officers of the vessel endeavored to withdraw their guests from the deck to the shelter of the cabin. The change was accomplished well and naturally, and we were all gathered between decks in that turmoil and confusion which form no insignificant part of the success of every entertainment, the buzz of talking and the sounds of pleasant laughter were heard on every side,—when suddenly a cry was heard above, and then the loud voice of the officer of the watch, commanding a boat to be instantly manned and lowered.

A hundred conjectures at once ran round as to the meaning of the order; but one of the officers hastily entering, a few minutes later, put an end to all guessing, by informing us that a very dreadful incident had just occurred within a short distance from where we lay. “You may have remarked a handsome yacht, which anchored last night in the bay, coming up from the eastward: she belonged to

an English gentleman, with whose name we were not acquainted, but whose conduct is calculated to confirm all that Frenchmen are accustomed to say of our national taste for eccentricity, even in crime. It would seem that at an early hour this morning he landed at the Mole, and by means of letters with which he was provided to the Minister of Police, obtained leave to inspect the different prisons of the city, and to pass under the most minute examination all those condemned to the galleys for life. As already all those who work at Castelamare had been sent away, he obtained an order to visit the galleys there, being determined, as it would seem, to leave nothing unseen. On reaching Castelamare, it is said that he again commenced his tour of inspection, going over the roll of the prisoners, with the muster-book in his hand, as if to compare their features with the crimes alleged against them, and scrutinizing each with a most searching look. The visit lasted till nigh evening; and although the governor was not a little astonished at the proceeding of the stranger, still less was he prepared for the singular request which succeeded: it was, that he might be permitted to return to Naples in one of the convict boats instead of in his own gig. The demand might have been treated lightly, or altogether refused, but that the Englishman's appearance and manner indicated rank, while the letter he carried from the minister showed him to be one with claims for consideration. The governor, therefore, gave the permission, smiling at the same time at a caprice which could not have proceeded from the native of any other country.

“The Englishman took his seat in the stern of the boat, and, as I am told by the steersman, never spoke nor moved for nigh an hour's time, muffling himself

up in his cloak so that his very face was concealed; he neither cast his eyes over the bay, nor looked towards the shore, but sat like one in deep reflection. As we neared the 'Tariffa,'" said my informant, "our passenger affected to feel cold and chilly,—he might have been so, since the evening breeze was just springing up,—and said that he would like to row for a spell, just to warm himself. The petty officer in charge explained that the request could not be complied with, since, amongst other reasons, the men were chained two and two on every bench, and then obliged to tug at the same oar.

"The Englishman, who throughout the day had invariably overruled every objection opposed to him, grew only more positive in his demand, and at last produced the minister's order, to strengthen his proposal; and finally said, that as he had obtained the permission to learn all he could of the condition of the convicts, he was determined not to depart without experiencing in his own person the amount of labor exacted from them. 'You shall chain me to that fellow in the bow of the boat,' said he, 'for I have my doubts that this same punishment is not equal to what our own sailors perform every day, as a mere duty.'

"I need not dwell upon the arguments he used, and the reason he pressed; and although I have not heard it, I have little doubt that bribery was among the rest. His demand was granted, and he was actually placed beside the convict, and his left wrist enclosed in the same fetter with the other's right.

"His face became almost purple as he grasped the oar, and his eyes glared fiercely round upon his fellow-laborer, like the red and staring orbs of a wild beast. 'So dreadful was the expression of his face,' said the steersman, 'that I believed him to be insane;

and a shocking fear of evil consequences shot through me for having yielded to him.'

"I at once called out to the crew to ship their oars, determining to make him resume his place beside me. The order was obeyed by the bow-oar as by the rest. I was then about to issue a command for him to be released when, with a yell that I shall never forget, he sprang up in the boat, and then, calling out something in English which I could not understand, he seized his comrade by the throat and shook him violently.

"The convict—himself a strong man, yet in the prime of life—seemed nothing in the grasp of the other, who held him at arm's length, as though he were a child; and then, letting go his hold, clasping him round the waist with both arms, he jumped into the sea.

"They were seen in mortal conflict for a second or two as they sank in the clear water, but they never rose to the surface; the weight of the massive fetters and their own struggles soon finished their sufferings!"

Such was the terrible story which now broke in upon the gay current of our festivity, and threw a gloom over a scene of brilliant pleasure. Of course various surmises as to the motive of this fearful act were uttered, but they all tended to the conclusion that it proceeded from insanity, which occasionally displays amongst its wonderful phenomena all the premeditation and circumspection of accomplished guilt.

There is that of solemnity about an event of this nature that even frivolity itself stands rebuked by, and so, now, instead of resuming the occupations of pleasure, many took their leave suddenly; and of

those who still remained, but one topic engrossed the conversation,—that of madness as an element in all great cases of guilt.

Of course, as in all similar discussions, the superiority lay with those who, with more readiness of expression, also possessed greater resources in anecdote and illustration; and of these the greater number were disposed to believe that all great criminality is allied with deranged intellect. The Marchesa, however, took the opposite side, and insisted that the passion which prompted to the most terrible and appalling acts was perfectly consistent with right reason and sound judgment.

"It is too rash in us," said she, "to assume a mere blind impulse in cases even where recognized insanity exists. Were we to know the secrets of the human heart, we might, perhaps, see a long-cherished purpose in acts which appear to be dictated by momentary passion. These impulses may be excessive, ill-directed, and ill-judging; but still they may have their origin in some train of thought where generous feelings and noble aspirations mingle. Witness those heroic—for they are, after all, heroic—assassinations of the student Sandt and Charlotte Corday. What a perfect abrogation of self did these acts evince; what consummate devotion to a cause! Deeply as we may condemn the horrid nature of the crime, it would be a great error to class these men with vulgar criminals, or deny to them the motives, at least, of something great."

