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Author: John C. Hutcheson

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CAUGHT IN A TRAP ***

John C. Hutcheson

"Caught in a Trap"

Volume One—Chapter One.

Amongst the Plungers.

"Hullo! Markworth. How lucky! Why you are just the man I want; you're ubiquitous, who'd have thought of seeing you in town?" said Tom Hartshorne, of the —th Dragoons, cheerily, as he sauntered late one summer afternoon into a private billiard-room in Oxford-street, where a tall, dark-complexioned, and strikingly-handsome man, was knocking the balls about in his shirt-sleeves, and trying all sorts of fancy shots against the cushions—The sole occupant of the room was he, with the exception of the marker, who was looking on in a desultory sort of way at the strokes of the player from his thronelike chair underneath the scoring board.

"Hullo! Tom, by all that's holy! And what brings you to Babylon? I left Boulogne last week, and ran up to see what the 'boys' were after; so here I am, quite at your service. What can I do for you, Tom? Are you hard up, in a row, or run away with your neighbour's wife? Unbosom yourself, *caro mio*."

"No, I'm all right, old chap; but nothing could be better. By Jove! it's the very thing!"

"Who? Why? What? Enlighten me, Tom."

"Well, you see, Markworth, I've got to go down to-morrow for my annual week to my mother's place in Sussex. It will be so awfully slow; just fancy, old chap, a whole week in that dreary old country house, with no company, no shooting, no fishing, no anything! Why, it's enough to kill a fellow!"

"Poor Tom," observed Markworth, sympathisingly.

"Yes; but that's not the worst either, old chap. My mother is very cranky, you know, and the house itself is as dull as ditch-water. You have to go to bed and get up by clockwork; and if one should be late at dinner, or in turning in, why, it is thought more of by the ruling powers than the worst sin in the decalogue. Besides, I have to keep straight and humour the old lady—for I am quite dependent on her until I come of age; and, though she's very fond of me in her sort of way, she cuts up rough sometimes, and would stop supplies in a moment if I should offend her."

"Dutiful infant! I pity your sorrows, Tom; but what can I do to help you?"

"I'm just coming to that; but we may as well have a game by the way, while we're talking."

"Certainly; how many points shall I give you? The usual number, eh? Score up, fifteen to spot, marker," he said, turning to the little man, who, with a face of dull impassiveness, was sitting bolt upright, like Neptune with his trident, holding the billiard-rest in a perpendicular position, apparently hearing nothing, although his eyes twinkled every now and then. "You lead, Tom, of course."

"All right, here goes; but, to return to what we were speaking about. You can help me very much, Markworth."

"Can I? That's a good cannon, you mustn't play all through like that, Tom, or you'll beat me easily; but, go on, and tell me what you want."

"Ha! yes—you see I've got one saving clause in my predicament. My mother says I may bring some one down with me, and I don't know who the deuce to take—for any of our fellows would ruin me in half a day with the old lady, by talking slang, or flirting with the maids, or something else."

"And you want me to go and victimise myself for a week? Much obliged, I'm sure."

"Nonsense, Markworth. By Jove! that's a ripping hazard in the middle pocket; you've got the red in baulk, too, and the game's all in your hands. You are really the only fellow I'd ask, and it would be a perfect godsend to have you. It won't be so dull for the two of us together, and I'm sure you'll be able to pull me out of many a scrape with the old lady, for she's just your sort, and you can tackle her like one o'clock; only talk to her about the 'Ologies' old country families, and the peerage, and you'll be all right. She never speaks of anything else. Besides, there's a Miss Kingscott down there—a governess, or companion, or something of the sort to my sister—whom I've never yet seen, as she only came there this year. I daresay you can make love to her."

"Thank you, especially after the warning about the maids!"

"But you'll come, won't you?"

"I can't promise, Tom. There, that stroke ends the game; let's finish billiards: they're too slow. What are you going to do to-night, Tom?"

"A lot of us are going to have a quiet little dinner party at Lane's. The old colonel has been awfully jolly, and let away nearly the whole squad on leave together. Will you come? There'll be Harrowby, Miles—in fact all the boys. We'll have lansquenette afterwards, and then you and I can talk over about running down to the country. Do come, there's a good fellow."

"Well, I will; what time do you dine?"

"Sharp seven; so don't be late."

"I'll be there. Ta-ta, now, for I've got a lot of letters to write. I'm stopping at the 'Tavistock' by the way, in case I don't turn up and you want to find me."

They had emerged from the billiard-room, and now stood in the street.

"But you must come, I shall expect you and will take no excuse. I'm going to call on some jolly girls whom I met at the Woolwich hop last night. So good-bye till seven—sharp, mind!"

"All right," answered the other, as Tom Hartshorne hailed a hansom, and was quickly whirled off to his destination in Bruton Street, where the Miss Inskips, two pretty and fast young ladies of the period, dwelt with their mamma, a widowed dame.

Allynne Markworth was not so much a type, as a specimen, of a curious class of men constantly to be met with in London society, and of whom society knows next to nothing. No one knew where he came from, who were his progenitors, or what he did; and yet he suffered in no respect from this self-same ignorance of the world around him, in which he lived and moved and had his being, as any other of its more regular units.

He always dressed well, lived well, and seemed to have a fair share of the loaves and fishes which Providence often so unequally bestows. Having the *entrée* of good houses, he knew "everybody," and everybody knew him; but if you asked any of the men who knew him, and were constantly meeting him about, who Markworth was, the general answer you would get would be, "'Pon my soul, I don't know." Perhaps Tom Hartshorne knew more about him and was more intimate with him than anyone else, but even he had long ceased to puzzle his budding brains over any analysis of his friend: he was a "good fellow," and "a clever fellow, by Jove," and that was enough for him. Tom, however, never dreamt of calling Markworth by his Christian name, and no one else could have approached that phase of intimacy.

To tell the truth Allynne Markworth lived by his wits. He was a *Chevalier d'Industrie* in a certain sense of the term, although in a slightly more moral degree; and ran the race set before him by preying on the weaknesses, follies, and ignorances of human nature in the abstract, as evinced amongst his fellows in the concrete.

He was a good billiard player, and knew as well when to hide his play as "any other man." Many a stray sovereign did he pick up in lives after pool at Phillipps', even when he could not get a bet on, which he was never loth to take. The Hanover Square Club acknowledged his supremacy at whist, and happy was he who was his partner when guinea points were the rule. Being a good judge of horseflesh, he of course kept a book on the principal events of the year: rare in "hedging" he was seldom known to come out a loser.

With all these little strings to his bow, it is no wonder that Markworth managed to get along pretty comfortably; and although he toiled not nor yet did he spin, I much question whether King Solomon if clad *en règle* to the nineteenth century would have been better dressed, taking Poole as a criterion. Add to this that Allynne Markworth was a well-bred, handsome man of thirty to thirty-five—although his right age would have been rather hard to discover—and had a certain plausibility of manner which prevented one at first from noticing the somewhat sinister expression about his eyes and mouth; and the surprising thing would have been that he did *not* get on. Generally he had plenty of money; and when he had not he absented himself from society until his coffers were replenished in some secret way or other.

At this time, however, he had been for some months undergoing a run of ill-luck. The year had opened badly by the failure of a bubble company in which he was deeply interested; then, again, men were fighting shy of him at billiards, and it cost him more work for a sovereign than it was worth, and guinea points at whist were becoming rare events even amongst the most reckless *habitués* of the club; to climax his misfortunes, he had made a very losing book on the Derby, and although he paid it up—for to be a defaulter would have ruined him in his set—he had to leave London early in the season in consequence of not having the wherewithal to prosecute the war.

When he had gone away at the end of May he told Tom Hartshorne that he would be detained away on the continent on business for months; and yet here he was back again before the end of July. The fact was he came back money-hunting, and was so pressed now that he hardly knew where to turn. He had made up his mind that unless he married a fortune, discovered a gold mine, or tumbled into some wonderful luck, that his "little game," as he expressed it, would be "all up." He was glad to meet Tom Hartshorne so very opportunely at the present juncture, for he thought that he might be put in the way of some plan for changing events—and at the worst a little good card playing in the evening might place him in the position of being able "to look about him."

Punctually at seven o'clock he showed himself up at Lane's Hotel, where some half-a-dozen men of Tom's regiment were assembled in a cosy little room up-stairs, well lighted, and with snow-white-cloth-covered-table, all duly prepared and laid out for the contemplated feast.

Dragoon officers or "Plungers"—indeed, all cavalry men—are pretty much alike, and unlike the remainder of the Army List. The mild, "gushing" comet, dashing "sub," and massive captain, full-fledged and silky as to hair and drooping moustache—not forgetting general apathy of expression—of one troop, or regiment, resemble those of another, even as the proverbial "two peas," and it would sorely tax one's powers of diagnosis to discriminate between the members of a party like those assembled for the present "quiet little dinner, you know."

Tom Hartshorne—no one who ever spoke two words with him could call him anything else but "Tom"—was the only exception to this rule; the others were all men of a class, "classy," without any distinctive individuality. He, however, was of a different stamp. Of middle-height, thick-set, fair-haired, and open face—Saxon all over—his was the native mould, thorough British metal, that makes our strong and plucky athletes of the Isis and the Cam, who struggle each year for aquatic supremacy, like the strong *Gyas fortisque Cloanthus* of Virgil's Aenead—that long line of heroes celebrated for every deed of daring, from Richard the "Lion-hearted" down to the last gallant recipient of the Victoria Cross: men of which stamp, thank God, live yet among us!

A thorough gentleman, his nature was as open as the day, which you could readily see for yourself by one glance into his truthful face, and clear blue eyes, although perhaps concealed partly by that slight upper-crust or veneer of egotism and affectation, which generally hides the better qualities of young men on first entering into life, and just released from their "mother's apron string" and the trammels of home and school.

Tom Hartshorne was little more than nineteen, and it was a wonder, with his bringing up, that he was what he was; but nothing could altogether taint the sterling stuff of which he was composed. He was one who could pass through the lighter follies of military life unscathed, and only wanted some strong impetus, some ardent motive to bring him out in his true colours. Tom Hartshorne had made the acquaintance of Markworth about a year previous to the meeting with which the story opens—in fact just after he had been gazetted to his cornetcy, and had taken to him at once—and Markworth had apparently taken to him, a sort of chemical affinity of opposing forces.

It may be thought strange that natures so dissimilar should agree, but so it was. The Latin proverb is often curiously wrong; instead of *similes similibus curantur*, the prefix *dis* should be added, and then the axiom would be complete. When Tom first met Markworth, who had received an invitation to the mess of the —th, he was struck with him, and on introduction came to like him greatly, for he was so clever, so agreeable, so different to the men he had previously met that he could not fail to be impressed; you always find young men take to a man of the world, particularly if he be like such a man as Markworth was.

The little dinner at Lane's passed off well, and the young Plungers enjoyed themselves to their heart's core, now that they were not under the jaundiced eye of their stern major, who envied them all their strong digestions and perfect livers; and, it is to be feared, they drank a little more champagne than was good for some of them. At the table Markworth was placed alongside a brother sub of Tom's, who was most communicative over his wine, talking in a low confidential voice with his elder companion, whom he wished to convince of his "mannishness," of horses, dogs, and women, as befitted a noble young soldier.

During a pause in the conversation Markworth thought he might gain some information, and having an opportunity of putting in a word, asked—

"By the way, do you know any of Tom's people?"

"Know them? By Jove! yes. Catch me there again, that's all!"

"Why—how—what's the matter?" asked Markworth. "I thought everybody liked Tom?"

"So they do; he's a brick. But Tom ain't his mother and his sister."

"Certainly not," answered the other, agreeing with the indisputable fact; "but what of them?"

"Well, the fact is Tom asked me down there last Christmas, and I never spent such a time in my life. They are very well connected, but see no people at all. The mother is a regular Tartar. There is also a sort of half idiot sister older than Tom. She has a pile of money left her, by the way; not a bad chance for any one in search of an heiress, who doesn't care about beauty and brains, and that sort of thing!"

"The devil she has?"

"Yes, by Jove! a regular pot of money; twenty thou' or more, I'm told. There's no elder son and nobody else, so Tom will inherit all the property when the old lady hooks it. There you have the family. I stopped with them two days, but it nearly killed me. Men of the world like us, you know, can't stand that sort of thing. Of course I had to plead regimental business, and get away. I remember the old lady—a regular she cat by Jove!—saying that she hoped my mamma—curse her impudence—would teach me better manners before she let me go out again. Did you ever hear of such a thing?"

“Ha! ha! ha! a pleasant old lady, Harrowby; I do not wonder at your dignity being hurt. I must look out for her if I ever tackle her.”

“What, are you thinking of going down? Take my advice, don’t: you’ll be sick of it.”

“Yes, I may. Tom asked me, and perhaps I’ll see some fan,” responded Markworth—and there the conversation dropped.

Later on, when he wished Tom Hartshorne “good-night,” in reply to his repeated invitation, he promised to go.

“And we’ll start on Friday,” said Tom, gleefully; “that will be the day after to-morrow, you know.”

“All right, I’m your man. Call for me at the ‘Tavistock’ at twelve, and we can start as soon after as you like.”

“Done. That will just give us time to catch the 2:30 train. Good-night, old fellow!”

And they parted.

The next morning Mr Allynne Markworth took a solitary walk citywards. After passing through Temple Bar and the then—undesolated—Fleet Street, he ascended the hill of Ludgate; and turning into a thin row of straggling and seedy old buildings, found himself within the precincts of Doctor’s Commons, sacred to the archives of marriage—one cannot always say love—and death!

Here, having previously invested the sum of one shilling in current coin of the realm, he received permission to examine the “Last will and testament of one Roger Hartshorne, deceased, of the county of Sussex, gentleman,” the perusal of which document appeared to give him much internal satisfaction. His task did not take him long, and he was soon retracing his steps.

On the day after he went down to Sussex, as agreed, with Tom Hartshorne.

Volume One—Chapter Two.

The Sussex Dowager.

Only a simple, and yet special name and appellation—

> “Mrs Hartshorne,
> The Poplars.”

That is all.

Nothing much in the name certainly, at first sight, nor yet such a very extraordinary address, either in the nomenclature of the mansion, or in its surroundings; but the two taken together were something entirely out of the common. Mrs Hartshorne by herself, or the Poplars, considered merely as a residence, were neither of them grand or startling phenomena; but one could not well do without the other, and the dual in unity formed a complete and unique integrity. In other words, “Mrs Hartshorne, of the Poplars,” was an “institution” in the land, to quote an Americanism, although neither a thing of beauty nor a joy for ever. She was a *rara avis in terris*, a millionaire Hecate, a rich and slightly-over-middle-aged eccentric, a Xantipical Croesus—no less a personage, in fact, than the “Sussex Dowager.”

Far and wide throughout this county—over a considerable portion of which she owned manorial rights of vassalage, and ruled with sovereign sway in the matter of leases and titheholds and rackrents—amongst the lesser farmers and villagers she was known by this title; although, it must be confessed, her more intimate dependents and rustic neighbours dubbed her by far less elegant sobriquets.

Any one meeting her about the country lanes, where she was to be found at all hours, would have taken Mrs Hartshorne to be a shabby little dried-up, poor old woman. She always dressed in dark grey garments of antediluvian cut, somewhat brown and rusty from age and wear. Her bonnet was a marvellous specimen of the hideous old coal-scuttle form used by our grandmothers. She always carried a reticule of similar date, which, by her demeanour when emporting it, might have contained a hundred death-warrants, or keys of dungeons—if she had lived some three centuries or so ago: a bulgy umbrella in all weathers, wet or fine: thick shoes of rough country make: dark woollen gloves; and no veil to disguise the thin sharp features and piercing bead-like black eyes, overhung with bushy grey eyebrows, and the wrinkled forehead above, covered with scanty white locks, braided puritanically on each side, and there you have Mrs Hartshorne.

She was not a handsome old woman, nor a prepossessing old woman, nor would her face impress you as being either benevolent or pious; but shrewdness, cleverness, and hardness of set purpose, were ingrained in every line of its expression; and in truth—she was a hard, shrewd, clever old woman.

A quarter of a century seems a somewhat long time to look back, but twenty-five years ago Mrs Hartshorne was a young and handsome woman. Time had not dealt kindly with her as he does to some: none would dream of calling hers a graceful or a winning old age. She seemed to wrestle with the Destroyer, instead of ignoring his approach as most of us do, and quietly and placidly submitting to his encroachments. The result was not to her advantage. Every line on her face, every crow’s-foot in the corners of her twinkling little eyes, every wrinkle on her careworn brow, every silvery hair on her head, marked the issue of some unsuccessful struggle; and the strong passions of her nature, even as they had embittered her life, seemed now, when her youth was passed, to war with death.

She had a quick way of speaking, running her words and sentences into one another, so that they resembled one of those compound, Dutch jaw-breaking words that occupy several lines in extent, and almost fill up a paragraph. Her temper was not a sweet one. It might suit "namby pamby," milk-and-water, bread-and-butter girls—"hussies," she would have called them—to mince their words and moderate their utterances; but she, "thank God, was none of those!" She said what she meant, sharp and straight to the point, and did not care what any one thought about it. Her voice, mode of speech, and general manner, resembled the barking of a wiry little Scotch terrier, and terrified most with whom she had any dealings. "Good Lord!" as old Doctor Jolly, the most hearty, jovial, loud and cheery-voiced of country surgeons—the only visitor who had entrance within her gates, and who used at fixed intervals to beard the lioness in her den—used to say; "but she has a temper. I would not be her husband, or her son, or her daughter for something! God bless my soul! sir, but she could hold a candle to the devil himself." And so she could, and hold her own, too!

Old Roger Hartshorne—the "squire"—had married her late in life some twenty-five years ago, and brought her home to the Poplars in all state and ceremony as befitted the lady of so great a landowner. The old squire was a very good-natured, liberal sort of man, whose only amusement was in following the harriers—there were no hounds and scarlet-coated foxhunters in those parts—and he was generally liked throughout the county, for he kept a sort of open house, and was hail-fellow-well-met with everyone; but when he married—and no one knew where he picked up his wife, people said that *she* married him—all this was changed. A new *regime* was instituted, and the sporting breakfasts, and hunting dinners, and open-house festivities at the Poplars became as a thing of the past. Mrs Hartshorne said she would not have any such "scandalous goings on" in her house: she wasn't going to be "eaten out of house and home." Every expense of the *ménage* was cut down. Instead of some seven or eight grooms and gardeners and domestic servants, only three were retained—an old woman to mind the house, an old butler, whom the squire insisted on keeping, and a groom and gardener, who combined both situations in one. When the children came—a girl and a boy—the squire thought things would be altered; but they were not. Mrs Hartshorne said they must save, and pinch and pinch more now for them—although goodness knows the estate was rich enough; and shortly after the birth of Tom, the old squire died, worn out it was said by the temper and treatment of his wife. It was, perhaps, a happy release to Roger of that Ilk, for the poor old gentleman had been sadly changed since his marriage, and used to look a piteous spectacle when he took his solitary rides around the village lanes on his old cob, the sole relict of his handsome stud which he had been proudly fond of displaying across country.

With the death of the squire, Mrs Hartshorne became more saving and pinching, and miserly than ever. The first thing she did was to dismiss the old butler, who had been in the family for some forty years, saying she "could not afford to support a lazy, useless pauper;" the next was to tell the bailiff and estate agent that their services were no longer required, for "she would have no curious eyes prying into her property, and telling everyone how much she was worth." The house was almost shut up and buried in seclusion, and no one but Doctor Jolly ever went there. *He* said he "would not be denied by any woman in creation," and although the "dowager," as she now came to be termed, used to put on her most vinegar-like expression for him, and address him in the snappiest and most provoking and insulting manner, he would call at the Poplars at least once a month in obedience to the promise he had given to the old squire on his death-bed to "look after his poor children." It must be said that Mrs Hartshorne tolerated the doctor in a sort of way—her way; and if she liked anyone, liked him who was a favourite with the whole county round. She had said to him when he first used to come, that she supposed he "came there because he might charge for his visits, and get something by it;" but when she found this was not the case, and that Doctor Jolly had no base intentions towards her money bags, she tolerated him, and allowed him to come and go as he pleased, without bestowing on him more than her customary amount of sweet temper.

When Tom grew old enough he was sent to school, only coming home for one week every year by express stipulation with the proprietor of the school! and when he became eighteen, at his earnest wish, and after continual wranglings with the old lady—who was passionately fond of him, although at the same time possessing an inordinate affection for money—he was allowed to go into the army. His mother said that he would "ruin her" when she gave an order on her banker to the doctor, who was Tom's guardian, for the sum required for his commission and outfit, but she did not behave illiberally, and gave master Tom a very fair allowance, satisfying her conscience by raising all the rents of her poorer tenants, and grinding down the household expenses more than ever. Of Tom she was not only fond but proud: it was the only one womanly trait in her character; and although she was not a very motherly kind of woman, and did not display her affection in the manner customary to the feminine sex—ruling her household, even Tom, with a rod of iron and a stern sense of duty—yet her son was very much attached to her, notwithstanding he did not exhibit any strong partiality for visiting her. He knew that the less he saw of her the better: they both understood each other well.

The daughter, however, Mrs Hartshorne hated and disliked in the strongest manner possible. She grew up uncared for, except as regarded frequent and summary corrections for childish misdemeanours; and if it had not been for the boy Tom she would have been altogether neglected. Little Susan was an eyesore to her mother in consequence of her being the only one provided for in Roger Hartshorne's will independently of the mother, to whom all the rest of the property, excepting of course the entail, was bequeathed without reservation. Mrs Hartshorne considered her own child as a species of interloper or invader of her rights, and treated her accordingly with neglect and almost cruelty when the squire was no longer able to look after and protect her. The very fondness of the old man for his little girl had been even an additional incentive for her ill-treatment. When Susan had reached her fifteenth year—she was little more than a year older than Tom—the dislike of her mother culminated in an accident, which indeed might be characterised in worse terms, that somewhat checked the ill-treatment and harshness she had previously suffered. She had done some trifling thing or other one day which had offended her mother to fury, and she consequently, after beating her most unmercifully, had locked her up all one night in a solitary part of the house by herself. The little thing was of a very nervous, tender organisation; and the fright she suffered in the lonely darkness throughout the long hours of the night drove away her poor little wits. When the child was let out the next day she was in a raging fever, and when she recovered from that, thanks to old Doctor Jolly (who was unremitting in his care, after frightening the mother by declaring her to be almost a murderess), she was never herself again. She remained quietly passive under any or every treatment of the mother "half-silly," as the poor folks say, and half-silly she was now still, although she was almost one-and-twenty. Her mental disorder was of a pathetic description—a sort of melancholia, and although her mother had procured governesses for her, and she knew, like a parrot, as much as most girls of her age in the matter of education, she never exhibited any likes or dislikes, or preferences, except for music, of which she was passionately fond: everything else that was taught her she learnt in a machine-like way. Susan would spend hours each day, particularly in the evening, playing on an old chamber-organ, which occupied one of the disused rooms of the house, wild, weird, melancholy melodies which appeared to soothe her, and give her the only sense of enjoyment she seemed to possess. Tom and Doctor Jolly were the only people she cared to see; her mother she disliked greatly, and had a sort of trembling fit whenever she came across her or passed her in the passages of the house; and the old female domestics she barely tolerated, although she liked old George, a simple, uneducated Sussex countryman (the county is great for its “chawbacons”), who now did all the odd jobs and outdoor work about the house since the establishment had been reduced.

Mrs Hartshorne always had a governess or special person to look after Susan, and she was careful to put down all the expenses of the said individual to be charged against and deducted from the portion which her daughter was to inherit in accordance with the terms of the squire’s will.

These governesses were always being changed, for few persons, even those who have taught themselves to submit, as governesses have to teach themselves, could long bear with the temper of the dowager. A new face was consequently ever coming and going within the narrow range of Susan Hartshorne’s horizon.

Doctor Jolly used to say that perhaps some sudden shock of grief or joy might restore the poor girl to the full possession of her senses.

“But then,” he would remark, “I don’t know how that is going to happen, unless the old lady kicks the bucket.”

Thus was Mrs Hartshorne placed, and it must be owned that a skeleton such as she had in her closet would not tend to sweeten her disposition. Hard and stern she was with all around her. She was her own farm agent, her own bailiff, her own man of business. If she had been entirely alone she would probably have had not a soul in the house with her, not even a domestic. She collected her own rents, and was never forgetful of a farthing owed to her. When the leases granted by the squire expired she would not let them be renewed, but kept her tenants under fear and trembling, with only a year’s certainty of possession of their homes; and she waxed rich, did the dowager, and had by this time a goodly pile of ready money at her bankers’. This was all for Tom, and, faith! the young sir would have a splendid inheritance when the dowager departed for the happy hunting grounds. The squire’s property, before the advent of Mrs Hartshorne, had been worth some ten thousand a year. It was now worth nearly half as much again, and the savings of the yearly income amounted to more than a hundred thousand pounds. “A very comfortable little sum of ready money, sir!” as the doctor would say.

The residence of the dowager was situated about a mile from the picturesque little village of Hartwood, which boasted not only of a special little station to itself on the S.C. Rail, but also of its own little church, quite independent of the sacred episcopal edifice general to the parish under whose jurisdiction it came. The dowager owned the church as well as the village, and the right of presentation being in her gift, she had recently inducted the most extreme Ritualistic divine she could procure into the pulpit of Hartwood, just purely out of opposition to the rector of the district, whom she disliked, and who was supposed to be of strong evangelical principles.

The Poplars—there can be no mistake in saying it—was an extremely ugly house. Its architecture was neither Gothic nor Norman, Elizabethan or Tudor; it was an heterogeneous pile of stones and brickwork, scrambled together without any style or design. Inside it was comfortable enough, and roomy and rambling; without it seemed nothing but a collection of eaves and chimneys, and its sole redeeming point consisted in the lofty and spreading poplar trees which surrounded it on all sides, as well as gave it its name, and concealed its native ugliness from strangers and passers-by.

There you have “The Poplars” and its mistress.

Volume One—Chapter Three.

The Fish and the Hook.

“Het-wood!” shouted the guard vehemently, as the train in which Tom Hartshorne and Markworth had left London drew up at a little wayside station, closely adjoining Hartwood village, the spire of whose church could be seen near at hand, amidst a group of lofty elm trees which surrounded it—and “Het-wood! Het-wood! Het-wood!” burst a tribe of porters and railway men, after that official, chorusing in full cry to a musical accompaniment of door-slammings and steam-escapements.

“Here we are at last,” ejaculated Tom, poking his head out of the window of one of the carriages as soon as they fairly stopped.

“Are we? Then the Lord be praised! Beastly long journey. More than two hours for only sixty or seventy miles!” responded his companion, stepping on to the platform, where they and their luggage were quickly deposited—the only arrivals for the little village—while the iron horse again grunted and puffed on its toilsome way with its string of cattle pens behind it.

“Good day, sir,” said the station-master, touching his hat respectfully to Tom; “do you want a trap, sir?”

“No, thanks, we’ll walk over; but will you send up our things for us, Murphy?”

“Certainly, sir; one of the men shall go at once with them. Here, Peter! shoulder them there bags, and follow Mister Hartshorne up t’ouse.”

“It’s much jollier to walk, Markworth,” remarked Tom, as they left the station, and he led the way over a stile into a little bypath across a field; “it’s a lovely afternoon, and we’ll get there in half the time we should if we drove by the road.”

“All right, my boy, I’m agreeable,” answered Markworth.

So they sauntered on, walking in a narrow foot-wide track, through acres of gleaming green fields of oats and wheat, with their wavy motion, like the sea, and their rustling tops, one of the railway porters following closely behind them, weighed down apparently by two heavy travelling-bags he carried, although, probably, he thought them but a trifle.

A pleasant walk it was on a fine summer day.

Presently Markworth could see a gaunt, grim stone wall in front of them, with a mass of tall, melancholy-looking, waving poplar trees behind it, all in a clump together.

“There’s the place,” said Tom. “We’ll be there in no time. We can go through that side-door,” pointing to a small gateway cut through the wall. “You must not mind, old chap, what my mother says, you know, at first. I told you she was a queer fellow, you know, and she will seem rough to you at first.”

“I sha’n’t mind, bless you, Tom—I oughtn’t to be afraid of any woman at my time of life, my hearty.”

In another minute they had arrived at the small door they had been making for, and Tom rang the bell with a sonorous peal.

After waiting about a quarter of an hour, and ringing some three times, the gate was at length opened by George, the Dowager’s “man of all work,” an honest, tall, beaming-looking countryman, who stood at the entrance with a broad grin of pleasure on his rustic face.

“Whoy! Lor sakes, measter Tummus! It beant you, be it? Well, to be sure!”

“Yes, it’s me, sure enough, George. How are the rheumatics?”

“Och! they be foine, sur?”

“Nice day, George, ain’t it? Good for the crops, eh?”

“Yees, *surely*! it’s a foine day when the soon shoines! that it be, sur! Ho! ho! ho.” And George laughed a heavy, earthy sort of laugh, which partook of the nature of the clay in which he delved—it was so warm, and yet lumpish, and seemed to stick in his throat and be unable to come out, although his mouth was certainly opened wide enough to permit of its exit. It may be mentioned that this was one of George’s time-honoured jokes about the sun and the weather, indeed the only one he ever knew of; and he would repeat it some twenty times a day, if anyone gave him the cue, each time being as much amused with it, and struck with its novelty and wit as if that were the first time he propounded it.

A sharp, querulous voice, which belonged to somebody evidently not far distant, here suddenly interposed—

“What are you standing jabbering and grinning there like a baboon for, man? Begone to your work man! Do you think I keep your idle carcass and pay your wages for you to be kicking your heels in the air all day and doing nothing? Begone to your work, man, and let my son in; if I ever catch you jabbering away like this again, out you go bag and baggage!”

Here it must be noted that the speaker did not pause a second in the delivery of this harangue—not a stop, such as have been put here for the sake of legibility, occurred between the words—the whole sentence rattled out as one word—a word fiery, hot, strong, and by no means sweet.

“Lor sakes! here’s the missus!” ejaculated George, in sudden terror; and clutching his spade, which he had put down to open the gate, he disappeared amidst the shrubbery much sooner and with a quicker movement than he had evidently acted the part of Janitor.

The Dowager it was, without a doubt—for her presence had quickly followed her words, and she now stood before the pair in all her imposing appearance with an irritated face, and her piercing eyes fixed on them enquiringly.

She was the first to break the short silence that ensued.

“Well, and so you have come at last, Thomas! There, shake hands! that will do. I wonder you have been able to tear yourself away from all your jackanape companions—a lot of reckless spendthrifts and conceited puppies, every one of them—to come and see your ugly old mother at last. I am so old, and, having no airs and graces to receive you like other people—all lies to be sure—that I wonder you do come at all! I suppose it is only because you want money—money, money, money, like the whole tribe of them—bloodsuckers all. But who’s this fellow with you?” she said, abruptly, turning round on Markworth as if she were going to snap him up. “Who is he, and what does he want, shoving himself in?”

Tom hastened to introduce him, saying that he was an old friend, Mr Allynne Markworth, who had been very kind to him, and whom he had ventured to invite down according to the express stipulation of his mother.

“Humph!” she muttered, “oh! that’s it, is it; why did you not say so before instead of letting him stand staring there like an idiot? But you never had a head, Thomas, and never will as long as you live! You are only fit to be a lazy soldier to flaunt about all day in a patchwork uniform and do nothing. The only sense you ever have shown was in selecting your profession! So this is Mr Markworth, is it? Humph! I daresay he’s like the rest of them—all calf’s head and shrimp sauce! How do you do, Mr Markworth?” She now spoke without the former asperity, and curtseyed low in an old-fashioned manner. “Any friend of my son is welcome to my house, poor as it is! Please go on and lead the way, Thomas, with your friend, you will find a room ready prepared for him, and you know your own. We dine at the regular hour, five o’clock, and it only wants half-an-hour to that, so don’t be late. I don’t want any dressing or fal-lalling!” The old lady then turned into the shrubbery, evidently after the recreant George, and she muttered to herself as she ambled along, “He’s taller than Thomas, and a handsome puppy; but I don’t like him—he’s a rogue, or I’ll eat my boots.”

There was no need for such an unusual repast on the part of the Dowager; she might have been wider from the mark in her casual conjecture.

Punctually at five o’clock the tones of some huge clanging old bell clanked through the house, proclaiming the hour; and Tom tapping at Markworth’s door, told him that dinner was ready. The latter at once appeared outside as elaborately dressed as if he were going to attend a Lord Mayor’s banquet.

“By Jove!” exclaimed Tom, turning his companion round and gazing upon him with eyes of wonder; “why, what on earth led you to get yourself up so fearfully?” as he led the way to the dining-parlour—a long, low, dismal room on the ground floor.

“I always mind little things,” replied the other; “I never sacrifice appearances:” in truth he never did.

Tom, on the way down in the train, had explained all about his sister’s infirmity—that she was “Not quite right here, you know,” tapping his forehead significantly; so Markworth was not surprised to see a tall, pale, slim-looking girl seated at the table with her eyes bent down on her plate. She looked up in a sort of painful wonder when they entered, which changed into a pleased, unmeaning smile when she recognised Tom, and immediately again dropped her eyes.

She was dressed in a scarlet dress, made of some stuffy material. Her one weakness—if weakness it were—was for bright colours; she had often told Tom that they made her “feel warm and happy.” Poor child! So she always wore scarlet or light-blue, or orange—the former hue was her favourite one, and she had evidently put on that dress to-day in honour of Tom, to show that she was glad and happy to see him.

Susan Hartshorne looked older perhaps than she really was; she had beautiful features, but her face was without expression, save that Markworth could perceive—for he had been intently watching her—an occasional careworn or agonised look pass across it whenever her mother spoke, which she did every now and then in sharp accents to the old woman servant who waited on them at table. The Dowager had taken no notice of Markworth in a conversational sense, although she eyed him frequently, except to mutter “coxcomb!” in an underbreath (which he however distinctly heard), when he first entered the room, and once to ask him to be helped to some dish before her.

The meal was a good one. The old lady received a portion of her rents “in kind,” and was never at a loss for fresh poultry, fish, or vegetable, not to speak of game; but it was soon over, for the presiding genius evidently looked upon it in the light of a serious business which was not to be trifled with. When the last dish had been brought in and removed, the dowager got up from her seat and stalked majestically out of the room, followed silently by her daughter, who seemed to glide rather than move.

“Rum old party, ain’t she? But she’s good, though, and I like her in my way, you know, the same as she does me,” observed Tom.

“Yes,” said Markworth, neither affirmatively nor in a questioning tone of voice, but with a mixture of both inflections. “Where, however, is that governess you were talking about to me?”

“Oh! Miss Kingscott! ’Pon my soul I don’t know. Let’s go and hunt her up; I have not seen her yet.”

Just then they heard the melancholy notes of an organ in the distance, as they turned into the passage.

“That’s Susan,” observed her brother. “I daresay Miss Kingscott is with her.”

They followed the strains, which grew louder as they penetrated into the back and apparently deserted quarters of the house.

“Here we are,” said Tom, as he opened the door of the room from whence the music proceeded.

A dark, haughty, ladylike girl, clad in rustling black silk, stood up and faced the door as they entered.

“Miss Kingscott, I presume?” Tom asked, bowing politely with his usual frankness.

“Whew! By jingo!” ejaculated Markworth, between his teeth. “I’m blessed if it isn’t Clara!”

Volume One—Chapter Four.

Miss Kingscott.

“Who was Miss Kingscott?”

“Aye, that would be telling, sure,” as a native of the Emerald Isle says when you question him about anything he does not care to disclose. But few persons could give you any satisfactory answer to your enquiry, not even the sharp, shrewd old dowager in whose employ she now was. She might tell you that Miss Kingscott was a governess, a lady’s companion—regarding her in the light of a saleable article of furniture—and that she came to her well recommended, and that she supposed she knew what she professed to teach, and was worth her wages, or she would not be hired; but she personally thought her “a bold hussie,” and that was all. Knowledge has its limits, and there Mrs Hartshorne ceased.

Who was Miss Kingscott? An easy question on the face of it, but one requiring a very complicated answer. Who was she? Why, *une fille errante*, a nobody’s child, a sort of female Bedouin, whose hand was against every man’s—and woman’s also—as she thought theirs to be against her. A woman young, beautiful, and, beyond all, clever, and not only very clever but heartless, and as devoted to self as she was *sans coeur*. One who could take her part—aye, and play her part—before the world; a fair face with a devil’s heart—that is if a devil does have a heart—and great keen basilisk eyes. One who might be anything and everything, for you could hardly judge her as to what *rôle* would suit her best, or rather suit her purpose best. A child yesterday, a woman to-day—nay, she could never have been a child. Only a governess now mayhap, but she might be *miladi* to-morrow if she plays her cards well. Pshaw! she always played her cards well, for there’s a rare little plotting head on her well-formed shoulders. Miss Kingscott, *entendez vous*, is a clever woman; one day she may be any character she please, and God knows what the next.

Now to sketch her personal attributes. In the ante-passport abolition days an employé in the *Bureau des Passeportes* might have put her down as follows: *Des yeux—gris; nez—aquilin; teint—pâle; cheveux—noirs; et taille moyenne*. In plain English she was a girl—woman that is—of some five feet two in height, of pale—strange the French have no distinction between pale and sallow—complexion, and with black hair and grey eyes. Grey eyes the Gallic officer would call them, but that would not describe them; they were basilisk eyes, eyes that had a depth of cunning, and treachery, and entrancement in them, which no colour term would express.

Ten years ago Clara Joyce—she had lately adopted the name of Kingscott, bequeathed her by a maiden aunt, who left her nothing else but her patronymic, which she could wear or not as she pleased, for there was no one living to question her right to the same—filled the position of English governess at a *Pensionat des Filles* in the *Rue des Courcelles* in Paris. The school was a famous one, and is a famous one still, so we must not be too particular about names or dates exactly.

Her previous life had been one of hardship, slavery, and neglect. Her parents had died when she was quite young, and she was placed at school, not to learn merely her education like her mates, but to learn her profession. She was to be a governess, and her earlier years were but a training for what she had afterwards to go through. First, she was a scholar *pur et simple*; next, she became a sort of general drudge, or female usher, as she grew older; and then her aunt—when the harpy who watched over her budding intellects grew tired of her temper, and declared her to be sufficiently taught to be able to teach others,—told her she could do nothing more for her, having recommended her to a situation, where she was engaged to teach every possible and impossible grace and accomplishment at starvation rate, and *ma tante* washed her hands metaphorically of her. This aunt of hers, who was the only relative that Clara Joyce ever remembered coming across, was by no means the sort of person to impress anyone with the idea of domestic affection, so houseless, homeless, and friendless, the girl had been all her school life, and houseless, homeless, and friendless she was when turned out into the world.

The very marrow of her nature had been frozen by her surroundings, and the life of a governess was not one to imbue her with any better feelings, although it increased her knowledge of human nature. One situation after another she filled in England until she was fairly sick of her country, and she eagerly accepted the position offered her in the *pensionat* in Paris, thinking that it might throw her into a fresh field and improve her chances of rising in the social scale. She had been an *intriguante* early, her experiences of life already had deepened her convictions that in order to succeed she must skilfully manoeuvre the wires, looking upon her fellows as puppets; but even then if she had had a fair chance—good heavens! how many of us are there not crying out for a fair chance—Clara Joyce would have turned out a very different person from the Clara Kingscott, of our story; but it was not to be.

At the time she entered the *pensionat* she was barely twenty years of age—she was now consequently just thirty—a handsome girl, although somewhat thin and pale, from the hard life and harder living she had gone through; and she now determined more than ever to take advantage of her looks and chances, literally to husband her resources. To endeavour in fact by a wealthy marriage—she had read and was told that eligible *partis* were much sooner picked up on the continent than in the more calculating Britain—to rid herself for ever of her working life, and be above the danger of want, which, poor *intriguante*, she had already gone through, and the necessity for drudgery.

She had no romance in her nature, no absurd ideas on the subject of love and happiness which the more benighted of us sometimes imagine to be indissolubly connected with the married state; but, taking her as she was, and putting such thoughts out of consideration, Clara Joyce, if she had had the chance, as has been before suggested, might have made a most exemplary wife for some one, and turned out, perhaps, a highly correct and eminently respectable mother of a family. Consider, now, she was brought up to slave for others, to subdue her own private feelings and wishes, to conceal her own thoughts and opinions, to enact a series of petty deceptions and tell white lies every day. How many are there not of our noble army of British matrons who go through the same parts every day? Fancy how Joan has to wheedle old Darby, and laugh at his stale jokes and “keep up appearances,” and slave for the children, so that her life is one long drudgery, the same as Clara’s. *Ma foi*! there are slaves and slaves, many whose black skins are hidden by a white mask, and whose chains clank beneath their silk or merino gowns.

French life with its manners and customs pleased our young *debutante*. Although as a matter of course, *mademoiselles les étudiantes* were carefully looked after, yet she had plenty of liberty allowed her, for she so “got round” the *directrice* of the school that she was nearly her own mistress; and she was not slow to employ her spare time in seeing as much as she could of the gay city, its habits, and its visitors. *Madame la Directrice* would have been shocked if she had known that her timid little modest English teacher, “such a quiet little thing, *pauvre enfante*!” often went to fêtes by herself, *sans chaperone*, and had been even seen in one of those monstrous places—a theatre! The *gouvernante* was a shrewd, cautious little actress, and *Madame la Directrice* was as blind, bah! as a mole. It was easy enough to make up a little story of relations to be seen, and to show letters of invitation imploring a certain demure English teacher to visit her poor aunt, who was all alone in Paris. And then the *pauvre enfante* was so regular in coming back. She was always in at the fixed hour every evening she went out—so quiet, so punctual. Madame never dreamt of such things as bribing a *concierge*!

While Clara Joyce was thus busying herself in investigating human nature, a certain young Englishman came to Paris, and in one of her excursions he made her acquaintance. *Monsieur l’Anglais* was tall and handsome and rich. He had plenty of money, and was liberal, and was looked upon as a *milord* at least by those with whom he associated. The young Englishman, however, was as shrewd and clever as the *gouvernante*. Need it be said that his name was one with which we are already acquainted? It was Allynne Markworth.

Clara Joyce was an elegant, pretty girl, and the way he made her acquaintance was in itself an additional charm. Markworth was attracted by her, and courted her society. He had then a little romance in him, and was to a certain extent in love with her; but the girl was as cautious as he was enamoured. She thought that at last she had succeeded in picking up her eligible *parti*, not only a wealthy one, but a young and handsome one also, a regular pearl of price. But, like all young players, she underrated her adversary, and let him see her hand too soon. Markworth was not one to be caught so easily. He was one, also, who was marketing on his good looks, and contemplated matrimony only through the diamond light of a fortune. He was not going to sacrifice himself for a pretty English governess, who had only her graces to recommend her, and not a sou of *dot*! He laughed at her when she spoke of the hymeneal altar; and so poor Clara Joyce—one cannot help pitying a clever woman who lays herself out to win and loses in the end—had made her *coup* and missed it just by a fluke!

She had staked her all, her *petit rouleau* of a heart on “black,” and here *noir perd et passe le coup*, as the gentleman, who presides over a queer looking long table divided into red and black squares as to its surface, at Homburg, says mechanically as he rakes in the little piles of glittering coin and quires of *billets de banque*, while the unlucky gamesters gaze on him ruefully, and bite their nails in disgust.

The girl was furious against him. She railed at him, she threatened him, she vowed vengeance, but he did not care a jot. He had not committed himself. He was too wary for that, and what did he care? She bored him, he said, and so he took himself off, and left her to her own machinations. But Clara was not one to be insulted or injured with impunity. She had vowed vengeance, and she intended to have it. She interested herself about Markworth. She wrote to England about him. She found out many little things about him which he never thought any one would recollect, or know here in Paris, at all events. By her indefatigable exertions, she discovered after a year’s spying, and seeking, and enquiry, that Markworth was on the eve of marriage with a millionairess—a besotted old widow of a Lyons manufacturer, who adored Englishmen, especially if they were *milords*, and the young lady communicated with the friends of the *devotee*. Through information she gave, the match was broken off, and Markworth learnt who had spoiled his little game. He could not do much, however; he could only expose her at the Pension, and then there was a fine blow up with Madame Bonchose, the *Directrice*. Of course Clara had to leave—such a “little snake in the grass,” as Madame called her. But she had had her revenge. Not that she was satisfied yet. That was only the first of a series of attacks she planned. She intended to be Mr Allynne Markworth’s evil star through life. It was an unlucky day for him, according to the Fates, when he came across her orbit and discovered Clara Joyce.

After leaving the *Pensionat des Filles* in disgrace, she next became a *Femme de Chambre* to a Marquise of questionable reputation, with whom she remained some two years, travelling about and increasing her knowledge of the world. But she had not forgotten Markworth, not she, and was ready to lay her hand on him again whenever she had the opportunity.

Time passed, and she came back once more to England. Her aunt died, so she assumed her name; and, as Miss Kingscott now, she took a situation once more in an English family at a cathedral town in the south. She knew *he* was in London now, and she wanted to be near him. She was so fond of him, you see!

But she had another little game, too, to watch over. One day Doctor Jolly had come to visit at the house where she was employed as a governess, and where she was about leaving, on account of the breaking up of the household. Doctor Jolly was impressed with her, and our heroine, having made enquiries, thought there might be worse lots in life than being a rich doctress: so she made eyes at him, and set her cap coquettishly.

The doctor mentioned that Mrs Hartshorne was in want of a lady companion for her daughter, and said he would recommend her.

Miss Kingscott was agreeable. She had heard there was an only son—Poor Tom!—and who knew what might turn up? Besides, she would be near the doctor, and consequently have him to fall back upon.

And so she came to be domesticated at The Poplars. The old lady squabbled with her, but she gave her as much as she got; and the dowager, pleased with having some one worth quarrelling with, retained her.

Susan, of course, was passive in her hands, and the son of the house she had not yet seen, so she bided her time, and diligently cultivated old Jolly, whose cheery “How-de-do!” to her would be heard afar, echoing through the poplar trees when he came to visit at the house, which he now did much oftener than before.

She was surprised, naturally, to see Markworth at the present juncture, but not so much as he was. He of course had not recognised her new name, which, indeed, he had never heard of before; and would have been as pleased—aye! more so—to have met his Satanic Majesty now than his quondam Parisian love—the little English governess.

“Damn her!” he growled, *sotto voce* to himself; “what the devil brings her here to spoil my game?”

Volume One—Chapter Five.

Counting the Cost.

“Miss Kingscott, I presume?” said Tom, bowing politely, as the lady gave a Parthian glance, sharp, quick, and incisive, of mingled recognition and command-to-keep-his-own-counsel-until-further-orders at her *soi-disant* lover Markworth, who stood in the rear of his companion, and who, although he was startled at her appearance, was too much the cool man of the world to give expression aloud to his astonishment. “Humph!” he thought unto himself, as he pulled his wits together. “I’m to keep dark, I suppose,” and he adopted an air of well-bred indifference.

Miss Kingscott smiled bewitchingly on the young squire.

“I am Tom Hartshorne,” continued that gentleman, in a warm, friendly manner. “You have been very kind to my sister, and I hope we shall be friends.”

This was a pleasant little fiction, by the way, on Tom’s part, as he had no previous knowledge whatever of Miss Kingscott’s kindness, or the reverse, but the young officer was of a gallant disposition.

“Oh, indeed!” said the lady, with an air of agreeable surprise. “And so you are Mr Tom. I am sure dear Susan has spoken often enough to me about you. I am only Miss Hartshorne’s governess, you know, but I’ve no doubt we will be good friends as far as our respective positions will allow.”

Humility was one of her cards, you see, but it was thrown away on Tom: he was more shocked than pleased, as others more purse-proud might have been, at the contrast drawn.

“This is my friend Allynne Markworth,” he went on, hurriedly; “we ran down together for a week to dissipate the London dust. He and I are great friends, so I hope that we’ll all be jolly together.”

Both inclined as if they had never seen each other before. Mr Markworth was remarkably deferential, with a concealed sneer on his lips, and the governess sweeping in her condescension.

Some little commonplace expressions and conversation then passed between the party, and you would have thought it the most delightful trio in the world.

All the while Susan Hartshorne was aloof from the party, seated in a corner of the half-furnished and half-lighted room, for the outside shutters were partially closed, and it looked as if it had not been inhabited for years—most probably a fire had not been lighted in its old grate since the squire’s death. She was playing on an antique-looking organ, with its zigzag rows of metal pipes which nearly filled up one end of the apartment, a fitful sort of air which rose and fell every now and then with a shriek like the last despairing moan of one of the lost spirits in Dante’s Inferno. Presently she ceased playing, and coming up to the others touched Tom on the arm.

“Come, brother,” she said, in a low, soft voice, without any inflexion in it; and, taking no notice of either the governess or Markworth, she led him gently towards the door. “You must see my garden,” she continued, speaking to him as if they were alone, just in the same quiet tones.

“I’ll be back presently; pray excuse me,” said Tom, as he went out; and Markworth and Miss Kingscott were left alone.

The former was the first to speak.

“So we’ve changed names, have we? Clara Joyce is dead, and Miss Kingscott reigns in her stead?”

“Mr Allynne Markworth, however, is still flourishing, I see,” she replied, in accents whose sarcasm was bitter enough and apparent enough without glancing at her scornful flashing eyes.

“Yes, small blame to you; but I don’t think you’ll play any more tricks with me again. Well, that’s long ago, and I can ‘forgive and forget;’ I shan’t rake up the past if you won’t. You are here under an assumed name, and—but what’s it to be, Clara, peace or war between us?”

“Or you’ll unmask me, eh? You will tell all about the silly English teacher-girl who was *éprise* of a swindling vagabond, and the mistress of whose school was so very correct as to discharge her without a character, will you? You’d like to get me turned out from here, the house of your rich country friends, would you?” she spoke rapidly and with intense bitterness. “Bah! I do not fear you, Allynne Markworth, any more than I do that baby-faced, idiot girl who has just left the room!”

“What’s the use of going on like that, Clara? Who said that I was going to injure you, or that you were afraid of me? By Jove! I know to my cost you’re not. Why can’t you be calm and look at things reasonably? You and I may be able to assist each other, and it’s better for us to be friends than enemies.”

“I care as little for your enmity as I do for the valuable friendship you gave me formerly. There can be little in common between us. Besides, even if I had the inclination, I don’t see how either you can help me, or I you.”

“But you can help me very much.”

"Ha! I thought you wanted something! No, there can be no accord between us. You are a man of the world, and I am, myself!" (here she laughed bitterly) "so let us each go our own way in peace or in war, just as you please—it's indifferent to me."

"What nonsense!" said Markworth. "It is not indifferent to you. You can assist me here in this very house, and, if you do, it will be to your advantage."

"Of course, you don't gain anything by it?"

"If my scheme succeeds, you shall share the profits."

"You will take the lion's share, I have no doubt! and if you fail?"

"I alone will bear the loss."

"How generous you are!"

"Well, do you consent to join forces? is it settled? Am I to tell Mrs Hartshorne—how pleased she'll be to hear it!—the character of the governess she has got for her daughter, or are we to form an operative alliance!"

"Markworth, you are a villain!"

"Granted," he said, calmly. "Do you agree?"

"I suppose I must," she replied. "You are not to interfere with me? and I—"

"Will assist me to the best of your ability. That's a bargain; I thought you would be reasonable, Clara."

"But what do you want me to do?" she asked, after a slight pause, fixing her eyes searchingly on his face.

"It is nothing criminal. You will not have to commit yourself in any way. I don't want you to do anything, in fact; I only want you to keep in the background, and not spoil sport. Will you do it?"