I am not able—were I even disposed—to repeat all the ingenious arguments by which the Marchesa supported her opinion, nor the instances she so readily adduced in support of it. She became highly excited by the theme, and soon, by the eloquence of her words and the fascinations of her manner,

enchained the whole company in a mute attention around her.

It was just as she concluded a very animated and glowing description of that condition of the human mind when, by a volcanic effort, as it were, the long-buried flames burst forth, to scatter ruin and destruction on every side, that a young officer entered the cabin, and stood fascinated by the powers of her fervid eloquence.

“Well, Mr. Hardy,” said the Captain, recalling the youth's attention to duty, “have you been on board of her?”

“Yes, sir, she is an English yacht, the 'Firefly,' and her late owner was an English baronet, whose name I have written down in my pocket-book.”

The Captain took the note-book from the young officer's hand, and, after reading the name, said, “If I mistake not, this is the same person that once was so well known in London life. Most of the present company must have heard of the rich and eccentric Sir Dudley Broughton.”

A low groan broke from me, and I turned my eyes slowly and stealthily towards the end of the table, where the Marchesa sat. Not a word, not the faintest sound, had issued from her lips; but she sat still and motionless, her lips slightly parted, and her eyes staring straight before her. The pallor of her features was that of death itself; and, indeed, the rigid contour of the cheeks and the firm tension of the muscles gave no evidence of life.

“You are ill, Madame la Marchesa,” said a gentleman who sat beside her; but as she made no reply, several now turned towards her, to press their attentions and suggest advice. She never spoke,—indeed, she seemed not to hear them,—but sat with

her head erect, and her arms rigidly stretched out on either side, motionless as a statue.

The shocking incident that had occurred, and the discussion which followed it, were sufficient to account for this sudden attack in one whose nervous temperament was so finely strung; but as she showed no signs of recovering consciousness, nor gave the slightest indication of rallying, it was decided at once that she should be conveyed to shore, where in her own house medical aid might be had recourse to.

I was one of those who assisted to carry her to the boat, and sat beside her afterwards, and held her hand in mine; but she never recognized me; her hand, too, was cold and clammy, and the fingers felt rigid and cramped. The stern, impressive look of her features, the cold stare of her fixed eyes, were terrible to behold,—far more so than even the workings of mere bodily sufferings.

During the passage to the shore, at the landing itself, and on our way to the Palazzo, she remained in the same state; nor did she ever evince any trait of consciousness till she reached the foot of the great staircase, where a crowd of servants, in the richest liveries, awaited to offer their services. Then suddenly she moved her head from side to side, regarding the crowd with a glance of wild and terrific meaning; she raised her hand to her brow, and passed it slowly across her forehead. For an instant it seemed as if the lethargic paroxysm was about to pass away, for her features softened into a look of calm but melancholy beauty. This, too, glided away, and her mouth settled into a hard and rigid smile. It was the last change of all, for she had become an idiot!

From that hour forth she never spoke again! she

never knew those about her, neither missing them while absent, nor recognizing them when they reappeared. She had none of the childish wilfulness of others in her sad condition, nor did she show the likings and dislikings they usually manifest; and thus she lingered on to her death.

Of her secret I was the sole depositary; and from that hour to this, in which I write, it has never escaped my lips.



CHAPTER XXXIV. CONCLUSION

I had few inducements to prolong my stay at Naples. The society in which I moved had received a

shock so terrible that for some time, at least, it could not hope to recover, and an air of gloom and despondency prevailed, where so lately all had worn the livery of pleasure.

I made my farewell visit, therefore, at the court, and the various embassies, and set out for Paris. This time, grown wiser by experience, I did not seek to astonish the world by any gorgeous display of my riches. I travelled with but two carriages, one of which contained my luggage; the other, a light "coupé," I occupied alone. My route lay through Rome and Florence, across the Apennines to Milan, and thence, by the glorious scenery of the Splügen, into Switzerland; but I saw little of the varied scenes through which I journeyed. My whole thoughts were engaged upon the future.

I had once more won the great prize in the world's lottery, and I never ceased catechizing myself in what way I should exercise my power.

From what I had already observed of life, the great mistake of rich men seemed to me, their addiction to some one pursuit of pleasure, which gradually gained an undue ascendency over their minds, and exercised at last an unwonted degree of tyranny. The passion for play, the love of pictures, the taste for company-seeing, the sports of the field, and so on, ought never to be allowed any paramount place, or used as pursuits; all these things should be simply employed as means of obtaining an ascendency over other men, and of exercising that sway which is never denied to success.

Some men are your slaves because your cook is unrivalled, or your cellar incomparable: others look up to you because your equipages exhibit an elegance with which none can vie; because your

thoroughbreds are larger, show more bone, and carry the highest condition. Others, again, revere you for your Vandykes and your Titians, your Rembrandts and Murillos, your illuminated missals, your antique marbles. To every section of society you can exhibit some peculiar and special temptation, which, in their blind admiration, they refer to as an attribute of yourself. Your own fault is it if they ever discover their error! The triumphs of Raphael and Velasquez shed a reflected light upon him who possesses them; and so of each excellence that wealth can purchase. You stand embodied in the exercise of your taste, and in your own person receive the adulation which greatness and genius have achieved.

To accomplish this, however, requires infinite tact and a great abrogation of self. All individuality must be merged, and a new character created, from the “disjecta membra” of many crafts and callings.