"Agreed," she answered. "And your grand scheme is—"

"Marriage," he said, curtly. "Well, it won't be your first attempt in that way at all events! Of course, there's a fortune in view, or you would not try that speculation. But who's the lady—not me, I presume?" she enquired, with another of those short bitter laughs which sounded so strangely from her lips.

"Not exactly!" he sneered; "I don't think you and I would just suit one another. Listen," he resumed, quietly, looking towards the door, and drawing closer to her, and sinking his voice as he spoke, "The girl is here—you understand?"

"I confess I do not see your drift," she said, wishing to draw him on to a full disclosure.

"Pshaw! Clara, you are not a fool; you understand me well enough."

"Perhaps I do, and perhaps I don't."

"Your eyes are not so blind that you cannot see when it is to your own interests. But there's no use in beating about the bush or mincing matters; you know this girl here."

"What! Susan Hartshorne—that poor idiot?" she exclaimed with well-acted amazement and horror.

"That same and no other," replied Markworth, positively blushing at being obliged actually to confess his own villainy. "But she's not an idiot, she's only foolish—half-silly; and there's no harm in it," he continued, half apologetically.

"And you want to marry her?" said the other.

"I do not *want* to marry her; I *mean* to marry her!" answered Markworth, quite himself again, and with his usual coolness and *sang froid*, "and you must help me. Listen! That girl has a fortune of twenty thousand pounds. I am so hard run for money that unless I get some before the present month is up, I shall be ruined—that girl has money which she does not want, and can never feel the need of—do you follow me?—consequently I mean to marry that girl. Nobody cares for her here; her mother, I daresay, will be glad to get rid of her, and the girl will suffer no loss."

"You will take care of her, I suppose!" said the governess, in her pleasant biting way.

"Yes, I will take care of her—as good care, I daresay, as she gets now."

"Well, and supposing I lent myself to your purposes, what am I to get—what is to be my share in the transaction? You don't suppose I am going to assist you and risk my situation for nothing?"

"I tell you what, Clara, if you help me in the affair I'll give you two hundred pounds; I can't give you more now, and I'll have hard work to get that, for I daresay I will have to go through a long law suit before I can get her fortune, and spend most of it, perhaps, in doing so, even if I do succeed in marrying the girl and getting her off."

"It's little enough! but how shall I know that you will pay me?—you have cheated me before, Markworth, and I would not trust your word for sixpence."

"You need not if you don't like, but I'll act fairly in the matter. I will give you a hundred before I get the girl away, and another hundred after I am married to her. There, will that do? If I don't pay you, you can expose the whole affair; and if you go back on me you will implicate yourself afterwards; so it serves both our purposes to act squarely. Do you know what the girl's age is?"

"Yes, twenty-one; I saw her age in the old family Bible, which Mrs Hartshorne keeps up-stairs in her own room."

"Well I wish you would get me a look at it, or find out the exact date of her birthday for me—it's important."

"I will let you know either this evening or to-morrow, better say to-morrow."

"That will do. Then the bargain is concluded between us. All I want you to do now is to help me gain the girl over, she looks tractable enough—and help me to get her away quietly. I'll give you the hundred before I get her off; then as soon as I marry her you shall get the other century. I can't help keeping my word to you, for you see it suits my own interest. It's little enough I want you to do. If all goes well it will run hard if I don't succeed and get the fortune, and I'll remember you afterwards. Do you agree—is it a settled thing between us?"

"Yes," said she, apparently reflecting a moment. "I suppose that will do, for if you don't pay me I shall then be able to disclose the whole transaction."

"Precisely," he answered, complacently, "You can have me indicted for conspiracy and what not! but there'll be no fear of that. We will not quarrel, Clara; what suits my book will suit yours."

Besides consulting Roger Hartshorne's will he had obtained legal advice on his contemplated marriage before coming down to The Poplars.

"Very well, if you are sensible you will play fair in the undertaking, and I shall be satisfied. If you keep your word I shall assist you; at all events *I* am not going to marry the girl, so I shan't have anything to complain of if I get my money."

"I will pay you, never fear! and you must keep to your bargain, and allow me to work my own way with the girl, and assist me in the end to get her off. Don't forget to let me know to-morrow her right age, and write down the date of her birth—it might be useful to me. But about the girl herself, she is not really mad, is she?"

"I thought you yourself told me just now she was not."

"Bother! don't be so aggravating, Clara; you ought to know the girl, and be able to tell me about her."

"You need not alarm yourself, Mr Allynne Markworth," replied Miss Kingscott, with a sneer; "on the contrary, allow me to congratulate you. You have tumbled into luck's way, and appear to have fallen upon your legs as usual. The girl is only, as you said, half-silly, and without being exactly an idiot can be made to do anything you and I please—that is, by judicious management."

She was going to say something further, but at this moment Tom re-entered the room, and, of course, the conversation was dropped.

"I was just asking Miss Kingscott if she liked croquet, and, Tom, do you know—can you believe it, she has never heard of that flirtative and fascinating game?" said Markworth, in his usual free and elegant manner.

"Really!" said Tom. "Then we must enlighten her. Markworth is the prince of croquetters, you know, Miss Kingscott"—turning to her, and that lady seemed pleased for the information, and transfixed poor Tom with her beautifully expressive eyes.

"Fine girl," he said presently to Markworth, as they went out of the room to smoke their cigars in the garden.

"Ya-a-s," he replied, spinning out his answer as if he had not quite made up his mind on the subject; "but she's no chicken."

He was right, and he ought to know, at all events. Miss Kingscott was "no chicken," either in years or in strength of mind.

The evening passed quietly with Tom and his visitor, neither the governess nor Susan being seen again, and the old dowager was especially gracious as bed-time drew nigh. This was fixed at an early hour—ten o'clock.

Markworth was presently in his room, and as he undressed he moralised on the events of the day, and the progress of his plot.

"Rum, wasn't it?" he soliloquised, "meeting Clara here; but it is a decided pull in my favour. The thing is regularly *en train* now, and must come off soon. The girl is passable enough, and at all events I don't care. I must risk Tom's anger; but I don't suppose he will mind it much—he's soft, and I can manage him as I like. There's only the old lady, and I hardly know how to wheedle her yet, she's so downright and plain spoken. By Jove! of all the characters I ever met she's one!"

In the midst of his meditations a loud authoritative rap came to the door.

"Your light?" said a thin, sharp voice, which he instantly recognised as Mrs Hartshorne's.

He opened the door, and nearly burst out laughing at the odd figure which presented itself. It was the dowager, clothed in a long white garment, and with an immense frilled night-cap on her head, and two or three candlesticks in one hand, and a huge bunch of keys in the other.

“What are you staring like a stuck pig at? Give me your candlestick! All the lights in my house go out at half-past ten o’clock every night. That’s my rule, and I won’t break it for anyone, I don’t care who! Give me your light.”

Markworth handed the candlestick to the old lady, who presently retreated down the passage with her arms outstretched, looking like the Witch of Endor.

“No chance of a cigar here,” he said to himself, as he closed the door once more, and jumped into bed. “She would smell it at once; I’d back her nose against a pointer’s any day. She’s a rum un; of all the characters, by Jove! I ever met, she is one!”

And he turned in his bed and slept the sleep of the just, in which the wicked equally share.

Volume One—Chapter Six.

Concerning Certain Young Persons.

It came to pass on the following Sunday, two days after their arrival, that Tom and his friend went to church along with the dowager, as befitted respectable people, and a family of state in the county. Not to the parish church, where the Rev. Jabez Heavieman preached his ponderous sermons, and warned his congregation of their approaching perdition, and the damnation of their souls, in his customary evangelical style. Oh, no! but to the altogether-of-a-different-sort-of-a-doctrine little edifice in Hartwood village, which specially belonged to the Sussex Dowager. Indeed she regarded not only the church as her own peculiar property, but also its officiating clergyman, clerk, school children, nay, even the very future hopes of salvation of the worshippers who frequented it.

Hartwood Church was as unpretending a building as to its style as The Poplars.

It was a small ungainly-looking, low-roofed structure, oblong with a stone cross at one end, and a short square tower at the other. It was built of rough stone, and had apparently been constructed with a deficient supply of mortar; and a small abutment, which it had on one side for the requirements of the porch and vestry-room, had more the semblance of a shed attached to a farmhouse than anything else. It was an old church, too, probably much older than the one belonging to the parish; and its little churchyard, encircled by rude wooden palings, contained some monuments and tombstones, which were grey with age and as rough as when they were first hewn from the quarry, telling how “John Giles, aetat 95,” and “Richard Chawbacon, aetat 104,” both of whom departed this life Anno Domini 16 hundred and something, were there entombed. All the Hartshorne family, too, from Geoffrey Hartshorne, who founded the race and belonged to the Roundhead party in the days of Cromwell, down to the last old squire, there rested their bones in peace. One peculiarity of the churchyard, however, consisted in the great age to which its inhabitants had attained before shaking off this mortal coil. Ninety years was a comparatively early time for any of the former citizens of Hartwood to dream of sleeping with his fathers; and although you occasionally came across an inscription sacred to the memory of a young man of seventy or thereabouts, the majority of the departed were mostly centenarians.

The interior of the church was very different to what you might have expected from the outside view. The dowager, to do her justice, was not mean in all things; and, although she would screw her tenants down and pinch her household, she could occasionally—very occasionally it must be confessed—be not only liberal but grand in her views, that is when it suited her book. She had had the church newly fitted up some short time before, when her High Church fever and devotion to Ritualism had first begun; and all its columns and crossbeams and rough rafters, which could be seen within, were newly varnished and resplendent in their graining. The chancel, too, was a wonder of blue and gold, and she had also presented a novel reading-desk or *lectern*, consisting of a brass eagle with outstretched wings, which stood in the centre of the aisle, and presented quite a grand appearance.

The pews were not what one generally calls pews at all: they were a series of high-backed benches, armed at each end, and placed in rows down the middle of the aisle facing the pulpit and chancel, those at the side being arranged at right angles, so that the lateral pews faced each other; this position must be borne in mind, as it accounts for a trifling circumstance which led to the origin of the present chapter.

Slowly and majestically Mrs Hartshorne marched into the church, and slowly and majestically Tom marched after her, carrying her large prayer-book and Bible of the size originally distributed by the Religious Tract Society—a service generally performed by the henchman “Jarge,” as he pronounced his own name—while Markworth brought up the rear of the procession.

The dowager’s pew was immediately opposite the pulpit, and, of course, facing the side pews on the other side behind the reading-desk, the front one of which was devoted to the use of the incumbent for the time being and his family, in case he had any.

Up the aisle in its onward and solemn progress the procession passed, and the dowager was soon ensconced in the extreme upper corner of the pew, with her devotional exercises arranged before her on the *prie-Dieu*, and her hands folded on her lap, now deprived of their customary woollen envelopes, as prim as you please. “Primness was no name for it, sir,” as Markworth said afterwards to Tom; “her position was—yes, sir, statuesque, by Jove!” The guest sat bodkin between the two, while Tom occupied the corner—by the place where the door should have been if there had been one—from which point he could command a portion of the clerical pew, otherwise obscured from general observation, at least on this side of the house, by the reading-desk.

Tom, I am sorry to say, was not particularly devout in church. He would keep his eyes straying from his book, and yet his attention did not wander over the whole edifice, for he looked straight in front of him, and none but a very curious observer could have detected his lack of devotional zeal. His mother did not notice it, for she was apparently plunged heart and soul into the liturgy, although really making up her mind as to the feasibility of raising Farmer Grigg's rent upon having seen the daughters of that unfortunate worthy, who were esteemed the belles of the village, come into church with new bonnets and actually silk dresses! "when I can not afford them, the brazen hussies." As for Markworth he was wondering what a rum lot the Chawbacons were, and how funny they all looked clean washed and scraped, and with their elaborately-braided white smock-frocks on over their black trowsers, looking as if they had donned surplices, or, as he hit upon a better illustration, as if they had put on their night-shirts—I beg pardon, *rôbes de chambre*—and come out by mistake instead of going to bed. So Tom had it all his own way.

Tom was observant, but it was nothing so very noticeable that attracted his attention. It was only a bonnet! only a little coquettish arrangement of ribbons and lace, and very little crown to it, if any,—only one of those tiny specimens of Madame Charles or Leroux, handiwork which you can see any day in Leicester Square, and which though apparently so trifling are worth far more than their weight in gold—as poor Paterfamilias knew to his cost. It is a dainty, demure little article enough, but nothing in it is there to warrant this wrapt attention on Tom's part.

Can he be considering how two ribbons can be held together in that artful mode by a mere straw? is he a disciple of the millinery art? No, that would not make the gallant young officer gaze so entrancingly, and cause the ruddy flush of excitement to colour his budding cheek! Master Tom is not so simple as that, although he may be a most ingenuous youth. The bonnet has a wearer who will keep her eyes bent down as earnestly as Tom persists in raising his from his book, and fixing them over the way, except now and then an occasional blushing little look across, and then once more down deep into the service again. It is a pretty little bonnet and has a pretty little owner, as Tom thinks. He "considers it a shame," but he cannot help letting his enquiring optics travel over the way. Young rogue! how he enjoys seeing the colour which his too-earnest gaze calls up—the pink signal of maidenly reserve, pleasure, coyness, consciousness.

There is no blame attached to Tom, those heavenly violet eyes have done it all. He could not help it even if he would. Tom is hopelessly in love—love at first sight—with pretty Lizzie Pringle, Mrs Hartshorne's young incumbent's sister. He is thoroughly in for it, as much as if he had known her for months or years.

It is all very well for you, Monsieur Cynic, or you, Madame Artless, to say that there is no such thing as "love at first sight." Of course it is foolish, but it is not impossible; Cupid, my dear sir or madam, is a most erratic as well as *erotic* young gentleman, and plays some strange pranks sometimes. A glance from a pair of bright eyes will some times, one glance, effect a wonderful metamorphosis in even the sternest misogynists, create a revolution, ruin an empire. Look at history, Monsieur Cynic, and answer me if you dare. Nay, my dear sir, it is not impossible, not even improbable. A single word, one look between sympathetic souls, often establishes that cordial affinity which years of intercourse, and dictionaries of words, and oceans of sighs will not create between others who have not met their mental kindred. Philosophy cannot argue against Cupidon; he laughs Plato and his platitudes to scorn. *Dixi*! I have spoken. Tom has fallen in love, and it was a clear case of love at first sight, with Lizzie Pringle just the girl he was ordained—in a non-clerical sense—to fall in love with.

She was as nice a little thing as you could conceive—slim, petite, with dark brown hair nearly black, such heavenly violet eyes with liquid depths, and the most ravishing little rosebud of a mouth and piquante little nose possible for any one but a fairy to possess; she was so winning, innocent, pretty a specimen of God's gift to man, that the fact is Master Tom would have deserved being called an *eingebornen knarren*, adopting the German text for fool, if he had *not* fallen a victim immediately to her violet eyes. And then she was dressed so bewitchingly—not in gaudy contrasts, or in the extreme of the *mode*, but so neatly and in such a ladylike manner that she must have attracted even wiser heads than his.

Of course she saw him looking at her—of course she did! "What a rude staring fellow he is to be sure!" she said to herself mentally, and resolved not to look that way again but to fix her attention sternly on the Thirty-nine Articles; still she would have just one peep more.—"There he is again, the great rude creature! What nice blue eyes he has, and such a little love of a moustache! and what on earth can he find to look at so persistently over here?" And down would go the long dark lashes again, and a little conscious blush would rise, and even the tender little ears and supple white neck would be encrimsoned. "It must be Mister Tom," she determined, "that dark ugly man that went in with Mistress Hartshorne could not be him; but he is a very naughty fellow to be staring at a young lady like that." Yet she would go on to excuse him to herself. "Perhaps he does not know any better, poor fellow; he's very young" (she was just seventeen mind you), "and when I know him I will tell him what I think of his rudeness." And then she would wonder to herself whether she ever would know him, and it sent a pang to her little heart when she thought she might not, and then Master Tom would catch her eye, and the tell-tale blush would hang out its pink flag again, and there would be a little flush of happiness, and so *da capo*. Just picture to yourself, Corydon, your little flirtation or *grande passion* with Phyllis, and you can easily fill up all the blanks and imagine the rest.

The Reverend Herbert Pringle, B.A., Oxon, who now filled the living at Hartwood, was a very young man; but a very great man in his own estimation, and in that of some others also, as to family, talents, and ritualistic attainments in the church. He was the cousin, twice removed, of Sir Boanerges Todhunter the great anti-taxpayer and member of the Opposition, belonged to the extensive High Church party at Oxford, had gained some celebrity at the Union Debating Club; and here he was now the regular incumbent (for a term of only five years be it known, for the Sussex Dowager liked always to have a hold on her tenants in the matter of leases, and stretched her authority to the livings she had in her gift) of a respectable church in a good county, where he could do as he pleased—at an age when the majority of his compeers would be struggling along perhaps in their first curacies.

He had reason to be proud of himself; and really, putting aside a certain priggishness of manner and affectation of style, he was not such a very bad fellow. Take him out of the church, and he would have been a regular jolly fellow, who would have got along capitally in a mess room or in a hunting county, for he was dearly inclined to horseflesh, and had kept his two hunters at Swain's before he had "gone in" for the High Church party of "young Oxford." He was a short, well-built, straw-whiskered man of some eight and twenty, although almost boyish in manner and in face. He had pleased the dowager by the way in which he had officiated as curate during the long illness of the late incumbent, and she had determined to put him in the vacant pulpit, if only out of opposition, as has been observed before, to the Reverend Jabez Heavieman, whom she cordially detested.

Herbert Pringle had therefore tumbled upon a snug thing. "His lines had fallen in pleasant places," so here he was inducted into the living of Hartwood. His first step was to set up housekeeping, in order to do which he had to bring his favourite little sister Lizzie from school to "keep house" for him, and then he set about making further improvements in his district, for which he had *carte blanche* from the dowager, who, whenever she heard of some fresh innovation, thought to herself, "I wonder what that old hypocrite"—alluding to the Reverend Jabez—"thinks of that now!"

The restoration of the church was effected at the new incumbent's especial request; and the brass lectern was given by the old lady because the young divine had munificently presented a huge painted window, the subject of which was a large cross, erected just over the chancel. Then a new harmonium was got in place of a wretched old "spinet," which had previously done duty for an organ, and a choir was regularly established from amongst the school children that sang the responses in church now every Sunday, its members clad in little dirty white surplices.

He was all in favour of ceremonials, was the Reverend Herbert Pringle; and although he perhaps "meant well" according to his judgment, he was very affected, and "High Church" all through the service—to the intense astonishment of the farmers and poor labourers, who used to wonder at the new style of worship adopted in their old church, and be perplexed with all the bowings and genuflections, and especially with the white-surpliced choir.

To give him his due, however, he did not preach a bad sermon, and had a very effective way of appealing to the pockets of his hearers when any charity required his aid; but he read always in a light, jocular, hurried manner, as if he were under an engagement to get over a certain portion of ground in a fixed time, and he always said, or intoned, "Awe-men" instead of Amen at the end of the prayers.

He had now been in possession of his cure for more than six months, and consequently felt at home in it. His improvements, too, had now been got accustomed to; and although he was thought somewhat queer in his notions by the heavy agriculturists around him, he was pretty well liked on the whole. As for his sister Lizzie, she was idolised by poor and rich around: to tell the truth, it is my opinion that a good deal of her brother's popularity arose from his connection with the young lady with the violet eyes.

Tom's bad behaviour continued all through the service, and his eyes were not still even during the eloquent discourse which the young divine afterwards delivered, on the "Vanity of human wishes"—would that Tom could have applied the text! In going out of the church, he allowed his mother and Markworth to go on in front, and hung back in the rear. He could see that his charmer had not yet stirred from her pew, although nearly all the congregation were out, and he wondered what made her linger.

Fortunately, he was not long kept in suspense. He passed our old friend "Jarge" in the porch, and incontinently asked that individual "who was the young lady in the rector's pew?"

"Lor sakes! Measter Tummus, don't you know un? Whoi, thet's the porsun's seestur; that be Missy Pringle, Measter Tummus!"

"Thank you, George," answered our hero; and how overjoyed he felt as he walked along after the others. He knew Pringle well, although he was not aware that he had a sister; and "of course I can easily get introduced," he thought very naturally.

The following Monday, strange to say, Tom begged Markworth to excuse him for some little time, as he had to pay a visit, and he set off alone to the parsonage.

Naturally he was "only going to pay a regular call;" it was only proper that he should pay a visit to his friend Pringle, whom he had not seen "since last year, by Jove!" and to congratulate him on his ecclesiastical preferment. That was all! And so Master Tom rode up to the parsonage on one of the old horses, which the dowager had retained in the stables—probably on account of its not being fit for farm-work—the very next morning after seeing Lizzie.

Pringle was glad to see him, and his sister was introduced to the "young squire," who tried to make himself as agreeable as possible, but was painfully embarrassed during his entire visit; and yet, before he had gone away, Lizzie thought him "such a nice fellow," and she was "oh, what a darling" to him.—The two young things were drinking deep draughts of love which were intoxicating them and drawing them nearer and nearer to each other in a sort of rose-coloured Paradise, which the mere presence of the one conjured up to the other. And then he had to go, and it was pleasant to go, merely to have those taper fingers in his, which pressure sent a thrill of sweet electricity through his frame, while even she trembled and blushed—and then came the pang of parting.

On the morrow, he had to come and see "Pringle's new fishing rod," and show him his own, for it would be so jolly to fish from the lawn at the back of the parsonage, that ran down to the little river which contained such capital perch! and of course he could not help meeting her again, and she wanted to see the "poor little fish that were caught!"

Bless you, my darling, there were other fish caught that morning besides perch! How hackneyed, and yet how novel are the windings and twistings in the fairy land of Love's Young Dream!

It was all over with them.

Volume One—Chapter Seven.

“Sowing the Wind.”

The nominal week, which had been mentioned as the duration of Markworth’s stay at The Poplars, passed pleasantly enough for Tom at all events. So pleasantly indeed, that he did not keep count of the days as they glided by, for he was continually dropping in at the parsonage “to see Pringle,” and was, long before the following Friday arrived, over head and ears in the little pit of love which Lizzie’s bright eyes had excavated in his heart. The dowager was still trotting about grinding down her tenants, and laying up riches which she did not know who would gather. Miss Kingscott had made the best use of her opportunities in two short interviews which she had had with the somewhat amorous doctor, and had yet contrived to cast sheep’s eyes on the young squire, whom she had hopes of captivating; while Markworth was steadily trying to gain the confidence of the poor half-demented girl, around whom he had already set his snares. All, all the members in fact of our drama, were recklessly engaged in the vineyard of Aeolus, all were with lavish hand sowing to the wind, never dreaming of the crop they should reap.

Susan Hartshorne’s strong passion for music had early been taken advantage of by Markworth as a means towards the end he had in view.

Music was, strange to say, for such a character, one of his fortes, indeed it was a hobby with him; and he was not only a first-rate player in the mere sense of mechanical dexterity, but was also a thorough musician at heart.

The pathology of the human mind is a wonderful and intricate study, and it is a remarkable fact, with all our spread of knowledge and science, with the vast new fields of thought which are freshly opened every day in the educated world, what trifling advance we have made in the analysis of the mainspring and moving power that sets in motion the train of thought itself! Medical jurisprudence has only of late become a special study, and the psychology of the human mind, one of its most important branches—more than a mere ramification as it is often held—is at best only a dead letter as yet to those who affect any acquaintance with the subject. Mental insanity is one of those topics, like the physiology of dreams, which embraces a large area for research and investigation; and even the best and latest of the physicians who have made this division of medical knowledge their especial field for enquiry, confess to what a very short distance their knowledge carries them. Hence, until very lately, not only was there no remedial treatment pursued, but arbitrary incarceration, strait-waistcoats, and chains, comprised all medical procedure towards our lunatics. Thank goodness, however, the broad light of science, reason, and common sense, has tended to dispel the black ignorance displayed by our forefathers towards our mental as well as bodily ills. Formerly drastics and phlebotomy, adopted alternately, were supposed to cure every disease and ailment of the human body, but that day is past now; and, so as in surgery and physic, a new path has been opened for the treatment of insanity. It is yet in its infancy; but many species of mania now deemed hopeless will before long, probably, succumb before judicious and efficacious ministering.

One of the most hopeless forms of insanity, according to eminent authorities on the subject, is melancholia, but even this gives way under proper treatment. In cases of this kind, patients are but too often neglected, and the cure is left, ignorantly, to work out itself, which generally ends unsuccessfully; whereas, if the patient under treatment were led out of themselves as it were, their affliction ignored, and treated to just the company and influences which appear to affect them most, I believe in nine cases out of ten of so called settled melancholia, the unfortunate sufferer would be turned out cured after a time.

Susan Hartshorne was suffering from this species of mental infliction. Her case certainly was not a very extreme one; and if she had been removed from her home at the time she first lost her wits, and been under gentle treatment and care (as Doctor Jolly recommended) instead of being kept at the place where all her surroundings, and especially her mother’s presence, kept the great fright she had undergone continually before her, she would have been cured long since. Even as it was, she was every month gaining fresh mental stamina from the outside influences at work upon her: now that Markworth specially devoted himself to her, as he did, and gradually caused her budding intellect and intelligence to expand instead of warping them, she changed more and more for the better every day. Markworth told Tom that he was interested in the case—as indeed he was on more accounts than one—and if left to himself he would cure her completely. The mother, too, seemed interested, as she could not but perceive the change in Susan, and thanked Markworth in her way, by dropping some of her brusquerie, and also by avoiding her daughter so as not to frighten her, and make her shrink back within herself by her presence and appearance—Markworth had drawn her attention to the point. As for Miss Kingscott, of course in fulfilment of her compact, she did not interfere with him at all, and allowed him to mould her charge as he pleased, although she watched him narrowly, and bided her time.

Allynne Markworth had now become domesticated to a certain extent at The Poplars. The first week flew away rapidly, even with him, he had so much to plan, and to take such pains to get his plot *en train*; while with Tom the time had disappeared since he knew Lizzie as one day. Mrs Hartshorne, too, was so glad to have her son at home, although she seemed rather unsympathetic mother, that she tolerated Markworth at first for his sake; and he had played his cards so well, and studied her little weaknesses so fully, and kept himself so much out of the way, that she at length looked upon it as a matter of course that he should remain when Tom hinted at stopping. “It is such nice weather,” explained that young deceiver, “and so jolly down here, Markworth, and the Inskips are coming down this week, that I wish you would stay on—that is, if you are not fearfully bored with us all.” It was very strange, was it not, that Tom had not remembered the fact of the Inskips coming down before?

“Not at all, my dear fellow,” answered Markworth; “I like this place very much; and your mother and I get on very well now, although she did not certainly like me at first;” he could not help laughing over the recollection of his first meeting and introduction to the dowager, Tom sharing in his merriment.

“Well, I am glad you will stop. It is much better here than being in town, and I begin to like a country life,” observed Tom, thinking of violet eyes and pastoral rusticity.

“So do I, Tom; it is far better than all the racket we could have up in London. I am very glad I came down, but we’ll, no doubt, have lots of gaiety when the Inskips come—not that I care about it, for I am really interested in the case of your sister.”

“Thank you, old fellow; I am sure you are very kind to take all that trouble about Susan. Well, it’s agreed that we stay on now that we are here, at least for a week or two. My leave won’t be up until September, and even then I daresay I could get an extension, for the colonel’s an old trump.”

“Agreed,” responded Markworth; “when you are tired of me you can turn me out, you know, but I daresay the old lady would take that trouble off your hands.” And they both laughed again at such a possibility, which without joking the dowager was fully capable of doing by herself. And so their stay at The Poplars was decided upon, and Markworth had plenty of time in which to perfect his plans.

Susan’s love of music had done much, probably, to preserve her mind from altogether closing up within itself: and her fondness for gardening and flowers was also beneficial to her case.

The first, Markworth had perceived at once; and he quickly set to work upon that foundation to gain a hold upon her, and draw her out of herself.

He used to go up-stairs to the old room where the organ was, and play some of those wonderful fugues of Beethoven, and saddening chords from the “Lieder ohne Worte,” that would nearly make angels weep; and the affected girl used to follow him, and draw near, as if spell-bound, whilst he was playing, and try and imitate him after he had left his seat before the keys.

Then he began to speak gently to her, only, perhaps, a sentence now and then, for she was fearfully timid and frightened of strangers, but after a time she learned to know him, and would reply. No sort of conversation, of course, could be carried on with her, for her intellect was just like that of a young child’s, although she had learned things by wrote, like a parrot, and could imitate whatever she saw another do. After a time she would voluntarily seek Markworth, and ask him to play the organ in her pleading way; and she would sit quietly for hours to hear him. If he smiled on her she looked happy: if he frowned, or raised his voice, her face would wear a tearful and frightened aspect.

The garden used to be one of her favourite resorts. Here she would wander up and down before Markworth came, speaking to herself, as if she were carrying on a conversation with someone else. Here she had flowers of which she was passionately fond, treating them as if they were living things, and crying over them should a leaf be broken off, or a branch blown down. Old George used to take especial pains over “Missy’s” garden, and she always used to go out and watch him at work, and be continually inciting him to dig up the earth around her plants. When Markworth began his care, however, Susan changed a great deal in her habits. She at first gave up the garden, and only would go to the organ-room; but when he brought a flute out and used to play an air of which she was especially fond, in and about her favourite haunts in the shrubbery, she got to come out again, ceased her imaginary dialogues, and grew more expressive and brighter. Insane people always seem affected by wind instruments.

Markworth took care, however, never to play the flute when the dowager was about the premises, as she “hated that odious tooting thing even worse than the jackass that played it”—she said.

Miss Kingscott used to accompany Susan, and consequently the three were very much together, for Tom was nearly always out now by himself, as he could not get Markworth to accompany him to the Pringles; and when he was at home he used to flirt with the governess under his mother’s very nose, and leave Susan even more in Markworth’s hands.

The devil, they say, is never so black as he is painted, and, perhaps, Markworth was not altogether so selfish or so wicked in his motives as one might suppose. He was really interested, deeply so, in the peculiar case of Susan Hartshorne; and having read a great deal on insanity and its cure, he had certain theories of his own on the subject which made him glad of the opportunity for reducing them to practice. If he had not known that the poor girl was the heiress to twenty thousand pounds, and had not circumstances so strangely placed Clara Joyce—he could not think of her even by her new name—in the house to assist him, he would never have dreamt of his plot, nor have attempted to carry it out after he saw the subject, or rather object, of it; and yet, perhaps, he would still have tried to put her in the way of recovering her reason without a thought of recompense. As it was, he was now working with a double object, and the success which he met with startled him, while it emboldened him to persevere in his design.

In a short time there was such a perceptible change in Susan that anyone not in the habit of seeing her frequently would have noticed it at once; and soon she was altogether different from what she had been. Her eyes began to have some expression in them; how different they looked from their former dull appearance; and she would now look anyone in the face instead of hanging down her head as she formerly did. Dr Jolly was one of the first to perceive the alteration, and complimented Miss Kingscott on the change one day.

“Bless my soul, ma’am! why, nobody would recognise her again. It’s positively wonderful. By Gad! madam, you deserve a medal for it. I would not have believed such a change could have taken place unless I had seen it myself.”

Whereupon Miss Kingscott half declined the credit of the cure, but in such a way as to make the doctor repeat his compliments.

“Bless my soul, ma’am! it’s no use telling me that, I know better. It’s wonderful, and you deserve every credit—yes, ma’am, by Gad! ma’am, you do. Good-bye, Miss Kingscott; I shall call soon again to see your patient, for she is yours now, you know, ma’am. Go-o-od-morning.”

And the doctor took himself off, with an elaborate farewell adieu. He would have kissed his hand, it is believed, only that the old dowager was standing looking out at the window, and might have called him an old fool as likely as not.

Volume One—Chapter Eight.

Damon and Pythias.

He is not a very romantic Damon is Doctor Jolly, nor is he at the present time to be seen under favourable circumstances, or in the most picturesque of situations.

The fact is, Dr Jolly has got an attack of the gout, “his old friend,” as he calls that hereditary and choleric disease; and here he is, seated in his snug parlour—he knew how to live well and be comfortable did the doctor—with his feet in a pail of cold water, like Patience on a monument smiling at grief; (one can’t help quoting the “noble bard.”) He was pursuing a rather violent method for reducing the inflammation in his pedal extremities in order that he might be able to go out and pay his usual pharmaceutical round of visits, and he was writhing and swearing inwardly, most probably, and often aloud, from the pain of the gout and remedy combined.

“Bless my soul! Deb!” he exclaimed, as irascibly as his natural good temper would allow, to his sister Deborah, our Pythias, who was in the room along with him. “Bless my soul! Whew I what a twinge. Confound the gout, Deborah!”

“Confound it with all my heart, Richard, if it will do you any good,” she replied, calmly, drawing the thread through the heel of a stocking which she was darning; “but you know, Richard, it’s your own fault. You *will* drink that port wine, and you must take the consequences.”

“Bosh, Deb; don’t preach. Why, I only drank two glasses yesterday at lunch, and—”

“How about the bottle after dinner?”

“Well, you know, Pringle was here, and hospitality you know, Deb, hospitality you know—”

“Hospitality won’t preserve your health, Richard.”

“True Deb, quite true; but I couldn’t help it, and the gout’s getting better now, the pain’s nearly gone. Whew! there’s another twinge. Confound the gout, I say!”

Damon was a stout, florid, jolly-looking—there is no other word so expressive—man of forty-five or thereabouts; Pythias—some apology is due for her sex in carrying out the classical metaphor, although when you know her better you will acknowledge the propriety of the allusion—was some five years the elder, as she could look back with complacency or otherwise on her fiftieth birthday. She was tall and ungainly, and her face was so set and deficient of mobility that it looked as if it were carved out of mahogany, to which wood indeed its colour bore some resemblance. She evidently took after her male parent more than her mother, and her brother was right when he called her a “chip of the old block.”

Damon was genial and hearty; Pythias cold and formal, as befitted an austere virgin of her years; but both possessed the same kind heart, and you would rarely find such a good-natured pair, who were so fond of each other, and so considerate and charitable in every sense of the word, to those around them.

Doctor Jolly was emphatically one of the jolliest country-practitioners in the country, and had one of the best practices, and was better liked than any other disciple of Aesculapius in the county. For miles round the farmers and well-to-do, as well as poorer people, knew his pleasant weather-beaten face and hearty voice. He “was so sociable and pleasant-like,” as the country folk would say; and his well-known portly form—he rode about sixteen stone—and cheery “How de-do!” used to be eagerly welcomed when he came riding round on his thorough-bred heavy-weight hunter, with his two favourite little black and tan terriers, “Huz, and Buz his brother,” scudding at its heels.

He and his sister had lived together at Bigton for many years past. The doctor had succeeded his father, and he his father, as far back as lay within the memory of “the oldest inhabitant”—the practice with its connection having been kept in the family for nearly a century.

Bigton is a very quiet rising little watering place, situated some five or six miles from The Poplars and Hartwood village, at the mouth of the river, wherein Tom Hartshorne was catching his perch under the eyes of Miss Lizzie. Bigton is by no means an ostentatious sort of place: it lacks self-assertion, and is content to occupy a back seat, as it were, in the assembly of “Fashionable Resorts,” when, if it would but only put itself forward it might be bidden to “come up higher.”

It is really a pleasant little place, and has all the requirements to make it an agreeable retreat for the hot summer months, when one longs for the seaside with that intense ardour which only a Londoner knows. Bigton has a pier—a shabby little pier it must be confessed—a sort of esplanade, which is as long as that of its Brobdignagian rival, where George’s Pavilion, that hideous monstrosity, used once to attract admirers—an excellent beach of fine grey sand, and a splendid common, all covered with gorse and furze, whereon juveniles can play “the criquette,” as Monsieur Jeune France calls our national game. Beyond that, it has a splendid country around for jaunts and pic-nics; and, as for antiquities, why, is it not within a decent drive of one of the most historic old castles in the kingdom, a castle which has its ancient old keep still in preservation, and which was one of the few Royalist strongholds that held out successfully against the Puritan general and his myrmidon Roundheads?

Yet, with all these advantages, Bigton has not yet become a favourite with the multitude who annually adjourn to the seaside, and this neglect is not by any means complained of by the quiet few who wish to avoid the racket of a fashionable watering place, and come down here in order to have a quiet enjoyable holiday. The fact is, Bigton reckons for its standing more upon the support of its residents than on stray birds of passage; and, of these, it has a larger proportion perhaps than some of its better known and more highly cracked-up rivals. It has nice trim rows of terraces facing the sea, and plenty of comfortable detached houses which are generally let to people who stay for mouths, and even a year or two, instead of hiring for merely a six week's occupation. Bigton is therefore busy all the year round, instead of having a season of three months, and being a necropolis for the rest of the year: indeed, the annual visitors who come down in summer do not alter the look of the place much: it is too respectable a town to bother itself about casual tourists or London holiday-makers. In the summer the landholders and great people of the surrounding country come from their inland homes, and take lodgings for the bathing: so Bigton is very exclusive and keeps entirely to its own set.

Among not only the residents—returning to our story—but also the regular visitors, Doctor Jolly was a general favourite, and the doctor supreme of the locality; and he was as good a surgeon and physician as he was a favourite. He was not the man to nurse a hypochondriacal patient by giving him various bottles of medicine containing coloured water, or pills "as before," consisting of harmless dough. No, he would tell them to get out and take plenty of exercise and mayhap dip in the sea, and above all to get good food and plenty of it. No gruel and arrowroot from him. "All damned slops and dishwater," he would say; but a mutton chop three times a day, and a glass or two of really good port wine. "Stop, I'll send you over some of my own, and you may bet your boots that that's prime stuff," he would offer with a knowing wink of his eye, riding off to escape a denial.

He was a jolly, good-natured man, and such a really good minister to the ills of human nature, that he had it all his own way at Bigton, and almost throughout the entire county. His practice was so large, that he had to ride miles every day to do justice to his patients; and yet he would hire no assistant, except a mild, gentlemanly pupil, whom he kept to do the home business in his surgery.

"Catch me!" he would say, "having a fellow to cut me out with all the pretty girls and old ladies! No, sir, as long as I can cross a horse, no other sawbones shall rule here but myself. I'm hanged if they shall, sir?"

One or two other medical men had tried rashly to set up to him in opposition at Bigton; but never getting anyone who was ill to patronise them, they had to give up at length in disgust. One, indeed, still hung on, as he had bought a house and could not sell it; but he had to take to the coal trade to support his family. Not that Doctor Jolly grudged him a living, for no matter what he said, he would cheerfully have lent his brother practitioner a helping hand; but then no one would let anyone else visit them in Bigton but our Damon, so the poor—Othello's-occupation's-gone-M.D. had to buy and sell chaldrons of the best Wallsend and Seaborne, and fed his family in that way.

Dr Jolly's house was one of the best and nicest kept mansions in Bigton, for the doctor loved to live well, as he could afford it; and his sister Deborah was one of the most valuable housewives that could be cited. It was a long, low, old-fashioned house, with a splendid garden and paddock adjoining, for the doctor's horses, of which he kept three—he used to follow the harriers in the time of the old squire, Roger Hartshorne—but he was getting too heavy for that now, besides having too much to do. Now he was devoted to poultry and pet deer, pet hares, pet dogs, pet animals of all kinds, even cats, and had all his out-houses, yards, and paddocks filled with his various adopted nurslings.

It was a wonder, considering his disposition, that he had remained a bachelor so long; but then he had his sister Deborah to take care of him, and as he would say, "Bless my soul, man, what more do I want?" His old friends who had known him for years would hint at a disappointment in early life; but I don't think care sat heavily on the doctor's brow, as it does on some of us, for he lived well, and enjoyed life as he found it, and did not seem inclined to give up his present life for all the unknown sea of troubles into which matrimony might plunge him. Perhaps he saw too much and too many of the gentler sex to hazard a selection, but the probable reason was that he was too comfortable as he was. He and his sister pulled along capitally as Damon and Pythias, as they had in fact done all their lives; both were freely outspoken to each other; and if Deborah had the pre-eminence within, the doctor was master out of doors.

The doctor relished good cheer, and gave capital dinner parties, as he was the most hospitable man in the county. He had had one the evening before, and hence his slight attack of the gout; its invariable consequence this morning. He said he had inherited the aristocratic infliction from his sire, along with a good digestion and his practice; but perhaps Pythias, or Deborah, was not far wrong in ascribing it to his love of good living and partiality for port. The gout made him swear a little, but he did not really mean anything by it: if all our oaths were as harmless as his, the recording angel who watches over that special failing of human nature would have a sinecure.

"Confound the gout, Deb!" he exclaimed, as that sharp twinge caught him in his left foot, and made him writhe with ill-concealed agony. "Confound the gout! I'll drink no more of that infernal port! that is," he added, shortly afterwards, as the pain subsided, "not beyond a glass or two at lunch; and perhaps a bottle after dinner, eh, Deb? Ho! ho! ho!" And he laughed his jolly cheery laugh, as he took his feet out of the tub of water, in which they had been hitherto reposing; and, drawing on his boots with difficulty, prepared himself for setting out on his morning round of visits.

"Better now, Richard?" enquired Pythias, as he stood up fully caparisoned in the matter of his lower extremities.

"Yes, Deb, all right now; the plaguey thing has gone away for the present, and won't trouble me again till next time. My 'off stepper' is somewhat sore still, but it'll be as sound as sixpence by the time I get back."

"Are you going far, Richard?"

"Well, I think I'll pay a call at the dowager's, and all about Hartwood; and as I shan't be back in time for lunch, I'll drop in and feed at Pringle's—uncommon pretty little girl his sister is. Bless my soul! Deb, she's enough to make one think of marrying, although I suspect that sly dog Tom Hartshorne's after her—we old fellows have got no chance."

"Take care, Richard. She would probably jump to have you. I know what girls are! But how is that poor girl Susan Hartshorne getting on?"

“Really, Deb, do you know I think she has been looking much brighter lately. I have observed this within the last week or so—there is a decided change for the better. She has lost nearly all that frightened look she used to have; and I would not be surprised if she eventually recovered her mind. It’s a sad pity, Deb, bless my soul! a sad pity! She was a nice child—confound that old woman! and she’s now such an interesting-looking girl—a sad pity that old hag frightened her senses away.”

“What do you think is the reason of this change in her?” asked Deborah.

“Well, I can hardly tell, Deb; you see, Tom has been down, and there’s that friend of his, too—don’t like him—and she has seen more company than usual—all these things may have something to do with it; but I think that the improvement is all due to that new governess, Miss Kingscott—by Jove! she is a fine girl if you like, a—”

“Take care, Richard, take care!” she said, as Doctor Jolly went out of the room, after poking about vainly in every direction for his gloves.

He mounted his horse which the groom held at the door, and as he rode away, he murmured to himself, “Dooced fine girl! I wouldn’t be surprised if the artful jade caught me after all!” And off he cantered down the street, bowing affably, and waving his hand with a cordial “How-de-do!” to everyone he met, for he knew everybody, on his way to Hartwood.

Volume One—Chapter Nine.

An Old Campaigner.

The London season had ended: so Lady Inskip, having packed up her baggage waggons, gathered her *impedimenta* around her, and mustered her forces, consisting of her two grown-up daughters, her only son, a young imp of twelve summers; her maid, a knowing abigail; and lastly, though by no means least, herself—put her regiment in marching order; and sallied down with metaphorical bands playing and colours flying to the quiet little watering place of Bigton, to prosecute a sort of son-in-law-hunting war during the summer solstice.

For be it known, Lady Inskip was a campaigner—one, too, who had fought many a fray on many a field, from the era of her first battle when she had, with an equally adept old mother for an ally, striven for a husband and a title, and an establishment in life, and had won the three combined in the person of her departed spouse, the late Sir John O’Gaunt Inskip, Bart.—down to her last little skirmish in Mayfair, where she had attempted to float off her two remaining daughters—her eldest she had gotten rid of handsomely some time before. She had then and there been routed disastrously, before she could draw up her forces for a regular pitched battle; but it was not her fault, or from lack of perseverance or want of judgment on her part, as she had been unable to fix upon any special young or old gentleman—it did not matter which—whom she deemed or doomed as eligible for her matrimonial projects.

She was not daunted, however: not she! She was too old and experienced a campaigner for that, and had regularly changed her front mapped out her *carte du pays*, and planned out an entirely new disposition of her forces before coming down to Bigton. She contemplated a bold stroke, somewhat like Napoleon’s procedure at Austerlitz, or, better still, his invasion of Egypt; and had determined to follow the tactics of other experienced commanders, and “carry the war into Africa.”

It was not a very colossal adversary against whom she schemed and plotted, and collected such munitions of war—it was only Tom Hartshorne—poor Tom, whom she had met in London, and who seemed inclined for a mild flirtation with her pensive Laura, and lively, not to say “larky,” Carry—especially at the last Woolwich Artillery ball, when his attentions had been “really quite marked!” That unfortunate young officer having sauntered through a quadrille with Laura, and told the exuberant Carry, after a waltz, that she was “a stunner to go.” He certainly, however, criminated himself to some extent, by calling the next day at their house in town, and playing pretty to, and chaffing both girls.

Mr Thomas Hartshorne she had found out—strange what wonderful perspicacity and knowledge of the means, standing, and expectations of wooers and would-be sons-in-law, mothers with marriageable daughters have!—was in a very good position, and was the presumptive heir to the present proprietress of The Poplars.

She had made up her mind, therefore, to secure him at all hazards for one of her “dear, darling, girls.” He was, consequently, the object of her present visit to Bigton. Tom was the game marked down *in esse*, although goodness knows, with the hopeful ground of a watering place to work upon, and its heterogeneous crowds of visitors, and its romantic opportunities, who and how many, without agitating Mormonism, might not be the victims *in posse*!

Lady Inskip was the widow of a Scotch baronet, who had married her for her good looks rather than her fortune—unlike the generality of his countrymen—for a very limited trousseau was all she brought him; and even now, some twenty years after her marriage, she was still what Doctor Jolly would, and did, call “a fine figure of a woman, sir, by Gad!”

Her two daughters were very nice, presentable girls; Laura a sort of languid beauty, and Carry “gushing,” and a trifle inclined to be fast. The boy, Mortimer, was an obstinate, headstrong, young cub, just of that age when boys are peculiarly obnoxious and always in the way and disagreeable. He was, naturally enough, the spoilt pet of his mother, and for a young baronet had all the graces and follies of the position which he would be required to fill. But we need not go on to particularise all the points of Lady Inskip’s *ménage*.

Suffice it to say, that she came down to Bigton very shortly after Tom had left town. You may wager a trifle, if you are inclined to woo Fortune in that way, that she was previously acquainted with his destination before she moved her Lares and Penates; and now that she was here, you may depend that she would leave no stone unturned to secure her object.

She took a pleasant little cottage on the Esplanade, about half a mile or so from the town, for a year, and had it fitted up elegantly and decorated so as to make it a perfect bijou of a place. If you watch a spider, you will always observe what a magnificent web he spins before he hunts about or lays in wait for his prey; see what a gorgeous centre-piece he has to his prismatic castle! Depend upon it that the spider is certain that his parlour is well-furnished before he invites the fly to “walk in,” as is detailed in the lines of the harrowing ballad sacred to childhood.

Well, Lady Inskip had a nice little house, nicely furnished, with a nice little garden all mignionette and passion flowers, and a nice little croquet lawn, where nice little games of flirtation could be played by suitable nice young gentlemen with her nice dear darling girls. In fact it was all “nice”—that adjective so dear to the heart of the gentler sex, and so lavishly used by them—and so the old campaigner having entrenched herself within these fortifications, continuing our military descriptive, prepared to battle for and on behalf her of two daughters Laura and Caroline, as aforesaid.

She had not been in the place two days, before she knew “all about everybody.” How Captain Curry Cucumber, who lived at the big red brick house, “just as you passed the common, you know,” was an old returned East India officer (and who was seventy years old if he was a day), was immensely rich, and had come home with a lakh of rupees to marry and settle down. He had an “awful temper in course,” as his landlady said, and swore dreadful at his “pore black man,” but then he had a sweet yellow face, and his widow would be left very comfortably off. Then she learnt too of our old friend the doctor, how he was a gay young bachelor; and of course she found out all about Mrs Hartshorne, and her place and her ways and her oddities. She learnt also of the Revd. Herbert Pringle, and his little church at Hartwood: and as he was a relative of the great Sir Boanerges Todhunter, and was a young man with a good living, and probably had property of his own, she made up her mind to patronise him, especially as he was the protégé of the dowager.

Accordingly she and her tender daughters and the young Sir Mortimer attended divine service at Hartwood the first Sunday of her stay at Bigton, and she was so wonderfully pleased with the performances of the ritualistic rector—he was “so like that dear Aminadab, at St. Barnabas’,” that she made up her mind to go there always in future, and not to patronise the Reverend Jabez, of Bigton.

She met Tom after church. She was “delighted to see him,” and made him promise to call next day and bring the Reverend Herbert Pringle, on his mentioning that he was a great friend and a nice fellow. The dowager having bundled out of church immediately the service was over, Lady Inskip had then had no opportunity to make her acquaintance, although she assured Tom she was “longing to know her,” but as she was an old lady, she, Lady Inskip, said she would do herself the honour of paying a visit at The Poplars very shortly.

She was *so* glad to see Mr Markworth, too, “quite an unexpected pleasure to see him down here,” when she was really mortally afraid of that worthy, who she could readily perceive, with a woman’s mental keenness of vision, had taken her measure and thoroughly understood her plans and tactics. Altogether Lady Inskip was delighted with everything, as, fortunately for her peace of mind, she had not seen the pretty Lizzie Pringle, and was unaware of Tom’s present infatuation about that young lady, which anyone “with half an eye,” except those personally concerned, would have at once recognised.

She drove back to Bigton, in a very pleasant frame of mind, at peace with her daughters, herself and everything around her; and her smart little equipage—a park phaeton and pair of ponies—caused much excitement amongst the rustics along the road.

Master Tom, not being averse to renewing his flirtation with Miss Carry and her sister, notwithstanding his being enthralled by Lizzie, determined to pay a call at the Inskip’s little cottage, on the Bigton esplanade, a morning or two after, and proposed to Markworth that he should accompany himself and Pringle.

“No, thanks,” replied that gentleman, “none of my lady schemer for me! Look out for her, Tom! She’s an awful old pythoness, and would wheedle the devil himself into marrying one of her plain daughters. Why, she nearly caught Harrowby ‘of yours’ the other day, and I believe she came down here after you.”

“Never fear, Markworth,” answered Tom, as he went off to call on Pringle, in order to get him to go, and also perhaps to have a glimpse of Lizzie, to act as a sort of charm against witchery from the Inskip girls. “Never fear, my boy! I saw her game in London, and shan’t be caught. But they are jolly girls, that little Carry is up to chaff no end; and they will make this place gayer by coming down. There’ll be nothing but pic-nics and croquet presently, if I know them aright,” and he walked off to get his horse, which George was grooming to make it look respectable.

Pringle was a very dapper little man. A perfect little exquisite, and no one was so particular as to the parting of his hair, the curl of his whiskers, and the general “nattiness” of his turn out, as himself. He had seen the fair Laura and Caroline in church, and their presence had lent a perceptible tone to the pronunciation of his “awe-men,” and the delivery of his sermon. He saw they were well dressed, but when he learnt that Tom knew them, and beyond that, that they were the daughters of a baronet, and their mother a “lady in her own right,” he was most anxious to make their acquaintance. Lizzie told him laughingly not to lose his heart over the belles, and suggested that he would be quite irresistible when she saw him so particular about the various points of his toilet this morning; but he thought it no laughing matter, I can assure you. He had all the elaborate priggishness of a young man fresh from college, and was more bent on making an impression than on pleasing. To tell the truth he had mixed very little in the world, and the feeling of being a man and occupying a responsible position was quite a novel one to him.

He was ready long before the hour Tom had fixed for calling for him on his way to Bigton, and was walking up and down the verandah in front of the parsonage, waiting impatiently, and flicking the flies off his pony, which stood ready saddled for the start.

"By Jove!" he said (he had not been able to break himself of that expression, more suited to the laity, which he had picked up at Oxford), "I wish he would come: we shall be too late!" and at that moment Tom rode in at the gate. After passing a little time speaking to Lizzie, who told him, too, not to "lose his heart," to which little shot Tom replied in a low voice—they had become intimate now, you see—that he had lost his already, which caused Miss Violet Eyes to blush, of course from sorrow; they at length rode off, and the promised visit was made to Lady Inskip, at Laburnum Cottage.

Poor Pringle was dreadfully embarrassed during the time he was under the eyes of the three ladies, and the "young imp" Mortimer caused him to lose what little self-possession he had, by making some observation on the parting of his back hair, asking him what was the perfume on his "rag," alluding to his pocket-handkerchief, and finally by playfully pulling away his chair as he was going to sit down. He blushed all the time of his stay, although Lady Inskip was very affable to him, and the girls expressed the most intense admiration for his little church and all its belongings. The only easy moment he had when he could speak clearly was when "the darling girls," as their mother called them, came out on the lawn to admire his dapple pony, and called it "a little duck:" then Pringle had longed in his inmost heart to be that pony, for he was enraptured with the langour and beauty of Laura. Carry frightened him with her chaffy tongue, and by the way she went on with Tom, who seemed quite "at home," as he generally made himself at most places.

The young men left after a lengthy stay, and the ladies very naturally, canvassed them on their departure.

"What a nice fellow—regularly jolly fellow Tom Hartshorne is!" said Miss Caroline, "but the parson's a spoon!"

"My dear Carry!" interposed Lady Inskip, "I do really wish you would not talk in those horrid slang terms! It is quite shocking! Mr Hartshorne is a very nice gentleman, of course, and I think Mr Pringle the same thing. He's very quiet naturally; you cannot expect a clergyman, Caroline, to be as gay and 'jolly,' as you call it, as a young officer. I'm surprised at you, miss."

"He preaches delightfully!" observed the beauty languidly, "and I think him very nice; he was only bashful!"

"I suppose at the sight of you, Laura?" said the pert Miss Carry. "But he has one good point about him, and that is his pony. I wonder if it is up to my weight?" a very natural enquiry, as she probably weighed considerably heavier than the owner of the animal, and was what an outspoken individual would have termed "a bouncer."

"I'm glad he's coming again; we shall have some croquet," continued the elder sister. "Yes, my dears," said the mother. "We must make him at home; he's a very nice young man." She had already looked upon the Oxonian as "eligible," and was bent on making him a captive of her bow and spear.

"Well, for my part, I think him a donkey, and do not care whether he comes or not."

"Caroline! Caroline! Is this the return you make me for all I have done for you, and planned and schemed on my bended knees! ungrateful girl!" said Lady Inskip plaintively, as if she was going to cry.

"Oh, don't go on, ma, any more. We know all that! Laura can have the white-choker if she likes: I will cultivate Tom."

"Bless you my child!" said the mother, "you are rash and impetuous, but you have a good heart."

Volume One—Chapter Ten.

A Call and its Consequences.

Doctor Jolly trotted along the road from Bigton to Hartwood, with Huz and Buz his brother, cantering at his horse's heels, and making short predatory excursions every now and then into neighbouring gardens and farmyards on the way, to the apoplectic scaring and bewilderment of sundry unhappy fowls and ducks. In about half an hour, as he always rode at a sharp pace, he had reached The Poplars to make his weekly visit.

"How-de-do!" he shouted to Tom, when he was half a mile off, seeing him at the gate; and presently the stout doctor was dismounting from his quadruped with extreme difficulty, owing to the still painful gout, and limping up the steps of the dowager's mansion.

"So you are here again, are you?" observed that lady with her customary acrimony, from the open window of the dining-room, which faced the entrance gate. "Why, you're always running here, now; you'd better come and live here at once; it would, at all events, save your gouty legs some exertion."

"Bless my soul! Mrs Hartshorne, why you are looking as blooming as a daisy. I wish I could wear like you, madam; why you must be sixty, if you are a day!"

"I'll outlast you at all events, Mister Jolly," said the old lady, as our friend the doctor, who hated being called "Mister" instead of by his medical title, walked into the house.

"And how's Susan?" he asked, as he entered the room.

"There she is with her governess, and you can see for yourself," snappishly returned the dowager, walking out, and leaving the doctor with Miss Kingscott and her charge.

Susan looked greatly improved, and timidly offered her hand as he went up to her in his hearty way.

“And how are we to-day?” he said kindly.

She, to his great astonishment, not only looked him in the face, but answered him, which she had seldom or ever done before.

“Very well, I thank you,” she said, quietly.

It was not much, certainly; not more, perhaps, than a well-trained parrot might have said, but, then, it was a decided improvement to her former apathy. She immediately afterwards, however, left the room, as she heard Markworth playing on the organ up-stairs; and Miss Kingscott and the doctor were alone.

“By Gad, madam!” exclaimed the doctor, as soon as she had gone—he did not mean to give Miss Kingscott “brevet rank,” but he always addressed every woman, young or old, as “Madam.”

“By Gad, madam! it’s positively wonderful. What an improvement; couldn’t have believed it if I hadn’t seen it! But where has she gone to now—who’s that thrumming the old organ?”

“That must be Mr Markworth, I believe,” she answered, “and you must compliment him on Susan’s improvement: she’s always with him, and he seems quite devoted to her. It is really quite charming to see them together.”

Who would have dreamt of their joint conspiracy from the way she spoke?

“Really?” enquired our Aesculapius. “To tell you the truth, madam, I don’t like that fellow at all. I’m never deceived in a face; and, if I do not make a mistake, madam, that man is a scoundrel as certain as God made little apples.”

I do not know why it was, but the doctor always seemed desirous of connecting the name of the deity with miniature specimens of the forbidden fruit whenever he wanted to qualify a strong assertion.

“Dear me, doctor!” interposed the lady, “your language is very strong.”

“Not a bit of it, madam; not a bit more than he deserves. By Gad, madam! he must have some object to gain; he would not take all that trouble for nothing. I know human nature, madam, and he is either going to marry the old lady, or something else. Ho! ho! ho! what a fine pair they would make!”

And the doctor sniggered over his own joke, and laughed so contagiously that Miss Kingscott could not but follow suit.

The doctor presently, however, returned to business. He had been thinking of this young lady all the way over from Bigton. He had asserted to himself over and over again that she was “a dooced fine girl,” as if some one else had been disputing the point with him; and now that he was in her presence she not only looked finer and more beautiful than ever, but he had one of the best opportunities for speaking to her alone he had ever had before, or could have wished for.

She looked very refined and ladylike as she stood there in the shaded dining-room, clad in a light morning dress. Her regular features and pale complexion gave an air of dignified beauty to her face which her height and figure well carried out. Altogether she was very charming, and looked so loveable on the present occasion, in appearance, that she would have captivated a man even less in love than the doctor, and led him on to the inevitable “pop!”

Aesculapius was a long time beating about the bush. Although he was generally free and easy in his speech, the doctor was now tongue-tied when he most wanted to speak, and his already ruddy face was more “peonified” than ever—if I may be allowed to coin that word—while his heart thumped against his ribs “like a pestle against the sides of a pill mortar,” as he expressed it professionally.

“Ha! hum! a fine morning, madam—a fine morning! Don’t you think so?”

Miss Kingscott assented, of course. She saw his embarrassment, and wished to lead him on to an *éclaircissement*; but she could scarcely refrain herself from smiling at the ludicrous endeavours of the doctor to hide his nervousness, which was unmistakeably increasing.

“Yes, madam, it’s a fine day; but hot, madam. Don’t you think so?”

“Certainly, doctor, I think it is warm,” answered the lady, confirmatively.

And, indeed, any one looking into his face could not but agree with the remark.

“Warm, madam, is no term for it, it is confoundedly hot! But I beg your pardon, madam, were you ever in love?” he blurted out abruptly, after a great effort, bolting into his subject, as it were.

“Good gracious me, doctor?” said Miss Kingscott, with a charmingly acted surprise, and blushing embarrassment. “What a strange question for you to ask!”

“Not at all, madam—not at all. I said the weather was hot. Don’t you see, madam? and it is hot. I asked you about love—and love is hot. There’s my proposition, you see the connection between the two?”

And the doctor’s face glowed with perspiration.

“I do not follow your argument,” said the governess, calmly. “You seem to arrive very rapidly at your deductions; but what has the result to do with me?” she asked, with ingenuous innocence.

“A good deal, madam—a good deal. How fearfully warm it is! You see, madam, before you an old man.”

“Not so very old, doctor, I’m sure,” she interrupted, looking bewitchingly into his perspiring countenance.

“Well, well,” he continued, in a gratified tone, “perhaps not exactly an old man; but I’m not a young one. Still, if it wasn’t for the confounded gout, I daresay I should be as young and skittish as the best of them.”

“Oh! I’m so sorry for that horrid gout—and I do pity you so when I see you in pain,” condoled Miss Kingscott, thinking of the doctor being “skittish,” as if she had heard of an elephant dancing a hornpipe.

“Are you really—do you really?” he asked eagerly, a flush of joy overspreading his already flushed and perspiring face. “Well, I tell you what, madam, I’m in love.”

And the doctor heaved a portentous and languishing sigh, which quivered through his colossal frame which shook like a mould of jelly.

“Are you really, doctor? I am sure I hope the young lady is nice, for your sake; and I hope she will make you a good wife,” she replied, ignoring the doctor’s nervousness until she got him to the point.

“You are very kind, madam, very kind; but you are always kind—you can’t help it, for it is in your nature. Infernally hot, is it not, madam?”

“Very warm,” said the lady, encouragingly.

“Bless my soul! madam, so it is. But, madam, Miss Kingscott that is—”

“Well?” she encouraged him, her eyes sparkling with ill-concealed fun at the doctor’s predicament.

“You sly little creature! Why, you are laughing at me all the time!”

“Oh! dear no; but who’s the young lady, doctor? You have not told me her name yet, and I’m dying to know.”

“You wicked little baggage! you know all the time.”

“How can I? when you have not yet told me.”

“By Gad! women are the most provoking creatures under the sun.”

“Not *all*, doctor,” she pleaded, demurely, tapping the carpet impatiently with her foot.

“Well, perhaps not all; but dooced near it. I am an old fool! Here am I bungling about and can’t say what I mean!”

“Can I help you, doctor?”

“I wish you would, and tell me what to say to you, young baggage!”

“Do be calm, doctor. Suppose I’m the old lady now, and that you were talking to me—I am not so very young you know, either.”

And she looked so demurely grave and elderly, that Aesculapius was charmed anew.

“Well, I must say it. It’s better to have it out, like a bad tooth; there’s no good in keeping it in my head. I’m an old fool I know, madam; but I am really in earnest now, and I want you to listen seriously to me for a moment. The fact is, madam, Miss Kingscott that is—how fearfully warm it is!”

At that moment, just when he was trembling on the verge of his disclosure, the shrill tones of Mrs Hartshorne’s voice was heard without.

“George! George!” she cried to the faithful servitor (she pronounced his name indeed *Jodge*! *Jodge*! speaking in her usual rapid manner, with quick utterance). “Who’s that at the gate? Don’t you let anybody in, man!”

And our friends inside could hear her feet scrunching the gravel as she walked towards the gate in order to see who it was; so they went to the window also to look on, and the interesting conversation I have just detailed, was abruptly broken off at the indefinite point it had reached.

“Plaise, marm,” replied the rustic voice of George, “it’s a leddy, marm, and she says as how she’s coomed to say un.”

“I don’t know any ladies, and don’t want to know any, either; I wonder who is the flaunting creature? Get back to your work, you grinning baboon! I’ll speak to the woman myself.”

At the gate, seated in her pony carriage, and accompanied by her two daughters, all dressed out and equipped in their state-costume for the payment of calls, was Lady Inskip. She looked astounded—for she had heard every word of the dialogue between the dowager and her henchman; and not only she had heard it, but her daughters also; and the grinning page, covered with sugar-loaf buttons, who sat perched on a mushroom sort of seat that sprang out as a sort of excrescence from behind the equipage. The old campaigner was surprised and astounded: but she tried to appear cool and collected as befitted her dignity: the languid Laura was as apathetic as ever; and the fast Carry seemed inclined to follow the Buttons example and laugh aloud.

The dowager, in another moment, was on the scene of operations, and addressed the campaigner who sat in her pony carriage, with her forces drawn up in *echelon* behind the gate.

"Who are you, woman; and what do you want?"

"My name is Lady Inskip," answered the veteran, with bridling dignity. "I presume I have the honour of addressing Mistress Hartshorne?"

"I don't know you—that's my name; what do you want, woman? My time is valuable, and I can't stop cackling with you all day."

"You might be a little more polite, madam," said Lady Inskip, with freezing politeness and sarcasm. "I came with my daughters just to pay a customary call of civility, and I expected, at all events, to be treated like a lady, by a lady, whom I expected to meet here; but I now find out I am mistaken."

"Is that all? Then you and your daughters can just take yourselves off, with all your flauntings and finery! I don't want any grand people coming about me! *I* never go to see anybody, and I don't want anybody to come and see me. Quite a pity, isn't it, after you had bedizened yourself so finely too?"

"Laura!" exclaimed Lady Inskip, ignoring the presence of the dowager, "I think we had better drive home, and leave this vulgar woman to herself. Perhaps," she said, turning to the dowager as she whirled the ponies round, "you will have the civility to give that letter to your son, it contains an invitation to a pic-nic. I suppose we need not hope for the pleasure of your sweet company?"

"I don't want any of your pic-nics, or jakanapes, or your impudence!" said the downright old woman, raising her shrill voice even more piercingly. "I will give the letter to my son. If he cares about running after you, *I* don't. Go! You said you were going home, and the sooner you go the better, for you don't come in here, my lady!" Then, considering the engagement terminated, she slammed-to the gate menacingly, and turned on her way back to the house, leaving the discomfitted campaigner to retreat at her leisure.

Our friends, the doctor and the governess, had heard the whole of the interview, and much amused they were over it, too, I promise you; but it stopped the coming proposal. Miss Kingscott was rather pleased at this, for she thought there was still some hope of gaining over Master Tom, the young squire, and she did not wish either to finally accept or reject the doctor until she knew which was the best card to play.

He, on his way home, was also pleased that he had not fully committed himself.

"It would never have done for Deb," he considered; "she would never have liked it. At all events, I was just stopped in time, though, and a miss is as good as a mile. But I am a damned old fool! That's a fact."

He kept to his promise with Pythias, did Damon, and drank a bottle of port to himself that day after dinner, shaking his head as he muttered to himself every now and then, while, with half-cocked eye, he held up his glass to the light—

"It's a lucky escape; but I'm a confounded old fool!"

Twice he bethought him of telling Deborah all about it; but she looked so comfortable and composed, as she sat there darning his socks, that he thought it would be a pity to disturb and agitate her. So his dreams, when he retired to rest, were very wild indeed, and he passed altogether a sleepless night.—So much for the doctor's love-making.

Volume One—Chapter Eleven.

Des Beaux Yeux.

No words can paint the mingled rage and mortification that filled the heart of Lady Inskip as she drove away from The Poplars, after her interview with the dowager.

"The Jezabel!" she said, in a voice of anger, "I've never been so scandalously treated in my life. You need not laugh, miss!" she fired out on Carry, who was exploding in fits of laughter at the humorous nature of the rencontre. "You need not laugh, miss; it is no laughing matter to see your mother insulted! But what can you expect from a vulgar boor but abuse? I ought to have known that before I laid myself open to such treatment. I don't think I can ask that young Hartshorne to my house again after this."

"Good gracious! ma," said Carry; "why what has he got to do with it? I'm sure he's a very nice fellow, and he is not accountable for his mother's actions."

"Well," said the old campaigner, mollifying somewhat, as she got further from the scene of her defeat, and allowed her better judgment to prevail; "perhaps he's not to blame, and I am sure I never said so. He can come of course to the pic-nic, now he is invited; but I am sorry I left the note with that old cat, after all. Never mind, it's done now, and there's no use in regretting it. He is a good match; and if you listen to my words, Carry," she leaned over and said confidentially to her daughter, so that Buttons might not overhear, "instead of giggling so foolishly, and play you cards well, you will secure him in spite of that Jezabel, his mother. Not that I am afraid of her, or twenty like her," Lady Inskip said to herself consolingly, now that a distance of road lay between them.

But where was Master Tom all this while?

Well, you must understand that Mr Thomas Hartshorne, of Her Majesty's Plungers, was, and had been all the morning, learning the craft of fly-fishing on the banks of the little stream that ran by the bottom of the parsonage, under the apt tuition of the incumbent's sister. The young reverend himself had long since gone out for his parochial duties, such as enquiring after farmer Giles' rheumatism, and the widow Blake's asthma, intending also to do himself the honour of calling on Lady Inskip on his way home, for Pringle had been much struck by the charming Laura the more he saw of her, and wanted to see more still.

It was most surprising what a violent and indefatigable interest that previously indolent young man Tom had taken in the piscatorial art.

He who had before declared Isaac Walton an old humbug, and who had professed his agreement with the dogmatic old doctor Johnson's assertion, that fishing consisted of "a worm at one end of a rod and a fool at the other," now used to sally out every morning nearly from The Poplars, with his fishing-tackle on his shoulder down to the parsonage, telling Markworth, whom he used to faintly persuade to accompany him, that it was "the best sport in the world, old fellow."

He went to the incumbent's grounds because it was the "finest spot in the county for perch," and Pringle was "a brother angler, and such a jolly good fellow, you know." Those were his only reasons, of course!

Hartwood parsonage was the beau ideal of a snug little country lodge; a long, straggling, one-storied cottage form of house, all ingles and corners and slanting roofs, and covered with roses, jessamine, and clematis.

It had low, diamond-paned French windows, opening down to the ground; so that one could walk out into the trim-inclined but wild planted flower garden—Lizzie's especial pride—and on to the smooth velvetty lawn beyond, that sloped down to the water's edge, bordered with hanging branches of weeping willows, and sappy, luscious, green osiers, that sprang like ostrich plumes from the quiet pools and crinks into which the stream widened here and there.

The parsonage had a "fine walled-in kitchen garden," as house agents advertise, devoted to spruce rows of cabbages and arrogant cauliflowers, each of which weighed more than a good-sized Christmas turkey; and fruit-clustered pear and apple and peach trees, all nailed up and trained along the walls, like a giant's palms spread out with the fingers extended. Beyond the kitchen garden the walls were overhung with rich green ivy, which took off the stuck-up appearance it might have had like most enclosures, and gave the place a much, more picturesque aspect. But it was in the flowery plaisance, marked out on each side by a thick laurel shrubbery, that Lizzie's handiwork shone out.

This commenced just under the windows of the house, round which it extended, and spread out to where it joined the lawn, from which it was separated by a sort of strawberry island, and a hedge-row of box, tall, up-grown, and cut in queer, fantastic shapes.

In Lizzie's flower garden, which she had specially looked after since she came to keep house for her brother, there was the most lavish display. Tiger lilies and jonquills, sunflowers and pale-faced narcissi, vied with each other for effect; and the great charm of the whole lay in the utter absence of any set form or arrangement—roses and lilies all grew together in the most charming confusion, with sundry creepers twining around them; it was only on account of there being no weeds visible, that you did not set down this wilderness of flowers to be totally neglected.

Other effects were not wanting to complete the picture. Here on a summer afternoon you would hear a pet robin punctually begin his sweet song, at "four of the clock precisely," from his favourite perch on a spreading fir tree that overhung the eaves of the house—a little robin that used to hop down every morning to the adjacent window of the parlour, to receive his matutinal crumbs from Lizzie's hand. The "chuck! chuck! chuck!" of the black bird too, would be also heard from the laurel shrubbery; and the rival strains of the yellow-hammer from the neighbouring medlar tree. The latter gentleman would commence his lay with a "whirr," like an alarm clock running down, and end with a sort of chorus like the concluding bars of "Green grow the Rushes O!" The Beccaficoes, too, or English ortolan, very like the thrush, would assemble here in the hot months of the year, and did not fail to leave evidences of their partiality for the fruit tree which received the Saviour's curse.

Tom Hartshorne had explored all this paradise long before, in the company of Miss Lizzie; and he was now, as I said, under her tuition, looking at her tying on some artificial May-fly or other ichneumon to his line.

It was a beautiful morning—not yet twelve—and the air was balmy, and scented with new-mown hay and flowers; while bees were buzzing around, and birds singing in the air, the lark, chief songster, above them all; altogether, Master Tom was situated under very romantic circumstances, and his handsome Saxon face and honest blue eyes looked and shone out happy in the extreme.

Lizzie was dressed in a dainty little muslin dress, picked out with some lilac tinge, and her little hat was thrown on coquettishly, half off and half on; while her bright pretty little face was unclouded, and there was a depth of tenderness in the deep violet eyes that glanced up every now and then to Tom.

She had just succeeded in tying on the fly, and looked up suddenly in a triumphant, saucy little way, in Tom's face. He was very close to her, for he had to watch very narrowly to see how the work was done, and he stooped at the time she looked up; and she said, "There, sir!"

They were very close together, and their eyes met, and Tom was stooping, and, naturally, as those sweet little tempting rosebud lips were so near, he—

Well, what would you do if a very pretty girl was very close to you, male reader, under the same circumstances? What reply would you make?

Very well, Tom did it!

Just at that moment, Lady Inskip was driving round the road which skirted by the parsonage garden, to pay a visit, and leave an invitation, at the house of our friend, the young incumbent. It was not long after her encounter with the dowager, and Lady Inskip was still wrath: her observation being keen, and the pony carriage high, she could therefore see the little meeting between Tom and Lizzie over the wall.

She saw it all, my dear sir; and her sense of propriety was so shocked, that, instead of calling, as she intended, on the Pringles, she only left the invitation and drove on homewards.

Here she had been twice defeated this morning! The dowager had routed her at The Poplars, and “that artful little minx” had presumed to poach upon her manor—was actually making love to Master Tom, whom she had designed for her own Carry. It was absolutely startling! She did not know what to do. Fortunately, she thought, no one had observed the pleasant little episode in the garden—so indelicate!—but herself, as her daughters, riding on the front seat, had had their backs turned at the time, so she would keep it to herself, and determine what was to be done.

One thing, at all events, she resolved to do, and that was to speak to the Reverend Herbert Pringle privately, and in confidence, about his sister. He was a most gentlemanly young man, and could not be offended at her mentioning the subject, especially as she would put it to him, since she was old enough to be his mother—at least, his mother-in-law!

Fortune favoured the old campaigner in her object. Our friend, the incumbent, having visited and cheered his poor people, by asking affably as to their healths, returned homewards by way of Laburnum Cottage, to see the Inskips, determining to himself that that was the shortest way round, although it was at least five miles out of his way.

Lady Inskip only arrived a few moments before him, and so he caught her when she was red hot on the subject just then rampant in her heart.

When she had flattered him sufficiently, and after he had basked in the sunshine of Laura’s smiles, he rose to leave, and Lady Inskip accompanied him herself to the door, and on to the grass plot beyond, and the gate, where stood his dapple-grey pony with his reins flung over the post to keep him from straying. When the girls saw their mother follow Clericus without, they made up their minds that she was going to “ask his intentions,” and much did the lively Carry chaff her sister therenent. The campaigner’s motive was, however, a very different one.

“You will excuse me, Mr Pringle, I’m sure, but I am an old woman, you know, and I take such a motherly interest in you—(very motherly!)—that you will forgive me for asking you a question?”

Poor Clericus, himself, trembled at this introduction, as I believe his idea of what was coming was very similar to those of the girls inside.

“Oh, certainly, Lady Inskip, certainly!” he said, with a sort of dead-alive alacrity.

“Is your sister engaged to Mr Tom Hartshorne?” said the old campaigner; and Pringle was immensely relieved.

“Oh dear, no!” he responded, this time cheerfully enough. “Oh dear, no, Lady Inskip, what made you suppose so?”

And, thereupon, my lady spoke, and told what she had seen; and, although Pringle was not very angry at first, nor did he look upon the affair as anything serious, the campaigner presently persuaded him that it was his duty to speak to his sister. He, of course,—so she explained—could not be aware how a young girl would be talked about if she were allowed *carte blanche* to flirt with every young man she came across. Poor Lizzie! as if she would have done so—and that it was very unfortunate the poor girl had no mother to warn her, and so on. But it was his duty as her brother, and not only on that account, but as a clergyman also—so the campaigner put it—to speak earnestly at once, and have the thing broken off.

Herbert Pringle promised to do so, and rode home very sadly, for he loved his little sister very much in his way, and hated the business of talking so seriously to her, besides not knowing how to set about it.

Let us return to our lovers; our poor tender sheep, into whose fold such a great gaunt wolf had now penetrated.

They did not hear the wheels of the old campaigner’s chaise as it passed round by the garden wall, nor did they see her grim eyes surveying them above it, and taking notes of their propinquity—not they!

When Master Tom committed himself in the way I have hinted at, little Lizzie blushed crimson, and hung down her head so that he could not see her face.

“Oh, how could you? How could you?” she stammered out, nearly crying.

“Forgive me! I beg your pardon: I could not help it”—and Tom was going to tell his love, and disclose all the feelings that filled his heart, when, at that moment, my Lady Inskip rang the bell to leave her note, as already detailed.

Before Tom could catch her so as to hold her, Lizzie darted off, like a startled fawn, towards the house, and the opportunity was lost.

The next day she was not in when he called round, and Pringle visited him the day after that, instead of his visiting him; and so, although he was not spoken to, no opportunities were put in the way of their meeting alone.

Both Tom and Lizzie were looking forward to the pic-nic with heartfelt longing, for the former, at least, determined to speak then.

Oh, Love! Love! When will thy course run smooth?

Volume One—Chapter Twelve.

“The Beginning of the End.”

Markworth’s plot was now nearly ripe for execution.

When he had been down at The Poplars some weeks now, he said one morning at the breakfast table that he must run up to town for a day or two, as he had some important business to transact; so excusing himself to the Hartshornes, mother and son, the former of whom did not look as if she would break her heart if he never returned, he said he supposed he had better start at once and come down on the next day, Saturday, so as to be in time for the contemplated pic-nic on the following Tuesday, which Tom would not hear of his missing.

“You’ll be sure to be back in time, old fellow,” said the latter, as he wished Markworth good-bye; and the train glided off from the little station to which they had walked in company across the fields. “There’ll be heaps of fun, for Harrowby and a lot of the fellows will be down, and I want you to draw out the campaigner, or she’ll be making a dead set at me, and—”

“You’ll have other fish to fry, and will want to attend to someone else, eh? I quite understand it all, my boy; I’m not so blind as some people think, Master Tom. However, I’ll spare your blushes and your explanations: don’t be alarmed, my boy, I’ll be back in plenty of time for the pic-nic, and will take care to occupy my lady’s attention so as to leave you to your own devices. Good-bye, old chap.”

“Good-bye, old fellow,” said Tom; and Markworth was soon whizzing on his way to London.

Arrived in town, he first directed his steps to the private billiard-room where he and his friend first made the acquaintance of the reader.

His object was to enlist the services of the little old-fashioned marker, who we had previously seen watching the game.

This man, Joe Begg by name, although only known to the sporting world who frequented the room by his Christian name alone, was an accomplice and ally of Markworth. When our friend would manage to get hold of a nice pigeon for plucking, Joe Begg used to be of the greatest service. He had a peculiarly dexterous way of running up the score, and also a pleasant and most unaccountable manner of sneezing just when Markworth’s opponent would be making some important stroke. It was most unfortunate of course, and the victim would meet with so much sympathy, and the marker would apologise so earnestly with tears in his eyes for the unfortunate cold in the head, “which takes me most unexpected, sir,” as he would explain, that poor pigeon could not but allow that it was an accident, and accept the *amende honorable* by continuing his play. When neophyte went away, after his vanity had been flattered by his being allowed *nearly* to win and his losing “rather hot, you know, by Jove?” he did not know that Markworth and the marker generally came to an understanding, which always resulted in the former offering and the latter accepting sundry substantial tokens of esteem and regard.

It was not to make use of his aid in the matter of billiards and by-play that Markworth now sought the company of Joe Begg. It was for something much more important and vastly different, although of a similar nature.

He wanted a witness for the contemplated marriage, and he could not think of anyone better qualified to assist him than Joe. He was just the man, for he had been always faithful to Markworth’s interests, and could be as “close as wax,” although he would naturally require a “consideration.”

“Well, Joe, how’s business,” he said, as he walked into the billiard-room, when, as was usual at such an early hour of the day, the marker was all alone.

“Very dull, Mister Markworth, very dull! Why, sir, I haven’t made a bob at pool for the last three weeks. Everybody’s out of town, and those City fellows as comes in are afeared to bet a tizzy on a dead certainty. Can I do anything for you to-day, Mister Markworth?”

“Not to-day, Joe; but I will want you shortly.”

“All right, sir, whenever you want me you’ve only got to speak, and I’m there.”

“I thought I could rely on you, Joe. The fact is, I shall want you to be a witness to a marriage between a lady and myself.”

“How much will you stand?”

“I’ll do the thing handsomely. I tell you what, I will give you a fiver after it’s all over, because I shall want you to swear to it perhaps in evidence afterwards.”

“I’m your man, sir,” replied the marker, with alacrity; “swear to anything for that sum. When is the little affair coming off?”

“I can’t say yet, Joe. Maybe in a week, maybe not for a month; but when I want you I shall write here and let you know. Mind! You must be ready at once to accompany me when I write for you.”

“I’m fly, sir,” responded Joe, with a cunning movement of his left eyelid, more expressive than an ordinary wink. “I’ll be ready any time; and perhaps, sir, as the business is partickler, it’ll be worth more than a fiver, who knows?”

"I shan't forget you, Joe; we won't quarrel about terms," answered Markworth, meaningly, and he then went away, for he had even more important arrangements to make.

He paid a second visit to the dingy purlieus of Doctors Commons.

This time not to the deed depository of the dead, but to the legal portals of Hymen, where Cupid sits enthroned on the bench, in all the majesty of the law, with a horsehair wig and a pair of clerical bands, to issue licenses to marry and for giving in marriage.

It was now Friday, and the pic-nic was to come off at Bigton on the ensuing Tuesday, so Markworth determined that he would manage to get Susan Hartshorne away from The Poplars on that day, as he would be less liable to observation and detection; and taking her up to London, could have the marriage solemnised on the succeeding day. Tuesday, strange to say, was the very day, the 27th of August, according to the information of Miss Kingscott, retailed from the Family Bible, when the girl would be of legal age, one and twenty, and entitled to the free disposal of her money.

He accordingly got a license made out without much trouble, by means of a little stretch of the imagination—called perjury in courts of law—and the initiatory step for his design was taken. If everything went well, he would before that day week be the husband of Susan Hartshorne, and master of her twenty thousand pounds. He had well weighed every step in his programme; he had studied every possible consequence to himself; and he saw no reason to anticipate failure when everything pointed to success.

After leaving Doctors Commons he went to some old lodgings of his in a retired street in Bloomsbury, where he was well-known, and a set of rooms always kept vacant for him, for his comings and goings were so irregular that no one knew when to expect him. None of his West End friends knew of his ever living here, for he always gave an hotel as an address; and to tell the truth, he had often been comfortably installed in these same Bloomsbury lodgings when the world thought him travelling on the Continent, or shooting grouse on the moors.

His appearance was therefore looked upon as a usual thing, and no surprise was manifested; for his ways had always been inscrutable, and as he checked curiosity and was a good and regular paying lodger, he could do as he liked. He had always done so from the first, and his landlady never bothered herself about him or his business, "it was no concern of hers, he always paid his rent, and that was all she cared about," she said.

He stopped here that night, and went away the next morning, telling Mrs Martin, the landlady, that he was going to bring "his sister" to town on the following Tuesday, and would require the rooms to be ready for her reception. This was the first time she had ever heard of his having a sister; but he might have brought twenty so long as he paid his rent. I believe a regular London lodging-house keeper is more of a cosmopolitan than any other person in the world. She will take in anybody with a decent supply of luggage, and who is tolerably regular in the payment of his or her weekly bills—the wandering Jew, Calcraft, or Eugene Aram. It is all the same to the proprietors of the "apartments" whether her tenant be Jew or Gentile, gentleman or "snob," criminal or honest man; she has but one standard for social position, morality or nationality, and that is a pecuniary one. A lodger may be forgiven everything, even seventy times seven, if he only pays his rent regularly; that is the *ultima ratio* to which appeal is made—it is practical and works well!

These preliminary arrangements being seen to, Markworth walked down through Lincoln's Inn Fields, across into Chancery Lane, and paid a visit to some dingy, tumble-down looking chambers close to the projected site for the new Law Courts, which are to be built at some era dim in futurity. A brass plate was on the door, with the names "Solomonson and Isaacs, solicitors," engraved thereon.

His business was with the senior partner, who greeted him as an old client or customer, which indeed he was. Solomonson was not at all averse to transact business, even on the Jewish Sabbath.

"Vell, Mishter M," said the Jew, who was part money lender, part lawyer, and all rogue. "Doesh de leetel affairsh go on? Have you got de mad girlsh yet. I vants to see her Mishtressh M'sh—"

"Not yet, Shylock; but everything's in train, and I shall do it before the week is out. But you told me right, I hope, about the law; I would not like to commit a felony?"

"You are all rightsh, Mishter M'sh. Leave de cashe in dese hands and ve vill see you trough!"

"I rely upon you then, and will let you conduct the whole affair,—but I must have some money to carry the thing through, Solomonson. How much can you let me have on my own security?"

"I vill letsh you ave two hundredsh pound. S'help me Gadsh, Mishter M'sh! itsh all I've got!"

"Nonsense, Shylock! you can't fool me like that," replied Markworth, and he tried unsuccessfully to get more out of the Jew. He had to be contented for the present with a couple of hundreds. Solomonson knew, however, the stake for which he was playing, and told him that as soon as he was really married to Susan Hartshorne he would advance him more. Until then he would not let him have another penny. So Markworth was forced to content himself with what he had got, and he was not pleased when he recollected that he would have to give the governess half.

He was, however, provided with the sinews of war, so he wished Solomonson good day, cheerfully as he went out, and told him he would soon see him back again.

"Good daysh!" replied the Jew. "Don't forget to send me the weddingsh cakesh, my dearsh! I likesh weddingsh cakesh!"

The last visit Markworth paid before leaving London was to the curate of a small church in the city, with whom he was acquainted—how he had made his acquaintance I cannot say; and to this gentleman he made some explanation about a forthcoming marriage which appeared to be highly satisfactory to both parties.

Everything was now settled but the great event itself, and so Markworth returned to Hartwood by the afternoon train. To shew that he did not forget even trifles in considering everything for his plot, he bought an odd volume of the recently revived "Essays and Reviews," at the railway book stall, for the personal edification of the Dowager Mrs Hartshorne, who had been speaking of the book in connection with her now favourite topic of ritualism. This he presented to her the same evening, much to her surprise, and peculiarly snappishly-expressed pleasure and thanks. The old lady had recently been over head and ears in pre-adamite geology, and nothing interested her so much as a secular essay on theological truths.

Tom was delighted to see him back in such good time, and planned out all sorts of pleasant things for the pic-nic, which was in everybody's thoughts—little knowing how Markworth intended to dispose of his day. All the Sussex world was going to be there. A pair of violet eyes comprised "all the world" to Tom now.

Some time that evening Markworth had a long conversation with Miss Kingscott, preparing for "the end." Both—strange anomaly!—had worked together for once, and not for good. He gave her a hundred pounds, the first instalment of the "hush money," and their compact was nearly completed.

To one who had not marked out every phase in Susan Hartshorne's treatment, the change that had been worked in her since Markworth had devoted his energies to her care, was nothing less than marvellous.

From dull, irksome melancholia the patient had been transported to the fields of reason. A constantly unchanged vacuity of expression on her face had given place to mobility of feature. Instead of void animal eyes, the windows of the soul now looked out of her face. From an idiot she had been changed nearly if not quite into a reasoning being. Markworth had done all this, aided by Miss Kingscott acting under him and by his directions. It is true the girl had only got back the germ of reason, the reason of a child in nature, and measured by the experience of years. But it was a germ which, although now of delicate growth, and requiring every fostering and care, might yet expand into the fullness of moral culture.

No one had any idea how poor Susan had improved, for she saw no one to speak to as yet; and although Tom and Mrs Hartshorne noticed some change in her, yet the former was too much engaged with observing another to notice much in his sister, and as for the mother she really, I believe, did not care either way. She had so long looked upon Susan as insane, that the possibility of her ever recovering her reason now after the lapse of so many years, was put beyond the pale of consideration altogether.

And so only Markworth and Miss Kingscott knew of her dawning reason; with them both she spoke now as sensibly as themselves, and as to Markworth she was his abject slave.

The first reasoning thought that filled the poor girl's vacuous brain was one of heartfelt devotion to him who had led her out of darkness to light. She looked upon him as her saviour, ignorant as she was of a higher and more powerful God than he; and he was so uniformly kind and considerate to her, seemingly anticipating her every wish, that one cannot wonder at her slavish idolatry. He was her god—her all; she loved him as a dog would love its master, and everything he did was right: his word, law.

Markworth's material was now plastic enough.

Volume One—Chapter Thirteen.

Brother and Sister.

"Now, Lizzie, I want to know what all this means?" said the Reverend Herbert Pringle, B.A., putting on quite a fatherly dignity of manner to his sister, an evening or two after Lady Inskip had spoken to him. "I want to know what all this means."

Lizzie was at the time engaged lifting pots up and down, and poking about in her little conservatory, which jutted out of the drawing room, with a trowel and watering-pot, in the manner peculiar to young ladies of a horticultural tendency. Her back was turned to her brother, so that he could not see her face, but a brilliant tinge of pink carnation coloured her little white neck, and suffused her dainty-cheeks, and ascended even to the pure white forehead; still she steadfastly kept her head down, bent apparently on investigating the wonderful mysteries of some flower with a horribly long Greek name, which she was inspecting.

She must have guessed intuitively what her brother was going to speak about, but with a woman's noble gift of dissimulation, she asked, with an air of candour and conscious rectitude—little hypocrite!

"Why, Bertie, dear, what on earth do you mean?"

They are all deceivers, every one; bless you! that's the way with them. They are tricksters at heart, and conceal their feelings with a sort of savage deceit, which only a Red Indian besides possesses. See how calmly and placidly Miss Dissembler smiles with elegant ease, whilst Madame Verjuice pierces her little writhing heart through and through with a malicious sarcasm that wounds her to the core. She looks as if she never felt it whilst she is bleeding to death inwardly. Look at the poor fainting wife and mother, who with a smile on her lips and death at heart, cheerfully gives her husband and starving children the last morsel of bread in the hovel, and says with a martyr-like dissimulation that she does not want it, she is not hungry. Bless you they are all deceivers, every one, from little miss in her teens, who flirts with her boy lovers, to old Joan of threescore, who still wheedles her venerable Darby!

“Why, Bertie, what on earth do you mean?” as innocently as you please.

The Reverend Herbert Pringle, B.A., had for the last two days been puzzling his small amount of brains how to broach the subject to his sister. He did not wish to vex her, or hurt her feelings; in fact, he did not know what to do, it was “such a delicate matter, you know, such a very delicate matter,” that he wished it were settled and done for, and off his hands. But still, all the same, he did not know how to begin.

“Well, humph!” clearing his throat portentously, “the fact is, Lizzie, you know all about it.”

“Really, Bertie,” said Lizzie, laughing—oh! such a faint little laugh, “you are very enigmatical to-day.”

“I’m not joking, Lizzie; it’s a serious business, a very serious business. What is all this going on between you and Tom Hartshorne?”

Poor Lizzie’s little defences of affected ignorance and nonchalance at once broke down, although she bravely struggled on to preserve her equanimity.

“I’m sure I’ve nothing to do with Mr Hartshorne. What *do* you mean, Herbert? Pray explain yourself.”

And the young lady drew herself up with a tremendous accession of dignity to the full height of her little figure.

Herbert Pringle was so disgusted with the dissimulation of the sex as evinced in the instance of his sister that he felt himself nerved up and able to go on with the talk before him, so he plunged at once *in medias res*.

“Here’s Lady Inskip been telling me—”

“Oh! I’ve got to thank *her* for interesting herself about me! I am sure I am very much obliged to Lady Inskip!”

“You need not interrupt me, Lizzie, and you need not get angry about Lady Inskip. She’s a most motherly woman, and she spoke very kindly to me about you. You see, Lizzie, it’s a very hard thing for a fellow to speak of. Of course I think girls ought to be allowed to mind their own affairs of this kind, and it seems rough on my part to interfere; but, you see, as Lady Inskip very kindly observed, you’ve no mother to advise you, and consequently I must take her place.”

As he said this, the Reverend Herbert Pringle looked certainly as unlike a mother as possible.

“Go on, Herbert; let me know all that Lady Inskip has been kind enough to say of me,” said Violet Eyes, now facing her brother, with a full sense of her dignity, and tapping her foot on the floor with angry impatience.

“Well, she told me that she saw you and Tom Hartshorne in the garden the other day as she drove by; and, though I see no harm in it, and fortunately no one but herself saw it, she said she was very much shocked, and that you acted as if you were engaged. Now, Lizzie, you know I’m very fond of you, and all that sort of thing, but people might talk, you know, and I want you to put a stop to it.”

Lizzie’s defences were entirely overthrown. Her look of indignation faded off her face, to be replaced by a quick crimson blush, which as rapidly disappeared and left her features as pale as marble. She made a hurried step towards her brother, and fell sobbing on his neck.

“Oh! Bertie, Bertie!” she sobbed out, between a series of little gasps.

“There, there, don’t cry! my darling little Lizzie. You know I did not mean to hurt you, my own little sister!” said Herbert, sympathisingly, patting her head as if he were saying “Poor dog! poor dog!” to a Newfoundland pup. And the subject was dropped, Lizzie thus gaining the victory in the end by having recourse to a woman’s strongest safeguard—tears. For, as he told Lady Inskip afterwards, “when the waterworks were turned on he had to give in.” The old campaigner for her part, was very well satisfied that the topic had been mentioned: that was all she wanted.

Lizzie went to bed very early that night, pleading a headache, and really her face was so pale and the deep violet eyes were so sunk in her head with broad veins of black underneath them, that her assertion was freely borne out by her appearance.

The poor little heart was deeply troubled: the stricken deer was grievously wounded. She was very young, you must remember, and had fallen into that horrible abyss of love without knowing what she was doing. The temptation had been so sweet, the steps she had taken into that rose-coloured paradise so gradual, that she had not perceived the drift of their march, so that Tom’s sudden act and manner had startled and frightened her; it was letting in the sunlight on one who has been blindfolded, and the little secret which she had hugged to her heart alarmed, while it gave her such sweet ecstasy.

Ever since that morning in the garden, only two days ago—two days! it seemed more like two years, she had been so much altered—Lizzie had not been the same. She had awakened from a long sleep as it were, and everything round her, every little inconsiderable item in her daily life bore a new charm to her or had a fresh meaning. A deeper and more beautiful light beamed now in her thoughtful eyes; there was a charming hesitancy in her manner in lieu of the former piquante pert way she had. In a word, Lizzie was our Lizzie still, but a hundred times more loveable and prettier from the new love light that encircled her.

She had been watching—eagerly watching, for her next meeting with Tom, and yet when she thought of him, blushed at her thoughts and trembled with a sly rapture. He was so noble—so manly—so handsome! Just in fact what most young girls think Corydon when in love.

It was no wonder, then, that the brother's lecture and the idea of the old campaigner's criticism on her conduct frightened our poor little maid.

She went up to her little bed tearfully and heavy-hearted, and thought of chains and dungeons, and all the malicious contrivances of the wicked for parting true lovers, and she sobbed herself to sleep. When she woke up in the morning she was still in the most restless and perturbed state that her little mind could be in. "How dared that odious old thing speak about her, or look at her, or come round at all!" She would never see Tom again—and she was longing to see him all the time!

She would not go to the pic-nic—that she wouldn't!

Then she *would* go, because the aforesaid old odious thing would imagine that she took it to heart if she stopped away.

But she would *not* go because that impudent Master Tom would be there, she thought, with a rising blush and a conscious swelling of the tender little bosom underneath her muslin dress.

Of course she determined to go!

Volume One—Chapter Fourteen.

That Young Imp.

The old campaigner's pic-nic had been decided upon by her, not only as a merrymaking festival, but as a regular strategical *coup*.

She wanted to roll many issues into one, and like a prudent general, she conned her forces, surveyed their position, and considered her war *materiel*; all being in train, she determined that as she wanted to create an impression in the neighbourhood, and bring sundry persons together without being compelled to go to any great expense, the best and most efficacious mode she could adopt for carrying out her plans would be to give a pic-nic.

In the first place she could ask all those people of the vicinity whom she did not care to specially invite to her own house; in the second, as everyone would to some extent purvey their own refreshments, no great outlay would be required on her part; and in the third place this sort of rustic excursion offers greater advantages and inducements for judicious love-making, and brings many bashful wooers, such as young Clericus, to the scratch.

It was under these circumstances and acting with these motives, that Lady Inskip had made preparations and issued invitations for a grand pic-nic to come off at Dingle Dell, which was a nice drive from Bigton, a few weeks after she came down to reside at that festive haunt.

She had by this time thoroughly explored all the capabilities of the place, and knew just whom to ask and whom to avoid. The old Indian officer, Captain Curry Cucumber, had of course an invitation, and so had Doctor Jolly and his sister, but Deborah said that she never went out to any such "gallivantings," and declined; the doctor, however, promised to pick them up in the course of the day after he had made some necessary calls on his patients.

The people were all to meet together at Laburnum Cottage, and drive from thence *en cortège* to the Dingle, so an early hour was fixed for the rendezvous in order to have a good long day of it.

Soon after eleven, the time appointed, there was quite a goodly muster of vehicles in front of Lady Inskip's residence. Tom Hartshorne drove down in a bright new dog-cart, and being immediately pounced upon by the campaigner, was made or inveigled into taking Carry with him. Not that Tom objected personally to that young lady, who was very agreeable and naturally glib of tongue, but he sorely wished and had indeed planned that our little friend Lizzie should be his companion.

In order to prevent this the campaigner had specially called at the parsonage and taken Miss Lizzie in her own pony chaise with her: the Reverend Herbert and the languid Laura completed the quartette. Tom sadly deplored the absence of Markworth, for he was so well used to the campaigner, and had such nerve and *sang froid* that he was capable of even turning her out of her own carriage. Lieutenant Harrowby and Captain Miles, too, of Tom's regiment, who had come over from Brighton that morning for the *fête*, and who hoped to have complete possession of the Inskip "girls," as military men usually dub the young ladies of families, did not seem satisfied with the arrangements for the procession; and as for Captain Curry Cucumber—who had arrived on the scene of action dressed in a new pair of nankeen trowsers and a solar hat, not to mention a blue coat with brass buttons and other portions of a perfectly gorgeous toilet—he was simply enraged at the want of deference paid him by Lady Inskip, and had serious thoughts of turning back at first, although he afterwards suffered himself to be soothed over by Miss Blandish (spinster, *aetat* 45-60), and promised to remain with the company until at least "tiffin" should be over.

At last, however, all things were settled, and "barring" a few *contretemps* and heartburnings the whole party started off in great spirit to drive towards Dingle Dell.

The road was a very pretty one, all through the romantic scenery to be found in the valley of the swift-running and widening river Biggle, at the mouth of which, as has been described in its proper place, the watering place of Bigton, formerly called Biggleton (*vide* County Archaeology), was situated.

The day was fine—as fine as a bright August day can be in the country. *Ergo* all went merry as the proverbial marriage bell. The only trouble Lady Inskip had was with her darling pride—that horrible boy, the young Sir Mortimer. He would insist on carrying a wretched old single-barrel gun with him for the purpose of shooting small birds when they got to the wood, and of course, as he always managed, he had his own way. “Such a darling boy,” as he was, “but *so* rash!” Mortimer persisted in practising along the road as they drove on, frightening the horses every now and then, and making everybody feel in terror for their lives.

It was no use that Lady Inskip called out in a half-entreating, half-commanding voice at intervals, “Oh! Morti-mer! Mortimer!” the young imp would continue his detonating sport, and everyone was heartily glad when after passing the steep incline which led down from the old castle of archaeological renown, they crossed the pretty rustic bridge over the Biggle, and arrived at length at Dingle Dell.

Considering that it was a good two hours’ drive or more from Bigton, and that it was “getting on” in the afternoon, no one was averse to preparations being at once made for the substantial and real part of the pic-nic. All helped with good will to lay the cloth on the smooth green turf, and unpack the hampers. Even a smile irradiated the choleric and saffronised face of the Indian warrior, who was much disgusted when they sat down to the *al fresco* banquet that no one had remembered to bring mango, chutney, or Cayenne pepper, without which he assured Lady Inskip that even “the best victuals” were not worth the salt that accompanied them.

The old campaigner very judiciously arranged the various members of her company around the tablecloth—one cannot exactly say table. She placed Tom by the side of Carry, at the extreme opposite end of the “board,” away from Lizzie, whom she quartered with the gallant lieutenant, Harrowby, by herself. Pringle, of course, was placed next Laura; and although Lady Inskip had been obliged to invite the Rev. Jabez Heavieman, of Bigton, for appearance’s sake, she took very good care that he should not run foul of our Ritualistic young incumbent, whom he regarded in much the same light as the devil is supposed to look upon holy water.

Everything passed off well, and Lady Inskip was in ecstasies; Carry was apparently having it all her own way with Tom Hartshorne, and Pringle was most devoted to Laura. As for Lizzie, she was hopelessly put on one side, and the campaigner considered “that artful little minx” as done for and out of her way: nothing could be better.

The banquet was at length finished.

Young Sir Mortimer, having gorged himself sufficiently with cold chicken and greengage tart, so that his face shone again, went off with his gun to shoot in the woods, much against the entreaties of his mother, who fervently implored him “take care, Mortimer, my darling boy, take great care!”

The others disposed themselves around; some lolling on the grass, others making a pretence of fishing in the adjacent river: Tom had wandered off somewhere—Lizzie had disappeared; and our cheery Doctor Jolly, who had just arrived in time for the feast—“Bless my soul! madam,” as he said, in explanation, “never miss the grub, my lady—never miss my grub,”—was enjoying a cigar along with the “military swells,” as he called them.

When suddenly Lady Inskip’s pride and hope, the boy Mortimer, dashed in amongst them with a scared face, yelling out at the top of his voice—

“Oh! ma, ma! I’ve shot and killed somebody!”

The consternation his advent created can be imagined.

“Oh! dear, Morti-mer,—Morti-mer! I told you so: I told you so!” said Lady Inskip, bursting into tears.

Carry went into hysterics, entreating everybody to “hold me down! hold me down!” Laura fell fainting in the arms of the Reverend Pringle, who looked hopelessly bewildered. Miss Blandish, making an ineffectual and similar attempt to repose on the white waistcoat and nankeen trowsers of Captain Curry Cucumber, was precipitated by a dexterous and skilful manoeuvre on the part of that gallant officer, into the salad-bowl, the Captain muttering horrible imprecations in Hindostanee, such as heaping curses on the beard of her departed father, and devoutly hoping that jackasses might sit on her grandmother’s grave.