To have any one inordinate passion is to betray a weak spot in one's armor of which the cunning will soon take advantage. Such were among my meditations as I rolled along towards Paris; and so long as I journeyed alone, with no other companionship than my own thoughts, these opinions appeared sage and well reasoned; but how soon were they routed as I drove into that gorgeous capital, and saw the full tide of its pleasure-loving inhabitants as it rolled proudly past! How vain to reason farther upon the regulation of a life to which wealth set no limits! how impossible to restrain one's self within the barriers of cold prudential thought, where all was to be had for asking!

Ah, Con, your philosophy was excellent while, sitting in the corner of your coupe, you rolled along unnoticed, save by the vacant stare of some vigneron in a blue cotton nightcap, or some short-legged

wench in wooden “sabots;” but now that you stand in the window of your great hotel in the Place Vendôme and see the gathering crowd which inquires, who is the illustrious arrival? your heart begins to beat quicker and fuller; you feel like a great actor, for whom the house is already impatient; nor is the curtain to remain longer down. You are scarcely an hour in Paris when your visitors began to call. Here are cards without number,—officers in high command, courtiers, ministers, and aides-de-camp of those whose rank precludes the first visit. The “place” is like a fair, with its crush of equipages, the hotel is actually besieged. Every language of Europe is heard within its “porte-cochère,” and your own chasseur is overwhelmed with questionings enough to drive him distracted.

Is it any wonder how the poor man adulates wealth, when those in high station—the great and titled of the earth—are so ready to worship and revere it!

My first care was, of course, to present myself before the Prince, my gracious master, and I drove at once to the Tuileries. There was a reception that morning by the King, and the Duc de St. Cloud led me forward and presented me to his Majesty, with a very eulogistic account of my services in Africa.

The King listened most graciously to the narrative, and then, with a cordial courtesy that at once put me at my ease, asked me several questions about my campaigns, all ingeniously contrived to be complimentary to me.

“Yours is not originally a Spanish family, Count; I fancy the name is Celtic.”

“Yes, Sire, we came from Ireland,” said I, blushing in spite of myself.

"Ah, very true. There was always a great interchange of races between the two nations. And have you never tried to trace back among your Irish ancestors, so as to learn who are the lineal descendants of your house?"

"I have been hitherto, Sire, rather a man of action than of thought or reflection. To obtain possession of a property belonging to my family, I undertook a journey to, and a long residence in, Mexico; and although successful in this, a subsequent misfortune deprived me of all I owned, and left me actually in want. The good fortune which led me to take service under your Majesty has, however, never deserted me, and I am enabled once again to assume the station that belonged to me."

The King heard me with apparent pleasure, and after a few generalities about Paris and my acquaintances, said: "His Royal Highness the Duc de St. Cloud has asked me to appoint you on my personal staff. There is not at the present a vacancy, but you shall be named as an extra aide-de-camp in the meanwhile."

Overwhelmed by this distinction, I could only bow my gratitude in silence; and, with an air and show of great devotion, I retired from the royal presence. Thus did proper feeling suggest the truest politeness; for had I been more assured, the chances were I should have endeavored to say something, and consequently committed a very grievous breach of etiquette.

The following day I received an invitation to dine at Court. The company was numerous, and among them I discovered the young English attaché who had so insolently treated my demands on my first visit to Paris. With what sovereign contempt did I

now look down upon him! He was there, exactly as I left him, muddling away in the petty details of his little routine life,—signing a passport or copying a despatch, playing off the airs of grand seigneur to couriers and laquais de place, while in the same time I had won honors and rewards upon the field of battle, and now stood while the Prince leaned upon my arm and chatted familiarly over the assembled company. Nothing gave me a more confident sense of my own standing in the world than the feeling with which I now regarded those whom once I looked up to with a kind of awe. It is precisely as we discover that the hills which in childhood we believed to be gigantic mountains are mere hillocks, that in after life we find out how indescribably small are many of those we used to think of as “high and mighty.”

I therefore sneered down my poor attaché, and as I passed him, I believe I even suffered my sabre to jar against his leg, not without hoping that he might notice the slight, and seek satisfaction for it. In this I was disappointed, and I left him, never to trouble my head more about him.

Among the pleasures which awaited me in Paris, none gave me more sincere satisfaction than the renewal of my acquaintance with De Minérale, who, however, could never believe that my good fortune was other than some lucky accident of my African campaign.

“Come, out with it,” he would say. “You robbed a 'Smala,' you pillaged a 'Deira,' or something of the sort. Tell me frankly how it was, and, on my honor, I 'll never print it till you 're dead and gone. In fact, if you persist in refusing, I 'll give you to the world, with name in full. I 'll describe you as a fellow that picked up a treasure in some small island of the Mediterranean, and turned millionnaire after being a

pirate."

"Put me down for fifty copies of the book," said I, laughing; "I'm rich enough now to encourage the small-fry of literature."

Thus did we often jest with each other, and we met continually; for when not invited out myself, I gave entertainments at home, at which I assembled various members of that artistic set in which I had once moved,—a very different order of society from that in which I mixed in Naples, and, I am free to own, with far less claim to real agreeability. The "wits by profession" were not only less natural than the smart people of society, but they wearied you by the exactions of their drollery. Not to laugh at the sorriest jest was to discredit the jester, and the omission became a serious thing when it touched a man's livelihood. In fact, from first to last, in whatever country I have lived, I have ever found that the best—that is, the highest society—was always the most agreeable as well as the most profitable. Its forms were not alone regulated upon the surest basis of comfort, but its tone ever tended to promote whatever was pleasurable, and exclude everything that could hurt or offend. So is it, your great aristocrats are very democratic in a drawing-room,—professing and practising the most perfect equality; while your "rights of man" and "popular sovereignty advocate" insists upon always being the king of his company. Forgive this digression, my dear reader, if for nothing else than because it shall be the last time of my offending.