Doctor Jolly alone retained his composure, and darted off, as quickly as his size and gout would permit him, in the direction from which the young imp, Mortimer, had come.

What had happened?

Lizzie, after enduring the platitudes of Lieutenant Harrowby until she was sick of them—the burden of that officer’s conversation being limited apparently to the observations of “Haw! be-y Je-ove!” and “Doo-ced fine!” to anything and everything around him, including scenery and lobster salad, managed at last to get away from the company.

She wandered along listlessly amongst the thickly crowded elms and firs of the forest that crowned the slopes of the dell, musing on her own sad thoughts, for her heart felt very weary. Everything had gone wrong with her that day; Tom had not spoken two words to her, and she did not know whether he wanted to speak to her at all. He was very unkind; he might, at least, have said something after what had passed between them the other day! Then, too, the whole thing had bored her, and she wished she had never come! Lady Inskip also had been very snappish with her—even rude, she thought, and though Lizzie, with all her gentleness, was not “one to be put upon with impunity,” and could have held her own against the campaigner at any other time: still to-day she had quite lost her natural spirit, and did not try to turn aside a single shaft of the many hurled by her implacable foe.

Lizzie was sadly out of heart. Rambling along, she at length came to a little open glade at some distance from where the picnickers were making merry.

Here, as she turned round the trunk of a gnarled old elm, all covered with ivy, which had previously obscured this open glade from her view, whom should she see, standing there in gloomy solitude, and looking up at the fleecy white clouds sailing over head, but the very person who filled her thoughts—Tom Hartshorne himself, and no other.

Now was the time, one would think, for an explanation between the pair; but the Fates willed it otherwise.

“That young imp,” when he left the picnickers, sallied off like a gallant young sportsman, as he fancied himself, with his “gun upon his shoulder,” and a brandy flask, which he used for a shot pouch, instead of a “bayonet by his side,” in the words of the affecting ballad of “Jeanette and Jeanot.”

He penetrated into the depths of the wood, firing at everything that happened to be a trifle larger than a butterfly or humble bee; but although Mortimer thought he took steady aim at the several little feathered songsters against whom he had murder in his heart, the gun, which was something like the Irishman’s that could “shoot round a corner,” never brought down anything.

At length he came to a dense thicket, just on the borders of the little open glade where Tom and Lizzie were about to meet.

A particularly fine fat thrush hopped on a twig in the midst of the thicket; and, as it was only about a yard from the muzzle of his gun, the young imp was more successful this time. He fired and brought down his bird; but he also brought down something else which he had not bargained for.

Tom was just advancing with outstretched hand towards Lizzie, glad of the opportunity for which he had been longing all day.

Whiz! bang! more than half the charge of the young imp’s shot struck him in the side, and Tom fell nearly senseless at Lizzie’s feet.

She, forgetting all her reserve, bent over him in an agony of terror.

“Oh! Tom, Tom!” she cried, as she knelt down by his side, their faces nearly touching, and her hair sweeping across his cheek. “They have killed you! They have killed you!”

And the sun still shone down, and the fleecy clouds still sailed overhead, and the summer breeze rippled through the trees.

“Lizzie, my darling! I’m so happy: I wish I could die now,” murmured Tom, in disconnected fragments, and he fainted away outright.

“Oh! he’s dead! He’s dead!” cried Lizzie, out aloud, wringing her hands, bursting into an agony of tears—tears, idle tears!

“Bless my soul!” said the doctor, bursting through the bushes, as he arrived very opportunely on the scene of action, out of breath with the haste he had made. “Bless my soul! Who’s dead, what’s dead? It’s all confounded nonsense,” he continued, excitedly, bending down over Tom, and tearing open his coat and shirt, and feeling his heart. “Bless my soul! He’s no more dead than you are, my dear! The man’s only fainted.”

Volume One—Chapter Fifteen.

End of “First Act.”

The most powerful logic fails to supply one with any rules or data whereby to analyse the workings and application of motives. If we try within ourselves even to trace back a passing thought to its original cause and inception, we see how involved and erratic are its wanderings; and we are obliged to give up the hopeless quest from sheer inability to follow its course. No wonder, therefore, that human motives are difficult to fathom; and although writers of fiction have the presumptive right to lay bare the inward mechanism which directs and guides their various characters, and are permitted to exemplify—hanging their theories and arguments on certain lay-figures more or less natural—how such and such a train of thought, and such and such a motive leads on and up to such and such an end; still, it is a very deceptive argument at the best, and these deductions, however plausible, are often grievously in fault. Motives are inscrutable. The slightest bias or hitch one way or the other will produce an altogether different result. Let us just imagine “what might have been” in the lives of our heroes and heroines if some new little incident had cropped up, or some detail or phase been ever-so-little altered; and we cannot but agree, in the felicitous observation of one of our greatest authors and students of human nature, that the history of “great events that might have been” would far outweigh and be more deeply interesting than any history ever published of what *has* happened!

These remarks have been made with reference to the character of Clara Kingscott. She had been grossly deceived in the first instance by Markworth, brought about a good deal by herself, no doubt; but still she had been deceived and her reputation ruined. She then naturally hated the author of her misfortunes—for hate is closely akin to love—and yet with all her hate, the love that had first originated had not quite died out. She hated Markworth: she longed for revenge, she determined to be even with him; and yet at the same time, the greatest pang she could have suffered would have been to see him ruined, as she intended him to be by herself.

Thus it was partly from love—what a misapplication of the term!—partly from revenge that she had foiled his wealthy marriage in Paris; it was partly from love, partly from hate that she was now bent on assisting his marriage with Susan Hartshorne, if such a conflict of motives with actions can be imagined. She had entered into the compact with him to suit her own purpose of attaining her revenge: still when it came to the last it went to her heart, if she had one, to help him on to his end. She was his bond servant and his Nemesis as well; and the man's strong nature controlled the woman's equally strong nature merely by the force of former circumstances than by anything else. She was assisting in a plot she knew; but no feeling of self-consideration would have induced her to hold back now, or from exposing her participation in the conspiracy when she determined to stretch out her hand. She was bent on ruining him body and soul; and at the last moment when she had succeeded in achieving her purpose, she would be the first, the only one, perhaps, to weep over her own success, and allow the demon of Remorse to prey upon her vitals. But she must go on now: she had already received the "blood money!" He, schemer as he was, and skilled as he dreamed himself to be in the secrets of men and women, did not understand one tithe of Clara Kingscott's nature. She had tried to entrap him once, and had found out too late that she herself was entrapped. Her first proceeding against him resulted most probably, he thought, from a woman's spite and a woman's jealousy, but he had no doubt she had grown more sensible now, as she had grown older. She knew him of old, and was no match for him; so, like a sensible woman, she accepted the part laid down for her, and acted Faust to his Mephistopheles. She was quite satisfied of course, for it suited her interests, and he thought besides that she had some lingering liking—like most women—for the man that had deceived her. She was a fine girl still, too, and if circumstances had been otherwise, and Susan Hartshorne and a fortune been in the way, he might have married her. Of course there would have been no such nonsense as "love" between them now. Yet she was a clever woman, and he and she would have got on together very well, and have managed to pick up a very comfortable living out of the world. This was, probably, what Markworth did think occasionally, but events were hurrying him on, and he was fully prepared to take advantage of every circumstance to perfect his plot. It would be time enough to think of the future when he had hold of that nice little sum of money which was just within his grasp.

From what he had heard of the pic-nic he had determined that that day would be best suited for carrying out his purpose, and later events decided him upon the justice of his surmise. He found out that the old lady was going a long distance to collect some rents: she had laughed the idea to scorn of her attending the merrymaking. Tom would, of course, be there, and it would be a strange thing if he and Miss Kingscott could not manage to get Susan—who would not be expected of course, to go to the pic-nic, even if she were asked—out of the house, and away without risking discovery.

Accordingly, finding everything suitable, Markworth wrote up to town on the Monday (when he was certain that the dowager would be away, and the coast clear for his purpose) to Joseph Begg, telling him he wanted him to meet a lady and himself at the Waterloo Terminus the next afternoon at two o'clock—at all events to be there from two to four; and as the lady was very timid Begg was to be respectably dressed as an honest old-fashioned old gentleman, for he would have to take charge of her. His letter was sent up in good time, made up as a parcel, and given in charge of the guard of the train, so it was delivered early that evening; and Markworth got an answer the next morning, saying that his instructions would be carried out.

Just as Tom was ready to start to join the party at Lady Inskip's, Markworth held out an envelope to him, and said he was so sorry, but he would have to go up to town at once, and consequently could not join him to go for the pic-nic.

"Couldn't you put off the business," said Tom excitedly. "It's an awful shame! I wanted you to be there so much."

"Well, you see, Tom," said Markworth, speaking with a tone of deep regret pervading his words, "I'm sure I want to go with you, and have been thinking of it all the week. But lawyers, you know, won't be put off, and if I do not go to-day, why it will cost me a pretty penny I can tell you! I am more sorry than you are, old fellow; you will be in the society of a nice pretty girl all day, while I shall be muddled up in law and parchment. By the way there's a train at eleven, isn't there?"

"Yes, but I'm infernally cut up about this; yet if you must go, of course you must. I'll drive you over to the station because you have not much time to lose to catch the train. Will you be back soon?"

"Well, I can't say; and as my time will be uncertain—you never know when legal business will be arranged—I think I had better take my traps with me. If I can, I'll be down again as soon as possible; but I may as well be prepared."

"Just as you please, old fellow!" answered Tom; and the friends presently drove off to the station in the nice looking dog-cart Tom had hired for going to the pic-nic, when he hoped to have the opportunity of driving some one else after he got there.

They just caught the train, and Markworth jumped in, not having a moment to spare; while Tom drove on to Bigton and the bright eyes that were expecting him.

At the next station, on the "up line," Markworth got out. He was not more than a couple of miles from Hartwood and The Poplars; so, by twelve o'clock, the time he had previously agreed on with Miss Kingscott before leaving the house, he met her and Susan at a certain part of the road across the fields.

We must retrace our steps for a short time to explain matters. How strange it is, by the way, the manner in which events and incidents work out to suit one's plot? They do very often, too, in real life, as the perusal of any of our *causes célèbres* will show. That unfortunate victim of the Mannings came punctually to eat of his roast goose, mindful that he was going to his doom, as we read in that famous murder case which startled everybody twenty years ago. I wonder if the circumstances of the crime originated the current idiom known as "cooking one's goose?"

The old lady, you see, went off very quietly, to be out of the way, and Miss Kingscott and Markworth had a splendid opportunity.

Susan was quite tractable, and would have done anything that Markworth told her. He said before leaving the house that she was to go for a walk with him; he did not tell her more at the time, and that she was to meet him with Miss Kingscott at the stile, across the fields. He also told her that she must dress nicely in something dark to please him, and wear a veil; and of course she was delighted to obey him.

Miss Kingscott lent her a dark dress, shawl and bonnet, and having assisted her toilet, she was soon equipped. Altogether from her leaving off her old and favourite colours, the change in her appearance was so great that she looked totally unlike her former self, and even her own mother would hardly have recognised her with her piercing eyes, if she had met her out of doors.

The governess did not omit any little thing that would baulk the success of the enterprise. She studied every little detail, too, for she had her purpose to serve as well as Markworth. She was not going to jeopardise her prospects of gaining over the young squire, or in fascinating the doctor, by being mixed up in the elopement in any way, so that her assistance should be brought home to her; and consequently for her own sake she had to avoid detection and recognition as well as her accomplice.

She sent off George to the neighbouring public-house "The Jolly Spades," with a shilling, to make himself glad, and render his nature even more comatose than usual on "home-brewed." George went off exultant, declaring that she "was a raal leddy, that she were," and that he would drink her health—so *he* was disposed of. The old lady was miles away, and so was Tom, too, at the pic-nic; the old woman servant was deep in the kitchen or somewhere else downstairs; and thus nobody saw Miss Kingscott leave the house with Susan. There was only herself to prove it.

They met Markworth at the stile; and Miss Kingscott, telling him briefly "I have kept my part of the compact," to which he as briefly replied "I will keep mine; you shall hear from me in a month," returned to the house. They had arranged matters previously, as we have seen.

Her entrance was as unobserved as her exit.

Susan was overjoyed at being out, and, above all, being out with Markworth—without even "that governess," whom she partially disliked—and away from the house and her mother.

It was quite a fairy holiday for her; and although she was now as reasoning a being as any of us, and had quite recovered her senses, she asked no questions: she left everything in Markworth's hands, as she looked up to him as a superior to whom every obedience was due, and who would do everything for the best. He led the way over the fields, Susan walking by his side like a child engrossed by her own happy thoughts, and the novelty of everything around her—it was a new world to her—towards the Bigglethorpe station, on the "up line;" this was where he had got out: it was above Hartwood, so nobody could recognise him.

"How would you like to be with me always, Susan? To go away and never come back to the old house again, and all its horrors."

"Oh! that would be so happy if I were with you," she said, in joy; "but my mother would never let me," she continued, her tone changing to one of sadness.

"Suppose she knew nothing about it, Susan? We won't tell her, and will go away now, and never come back."

"Can we? can we?" she exclaimed, with startling earnestness; "you are not laughing at me?"

"I mean it, Susan. You shall come with me now if you like. I will take you up to London and marry you, and then nobody can take you away. Will you come?"

"Will I?" she repeated with emotion; "I will go anywhere with you." And she clung to his arm with a child's touching trust.

They took the train at Bigglethorpe and in due time arrived at the Waterloo Station, where Mr Begg, looking like a very respectable old gentleman, but small and spare, met them. Markworth introduced him as "his uncle," and they drove together to the lodgings in Bloomsbury Street. On the way he led out Susan and made her converse with the ex-marker, who was much struck with her appearance, and her timid, hesitating way.

"Well, what do you think of her?" asked Markworth, when Susan had gone up-stairs to take her things off, under the charge of the old landlady.

"What do I think, Mister Markworth? Well, I think you are put in luck's way. She's as pretty a young lady, and as ladylike a one as I ever seed."

"You don't see anything about her, do you?" he asked anxiously.

"Queer? not I; she's a bit nervous, in course, but I'd bet she's as sensible a lady as you or I."

"Thank you, Joe, good day; I want you to be here at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. You must not be late; it will be my marriage day."

"Never fear, sir; I'll be here sharp ten," and the confederates separated—the marker to go back to his billiard-room, where he had left a friend watching over the interest of his pool table, and Markworth to think over the day and study his plans.

On the next morning, Wednesday, August 28th, 1867, Susan Hartshorne was married to Allynne Markworth, at the church of St. Catherine's Cross the Less, Johnson's Lane, E.C., in the presence of Joseph Begg and the parish clerk, witnesses.

End of Volume One.

Volume Two—Chapter One.

“A Pretty Kettle of Fish!”

Imagine the unexpected arrival of the murdered Duncan’s wraith at Macbeth’s correct little dinner party, just after the soup had been removed—a break-down of the Prima Donna at the Opera, while executing some grand *scena*—or, in these High Church days of fashionable banns-publishing, the sudden uprising of some stern parent or Nemisitical Mawworm, to interrupt the glib utterance of the hair-parted-down-the-middle and lavender-kid-gloved curate of the period with the solemn veto, in basso profundo voice, “I forbid the banns!”—and you will have some idea of the alteration and effect which the young imp’s mischief created in the programme of Lady Inskip’s pic-nic.

The whole company soon hurried after the doctor in real alarm; even Captain Curry Cucumber, forgetting his liver, and the not-fit-for-much-exertion officers, their lisp and laziness, were in a few moments on the scene of the accident: whither too, Laura presently appeared, leaning on Pringle’s arm; for she honestly was nervous, and had been really frightened.

It was a very dramatic *pose*.

Tom was lying on the ground, half-supported in Lizzie’s arms, a red stream of blood trickling down from his right side, while Doctor Jolly was bending over him, dashing water in his face.

It is wonderful how much more composed in scenes of suffering and danger women are than men, that is when their services are required. Tell a girl that a man is shot or someone drowned, and she will immediately, perhaps, burst into tears, and wail and ring her hands; but tell her to hold his head up, or fetch water—only to do something, and she will be as composed as you please, and will set about doing the work far more steadily and usefully—in a workmanlike manner, so to speak—than you could get any man to do it.

Women are all nurses and sick-attendants at heart: there are more Florence Nightingale’s among us than we know of, until time and occasion draws them out of seclusion, and displays them in their true colours.

Here was Lizzie, who a moment before had been crying, wringing her hands and inclined to faint, now as composed as possible, although very pale and tearful, just because the doctor had employed her services, and showed her how to be useful.

“Bless my soul! little girl; don’t stop crying there. Hold his head up, while I get some water.” And Lizzie had raised Tom’s head as tenderly as if it had been a piece of Sèvres china, and moved it on to her lap, while her arm passed round him. She did not mind his weight a bit, and could have thus supported him all day without feeling tired, although Tom was pretty heavy. Love lightens loads wonderfully!

The doctor bustled off down to the river’s brink, and quickly fetched back some water in his smart new white hat; he did not mind that, however, for he would at any time sacrifice anything he had to give ease or pleasure to another.

By the time the others came up, Tom opened his eyes, and looked dreamily around.

“Hullo! what’s the row? where am I?”

“Bless my soul! you’re a nice fellow you are, alarming us all like this. Do you feel better now? Where’s the pain? Does that hurt you, eh! or that?” said the doctor, who had removed Tom’s waistcoat, and was poking him about in the side with his fat fore-finger.

“Ugh!” ejaculated Tom, as Aesculapius bore rather heavily on a tender spot in his ribs, but he took no further notice of his enquiries, for he was gazing up into Lizzie’s anxious face; unless you take a murmured “Lizzie, my darling,” spoken so softly that only one person heard it, as an answer to the doctor’s questions.

“Speak, you young rascal! You can speak well enough; I heard you, you rogue. Bless my soul! I heard you.”

Tom laughed faintly, and a little pink colour came into Lizzie’s face. “I’m all right, doctor, thanks. I’ll be well in a minute.” He made an effort to rise, as the others gathered around, and a perfect gabble of questions without answers ensued. “I’m all right;” but his head fell back again in Lizzie’s lap, and a dead-like pallor once more overspread his face.

Tom’s actions belied his words. He was not by any means all right. Two of his ribs were broken by the heavy shot, nearly the size of slugs, that the young imp, Sir Mortimer had loaded his gun with; and if Tom had been hit on the left side, it would have been a case of *requiescat in pace* for him and all his troubles. As it was, he would be laid up for some time, perhaps for months.

The doctor saw this, and interrupted the old campaigner, as she was saying for Lizzie’s especial benefit, in her honeyed accents, which had a concealed sting beneath them—“How very sad! What a very charming picture; but if I were a young girl—”

“We would try and make ourselves useful? Bless my soul! my lady, we must try and get him home. Here, one of you,” he said, turning to the males, who stood aloof looking at one another, and doing nothing, in the manner customary to them on such occasions—“run up to the cottage where the carriages are left—”

Three or four immediately started off, without an idea of what they were about.

“Stop!” shouted the doctor, “what are you going for? Ask for a door, mind you; take one off the hinges, by Gad! if you can't get it any other way; and steal a mattress and some pillows! Lay them inside the largest of the pony carriages, and bring it down here as quick as you can. Bless my soul! and don't walk as if your legs did not belong to you!" whereupon all, with the exception of the Reverend Jabez Heavieman and the Indian warrior, hied them off on the errand, although one or two could have easily performed the service. The ladies, however, still grouped themselves in picturesque attitudes round the wounded man, and gazed on him as if he were a rare geological specimen, to be inspected scientifically. "Ah! he moves," said one; "I think he raised his arm," put in Aliquis; "He breathes! he breathes!" exclaimed Lady Inskip, with tragic joy, such as the "heavy old lady" of the piece admirably puts on when she throws her arms round the villain's neck, and putting her chin on his left shoulder, gives vent to the agonised words—"My chee-ild! my chee-ild!"

The doctor, however, was too full of common sense to make any allowance for heroics.

"Move aside, can't ye?" he shouted out stentorially, "move aside, can't ye? and let the poor fellow have some air. It's enough to stifle him, all of you sticking around like this, doing nothing, and preventing a breath of wind from coming past your krinlins! The poor chap wants air; and he must have it!" And the doctor, rising up, and stretching out his hands, like street acrobats when they wish to clear a space for their performance amidst the encircling crowd, the ladies retreated, headed by the campaigner, who held her nose in the air, as if the whole thing was "much beneath her," leaving the doctor and his patient, and Miss Lizzie, for awhile to themselves. Only the young imp remained behind to gaze with eyes of curiosity on his handiwork, until the doctor sent him to the right-about, by asking him the pertinent question, "What the doose are you stopping for? By Gad! don't you think you've done enough for one day?" when he, too, drew on one side, and left the trio alone.

After a few moments' pause, by dint of having repeated handfuls of water dashed into his face, Tom again revived and opened his eyes.

Shortly he looked much better, and was able to answer the doctor's enquiries. He raised himself half up, turning over on his left side—"Oh, yes, doctor, I'm nearly all right. By Jove! though, don't that hurt," he said, as our friend still continued to examine him—"I'll soon be right, won't I, doctor? Thank you, but don't press so hard! And thank you," he said, turning his eyes round and upon her—"my darling"—he murmured, softly, "what a trouble I am to you." But, strange to say, Lizzie did not look as if she thought it a trouble at all!

The doctor was plunged in deep thought, "Humph! very serious, very serious," he exclaimed, shaking his head solemnly, at the same time with a sly twinkle in his eyes—"Very serious, very serious, Master Tom. You've got two ribs smashed, sir, and I think you want to have another. Ha! Ha! Sly dog, sly dog. Never mind, it's a beautiful contusion! Luckily it wasn't the other side, or we would have had your heart gone."

"I'm afraid it's gone already, doctor," observed the wounded hero, gazing artfully round at Lizzie, who looked very conscious, "but shall I be able to get round soon?" and he tried to get up, but fell back again into his former position, and looked as if he were going to faint.

"Oh, don't move, pray don't move," Lizzie said, laying her hand on his shoulder entreatingly: Tom seized that opportunity to make the little hand a prisoner. Very interesting, was it not, for the old campaigner, who was looking on grimly from a distance?

"Don't budge, you young rascal; don't you stir, or we'll have you fainting again, and looking interesting, like my lady, yonder," and the doctor sniggered, for his eyes were sharp, and, I believe, he had fathomed the campaigner's little game—"Don't stir, my boy. You must keep quiet now, but we'll have you on your legs again in a few days."

The biggest of the pony carriages, accompanied by a band of gentlemen followers, now drew up in the glen, close to the gnarled old oak, by the stump of which the unlucky object of young Sir Mortimer's gun practice was reclining.

Doctor Jolly inspected the vehicle to see whether all his directions had been obeyed; and, finding an old door laid across the seats, on which was a mattress and a bundle of pillows, he said, "That's right, boys. Now bear a hand, and we'll get him in."

Supported by the brawny Aesculapius, and the offered arms of a score of others, Tom was lifted carefully into the chaise, and arranged comfortably amidst the pillows.

"Now," said the doctor aloud, for the benefit of the company, apparently, but in reality, I think, for little Lizzie's sake, "I want some lady to go along with us, to hold his head up, and carry the salts—I want smelling salts, too—or a vinaigrette, or something of that sort."

All the ladies eagerly proffered help, but they were headed by Lady Inskip, who exclaimed—

"Here's my darling child Carry, who is so anxious, and will be so glad to go:" a dozen fair hands also held up gorgeous little silver-topped vinaigrettes.

The doctor looked upon them all reflectively.

"Humph!" he said, sententiously, "I don't think any of you will do. I shall take Miss Pringle here; she's undertaken the case, and she may as well complete the cure."

The campaigner looked fearfully disgusted. She turned to Pringle, B.A., and said, as if speaking confidentially to them, but for the express benefit of the doctor and Lizzie, as she spoke so that all might hear her—

"Of course I would not like to interfere with a medical man, Mr Pringle; but do you think it is quite correct for a young girl like your sister to go off in that way with a young man without any chaperone?"

"No indeed, Lady Inskip—no, indeed, Lady Inskip. Of course you know best; ah! and ah! Lizzie—"

"Bless my soul!" said the doctor, excitedly, "I don't see why Miss Lizzie cannot go just as properly as your daughter, my lady! It's all nonsense, and she shall go!" And the doctor, without asking anybody's leave or license, at once handed Lizzie into the pony carriage by the side of Tom. Getting in himself, and telling the campaigner cordially "Good-day, my lady! good-day," he drove off triumphantly, although slowly, out from the glade, in and out of the trees, on to the road, and so slowly homeward to The Poplars, with our wounded hero lying back in Lizzie's arm—a very different plight to the gallant turn-out in which Tom had set out so hopefully in the morning for Lady Inskip's *fête champêtre*.

The campaigner was certainly defeated to some extent, but she was not discomfited. Oh! dear, no. She had secured one of her birds—Pringle—at all events, for he was as devoted as she could wish to Laura; and as for the other, although he had been brought down, winged is the word—so unfortunately by the young imp, still, all was not lost there yet—she had only to act, and it would run hard, so she thought, if she did not succeed in throwing on one side "that artful little minx."

She now bethought herself of her company. The day was far spent, and she was not going to let the whole thing break up in such an unsatisfactory manner. She was too knowing for that; consequently she threw cold water on the manifest sympathy for Tom.

"Pooh!" she said, "it's not much. The doctor said he would be well in a day or two, it's only a mere scratch!"

Of course several joined in with her, and followed suit. When Lieutenant Harrowby ventured to suggest that it "must be very painful, you know, ba-iey Jo-ve!" he was caught up at once by the choleric Captain Curry Cucumber, "Nice soldier you are, my fine fellow! to think so much of a mere flea-bite—a mere flea-bite. By Jingo! when I was at Rhamdaghur—" And he was going to retail some of his East-Indian reminiscences, when he was adroitly stopped by the campaigner's suggesting that they should return to the festal board, which all thereupon did, sitting down again with much gusto to the remnants of the feast.

The evening waxed on, and then they packed up, and sallied homewards. It is wonderful what a little break the absence or injury of one makes in a large party. The proverb, "out of sight, out of mind," is true enough, although it contradicts that other veracious proverb, which tells us that "absence makes the heart grow fonder!"

Pringle and the young officers finished the evening very agreeably with the Inskip girls at their residence, the former not agitating himself much about his sister, "of whom," the campaigner observed, "she was sure Doctor Jolly would take every care, notwithstanding his rudeness to her!" So everything went well with Lady Inskip, and the pic-nic was voted a success, although Captain Curry Cucumber dubbed her "an infernal old harridan, by Jingo!" and wished he had had her "out at Rhamdaghur, by Gad!" and he would have taught her how to "insult an army-man, by Jingo!" in taking no notice of him, while she "could pamper a civilian, by Gad!"—alluding, we very much fear, to the Revd. Herbert Pringle, to whom the campaigner had been really very ingratiating. If only that accident had not happened, who knows what other success might not have fallen to her share! But Lady Inskip had the satisfaction that night of boxing Mortimer's ears.

As the pony carriage drove very slowly, it was evening, nearly night, by the time Tom and his companions arrived at The Poplars: the house was wrapped in gloomy silence.

The doctor jumped down quickly, and Lizzie after him, when she took the opportunity of saying to him, quickly, "I will wait here, doctor, until you come out, and do tell me then how he is!" She wished Tom good-bye, and walked on, apparently home to the parsonage, but she waited at the corner, and peeped back to see him carried in; after which she shrunk into the shades again to the garden-gate of The Poplars, and waited patiently for the doctor to come out.

The dowager, herself, answered the gate, outstripping "Garge" in getting there first. The doctor, having rapidly explained matters, and told her not to be alarmed, she spoke up at once sharply to the point.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish!" she said. "I'm a woman, Doctor Jolly; but I'm not a fool, and you won't find me crying like an idiot!"

Whereupon the orders were given to George, who looked on with stolid wonder and grief, and between them they carried Tom into the house and laid him on his bed, where the doctor saw him tranquilly composed, and told him cheerily he would be all right to-morrow.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish!" said the dowager, half to herself, in a muttering tone. "Here's Thomas wounded, and Susan gone away, one doesn't know where!"

"What! Susan gone?" enquired the doctor anxiously.

"Drat it all, man! It doesn't matter. I was only bothering about her being out in the garden so late; that's all!"

"Bless my soul!" said the doctor, quieting down—"you nearly frightened me to death! But I must see about Tom now!"—and there the conversation about the missing girl dropped.

The old lady had but just discovered the absence of the girl, and Miss Kingscott had disclaimed any knowledge as to her whereabouts. The fright of the dowager, however, about Tom, made her forget the other trouble for a time, particularly as Susan had often before stopped out late in the garden. She would not be really alarmed about her daughter till the morning.

Now, she was in a fearful state of anxiety about Tom, although she tried, with the dogged obstinacy of her nature, to affect indifference; but she was heartily glad when Doctor Jolly said he would do very well, and that he would come the first thing in the morning to see him.

It was night now, quite late; and the bright harvest moon was shining down out of a clear blue sky with all its August fulness, marking out every feature of the landscape with all that clearness of outline and vivid contrast of brilliant, blueish light and dark shadow which only moonlight gives.

Not a breath stirred the summer night. The tall, melancholy poplars around the Hartshorne's house looked even more dismal by night than by day, with their ungainly shapes sharply defined against the sky, and their shadows more gloomy and eerie than those of the other trees; yet still Lizzie leant against the gate and waited, Heaven knows how anxiously! for Doctor Jolly's re-appearance.

The poor little thing had now been there, outside the gate, for more than two hours; as the doctor had been long engaged hearing about Susan's disappearance, which he also made light of, besides seeing to Tom's comfort and arrangements when they had lifted him into his bed and undressed him—for he was nearly helpless now.

He at length came out, however; and he had no sooner got out of the gate than Lizzie, who was eagerly watching for him, clutched his arm, and outspoke her dreadful anxiety, “Oh! doctor, dear doctor, is there any hope? He looked so pale and helpless, and—and—he will die! He will die!”

Her little wistful face looked up with such distressing enquiry into his jovial, weather-beaten countenance, that Doctor Jolly felt his eyes grow very hazy, and blew his nose vigorously.

“Certainly, my dear, certainly! That is, there is plenty of hope, Miss Lizzie. Bless my soul! plenty of hope. You see, we've extracted all the shot (Lizzie shuddered), and he's a strong and hearty young fellow, and he'll be round again before we know where we are.”

“Thank you, doctor,” Lizzie said, pressing his arm: the doctor felt that her simple words expressed more then than a hundred sentences might have done from others.

The doctor saw her home, and cheered her up wonderfully, so that she actually laughed before she quitted him at the parsonage gate. They seemed to have a secret understanding about the wounded hero, although neither had expressed it in words. Indeed, Doctor Jolly had been so much taken up in soothing his companion, that he quite forgot to mention anything about Susan's being missed. And all the time, the hours were gliding by, and the chances for her recovery were becoming more and more indefinite.

Verily! a very pretty kettle of fish.

Volume Two—Chapter Two.

At Havre and London.

Late on the evening of the day after the marriage in London, Markworth and his charge—lately his “sister,” now *Madame sa femme*—arrived at the half-seaport town, half-fashionable watering place of *Havre-de-Grace*, at the mouth of the slowly running Seine, tawny as the yellow Tiber.

Susan had not been brought to the Continent without serious prior deliberation.

Markworth, in the first place, wished to avoid observation at the present time; and he was so well-known in London, that he thought it would be folly to remain there any longer than necessary; and, in the second place, he wanted to secure a quiet retreat wherein to lodge Susan.

He determined, of course, to keep his hold on her until her friends were assured of the marriage; and as she might be traced, and he, perhaps, arrested for abducting the girl, before he was able to lay a legal claim to her inheritance, the best plan for him to pursue was to “go across the water,” as he expressed it, for awhile—as, indeed, a good many other gentlemen, who have sympathising friends amongst the trading interests of the great city of Babylon-the-Less have done, and annually do still.

What place so convenient, he thought, as Havre? So to Havre he accordingly ran over the next day, and in that pleasant little town he sat down awhile, to consider what his next movement should be, as he had to study each move carefully. He had plenty of money for present expenses; he had “the goose;” the only thing now to do was to get the “golden eggs.” As he had gone so far, he certainly was not going to be baulked now, he thought. And his chances must have been good, or that cautious old Jew, Solomonson, would not have “backed him.” He had only got to play his cards properly, and look about him awhile. That was all! Yes, that was all.

He could not have chosen a more convenient and comfortable place in France, all things considered, for his purpose.

Perhaps, an exceptional reader—I say “exceptional” advisedly—may have stopped at Havre after crossing over from Southampton—stopped a sufficient time to learn and know the place, for the generality of travellers who adopt this route to Paris, usually go on straight to their destination without breaking their journey at this picturesque old town, which is a sort of “half-way house” on the direct road. If so, the “exceptional reader” will bear me out in my observations on the subject and place.

Havre is like Liverpool and Boulogne rolled into one harmonious or inharmonious whole. It has all the shipping and maritime population—although perhaps the latter are more gaily dressed—of the great entrepôt on the Mersey, with all the thorough Gallic attributes of a French watering place.

Down in the town, Havre proper, it is all trade and bustle as befits a great commercial port; up amidst the heights of Ingouville, it is fashionable and fantastic, with its trim white terraces and green, gay Venetian blinds, and its lovely view of the bay beyond. Havre is really not considered half as much as it ought to be, and forms a much more enjoyable spot for a holiday than many of these fearfully uneventful and racketty fashionable resorts, which are generally patronised by English tourists on the Continent.

Liverpool it is like, with its muddy Seine—like the other river that runs between Birkenhead and its sister city—and its bustling streets and quays. Liverpool, with a touch of Ratcliffe Highway, on account of the parrots and foreign birds, mostly South American, that you see troops of sailors marching about with, besides the strong touch of the military element which one more frequently observes by the side of Tower Hill, than in the parallel city of trade in Lancashire. A French Liverpool, very Frenchified, and jovial and gay, with that foreign dash of sprightliness and *insouciance* which is never seen in England.

Here Markworth hired lodgings, in the *Rue Montmartre*, of a stout, middle-aged Frenchwoman and her little husband: the latter being a *marchand* of something or the other; and by no means the “better half” of the two.

Susan was as pleased as a child with the novelty of everything around her; and if she had been changed for the better at The Poplars, the change was twice as noticeable now that she had shut out from her all the past with its associations.

Every little item in her new life tended to increase the improvement in her mental organisation; besides which Markworth was kind and attentive to her, even more so than he had been before.

Instead of the dingy old melancholy house in Sussex, she was in a bright little French cottage. The old dark rooms were exchanged for a simple *apartement bien garni*, with its tiled floor, and those wonderfully simple accessories which complete the mobilier of our friends on the other side; the half dozen extraordinary-looking straight backed chairs, the round table with its matting beneath, the elaborate fire-place with its porcelain belongings, and the mantel-piece with inevitable gilt clock and china shepherdesses.

The fat landlady was very kind, although she did not speak a word of English; still her husband prided himself on his knowledge of our language, a knowledge nearly limited to that of the Frenchman’s of poor Albert Smith’s acquaintance, who saying “Ah, Ya-as! I spik Englise—portair—bier—rosbif—God dam!” there wound up the catalogue of his accomplishments.

But Mère Cliquelle was kind in her way. She understood from Markworth that “Madame” was very delicate; and as she had a separate room and looked very pale, Mère Cliquelle tried to make her very comfortable by always nodding to her, and smiling whenever she came into the room, which she was constantly doing to bring Madame sundry little pet-dishes or plats of her own *cuisine* and bonbons *ad infinitum*.

Susan was soon very happy, and as gay as a bird in her new home. She had been sensible enough before; but she was now light-hearted as well.

Markworth devoted himself to her. He would take her out constantly for walks along the bustling quays, where Susan liked to watch the gaily dressed sailors, and the ships and tiny craft in the harbour. Every sailor on landing seemed to bring home half a dozen parrots or crimson birds of the tropics. You never can see such a lot of “imported” birds, as the Americans say, anywhere else, as at Havre.

Susan and Markworth were quite a study for the simple French couple with whom they abode. They thought “Madame” so beautiful and affectionate; and Monsieur, “*Mon Dieu! un galant homme*, and *so* handsome:—a rich Milor Anglais, no doubt.”

Thus a month had passed by; and Markworth thought that the time for him to act once more had arrived. His training had not been lost on Susan. Thanks to his indefatigable efforts she was now fully restored, and she would be the best witness he could have in court should he be forced to go to law in order to gain his rights to her money. He had indeed devoted himself to the girl’s cure especially for this object, but he had also been led on by a species of real zeal in the case. He had seen from the first how easily Susan, by proper influences, could be led to regain her mind, and had steadily persevered in that direction.

If anyone else had spent as much time and trouble on her long ago, Susan would never have required his aid, but she had been neglected, left alone in that old house; and Doctor Jolly, with all his cleverness as a medical practitioner, had not understood her case.

Markworth was proud of his triumph, apart from the consideration that his own well-being was interested in Susan’s recovery. He was proud that his hand had wrought the cure; and besides, he was really concerned about the girl on her own account. Her entire faith and confidence, and her blind worship, touched even him, while her love had made him have a friendly regard for her, which might or might not grow deeper.

There were one or two good points in his character, as is the case with all bad men. He was not brutal, or naturally bad hearted, but at the same time he was careful of his own interests. If he had got Susan’s money, for example, he would not then have turned her adrift. She loved him like a faithful dog, and it was not in his nature to kick a dog away. He was kind to her because it suited his purpose: it was necessary to her cure, and besides he had no reason to be otherwise.

At the end of a month, therefore, he determined to make some move.

He had seen an advertisement for the lost girl in the “Times,” which he had given directions to have sent over to him here. The advertisement had appeared a very few days after the date on which he had removed Susan from The

Poplars, and had been continued repeatedly since; but that did not flurry him much. He knew he could not be traced, and as the had no feelings of compunction for the anxiety which might be occasioned by her disappearance, he determined to suit his own time when to make the news known of her safety and present condition.

He was certain that Clara Kingscott would not give any information about him, as she was a clever woman, and was obliged on her own account not to implicate herself in the abduction of the girl, and was besides anxious to get the remainder of the money he had promised her for aiding him; so he could afford to take his own time and play the game just as he chose, for the cards were in his hand.

He thus let a month run, and Susan being quite happy and settled down in their comfortable lodgings with the Mère Cliquelle in the Rue Montmartre, he thought he would go over to London for a couple of days or so, and set his plans to work. He also wanted more money, and that was a potent reason for taking him.

Susan was disturbed at first on learning that he was going away, but was as quickly consoled when he promised to be back very soon, and to bring her brother Tom with him; that was the only anxiety she had displayed on leaving her home. She had retained her love for her brother, and she feared he was angry at her leaving. She was delighted consequently to learn from Markworth, as he told her, that he was going to fetch him, for she was not yet aware of the great interests that hung at stake upon her.

Susan saw him preparing to start with many tears, and many directions for him to be back soon; after which Markworth left her to the kindly care of the Mère Cliquelle, who promised to look after her as her own child: he then crossed the channel.

He first visited his Hebrew friend Solomonson in Chancery Lane, whereby depositing sundry shares he had in a City Company, and giving a bond for about five times the amount, payable on his obtaining his wife’s inheritance, he managed to obtain an advance of some hundred pounds to carry him on until the lawsuit should be determined.

Before coming to a final settlement, Markworth bargained some time as usual with the Jew, but had at last to accede to his terms; as it would have been difficult for him to get money from anyone else without stronger security. Indeed, the Jew only trusted him now because he was in a heavy venture, and because also, Markworth had always behaved honourably to him in his dealings before—and there had been many and various between the parties. But he would require sharp payment would the Jew with all his trust, and should he lose his case, old Solomonson would be the first to be down upon him.

He was apparently, he reflected, spending Susan’s fortune before he got it; so he determined to set about securing it now as soon as possible.

Having already perused several times the advertisement for Susan, he knew well where the lawyer’s offices were, where he was to apply, and he made up his mind to go there first before—as he called it—“tackling the old dowager.”

To Bedford Row, he accordingly bent his steps; and he laughed jocosely, as he went up the staircase towards Messrs Trump and Sequence’s offices. “What a capital joke it will be,” he said to himself, “asking them for that ‘Fifty Pounds Reward.’ I’m hanged if I don’t do it;” and he walked in accordingly to startle Mr Trump.

Volume Two—Chapter Three.

The Next Morning.

Just about the time when the curate of St. Catherine Cross’ Church, in London, was asking Markworth whether he would take this woman, M. or N., to be his wedded wife, the dowager and the inhabitants of The Poplars awoke to the certainty that Susan had really gone off somewhere without leaving a trace behind.

She had not come to breakfast; she had not been seen about the premises or in the garden; she had not come into the house or slept in her bed all night; where on earth could she be? It was time, indeed, that some search or enquiry should be instituted.

No time was to be lost!

The old dowager was fearfully excited on being made certain of Susan’s disappearance.

She would not believe it at first; and, saying “It’s all stuff and nonsense, the girl’s hidden somewhere, I know,” was not convinced until she had herself in person searched, every nook and cranny in the old house from top to bottom.

It was the first time that she had really showed any anxiety about the girl, for the old woman was very much troubled indeed. She was shrewd and business-like as usual, however, in her enquiries, and first examined everybody in the house before carrying the search further.

Miss Kingscott, the governess, said she had not seen her since the middle of the previous day, and she had supposed at first that she had gone out to walk with Mr Markworth. She had found out afterwards, however, that that gentleman had driven off early along with “poor Mr Thomas,” she believed, towards the station, and so her pupil could not have gone to walk with him.

Miss Kingscott afterwards informed Mrs Hartshorne that she missed out of her wardrobe a black silk dress, and a shawl and bonnet. She supposed Susan had taken those with her, as her own walking things had been left behind in her, Miss Kingscott’s, room. The old lady said snappishly that “she did not know what right she, the governess, had to suppose anything of the sort;” but she kept the information in her mind nevertheless.

The old servant, Martha, said she had not seen Miss Susan at all, as "she had too much work of her own in the kitchen for her to do, as was a disgrace for only one servant in sich a large 'ouse as she never see, and it were a burnin' shame it were a workin' one pore old woman worse nor any black nigger slave as ever was, that it were:" so no information was obtained from her.

George, on being summoned in to speak to the "old un," as he called the dowager, said that he had been "at work all t'day a diggin on t'petatus," and he had seen "no leetel miss" about the garden, but he "thort he seed un when he wor a goin' to his dinner, jist arter twelve, awalkin' in the far lot across t'fields with that gentelmun froom Lunnon, but he warn't shoor."

The old lady called him "an ass and a grinning baboon" for his pains, and told him "get out and go to your work, man!" But George was right, for he had seen them as he said, when on his way back to the house after his visit to the "Jolly Spades," although his vision was then somewhat hazy, and his intellects more obtuse than usual from the large potations of home-brewed he had taken at such an early hour of the day—thanks to Miss Kingscott's liberality to him. The dowager was perplexed, but her cool, calculating temperament was soon at work.

She determined to send at once to her lawyers in London, and calling in the aid of the police to track the fugitive.

Doctor Jolly, too, who came in at this moment to see after Tom—rather earlier than usual for his professional call, but he was anxious about his patient—warmly applauded the dowager's resolve.

He, of course, was also startled at the news that Susan had not been heard of. "Bless my soul!" he said, when all the facts and enquiries that had been made were explained to him. "Bless my soul! It's very strange, very strange, indeed. She could not have stopped anywhere in the neighbourhood, or you would have heard of her before. She must have gone off to some distance. Did she have any money with her?"

"Oh, no!" said Miss Kingscott, to whom he had addressed himself.

"Fool!" spoke out sharply the dowager.

"Why, is it likely that I would give any of my hard-earned money to an idiot to throw away?"

The doctor confessed the improbability of Mrs Hartshorne's disposing of her surplus funds in the manner suggested, although he was somewhat indignant at the strong epithet applied to himself: he was, however, too much interested on Susan's behalf to cavil now about words with the old lady.

"Have you asked about her in the village and at the station?" he said, after reflecting a minute or two.

"What is the use of that?" replied the dowager; "all the people know about her at Hartwood, and would have stopped her. But you can ask yourself presently, if you don't mind going down there."

The doctor said he would; and the plan of the dowager, he thought, would, in the meantime, be the best one to pursue.

"Yes," said Mrs Hartshorne; "I shall send up to Mr Trump, in London, at once, and put the matter in his hands. He is a lawyer, and he will know what is best for us to do. I can't say I'm very fond of the girl," observed the dowager, drily, to which Doctor Jolly gave a decidedly affirmative nod; "but I would not like her to come to any harm. But who shall I send? Can you go?"

"Bless my soul!" replied Doctor Jolly. "I would go at once, but there's poor Tom; I can't leave him, for he's in a very ticklish state."

"True—true; poor Thomas! It's a pretty kettle of fish, all this happening just now."

"Let me go, ma'am," said Miss Kingscott, quietly.

"You!" snapped out the old lady. "What's the good of a girl like you going? What can you do?"

"I'm sure a girl can be as good a messenger as anyone else, and I can go at once," answered the governess, calmly; "indeed I'm so interested in my poor pupil, that I should like to do something towards finding her."

"Humph!" grunted the dowager, thinking it over.

"Certainly," put in the doctor; "certainly, madam. Bless my soul! I should like to know why not?"

The thing was agreed to after some further conversation, and Miss Kingscott, charged with a curt epistle from the dowager, and a supply of money from the doctor's own purse—the old lady had not hinted at producing any, and did not advance any demurrer to his so doing—for paying her expenses on the road, was directed to go to Hartwood Station. She was to ask there whether they had seen Susan, and if she heard no intelligence, she was to proceed direct to London; there she was to call on the lawyers without losing time, explain the whole matter to Mr Trump, and tell him to come down at once—indeed, she was to bring him down with her if she could.

The governess obeyed her instructions to the letter, and acted all through as if she was as ignorant about Susan's disappearance and her movements as she had professed to be.

She asked about Susan in the village, in order that if any enquiries were made she could substantiate her statement of ignorance. Of course, nobody had heard there of the missing girl, as she very well knew would be the case. She then went on up to London by the next train, and proceeding at once to the offices to which she was directed, she handed the old lady's letter to the senior partner.

In the meantime, Doctor Jolly was attending to poor Tom's wounds; the wounded hero had passed a very bad night, and was feverish and excitable.

The doctor, who had his suspicions about Markworth, asked one or two guarded questions of Tom as to the whereabouts of his friend. He had been surprised at not seeing the exquisite at Lady Inskip's pic-nic: with his downright common sense, aided by his dislike and suspicions of Markworth, he thought that there must be some connection at first between Susan's disappearance and the absence of the other.

Tom's answers to his questions, however, fairly puzzled him, and the doctor was thrown off the scent entirely.

Tom said, in reply to one of the doctor's casual enquiries, that he had driven Markworth over to Hartwood Station himself before he had gone on to the pic-nic. That his friend had been suddenly summoned up to town the previous morning, and that he expected him back very shortly, as he said he might not be detained long; although Tom added, "he had taken his traps with him."

"Oh, he has? has he!" answered the doctor. "Well, I daresay we'll have him down soon again though, and then you will be able to get about again with him."

He cheered up Tom, who was very crestfallen and hippish with the pain he had undergone, and the thoughts of being kept a prisoner in bed whilst he so much wished, particularly now on account of Lizzie, to be able to move about.

"Bless my soul!" said the old fellow, cheerfully, as he went out, "why, you will be right again in a jiffey. We have got all that beastly shot out of you, and the place is healing beautifully. I tell you what I will do, too, Master Tom," he added, nodding his head knowingly, with a twinkling of his kind grey eyes—"I'll tell a certain little girl how we are getting on; I know she will feel interested!"

"Thank you, doctor; you're a trump, by Jove!" said Tom, gladly, "and give her my compliments."

"Hang your compliments, you young rascal; I'll give you her love when I come back!" and the doctor laughed himself with a cheery ho! ho! ho! out of the room, down the staircase, to the dining-room below, where Mrs Hartshorne—the old lady looking quite broken already from the anxiety she had gone through—was waiting to hear his report about Tom.

They had decided not to tell him yet about Susan in his present state—not, at all events, until the lawyer came down.

The doctor said Tom was doing very well, although excitement would be bad for him; and then went out to pay some calls around, promising to call back in a few hours' time.

You may be sure he did not forget, with his kind heart, to call round at the Pringles, where he found little Lizzie listening anxiously for his approach, for he had promised her last night to come and give the news about Tom.

She eagerly thanked him for coming and for his good news, and coyly gave the doctor permission to take back her love to Tom: of course, she was as much surprised as the doctor was to hear of Susan's disappearance, and her sympathies were quite aroused when he told her how broken the old lady seemed under the double trouble she was suffering under.

Lizzie immediately offered to go up and see her, not knowing her general disposition so well as our friend Aesculapius; but he told her that it would be useless, and that nothing could be done until the lawyer and the detective arrived from London. Lizzie was doubly anxious about Susan for Tom's sake: it is wonderful the interest that young ladies take in the sisters and other relatives of young gentlemen for whom they may entertain regard! But Lizzie could do nothing, and was even more useless in the juncture than the dowager had at first supposed the governess to be when she offered to make herself useful.

After paying his round of calls, the doctor returned to The Poplars, some three hours or more from the time of his setting out: and he and the dowager then sat down in sympathy and mutual anxiety together in the parlour, for the first time in their respective lives, to wait for the return of Miss Kingscott from her mission to London.

Thus the hours passed by, the day after Susan Hartshorne's elopement.

Volume Two—Chapter Four.

Messrs Trump, Sequence, and Co.

Mrs Hartshorne's lawyers had their offices in one of the most palatial and dingy of that, whilom palatial, and now most dingy, collection of houses, which it would be sheer lunacy to christen a street,—yclept Bedford Row—that favourite abiding place and Mecca of the gentlemen of the "sheepskin" persuasion. The proprietress of The Poplars was one of the richest clients of the firm, who had for years done business for the family before the dowager's incorporation in it; but still it does not follow that Messrs Trump, Sequence, and Co. got over many fees and costs from that long-headed lady. She employed them as a matter of course, for they had all the Hartshorne papers, but they got very little money out of her, or from the estate, since Roger Hartshorne, the old squire, died.

It was to these gentlemen that Miss Kingscott was introduced on coming up to London to fulfil the mission with which she had been entrusted. It was good to see how the eyes of both partners glistened on hearing that, at last, some business was to be done for the Sussex dowager. Miss Kingscott related the particulars.

Mr Trump at first was surprised, but being of a keen, energetic turn of mind, he quickly determined how to act.

Having examined and cross-examined Miss Kingscott with regard to the dress and appearance of the girl, and so on—although he himself had frequently seen Susan too—he at once drew up the form of an advertisement for the lost girl, offering a reward of fifty pounds for her recovery.

He then rang his bell for one of the clerks in the outer office; and a grizzled old man, old but alert, with his hair standing on end, like a porcupine’s quills, at once obeyed the summons.

“Here, Smiffens,” said Mr Trump, giving him the paper he had just written, “copy that advertisement; take down copies to the morning papers, and have it inserted at once. By the way,” he added, as Smiffens bustled out of the room, “take a copy, too, to the printers, and have five hundred handbills struck off for the police. Wait for them till they’re done, and take them down to the central office. I’m just going down to Scotland Yard myself, and will tell them to expect the bills. Be sharp, mind! there’s no time to lose.”

As soon as the clerk had gone, Mr Trump turned to the governess who had been waiting all this time.

“Now, I’m at your service, Miss Kingscott,” he said. “I shall be happy to accompany you down to Hartwood if you are going back at once.” Miss Kingscott signified that that was her intention. “You won’t mind my stopping at the police-station, will you? I want to pick a sharp detective there, whom I know, and get him to go down with us.”

“Oh, dear no!” said Miss Kingscott; and after a very trifling delay, Miss Kingscott, the lawyer, and John Bounce, special detective, of Scotland Yard, were in the coupé of a first-class carriage, and rattling down at express speed to Hartwood.

Arrived there, they managed to secure one of those extraordinary cabs or flys that are to be met with at country places, and which, I believe, are derelict London carriages that are thrown away by their former owners as worn out and useless: and after a short time they got to The Poplars, just as the doctor and the dowager, worn out with waiting, began to feel tired of the unusual pleasure of each other’s company.

Matters having been explained over again, the detective, John Bounce, was set to work; and he, with that look of mystic preparation which the craft glory in, asked at once to be shown over the house. He examined every hole and corner as if he thought Susan had been purposely stowed away by the members of the family. When he was satisfied with an inspection of the house and garden, giving especial care to examining the various locks and appurtenances of the gates, he appeared to think profoundly for a short time, when he asked to be shown the clothes which Susan had left behind her. These gave him immense gratification, for he turned them over and over again, giving vent to sundry Lord Burleigh’s shakings of the head, and portentous “humphs,” as if he had the whole thing in his mind’s eye.

Detectives, my dear sir, or madam, are not by any means such sharp personages as writers of fiction generally love to depict. There are some especially “cute” members of the force I don’t for a moment deny; but as a class their knowledge and acquirements are fearfully exaggerated. Indeed, I must be so severe as to call them at once, humbugs; but they deceive themselves quite as greatly and as often as they deceive the public, and are by no means so sharp as the malefactors they are set to catch. I think a clergyman I once knew would have made a far better detective than a good many real *mouchoirs* I have come across. He had the gift of at once divining at the truth, investigating the morality and ethics of his parishioners which not one detective in a hundred possesses. They put on a great deal of mystery, and appear to “know all about it,” but they are really much more shallow conjurers than Herr Frickell when, turning up the sleeves of his coat and his snow-white wristbands and calling his audience’s attention to the theory that there is “no preparation, gentlemen! no preparation,” at once proceeds to smuggle eggs up his sleeves with a “Hi, Presto! Begone!”

The detective placed great emphasis on the fact that Susan had taken Miss Kingscott’s dress and bonnet with her. “Putting two and two together,” as he said, he delivered himself of the oracular assertion, that she “must have gone off somewhere,” which, of course, no one else would have dreamt of but the dowager, who observed snappishly that she could have told him that before, and advised him to try and find out where the girl had gone to, as that was what he had been employed for. Whereupon, John Bounce appeared all at once to wake up to the notion that he would have to go somewhere else to look for the missing girl. He asked if they had enquired about her at the nearest railway station, and was told they had; and on being further told that another station, Bigglethorpe, was also not far from The Poplars, he said she might have gone there, which was also perfectly feasible to the meanest comprehension.

At Bigglethorpe they found out that the station-master remembered a tall, dark gentleman getting out on the previous day, and coming back shortly afterwards with a lady. He thought it was the same, because now he remembered the gentleman had left his bag there, and had taken it, and gone off in the next up-train. On the detective’s telling him to “Take care!” and mentioning that he was a policeman, which he generally found to have an awe-inspiring influence on the *gamins* of London, the station-master said he could not tell him any more, not if he were “twenty detectives, and the Lord Mayor into the bargain, all rolled into one.” He recollected a gentleman getting out there, he thought, and coming back again, and going up to London, and he believed he had a lady with him, but he would not be sure. It was “no use a pestering him with any more questions, for he had his own business to attend to about the traffic returns.” He did not know who the gentleman was, nor the lady, and he “had not seen them afore or since, and didn’t want to see ’em either, for that matter.” There the enquiry ended, for the detective was at fault; and that is all they found out about Susan, after searching for days about the neighbourhood in every direction.

Nothing could be done now but to wait and see what effect the advertisements and handbills would have in discovering her whereabouts. So Mr Trump and the detective had to go back to London as unsuccessful as when they had gone down; while Doctor Jolly and the old lady and Tom, who were all greatly grieved at the disappearance of the girl, could but wonder what had become of her. The only thing they had learnt for a certainty was that she was not in the county; and they could only hope that a good providence would watch over her, and bring her back to them safe: in the interim the police in the metropolis, with their wits sharpened by the reward offered, were doing all they could to ferret her out in London. And thus a month passed by.

During all this time, Messrs Trump, Sequence, and Co. had been fairly worried out of their wits, day and night, with false reports about the finding of Susan. More than a hundred persons had come to their offices brimful of the intelligence that they had secured the fugitive, and had seen her at all sorts of unheard of places; but the persons whom they thought to be Susan turned out to be totally unlike her in every particular. Mr Trump was for ever going with the police to inspect the bodies of drowned persons; and yet no trace was found of the missing girl, and he at last began to hope devoutly that she would be found soon, whether dead or alive he did not care which, for he was bothered to death about the matter. Indeed, he would have cheerfully given a handsome sum to have "washed his hands," as he often said to Sequence, who had a peculiar, parrot-like habit of repeating Trump's words after him, as if affirmatively, "of the whole affair." To which Sequence would nod his head, and respond sagaciously, "Certainly, of the whole affair."

When Markworth, therefore, after the search had lasted a month, walked into the office one morning just after his interview with the Jew, Solomonson, and told Mr Trump, who had accosted him graciously, thinking he was a new client, that he came about the advertisement for the lost girl, Mr Trump was wroth and slightly snappy.

"I hope to goodness you've really found her, and not come here with any cock and bull story like the rest of 'em."

"I think you'll find," said Markworth, taking out the marriage certificate which he had brought with him, the advertisement, and a photographic likeness which he had had taken at Havre, "when you look at these, that I've found the girl, and am entitled to the reward you have offered."

"This is Susan, sure enough; but," he observed, "where's it taken? Havre? Havre? How the devil did she get there?"

"I took her there," answered Markworth, in the most cool and collected manner, according to his wont; "and if you'll look at this certificate here you'll see that I had a perfect right to do so. She is my wife!"

"Whew!" whistled Mr Trump, through his closed teeth. "Your wife! Why, the girl's insane!"

"That's where you make the mistake, my dear sir! She's no more insane than you are. Her people ought to have told you that, for although she had been previously a little 'foolish,' perhaps, they saw her improvement of late; and she had the sense, at all events, to run away with me and get married, and that's no proof of her insanity."

"I don't know about that," said Mr Trump, "I don't know about that. I remember now, the old doctor said that she had been more intelligent before she disappeared, but he did not tell me that Susan Hartshorne was quite right in her mind, and I won't believe it. Do you know Mr —, I beg your pardon, I did not catch your name."

"Markworth, Allynne Markworth," said that gentleman.

"Thank you! Well then, Mr Allynne Markworth, do you know that that girl has a large fortune, and it is a very serious offence in the eyes of the law to abduct, and enter into a false contract of marriage with a girl of feeble intellect like that?"

"I am perfectly aware of the facts as you state them, my dear sir. Allow me to congratulate you on your legal presence of mind and abilities," said Markworth, as calmly as ever. "I knew she had a fortune, but you will have to prove she was *non compos mentis*, I believe that's your term for it, when I married her. The girl was of age, my dear sir. Look at that marriage certificate, and see for yourself. She was of legal age on the very day before we were married. There! you see the date of the certificate, 28th August, 1867."

"Well, well, whether she was of age or not you can be prosecuted under an indictment for a conspiracy to obtain the money of a person of unsound mind, under the pretence of going through a marriage ceremony with a person who, in the eye of the law, could not make a binding contract!"

"Precisely, my dear sir!" said the other, coolly, Mr Sequence, of course, taking no part in the conversation. "Precisely, but you see you will have to prove, in the first place, that the girl was of unsound mind; and in the second, to prove conspiracy you will have to implicate two or more persons. You see, I too, know the law, Mr Trump: allow me to inform you that I alone was concerned in the affair, how will you prove your conspiracy?"

The lawyer looked fairly baffled. "The girl's found at all events, and that's one trouble saved," he said to himself.

Markworth resumed after a moment's pause, "You see, my dear sir, the girl was of age, she was unhappy at home, she ran away with me and married me: the whole thing lies in a nutshell. I wasn't to blame; and, of course, as she has property, I shall take very good care to assert my rights as her husband. But that's an after consideration. You are quite satisfied that the girl is found, I suppose?" said Markworth, after detailing how Susan had met him on the day of her disappearance, taken train with him at Bigglethorpe Station (corroborated as the lawyer remembered, by his and the detective's enquiries on the day they went down to Hartwood), from whence they had come up to London, and then gone to Havre. The marriage certificate and photograph were also convincing proofs of his statement.

"Yes," said Mr Trump, "I suppose you have the girl; but it's a very queer case."

"My address is *Numéro Sept*, *Rue Montmartre*, Havre, where you can see Mrs Markworth yourself: now I'll thank you to hand over that fifty pounds you offered as a reward for any information about her."

“By George!” said the lawyer, “you’re a cool hand, and no mistake!” He could not gainsay Markworth’s statement, however; so, unlocking his cash box, and taking out five ten pound notes, he handed them to him reluctantly. “There they are, and much good may they do you!” said Mr Trump, ruefully—He felt just as if he had been the victim of a practical joke.

Markworth, after counting them over carefully, pocketed the notes with the utmost *sang froid*. “I suppose you will inform Mrs Hartshorne of her daughter’s marriage?”

“Of course, sir, of course! I shall make it my business to go down there myself at once.”

“Aye, do, my dear sir! and get all those unpleasant details over. I’m myself going down to-morrow, and should not like to be bothered in having to make any explanation.”

“You’ll get as much as you want,” said Mr Trump, significantly, “when you come across the old lady.” And Mr Trump bethought him, with ill-concealed satisfaction, of the reception with which Markworth would probably meet; it would be a sort of tit-for-tat, or *quid pro quo*, for the “sell” he had just been made a victim of, in having to hand over that fifty pounds to the very man who had caused all the worry of Susan’s disappearance. “You won’t get any money out of her,” he thought.

“I shall instruct my solicitors,” said Markworth, as he turned to leave the room, after making the first move of his game of chess, “to substantiate my marriage, which can be easily done, and claim my wife’s fortune.”

“You had better,” said Mr Trump, savagely; “you won’t get it, my dear sir, without a fight, I can tell you!”

“Ha—um! *we* will see,” said Markworth, putting on his hat. “Good morning, gentlemen—good morning!” and he went out.

“Morning!” grunted Mr Trump, feeling as if he had undergone a defeat; and “Morning,” echoed Mr Sequence, who had been listening carefully all the time, without putting in a word. He had the whole conversation, however, stored up in his brain for the future use of the firm.

Volume Two—Chapter Five.

Convalescent.

At the commencement of the fifth chapter of the veracious history of the Knight of La Mancha, it is related that “Don Quixote perceiving that he was not able to stir, resolved to have recourse to his signal remedy, which was to bethink himself what passage in his books might afford him comfort; and presently this fully brought to his remembrance that story of Baldwin and the Marquis of Mantua, when Charlotte left the former wounded on the mountain: a story learned and known by little children,”—as the author proceeds to comment,—“not unknown to young men and women, celebrated and even received by the old, and yet not a jot more authentic than the miracles of Mahomet.”

In a similar way did our wounded hero, Master Tom, hasten his recovery by thinking over all the charming little love passages which had occurred between Miss Lizzie and himself; consequently in a few weeks, thanks to Cupid’s recollections and the aid of pharmacy, our hero was nearly on his legs again.

The broken—“smashed” the doctor called them—ribs had been steadily improving, in spite of all the anxiety Tom suffered on his sister’s account, sanguine though he was of her yet being brought home; and by the time that Markworth divulged his plot, and Mr Trump hastened down to The Poplars to communicate it, Master Tom had progressed his cure as rapidly as did Don Quixote, being able to leave his bed and hobble about a bit before being declared by Doctor Jolly to be quite convalescent and out of his hands. The young squire had, however, youth and health to back him up, which enabled the “signal remedy,” perhaps, to have more effect on him than it had on Sancho Panza’s master.

The interest which the invalid Tom had created, had somewhat deadened the effect of Susan’s disappearance; and although that was as yet an unsolved secret, and the cause of much anxiety, still everyone, both in and out of the household, celebrated it as a day of rejoicing when Tom made his first re-appearance down stairs. The young Antinous had undergone the scars and strife of battle: it was meet that his recovery should be made much of, as indeed was the case.

Tom came down stairs, and all were glad to see him: even the dowager allowed a frigid smile of welcome to flit across her features as he entered the dining-room once more; and “Garge,” whom he met in the passage, exclaimed, with his customary “ploughishness—”

“Lor’ sakes, Measter Tummus! I are roight glad to say un!”

Miss Kingscott expressed her welcome by far too warmly, the old lady thought, for she advanced eagerly and squeezed the hand Tom offered, after curtseying low. Doctor Jolly was pleased to be present also on the occasion.

“Bless my soul, Tom!” he said. “Here we are, as right again as ninepence, my boy; I told you so, Mrs Hartshorne—I told you so,” as if that lady were disputing the point. She was too glad to see Tom, however, to argue with the doctor as usual, but yielded the point gracefully, only throwing cold water on the ecstasies of our friend Damon, by suggesting that Tom’s youth and constitution had pulled him through better perhaps than all the physic and meddling doctors in the world. Doctor Jolly, however, could also afford to be lenient; so he left the dowager’s challenge unanswered.

After a day or two, Tom hobbled out into the garden. He was still very weak and pale, but improving; and as soon as he had tried his powers at hobbling outside the front door, he determined to hobble down to the parsonage. "It was only right, you know, after all their kind enquiries every day about his health!" The Pringles had sent up every morning an extraordinary looking young female servant of theirs, whom the dowager christened "the Gezaba," to ask how "Mister Tom was getting on." Naturally Tom could do no less than return his thanks for such an attention: it could be no other motive that would take him out down to the parsonage so soon after he was able to stir—nothing else, of course!

Accordingly, Tom sallied out a day or two after he had come down stairs, telling no one of his venture, for they would all have been up in arms at his walking so far so soon after his illness.

It was now a month past the era of the pic-nic—a month remarkable for much besides his accident, and Tom had many things to think of, not the least of which was the recollection of what he had said to Lizzie, and she to him, just after he had been wounded. Doctor Jolly had acted as a sort of go-between to them, having carried many a little message twixt The Poplars and the parsonage, after Tom had been placed *hors de combat*. Kind hearted old Doctor Jolly—his is the truest and most pleasant face on these pages!

Tom remembered that walk of his for many a day afterwards. How he had paused at that corner to take breath, and rested on this stile here to recover his faintness; and how he thought he would never be able to reach his destination, until he saw the square old tower of the church and the trim built parsonage beyond. But he got over the ground heavily, hobbling along by the aid of his stick, and receiving hearty greetings of "Foine day, sir!" from the fat farmers, who rejoiced to see the "yoong squoire" about again.

The parsonage never looked prettier, he thought, as he got to the gate at last, and Tom rolled over in his mind what he should say to Lizzie, and if she would be glad to see him, and whether he should see her at all.

His doubts were, however, soon solved. The "Gezaba of a servant" who opened the door and bungled out a sort of greeting to him, told him that both "Miss Lizzie and the master" were in. Tom could have dispensed with Pringle's presence, but he had to make the best of a bad bargain.

As he entered the little drawing-room which he knew so well, Pringle stepped forward gladly to meet him, while Lizzie remained shyly in the background.

"By Jove! Tom"—they had long since dropped surnames between them, as men do after a little intimacy—"I'm right glad to see you, old fellow! But we heard that you only got out of bed the day before yesterday, so we hardly expected you to come over yet. How are you, old fellow, eh?" and he shook Tom eagerly by the hand.

"Oh, I'm all right," answered our hero, after which he gave Lizzie's hand a very hard squeeze, which caused that young lady to blush furiously, but in a moment the flush of excitement passed off Tom's face, and he looked as pale as death; if he had not caught hold of the back of a chair he would have dropped down. The walk had certainly been too much for him.

"Oh! Herbert," exclaimed Lizzie, in alarm, "he's going to faint!" and she ran forward to Tom, who, I believe, would have cheerfully fainted at the juncture, if he could possibly have achieved it; you see, the circumstances were very favourable to the occasion.

As it was, the "gay young dog," as Doctor Jolly would have said, was "in precious nice quarters," for there he was in a moment, by the aid of Pringle's arm, laid out on the comfortable sofa, with Lizzie bathing his forehead with *eau de Cologne*, and handing him smelling salts, and Pringle enquiring every moment, "Do you feel better now, eh, old fellow?"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir!" said Lizzie, as she bent over him with her face suffused with a carnation tinge whenever she caught his eye, which the artful rogue contrived should happen very frequently—"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir! walking out so soon, and you deserve a good punishing."

And Miss Lizzie looked very stern, indeed, with her violet eyes beaming with a rich warm light: she seemed as if she would punish Master Tom very severely.

"Yes, it's very wrong," answered the recumbent hero; "but you see, I could not help it, you know!" and Miss Lizzie blushed again, as Tom looked very meaningly at her.

"Better now, old fellow?" put in Pringle, at this juncture. "That's right: you don't look so pale now. By Jove! I thought you were going to faint."

"Bless you! I'll be right in a twinkle," answered Tom. "You see, the walk was a trifle too much; but I feel decidedly better now," with a look at the young lady's eyes to invigorate himself anew: the violet eyes seemed to act as a sort of tonic.

"You shall be condemned to lie on the sofa all the afternoon, sir!" said Lizzie, "as a punishment for your imprudence!"

"All right," laughed Tom, "I'll stop for ever—that is if you'll let me; but what will your brother say?" he asked, with a roguish glance.

"Oh! certainly—certainly," said Pringle, hurriedly; he was very much puzzled how to act. It looked very much like a flirtation between his sister and Tom, under his very nose as it were, and he had promised Lady Inskip to "put a stop to it." He did not know what to do. He liked Tom, and did not wish besides to appear uncourteous; but he was very nervous. “If I were only her mother,” he murmured to himself, “it would be easy enough;” but as he unfortunately did not occupy the position of a maternal relative, he was on thorns all the time Tom stayed.

“Don’t you think we’d better have some lunch, Lizzie,” he said, after a pause, filled up by the other two very agreeably by the aid of that very intelligible “conversation without words”—which by the aid of looks is carried on between lovers, whether *de facto* or *de jure*. Whereupon Lizzie bustled out of the room, shaking a little bunch of keys in the most housewifely manner, and looking dangerously pretty; presently returning with the “Gezaba” in her train, and carrying a little damask covered luncheon tray. The three had a very sociable and pleasant little meal, although neither Tom nor Lizzie eat much; however, they both drank deeply-intoxicating draughts from each other’s eyes.

Presently, Tom rose to go, after paying a call of some hours’ duration, during which Pringle had never given him an opportunity of being alone with Lizzie. “What cubs brothers are!” thought Tom in his inmost heart, but he thanked Pringle aloud for his kindness in sending up every day to enquire after him. Pringle was candid with all his faults. “Oh, you must thank Lizzie for that,” he said; “I’ve called several times myself to ask about you, but she sent up the servant, I believe, every day!”

And then, of course, Master Tom had to thank Miss Lizzie. Why the thanking had to occupy such a long time, and why Lizzie had to blush so much, and why Master Tom had to keep her hand such an unconscionable long time in his, while Pringle went forward to open the door, and show his guest out; and why Tom had to make the little attention into a serious business by saying, “I shall never forget it! never, as long as I live,” I can’t explain—sufficient to say that Master Tom appeared very much satisfied at leaving her, though he had not had the chance of actually telling his love, while Miss Lizzie did not appear as if she would “punish” him, as she threatened to do, when he called again.

The young incumbent walked home with Tom, to give him the benefit of his arm; and he was very uncomfortable about it all, for he could not ask a poor, sick fellow like that who was hobbling by his side, “what were his intentions.” He must let matters rest for a season, until something actually turned up. He was distrustful of the whole business, for he did not think the rich and purse-proud old dowager would consent to let her son wed her curate’s portionless sister; so Pringle felt worried in his heart, and, after seeing Tom home, had to go and call on Lady Inskip in order to be comforted by the languid Laura.

When Tom got to The Poplars, he found that a great deal had happened in his absence.

Mr Trump had come down post haste to tell about Susan’s recovery, and how Markworth had taken her away and married her, and that she was with him now at Havre. The lawyer was still waiting to see him. Doctor Jolly too was there, and had heard the news, our old friend telling Tom as he hobbled into the hall, “Bless my soul! sir, there’s the very devil to pay!”

Volume Two—Chapter Six.

Stormy! Glass Rising.

Barometers are of such use to maritime and other folk, in indicating the changes of atmospherical phenomena, and the approach of disturbing elements, that it is a wonder in these go-a-head days, no instrument has been constructed by which we could ascertain the fluctuations of the human temperament. One might have a sort of graduated thermometer, *par exemple*, to indicate the rise and force of the passions, especially that of anger, and call it a “cholerometer.” The idea may be recommended to the attention of scientific philanthropists, as it would be of incalculable use in preventing unruly encounters, if one but just knew the exact choleric and argumentative calibre and equipoise of those with whom one has frequently to come in contact.

If such an instrument did exist, the barometrical measurement applied to the old dowager, Mrs Hartshorne’s temper on the morning that Markworth came to have his interview, and state his case about Susan, would certainly have indicated some such stormy height, or fall, as 29 degrees 31, or thereabouts!

Mr Trump had gone down expressly the previous day, as he said he would; and a nice storm he created. “Not a tempest in a teapot,” but a regular carousal of the elements—a rushing together of hot and cold streams, not of air, as is so eloquently described in the pages of Professor Maury, but of temper and passion.

“Stuff and nonsense,” said the dowager, virulently, “I won’t believe it! Do you mean to say that that man, who was stopping here in the house with us as Thomas’ friend, and accepted our hospitality, took advantage of our kindness, and ran off with that idiot girl; why, it’s absurd! Stuff and nonsense, I tell you. I won’t believe it!”

“But, my dear madam,” interposed Mr Trump, “I assure you it is a fact. We’ve got the proof, and I have just told you all the circumstances. It’s as clear as a counsellor’s wig, madam! He took the girl away from here, married her, and there she is; nothing could be plainer.”

“Gammon!” said the dowager. “It is all rubbish!”

“My dear madam,” said the lawyer, “just be sensible for a moment.”

“I’ve got more sense in my little finger, sir, than you have in your whole body,” snapped out the old lady.

“Granted, my dear madam; but, pardon me, if that is not exactly relevant to the case. The proof is clear enough that Markworth took her away; and I sent my clerk down to the church mentioned in the certificate, and there is no doubt that he married Susan there, and that she’s now at Havre. Besides, his motive is plain enough; he wanted to get her fortune.”

“The artful, designing scoundrel!” broke out the dowager.

“The question is, my dear madam, what is to be done now? That fellow said he was coming down here to-morrow morning. Would it be better to wait until you see him, and fathom his plans, or else send over to Havre at once, and take steps to recover the girl?”

“The cunning, crawling villain!” ejaculated Mrs Hartshorne; “but I’ll be even with him yet, I’ll be even with him!”

“I am quite at your disposal,” promptly replied the lawyer, who was eager to be bounding after Markworth; and just at this moment, before anything had been decided upon, Doctor Jolly was announced.

He apologised for interrupting the conversation; but said, that as he had heard that Mr Trump had just come down, he thought there would be some tidings of Susan, which must be his excuse for walking in so unceremoniously.

Whereupon, both the dowager and the lawyer together fired out upon him with the astonishing news. “Bless my soul!” exclaimed he, horrified at what he heard. “Who would have thought it? But I always said he was a bad fellow! I told you so Mrs Hartshorne, I told you so!”

“And much good there was in your telling! If you hadn’t been always dangling here, taking that governess off from her duties, and had looked after Susan better yourself, this would never have happened.”

“Bless my soul! madam,” exclaimed the doctor, staring helplessly at Mr Trump, aghast at the blame being thus thrown on him of all others; and dabbing his face in perplexity with his yellow bandana pocket handkerchief. “Bless my soul, madam! What have *I* got to do with it?”

Tom at this moment came hobbling up the front steps, and the doctor, eagerly seizing the opportunity to escape from the dowager’s invective, went out of the room hastily to open the door for him, when he took the opportunity of telling Tom, as we have already heard, that there was “the devil to pay in there,” pointing with his thumb over his shoulder to the room he had just quitted, in the most significant manner.

The tale had, of course, to be told over again to Tom, when he was admitted to the council, now of four; and an animated debate ensued on what was to be done. It was finally resolved that the lawyer should telegraph to London, and send over one of his clerks that night to Havre, to watch the house where Susan was, and see that she was not removed in the interim; that Mr Trump was to remain at The Poplars until after Markworth’s visit on the morrow; and, at his express wish, Tom was to go over as soon afterwards as possible, and fetch Susan back himself.

After a good deal of fluctuation, from 29 degrees 31 down to so low a fall as 28 degrees 64, the barometrical pressure of the dowager’s temper had returned to its abnormal state, during the excited conversation that had gone on all the time; but the next morning, however, when Markworth made his appearance, the dowager’s barometer sank again to a very low depth indeed.

Although he was opposed to three people at once—the old lady, Tom, and Mr Trump, the former of whom piled Pelion on Ossa in her wrath, Markworth kept his temper admirably. He seemed to pride himself on the successful issue of his scheme, and related each step he had taken with an air of ill-concealed triumph. The dowager was furious, but her hot-tempered words appeared to have little or no effect on the man who now proclaimed himself the husband of her daughter, a neglect of which daughter by herself and her cruelty, he stated, led to his success. Rages are all very well in their way, but the dowager’s anger was powerless here, so Markworth bore off the palm of victory against the triple odds against which he had contested it.

The only time that he appeared to be affected by all that was said against him, was when Tom addressed him pointedly and coldly with the stern truth, which he could not dispute. He then turned pale.

“You have done a dishonourable action, sir,” said Tom. “I treated you and trusted you as a gentleman and a friend, and you have abused that trust. I—I never thought you would have acted like it; and, apart from the injury you have done us, I am sorry for it, for you have hurt my faith in a man’s honour.”

Tom really felt it thus.

“I can’t excuse myself,” answered Markworth, “but I have done good to your sister instead of harm. I have brought her back to her reason, instead of letting her remain a hopeless idiot, as she would have done if I had not drawn her out; and I’ll say this, it was not all for the sake of her money I did it. I was really, so help me heaven I interested in her case, and trusted to cure her honestly.”

“You need not swear any more false oaths to me,” answered Tom; “I don’t desire to speak to you again, or see you again as long as I live.”

“Very well,” said Markworth, “so be it. But all I have to say is this, that if you wish to take back your sister you are free to do so; if she likes to go, I will not prevent her. As for you, madam,” he said, turning politely to Mrs Hartshorne, and bowing, “I have placed the matter in the hands of my solicitor, for I am determined to get the fortune to which my wife is entitled.”

“You’ll not get a penny, rogue,” retorted the dowager (barometer 28 degrees 64!) “not if there’s any law in the land.”

“We will see, madam.”

“Hark you, sir,” said Mr Trump, having his say, of which he had been sadly deprived all the time the dowager was going on. “Hark you, sir, we can find the girl was of unsound mind, as I told you before, and have you indicted for a conspiracy.”

“That we will!” echoed the dowager, “and have you on the treadmill, villain!”

Mrs Hartshorne had somewhat vague notions of the power of that large word in capitals—Law, and seemed to think that its obvious bent in any case, especially one like the present, was the treadmill.

“We will see,” answered Markworth, defiantly; “but you will have to prove your case, my dear sir. You see I did it all by myself, and the girl was a willing agent, and of age: she is of perfectly sound mind, as she can prove in the witness-box, and how you are to get over all that evidence remains to be proved.”

“We’ll prove it,” answered Mr Trump; but although he was certainly cross, his countenance did not exhibit any strong hopes of success. “The cunning vagabond is too much for us,” he murmured, *sotto voce*.

“Good morning,” said Markworth, blandly, to all, and he walked out triumphantly, the dowager screaming after him, “Not a penny will you get, scoundrel.”

In Markworth’s confession he had very naturally, for his own sake, not brought up the governess’s name; consequently she was excluded from all share in the conspiracy. She knew of his being down, however, and had gone out apparently for a walk while the battle was being fought in the dining-room. She wished to meet Markworth alone, and he was equally desirous to see her; so it is not surprising that a few minutes after taking such a stagey farewell of the dowager, the two met beyond the precincts of The Poplars.

“Just the person I wanted to see,” ejaculated Markworth, on coming up with her under the shadow of the wall, which encircled the Hartshorne mansion.

“Indeed! I did not think you would be so glad to see me,” replied Miss Kingscott.

“Indeed I am, Clara; I wished to settle up with you. I have married the girl, and the thing’s regularly *en train* now. I have only got to get the money.”

“That’s just what I wanted.”

“Well, I’ve got it for you.”

“Really?” exclaimed the governess, surprised; she had never thought that Markworth would have kept to his compact once he had got the girl off. But he was “careful about little things,” as he had told Tom when he first came down to The Poplars, and he was not going to incur Clara Kingscott’s hostility by breaking his agreement, even when there was nothing to force him to keep it.

“Yes, really,” he answered; “here’s the other hundred I promised you, so you and I are quits, Clara.”

“Thank you,” she said, turning over the notes in astonishment in her hand; “I never expected you to pay me.”

“Did you not. I always keep my bargains.”

“Do you,” she replied. “You have not always done so.”

“Let bygones be bygones, Clara; I promised you the money, and I have paid you now, and you cannot complain.”

“It is the first time you ever recollected what you owed me,” said the governess, bitterly.

“Don’t say that, Clara; let us be good friends. Our compact is now finished, and we need not rake up the past. If there is anything more I can do for you, Clara, let me know; and if it’s in my power, I’ll do it,” said Markworth, magnanimously, for he thought the woman had still a lingering regard for him.

“I don’t want anything from you, Allynne Markworth,” she said, angrily stamping her foot; “and I don’t wish to see you again. You’ve been the curse of my life! But all’s not over yet between us!” she muttered, significantly, as she turned on her heel and walked back towards the house.

Markworth looked after her a moment, and then resumed his way down to the railway station, *en route* for London. He had a good deal to do before starting for Havre, and wanted to get there before Tom or anyone else went over after Susan.

“That’s the way with them all!” he said, to himself, as he walked away rapidly in quick strides. “They get all they can, and then wash their hands of you!”

But he made a great mistake. Miss Kingscott had not by any means washed her hands of Markworth yet. She had gathered a good deal from the conversation between Mr Trump and the dowager on the previous day, to which she had listened attentively through the keyhole of the next room, and she knew that she could not only upset Markworth’s plans for obtaining Susan’s inheritance, but perhaps, also, get him imprisoned, if she exposed her share in the affair.

This she intended to do, but not until the last moment, just when she should think fit; and at present she would remain at The Poplars, and go on as if she knew nothing of the great event. She might captivate Tom in the meantime, she thought; and, at all events, she as yet had the doctor to fall back upon. Aesculapius had been twice as devoted to her since she displayed so much energy in trying to get Susan back. He had muttered to himself, over and over again, as he rode up to The Poplars, in his daily visits to Tom, “She is a dooced fine girl; and a clever girl, too, by Gad!” and, no doubt, would have repeated that declaration of his which the campaigner’s call had nipped in the bud, if the opportunity had only favoured him. But it had not, for the dowager seemed adverse to letting the doctor remain a moment alone with the governess.

When Markworth had gone away, the council between Mrs Hartshorne, and Tom, and the lawyer, was resumed; Tom said that he would go the next day if he was able and fetch back Susan. As for the money matters, the old lady declared she would spare no expense to "cheat that scoundrel" out of his plunder; and Mr Trump was authorised to go to every end to defeat the suit of Markworth *versus* Hartshorne, which the schemer had stated would be at once commenced, the old lady refusing to surrender her daughter's fortune unless she were compelled to do so. And she "wouldn't even do it then," she declared.

While they were debating over the matter, Miss Kingscott came in quietly and went up to her room—nobody knowing what a strong witness she would prove on the side of the defendants in the case, if she so willed it: she now revolved in her mind whether she would or would not act in the matter. It was as yet unsettled, although she had sworn to revenge herself on Markworth. His last words to her had somewhat disarmed her.

Nemesis or *non* Nemesis: that was the question. The former triumphed. Mr Trump went back to London; and there he found that the case of Markworth *versus* Hartshorne, was already "brewing in the storm," although it remained to be proved whether it was going to be "nipped in the bud," as the American stump speaker told his audience after he had informed them that he "smelt a rat." With which metaphor the chapter had better be concluded.

Barometer "Fair" again!

Volume Two—Chapter Seven.

The Campaigner "Carries the Fortress."

Like a lamb to the slaughter, Herbert Pringle was led by the wily campaigner to his doom matrimonial.

When the veteran perceived that all her operations *in re* Tom and the gushing Carry must for a time be postponed, on account of the prostration of the principal combatant, she determined to prosecute the other enterprise to the best of her ability, and declared a sort of *guerre à l'outrance* against the young incumbent for the sake of her eldest daughter, the charming Laura.

Of course, she was far too strategic a campaigner to neglect the other affair altogether. She had written Tom an elegant little *billet-doux* after the sad contretemps of the pic-nic, telling how sorry she was for his accident, and how she had punished Mortimer, "that naughty, naughty boy," and would remember the painful scene "to her grave:" she also caused Carry to scribble a postscript expressing her condolence, besides sending every day, like the Pringles, to enquire how he did. But she could do nothing further there at present, not at all events until Tom was able to come out again, when she had no doubt she would secure him, and oust that "odious little minx," in spite of what she had seen at the pic-nic. She would, indeed, have said more about the matter, only that she would not for the world offend that "dear Mr Pringle," who was "such a love of a preacher," and "a perfect gentleman," which she would persist in telling everyone, as if they disputed the point in the first place, and in the second, as if it was the most extraordinary thing in the world to meet with a member of the cloth who was a gentleman! The surprise on the campaigner's part as to his being a good preacher was, however, perfectly natural: it is not every gentleman that wears a cassock who is either a fair orator, has a passable delivery, or preaches a good sermon.

Men who go into the church appear sadly ignorant of the old Latin proverb, *Poeta nascitur non fit*! They ascribe unto themselves two gifts which they believe that they possess, the gift of literary composition, and the gift of oratory; neither of which one man in a hundred, perhaps, possesses separately, and not one in ten thousand, together! And yet the generality of clergymen seem to think that they can not only write a good sarmon, but preach it also; hence these dismal, dreary platitudes, and over-and-over-again schoolboy-themes or truisms which set most of us to sleep every Sunday in the family pew. The short homily of the early clericals was far better than the prosy sermon, of unconscionable length, delivered by the moderns; all of whom seem to think that they were born and brought up, and mercifully ordained to be popular preachers, and nothing else!

The war waged by the campaigner against the young incumbent of Hartwood church was not one of guns of precision and bloodshed. It was a very rosy sort of campaign, all rose-coloured, fought with honied words and sugar plums, and meant to end in orange blossoms and marriage settlements; only a lawsuit in which the conflicting parties and ends were the languid Laura, and an establishment, *versus* the celibacy of Herbert Pringle, B.A., Oxon.

Everything favoured the campaigner's manoeuvres. You see, she had the field clear to herself. The bait she offered was very tempting, and summer in the country is a most dangerous time for young, unmarried men. A week in rural retreats will sometimes do more in the Hymeneal line than weeks of London fashionable life: Coelebs who laughs the hook to scorn, however so delicately baited in town, may be hooked at once with a gaudy May-fly down in the country. Besides, the Reverend Herbert was by no means averse to be caught. He, with all his Oxford experiences, must have to some extent perceived the motives Lady Inskip had for so pressingly cultivating his society; but he did not seek cover as the poor, hunted fox so artfully does. He really found the languid Laura too bewitching to be resisted; so, with hardly a coy make-believe of alarm at what he was doing, he eagerly swallowed the bait, hook and all.

Ever since the pic-nic, Herbert Pringle had become the devoted cavalier of Lady Inskip's eldest daughter.

Morning, noon, and night, the little dapple-grey animal which the young incumbent bestrode was to be seen tied up to the gateposts of Laburnum Cottage: substantial proof that Pringle was within. Of course this was during the intervals of parochial duties which were by no means heavy, as Hartwood, and Bigton too, for that matter, had no poor to speak of, the population being agricultural, living well on their weekly wage, and inhabiting comfortable looking stone houses with pleasant flower gardens in front, and vegetable compounds in the rear.

Croquet—that pleasantly flirtative game, which demands so little skill or exertion, and affords such rare opportunities for effective *poses*, and desultory chit-chat—was all the rage on the little lawn in front of the Inskip's cottage, during the warm September days: croquet settled the young incumbent's business.

Laura was afforded such nice little openings here for developing her conquest in an easy manner so suited to her nature, that she entered with some spirit in completing what the campaigner's manoeuvres had begun. She had only to look graceful, and move about imperially, as tall women can well do, and show her exquisite profile—it looked better than her full face: by such means the mischief was done.

Pringle, like most little men, had a fancy for graceful Junos, and here he had one ready-made to his hand. Out of the pulpit he was not much of an orator; but as the languid Laura hardly ever uttered anything but an occasional interjection, they suited each other admirably. Nothing was wanting but the final declaration, and that came quite as soon as the old campaigner had planned. Two or three weeks completed the conquest, thanks to country air and scene, statuesque charms and croquet, and the praiseworthy efforts of the skilful old veteran who had charge of the campaign.

People speak a great deal, in the press and elsewhere, of the insufficiency of public rewards and honours for distinguished services with a good deal of truth; but in all these discussions a large and praiseworthy portion of the community is entirely neglected, and its claims to honour and reward absolutely ignored. I allude to the mothers of families; how do they get their services recognised? We bind the hero's brows with laurels; we raise the brilliant party orator to the peerage; we give the eminent professor of the law a seat on the woolsack; the soldier a medal and a bit of ribbon for his wounds in the country's service; and we dub the worshipful alderman a knight, should he happen to be at the royal kitchen steps when a prince is born, or have invited the Grand Elector of Sauer Kraut to partake of a ham sandwich on his landing at Dover *en route* to visit the Palace; but the talented and skilful diplomatist—the mother of a family, who marries off her marriageable daughters all to the most eligible of *partis*, passes by unnoticed. She, who fights courageously a losing game, against fearful odds, who braves reproach, continually—nay, even disgrace, sometimes in furthering a praiseworthy object, and who deserves our esteem and recognition, gets no reward. Peerages in plenty for parliamentarians, titles for sycophants, knighthoods for toad eaters—but the campaigners go by without ne'er so much as a ribbon of decoration.

This should not be. In the time honoured cause of woman's rights, this neglect must be protested against. Let us reward our royal plate cleaners and caustic partisans as much as the nation pleases, but think also of the noble women of England, and their fortune and husband-hunting claims!

Lady Inskip was one of the most skilled and to be honoured of her class. Not only did she lead Pringle up to the point—but, knowing his nervousness, she also saved him the trouble of coming to a declaration. She did it for him herself, and this is how it happened.

She could be very confidential, you know, and was well fitted to assume the maternal *rôle*, and "talk as a mother myself," whenever it was required of her. She had once before done so to Pringle on Lizzie's account, as was mentioned in a former chapter; so nothing was more easy and graceful than to assume the same *rôle* now in his own interests while talking to himself. She determined to make the proposal for him, as he was too shy to make it himself; although in so doing, she spoilt considerable hopes of fun at the "fast" Carry's part, who had declared over and over again in the family circle that she "would give worlds to see the mild parson pop," provoking a mild "how can you be so absurd, Carry!" from Laura, who yet could not prevent a feeble smile at the possibility of such a *tableau*, and "you ought to be ashamed of yourself, miss!" from her mother; while the young imp, Sir Mortimer, gave vent to a triumphant war whoop, and declared that it would be "awful larks! to see Pringle on his knees!" The darling, naughty boy, to be sure! When the campaigner perceived from sundry unmistakable symptoms that things had been brought to a crisis, she prepared to act.

One day, after Pringle had been more bashful and nervous than ever, although still very attentive to Laura, when there had been some weeks of intercourse between the pair since the first descent on Bigton, Lady Inskip "button-holed" him as he was on his way out, and instead of letting him mount his pony at the gate, entreated him to walk a bit down the road with her, as she had something important to say. Pringle, more bashfully still, assented, and passing the bridle of the dapple-grey through his arm, he and the campaigner sauntered off in close confab, watched from the windows of Laburnum Cottage by the young ladies and Mortimer, who seriously wondered what was "up"—one must use slang sometimes; it is so expressive in these very slangy days.

"My dear Mr Pringle," began the wily campaigner, "I take a great interest in you, in quite a motherly way, indeed; and you will excuse me speaking on a very delicate matter to you?"

"Oh! certainly, Lady Inskip, certainly—anything you know," he stammered, in reply, blushing a rosy red, even beneath his budding whiskers of auburn hue.

"Well, then, my dear Mr Pringle, I have to speak to you about Laura. I am her mother, and it seems strange in me to speak to you; but I look upon you as a son, and I wish I could see things arranged between you. The darling girl is getting quite thin and pale, and this prolonged suspense is more than she can bear. And I must ask you in the most—that is—my dear Mr Pringle, I think your feelings are interested, and—"

"Precisely so, Lady Inskip; just what I wanted to say, only I could not say it. Would Laura, eh?—your daughter, do you think, eh?" and he looked nervously into the campaigner's face.

"I think she will consent. I am so glad, my dear young friend; I will speak to her for you, and it will be all arranged, if you will come in again this evening. I have long wished to see my angel Laura married to a Christian gentleman, and since I have known you, you have fulfilled everything which I could have hoped for her to find in a husband"—that he had, with regard to position and competency, besides being easily managed—“and, my dear Mr Pringle, I will tell Laura at once; and this is the happiest moment in my life!”

“Certainly, Lady Inskip, certainly!” stammered the young incumbent, as he shook hands joyfully with his future mother-in-law; and in the evening he came round again to Laburnum Cottage. Laura received him with a faint blush and a timid pressure of his hand, so it was an understood thing that they were regularly engaged.

After it was all settled, Pringle lost a good deal of his prior bashfulness; and both Carry and young Sir Mortimer regarded him as a very jolly sort of brother-in-law to have. The wedding was fixed for an early date in the following year, after a probationary engagement of some three months.

Eureka! The campaigner had carried the fortress after a series of admirable military tactics.

Volume Two—Chapter Eight.

Susan.

Change of scene is one of the most potent panaceas for mental ills; and change of scene had in a few week effected Susan’s complete recovery. She had been under Markworth’s care at The Poplars in those early days of August, an entirely reasoning being, but she had lacked animation and life; she had been like Gibson’s Venus, before the flesh tints were put on the statue; but she was now a bright, living, thinking girl, with hopes and pleasures and aspirations which she had hitherto undreamt of.

In her cheerful little apartments in the Rue Montmartre she unfolded herself like a chrysalis from the grub, and bustled about and took an interest in everything around her which Doctor Jolly would have wondered at.

While Markworth was away, the Mère Cliquelle used to look after her and keep her company, and go out with her, and the dignified *bon homme* of that good lady would also frequently came up to see Madame and air his few English phrases. But Markworth used never to be long away. Havre was so very convenient that he could run over to Southampton and thence to London whenever he wished to see how matters were going on for the approaching law suit; so he seldom stopped away beyond a couple of days. When he was at Havre, however, he continued to devote himself to Susan with all his former care, and tried to gratify every wish she had; and she was as happy as a bird.

One thing only was wanting to complete her happiness, and that was to see her brother Tom: that desire, however, was soon gratified. She had been disappointed sadly when Markworth returned the first time without him; but he said that Tom would soon come, and in a few more days he arrived at Havre. But, he was actuated with no desire to see Markworth: it was only his sister that brought him over, and he wished to persuade her to return home, which he thought she might do at once as he, with the others, had made certain of Markworth retaining her against her will. Indeed the lawyer Mr Trump, or Doctor Jolly would have gone over to Havre at once to fetch her back on learning where she was—for Markworth had freely said that they might come to fetch her if they pleased,—for it was only at Tom’s express wish that a few days were allowed to elapse to enable him to fetch her himself, for he was hardly able to move about as yet, notwithstanding that he had every desire to start off at once on first hearing the news. Miss Kingscott had offered to go, but the Dowager bluntly declined her services, saying that, as she had shown so little care in watching over her charge in the first instance, she certainly would not be now entrusted with the charge of bringing her back, and beyond that Mrs Hartshorne said she did not require her services any longer.

So Miss Kingscott left The Poplars altogether, much against her inclinations at this juncture, although she would have more time at her disposal for watching Markworth, for it cut her off from all association with the doctor before matters were brought to a satisfactory point between them. Tom went over to Havre to fetch Susan home in a day or two afterwards, confident of bringing her back. We thus see several important alterations in the *carte du pays*, of the several actors in our little drama.

Markworth was out one day shortly after his own return to Havre when he had set his plans rolling on the other side, when Tom Hartshorne rang the bell at the house *Numéro sept, Rue Montmartre*.

The Mère Cliquelle answered the summons and on Tom (in extremely bad French) asking if Madame Markworth was in, the fat landlady herself ushered him up-stairs. She was very much taken with the appearance of Master Tom, who really, with his fine built frame, slightly emaciated with the confinement he had undergone from his illness, and his pale face, looked altogether rather a handsome, presentable fellow. The Mère Cliquelle gazed upon him with admiration: she had a Frenchwoman’s eye for *un brave Monsieur*, and she showed it.

She tapped at the door of Susan’s little *salle à manger. “Un Monsieur Anglais*,” she said, with which explanatory information Tom was ushered in before Susan could exactly comprehend what the Mère Cliquelle meant.

Susan gave one look up of surprise and joy as the door opened and she recognised the visitor: she had been working and had not expected Markworth in for some time. Rushing forwards she flung her arms round Tom’s neck.

“Oh, Tom! Tom! You’ve come at last!” she said, and patted his cheek in delight, as if she were caressing a cat—a peculiarly sympathetic way the fair sex have of showing their affection.

Tom himself was touched. He loved his sister greatly, the more too for her infirmity, and he though he comprehended it all at once in his reasoning mind. Poor Susan was no doubt kept here against her will: she was doubtless glad to see him for his own sake, but probably ten times more so, thinking he was about to take her back home again to England and her own people.

He thought thus for a moment; but he was soon undeceived. After a moment or two he held his sister off from him, his two hands resting on her shoulders, and he looked in her face with surprise.

“By Jove, Susan!” he exclaimed. “How altered you are; I should not have known you again!” He had not seen her for some weeks, and the gradual change which had been taking place in her came upon him all at once like a shock.

“Would you not?” laughed Susan, “but I should have known you anywhere, although you look pale and thin. What has been the matter, Tom?”

“Oh nothing!” he answered. “I have not been quite well. But you, Susan, by Jove! why you are all right again!” he was amazed at her having got rid of that melancholy reticence which had hung over her for so many years as he well knew. Instead of hanging back and not saying a word as she used to do, she now spoke to him freely, and looked just the same as any other girl. He could not believe it: it was wonderful!

“Of course I am all right!” answered Susan, merrily, and then her voice changed to a tone of sadness and anxiety, “but you are not angry with me, Tom, are you?”

“Certainly not! Why should I be angry?”

“For going away and leaving you all like that, and—”

She hesitated.

“We don’t blame you, Susan, my dear,” said Tom, kindly. “We know that it was all that rascal Markworth’s doing.”

Susan interrupted him at once, and spoke earnestly, with great emotion.

“Do not say a word against him, Tom; he is my husband, and I won’t have a word said against him. If I am changed it is all his doing, and I love him. He has rescued me from ignorance and worse, and made me what I now am. Tom, Tom, you must not say a word against him. I won’t bear it even from you.”

“There, there,” said Tom, soothingly, as if he were speaking to a child, “I did not mean it, and I won’t say another word. But are you happy?”

“Happy!” echoed Susan—the answer to his question could be read in her face—“I never knew what happiness was before. I do not mean to blame you, Tom,” seeing the look of surprise in Tom’s face, “but I could never understand before. I have to thank him for reason and all. I can never repay all that he has done for me.”

Tom saw that it was useless to say anything further, and he changed the tenor of the conversation.

“And how did you get over here, Susan?” he said, cheerfully. “Tell me how you got away, and all about it.”

“I never intended to go away until the last moment,” said Susan, “and I was so frightened of mother that if I had thought of her I should have turned back; but he was with me, and I felt courage, and the next morning we were married in London, I believe, and then we came over here; and, oh! Tom, I am so happy!”

She proceeded to tell him all about her daily life, and her little joys and pleasures.

Tom was greatly interested. He saw that Susan was immensely improved, and he could not but be glad at the change, however much he may have been angry at the way in which it was brought about. Besides, no blame could be attached to her. Tom himself was in love, you see, and he could make greater allowances now on that score than he might previously have done. He saw that Markworth must be kind to her, and at all events, he had certainly done more good to Susan in these few weeks than all the doctors had done. For his part, he would cheerfully have let Markworth now have the money that he had plotted for, and be done with him altogether, but it did not rest in his hands, so the least he could do would be to try and get Susan to go back with him.

“And will you come home with me now, Susan?” he asked, after a pause. “We are all so anxious about you; and you will find things all right at home now, and mother will be very kind.”

“And Allynne!—will he come too?”

“No, Susan; I can’t ask him. You ought to know that.”

“You want me to leave him? Tom, I will never leave him unless he sends me away himself.”

Just at this moment the door opened, and Markworth walked in as coolly as possible. Susan darted past Tom and threw her arms round his neck.

“Oh! Allynne, Allynne!” she cried—she had learnt to call him by his Christian name, which no one else had done before—“they want to take me from you. You won’t let me go, will you?”

“Of course not, Susan. There, Mr Hartshorne,” he said, turning to Tom. “I told you that I did not detain the girl against her will, and you can hear her answer for yourself. I wish to act fairly in the matter, no matter how my motives are misunderstood. Susan,” he said, again addressing her, “what will you do—go with your brother or stay here with me?”

The only answer she made was to cling closer round his neck.

Markworth looked at Tom triumphantly, and the latter felt humbled.

“I’m sure it is not my fault,” he said. “I daresay you mean very well, Markworth, but I don’t retract what I said to you the other day. It was dishonourable for you to take my sister away like that. As for the money, however, now that I see her well and happy, you might cheerfully have it for all I care.”

“Thank you,” said Markworth, really touched, “you are a generous fellow, and I promise you to take care of your sister carefully for your sake as well as her own. She is well and happy now, and quite recovered, as you can see for yourself, but if she went back she might relapse again, although I won’t prevent her from going.”

Tom saw there was no use in trying to urge Susan, for she would not come with him and leave Markworth. He therefore only stopped that day with her, and returned on the morrow to Southampton, to report his want of success. He gave a very truthful account of his mission, and told both his mother and the doctor that Susan was quite restored. The old dowager appeared not to care very much about the matter, and reiterated her intention of preventing Markworth from “getting a penny of her money.” The doctor was pleased to hear such good accounts of his former patient, but he was apprehensive as to the duration of Markworth’s kind treatment to Susan.

“Bless my soul, sir!” said he to Tom, “it may be all very true now, but you can’t expect to make a nigger change his skin, or make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear, as they say somewhere or other, in something I’ve read. That man’s bad at the bottom, Tom, as certain as God made little apples!”—the doctor, in his customary manner, mixing up a hypothesis with two biblical proverbs.