I had now enjoyed myself at Paris about two months, or thereabouts, in which, having most satisfactorily arranged all my monetary matters, and —besides having a considerable sum in the English funds—found myself down in the "Grand Livre" for a

couple of million of francs,—a feature which made me a much-caressed individual in that new social order just then springing up, called the “financière” class, one which, if with few claims to the stately manners of the “Faubourg,” numbered as many pretty women and as agreeable ones as could be found anywhere. Had I been matrimonially disposed, this set would certainly have been dangerous ground for me,—the attentions which beset me being almost like adulation. The truth was, however, Donna Maria had left an impression which comparison with others did not efface. I felt, if I were to marry, it might as well be for high rank and family influence, since I never could do so for love. My nobility required a little strengthening, nor was there any easier or more efficient mode of supporting it than by an alliance with some of those antiquated houses who, with small fortunes but undiminished pride, inhabited the solitudes of the “Faubourg St. Germain.” I cannot afford space here to recount my adventures in that peaceful and deserted quarter, whose amusements ranged between masses and tric-trac,—where Piety and Pope Joan divided the hours. The antiquity of my family and the pureness of my Castilian blood! had been the pretensions which obtained admission for me into these sacred precincts; and there, I must say, everything seemed old and worn out: the houses, the salons, the furniture, the masters, servants, horses, carriages,—all were as old as the formalities and the opinions they professed.

Even the young ladies had got a premature cast of seriousness that took away every semblance of juvenility. Whether from associating with them, or that I had voluntarily conformed to the staid Puritanism of their manners, I cannot say, but my other acquaintances began to quiz and rally me

about my “Legitimist” air, and even said that the change had been remarked at Court.

This was an observation that gave me some uneasiness, and I hastened off to the Duc de St. Cloud, whose kindness had always admitted me to the most open intercourse.

“It is quite true, Creganne,” said he, “we all remarked that you were coquetting with the 'vieux,'—the old ones of the Faubourg; and although *I* had never any misgivings about you, *others* were less charitable.”

“What is to be done, then?” said I, in my distress at the bare thought of seeming ungrateful.

“I'll tell you,” said he: “there's the post of secretary of embassy just vacant at Madrid; your knowledge of the language, and your Spanish blood, admirably fit you for the mission. Shall I ask for it in your behalf?”

I could scarcely speak, for gratitude. I was longing for some “charge,” some public station that would give me a recognized position as well as wealth.

The “Duc” hurried from the room, and after an absence of half-an-hour came back, laughing, to say: “This was quite a brilliant idea of mine, for the Minister of Foreign Affairs was just in conversation with the King, and seeing that they were both in good humor, and discussing the Madrid mission, I even asked for the post of ambassador for you,—ay, and, what's better, obtained it, too.”

I could not believe my ears as I heard these words, and the Prince was obliged to repeat his tidings ere I could bring myself to credit them. “And now for a little plan of my own,” resumed he; “I am about to make a short visit to England, and, better still, to Ireland. You must accompany me. Of course I travel 'incog.,' which means that my real rank will be

known to all persons in authority; but, avoiding all state and parade, I shall be able to see something of that remarkable country of which I have heard so much."

I acknowledged a degree of curiosity to the full as great, but bewailed my ignorance of the language as a great drawback to the pleasures of the journey.

"But you do know a little English," said the Prince.

"Not a word," said I, coolly. "When a child, I believe I could speak it fluently,—so I have heard; but since that period I have utterly forgotten all about it." This may seem to have been a gratuitous fiction on my part, but it was not so; and to prove it, I must tell the reader a little incident which was running in my mind at that moment. A certain Tipperary gentleman, whose name is too familiar for me to print, once called upon a countryman in Paris, and, after ringing stoutly at the bell, the door was opened by a very smartly dressed "maid," whose grisette cap and apron immediately seemed to pronounce her to be French. "Est Capitaine,—est Monsieur O'Shea ici?" asked he, in considerable hesitation.

"Oh, sir! you're English," exclaimed the maid, in a very London accent.

"Yes, my little darlin', I was asking for Captain O'Shea."

"Ah, sir, you 're Irish!" said she, with a very significant fall of the voice. "So," as he afterwards remarked, "my French showed that I was English, and my English that I was Irish."

Now, although my French would have passed muster from Cannes to Caen, my English had something of the idiomatic peculiarity of the gentleman just alluded to; and were I only to speak

once in Ireland, I must be inevitably detected. There was then no choice for it; I must even consent to talk through an interpreter,—a rather dull situation for a man about to “tour it” in Ireland!

As the Prince's journey was a secret in Paris, our arrangements were made with great caution and despatch. We travelled down to Boulogne with merely one other companion, an old Colonel Demaunais, who had been for some years a prisoner in England, and spoke English fluently, and with only three servants; there was nothing in our “cortège” betraying the rank of his Royal Highness.

Apartments had been prepared for us at Mivart's, and we dined each day at the French Embassy,—going to the Opera in the evening, and sight-seeing all the forenoon, like genuine “country cousins.” The Court was in Scotland; but even had it been in London, I conclude that the Prince would have been received in some mode which should not have attracted publicity.

Ten days sufficed for “town,” and we set out for Ireland, to visit which his Royal Highness was all impatience and eagerness.

Never can I forget the sensations with which I landed on that shore, which, about a dozen years before, I had quitted barefooted and hungry! Was the change alone in me; or what had come over the objects, to make them so very different from what they once were? The hotel that I remembered to have regarded as a kind of palace, where splendor and profusion prevailed, seemed now dirty and uncared-for; the waiters slovenly, the landlord rude, the apartments mean, and the food detestable! The public itself, as it paraded on the pier, was not that gorgeous panorama I once saw there,—the mingled

elegance and fashion I used to regard with such eyes of wonderment and envy. What had become of them? Good looks there were, and in abundance,—for Irish women will be pretty, no matter what changes come over the land; but the men! good lack, what a strange aspect did they present! Without the air of fashion you see in Paris, or that more strongly marked characteristic of style and manliness the parks of London exhibit, here were displayed a kind of swaggering self-sufficiency whose pretension was awfully at variance with the mediocrity of their dress, and the easy jocularity that leered from their eyes. Some were aquatics, and wore Jersey shirts and frocks, loose trousers, and low shoes; but they overdid their parts, and lounged like Tom Cooke in a sea-piece.

Others appeared as *élégans*, and were even greater burlesques on the part. It was quite clear, however, that these formed no portion of the better classes of the capital, and so I hastened to assure the Prince, whose looks bespoke very palpable disappointment.

In Dublin, however, the changes were greater than I expected. It was not alone that I had seen other and greater capitals, where affluence and taste abound, and where, while the full tide of fashion sets “in” in one quarter, the still more exciting course of activity and industry flows along in another; but here an actual decline had taken place in the appearance of everything. The shops, the streets, the inhabitants, all looked in disrepair. There were few carriages, nothing deserving the name of equipage,—none of that stir and movement which characterize a capital. It all looked like a place where people dwelt to wear out their old houses and old garments, and to leave both behind them when no longer wearable. Windows mended with paper, pantaloons patched

with party-colored cloth, “shocking bad hats,” mangy car-drivers, and great troops of beggars of every age and walk of mendicancy, were met with even in the best quarters; and with all these signs of poverty and decay, there was an air of swaggering recklessness in every one that was particularly striking. All were out of temper with England and English rule; and “Ireland for the Irish” was becoming a popular cant phrase,—pretty much on the same principle that blacklegs extinguish the lights when luck goes against them, and have a scramble for “the bank” in the dark. The strangest of all was, however, that nobody seemed to have died or left the place since I remembered it as a boy. There went the burly barrister down Bachelor's Walk, with the same sturdy stride I used to admire of yore,—his cheek a little redder, his presence somewhat more portly, perhaps, but with the self-same smile with which he then cajoled the jury, and that imposing frown with which he repelled the freedom of a witness. There were the same civic magistrates, the same attorneys, dancing-masters,—ay, even the dandies had not been replaced, but were the old crop, sadly running to seed, and marvellously ill cared for.

Even the Castle officials were beautifully consistent, and true to their old traditions; they were as empty and insolent as ever. It was the English pale performed over again at the Upper Castle Yard, and all without its limits were the kerns and “wild Irish” of centuries ago.

How is a craft like this ever to take the sea, thought I, with misery and mutiny everywhere! With six feet of water in the hold, the crew are turning out for higher wages, and ready to throw overboard the man who counsels them to put a hand to the pump!

But what had I to do with all this? Nor would I

allude to it here, save to mention the straits and difficulties which beset me, to account for changes that I had never anticipated.

We dined everywhere, from that viceregal palace in a swamp, to the musty halls of the Chief Secretary in the Castle. We partook of a civic feast, a picnic at the waterfall; we had one day with the military! And here, by the way, I recognized an old acquaintance of other days, the Hon. Captain De Courcy. He was still on the staff, and still constant to his ancient flame, who, with a little higher complexion and more profuse ringlets,—it is strange how color and hair go on increasing with years,—looked pretty much what I remembered her of yore.

"You had better wait for your groom, Mons. Le Comte," said De Courcy to me at the review, as I was dismounting to speak to some people in the crowd of carriages. "Don't trust those fellows. I once had a valuable mare stolen by one of those vagrants, and, what was worse, the rascal rode her at a steeplechase the same day."

"Pas possible!" exclaimed I, at the bare thought of such an indignity. "What became of the young villain?"

"I forget, now, whether I let him off, or whether he was publicly whipped; but I am certain he never came to good."

I felt a flush of anger rise to my cheek at this speech, but I checked my passion; and well I might, as I thought upon my *own* condition and upon *his*. To have expended any interest or sympathy as to the boy, besides, would have been absurd, and I was silent. Among our invitations, was one to the house of a baronet who resided in a midland county, only a few miles from my native place. We arrived at night

at Knockdangan Castle, an edifice of modern gothic style, which means a marvellously expensive residence, rendered almost uninhabitable by the necessity of having winding stairs, narrow corridors, low ceilings, and pointed windows. The house was full of company, the greater part of whom had arrived unexpectedly; still, our reception was everything that genial hospitality could dictate. One of the drawing-rooms had been already converted into a kind of barrack-room, with half-a-dozen beds in it; and now the library was to be devoted to the Prince, while a small octagon tower leading off it, about the size and shape of a tea-tray, was reserved for me. If these arrangements were attended with inconvenience, certainly nothing in the manner of either host or hostess showed it. They and their numerous family of sons and daughters seemed to take it as the most natural thing in life to be thrown into disorder to accommodate their friends; not alone their friends, but their friends' friends: for so proved more than half of the present company. Several of “the boys,” meaning the sons of the host, slept at houses in the neighborhood; we actually bivouacked in a little temple in the garden. There seemed no limit to the contrivances of our kind entertainers, either in the variety of the plans for pleasure, or the hearty good-nature with which they concurred in any suggestion of the guests. All that Spanish politeness expresses, as a phrase, was here reduced to actual practice. Everything was at the disposal of the stranger. Not alone was he at liberty to ride, drive, fish, shoot, hunt, boat, or course at will, but all his hours were at his own disposal, and his liberty unfettered, even as to whether he dined in his own apartment, or joined the general company. Nothing that the most courteous attention could provide was

omitted, at the same time that the most ample freedom was secured to all. Here, too, was found a tone of cultivation that would have graced the most polished society of any European capital. Foreign languages were well understood and spoken; music practised in its higher walks; drawing cultivated with a skill rarely seen out of the hands of professed masters; subjects of politics and general literature were discussed with a knowledge and a liberality that bespoke the highest degree of enlightenment; while to all these gifts the general warmth of native character lent an indescribable charm of kindliness and cordiality that left none a stranger who spent even twelve hours beneath their roof.