Thus ended Tom’s mission after Susan. He shortly afterwards arranged another enterprise with a different object, and how he fared here will be detailed in the next chapter.

Volume Two—Chapter Nine.

“Fiddle-De-Dee!”

“Fiddle-de-dee! Thomas,” said the old dowager, with considerable asperity, “why you’ll be wanting a glass coach and four, and a cocked hat next. Stuff and nonsense, sir, it’s all fiddle-de-dee!”

“But, mother—”

“But me no buts sir! I tell you I won’t have it, and that’s enough.”

“Really, mother.”

“Really, indeed! I suppose you think I’m as great a fool as you are, Thomas.”

“Pray don’t excite yourself, mother,” said Tom, trying to keep down the thermometer until he could obtain a fair hearing, but the old lady was not to be pacified, for his soothing words only added fuel to the fire.

“Excite myself, indeed! I should think there was a little cause for excitement to hear a baby like you talking of getting married! And bearding me in my own house to be sure! I tell you, Thomas, I won’t have it!” And the dowager paced rapidly backwards and forwards on one side of the dining-room with short, jerky steps, swinging her hands, with the fingers clasping and unclasping in unison with her nervous walk.

Tom walked up and down the room on the other side, the table being entrenched between them. He took long military strides, and twirled the end of his moustache impatiently every now and then, for his temper too was rising. He did not reply at once, so his mother went on with a recapitulated volley of wrath. She had only been winding up as it were, before, and now burst out in a flowing stream of words, like an alarm clock running down, as if she had never paused from her last utterance.

“A boy like you—not of age yet, and whom I only carried in my arms the other day! You deserve to be whipped and sent to bed, sir! I never heard of such a thing in all my born days! And as for that little chit—she—she, I don’t know what oughtn’t to be done with her. Little minx! But it serves me right, putting that jackanapes of a brother of hers into that snug living down there.” And the dowager with a wave of her hand indicated Hartwood village. “There is he prancing about on that little beast of a pony of his every day after the heels of that fine my lady who wanted to poke her nose in here if I had only let her. I can see what’s going on, although I do mind my own business! And now that artful little jade is trying to catch you with her big staring eyes! I wonder what you can see in her I’m sure. I know what she’s after: they have heard that you are the heir, and they want to secure you for the family, but I’ll spoil their tricks. I’m not going to be turned out of my own house yet. I’ll pack that jackanapes of a brother off about his business, and as for the artful little minx—it’s positively indecent a girl running after a boy like that! I saw what they were fishing for, in sending up every day that Gezaba of a servant of theirs to enquire ‘how Mister Tom was.’ Mister Tom, indeed! It ought to be Master Tom, and he to be birched. The artful little minx! I’ll—I’ll—”

“Stop, mother,” shouted Tom, seizing upon a favourable opportunity when the dowager paused a moment from loss of breath. “Stop, mother, I won’t have you say a word against that young lady. I don’t mind what you say of me, but I won’t stand by and hear you abuse an innocent girl like that. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, mother, to use such language. Against your own sex, too, and a lady whom I intend to make my wife.”

“Your wife!” screamed the old lady with tenfold vehemence and passion. “Your wife! I’d sooner see you in your grave first!”

“You forget yourself, mother,” said Tom, hotly. Like all easy-going men who have good tempers and are seldom roused up to anger, Tom took some time to lose his temper thoroughly, and when he did, he lost it completely. He was now in a regular passion, and his mother’s taunts sent him up to fever heat.

"Forget myself, indeed!"—It was a case of flint and steel between the two.—"It is you that forget yourself, talking like a Bashaw of Nine Tails of marrying whom you please, as if you were a lord and master. Fine doings, indeed! why you're as mad as your sister Susan."

"You need not bring poor Susan into the conversation, mother. I'm sure she's very happy, and I believe she did for the best, if this be a sample of a mother's affection, and what she would have met with at home"—Tom ejaculated bitterly.

"Oh! she did for the best, did she? And a fine mess she made of it, running off with that swindling vagabond. I would like to see him on the treadmill! If that was the only way in which she could get back her senses, it would have been better for her to have been dead at once. But it is the way with all silly women; they never seem to have their senses until they have tied themselves to some scoundrel who has only married them for their money. You are more mad than she is, Thomas. Marry, indeed! A pretty pass things are coming to. You're an idiot, and she's a minx, there!"

"I tell you, mother, I won't have you say a word against that lady. If there be any fault attached to the business, which I can't see myself, she's not to blame at any rate."

"She's a little minx, there," repeated the dowager, with increased venom. She saw how well the shaft was aimed, and like a woman she pushed it in.

"I won't have it, mother."

"Minx! minx! minx! there!" uttered the old lady rapidly, giving her head a jerky nod after each repetition of the obnoxious epithet.

"This is scandalous!" said Tom, literally boiling over with passion. The term "minx," applied to Lizzie, having apparently the same effect on him as a red rag has on a bull, or a fat turkey gobler, to adapt a more ignoble simile. "I won't have it, whether you're my mother or not, and I'll marry whom I please, without asking your leave or licence."

"You will, will you? I should like to know how you're going to support a wife? I'm not going to do it for you."

"I don't care whether you do or do not," said Tom, savagely.

The bull had been now tormented sufficiently, and the matador thought it time to give the *coup de grace*.

"Mark my words," said the dowager, impressively, "if you marry that chit, Thomas, or have anything more to do with her, or any of that toadying crew, not a penny piece of my money do you get, Thomas."

"Hang the money! I don't want it: I suppose I can get along somehow or other without it."

"Remember, you're not of age yet, young sir, and when you are, you won't be much better off, unless I please. You haven't a penny of your own now, except what I give you, and if you don't abandon the whole thing, not a penny more will you have."

The dowager was aware of the advantage in military tactics of cutting off the enemy's supplies.

"I'm sure I don't want it," said Tom; but he thought in a moment how ungracious this was to his mother, who had previously been so kind to him. "I mean, I don't want you to help me any more, if it's to be thrown in my teeth like this. I am very much obliged to you, mother, for what you have done for me already. That is past and gone, and I'm not going to sell myself now and break a trusting girl's heart for the sake of my future chances. Hang the money! I hate the very sound of the word."

"But it is a very useful thing, Thomas—a very useful thing; and you don't seem to have had any objection to it before. It's very hard on me, Thomas, very hard." The old lady was broken now a good deal, after all the trouble she had gone through, and was not able to prosecute the combat with her customary vigour. "After I've been slaving and saving for you all these years to meet with such a return. It's a judgment on me; and if I had served my church better than I have served my son, it—it—" And the dowager fairly broke down for the first time in her life, after vainly attempting to paraphrase Cardinal Wolsey's memorable monologue.

Tom was fairly vanquished.

"I beg your pardon, mother. I did not mean to say anything unkind or ungrateful, but really—"

"After all I have done for you, too," whimpered Mrs Hartshorne; "it's a judgment on me for neglecting your sister and making so much of you."

"I'm very sorry, mother, but I'm a man now, and this is a matter I must decide for myself."

"You shan't marry with my consent," retorted the dowager; "and you can't marry without that."

"You're my mother," said Tom, sadly emphasising that undeniable fact; "and you can ruin my hopes of happiness, if you please. But I shan't stop here; I shall go abroad."

"You go where you please," said the old lady, in her usual sharp way, "so long as you give up that chit."

"I'm not going to give up anybody," said Tom, defiantly; "and I shall exchange into an Indian regiment to-morrow, and when I come of age I shall do as I please."

"Suit yourself," said the dowager, curtly; "but mark my words, not a penny of my money do you get."

At this point the engagement terminated, each party withdrawing their forces without undergoing either a defeat or a victory. It was a decided case of what the dowager had termed in the first instance, “Fiddle-de-dee!”

Tom, immediately after returning from his unsuccessful trip to Havre, had gone down one fine morning to the pretty little parsonage house at Hartwood.

This was not like the first visit he had paid after his convalescence. Then he had been prevented from speaking all he had to say, for Pringle was there; and however much a man may be in love and dying to speak out to the object of his young affections, he cannot very well do it in the presence of her brother. Much, therefore, as Tom liked Pringle, he had hated him at the time of his prior visit for his persistent presence.

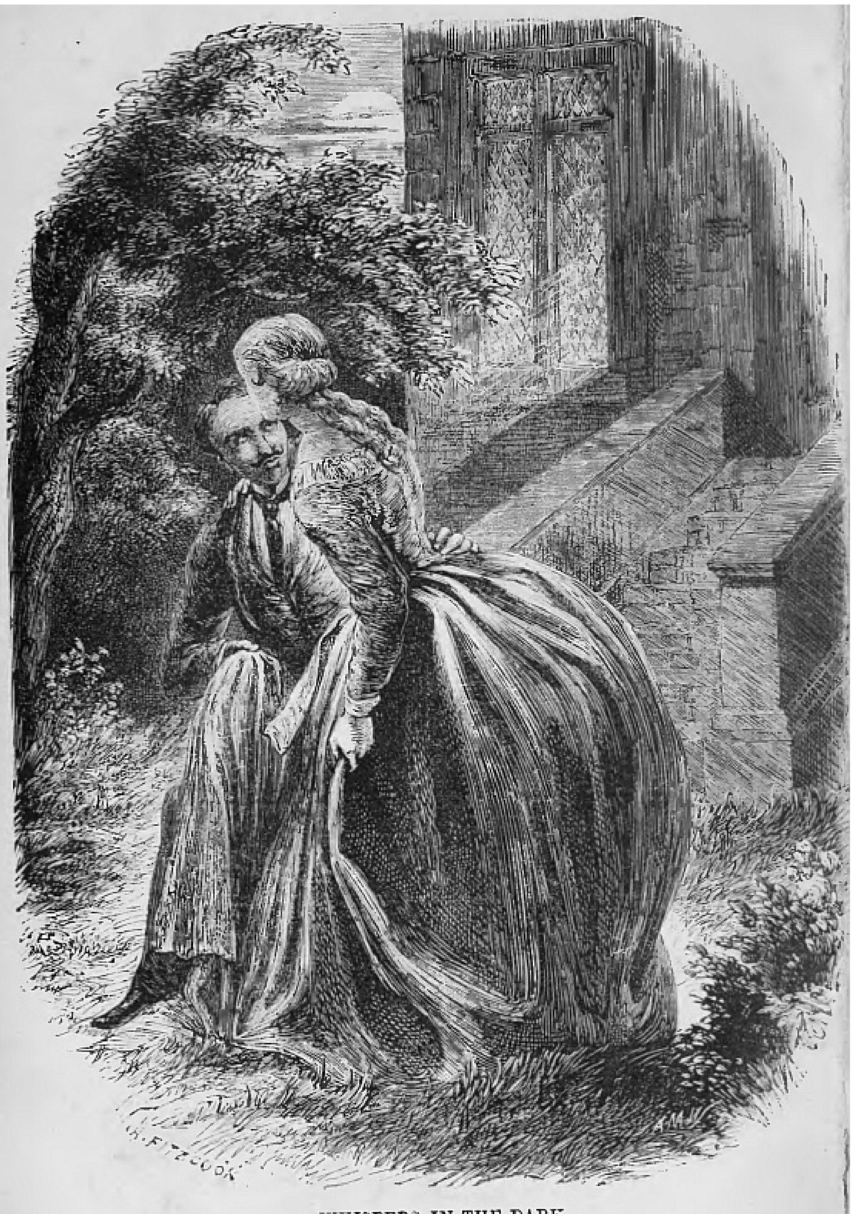
“Why on earth could he not go away and set to work about his sermon or something else,” Tom thought savagely at the time, and I believe his wishes were shared in this respect, mingled with a little trembling and nervousness, by Miss Lizzie herself, for she doubtless guessed what Tom wished to say. There is something inherent in the divine sex which tells them at once when a male biped is going to make a fool of himself. But then Pringle had not gone away, and the tale, that billionth-told tale, had still to be told.

Why is it that writers always allude to a love episode as that “old, old story?” It is never old, my dear sir, or madam, or mayhap, mademoiselle. It is always new. That wonderful little drama, oftentimes a tragedy, in which two actors only take the parts. It is like the fabled Phoenix which possesses the faculty of reproduction, for it is perennially fresh, and young, and new.

Tom found Lizzie alone this time, and you may be certain he took advantage of the opportunity. You see the case had nearly been concluded before, and was well understood between the pair, so it did not require all that serious preparation, and Quintus Curtian resolve before dashing into the yawning gulf. Tom plunged into it at once. Lizzie’s fresh little face, with its melting violet eyes, and the pretty embarrassment which she displayed as she received him in her little conservatory, into which he walked at once to find her on hearing Pringle was out, made him fear nothing and all confident.

The impudent dog darted forward on catching sight of her; and, would you believe it, he had Lizzie folded in his arms before she knew where she was, murmuring over her “My darling, my darling!” And Miss Lizzie—I suppose from discretion, knowing how powerless she was against his strong arms, did not appear to offer any protest. “Abandoned girl!” I hear the old campaigner exclaiming in her dulcet accents.

Master Tom was not going to let the opportunity slip, you may be bound. He had been looking forwards to this, and thinking over the scene all the time he had been laid up, and he was quite prepared to act it.



WHISPERS IN THE DARK.

“Lizzie, my darling,” he whispered, after a pause, into her little pink ear, which was temptingly near him, “will you be my own darling little wife?”

And Lizzie said nothing; she only looked up in his face. And their lips met in one long thrilling kiss.

Of course it was the old or new story all over again. Rehearse it, Damon; fight the love-strife over again, Phyllis, and you have the scene complete.

They were in the conservatory all the time; and it was curious how after Pringle came in what a tremendous lot of gardening Lizzie had to do, and how she could not move the pots about, or exercise her little trowel without Tom’s help. Shortly afterwards she darted off up-stairs somehow with a very flushed face. Stooping always does send the colour to one’s head, you know. And then Tom told Lizzie’s brother all about it.

“I’m awfully glad, old fellow,” said Herbert Pringle, B.A.—“I am awfully glad, old fellow. Nothing could have pleased me better. I thought you were rather spoony on Lizzie, you know, all along, and I was expecting something like this.”

And they shook hands together in mutual congratulation. Tom thought Lizzie’s brother a very fine, good-natured, clever fellow indeed!

“By-the-way,” said Pringle, after a pause, “have you asked your mother about this?”

Tom looked rather glum; he thought Lizzie’s brother a little like the stern parent now.

“Not yet,” he answered. “I am going up to tell her now; but it’ll be all right, you know.”

“I am very glad to hear it, for I would not let you and Lizzie enter into any engagement without her consent. It would not be right, as she’s placed me here in her parish, you know.”

Herbert Pringle had very serious thoughts on the subject of etiquette, and rather doubted the dowager’s consent being obtained, from all he had heard of her from the campaigner, and knew of her himself.

“Oh! that’ll be all right,” said Tom.

And then Lizzie had come down again, looking bewitchingly beautiful, and Tom spent an hour of ecstasy, after which he took up his hat to go.

Lizzie knew the errand he was now going on—to speak to the dowager—and she wished tearful success to him, and gave him a pretty adieu as he went off exultant: for he said his mother would never refuse her consent to an angel!

How he fared in his enterprise has been already detailed, for as soon as he hinted at the thing his mother had broken out with her characteristic diatribe.

And now the pleasant little drama was brought to an abrupt conclusion. It was all over! He could not marry Lizzie without his mother's consent; the crimson sea of love was now covered with the heaving billows of adversity. He would go abroad somewhere, for he should go mad if he stopped here and could not see his darling, and Lizzie, of course, she would die of a broken heart: it was always the usual routine in tragedies like this.

Tom was very miserable, for he had yet to see Lizzie and her brother—from whom he had gone off so exultant—and tell of his defeat.

The world was a blank to him now!

"Fiddle-de-dee!"

Volume Two—Chapter Ten.

Markworth versus Hartshorne.

Markworth was as good as his word.

As soon as he saw that there was no chance of prevailing on the old dowager to pay over Susan's inheritance without calling in the aid of the law, he quickly set the slowly-moving wheels of that ponderous and unwieldly machinery in motion.

The very day Mr Trump and himself both got back to London, Mrs Hartshorne was served, through her solicitors, with a notice to refund the sum of twenty thousand pounds cash, trust money held by her on behalf of her daughter, Susan Markworth *née* Hartshorne, and bequeathed by the late Roger Hartshorne, deceased, now claimed by Allynne Markworth on behalf of his wife Susan, as beforesaid.

This legal notice was sent to Messrs Trump, Sequence, and Co., by a firm of Jewish notoriety, Solomonson and Isaacs, unknown to Mr Trump, save through the columns of the "Law List"—although their names were frequently seen in the newspapers, under the head of "Police Intelligence," as the defenders of low class criminals and receivers of stolen goods.

"Mishter Sholomonshon" had not only been willing to act as Markworth's banker, "for a shtrong conshiderashun, ma dere shir," pending the suit, but also agreed to act as his legal adviser in the matter, and instruct counsel for carrying on the case. As Markworth looked upon all attorneys as alike, they all being, in his estimation, "limbs of the devil," without any distinction between them, he consented willingly to the arrangement, particularly as he knew Solomonson was as sharp as a needle, and he was not at all averse to his being a Jew; besides, he already knew all about the matter, and Markworth was not personally acquainted with any other lawyers.

"Sharp work!" said Mr Trump, rubbing his hands gleefully in anticipation of a lengthy suit and a long bill of costs when this notice was served. "Sharp work; but I don't like to have to act with that rascally Jew firm; I wish the rogue had respectable solicitors. It can't be helped though now—"

"Quite so," murmured Mr Sequence, affirmatively, looking at his partner straight in the face, with his dull eyes and expressionless features.

"But we'll stop their little game," continued Mr Trump, as if speaking to himself, without taking any notice of Sequence at the moment. He presently turned to him, however, and the two, after some little deliberation, settled upon what course they should pursue.

Mr Trump was resolved, according to the dowager's express wish and his own personal inclination—that fifty pounds rankled sorely in his breast!—to fight the case to the death.

The notice was answered by a peremptory refusal to pay over the trust money.

Whereupon Mrs Hartshorne was invited in judicial parlance through her solicitors to show cause why she should not refund the said sum of twenty thousand pounds.

The rule, "to show cause," was retorted to by sundry pleas, the first of which averred never indebtedness, and the others that the plaintiff, Allynne Markworth, had coerced the said Susan Hartshorne, falsely termed Susan Markworth, on whose behalf the trust money was claimed, which claim was null and void, and without foundation in the eyes of the law, inasmuch as the said plaintiff "had entered into a conspiracy to obtain the money of a person of unsound mind, under the pretence of going through a marriage ceremony with a person who, in the eye of the law, could not make a binding contract."

These pleas were replicated, and the whole thing resolved itself into a formal case at law—a very important case of medical jurisprudence, wherein the evidence for the defence was to impeach the sanity of the plaintiffs principal witness.

Everything was at length arranged. The preliminaries of the combat were all settled, and counsel were engaged on either side. The foemen were eager for the fray, a day was fixed for the trial, late in the Michaelmas term, and on the day of battle appointed, the lists would be lined by the partisans of the respectives combatants, who would then enter the arena with visors closed and lances couched—visors of legal dust with which to blind their opponent's eyes, and not to save their own, and lances of parchment briefs with substantial butts of strong witnesses—to fight the be-wigged and be-gowned battle until either foe should fall. When "God defend the right," or in the more colloquial language of the prize ring, "may the best man win."

The case of "Markworth *versus* Hartshorne" created an immense sensation in legal circles when it was known that a day had been appointed for giving it a hearing.

The issues involved were very intricate; and, as in most cases based on a point of lunacy, the sympathy of the public, who, as yet, knew nothing reliable about the matter, was in favour of Markworth and his wife, the latter of whom would be, it was said, produced in court to testify her own sanity at the time she married the plaintiff.

The whole case, in fact, rested upon this point—whether the marriage was a real marriage or not—that is to say, whether Susan Hartshorne was sane or insane at the time she ran away with Markworth. If she was in her right senses at the time, then the marriage was *bonâ fide*, and the old dowager would have to hand over the nice little amount of her daughter's inheritance that was due; if Susan was proved to be imbecile, then the marriage would be void, the dowager would still retain her hold of the twenty thousand pounds, and Markworth be indictable for conspiracy.

It was a civil suit, so to speak, based on criminal ends; so it would go worse with the plaintiff than the defendant should his case fall through.

Solomonson and Isaacs, however, were sharp practitioners, and one of their first proceedings was to subpoena Doctor Jolly, who had attended Susan so long as her medical adviser, and who, of course, would be a very material witness: this was in order to prevent the other side from getting hold of him; and Miss Kingscott was also favoured with a little oblong slip of paper and a guinea in order to insure her attendance to the same end.

They were sharp enough, as Mr Trump found out to his cost; for before the day fixed for the trial, the dowager's lawyers were at their wits end how to support their case. They had got hold of Joseph Begg, who had witnessed the marriage, and the curate who solemnised it, to bear out the alleged charge of conspiracy against Markworth, but beyond that they felt they could do nothing. If Susan were placed in the witness-box, and stood her cross-examination so as to prove her sanity, the case would be all put out of court, or, as Mr Trump graphically expressed it, "it would be all up."

Indeed, Mr Trump had such very serious thoughts about the termination of the case, after he had thoroughly gone into the evidence *pro* and *con*, that he took upon himself to advise Mrs Hartshorne to compromise the matter before it came on for trial. This was just after Tom came back from his visit to Susan and reported how happy and changed she was.

But the dowager would not hear a word of compromise. She was determined to "fight it out on that line," as General Grant is reported to have said when besieging Richmond in the Southern States, not only "if it took all the summer," but the winter too.

Accordingly the case of "Markworth *versus* Hartshorne," was regularly put down for trial; and Sergeants Thickhyde, Q.C., and Silvertong retained for the defence. The Jew lawyers had got hold of the well-known Brassy, considered A1 at the criminal bar, and Serjeant Interpleader, to conduct their case on Markworth's behalf.

Volume Two—Chapter Eleven.

"The Girl I Left behind me."

"*Partant pour la Syrie*" should have been the proper title for this chapter, only instead of *la Syrie*, read *l'Abysinne*; but as "The girl I left behind me" is more appropriate to the matter, if not to the motive of what follows, the latter heading has been adopted in preference. "The Girl I left behind me!" That would-be jovial and yet melancholy air, with its dreary rub-a-dub-dub which the band plays when the regiment is marching out so gaily oh! with the route for foreign service. The Light Brigade played it when they started off to the Crimea; the Royals when they sailed for India, to avenge the deaths of our murdered kinswomen at Cawnpore: how many that departed so gallantly marching to the strains of that sad hackneyed tune, saw their native land again, or met the welcome of the girls they left behind them!

The "fiddle-de-dee" conversation with the old dowager had levelled the charming little Spanish castle which Tom had erected down to the ground; so it was with a very sad heart that he called at the parsonage on the following day to acquaint Lizzie and her brother with the upshot of his interview with his mother.

He was obliged to speak out straight and tell the truth: and it resulted in his worst fears being realised. Herbert Pringle said he could not hear of an engagement between them, as Mrs Hartshorne would not give her consent; and Lizzie, with a very pale little face and a determined little air, as if she was a martyr and being led to the stake, said she would have to do as her brother told her.

Tom, on hearing this, burst into a passion, and said she had "never cared for him," and that "nobody cared for him," and he “wished he was dead,” and that he “would go away,” and “when some bullet put an end to his life” she “would think of him,” a false, “fickle, perjured girl as she was;” and he went off in a tantrum, unmindful of Lizzie’s pleading little face, and the longing violet eyes, and the pale, tearless cheek.

Tom went straight off to rejoin his regiment, the dépôt of which was quartered at Aldershot. He told the Colonel, who was an old bachelor, and regarded Tom as a son, that he wanted to exchange and go on foreign service.

“Pooh, pooh!” said the old Plunger, who had grown grey in the regiment, and seen much service at its head in India and the Crimea—“Pooh, pooh, Tom; why, you must be crossed in love, my boy!”

Tom was very sad over it, and very stern; he could not see anything to joke about. He told the colonel that he was very unhappy at home, and wished to go away for a time; and if he could assist him in furthering his object, he, Tom, would ever remain grateful, and so on.

The Colonel was a kind hearted old fellow, and seeing that Tom was sore wounded, he did not rally him any more on the subject, but entered into it *con amore*.

“I’ll do anything for you, Tom, my boy, that I can. You know that without my saying it; and if you really do want to go abroad, I can put you in the way of it this present moment.”

“Can you, Colonel?” said Tom, earnestly; “I wish you would.”

“That I will, my boy! You know the Abyssinian Expedition is just starting out.”

“By Jove!” said Tom, “that’s just what I should like.”

“Easy, my boy—easy! Don’t run away with the squad like that all at once! I’m just coming to it, my boy.”

“Pray excuse me, sir,” said Tom, who was dying for the rather easy-going Colonel to proceed.

“All right, my boy—all right. You see, I met my friend Sir Charles, who goes out with the advanced corps, the other day in London, and he told me that if I knew any smart young officer who would like to go out, he would be happy to let him come with him as one of his aides-de-camp, to oblige me.”

“Oh, sir!” ejaculated Tom, in anxiety.

“The question is, my boy, are you a smart young officer, and can I recommend you?” the Colonel asked, being a bit of a wag, as he saw the sudden joy which irradiated the suppliant’s face.

“I would thank you so much, sir,” ejaculated Tom; “I am sure I could be useful to him if you would only recommend me.”

“Much use you would be, to be sure! I suppose you would teach him the last waltz step, and tell him how to flirt, you dog!”

“Oh, sir—you’ll oblige me, Colonel, won’t you? and do me this favour?”

“Well, I don’t mind if I do, Tom. You are a young scamp I know, but I’ve a sort of liking for you, and I’ll give you a letter of introduction to Sir Charles. But you must go up to London at once, for he’ll be off in a day or two. I daresay you can catch him at that den of thieves, the Horse Guards, or else at his club.”

“Oh I thank you, sir,” said Tom, shaking the old veteran heartily by the hand. “Oh! thank you, Colonel; I’ll never forget your kindness.”

“There, there, my boy—take it easily. And now if you will kindly let me have my arm to myself, I will sit down and write you your letter at once, and also one to the commander-in-chief, which will facilitate your movements.”

The Colonel then sat down and wrote as he promised; and Tom was off in a jiffey to London. In the joy of going off, he had for a moment forgotten Lizzie, only to remember her with a ten times greater fondness a moment or two later.

Being diligent in his explorations, Tom speedily found his new chief, who received him very cordially, and said how very glad he was to be able to do anything for the old Plunger veteran, from whom he had just come. Tom, to his great joy, was appointed one of the aides-de-camp of the general who was going off with the expeditionary force to Abyssinia. He was only just in time, however, for the places had all been filled up. Tom indeed owed his luck to the sudden illness of one of the officers already appointed.

What a wonderful thing that Abyssinian Expedition was! The world sees some queer changes in its time. Twenty-eight hundred and fifty years ago the Queen of Sheba paid her celebrated visit to King Solomon at Jerusalem, and here, so many centuries after, we have the children of the Gentiles and the inhabitants of the Isles of the West sallying out and getting them ready to battle against the descendants of the self-same King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba across the waters of the Red Sea.

Tom had very few days in which to prepare for his departure. It was now October, and he had to go by the overland route to India first, and then to sail from Bombay with the advance guard of the invading army.

His mother was very much vexed at his going away. She did not think he would have acted up to what he had threatened; but Tom had the same stubborn temper at bottom, and what he had said he would stick to, so she could not alter it. As she saw this she did not press him, for she knew it would be no use; his preparations were therefore rather hurried.

Tom, however, was not going to part from Lizzie in that way. He had rushed off that time in a passion, but he was not going to leave her so abruptly, and he went down again to the parsonage to make his peace in his own way.

The little conservatory witnessed many little tender scenes before the day of his departure came, although the time was but short for them to be acted in. Pringle had interposed scruples at first, but his calm course of ecstasy with the languid Laura made him somewhat more lenient than the campaigner, his future mother-in-law—the time was drawing on now—would have approved.

Tender little scenes of love these were in that romantic conservatory, which had witnessed all Tom's love-making and all his short happiness. Little repetitions and conjugations of the same verb *amo* over and over again, with its present, and its past, and its future subjunctive tenses. Who has not lived and loved and can fill in all these details? Ah! how well remembered they are—the looks, the smiles, the tears, the joys, the sorrows, the ecstasies of love's young dream! Tom Moore was more eloquent on the subject than Goethe, who told—

> Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück;
> Ich habe gelebt und geliebt,

Is not half so expressive as the Irish Catullus.

Fond hearts are severed however, if sometimes only for a time. Tom came down one day to the parsonage to take his last farewell. He had bidden adieu to his mother before. Lizzie he wanted to see last of all! She was the girl he left behind him.

It was very sad for the young lovers to part like this, just when they were beginning to know each other.

But perhaps it was for the best. With true love "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," with the article of dross the reverse proverb holds true. Perhaps as it is preferable to be able to know which is the real Simon Pure: a separation sometimes works well.

There is little good in dwelling on last words.

The parting was only for a time, as Tom fondly told Lizzie, trying to cheer her up.

One long embrace, one last kiss, and Tom was off. The young Dunois had sallied forth for the Orient, and Lizzie wept like Medora at the departure of Conrad the Corsair, thinking, if not exclaiming—

> "And is he gone?" On sudden solitude
> How oft that question will intrude!
> "'Twas but an instant past, and here he stood!
> And now" - without the portal's porch she rush'd,
> And then her tears at length in freedom gush'd;
> Big, bright, and fast, unknown to her they fell,
> And still her lips refused to send "Farewell!"

Volume Two—Chapter Twelve.

Counter Traps.

Clara Kingscott, when Mrs Hartshorne sent her away from The Poplars in that ignominious manner, telling her she did not require her services any further, was more than half inclined not to prosecute her design against Markworth in revealing her share in inducing Susan to go away with him, out of pure spite against the old dowager.

"I'll make the old cat pay for it," she said to herself. "If I don't prove anything against Markworth she'll have to pay him all that money, and she shall too!"

But after some deliberation in the matter Miss Kingscott saw that she would, according to the proverb, "be biting off her nose to spite her face," and surrendering her long cherished revenge from a mere passing pique. It would never do; she thought she had been cold and calculating enough to achieve her purpose, and here she was going off at a tangent and sacrificing all she looked and hoped for these many years but for a petty loss of temper. No, she might be sent away from The Poplars, but she would still achieve that grand purpose of her life, and no regret at benefitting the harsh old woman she called her mistress should prevent her from ruining Markworth. That she had sworn, and would stick to.

She took some temporary satisfaction out of the old dowager by abusing her to her heart's content to her face, so astonishing that worthy lady, who had not had a person exchange retorts with her for years, that Miss Kingscott made her exit with flying colours just shortly before Tom started off for Abyssinia.

No one was very much grieved at her departure, except the old doctor, who said it was "A dooced shame sending away a poor girl like that, marm!" to the mistress of The Poplars, who told him in reply to mind his own business, and not to "be dancing to her house" any more, as he "had nothing and nobody to dance there for now, thank goodness!"

The doctor had held his peace, and went his way a wiser if a sadder man, saying unto himself, "Bless my soul! It's an infernal shame, and she's a dooced fine girl, and it's a great pity," after taking an affecting adieu of his late love, whom he commanded to have no scruples about writing to him in case she wanted any assistance. You see the old lady was present all the while, and the doctor could not repeat his declaration in her presence, however much he may have been tempted so to do.

In this manner Clara Kingscott went away, shaking the Sussex dust from her feet and came to London, The Poplars being left to its own solitude after Tom's departure, with the old dowager twice as cross and rancorous and grinding to her tenants as before. I believe she even missed the governess after a time, for now the old doctor hardly ever came, and she had no one to quarrel with; no one who would answer her back again that is, for "Garge" took all she gave him, as did the old women servant, and there is no fun in having the quarrelling all to oneself. It takes two to make a fair quarrel, but the poor old dowager had no one now but herself. She paid off, however, her deprivation on Mr Trump, writing long letters every day to him about the progress of the suit, and making the lawyer swear at old ladies in general and Mrs Hartshorne in particular, and curse the inventors of pen, ink, and paper, and Sir Rowland Hill for the penny post.

The governess, when she arrived in London, took some comfortable apartments for herself; she could afford to wait awhile, for she had plenty of money besides her salary, which latter she had rigorously exacted from the dowager to the last penny, including a month's notice, for which she gave a receipt in full, and she could afford to look about and suit her own convenience as to her future plans.

By a strange coincidence, she, after hunting about for a day or two, took lodgings in the very house where Markworth had formerly lived in Bloomsbury, and had the very same landlady, Mrs Martin, as hostess. That good lady being very fond of chat, like most landladies, and as "the parlours," as Miss Kingscott became called from taking these rooms, had no friends coming to see her, she would frequently drop in "of an evenink" to pass the time of day: also, like most landladies, Mrs Martin would recount all the deeds and doings of her former lodgers, in which narrative she did not fail to mention Mr Markworth, "The best gentleman as any lady ever had; so quiet and giving no trouble, and always paying his rent that regular as you might depend upon it like the Bank of England as ever was!"

It was not surprising under these circumstances, therefore, that Miss Kingscott soon got a little further information about the gentleman around whom she was busily weaving her coils, and learnt in a very short time—just through passing curiosity, that's all, she was so much interested in what that good Mrs Martin had to tell of her lodgers—all about the habits of Markworth, and that "sister" of his he had brought up from the country, and how he had removed all his things, and gone off at last without a word of warning; although "I'll do him the justice to say he behaved as a perfect gentleman, that he did, and paid a month's rent in advance," said Mrs Martin, which capped what the governess had got out of the old dowager, and placed the lodging-house keeper and herself on a par.

"Markworth *versus* Hartshorne" was rapidly coming on for trial, when late one evening, just as he was thinking of shutting up his office, and going home for the night—the clerks, but one, had all departed an hour since—Mr Trump had a visitor.

"Ah, ha! Miss Kingscott, glad to see you," said the lawyer, rising from his chair as she entered. He was by himself, Sequence and the "Co." having retired for the evening, and he was then writing busily by the aid of a couple of greasy candles, which flared, now to the right, now to the left, from the draught through the half-open door. "Glad to see you; can I do anything for you? it's rather late, but never too late for business, you know!" And he rubbed his hands with a sort of congratulatory and metallic rub.

"Yes," answered the governess, speaking deliberately, in her cold, calm voice; "I wanted to speak to you, and that's the reason you see me here. You know, I suppose, that I have left Mrs Hartshorne's employment?"

"Yes—sorry for it too—hasty business; but you must remember the old lady is a leetel hasty sometimes, and I ought to know it as well as anybody."

"You are right, sir; she is too hasty sometimes, and was a little too much so for her own good very nearly: only that it serves my purpose to help her, I would not now be here. That case is very nearly coming on, is it not?"

"What, Markworth *versus* Hartshorne? Yes; but I thought you were subpoenaed on the other side?"

"So I am, but I can help your side a good deal!"

"Indeed, Miss Kingscott! I do not like as a rule to tamper with an opponent's witness, but as they played so very sharply with us, I think we may stretch a point in the present instance." And the lawyer again rubbed his hands expectantly, waiting for what the governess had to say.

"Now, what I am going to tell you," continued Miss Kingscott, "I am going to disclose in confidence, and I wish you to pledge me your word—I know you to be a gentleman, and I believe you to be a man of honour—that not a particle of the information I give you is to be mentioned by you until the day the trial comes on, when, of course, you are welcome to make what use you please of it!"

"That's very strange, Miss Kingscott, very strange. I don't know what I might be binding myself to!"

"You will find nothing to reflect on you, sir," resumed the governess, "I shall be the only one who will suffer; and the very fact of my telling you what I will do will be a proof of its truthfulness and veracity. You can, in the meantime, substantiate anything I say by your own personal enquiry."

"It's very strange! very strange, indeed, madam! But I take your word for it, and will pledge myself as you require, excepting always," he added, with his legal acumen, "that it does not prejudice my future act on in the matter."

"It certainly will not; I shall want you to act!" said Miss Kingscott; and thereupon she told the astonished lawyer all about her complicity with Markworth, the compact between them, and how it was carried out.

“Dear me, this is very strange!” said the lawyer, when she had concluded. “You haven’t got any document to show, have you, in proof of what you say?”

“No; only my word.”

“Quite so! Quite so! What am I thinking of? Why, the very fact of your coming forward, and implicating yourself in the conspiracy will be proof enough.”

The lawyer did not look on Miss Kingscott with the same deference that he had previously shown her. He eyed her somewhat askance, but he presently resumed his cross-examination.

“And you gave him the date of Susan’s coming of age, eh!”

“Yes; I got it out of the family Bible. It was the 27th of August, I remember it well—just the day before they had the pic-nic—when he took Susan off.”

“Humph! The 27th of August,” said Mr Trump, reflectively, as he looked over a little document he had before him, at first carelessly, but in a moment or two more eagerly. “The 27th of August, eh—that’s strange!” He continued to pore upon the mass of papers on his desk, and then he suddenly seized a large, old-fashioned volume that also lay before him. “The twenty-seventh, eh? Then, by George, Miss Kingscott, I’m a born idiot! Hurrah!” he shouted, rising, and dashing the volume to the other end of the room, as if he were taken suddenly mad, and quite alarming the governess, who hastily got up, and cried out—

“Mr Trump! Mr Trump! what is the matter, sir?”

“Matter, eh? Matter enough. I’m a born fool! Why that rascal married the girl before she came of age. She was not of age until the 29th of August; and, by George, the mistake in the figure will spoil every chance he had, and prevent the necessity of your services, or any trial at all!”

“Gracious! Mr Trump, is that really so, and it is only found out now?”

“Fact, madam. I’m a born idiot! Why, the whole thing could have been nipped in the bud at once; and none of us to have seen that thing which was glaring in our faces all the time, and going to let the case come on for trial! Dear! Dear! I’m a born idiot, madam, and so is Sequence, and we’d better now shut up shop!”

“And that will end the case at once?”

“Certainly, at once; why, he’s got no right to claim anything now, as he will know very shortly, from the very wording of the will.”

“I’m glad of it; but I should have liked mine to have been the hand to work his ruin.”

“Very sorry, I’m sure, for your sake, madam; but you see we don’t want your help now, although I should have been very glad to use it a minute or two ago! I shall write to that vagabond at once. He gave me an address at an hotel the other day, and he said he would stop there until the trial came on, in case we wanted to compromise, which, I confess, I once did. But now, hurrah! the rascal’s done for without that. I shall be happy to see you any other time, Miss Kingscott; but I shall have to be very busy now, and if you will excuse me—yes—good evening, madam—ah—” And the governess was bowed out.

Mr Trump, when he was by himself, gave vent to a long, congratulatory chuckle; after which he called out to his clerk, Smiffens, in the outer office, and told him all about it.

“By George, Smiffens! what fools we all have been to be sure. There was that plain evidence of the girl’s birth, and the date of the marriage staring us in the face all the time, and not one of us perceived it! By George! Smiffens, what a fool I am!”

“Certainly, sir,” answered the old clerk, meekly, his hair standing bolt upright as he spoke.

“Go to the devil, sir! What do you mean? Confound your impudence!”

“Certainly, sir,” said Smiffens, in the same tone of voice as before; and he went towards the door, slowly.

“Stop!” sang out Mr Trump, who had not paused a moment writing all the time. “Here, copy these two letters, and deliver them before you go home. One is for Mr Markworth fixing an appointment for to-morrow morning, so be sure to tell the waiter or porter at the Tavistock, where he is staying, to be certain and give it to him to-night. The other letter is for Solomonson and Isaacs, which you can post.”

The clerk did as he was bidden; and Mr Trump went off to his suburban home very well satisfied with his day’s work. No cause now or need for any witnesses or evidence, or for the praiseworthy exertions of Sergeants Thickhyde and Silvertong. The suit of “Markworth *versus* Hartshorne” was quashed ere yet it had begun.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirteen.

The Biter Bit.

The lawyer’s letter surprised him somewhat, but Markworth had no fears or presentiment of what was the motive or would be the upshot of the missive.

“Ha!” he thought, “they want to compromise, do they? It’s rather late in the day for that, and they won’t catch me with any chaff. But I may as well go round and see what they are after.”

At eleven o’clock precisely, the hour they had fixed for the interview, Markworth tapped at the half-open green baize door which led into the outer office of Messrs Trump, Sequence and Co.’s chambers in Bedford Row.

“Mr Trump in?” he asked of the old clerk, whose desk, surmounted by the mahogany face and head, with the grizzled hair standing upon end as if it had been electrified, faced the door.

“Yes, sir,” answered that worthy, speaking through his shut lips, “Mr Trump and Mr Sequence both in. Yer name Markworth, b’lieve?”—and Markworth nodded—“Waiting to see you. Both in there!” pointing to the door of the inner office, where, on entering, our friend found the lawyers arranged in state, one on each side of a table, covered with papers and a wrinkled parchment folio, endorsed on the outside, “Last will and testament of Roger Hartshorne, deceased.” Markworth took in all the preparations at a glance, the lawyers with their pleasant about-to-perform-an-operation expression of face, the paper-covered table, the will, the dentist-like looking easy chair, placed handily for him between the solicitors, exposing him to their fire on either flank, and all.

“Aha! Good morning, Mr Markworth. Fine day,” said Mr Trump; and “Aha! Good morning, Mr Markworth. Fine day,” echoed Mr Sequence after him, as customary, in his feeble treble.

“Good morning,” he answered, “You sent for me, eh?”

“We sent for you, Mr Markworth, because,” said Mr Trump, smiling and rubbing his hands gleefully, as he always did before plunging into his subject. “We sent for you, Mr Markworth, because,” said the echo, without any smile, however, or rubbing of hands.

“Because what, sir?” exclaimed Markworth, turning round abruptly on poor little Sequence, who of course had not a word to say for himself until his principal gave him the cue.

Mr Trump came gallantly to the rescue.

“We sent for you, Mr Markworth, because we wished to have some conversation on the subject of the case put down for the present term of Markworth *versus* Hartshorne. We represent the defendant, as you know.”

“Certainly, Mr Trump; but don’t you think you had better consult my solicitor, as the matter is entirely out of my hands?”

“Hum! I think you’ll agree with us after hearing what we have to say, that the communication which we have to make had better be addressed to you in the first instance.”

“You wish to compromise the thing, I suppose?”

“Pray don’t be so hasty, my *dear* sir,” responded Trump, still smiling affably.

And “My *dear* sir!” chimed in Sequence, as usual.

“We don’t suppose anything, and we don’t pledge or commit ourselves to anything. Don’t be so hasty, my *dear* sir; it’s very unprofessional, *very* unprofessional.”

And “Very unprofessional,” squeaked Sequence.

“I wish you would come to the point at once!” said Markworth, angrily.

Mr Trump at once dropped his professional smile. Glancing his eyes carelessly over a paper before him, and taking up the will, he spoke out in a straight, business-like manner, while Mr Sequence sat himself bolt upright in his chair, and tried to look very stern and pre-occupied indeed.

“You are aware,” said Mr Trump, looking Markworth full in the face, “that the late Roger Hartshorne, deceased”—he smacked out his adjectives with an oily gusto, did Mr Trump—“Deceased;” he repeated the word as if loth to abandon it, “left his daughter Susan the sum of twenty thousand pounds sterling, free of legacy duty, to be inherited by her on her arriving at the age of twenty-one years; or, should she marry before arriving at the said age of twenty-one years, and after she had attained the age of eighteen years, *providing* that the said marriage should be sanctioned, and by the express will and consent of her mother, if alive, or in case of her death by an appointed guardian, a certain Doctor Richard Jolly, as mentioned in the will of the Testator, then and in such case she was to receive the annual interest at the rate of five per cent, per annum, chargeable on the property of the Testator, until she should arrive at the said age of twenty-one years, when she would be put in possession of all right, title, and interest whatever in the said sum of twenty thousand pounds, free of legacy duty. I believe that’s the wording of the will?”

“My dear sir,” interrupted Markworth, blandly, “what on earth are you repeating all that legal gibberish to me for? I knew all that long ago.”

“I’ve no doubt, sir, no doubt of *that*. You are a man of the world, Mr Markworth, like myself, and you’ll pardon my hinting that you probably took a glance at this self-same will before committing yourself in the matrimonial noose with our rustic young friend. Ha! ha!”

And Mr Trump laughed a taking, “good joke” sort of laugh. So genial was he, in fact, that Markworth could not help joining in the laugh, and thought himself a very smart and clever fellow indeed.

"You're a sharp fellow, Mr Trump," he said roguishly, giving Mr Trump a metaphorical poke in the ribs.

"A sharp fellow! a sharp fellow!" chorused Mr Sequence; and the three were all at once laughing cordially together, as friendly as you please.

What charming agreeable fellows dentists are: what capital jokes they make, and what highly seasoned anecdotes they retail just before drawing out a tooth.

Mr Trump was now going to produce his pliers; he had had them concealed in the professional way up his sleeve all this time.

"Pardon me, Mr Markworth," he said, all at once, when the chuckle had died out, turning grave and business-like once more. "Pardon me, but what I was reading from that will has a good deal to do with what I am now going to say. Supposing that I admitted for argument's sake, only as a mere figure of speech so to say, that Susan Hartshorne when she married you was perfectly sane, and was not coerced into the measure against her will?"

"Ha! you admit that."

"I don't admit it at all, my dear sir; I only used it just for mere argument's sake."

"That, Mr Trump, is just the question we are going to try, and I flatter myself our case is very good; you have got to prove that she was insane, and it seems incomprehensible to me how you are going to do it against the evidence we have—that of her governess and people who had seen her before the marriage—indeed we will have her own evidence in the witness-box. I don't see how, Mr Trump, you will be able to prove a conspiracy after that. Besides, we will produce her medical attendant and guardian, as you term him, Doctor Jolly."

"Ah! that was sharp practice subpoenaing him! I give you great credit for that stroke, Mr Markworth; but allow me to say we are not arguing the case now."

"And I don't see how I can come into any compromise so late in the day, Mr Trump! We have the whole thing as clear as a pikestaff, and you won't have a leg to stand upon when it is brought into court."

"Humph! we'll see," ejaculated the senior partner, and "we will see," followed Mr Sequence, parrot-like, after him. "But I did not make any allusion to such a thing as a compromise, Mr Markworth," continued Mr Trump.

"Then what have you brought me here for? I will wish you good morning," he said, rising, and taking up his hat to go, angrily.

"Stay! Don't be so hasty; pray don't be so hasty, Mr Markworth; you may be certain that I would not have asked you to call unless I had something important to communicate," said Mr Trump, soothingly.

"Then, why don't you get to it at once, instead of beating about the bush," he answered, still only half appeased, and resuming his seat in the dentist-like chair.

"I am just coming to the point, my dear sir, just coming to that; but, you see, we must speak of things in a professional way."

"Certainly, in a professional way," said Mr Sequence, nodding his head sagaciously, as if in confirmation of Mr Trump's remark; while Markworth twirled his hat impatiently between his fingers, and wondered what "those two rogues were after now!"

"By the terms of the will of the late Roger Hartshorne, deceased," resumed Mr Trump, unctiously, "without exactly phrasing it in legal language, Mr Markworth, you will see that, putting the question of Susan Hartshorne's sanity or insanity, as I said before, entirely out of the argument—and that remains to be proved"—he said, significantly, "if she married you without her mother's consent before she was twenty-one years of age, she forfeited all right and claim to the bequest mentioned in her father's will."

"Quite right, and I thought we settled all that before," responded Markworth, knowingly. He continued, as if in response to a question from the lawyer. "Quite right, Mr Trump. But you see, I took very good care that the happy day on which I called her mine should not be until after the date on which she came of age;" and Markworth laughed very heartily. Strange to say, neither Mr Trump nor his partner joined in the laugh this time; both of them looked more stolid and parchmenty than ever. The senior of the firm went on straight to the point.

"That is just the question we have to decide, Mr Markworth."

"What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say," answered Mr Trump, calmly. "That's the point," said Mr Sequence; and both looked at their subject composedly—just like dentists!

"What the devil do you mean? staring at me like that," said Markworth, angrily, and turning pale with apprehension. "What pettifoggery are you raking up now? I'm not to be frightened easily."

"We are not pettifoggers, Mr Markworth, and have no wish to intimidate you or any other person; but the date of your marriage, or quasi-marriage"—Mr Trump corrected himself—"with the girl has got a good deal to do with us, and you too."

"Go on, man, go on, and say all you've got to say without any more unnecessary words. By Heavens! I can't bear all this talking.”

Mr Trump went on systematically inserting the forceps, without paying any attention to the excitement of the other.

“The date of your marriage was—?”

“You know well enough. Have you not got the copy of the marriage certificate?”

“The 28th of August, I believe?”

“Right,” said Markworth, curtly. “And what then?”

“The date of your marriage, you allow then, with Susan Hartshorne, was on the twenty-eighth of last August; and, my dear sir, she did not come of legal age until the 29th of August, the day after the marriage.” Mr Trump could not refrain from putting an inflection of triumph in his voice, as with a mental twist of his wrist he extracted the metaphorical tooth. Even Mr Sequence gave vent to a faint chuckle, without, however, disturbing a single line in his immobile face, as he squeaked out in a sort of victorious way, “The day after the marriage; the day after, my dear sir—” the longest sentence he had ever yet been known to utter.

“By heavens! it can’t be—it can’t be. It’s an infernal swindle,” exclaimed Markworth, violently, his face flaming with passion, as he jumped up; and, seizing the lawyer by the collar, he shook him as a terrier would a rat; “it can’t be; it’s a confounded swindle!”

Mr Trump remained as calm as ever under this unexpected assault; but as for little Sequence he hedged himself into the corner by the window, having his chair and the table as a sort of barricade before him.

Markworth recovered himself in a moment.

“I beg your pardon, Mr Trump,” he said, apologising; “I forgot myself; what was it that you said?”

“Pray don’t mention it, my dear sir—my dear sir. I shan’t bring any action for assault and battery. You see, my dear sir,”—Trump got very affectionate here, as he had just played his winning card—“we are accustomed to these little emotions now and then. But to return to what I was saying, Mr Markworth, it is a very unfortunate circumstance for you; the son Tom was born on the 27th August, 1847, and Susan, the daughter, on the 29th August, ’46, and your mistake probably thus arose; but I can’t help feeling glad on my clients behalf, that your marriage took place the day before Susan Hartshorne came of age. Consequently you must admit it, as she did not marry with her mother’s consent, the marriage being, indeed, after an elopement, and our client, being ready to prove that it was entirely without her consent or knowledge, Susan Hartshorne—as your wife—has forfeited all right to the twenty thousand pounds mentioned in her father’s will.”

Markworth seemed to be quite dazed. This sudden blow to all his expectations quite unnerved him. He spoke absently, as if in a dream.

“Have you got the proofs?” he said abruptly; for he knew all the consequences which his oversight would entail. “Where are the papers?”

“Here is the certificate of her birth,” said the lawyer, producing it as he spoke, “dated the 29th August, 1846. Here is also the written evidence of her mother, Mrs Hartshorne, and here, too, the old Family Bible, with the date and entry of her birth inscribed in it, by the hand of the late Squire Roger Hartshorne, as I myself can testify. Quite sufficient evidence, Mr Markworth, in any court of law, to establish the date of Susan Hartshorne’s birth, and the consequent failure of your little plan to get her fortune. Very unfortunate, Mr Markworth! Very unfortunate!”

And the lawyer rubbed his hands with triumph, and smiled as if he was telling his victim a piece of remarkably good news.