The Prince was in ecstasies with everything and every one, and he himself no less a favorite with all. Every fall he got in hunting made him more popular; every misadventure that occurred to him, in trying to conform to native tastes, gave a new grace and charm to his character. The ladies pronounced him “a love,” and the men, in less polished, but not less hearty, encomium, called him “a devilish good fellow for a Frenchman.”

The habits I have already alluded to, of each guest living exactly how he pleased, gave a continual novelty to the company; sometimes two or three new faces would appear at the dinner-table or in the drawing-room, and conjecture was ever at work whether the last arrivals had been yet seen, and who were they who presented themselves at table?

“You will meet two new guests to-day, Count,” said the host one day, as we entered the drawing-room before dinner: “a Spanish Bishop and his niece, —a very charming person, and a widow of nineteen! They came over to Ireland about some disputed question of property,—being originally Irish by

family,—and are now, I regret to say, about to return to Spain in a few days. Hitherto a severe cold has confined the Bishop to his chamber; and his niece, not being, I fancy, a proficient in any but her native language, had not courage to face a miscellaneous party. They will both, however, favor us to-day; and as you are the only one here who can command the 'true Castilian tongue,' you will take the Countess in to dinner."

I bowed my acknowledgments, not sorry to have the occasion of displaying my Spanish and playing the agreeable to my fair countrywoman.

The drawing-room each day before dinner had no other light than that afforded by a great fire of bog deal, which, although diffusing a rich and ruddy glow over all who sat within the circle around it, left the remainder of the apartment in comparative darkness; and few, except those very intimate, were able to recognize each other in the obscurity. Whether this was a whim of the host, or a pardonable artifice to make the splendor of the well-lighted dinner-table more effective, on the principle of orators, who begin at a whisper to create silence, I know not, but we used to jest over the broken shins and upset spider tables that each day announced the entrance of some guest less familiarized to the geography of the apartment.

On this particular occasion the party was unusually large; possibly a certain curiosity to see the new guests had added to the number, while some of the neighboring families were also present. Various were the new names announced; and at last came the Bishop, with the lady of the house upon his arm, the young widow following with one of the daughters of the house. I could only distinguish a very white head, with a small black skull-cap, a

stooping figure, and a great gold cross, which, I concluded, represented the holy man; something in black, with a very long veil descending from the back of her head, being as evidently the niece.

A few formal introductions were gone through in clever pantomime, dinner was announced, and the company paired off in all stateliness, while the host, seizing my arm, led me across the room, and in a few words presented me to the fair widow, who courtesied, and accepted my arm, and away we marched in that solemn procession by which people endeavor to thaw the ice of first acquaintance.

“Your first visit to Ireland, I believe, Señhora?” said I, in Spanish, wishing to say something as we walked along.

“Yes, Señhor, and yours also, I understand?” replied she.

“Not exactly,” muttered I, taken too suddenly to recover myself; “when I was a boy, a mere child—” I here by accident employed a Mexican word almost synonymous with the French “gamin.” She started, and said eagerly, “How! you have been in Mexico?”

“Yes, Señhora, I have passed some years in that country.”

“I am a Mexican,” cried she, delightedly. “Tell me, where have you traveiled, and whom did you know there?”

“I have travelled a good deal, but scarcely knew any one,” replied I. “At Guajuaqualla—”

“Oh, were you there? My own neighborhood,—my home,” exclaimed she, fervidly.

“Then probably you know Don Estaban Olares,” said I.

“My own father!”

I turned round; our eyes met; it was just at the very entrance of the dinner-room, where a blaze of light was shed on everything, and there upon my arm—her hand trembling, her cheek colorless, and her eyes swimming in tears—was Donna Maria! Neither of us spoke, neither of us could speak!—and while her eyes wandered from my face to the several decorations I wore upon my breast, and I watched with agonizing intensity the look of terror she threw down the table towards the place where her uncle was seated, I saw plainly that some painful mystery was struggling within her mind.

"Do not let my uncle recognize you," said she, in a low whisper; "he is not likely to do so, for both his sight and hearing are much impaired."

"But why should I not claim him as an old acquaintance, if not a friend, Señhora, if he be the same Fra Miguel?"

"Hush! be cautious," cried she; "I will tell you all tomorrow,—to-night, if there be a fitting opportunity. Let us talk of something else, or we shall be remarked."

I tried my best to obey her, but I fear my attempt was a poor one; I was able, however, to listen to her with a certain amount of composure, and, while doing so, to remark how much she had improved in grace and beauty since we met. Years had developed the charms which girlhood then but shadowed forth, and in the full and liquid softness of her dark and long-lashed eyes, and the playful delicacy of her mouth, I saw how a consciousness of fascination had served to lend new powers of pleasing.

She spoke to me of her widowhood without any affectation of feeling grieved or sorry. So long as Don Geloso had lived, her existence had been like that of

a nun in a cloister; he was too jealous to suffer her to go into the world, and, save at the Court Chapel each morning and evening, she never saw anything of that brilliant society in which her equals were moving. When her uncle was created Bishop of Seville, she removed to that city to visit him, and had never seen her husband after. Such, in few words, was the story of a life, whose monotony would have broken the spirit of any nature less buoyant and elastic than her own. Don Estaban was dead; and of him she spoke with deep and affectionate feeling; betraying besides that her own lot was rendered almost a friendless one by the bereavement.