Markworth never took any notice of the lawyer’s words. He examined eagerly the papers before him; and when he saw the convincing entry in the family Bible, he gave up. The figure 9 in the date “29th August,” might easily have been taken for a 7, and he cursed Clara Kingscott for making the mistake, which she had very naturally made in this instance quite unintentionally, and without any thought as to the effects of the error.

He bore his defeat bravely, however, although all his schemes were thus dashed to the ground when they were trembling on the verge of success.

He knew at once that he had now no more chance of getting the fortune, for which he had risked so much, than the veriest beggar whom he might pick out of the street. He would have to leave England at once, or his next step would be into a gaol, on account of his debts: the harpies would be upon him the moment his failure was known. What on earth to do with himself, or with the girl he called his wife, whom he had tackled himself to, he did not know. The first thing, however, was to get away, and that as soon as possible.

“I suppose the suit will have to be dropped now, for I have no object in carrying it on. Good morning, gentlemen,” he said, to the lawyers; “I suppose you don’t want me any longer.”

And he walked out of the office as calmly as if he had achieved a victory, although all his hopes and plans were utterly wrecked.

“He’s a plucky fellow, and deserved to win,” said Mr Trump to his partner, when Markworth had disappeared, and his steps were heard going down the staircase.

"That he is; that he did," responded parrot Sequence, and both dismissed him from their minds, and set about filing the necessary papers which would soon put an end to the longed talked of suit of "Markworth *versus* Hartshorne."

Volume Two—Chapter Fourteen.

The Doctor Goes Abroad.

"Ait-choo!" sneezed the doctor one morning towards the end of October, when the weather was getting damp and misty, as he entered his comfortable breakfast parlour, where Deborah was sitting as usual before the fire darning her interminable stockings. I believe if you walked into that room at any hour of the day or night, you would always find her at the same task, darning stockings, and she always seemed to have the same stocking, a half grey and white one with plenty of holes about the heel, in her hand.

"Ait-choo!" sneezed the doctor again. "Bless my soul, Deb," he exclaimed, "I believe I have taken a cold. Confound it! Just what I might expect from toddling up to The Poplars last night on such a wild goose chase."

"Well, you know, Richard, you would go out, and you threw off that comforter I took the trouble to wrap round your neck."

"A lot of molly coddling! But you're a good soul, Deb. What an old catamaran that old woman is to be sure."

"Do you mean Mrs Hartshorne, Richard?"

"Bless my soul, Deb! Of course; who else should I mean? She's a regular old devil incarnate, and her temper, never very good, has got quite awful now. I wanted her to go according to Trump's advice; he's a sensible man, and told her to compromise that case. It will never stand in law, so Trump says; and it's better to give that rascal Markworth half the money now than expose the whole family, and have to give up the whole lot by and bye. Half a loaf is better than no bread, I say, and I would rather have it so for that poor girl's sake."

"And she won't do it, Richard?"

"The devil a scrap she says. Bless my soul, Deb! she won't hear of a compromise; she says she will see that rascal hanged first before he gets a penny of her money—and she's right, too, by Gad?"

"Oh! Richard, Richard!" said Pythias, warningly.

"Well, she did not use exactly that language, but she meant it. I tell you what I've a mind to do, Deb."

"What, Richard? Nothing rash I hope!" observed Deborah, with anxiety: she always looked upon her brother as a gay young fellow, who might suddenly rush off and commit some escapade, so she consequently was constantly on the tenter hooks of suspense. You see the doctor had a partiality for the fair sex. He was always fancying himself in love with every pretty young lady he came across, and innumerable were the frights Deborah had had in consequence. The doctor in fact was always committing himself, and only his universal *bonhomie* saved him from breaches of promises without number. He would be sensible enough and hold his own with men, but with women he was a very child in their hands. Deborah looked upon everybody in petticoats as special tempters and snares set in the path of her brother. She thought he was irresistible: and it was therefore a wonder with all the chances he had had and the many very serious flirtations he had engaged in that he had not yet been caught. He had got over his partiality for Miss Kingscott, now that the charmer had gone away, not that I wish to accuse the doctor of heartless conduct, or of being a "gay deceiver." But to be in love was a chronic epidemic with him, and as Miss Kingscott was gone, he was in duty and of necessity bound to take up with someone else, Deborah knew that the doctor had of late been very attentive to a certain pretty little widow who had come down to stop at Bigton, and had called in the services of Aesculapius for some trifling nervous ailment—who knows what might come of it? The doctor had escaped often but he might be caught at last! The pitcher that often is carried scatheless to the well is broken in the end; so she was now in terror that the doctor was going to declare in his well-known manner that this pretty little widow was "a dooced fine girl!" and state that he was going to marry her. "Women are so designing; the artful wretches!" Pythias thought, "especially widows!" and she waited in nervous expectation to hear what Damon had "a mind to do!"

The doctor was in a thinking fit. He twirled his hat in his hands; and then that not being sufficient to conduce to reflection, he pulled out his bandana pocket-handkerchief and began to twist it round his fingers in all sorts of fanciful shapes.

"I tell you what I've a mind to do, Deb. I'm hanged if I don't go over to that foreign Frenchy place, and try and fetch Susan back myself! Tom has gone away, and I daresay he made a mull of it before, and the old woman won't do anything. I promised poor Roger Hartshorne to look after his children, and I'm hanged if I don't go over there and bring her back!"

Pythias was at once relieved in her mind. It was not that artful designing creature then that Damon had in her thoughts. "Indeed, Richard!" she said, "but it is a long journey, and do you think at your time of life you can stand it?" she, like most country people who have never stirred out of their native wilds, looked upon a journey to France as if it comprised the circumnavigation of the globe.

"Bosh, Deb! Why it's only a hundred and fifty miles or so from here to Havre, and I'll be back in a couple of days at most! It is right for me to go, and I can just manage now to get away for two or three days, for there's nobody ill and nothing doing; and that coal merchant fellow Dobbins, who came down here to set up for surgeon, can mind my practice for me. I'll go round and ask him this morning; he'll jump at the offer."

"Well, if you think you ought to go, you must I suppose; and it is better now than any other time."

"Of course I ought, and I will to, by Gad!" The doctor being a man of resolution, although he often did make hasty resolves, quickly settled his departure; and to the intense astonishment of everybody went away from Bigton for a week as he said, although he only intended to be away two days at the most, the whilom coal merchant Dobbins driving about in the doctor's chaise, which he seldom used himself unless the gout was very bad indeed, and making the most of his short resign until Aesculapius proper should come back to his own again.

Doctor Jolly had never stirred out of his native town, save of course on short excursions into the surrounding neighbourhood, for nearly a quarter of a century; not for twenty-five years, ever since the time when he went to London to walk the boards of Guy's Hospital, in order to acquire his medical education; and naturally such an expedition as the present was quite an era in his life.

But the doctor did not make "any bones" about it, as the popular expression runs. He packed up his traps in a small portmanteau; and after a very affecting farewell with Deborah, who fell upon his neck and embraced him, as if she were never going to see him again, telling him, "Take care of yourself, Richard! *Do* take care of yourself!" to which he responded in his cheery voice, "God bless my soul! Deb, of course I will. God bless you!" he rubbed his eyes, which were glistening, with his horny fist, and blowing his nose vigorously with his bandana, the doctor went off on his travels.

He made his way safely to Havre, and got over all right with the exception of being fearfully sea-sick on the passage. Oh! the blessing of being thin! Fat men suffer the tortures of the direst days of the Inquisition when attacked by the fell *mal du mer*! while the Misters Slenders escaped scatheless.

He had some little difficulty with the gendarmes of the custom house and the hotel touts, the latter of whom struggled for the possession of his manly form; but he finally escaped after being taken summarily to a caravanserai, where he left his luggage, and shortly afterwards set about finding the abode of Susan and Markworth.

By some mistake or other he got carried off to the railway station, and was taken some miles on the road to Paris. A fellow countryman, however, convinced him of his mistake, and showed him how to get back again to Havre. By the time he got back, however, evening had set in, and he experienced the greatest difficulty in finding the direction of the Rue Montmartre, for, even after finding the direction in which it lay, he was still at fault. How he blessed the "frog eating race" as he called them.

As the doctor's knowledge of French was somewhat limited,—indeed, he only knew the word *oui* which he pronounced "Ooo"—he found some difficulty in finding his way. However, by dint of continually bawling out in an extra stentorian voice "Roo Mount Martha," as he called it, to every passer-by whom he met, he at length reached the street of which he was in search.

It was some time before he got to the right number, as he would persist in asking, of course in English, for "Number-o'-seven," instead of *numéro sept*. But in due course he arrived at the *logement* of La Mère Cliquelle.

The door was opened by the husband of that good lady—it is curious how some men lose their individuality on getting married; they become mere nonentities—how often you hear a man described as Mrs So-and-So's husband. The doctor, thinking that by speaking his words very distinctly, and in a loud tone of voice, he could make any Frenchman understand English, acted on that plan.

"Is—Susan? Bless my soul! What the dooce am I thinking of?" interrupted the doctor to himself. He commenced anew. "Is—Missis—Mark—worth—in?"

"Hein?" grunted the Frenchman, interrogatively.

The doctor repeated his question, only this time asking for "madam" instead of "mistress."

The Gaul's face brightened, and he looked more intelligent. "Ah-h! Yase! yase, yase, yase!" he said, nodding his head violently, "de madame? de Inglismans, hay?"

"Yes, yes! quite right," ejaculated the doctor. "I say you are quite right," bawling out the words at the top of his voice. "Confound these stupid French frogs," he muttered to himself; "why, they can't understand plain English! Is—she—you—know—who in?" And seeing that the Gaul liked to nod, he nodded his head until he grew quite apoplectic in the face.

"Non," said the Mère Cliquelle's husband. "Ze Inglisman's is go—vat you call it, eh? Ah, yase, is go oot."

"Oh! she's gone out, is she?"

"Ah-h! Yase! yase, yase!" nodded the M.C.'s husband.

"Do—you—know—when—she—will—come—back?"

The Frenchman looked puzzled for a moment, but with a foreigner's intuitive cleverness be guessed at the gist of the question. "Ah, yase! you vant to know *son retour*? Cee go walk mit monsieur. Cee go joost now *à huit heures*, and cee will retour byanby, *à neuf heures*, noine clock. *Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf*"—he said, counting on his fingers—"o'cloke!"

"Ooo!" said the doctor, giving a satisfied nod, "I understand, she will be back again at nine o'clock," holding up nine of his fingers in proof. "I—am—much—obliged—to—you,—I—will—come back again—at nine!"

“Ah-h, yase! Dat is raite. You will retour?”

“Yes, I’ll come back again!” said the doctor, as he walked away, after both had bowed politely to each other, and the Gaul had entreated him to accept a hundred thousand assurances of his extreme subserviency.

“Confound those stoopid foreigners!” muttered the doctor, as he walked up the street in the direction of Ingouville, to pass the time. “Confound those stoopid foreigners! Why, that fellow could have said all that in half the time in English.”

Volume Two—Chapter Fifteen.

“End of Second Act.”

The engulfment of the last straw on which he, the drowning man, had leant his weight, left Markworth without a single loophole of escape: he did not know where to turn.

The Jew, Solomonson, had not only advanced him the money required for carrying on the unsuccessful lawsuit, but he was largely indebted to him besides; and Solomonson, he knew, was a very Shylock, and although he might bow and smile, and be the best of friends, and most cordial of bankers, while things were going on right and he saw some prospect of getting his money back with a large “pershentage” in addition, still Markworth was equally well aware that the Jew would rigorously exact his pound of flesh as soon as he saw the game was up, and the cards exposed, and he would be the first one to come upon him for the three thousand pounds, for which he held his bill.

Markworth judged the child of Israel very rightly; and if he had not been a trifle earlier in the day in receiving that damming proof of the date of Susan’s coming of age, its disagreement with the date of the marriage, and the consequent working of the clause in the will, and its effect on his claims, he would have found Mr Solomonson so anxious about his welfare, and considerate about his movements, that he might have discovered some slight check, in the shape of a *capias*, was placed in the way of any desire he might evince to leave the kingdom, and rejoin his wife. Messrs Trump and Sequence had communicated with Markworth’s lawyers at the same time as they had done with him, so the news would soon reach other ears which would be attentive enough to the information, and note its effects. He did not have a very long start in his advance news; still it was sufficient. That was something at all events, and he just managed to catch the tidal boat that night, and was soon on his way to that Alsatia on the other side, where debtors, unless their shortcomings are of a criminal nature, may laugh in safety at their creditors in England.

When Markworth was safely on board, and the steamer had ploughed through the muddy Southampton Water, and was dancing through the blue sea beyond, somewhat rough and leadeny at this season of the year, and the Southampton lights were far behind, his mind grew more composed, and he began to think over all that had happened.

“Dolt that I was,” he said to himself, “not to have looked at that cursed register myself. In planning the whole scheme I neglected one of its most trifling, and yet most important points; and that has damned all! I see now how it all happened; the dates of Tom’s and the girl’s births came so close together, one on the 27th of August, and the other the 29th, that Clara jumbled the two together. The idiot! Curse her carelessness! But it was easy enough to mistake that 9 for a 7, and more fool I for trusting her! Curse my own folly! Treble fool, dolt, ass that I was! not to see to the thing myself!” He spoke out bitterly, looking out over the sea. “But I wonder how the devil it was those cursed lawyers and pettifoggers did not find out that mistake of the date before!” he added, afterwards, as if reflecting.

There was some cause for Markworth’s wonderment at the lawyers’ oversight, as the discovery was as much a surprise to them as it was to him. But such things do happen sometimes; and many an important case having large interests at stake, has been decided ere now on just such a similar point, which has never been discovered or brought to light until just before, or indeed after, the case has gone into court. In many instances the lawyers have been grubbing and searching far and wide for remote proofs and impossible witnesses, when some little, straightforward clue has been lying under their eyes all the time, without being seized upon and made use of, or even dreamt of.

In the case of Susan Hartshorne, the date of her marriage and her majority had been taken for granted to be coeval; and, indeed, there was so little difference in the date and in the figures, that some little allowance must be made for the palpable error of Trump, Sequence, and Co., which was only discovered just in time, as their case could never have been sustained in court for Susan could have proved her own sanity on Markworth’s side.

That date only saved the dowager from having to pay over her daughter’s inheritance; but Markworth would never have allowed that mistake in the date to have occurred if he had known at first, as he knew latterly, what a great effect it would have in the working of Roger Hartshorne’s will.

When he went down that first time to Doctors’ Commons he had read through the will carefully, but not carefully enough to understand the absolute forfeiture of Susan’s inheritance if she married before the age of twenty-one without her mother’s consent. Even when he had subsequently digested this fact, he had been so certain about the date that he had not given it an afterthought; and had, like Mrs Hartshorne’s lawyers, thought that the only thing he had to prove was her sanity at the time she married him.

The three months that had passed since her marriage, the change of scene from the place of her childhood which was associated with her calamity, and the novel influences which had been brought to bear upon her, had so thoroughly altered her, as has been observed before, although too much stress cannot be placed on that point, that Susan was completely cured, to all intents and purposes. She was no more silly, foolish, or insane than Markworth himself, and few people would have taken him for an idiot.

He had so thoroughly worked out her cure which he had planned when he had seen how malleable and easily influenced she was, for this especial purpose of putting her in the witness-box, having represented to her that she would have to come forward at some time and prove their marriage, or that her mother would tear her away from him—that she was quite prepared to be very strong evidence on his side. The very idea of her being taken back to The Poplars, and her mother, at whose name she still trembled, and grew frightened still, was sufficient to nerve her up to face a thousand juries, for the sake of her liberty and for Markworth, whom she now loved with more than the child's trusting love with which she had first regarded him.

That was all past now, however!

There was no more necessity for her coming forward, Markworth thought savagely; no chance now for him to produce her triumphantly at the last moment before his adversaries, and say—

“There! you say I have cajoled a lunatic into entering into an illegal contract of marriage with me, for the sake of appropriating her fortune. There is your alleged insane girl; examine her for yourselves, and prove your case if you can.”

The opportunity was lost, and he had to withdraw from the battle before the very forces even were marshalled for the fight.

He had played his game well, but one false move had lost him all, and what to do now he neither knew nor cared. All his aims and ends had become so bound up in the successful termination of that law suit, that now that he was vanquished he seemed to be completely shipwrecked.

His last straw had sunk, and he was lost. He knew it and felt it!

With a strong effort of his native indomitable will, he dismissed the past from his mind, and tried to concentrate his thoughts on some plan for the future.

All hopes of getting any money from the Hartshornes were idle to indulge in; the old lady certainly would see him in Tartarus first before she gave him a penny; and Tom, although he had offered to take his sister back, and would provide for her, would as certainly not assist him, for he had seen from their last interview that Tom was not nearly of so plastic a nature as he had thought him at first. Besides, he was far away now. There was only the doctor to ask, and he would do nothing, he thought; and, above all, he could not go back to England himself.

His best plan, therefore, would be to pack up his things when he arrived at Havre, and scrape together all the money he could by selling any unnecessary superfluities. He was not going to be “troubled with that girl any longer.”

He would send Susan back to her home, and tell her people to do what they liked with her, as he had no further need of her.

“Curse her!” he thought, for clogging himself to her, “the idiot! and curse myself, too, for my folly in not looking before I leaped.”

He stopped on deck the whole night during the passage across, for he could not sleep, his mind was so at war with every thing. If he had gone below he might, perhaps, have discovered who two of his fellow passengers were, but he did not.

Nemesis was with him, but he knew it not; and besides Nemesis there was another person, whom neither would have dreamt of seeing there.

It was broad day now—a beautiful morning; but the morning had no charms for him; and he was glad when it waxed towards noon, and Havre came in sight with its quaint lighthouse, and its twin rows of houses on the heights above, and the muddy Seine with its Babel of a landing place.

The *machine à vapeur* quickly plied her way along, and in another half hour broadly opened her destination on her port bow.

They were soon alongside the pier, and Markworth having no luggage, was not delayed in passing through the *Douane*.

Saying to the officer—“*Rien à declarer*!” he passed rapidly along the gangway on to the pier, and up through the busy little streets, until he reached his lodgings in the Rue Montmartre.

“Oh! Allynne! you're come at last. I've been longing so to see you; it has been so lonely here all this time by myself,” said Susan, rising and going forward eagerly to meet him, as he opened the door of their little sitting room.

“Stop! Damn it! I don't want any humbug and foolishness. None of that snivelling for me,” he said, savagely, repulsing her as she came towards him.

“Oh! Allynne! what have I done? Why are you angry with me?” said Susan, entreatingly.

The slightest change in his voice affected her at once, and all her joy and gladness at his return was frozen up in a moment.

When he perceived the effects of his words he relented and spoke kindly to her, and Susan was soothed in a moment.

But he was ill at ease, for he was busily debating with himself all day how he should break the news of his going away to her. The day passed drearily enough for him, and he was longing for evening to come; the sickly gleams of the November sun angered him: he wanted the day and all its belongings to be shut out.

Dreading that Solomonson might have sent a sheriff’s officer after him, he gave strict injunctions to the Mère Cliquelle to say he was not at home, and not to admit any one on any pretence at all to see him; at all events, during the day. In the evening it would not matter.

Someone came in the afternoon he heard, and beyond a muttered oath at the intruder, whom he did not make any inquiries respecting, he was left to himself all day.

He wanted to settle matters with Susan, and break the news to her, and he did not know how to set about it. He knew or fancied what might be the effects of a sudden shock on her. Evening came at last, and he felt he could not stop in any longer. So he told Susan he wanted her to come out with him for a walk.

“Here, put on your bonnet at once, and come out for a walk. I want to speak to you seriously, and I can’t breathe in this stuffy little hole,” he said, suddenly, after a pause, looking round morosely at the quaint little room, with its gaudy belongings, and its half-starved little fire, composed of about a dozen small pieces of slimly cut fire-wood, arranged with mathematical precision, in the porcelain fire-place. The evenings were chilly now, and even the French pretence of a fire was necessary to warm the room.

Susan was equipped in a moment; and they went out of the house, Markworth slamming the door behind him.

“*Mon Dieu*!” said the little fat landlady, who was superintending the cooking of her supper, to her husband, looking out of the window of her kitchen above, as she heard the door bang, and saw the pair go down the steps. “*Mon Dieu, Auguste! V’là Msieu et Madame qui’ls s’en vont sortir, et Monsieur, il ne fait que d’entrer*! *C’est bien tard promener*!”

“*Hein*!” observed her *bon homme*, reflectively, from his seat in the corner, where he was salivating a stick of chocolate to pass the time while waiting anxiously for the *potage* to be ready. “*C’ n’est pas mon affaire*!” and he proceeded to suck his *chocolat* calmly, which he had withdrawn for a moment from his mouth for the exigencies of conversation.

Markworth walked on rapidly, Susan keeping up with difficulty by his side, through the town, which was now partly overhung by the sea-fog, up to the heights of Ingouville, where the air was clearer, and the lights shone out from the trim little rows of villa residences.

The promenade was quite deserted; but Markworth proceeded without speaking a word until he had passed all the houses, and had reached a lonely part of the road, with the cliff above the footpath, and a precipitous descent on the other side nearest the town, below which was the zigzag street, up which they had come.

Markworth now stopped suddenly, seeing that Susan was quite out of breath from the exertions she had made to keep up with him.

“At last,” he said, “I can speak to you quietly;” and he paused a second, as if to think over his words.

He did not know that Nemesis was close behind him, for it was nearly dark: the thud of the sea in the distance, splashing against the pier, and the sound of the waters of the Seine at their embouchure, mingling with the tide, drowned even the sound of a passing footstep.

It was a crisis in Markworth’s fate.

“Susan,” he said, abruptly, “I have to leave you. I have to go away for a long time, and I shall send you back to-morrow to your people in England.”

He spoke rapidly. To do him justice, he knew what a pang it would be to the poor girl; but he could not possibly take her with him, so he was anxious to get the “scene,” as he called it, over as quickly as he could.

“Oh, Allynne! Allynne!” she cried out, piteously; “you are not going to leave me! I shall die if I go back there!”

And she flung her arms round his neck, as if to hold him for ever. He was her life, her all!

The avenger was close behind.

“Don’t be so foolish, Susan!” Markworth said, in a half-angry, half-coaxing manner. “I’m not going to leave you now, child. I’m talking about to-morrow. I’ve been away before, and I can’t be with you always.”

And he tried to unclasp her hands from his neck.

“Oh, Allynne! I can’t go back there! I shall die! Take my money, everything I’ve got; but do let me stay with you—don’t send me back there!” she sobbed out in broken accents.

The allusion to the money, and her entreaties seemed to madden him.

“Have done, girl! Idiot!” he said, roughly, tearing away her hands with violence, and throwing her from him.

The poor girl started back as pale as death, as if she had been shot.

“Idiot! idiot!” she cried out, in tones that seemed to come from the depths of a broken heart. “Oh, Allynne! That word from you! from you!” she moaned, and wrung her hands in bitterness of spirit.

As she started back—the pathway was very narrow—she stood on the very verge of the rocky precipice which bordered the road.

And as she uttered the last words, her foot slipped. With a scream of genuine terror, re-echoed by Markworth, she fell back, and he could hear the heavy fall of a body below.

“Good God!” he exclaimed aloud, rushing forward and peering into the gulf down which she had disappeared, “she must be killed!”

He turned round hurriedly, for he could not get down to the bottom of the cliff without retracing his steps by the winding road up which they had just come.

And, as he turned, he found himself face to face with—

Clara Kingscott.

End of Volume Two.

Volume Three—Chapter One.

At Bay!

“Gracious Heavens, Clara! What brings you here?” uttered Markworth, half in astonishment, half in terror, as he suddenly turned round, and was confronted by Miss Kingscott, immediately after Susan had fallen back over the precipice.

“Murderer!” she exclaimed, standing right before him in the narrow pathway. “Thank God! I came in time to witness your crime!”

“Woman!” cried Markworth, trying to brush past her. “You’re mad! What do you mean? Let me pass!”

“Murderer!” she repeated, with withering bitterness, still blocking the way. “Murderer!”

“Good God! Clara, what do you mean?”

“Mean, Allynne Markworth? What do I mean! That you are caught at last in your own toils! I knew you were a swindler, a cheat, a villain! I can now prove that you are a murderer as well!”

“For God’s sake, Clara, do not say that! You don’t think I’ve murdered the girl?”

She still looked him full in the face, but made no reply; so he went on hurriedly—

“Why, she fell over the cliff herself! I never touched her! I was just—”

“Ha! ha!” she laughed, a cold, bitter laugh. “Tell that to the officers of justice who will be soon in pursuit of you! To the jury who will try you! To the judge who will sentence you to your final end! I don’t want to hear your lying story!”

Markworth turned pale and shook with fear. “What do you mean, woman? Who will accuse me? God knows I never meant the poor girl any harm! She slipped, and fell back by accident; and I was just hastening down to her assistance when you—you—”

“Murderer!”

“Let me go, woman!” he cried, excitedly, shoving past the governess, who threw her arms round him and tried to hold him back.

“She’s dying, perhaps! I’ll be too late! Curse you, let me go!”

“Help! Help! Murder!” she screamed. “You’re mad! Let me go at once or it will be the worse for you.” And he struggled with her to get away, while the air rung with her loud screams for help. At length he got one arm free, although she still clung with desperation to him. “Curse you!” he muttered, between his clenched teeth, raising his fist and dealing her a savage blow in the face. “You’ve brought it on yourself!”

Another half-uttered scream was checked on her lips, and she sank back in a heap on the ground, while Markworth rushed past her, and flew rather than ran down the heights.

In spite of lung logic, Clara Kingscott’s cries for help remained unheard. No one came to her assistance; and when she recovered her consciousness after the insensibility produced by Markworth’s blow, she found herself cold and alone, lying stretched out along the side of the narrow path where she had fallen. And he? Where was he?

Gone!

After one half-stupefied thought as to where she was, she recollected all, and nerved herself up to the determination of following Markworth to the death! The blood was still trickling down her face from the dastardly blow she had received: it animated her with additional strength and fresh courage; and she seemed like a tigress, and snarled, as it were, at the sight of her own blood!

Rising to her feet, she nearly stumbled at first from stiffness and faintness, but by force of will she quickly recovered her strength, and in a few moments felt better, and able to walk.

She had marked the spot where Susan had disappeared; thither she bent her steps, and gazed down into the deep descent, hidden now, and black with the dark veil of night.

Turning round, and retracing her steps down the winding path, she proceeded to search below. As she projected round an abrupt turn of the road she jostled against a *sergent de ville*—mutual astonishment—explanations.

Speaking rapidly to him in his native tongue, with which she was even better conversant than Markworth, and knew almost as well as a genuine Parisienne, she represented matters to the guardian of the peace. “A murder and an assault has been committed,” she said, eagerly gesticulating in her emotion.

“I saw the villain throw a girl over that precipice above, and she or her body must be here! Let us search for her; help me to arrest the murderer! Have you heard no cries, seen no one?”

No, the *sergent de ville* had seen no one: he had only just come up the road: the officer whom he had relieved had reported no disturbance.

“Had madame cried out? *Mon Dieu*! really? He had heard no cries, in faith! It was very late for madame to be out—did she know what time it was?”

“I suppose it is nearly ten o’clock,” replied Miss Kingscott.

“*Ma foi*! Why it is close on morning. Madame cannot be well”—he meant that the lady, who certainly looked very bedraggled and disorderly, was something infinitely worse.

“I tell you, officer,” exclaimed the governess, stamping her foot, and speaking angrily, “I am not mad or drunk; and, no matter what time it is—night or morning—I am telling you the truth! I know the man that has done this; his name is Markworth, and an Englishman; and I saw him shove the girl over the precipice, for I was close behind him at the time! I tried to stop him. He struck me; here is the cut on my forehead; you can see for yourself that I don’t lie. The blow made me faint, and I must have been insensible much longer than I supposed, but it is not too late! We may catch the villain yet. It is your duty to aid me! But let us first search for the girl; her body must be here!”

Although strongly inclined to believe that the lady who addressed him was under the influence of absinthe or eau de vie, and that she had lost her way amongst the heights, and tumbling down had hurt herself, thus accounting for her blood-stained face and wild appearance, the *sergent de ville* was somewhat thrown off his first-formed opinion by her enthusiasm and the coherency of her story. He accordingly adjusted his lantern, and they looked about together in silence for some time. However, when no body of any murdered person was to be found, no traces of a sanguinary struggle to be seen, and everything looked as usual about the place, the *sergent de ville* returned to his original opinion.

“I said Madame was not well!” he observed, in an aggrieved tone. “She had better go home to bed, and not be talking of any fabulous murders! Where does Madame reside?”

“I tell you I saw the thing with my own eyes! He must have carried the body away and hidden it!”

“Hush! *ma petite*,” said the man, soothingly. “Go home: it will be all right to-morrow!”

“I won’t go home. I am quite in my senses, and it will be your fault if that man escapes. You ought to do your duty and arrest him. I shall complain to the Maire! Where does he live? I must see him! Take me there at once.”

“*C’est impossible*!” replied the officer, coldly; “but Madame will find that I will do my duty,” he added, meaningly.

“I must see the Maire! The murderer will escape!” went on the governess, hysterically.

The *sergent de ville* placed her arm firmly within his own.

“Madame will come with me,” he said, and he led her away.

He was not going to wake up the Maire or Juge de Paix at that late hour of the night, or rather early hour of the morning, with such a cock and a bull story from a drunken woman. Why, he might lose his promotion should he disturb the slumbers of his superiors!

Finding, therefore, that his entreaties for her to go home were treated only as deaf words, and that she would neither go herself nor tell where she lived, the astute officer conducted her carefully to the guard-house, under the plea of showing her where the Maire lived in order to get her along quietly, and had her comfortably locked up.

The tables were turned with a vengeance! Markworth had got off scot free; and here was Clara Kingscott locked up in a police-station for the night as a disorderly character! Some allowance must be made, however, for the *sergent de ville*. Her story was so improbable, and she looked so strange and talked so excitedly, that the mistake might have been made even by one of our very bright and intelligent guardians of the peace, who never make such mistakes as, say, locking up a dying man perhaps on the charge of inebriety!

Be that as it may, however, there was Clara Kingscott incarcerated in a cell, and powerless of action. There are strange things happen sometimes in fiction; but stranger things often occur in real life.

Volume Three—Chapter Two.

“Mishter Sholomonshon” prepares to Act: Much he gains by it!

Matters seem somewhat forestalled, and a brief retrospect is needed.

How came she there—his Nemesis? Politely bowed out, after she had avowed her share in Markworth’s conspiracy to Mr Trump, Clara Kingscott walked away from the lawyers’ offices in a perfect frenzy. She was ever tasting the cup of revenge, which she would have so gladly drunk to the dregs, and yet as she raised it to her lips it was ever being dashed away.

It was maddening to her now to think that when she had planned to ruin Markworth at the eleventh hour, just when he was confident of success, by her appearance against instead of for him in the suit, that circumstances should so occur to defeat his ends without her aid being required. She had intended all along that her hand should deal him the blow, and that he should know it.

True it was that all his hopes for getting Susan Hartshorne’s fortune were all passed away like last winter’s snow; that was some satisfaction for her to know, but then Markworth’s ill-luck was not caused by her; there was where the shoe pinched, and she felt foiled.

What should she do now? She could not remain inactive. Reflecting a moment, she turned and walked hurriedly onward across Holborn, and down Chancery Lane, until she came to the offices of Solomonson and Isaacs.

It was late now; so the place was closed up, and the children of Israel were gone home: After ringing in vain for some time, she had to give up her project until the morrow, and depart in peace.

“He’ll escape me yet,” she muttered, “but I will be here early, and make assurance doubly sure.”

And she turned on her heel and went away. Before she went home to her lodgings, however, she took the trouble to go round to the hotel where she had learnt that Markworth was staying, to ask whether he was there still. She was so afraid of his getting off before her vengeance could be felt. The porter told her that he was out, but that he had not left the hotel yet: he was expecting him in every minute, for a messenger had just brought a letter for him.

“A messenger to see him?”

She pondered a moment, and then she recollected that it must be the lawyers’ clerk, sent by Mr Trump to appoint the interview for the next day, when Markworth would hear the worst. She gave a sigh of satisfaction, and went to her lodgings contentedly.

Messrs Solomonson and Isaacs came to their offices the next day at their usual time, about half-past ten o’clock, and proceeded to set about their introductory business. Letters had to be opened, documents arranged, the list of bankrupts in the papers looked to and compared with another list of their own of the men indebted to them; in fact, all the minutiae of their daily routine had to be seen to before setting actually to work and “interviewing” their clients, or more properly speaking, customers or borrowers, for they did more in usury than law, although the appellation “solicitors” was on their door plate. The term indeed was better suited to the clients than the firm.

Mister Isaacs was at the moment engaged upon comparing the bankrupt lists, when a sudden exclamation from his partner Solomonson, who was opening the letters and glancing at their contents, startled him.

“Father Abrahamsh!” ejaculated that worthy. “Gott in Himmell! how about der monish?”

“Vat’s der matter, my tearsh?” enquired Isaacs, in anxious suspense. “Noting’s wrongsh mit der bank?”

“No, mine Isaacs, it is not ter banksh! Mein Gott, der monish! der monish! It is all oop wit Markevorts; der shoot is ruined!”

“Sholomonshon, ma tearsh, vat you mean? The suit lost! Vy it ain’t tried yet.”

“No mein söhn, it is not trite and perhaps never vills!”

And then he explained the purport of the letter.

“It’s a svindel!” said Isaacs. “Ow butch did he get from you, Solomonshon?” he asked, although he well knew.

“Eleving hundert! And we vos to get tree tousand—tree tousand pounds!”

He told Isaacs a lie, and Isaacs knew it.

“And now ve can’t get himsh? Is he got no monish?”

“No monish, but vat der shoot vood have bringsh.”

“And it is all gonesh?”

“Ja, tso! all gonesh if de lettersh be true!”

“And ve vood ’ave got tree tousaud, Sholomonshon?”

“Ja! tree tousand pound! der villainsh! der swindlersh! Tree tousand poundsh, and look’d as shafe as der bank! Tree tousand poundsh; never no moresh!”

The Jew repeated this over and over again, and almost wept in his anguish. It should have been mentioned before that Solomon was a Hebrew of Teutonic proclivities, and had emigrated from the *Juden Strasse* in Berlin, where he had originally belonged before he took up with his partner Isaacs and set up business in Chancery Lane, London.

After a hasty consultation Solomonson and Isaacs rushed off together to the offices of Messrs Trump, Sequence, and Co., to hear whether the ill-fated news was true.

Any hopes they might have had were quickly dispelled. Mr Trump, who could not repress his dislike for the men who now confronted him, did not mince matters with them. He showed them all the proofs, and gave them the additional evidence that Markworth himself had been there at his especial notification, and was satisfied that the opposition was too great for him to continue the suit.

Solomonson and Isaacs were not satisfied until they had read every tittle of the evidence, including Roger Hartshorne’s will, the baptismal certificate of Susan, and the marriage registry. It was all perfectly true, so they then heaped reproaches on Mr Trump for letting Markworth know before communicating with them. Indeed, they were both so violent that Mr Trump had to order them out of his office. They saw it was all up with them, and returned chagrined to their own den in Chancery Lane, to concert about what more should they do.

They had no doubt that Markworth would be off early, but it was their business to try and catch him if possible. Never let it be said in Jewry that a debtor got off clear from their clutches: it would be a standing reproach against them from Dan even unto Beersheba, and they would never hear the end of it. Besides the money, the money, they could not afford to lose that!

Once more the scene changes back to their den of usury. Solomonson had just taken out the bills Markworth had given from an escritoire in the corner of the room, and both he and Isaacs are pondering them over, and looking at the shares securities that their client had given them for the advance. The shares were in a financial company whose smash they had just read of in that morning’s paper! This news added “bad” to “worse.”

“Fader Abrahamsh!” ejaculated Solomonson. “Oh der villainsh! der shvindlersh! Tree tousand pounds, Isaacs, all gonesh!” and they bewailed their fate in concert.

Behold the children of Israel weeping and wailing, and making much lamentation over the loss of the presumptive three thousand pounds, which they would have gained if Markworth had won his suit against the old dowager of The Poplars. To them enters Clara Kingscott, governess, at present detective, Nemesis, and follower of their unlucky client. Affecting meeting.

She went like another Ruth to glean what she could towards affecting her purpose in the fields of the rich Boaz. The Hebrews, although sharp enough, were at their wits’ end when Miss Kingscott entered, but she quickly worked them up to the point of action, after explaining the reason of her visit.

“The news is true enough,” she said. “I was there and heard it all—when that letter was written to you; but have you not sent round yet to those lawyers? what do you propose to do?”

“Doosh? Vat can ve doosh! der shoot is gone! and der svindlersh is gone too, and he has no monish!” said Solomonson, in the most lugubrious tones.

“Why don’t you act?” said the governess, excitedly. “If I were a man I would arrest him and clap him into jail, and let him rot there until I got my money back. If I could not get my money I would get his life!”

“De womansh is right, Sholomonshon, my shon,” said Isaacs.

“Of course I am. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—that is your creed, is it not? Can’t you get out a warrant against that villain, or something else, and have him stopped before he leaves the country? Why even I will go after him: he shall never escape my hate!”

“Ja, tso!” exclaimed Solomonson, now fired by her words and animated by her desire for vengeance; “but a varrantsh ish no goots!”

“A Kay shay?” suggested Isaacs.

“Ja, dat is goot—der villainsh! But he was alvays squaresh vas mishter M., and it seems hart.”

“Pshaw!” exclaimed Clara Kingscott, with intense scorn. “Do you think he will pay you if you let him get away?”

That settled any lingering reluctance they might have had to proceed to extremities with their client, besides the loss of the money was rankling in their minds; so “Mishter Sholomonshon” started off down to the courts at Westminster to invoke the aid of her gracious Majesty “Victoria R. by the grace of God” in a documentary form.

While the Hebrews were concerting measures for Markworth’s apprehension, Clara Kingscott proceeded down to his hotel to see whether the “biter” had yet been “bitten,” and if he had returned from the interview appointed with Mr Trump.

She found he had come, and gone. The bird had flown! The porter said he had left in a cab with all his luggage for the Waterloo Station.

Making sure he was off to Havre, where she had previously found out his address, she started off to Southampton, intending to follow him wherever he went. Before doing this she sent a few hasty lines to Messrs Solomonson and Isaacs by a *commissionaire*, telling them where Markworth was gone and she would follow him up, and let them know further; although certainly her information would not be of much use to them if he were out of the kingdom.

The Jews in the meanwhile were crying "Havoc!" and trying very hard to "let loose the dogs of war." They had some difficulty in obtaining their *ca ça*. No Judge was at chambers when they first went down; and then they lost much valuable time in swearing to an affidavit that Markworth was going to leave the country. Not that the fact of swearing any number of oaths, whether true or false, troubled them much—but he was "gone," as the auctioneer cries, before they could touch him on the shoulder.

A bailiff and detective were sent down after the absconding debtor to Southampton—Miss Kingscott had telegraphed up to the Jews late in the evening to say that she had seen him there; but they arrived too late, notwithstanding that the Jews had not spared the expense of luring a special train for them: they never grudged money when hunting money. But they arrived too late! The *ca ça* and *ne exeat regno* were both useless.

Just as the Havre steamer had cast loose her fastenings, and was going out into the stream, the myrmidons of the law came down with the warrant for Markworth's arrest: the proverb "better late than never" did not hold true in their case, however, for the man they were after could laugh them to scorn with every revolution of the steamboat's paddles.

Jewry was "sold" by the Gentile, and there went up a wail in Chancery Lane.

Volume Three—Chapter Three.

On the Trail.

It was not until late in the morning that Clara Kingscott was let out of the cell in the police-station, where she had been locked up, and was taken to be examined before *Monsieur le Chef des sergents de ville*.

Although she was full of natural indignation at the treatment that she met with, to gain her purpose, she was forced to dissemble her anger, and answer all the questions put to her in a cool and collected manner.

Having taken care also to arrange her toilette and efface the traces of bedragglement, her appearance had its due effect, and Monsieur le Chef comprehended the case in a moment.

It was a mistake arising from the want of perspicacity of an over-zealous officer, and the Chef entreated Madame—he begged pardon, Mademoiselle—to accept a hundred thousand apologies for the unfortunate mistake which had subjected her to such treatment.

Trop de zele was poor satisfaction for being arrested, locked up, and losing her vengeance; but Mademoiselle smiled sweetly, told the officer not to mention it, and now that she had gained his ear went on eagerly to tell her tale.

The Chef listened attentively to Miss Kingscott's narration, making short notes in a memorandum book before him, knitting his brows, glancing at her every now and then interrogatively with his sharp pistolling eyes, and pulling the waxed ends of his black moustache *à l'Empereur* meditatively as she proceeded with her strange recital.

It did not astonish the Chef, however. The French police are never astonished, *Le Garde meurt, mais ne se rend pas*: Monsieur le Chef was only perplexed, but his perplexity grew greater the more he heard.

That a murder should have been committed anywhere was not such a very surprising thing in itself; but that a murder should take place in Havre, Havre which was under his own especial supervision, *c'était impossible*! It was a thing incredible.

It was absurd on the face of it. His *sergents de ville* knew their duty too well to allow it; but still he interrogated Mademoiselle, and put down the answers she gave to his various questions in his note book. All the circumstances of the case should be looked into and investigated, although they certainly seemed incredible. It struck the Chef, however, that Mademoiselle's narrative was too clear and succinct to be made up: besides, a few initiatory inquiries would readily reveal whether her premises were true or false.

The Chef touched a hand-bell on his table, and a subordinate officer quickly answered the summons. To him some directions were given, in a low earnest voice, so low that Miss Kingscott could not catch their purport: the man then withdrew.

"*Attendez un moment, Mademoiselle, il reviendra bientôt*," said the Chef, in an apologetic tone.

Miss Kingscott had to wait nearly half-an-hour until the messenger came back.

More whispering with the Chef, and comparing of note books; the news was evidently important, for the latter looked grave and puzzled; but as soon as the underling withdrew, he again addressed the governess.

"I find you have told me the truth about yourself," he commenced.

"Your politeness is great to have doubted my word: I thought all Frenchmen were renowned for their gallantry!" interposed the lady.

"Circumstances must plead my excuse, Mademoiselle," continued the Chef, making an elaborately polite bow; "the law must be assured before it can act. I find that you came to Havre yesterday, that about mid-day you went to the Hotel du Coté d'Or, secured a room, and left your luggage. The *propriétaire* mentions that you have stopped there before, and gives you a good character."

"A thousand thanks," said Miss Kingscott, with a sneer.

"Mademoiselle will understand that it is my duty to make these enquiries. *Allons*! That, after remaining a short time at the Hotel du Côte d'Or," continued the Chef, calmly, as if reading out from an affidavit, "you went out, leaving word that you would return again to dinner, but you did not go back, and *Monsieur le propriétaire* was plunged into the deepest uneasiness at your non-appearance: I believe I am so far correct."

The Chef paused here a moment, as if to to have his observation to be confirmed.

"*Après*?" inquired the lady, and nodded her head for him to go on.

"I have also learnt," continued the Chef, "that this man Markworth, whom you accuse, was a gentleman, English, and has lived with a lady whom he called his wife, and who was of delicate health for more than three months past at the house of Madame Cliquelle, commonly called *la Mère Cliquelle*, at the house *Numéro* 7, *Rue Montmartre*; that this man Markworth has been in the habit of quitting his apartments for short intervals, leaving *madame sa femme* behind him, and crossing over to England, from whence he has generally returned after an absence of two or three days. That, after one of these short absences, he came back yesterday—Mademoiselle probably crossed the channel in the same boat with Monsieur?"

"I did."

"This man Markworth, after coming back remained in his apartments all day until the evening. The Mère Cliquelle says that she heard no high words (*grosses paroles*) between Monsieur Markworth and his wife. She has observed that Madame was very delicate and very fond of Monsieur, and that he was always very gentle and kind to her—in fact that they were an attached couple. Well, this Monsieur Markworth remained in all day until the evening, he gave orders to the Mère Cliquelle to admit nobody to see him. One person called and enquired particularly to see him in the afternoon—perhaps that was Mademoiselle?"

"It was," answered Miss Kingscott.

"You were not admitted to see Monsieur?"

"I was not admitted," she answered, sententiously.

The Chef went on. "So says the Mère Cliquelle. In the evening about seven o'clock she and her husband also both declare that Monsieur et Madame Markworth went out apparently for a walk. Shortly after they went out a big stout English gentleman called and enquired for them; he was told they were out, and said he would return again at nine o'clock. About that time, as near as the Mère Cliquelle and her husband could judge, Markworth came back alone without his wife. Monsieur Cliquelle, who saw him, says he looked pale, and was out of breath, as if from running; and he told him that Madame Markworth was unwell, that he had taken her to see some friends at Lugonville, that he only came back to fetch some things for her, and would bring her home in the morning. Monsieur Markworth after remaining in his apartments perhaps half an hour or more went out, as the husband of the Mère Cliquelle supposed to Lugonville and his wife, taking a small travelling portmanteau with him; nothing further has been seen of Markworth or his wife, or of the fat Englishman who said he would return to the house in question at nine o'clock last night. Does Mademoiselle follow me? She will see that her story is partly confirmed by other circumstances."

"I told you nearly all that myself, before!" she observed, angrily.

"Certainly, Mademoiselle! But your statement had to be confirmed."

"And now, what are you going to do?"

"The machinery of justice shall be at once set in motion!" said the Frenchman, grandiloquently, in the fashion of his countrymen.

"And I?"

"Mademoiselle will do me the honour of accompanying me to the Bureau of *Monsieur le Juge de Paix*, to make her deposition. But we must attend to other things first," saying which the Chef again touched the hand-bell that lay within easy reach on his table. The same officer appeared again as before.

"Send Auguste and Dèchemal to me at once."

Enter two *mouchards* in plain clothes.

The Chef addressed the one he called Dèchemal first—did anyone ever know the real name of a French spy?—"You went to that house in the Rue Montmartre just now, did you not?"

"*Oui, Mon Chef*," he answered monosyllabically.

"Well, go there again. Arrest the Mère Cliquelle and her husband, take them to the office of the Juge de Paix, and await me there."

“Oui, Mon Chef,”—Exit first *mouchard*.

“Auguste!”

“Oui; Mon Chef.”

“Go down to the office of the English steam-boats. See what passengers leave this morning. Ask also along the quays if any boatman took any person or persons across to Honfleur, or any place adjoining, last night or this morning. Make enquiries, too, at the hotels and cabarets, if they have received any fresh lodgers since nine o’clock yesterday evening, and whom. Report to me at the Juge de Paix’s in half an hour, or as soon as you can.”

“*Oui, Mon Chef.*” Exit second *mouchard*, as stealthily as the other—serpentine in movements both.

“*Allons*, Mademoiselle,” said the Chef, rising from his chair of office and bowing to Nemesis, “if you will follow me, we will now act our parts. The machinery of justice is already in motion.”

Clara Kingscott accompanied the functionary of the law, civil in every respect, out of his office and into the street. At his notification their steps were first directed up the hill to the spot where she pointed out as having confronted Markworth. The Chef busied himself with taking notes as deftly as any “chiel.” She also indicated the place on the verge where she had seen Susan disappear. They then descended the pathway where she supposed the girl would have fallen. More keen observation and note taking on the part of the Chef. No apparent results however, for not a trace could be seen of anybody.

Suddenly the Chef paused in the act of taking notes with one hand and pulling the ends of his waxed moustache with the fingers of the other. He perceived a piece of rag evidently torn off a dress, clinging to the rocks. It was dark crimson in colour, and was a piece of merino dyed that hue. He took it up triumphantly, and held it forth for Miss Kingscott’s inspection.

“*Voilà*!” he exclaimed.

The governess did “look there,” and examined the fragment curiously; a glance of recognition flickered on her face, which the Chef at once perceived.

“Ha!” he said, “you see something? You recognise the dress of your compatriot?” with much guttural rolling of his R’s.

“I do!” she answered, “I can swear that Susan Hartshorne wore a dress like that the last time I saw her alive.”

“It is well! We have now some proof, but we must discover what has been done with the body. Mademoiselle will now accompany me to the bureau of the Juge de Paix,” he added, after a reflective pause, filled up with more notation and twirling of the somewhat stiff ends of the “hirsute appendage on his upper lip.”

The Chef leading this time and Miss Kingscott following behind, the two were soon walking rapidly together towards the imposing residence of the official alluded to.

Volume Three—Chapter Four.

Poor Andromeda!

While events were thus hastening on abroad, all was quiet at home, both at The Poplars and the parsonage. Fancy Andromeda’s lamentations when Perseus left her! and in her place picture Lizzie, since Tom had gone.

It was now autumn, or rather winter, for the month of November was well in hand, and Christmas was “coming,” as the adage says.—Some people’s Christmases seem always coming.

It was now autumn. The trees were leafless, with their skeleton boughs stretched out like spectral hands clutching towards the sky, and sighing with every breath of the dull wintry wind that swept across their moaning branches for the approach of spring.

What a change the past three weeks had made in Lizzie Pringle’s life! It is one of the anomalies of our nature, ever changeful and varying, that the world—our world—is made up of change, even in the most monotonous of lives. The machinery of existence is wonderfully intricate, and of such delicate construction, that the slightest hitch or strain can throw it entirely out of gear. We move on calmly, perhaps, in a smooth groove, from life to death, from the cradle towards the grave, when of a sudden a pebble gets into the works, a new element is introduced into, or an old one subtracted from, the course of our existence, and all is changed. No more do the wheels move steadily round and the cranks slide up and down as of yore; a hitch has occurred; and although the machine goes on still, apparently with the same rumble and clang, the motion is not what it was; it is parallel, perhaps, or elliptical, but is not the same as it was before. Nothing can ever restore it again. Our lives are altered against our wills, and though the cradle stands in the background and the grave looms in front, the change of the enchanter’s hand—it may be of pleasure and joy, or more likely one of grief and pain—has passed over our lives, and we ourselves are altered too, for better or worse—God grant the former!

In a woman’s life this change is more common, although not so apparent as with men; because love and marriage, which cause more proportionately this change, are looked upon by them more as their natural destiny than as exceptional incidents in an otherwise even life. Marriage is the ultimate end of a woman’s life, as the subsequent nursing of babies and darning of socks; with the sterner, though by no means nobler sex, it is but a new phase of existence.

When the little winged god makes his appearance, therefore, and hurls one of his death-dealing darts, it is a much more serious matter for a girl than it is with us. Daphne feels it far more acutely than Apollo. With him it has been merely a pleasant little change in his life—*pour s'amuser*; but to her it is a new existence—her life, her all. She has only been in a state of pupilage before; but now she is a woman, with all a woman's hopes and fears. She has entered on the portals of the future state, when once Love's fetters have entwined themselves around her, the state for which she was born—her *ultima Thule*.

For eighteen calm and happy years Lizzie's life had flowed on smoothly in the one quiet groove. She had passed from babyhood to girldom and school-age in the usual course of nature, and, until now, she had never had a deeper happiness than what a passing fancy would give, or a greater trouble than a few hours could efface. Her one great loss—the death of her mother—had occurred at so early an age that it left no lasting impression on her; and she had consequently grown up a merry little lassie, winning all hearts with her sweetly *piquante* face and those wondrous violet eyes, whose unknown depths now laughed defiance at you, and now displayed a strange wistful languor, which irresistibly attracted you.

That was until last summer; but Lizzie was very much changed now. The little laughing girl was transformed into the winning, wistful maiden, who knew now that there was more in life than eighteen summers usually dreams of. The apples of the Tree of Knowledge had been tasted, and Lizzie became aware that existence was not all lotus-eating, although it did contain, perhaps, some secret joys unknown to childhood.