That same evening, as we walked through the rooms, examining pictures and ancient armor, of which our host was somewhat vain, I learned the secret to which the Senhora had alluded at table, and divesting which of all the embarrassment the revelation occasioned herself, was briefly this: The Fra, who had never, for some reasons of his own, either liked or trusted me, happened to discover some circumstances of my earlier adventures in Texas, and even traced me in my rambles to the night of my duel with the Ranchero. Hence he drew the somewhat rash and ungenerous conclusion that my character was not so unimpeachable as I affected, and that my veracity was actually open to question! An active correspondence had taken place between Don Geloso and himself about me, in which the former, after great researches, pronounced that no noble family of my name had existed in Old Spain, and that, in plain fact, I was nothing better than an impostor! In this terrible delusion the old gentleman died; but so fearful was he of the bare possibility of injuring one in whose veins flowed the pure blood of Castile that on his death-bed he besought the Bishop

to ascertain the fact to a certainty, and not to desist in the investigation till he had traced me to my birth, parentage, and country. Upon this condition he had bequeathed all his fortune to the Church, and not alone all his own wealth, but all Donna Maria's also.

The Bishop's visit to Ireland, therefore, had no other object than to look for my baptismal certificate,—an investigation, I need scarcely say, somewhat difficult and intricate!

Of course, in this confession, the fair Contessa never hesitated to regard me as an injured and calumniated individual; but so assured was she of the Bishop's desire to endow the Church with her wealth that he would have less brooked to discover me a noble of title and rank indisputable, than to find me a poor and ignoble adventurer. “Were he but to recognize you,” said she, “I should be condemned to a nunnery for life!” and this terror, however little startling to *my* ears, had too much of significance to *her* mind to be undervalued.

Of course my present position, the companionship of me Prince, the foreign orders I wore, were more than sufficient to accredit me to her as anything I pleased to represent myself; but somehow I felt little inclination for that vein of fiction in which so often and so largely I had indulged! For the first time in my life I regarded this flow of invention as a treachery! and, when pressed by her to relate the full story of my life, I limited myself to that period which, beginning with my African campaign, brought me down to the moment of telling I was in love. Such is the simple solution of the mystery; nor can I cite a more convincing evidence of the ennobling nature of the passion than that it made me, such as I was, tenacious of the truth.

Every succeeding day brought me into closer intimacy with the Señhora, and taught me more and more to value her for other graces than those of personal beauty. The seclusion in which she had passed her last few years had led her to cultivate her mind by a course of study such as few Spanish women ever think of, and which gave an almost serious character to a nature of more than childlike buoyancy. We talked of her own joyous land, to which she seemed longing to return, and of our first meeting beside the “Rio Colloredo,” and then of our next meeting on her own marriage-day; and she wondered where, if ever, we should see each other again! The opportunity was not to be lost. I pressed her hand to my lips, and asked her never to leave me! I told her that, for me, country had no ties,—that I had neither home nor kindred. I would at that moment have confessed everything, even to my humble birth! I pledged myself to live with her amidst the sierras of the Far West, or, if she liked better, in some city of the Old World. I told her that I was rich, and that I needed not that wealth of which her uncle's covetousness would rob her. In fact, I said a great deal that was true; and when I added anything that was not so, it was simply as painters introduce a figure with a “bit of red,” to heighten the landscape. I will not weary my *fair* reader with all the little doubts, and hesitations, and fears, so natural for her to experience and express; nor will I tire my male companion by saying how I combated each in turn. Love, like a lawsuit, has but one ritual. First comes the declaration,—usually a pretty unintelligible piece of business, in either case; then come the “affidavits,” the sworn depositions; then follow the cross-examinations; after which, the charge and the verdict. In my case it was a favorable

one, and I was almost out of my senses with delight.



The Bishop, with whom my acquaintanceship had never betrayed my secret, was to leave Ireland in a few days, and the Prince, to whom I told everything, with the kindness of a true friend promised that he would take the very same day for his own departure. The remainder we were to leave to fortune. Love-making left me little time for any other thoughts; but still as, for appearance' sake, I was obliged to pass some hours of every day apart from Donna Maria, I took the occasion of one of these forced absences to visit a scene which had never quitted my mind through all the changeful fortunes of my life,—the little spot where I was born. Rising one morning at

break of day, I set out for Horseleap, to see once more, and for the last time, the humble home of my childhood. The distance was about sixteen miles; but as I rode slowly, my mind full of old memories and reflections, I did not reach the place till nigh noon. Alas! I should never have known the spot! There had been a season of famine and pestilence, and now the little village was almost tenantless. Many of the cabins were unroofed; in some, the blackened rafters bore tokens of fire. The one shop that used to supply the humble luxuries of the poor was closed, and I passed on with a heavy heart towards the cross-roads where “Con's Acre” lay.

I had not gone far when my eye, straining to catch it, detected the roof of the cabin rising above the little thorn hedge that flanked the road. Ay, there was the old stone-quarry I used to play in, as a child, fancying that its granite sides were mountain precipices, and its little pools were lakes. There was the gate on which for hours long I have sat, gazing at the bleak expanse of moorland, and wondering if all the wide world beyond had nothing fairer or more beautiful than this.

“Who lives in that cabin yonder?” asked I, of a peasant on the road.

The man replied that it was “the minister;” adding his name, which, however, I could not catch. Long as I had been away from Ireland, I could not forget that this was the especial title given to the Protestant clergyman of the parish, and I rode up to the door wondering how it chanced that he was reduced to a dwelling of such humble pretensions. An old woman came out as I drew up, and told me that the curate was from home, but would be back in less than an hour; requesting me to “put in my beast,” and sit down in the parlor till he came.

I accepted the invitation, followed her into the cabin, which, although in a condition of neatness very different from what I remembered it of old, brought back all my boyish days in an instant. There was the fireside, where, with naked feet roasting before the blazing turf, I had sat and slept full many an hour, dreaming of adventures which were as nothing to those my real life had met with. There the corner where I used to sit throughout the night, copying those law papers my father would bring back with him from Kilbeggan. There stood the little bed where often I have sobbed myself to sleep, when, wearied and worn out, I was punished for some trifling omission, some slight and accidental mistake. I sat down, and covered my face with my hands, for a sense of my utter loneliness in the world came suddenly over me; I felt as if this poor hovel was my only real home, and that all my success in life was a mere passing dream.

Meanwhile the old woman, with true native volubility, was explaining how the Bishop—"bad scran to him!—would n't let his riv'rence have pace and ease till he kem and lived in the parish, though there was n't a spot fit for a gentleman in the whole length and breadth of it! and signs on it," added she, "we had to put up with this little place here, they call Con's Acre, and it was all a ruin when we got it."

"And who owned this cabin before?" asked I.

"A villain they call Con Cregan, your honor,—the biggest thief ye ever heard of; he was paid for informin' agin the people, and whin the Government had done wid him, they transported him too!"

"Had he any children, this same Con?"

"He had a brat of a boy that was drowned at 'say,' they tell me; but I'd never believe it was that way

that Con Cregan's son was to die!”

I need scarcely remark that I saw no inducement for prolonging this conversation, wherein all the facts quoted were already familiar, and all the speculations the reverse of flattery; and I was far more agreeably occupied in discussing the eggs and milk the old lady had placed before me, when the door opened, and the curate entered. A deep cavernous cough and a stooped figure announcing the signs of some serious chest disease, were all I had time to observe; when, with the politeness of a gentleman, he advanced towards me. The first sound of his voice was enough, and I cried out, “Lyndsay! my oldest and best friend,—don't you know me?”

“I am ashamed to say that I do not,” said he, faltering, while he still held my hand, and gazed into my face.

“Not yet?” asked I again, smiling at the embarrassment of his countenance.

“Not even yet,” said he. “Tell me, I beseech you, where did we meet?”

“Come here,” said I, leading him to the door, and pointing to the wide-stretching moor that lay before us; “it was there,—yonder, where you see that heavy cloud-shadow stealing along,—yonder we first met. Do you know me now?”

He started; his pale cheek grew paler, and he fell upon my neck in a burst of tears. Who shall ever know the source, or what the meaning? They were not of joy, still less of sorrow,—they were the outbreak of a hundred emotions. Old memories of happy days, never to come back; boyish triumphs, successes, failures; moments of ecstasy—of bitter anguish; his own bleak, joyless existence, perhaps, contrasting with mine; and then at last the fell

consciousness of the malady in which he was but lingering out life.

“And here are you, and here!” cried he, in a voice which his faltering accents made scarce intelligible; “who should say that we were to meet thus?” Then, as if his words had conveyed a meaning of which he was ashamed, he blushed deeply, and said, “And oh, my friend! how truly you told me that life had its path for each, if we but knew how to choose it.”

I must not say how the hours were passed, nor how it was nightfall ere either of us guessed it. Lyndsay insisted upon hearing every adventure that had befallen me, questioning me eagerly as I went, how each new feature of prosperity had “worked with me,” and whether gold had yet hardened my heart, and taught me indifference to the poor.

I told him of my love, and with such rapturous delight that he even offered to aid me in my object, by marrying me to Donna Maria,—a piece of generous zeal, I am certain, that originated less in friendship than in the prospect of a proselyte,—the niece of a bishop, too! Poor fellow, he might make many converts, if he were thus easily satisfied.

The next day I drove Donna Maria out for an airing, and, while occupying her mind with various matters, contrived to prolong our excursion to Horseleap. “What a dreary spot you have chosen for our drive!” said she, looking around her.

“Do you see yonder little hut,” said I, “where the smoke is rising?”

“Yes, that poor cabin yonder! You have not come to show me *that?*” said she, laughing.

“Even so, Maria,” said I; “to show you that poor and humble hut, and to tell you that it was there I was born,—a peasant's son; that from that same

lowly roof I wandered out upon the world friendless and hungry; that partly by energy, partly by a resolution to succeed, partly by the daring determination that would not admit a failure, I have become what I am,—titled, honored, wealthy, but still the son of a poor man. I could not have gone on deceiving you, even though this confession should separate us forever." I could not speak more, nor needed I. Her hand had already clasped mine as she murmured: "Yours more than ever."

"Now is the moment, then, to become so," said I, as I lifted her from the carriage and led her within the cabin.

The company were already waiting dinner ere we returned to the Castle. "I have to make our excuses," said I to the hostess; "but we prolonged our drive to a considerable distance."

"Ah, we feared you might have taken the road by the lake, where there is no turning back," said she.

"Exactly, madam; that is what we did precisely, for we are married!"

Need I dwell upon the surprise and astonishment of this announcement? The Bishop—fortunately it was in Spanish—uttered something very like an oath. The bride blushed—some of the ladies looked shocked—the men shook hands with me, and the Prince, saluting Donna Maria with a most hearty embrace, begged to say "that the lady would be very welcomely received in Paris, since it was the only drawback to my appointment as an ambassador—that I was unmarried."

Here I have done,—not that my Confessions are exhausted, but that I fear my reader's patience may be; I may, however, add that this was not the only "Spanish marriage" in which I had a share,—that my

career in greatness was not less eventful than my life in obscurity, and that I draw up at this stage, leaving it for the traveller to say if he should ever care hereafter to journey further with me.

THE END.

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