Everyone meets their "Fate" at some time or other; and Tom was her fate, young as they both were; perhaps, it was better that that mysterious affinity which unites us all, for a temporary or a permanent period with those especially appointed for us, should come across her early in life. It is a cup which one only sips once in a lifetime—better early perhaps than late. Do you know there is something in the Mormon doctrine after all—putting polygamy aside—in that principle of theirs that the brides of the elders or prophets are "sealed" to them. It shows a belief in the mystical and apparently predestined affinity of certain souls to one another.

From that first meeting in church, when the stolen glances of Tom had set the loom of love in motion, a regular and intricate warp and woof of affection had been woven between the pair. The time of their acquaintance was perhaps short; but love laughs at time even as well as he does at the proverbial locksmiths: between kindred souls an hour affects more than years in others—as may have been already observed.

Lizzie was visited with an attack of that *malaria mortis* which comes to some of us in our lives at some certain time or other, either for good or ill. It was a very serious attack. Not a trumpery little ailment which could be patched up for the nonce, and the patient recover without having a scar to remind her of the disease; but a real bona fide visitation, in which the sickness works its course from beginning to end, and is not to be repelled by namby-pamby lotions of milk and water, and worldly prudence and mammon panaceas. It was love. Love *pur et simple*, which one hears derided every day by philosophising "anti-gamonists" and Pharisaical parents, who esteem riches beyond happiness, and "an eligible parti" superior to the attainment of healthy though poor affection. Love overrides worldly motives still, however, in this so-called heathenish and worldly nineteenth century, and exists in spite of the false code of morality which strives to bear it down. Love in a cottage may be humbug certainly when our souls thirst after the gargoyles of a ten-storied mansion and purple and fine linen. The dinner of roots and herbs in preference to the stalled ox, is a delusion and a snare to one who had a weakness for *entrées*, and would rather the high priced salmon and early peas, at some fabled sum a peck in Covent Garden; but bear me out, Chloe, when next thou listenest with attentive ear to the tuneful pipes of Amaryllon, and you, God-like Augustus, when you see the modest blush of happiness which crimsons the cheek of the gentle though rustic Lettice Lisle!

After Lizzie had first seen Tom she did not know what was the matter with her, and nobody else could perhaps have enlightened her on the subject.

She was restless, and did not know what to do. Things which had previously given pleasure to her she now wondered she could have ever enjoyed. Nothing pleased her; nothing delighted her; what could have come over her?

Her brother perceived the change, and wondered too what was the matter. He thought Lizzie was hipped at being left alone so much, for he had to be out a good deal, and the household was only composed of himself and her, with the exception of the servants. Acting on this idea he had proposed to Lizzie that they should invite a certain Aunt Jane to visit them; but Lizzie made up a horrible little *moue*, expressive of disgust, and laughed the idea to scorn.

She drew such a picture of the peculiarities of the stern Aunt Jane, and showed what straits they would be reduced to under her *régime*, that Pringle quickly abandoned the project in holy horror, and wondered how he could have ever thought of such a thing. Then when he commented on Lizzie's looks, and asked her affectionately what was the matter, she laughed it off at first, told him she was never better in her life, asked him what could induce him to question her so, and concluded by making a pretty scene, and sobbing on his neck. She was miserable! She did not know what was the matter with her! She must be ill! She would be all right probably to-morrow; she had a headache now, and was tired; she would go to bed!—which she accordingly did.

This was after the first acquaintance with Master Tom.

But when that young gentleman began to take such a deep interest in fly-fishing, and, in pursuing his favourite spoilt, had to pay so many and frequent visits to the parsonage in order to fish in the pool that ran at the bottom of the lawn, Lizzie got brighter and better.

Instead of her movements being all languor and lack of elasticity, they were now all life and vivacity. She took a deeper interest in everything around her; every little humdrum detail in her daily routine seemed to be invested with a new charm: there was not a brighter little lassie around the country side. She was merry then, and when Tom's avowal came, and she heard from his own lips those burning words of love, of which she had been intuitively cognisant, and which she had, unknown to herself, already returned, her cup of happiness brimmed over.

The change was complete.

Then came the after relapse, when Tom came down so miserably to tell of his mother’s refusal, and had afterwards parted from her in anger.

In anger with her! She thought her little heart would break.

The falling out of lovers, however, is the renewal of love; and so Lizzie found it.

The happiness which she then enjoyed was greater than that which preceded it. Who is it that defines that word happiness to be “gleams of a brighter world, too soon eclipsed and forfeited?” Lizzie’s bliss, however, was saddened by the thought that Tom was soon to leave her. It intensified her love, and surrounded it with that holier charm which sorrow always lends.

Then came the parting. And Andromeda was left alone to lament, whilst her lover was ploughing the stormy main. Tom was “off to the wars”—rather a queer place for a knight of chivalry in the nineteenth century to seek for adventure, Abyssinia!—and Lizzie had, like most women in such cases, to nurse her grief, which was her joy as well, by herself. ’Tis the way of the world, as Kingsley sings—

> “For men must work! and women must weep!
> And the sooner ’tis over, the sooner to sleep!”

The weary weeks glided by slowly after Tom’s departure, and Lizzie’s little world was changed. But greater changes were coming soon, if not to her spiritual, at least to her temporal state.

Lizzie had been made aware, of course, long since, of her brother’s engagement with Laura Inskip; but she had been so much taken up with her own troubles that she had not had spirit enough to enter into Herbert’s “little *roman*” with all the good-natured enthusiasm of which her bursting: little heart was capable. Events had rolled on so rapidly that she became confused between them all, and the engagement with Laura was not looked upon with that surprise and interest with which any enterprise or suit of her brother’s was usually regarded.

But time went on, and Lizzie could not but interest herself now in the progress of change around her. She had liked the languid Laura in her way; but she was not the sort of girl—being a very energetic and hopeful little sister—that she would have selected for her brother’s mate. She would have had a little goddess or empress for Herbert; still as Herbert had chosen for himself, she made up her mind to love her expected sister-in-law with all her heart.

With these thoughts, Lizzie made many advances to the Inskips, but the old campaigner was very disagreeable to her, and treated her as a nonentity; and Laura was too lazy to share her future sister’s enthusiasm, so Lizzie’s feelings were damped. Carry, she thought very “nice,” but she was too noisy and gushing for Lizzie, just so heavily bereaved; consequently the little maiden was forced to withdraw herself within herself, and think of the future and Tom, and build very unstable castles in the air.

And so the autumn passed by, and winter was nigh, and the change changed still.

Herbert Pringle was to be married early in the new year. It was to be quite a grand affair, and from the hints dropped, Bigton and Hartwood village were all agog with the news and their anticipations, for you may be sure the campaigner was not one to hide her light under a bushel.

But Lizzie felt alone! Poor Andromeda. Perseus had gone! not in a classic trireme! but by one of the P. and O. steamers.

Volume Three—Chapter Five.

Before the Juge de Paix.

Following the Chef, on her arrival at the office, Miss Kingscott found Monsieur le Juge de Paix to be an oldish man, with sharp striking features, his nose having an unfair advantage over the others; and his skin, tightly drawn over the face, was of that saffron hue which adapts itself to the complexion of most Frenchmen, and Messieurs les Espagnols as well, after they have entered their eighth lustrum. He was seated in his official chamber, surrounded with all the majesty of the law, as suited his elevated position. A clerk occupied a lower desk in the same room, and the majestic demeanour of his superior seemed reflected, although in an inferior degree, on him.

Dèchemal and Auguste, the Chefs aides, were both there. So also was the Mère Cliquelle and her husband, appearing terribly frightened, and imagining that they were going to be guillotined at the least. A bust of Napoleon the Third looked down from a niche in the wall, facing the judge, sternly on all, giving an air of dignity to the whole proceedings. The judge was taking notes, his clerk following suit; the *mouchards* contemplating the impassable physiognomy of the “Man of Destiny;” the Mère Cliquelle and her small better-half awaiting their turn for examination in the background. There was no crowd, no troops of friends and spectators and idlers, such as you would see in a disorderly English court-room; no, they manage these things very differently in France. There were only those persons present who were absolutely necessary for conducting the enquiry; all was silent and quiet, although the machinery of the law Gallic was in rapid motion.

The wheels of justice run in greased grooves on the other side of the Channel.

The arrival of the Chef and his important witness, Miss Kingscott, accelerated movements.

The governess deposed, on oath, as follows:—That on the previous day she had crossed over from Southampton, Angleterre, to Havre, *par la vapeur*; her object was to see a certain Monsieur Anglais, by name Allynne Markworth (the judge had some difficulty in arriving at the exact etymology of the name, being inclined more than persistently to call it "Makervorts;" so Miss Kingscott had to spell it succinctly, and afterwards write it down for the correct information of the clerk). This gentleman lived, when at Havre, at the house Numéro 7, Rue Montmartre; he had lived there for the last three months, she believed, with his wife—that is a lady whom he had married in England, after abducting her from her home; it was not yet settled whether she was legally his wife or not—there was a law-suit, or *procès civil*, at present pending in England on the subject. She (Miss Kingscott) knew this lady—Markworth's wife—very well; she had, indeed, been her *gouvernante* at her mother's house for some months; she had reason to know her, she should think, and would not have any difficulty in recognising her. Her name was Susan Hartshorne. This Susan Hartshorne came from the *département de Sussex, au sud de l'Angleterre*; her mother was *une veuve*, and a large *propriétaire*; her address was The Poplars, Sussex, England (direction given by the judge, and note taken by clerk to forward information to said address); she (Miss Kingscott) had crossed in the boat, as she had said, yesterday, and arrived at Havre about mid-day. Perhaps it was before that time, she could not be certain, and, at all events, it did not matter. (Witness was here cautioned by the judge not to make any irrelevant observations. Nothing was too insignificant to be taken note of; the eye of justice was wide, and comprehended everything in its vision.) Markworth probably came over in the same boat with her.

"Did Mademoiselle see *ce Monsieur là* on board?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle did see him on board; it was at night, and dark; but she saw him come on the boat at Southampton, and she saw him leave it yesterday when they arrived at Havre; she had been watching him."

"Did Mademoiselle accompany Monsieur?"

"No, certainly not; she had not spoken to him all the time they were on board; she did not think that he knew she was there."

"It is very strange. I thought Mademoiselle came over especially to see this Monsieur Markworth? *Mon Dieu*! Here she was on board with him all the time on the boat, and she had not spoken to him! She did not think even that this monsieur knew she was there! It was very strange!"

"Yes, it might be strange; but she had her own reasons for acting as she did. She did not wish this Markworth to know that she was there, or to meet him until after he had landed and gone home; she had her reasons."

"Mademoiselle then had *Monsieur* under surveillance?"

"Well, they might call it spying if they liked. She had watched this Markworth enter the house already pointed out in the Rue Montmartre. She had then herself gone to the Hotel du Côte d'Or, and secured an *appartement*. After this she had returned to the Rue Montmartre, and asked at the house of the Mère Cliquelle to see M. Markworth. She had been refused admittance, although she knew he was *chez lui*. In carrying out her purpose of watching his movements, she had gone over to a café on the opposite side of the street, from the upper room of which she was able to observe the house at *Numéro Sept*. She watched there until late in the afternoon—evening it was, for it was after seven—nearly eight o'clock she thought. At that time she then saw Markworth come out of the house along with his wife—the girl Susan Hartshorne, to whom she had before referred."

"Can you swear it was her?"

"*Je le jure*" responded Miss Kingscott, and then went on with her deposition. She went out from her place of observation quickly after them. They went in the direction of Ingouville, up the heights; Markworth walking by the side of his wife, or reputed wife, and she, Miss Kingscott some little distance behind them. She did not speak to them, and did not think that they knew of her propinquity. She let them get on some distance ahead of her, although she still followed and kept them in sight. When they got on the heights they stopped walking, and she hid herself behind a projecting wall. She feared some mischief, and watched to see what Markworth was going to do. Presently she heard his voice raised as if in anger, and then the voice of the girl Susan as if in supplication. She then heard a scream from the unfortunate girl. She, Miss Kingscott, rushed forward to help her. She was too late. *Hélas*! She saw this Markworth, this villain, throw the girl over the precipice.

"You saw him throw her over?"

"Yes, I swear it. I then tried to stop the murderer, but he escaped from my hands, knocked me senseless with a blow—here is the cut on my forehead now—and he got off, heaven only knows where. I had cried, '*à voleur*' and '*assassinat*' as loud as I could before I became insensible, but no one came to my help. When I recovered my consciousness I walked feebly down the path, and meeting a *sergent de ville*, told him all about the murder, but he arrested me, thinking, he says, I was drunk, and I was locked up in a cell till this evening, when the Chef released me, apologising for the mistake of his subordinate. I have only to add," observed Miss Kingscott, after she had finished answering the questions put to her, "that had it not been for this mistake on the part of your boasted *sergents de ville*, which could only have arisen from sheer stupidity, the murderer might never have got off."

"*C'est possible*!" said the judge, making a note against the name of the unfortunate guardian of the peace who had arrested the governess. "But Mademoiselle will recollect that according to her statement it was several hours after the escape of her assailant that she was thus *arrêtée*. Call the next witnesses!"

And the interrogatory went on.

The Mère Cliquelle and her husband, "*son petit bon homme*," as she called him, were then examined to the same purport as already detailed by the Chef to Miss Kingscott, Dèchemal corroborating what had been previously told him, and certifying to their arrest by him, and importation before the Juge de Paix.

Auguste, the other of the Chefs inquisitors, had little to tell. He had searched the *cabarets* and hotels, and enquired at the office of the Steamboat Company, and along the quays. No Englishman, or any one else resembling Markworth's description had been seen or heard of since yesterday evening, or had taken passage for England.

This was all the evidence that could be obtained, and on it Monsieur le Juge de Paix framed the *acte d'accusation*, by which the charge of wilful murder was established against Markworth, and a warrant issued for his arrest.

The police, therefore, acting under the orders of the Chef, were on the alert.

Directions were also given to the fishermen and sailors about the quays to look out for a body in the river: the Seine was then dragged with better effect, for the very next day the surmises of the Judge and the Chef were set at rest.

The body of a fair woman, with light brown hair and about twenty-one or twenty-two years of age, was discovered floating beneath the battlements of the centre quay. The features were nearly indistinguishable from the action of the water or the attacks of crustacea, but the remains of a crimson merino dress still clung around the body, which Miss Kingscott immediately recognised and identified as that of Susan Hartshorne. The Mère Cliquelle and her husband were also certain that the remains were those of the poor English lady, although neither were positive about the dress. Madame Cliquelle said that she had never observed any particular colour in the dress of Madame (Miss Kingscott had testified in her deposition that Susan Hartshorne always wore robes of bright hue, different, as a rule, from anyone else), but she might have worn this particular dress and gone out in it that evening without her having noticed it. *Hélas*! however, what need had they to be particular about a worthless dress when they had the body of the poor Madame before them! The Mère Cliquelle wept over the lifeless shell of humanity; and even her little husband shed tears as he recounted how he and *la pauvre belle ange Anglaise* used to "spik Inglese togeders."

The afternoon of the same day, too, a fisherman from Honfleur communicated with the police, and gave evidence that about ten o'clock on the night of the murder he had conveyed an Englishman, answering in every respect to the description of Markworth, across from Havre to his own village: he had been out to sea and along the coast since then, and had consequently not heard of the inquiry before.

There was no doubt of this being Markworth, as the fisherman described him to a hair with two or three telling word-strokes. The landlord of the Auberge, also, where he had stopped at Honfleur, produced a torn envelope which had been carelessly dropped by his guest. It was addressed "Allynne Markworth, Esqr.;" that settled the question.

Two clear days, however, had passed; and although the object of their search was traced to Paris, all further clue of his track was lost, and where he had gone remained an unsolved problem.

The French police, with all their acuteness and *finesse*, in the exercise of which they are far ahead of our blundering English detectives (and those vile, social-inquisitorial dens of humbug and area-sneakishness called "Private Inquiry Offices," too) were at fault, and the game had to be given up. From some papers found amongst the things he had left behind him at the Rue Montmartre, it was surmised that Markworth had gone to America; a photograph of himself was also discovered, which he had had taken with one of his wife—it may be remembered that Markworth had shown a carte de visite of Susan to Mr Trump, when he had gone to the lawyers to tell of his marriage, and claim the reward for the missing girl. These photographs were carefully preserved by the police, and copies of Markworth's likeness despatched to various points to secure his arrest in case he put foot on French ground.

Nothing more could be done, however, by the Juge de Paix or the Chef. The machinery of justice had been set in motion; and although its wheels were greased it had to stop working; its *bût* was non-apparent.

The depositions and evidence of the witnesses, who were now released from surveillance, were preserved until the occasion should arise for their utility.

Miss Kingscott was a potent pursuer, but the prey had escaped her again: she had still to wait for vengeance.

In the meantime the body of the girl was kept for burial until word should be received from England,

The chief of the police had communicated with the mother of Markworth's victim, having written to the *veuve* Hartshorne, according to the address given by Miss Kingscott; the latter personage had also sent her version of the affair to the widow lady's lawyers, and both were now awaiting response.

Volume Three—Chapter Six.

The Dowager Aroused—the Dowager Struck Down!

Dead!

"What? Susan dead!" She could not believe it; she wouldn't, and that was a fact. "Stuff and nonsense! don't tell me," she exclaimed; "I won't believe it."

"But, my dear madam," interposed Mr Trump, who had come down especially to The Poplars, for the purpose of breaking the news, and considering what was to be done on receiving Miss Kingscott's letter. "But, my dear madam, I have received the most satisfactory intelligence about the unfortunate event, and we must do something."

“Nonsense! don’t tell me! Susan dead, indeed! What should make her die? She is a hale, strong girl, much stronger than I am, and I am not going to die yet. It’s all some lying nonsense or other; that woman, the governess, who wrote to you, is capable of anything, after what you told me of her helping that villain to go away—and she as meek as a mouse all the time as if butter would not melt in her mouth! Stuff and nonsense! It’s all a lie from beginning to end.” But the old dowager did not speak with her customary absolute quality of expression. There was a lingering dread in her voice as if she wanted to be assured of the truth of what she herself had declared, and as if she feared the worst to be confirmed.

Mr Trump, from his previous knowledge of the family, did not think that Mrs Hartshorne would grieve very much about her daughter, and so he did not mince matters. He took out Miss Kingscott’s letter, and showed it her.

The old lady grasped it with trembling hands, and read it from first to last in silence, although her fingers shook, and the paper rustled in her clutch.

“I can’t read it,” she said, after a long pause, in a faint voice, without its usual querulous intonation. “My eyes are weak; they are not so strong as they were. The light to-day is very bad. That handwriting is so small, I cannot make it out. Here, take the worthless thing and read it out to me yourself. I cannot make head or tail of it.”

Mr Trump resumed possession of the document; his sight was not deficient, nor the light too bad for him, or the calligraphy beyond his comprehension. He read as follows, in his loud, clear voice:—

“Havre.

“Mr Trump,—

“Sir,—You will remember our conversation some days since with reference to the abduction of Susan Hartshorne by Markworth, and the desire I expressed to avow my share in the conspiracy? I have something now far more dreadful to communicate; the poor girl Susan has been murdered by that villain, Markworth! Finding, I suppose, all his hopes of gaining the girl’s fortune fruitless, after his explanation with you, he returned to Havre the same evening. For reasons of my own, I followed him over from England. The very same evening he returned here he took out the girl for a walk, and this ended in his throwing her over a precipice and murdering her—I suppose, in order to get rid of her, as he could not secure the money. How I came to be present will be explained in the accompanying attested copies of my deposition, and that of the other witnesses taken before the Juge de Paix, or principal magistrate of this town. The body of the poor girl was found this afternoon, floating in the river Seine, close to the scene of the brutal murder. I have seen it, and there is no doubt of its being Susan Hartshorne, but the authorities need some further identification by some member of the unfortunate victim’s family (or by some person authorised by them) before it is buried, or any further proceedings taken. I entreat you, my dear sir, to come over here at once. The murderer has escaped, the police seem undetermined; and although I have done all I could to stir them up, still I am only a woman, and cannot have that influence over them which a man would possess. They say that Markworth has gone to America, but surely something ought to be done, so you had better come over here, if you have got any interest in the fate of the poor girl. I believe the chief of the police has written to Mrs Hartshorne, but whether she will be able to come I do not know, and I think she had better not. Pray come yourself at once, or else the murderer will escape, and his crime be unavenged; and, besides, there are many other things to be attended to, notwithstanding that I have done my best. Come at once, and see what is to be done; you can take the night boat, which leaves Southampton at midnight, after seeing Mrs Hartshorne on your way.

“Yours, in haste,

“Clara Kingscott.

“Messrs Trump, Sequence, and Co.,

“Bedford Row, London.”

The old lady never moved, or spoke once during the time which Mr Trump was occupied in reading the governess’s long letter and the legal documents that accompanied it, although if the lawyer had looked at her, instead of at the papers, which he was perusing, he would have observed a strange and wonderful change in her face.

“Is that all? Have you done?” she asked, in a deep, hollow voice, so unlike her own, that the lawyer started and looked at her inquiringly.

“That is all,” he answered.

The old dowager had received no intimation before of the startling news. The Chef had undoubtedly forwarded a communication to the *veuve* bereaved; but, addressed as it was *au sud de l’Angleterre*, it would take some weeks for it to reach The Poplars, if it ever got there.

Mr Trump waited in vain for some time for what the old lady would say, glancing over the depositions, which Clara Kingscott had had translated for his benefit.

At last the dowager spoke.

“Go! Go!” she screamed out in a shrill, unearthly voice. “Pursue him! The murderer! The villain! The swindling rogue!”

As Mr Trump looked at her in amazement her face became of a blue and livid colour.

“I—I will go too! Get my—” The blue colour had now turned to black, and the old lady seemed to draw herself up as she exclaimed in disjointed sentences. “Get my—Susan!—Husband!—Where am I!”

And with a still shriller shriek she fell forward on her face on the floor.

“Apoplexy, my dear sir,” as Mr Trump said afterwards in detailing the circumstance to a *confrère*. “Apoplexy, my dear sir! It often happens to people like her from a sudden shock!” But he was wrong, it was a more insidious if not so fatal a disease—it was paralysis, the fell enemy of muscularity.

The lawyer at once sent for a doctor; and “Garge,” the messenger despatched, went to Bigton for Doctor Jolly, as he was the only medical man recognised in the country round. But our old friend was not at home, he had not returned yet from his unusual absence abroad; and Dobbins, the whilom coal merchant, who was acting in his stead, shortly came to see the dowager. After a hasty inspection he saw what was the case, and telling Mr Trump that further assistance would be required, the lawyer telegraphed up to London for the great doctor, Stephanos Jenner, who arrived in the evening. This great authority confirmed the opinion of the lesser medical light. He said, after a preliminary “Ha! Hum!” that the treatment of the patient was everything that could be desired; and, accepting a fee of fifty guineas, which Mr Trump presented him by cheque, went off again to London after a few minutes’ consultation, leaving the dowager in the hands of Dobbins, who, to do him justice, knew what he was about; and of Mr Trump, who hardly knew what to do.

The lawyer was puzzled at the first; but his logical mind, keen to action, comprehended the situation, and prepared to act. He could not help moralising for a moment, however, on the vanity of human wishes, and the truthfulness of the proverb which tells us that “*L’homme propose mais le bon Dieu dispose*.” The dowager had not been “going to die yet;” she had been ready to do anything and everything, and derided the idea of death and sickness; but here she was struck down in all her strength, and lying stretched out there a senseless lump of humanity without either the power or even the will to do anything. *Tali sunt solicitae vitae*!

However, as she could not, he had to act. So, after a hasty whisper with Dobbins—it was now getting late in the December night—he determined to proceed to Havre alone. Somebody had to go, for much had to be done; so much does not fall on all lawyer’s shoulders as rested on Mr Trump’s then. The dowager was accordingly left in the hands of Dobbins—who said that Doctor Jolly would probably return the next day, when he would undoubtedly take charge—and of the old woman-servant, who had described herself as being as hard-worked as “a pore nigger slave,” but who now cheerfully attended to her mistress, with whom she had lived for some twenty years, having treated with indignation the suggestion of calling in a hired nurse. “Not if I knows it,” she said, vehemently, “these hands wot ’ave worked for her twenty year will nuss her now; I should like ter know who else has any right to displace I?” So Dobbins conceded the points, at all events until Aesculapius proper should return; and he and the old woman nursed the dowager between them, and got her to bed, while Mr Trump went off on his travels. There was quite a revolution and a dark shadow in the old house, while the leafless poplars which encircled it seemed like funeral plumes, and the old house itself a hearse, in the hazy light of the dull December night.

The lawyer’s journey was a comparatively easy one in comparison with that which our old friend the doctor had taken some time before.

He travelled rapidly to Southampton by the express, which he caught at Bigton—only occasional trains stopped at Hartwood—and was in plenty of time to despatch sundry telegraphic instructions to his clerks in London before embarking in the night boat for Havre. At midnight, instead of going to his warm bed in his comfortable suburban retreat, as he usually did at that hour, Mr Trump had to pull on his nightcap between the rolls of the waves, and ensconce himself in the narrow bunk that fell to his share of the cabin in the channel-crossing steam-packet. However, Mr Trump was a man of the world besides being a man of business, and knew how to accommodate himself to circumstances, and make matters as comfortable as he could under unforeseen data. So there is little doubt that he went to sleep at last, in spite of the narrowness of his lodging, and just as probably, he snored harmoniously to the accompaniment of the steamboat’s paddles.

The morning found him at Havre, prepared to set about his business as methodically as if he were only going down to his chambers in Bedford Row as usual, instead of being in a strange country.

He first went to the police office, and subsequently to the address given by Miss Kingscott. Mr Trump never trusted to individual evidence. With the governess and Monsieur le Chef, he proceeded to view the remains of what had been Susan Hartshorne, and identify them. The inspection was merely a work of detail, for the face was irrecognisable, even more so now than when it had been first taken out of the water. The lawyer, to the best of his belief, thought it to be Susan. And then the corpse was buried in the cemetery with a single headstone above the grave, on which the name “Susan,” alone was inscribed, and her age.

Mr Trump had already explained his position, and stated himself to be the representative of the deceased’s family to the chief of the police, who was most cordial and polite to him on learning that he was *un avocat Anglais*. The chef, to the lawyer’s astonishment, spoke English fluently, just as if he were a native, and told him he knew Bedford Row as well as the Palais Royal in Paris. From him also, Mr Trump learnt a more coherent, and less one-sided story than from Miss Kingscott, although her statements were confirmed. From the evidence of the one witness, the case was evidently strong against Markworth, both the chef and the lawyer determined; but then the one witness was, on her own testimony, and from Mr Trump’s previous knowledge, strongly antagonistic to Markworth; and his legal mind compassed the probabilities of something to be said on the other side. Markworth’s disappearance was the great thing against him, for the girl might have drowned herself, and the scene which Clara Kingscott described never have taken place at all. It is true her story was somewhat corroborated, and the doctors had said, on the examination of the dead girl’s body, that death might have ensued from a jagged wound in the head which probably had been caused by a fall; but they had only said this when they had been asked their opinion on these points, and Miss Kingscott’s revelations been told them.

Altogether, Mr Trump thought it better to let the French police pursue their own course in the matter, and not interfere with them by any proceedings of his own. He also gave up to their possession all the poor girl's things which had been left behind at the Rue Montmartre; and he had a kindly word to say to the Mère Cliquelle and her husband for their kindness and treatment towards the ill-fated Susan.

Miss Kingscott was in a rage of mortification at the lawyer's apparent apathy; but her words had no weight with him; he had conceived a species of aversion towards her ever since her disclosure to him that night in Bedford Row; and the avowal of her purpose since, to track Markworth to the death, had not increased his regard, although it heightened his judgment on her as a "woman with a purpose."

After an absence of three days or more, Mr Trump returned to England. His hands drew up the advertisement of Susan's death, which he caused to be inserted in the *Times*. The circumstances of the mystery had not got abroad, and he did not wish to court public enquiry as yet, so he worded the announcement very simply:

At Havre, on the 27th ultimo, from an accident, Susan, wife of Allynne Markworth, and only daughter of Roger Hartshorne, Esq., of The Poplars, Sussex.

The lawyer then went down to see how the old lady was getting on.

She was still speechless—thoughtless—lying as it were on the brink of eternity; and Doctor Jolly, who had now returned, and was attending her, did not yet know whether she would recover or not. The doctor and Mr Trump had a long conversation together, and mutual explanations. The lawyer was more than ever glad that he had taken no further proceedings about Susan's death, although he wrote out to Tom Hartshorne, now among the heights of Abyssinia, telling him all about it.

Meanwhile, the old lady—struck down in her prime—was hovering on the edge of the grave, in her great, old solitary house at The Poplars. Her son had flown away, her daughter was among the departed, and she alone was left to struggle with the Mower's scythe, alone—although she neither seemed to think nor feel—Doctor Jolly and strangers ministering to her. It is sad being alone—sadder being alone at the last! May you, reader, never feel it!

Volume Three—Chapter Seven.

Bigton Bewitched.

The quiet, little unpretending, out-of-the-way and not-of-much-account watering place of Bigton, was emphatically upside-down and out of its mind.

Bigton was, in a word, bewitched—good reason, too, if all things were taken into consideration. It is not every day, according to our Hibernian friends, that "Morris kills a pig." Following out the analogy, it was not every day that Bigton had a wedding—a wedding, moreover, where the bride was the daughter of a lady, "in her own right;" and the happy man, if not "a lord of high degree," a shining light in the church, and closely related to a high and eminent political personage, such as Sir Boanerges Todhunter.

Besides, the nuptial ceremony was to be celebrated by the right reverend prelate, the Lord Bishop of Chumpchopster, who was renowned far and wide as the most imposing of confirmists in the annual laying on of hands; and distinguished, not only as being one of the most ornate of orators, but for having published the well-known refutation of Judaism on the part of the pork-consuming portion of the population. A treatise which proclaimed his unswerving adherence to the time-honoured thirty-nine articles and undoubted hostility to the pre-adamite theologians. The fact that he would be there was quite enough to set Bigton in a whirligig of wonder and expectation, quite apart from the contingent circumstances attending the auspicious event.

The engagement between the present contracting parties had not been a very long one, the campaigner being in favour of early marriages, she said—having daughters to dispose of; but her probable reason was to get the irrevocable knot tied so that there might be no backing-out and no backsliding on the part of *I promessi sposi*.

Lady Inskip took all the arrangements in her own hands. Having brought Pringle to book, she decided upon the length of the engagement, fixed the wedding day, and then told the languid Laura and her expectant son-in-law all about it. They had nothing whatever to do with the affair at all; they were to be married, and that was sufficient for them. She considered the pair as children in her hands, who had only to do as they were told. Hers be it to act, and plan, and settle everything; theirs to acquiesce in what she planned, and be thankful for the considerate forethought of their mamma-of-action.

Pringle glided readily and easily into such an improved order of things; he accepted the gifts the gods gave him with admirable complacency. He consented to every arrangement that was made; indeed, it was well that the campaigner took matters in her own hands, for the young incumbent was of such an easy-going temperament, that even if he had gone to the length of popping the question to the languid Laura on his own behalf, it might have been years before he summoned up resolution enough to take the final plunge into matrimony. All things considered, therefore, it was better for the campaigner to act; and act she did, with promptitude and despatch.

The Reverend Herbert Pringle, B.A., behaved, throughout, as a very decorous, about-to-be-married man, and expectant filial. Of course he paid a regular visit every day to the cottage on the esplanade to see his *fiancée*. He enjoyed her placid society, and went through all the formulas expected and required of him—even to the extent of going shopping for his presumptive mother-in-law, and selecting gaudy wools of many colours for mat manufacture, and purchasing garden seeds, besides attending to the redecoration and preparation of the parsonage for the reception of his bride, under the stern and uncompromising eye of the campaigner, who would have "this" done, and “that” altered, as she pleased: her word was already law to him.

The gloom that had fallen over the house of Hartshorne did not, in any way, affect the approaching marriage.

A rumour had got abroad that something was wrong at The Poplars, from the chattering of the villagers, but no real facts had leaked out; and everybody put down the old dowager’s attack of paralysis and subsequent long illness to the news of her daughter Susan’s sudden death, which they had read of in the necropolitan portion of the *Times* newspaper. Doctor Jolly, with the exception of such observations as, “Bless my soul! Sad pity! sad pity!” and “By Gad!” ’Twas a fearful “shock to the old woman!” kept a sealed tongue in his head; and the lawyer, who was the only other person that now had the *entrée* at The Poplars, was naturally and professionally reticent. At the parsonage, the calamities of the “big house” had, of course, created interest. Herbert Pringle thought, from his religious position, and Lizzie, from her sympathetic little heart, which naturally yearned towards anyone in affliction—particularly now, and when the object of her sympathy was the mother of her lover—both made attempts to minister at The Poplars, and both were unsuccessful.

The old lady was, for weeks, speechless; and so ill, as not to be able to bear the sight of a new face. Doctor Jolly would not hear of the young incumbent seeing her; she could not understand anything said to her, and, for the present—the doctor told him gravely—any religious question which she wanted settled must rest between herself and her God! The doctor thought that but little spiritual consolation could be imparted by a flippant young man, who only wore a cassock for temporal purposes: as the means of obtaining a living, to a woman old enough to be his mother, and who was already, even now, struggling, with the Infinite!

To Lizzie, however, the doctor spoke kindly. He recognised the spirit in which her sympathy was tendered; and he told her that as soon as the old lady got round a bit he would be glad of her services. When she recovered her consciousness, a brighter face around her than that of the old servant, who now attended her, would conduce to her recovery; and Lizzie, you may be sure, was very glad to hear this, and longed for the time when she could be of use to “Tom’s mother.”

Although the old dowager, therefore, lay sick unto death, the marriage preparations were not set aside. Pringle, indeed, had hinted to the campaigner that perhaps it would not be in good taste to celebrate the festival while the great proprietress of the county, his especial patroness, was in this state, but that intrepid lady had incontinently derided the notion, asking what was the dowager to them? following up the question with another and more potent one, as to whether he wished to postpone the marriage with her darling girl in a very aggrieved tone of voice. Upon this Pringle was hastily “shut up,” and had to pour out a hundred apologies of, “Really, Lady Inskip, not for the world!” and so on.

The end of the old year came, and the beginning of the new ushered in the wedding morn.

Many things had been achieved before this, however, as may have been expected, from the great preparations which had been going on ever since Pringle’s proposal, *ex parte* the campaigner, and the settlement of the engagement.

The parsonage had been newly decorated and painted throughout from top to basement; on the campaigner’s express stipulation, the drawing-room had been refurnished in a gorgeous suite of velvet and gold; and, although Lizzie’s special domain in the garden had not been interfered with, everything else about the young incumbent’s mansion had been altered and duly prepared for the coming event. At Laburnum Cottage, too, the occasion was not disregarded.

To do her the justice, the campaigner was not stingy in her present expenditure. Whether it was the joy of marrying off one of her marriageable daughters opened her purse-strings in the same extent as it gladdened her heart, or that it arose from a desire to shine amidst the thing, or that it was owing to a union of both sentiments, cannot be exactly decided: suffice it to say that the campaigner opened her purse with a lavish hand.

For many days large boxes had come down from various haberdashers—“dry goods establishments,” the Americans call them—and milliners in London; and every little shop in Bigton had been ransacked to the same intent by Lady Inskip and her daughters. The languid Laura was provided with such a gigantic *trousseau* that she would probably attain the rank of grandmother before she wore out one half the number of “dozens” provided, while a perfect corps of needlewomen was kept in constant employment, basting, fitting, hemming, stitching, cutting out, felling, “goring,” and trying on, for upwards of a fortnight or more.

The campaigner had an additional motive in thus providing for her eldest darling. You see, Lady Inskip had no *dôt*, as she elegantly phrased it, with which to endow her “poor, portionless darlings,” and the fact of giving them a handsome “rig-out,” as their brother Mortimer said, would perhaps blind the eyes of Caelebs in search of a wife. Be that as it may, however, the needlewomen worked apace, the *trousseau* was fully provided, and Monday night, the eve of the wedding day, Tuesday, the seventh of January, anno domini 1868, found everything ready for the auspicious event.

Lizzie was necessarily one of the bridesmaids—that highly necessary *corps d’armée*, without which no bride of any pretensions will allow herself to be conducted to Hymen’s sacrificial font. Carry, the bride’s sister, was another; and the places of the two additional ladies-in-waiting (for espousal themselves) were supplied by two distant cousins of the Inskips, who had already officiated in a similar capacity so many times that they had most probably made up their maiden minds that this was the only problematical manner in which they would ever officiate at a wedding. Some people seem doomed always to play second fiddle through life, and bridesmaids are no exceptions to the rule.

The campaigner had spared no pains, as she had grudged no expense. All her influence, whether important or slight, was brought to bear on the contingent circumstances of the affair.

By back-stairs beseeching she so worked round the maternal aunt of the Bishop of Chumpchopster, that the right reverend prelate was persuaded—inasmuch as he had temporal expectations from the said maternal aunt—to accompany her to Bigton, and officiate in the tying of the matrimonial noose between Herbert Pringle, of whom his lordship was pleased to take some considerable notice, and Laura. The prelate and his maternal aunt became the honoured guests of Lady Inskip for a day and a night in consequence; but how on earth they were stowed in Laburnum Cottage, and what accommodation was provided for them, remains to this day a puzzle.

“The blushing orb of day at length gilded the sky,” and “Phoebus” announced the wedding morn.

Enormous dressings of bride and bridesmaids. White and scarlet were the colours adopted, if you’ve a fancy for knowing them, although the campaigner had a strong leaning, which she subsequently quenched, towards mauve and yellow. Multitudinous errands and scurryings to and fro of “slavies” and domestics, including “Buttons” and several hired menials, now addicted to Berlin gloves, although displaying raw, beefsteaky hands in every-day life. Manifold preparations for the *déjeuner*, and consequent encroachments of pastry-cook’s boys with superincumbent trays and oblong covered boxes with horizontal S handles; Laburnum Cottage turned inside out, and outside in; Bigton church bells clanging “fit to bust ’emselves,” as the villagers said; Bigton upside-down—in a word, bewitched.

In the early morning two cavaliers might have been seen wending their way towards the scene of the festivities; not “clad in Lincoln green,” as the late lamented G.P.R. James would have described, but dressed *en règle*: these were Captain Miles and Lieutenant Harrowby, who had received pressing invitations from Lady Inskip to come over from Brighton in order to be present at the ceremony. Neither was averse to coming, and, indeed, Captain Miles had certain reasons of his own, which will be detailed presently, for jumping at the offer; so the two cavaliers set out early, and wended their way to Bigton, as already chronicled in the language of the ancient “romancist.” The Americans will add an “ist” or a “cist” to every known trade or substantive under the sun, to describe the person or individual who practises or has any connection with the same: thus, a “paragraphist” is a man who writes a paragraph, and they carry it down to a “pipist,” who uses a pipe—whether for smoking or musical purposes it does not matter—and “chawist,” he who masticates tobacco—a remarkably dirty habit!

Captain Miles and Lieutenant Harrowby, however, were not the only guests. Besides these were others, great and important too, although it must be observed that there was an especial lack of young men in the campaigner’s “goodlie compagnie;” whether it was because she deprecated their presence or feared their worldly ways cannot be exactly decided. The campaigner was acquainted with the truism that “young people will be young people,” and fenced herself in accordingly, as she had fears on the subject of her youngest daughter Carry, who was far too frivolous to suit her more prudent expectations, and she wanted to put temptation out of the way of the “dear girl” that she might not be led to throw herself away on an “ineligible *parti*.” The campaigner thought that she knew Captain Miles very well; he had nothing but his pay, and if he were younger she would not put him in the way of any young lady whom she wished to marry well, but she was certain that the captain was no fool to let his beautiful Dundreary whiskers be sold for nothing, so she had no fears for Carry with him. Lieutenant Harrowby was perfectly allowable too: he was a simpleton, and had a very snug little fortune of five “thou” per annum.

Besides the Bishop of Chumpchopster and his maternal aunt, the next most important guest who would grace the festal board at the wedding breakfast would be Sir Boanerges Todhunter, the great Conservative Reformer. He was stopping at the parsonage now with the Reverend Herbert Pringle, his distant cousin, but he had already accepted an invitation to the *déjeuner*, and had in fact come over for the purpose, on the grounds of his relationship with the bridegroom, to assist in the demolition of the Strasbourg *paté*, and propose the health of the about-to-be-newly-spliced pair.

In the list also of the fashionable world present might have been seen the names of Captain Curry Cucumber, of the Honorable and defunct East India Company’s Service, Miss Blandish, Lady Sparrowhawk and sister, the Honorable Miss Bigges (pray be particular about the final e), the Reverend Jabez Heavieman—invited in virtue of his office more than on account of his convivial proclivities—and others.

Suppose the wedding over. Picture the bride in her orange blossoms, the bridegroom in his magpie dress—he could not adopt the time-honoured blue frock, being a cleric—the bridesmaids in their scarlet and white trains of tulle and tulips—the Bishop of Chumpchopster in his voluminous lawn sleeves pronouncing the blessing in his well-known and to be-much-admired Alcaic manner. Imagine the bells of Bigton clanging out their merry peal in the frosty air: paint to yourself the gallant and gay assemblage. Fancy, in a word, the marriage to be *un fait accompli*; the guests returned to Laburnum Cottage; the toast of the day proposed in that highly-declamatory style which makes the name of Sir Boanerges Todhunter synonymous with that of Cicero; thanks responded in the usual halting manner by the bridegroom; the happy pair started on their tour with the customary shower of shoes; the banquet concluded. Imagine all this. Aha! and now I will a tale unfold.

The campaigner had been in ecstasies with the way in which everything had gone off. The Bishop and Sir Boanerges had just driven away, late in the evening, after partaking of a hasty dinner, which had been scrambled out of the remains of the previous feast; Captain Curry Cucumber was detailing some highly-spiced Indian anecdotes to Miss Blandish, who was in a holy state of maiden indignation at some of the particulars with which the captain thought it incumbent on him to furnish her, although she listened eagerly all the while; Lieutenant Harrowby was indulging in platitudes with the Hon. Miss Bigges, while poor Lizzie was being swamped by the veteran Lady Sparrowhawk, who was imparting to our little friend—who found the whole thing fearfully dreary—her views on the girls of the present day, contrasting them, sadly to the disadvantage of the former, with the time when she was young: all, in fact, was going on just as the campaigner wished.

When, suddenly, just as Lady Inskip proposed a carpet dance to break the monotony of the evening, she discovered that her darling girl Carry and Captain Miles were both missing!

Horror! Where could they be? Could her worst fears be realised? The skeleton which had lurked behind the banquet now stepped forth. Her *atra cura* now confronted the campaigner! Uneasy was the head that wore the crown of manoeuvring triumph that day: Carry and the Captain had gone off *nulla vestigia retrorsum*, leaving not a trace behind.

Mortimer was first dispatched to search for the fugitives; but when he returned unsuccessfully, and no trace of the delinquents was to be found, either in and about the house or in the adjacent garden, the campaigner, whose nerves had been in a state of tension all day, fairly broke down. She proclaimed her calamities to her astonished company, bursting into a passion of tears, as she threw her arms round the neck of her boy, that young imp, and exclaimed, “Oh! Morti-mer! Morti-mer! I told you so! I told you so!” over and over again, insisting all the time that she had *him* still left to her!

The *fiasco* of the pic-nic was comparatively nothing to the present scene; and the excitement culminated when a note was brought in at this juncture by the campaigner’s abigail (who said she had just found it on the dressing-table in Miss Carry’s room, although she had known of its existence some hours before, and Lady Inskip discharged her, “by the same token,” as Paddy says, the next day for her complicity in the affair), telling how the young lady—somewhat “fast” on her part, it must be confessed—had gone off with Captain Miles to get married, spurred up to the point probably by the events of the day.

The note, which was handed round for general perusal, in consequence of Lady Inskip’s temporary abstraction, ran as follows, in Carry’s neat calligraphy, described in violet ink, on cream-laid note:—

“Dear Ma,—

“Algernon and I having determined to unite our lot—(we have been in correspondence for a long time without your knowledge)—have gone off to get married without any bother. We knew you would object and ‘kick up a row,’ as dear Algernon says, and have therefore thought it best to go off without letting you know anything about the state of our affections. Any pursuit will be vain, as we are both determined. We will be married to-morrow morning. Hoping you will not be vexed very much with your ‘darling girl,’ and that Laura will be as happy as I intend to be, with the ‘prig,’ as I used to call the poor little parson,

“Believe me,

“Your affectionate daughter,

“Carry.

“P.S.—Algernon says to give you his love, and he tells you to ‘keep your pecker up.’ Tell Mortimer he can have my Persian kitten. Please excuse Abigail for helping me off. I bullied her into doing it. Forgive me, dear ma! I know I shall be as happy as a butterfly, and, at all events, I shall ever be your loving daughter, Carry.”

The comments that were made on this missive may be imagined; and in the commotion that ensued the characters of the campaigner’s guests soon developed themselves, as is usually the case in moments of excitement, particularly when an *esclandre* arises.

Old Lady Sparrowhawk and the antiquated virgin, Miss Bigges, thought it highly immoral on Lady Inskip’s part to invite them to a house where any such thing could possibly have happened. Of course they would not mention anything about it, they said, as they retired from the scene; but, strange to say, in a very little while after, the mutual friends of Lady Sparrowhawk and the campaigner were acquainted with every incident of the elopement. Indeed, from the statements of these people, you would be led to suppose that they knew a good deal more about it than had as yet transpired, with much noddings and sly gestures, and confidential “you knows.”

To say that Captain Curry Cucumber was wrath, would convey but a feeble idea of his state of mind and volubility of expression, when he, too, got up to go. In the first place, he had had a slight penchant for the fair Carry, which Lady Inskip had fostered and encouraged; the remnant of his liver was consequently wrung with jealousy and baffled love—if love it may be called—which empurpled his saffron face; and he looked upon it is a special affront and injury to himself that the campaigner should have allowed her daughter thus to run away.

“By Gad! sir!” he said, to Lieutenant Harrowby, who, having been a confidant of Captain Miles, was dreading in much fear and trembling that the onus of the whole affair would be laid upon his weak shoulders. “By Gad! sir, I have never been so scandalously treated in my life; not even by the Begum of Ferozesha!”

He said this in sufficiently angry tones, ere he left the room; but when he got into the hall, his wrath rose to thunder, and was terrific to behold.

The magnificent gold-mounted bamboo cane which he had left there, which had been presented to him by Rumagee Bumagee, the Rajah of Bugpoor, and which he valued at ever so many lakhs of rupees, was missing. The captain boiled over with indignation, called Laburnum Cottage a den of thieves, and heaped such reams of violent epithets on the heads of Lady Inskip, her daughter, and all her family, even unto the third and fourth generation, as made Miss Blandish’s scanty locks stand on end with fright, and even restored the campaigner to her senses.

Captain Curry Cucumber then went out of Laburnum Cottage, for good and all, and he vowed he would never set foot within another house in Bigton for social purposes or otherwise. For the remainder of his term of residence in the sea-side retreat, he shut himself up in the red brick corner house of the terrace he inhabited, where he spent his time, it is believed, from morning until night, swearing at his Kitmaghar, a lascar servant, and eating chutney and prawn curries. The poor unhappy half caste servant’s life must have been a sad burden to him, for the captain was continually calling him an “Ooloo ka bucka,” or son of an owl, and associating his name in Hindostanee with a big black monkey, who was being perpetually consigned to the lower regions.

Carry Inskip's elopement was a "nine days' wonder" in Bigton, and then was forgotten. It is supposed that the young lady made a better bargain of it than most runaway matches turn out, and she lives very happily on a somewhat limited income, with the gallant son of Mars, whom she espoused the day after their elopement, not at Gretna Green, but by licence at Chumpchopster, the adjacent cathedral town to Bigton.

The campaigner's star was certainly under an eclipse. She had done well for her eldest, but Carry turned out "a bold, ungrateful hussie," as she called her. Yet she quickly recovered from the blow. In bewitching Bigton she had been bewitched herself; but she was not one to be daunted, and now that her "darling Laura" was so comfortably established, the campaigner began to agitate a most notable scheme in her worldly-wise head.

Volume Three—Chapter Eight.

Foiled!

The winter passed by and fled. Ships from foreign parts came and went from Havre; and still, although the police with the able Chef at their head kept a strict look out and surveillance on all comers and goers, nothing was heard or seen of Markworth, and no circumstances arose to unravel the web of mystery in which his disappearance and the murder of the girl were enwrapped.

Clara Kingscott still remained at Havre. She was loth to leave the scene where her enemy had made his last *coup*, and she was hoping on against hope that something might arise to mature her vengeance—but nothing came.

So at last in disgust, having made the Chef promise her, as he did willingly in the interests of the law, to forward her the first intimation should anything be heard of Markworth, she quitted Havre and returned to England in order to prosecute her watch here.

She went back to the lodgings she had previously occupied in Bloomsbury. It may be remembered that these were the same where Markworth used formerly to live; and besides their being comfortable and suited to her in every way as a point of attack, the governess hoped that perchance he of whom she was in search might perchance come there unexpectedly. He would probably have seen the news of Susan's death in the paper, and thinking that nothing had been discovered of his crime, as she thought, return again some time to London: where would he be more likely to come than here? No one connected with the after circumstances of his life knew of his having lived here but herself, and it was on the cards that the first place that he would go to, should he return again, as was most probable, to the scenes of his old life, when he thought pursuit had died out, would be Mrs Martin's old apartments.

Here, therefore, Miss Kingscott sat herself down to bide her time. Patience was never a virtue that she possessed, and it can be no wonder that time hung heavy on her hands, and her heart was gnawed through with vexation and impatience at the delay in all her plans, the failure of her vengeance. Nemesis was at fault, and Nemesis showed the traces of her mental struggles in her face: this last year had aged her more than ten.

She paid repeated visits to the offices of Messrs Trump, Sequence, and Co., in Bedford Row, all to no purpose.

Mr Trump had first heard her placidly and promised assistance when she should have secured her prey; he had next, after being sufficiently bored, told her that it was no business of his, and washed his hands of it; he also said that if she took his advice she too would wash her hands of it, and leave it alone, to which Sequence, parrot-like, had re-echoed "leave it alone!" The lawyer finally, when he had been bored too much and had lost his admiration at the woman's fixity of purpose, gave directions in his office that he was to be "never in" when she called. Clara Kingscott after this waited long hours, sitting determinedly in the outer room, amid the ill-concealed ridicule and chaff of "sucking sheepskins," the clerks, and had finally to give up the lawyers in the chronic disgust which was now enveloping everything in her life.

Solomonson and Isaacs, the Jew creditors of Markworth, she also haunted; but they, too, could not see what was to be done, and did not take that interest in Clara Kingscott's plans which she had supposed they would have done. To tell the truth the name of Markworth and all that was connected with their former client stunk in their nostrils; it was not a pleasant subject for them to dwell upon; so while their debtor was out of their reach,—although they were ready to pounce upon him *vi et armis*, with warrants and detainers, should he venture within the precincts of the lion's den, *id est*, be again within the realm—they preferred taking a dignified, albeit Hebrews, silence on the matter, and let it lie *perdu* for the present.

Ousted on all sides, therefore, and disappointed of her prey, Clara Kingscott's life during this interregnum of affairs was not a happy one, although she tried to make the best of it that she could. As she had plenty of money for her wants she was not obliged to seek employment, and she could afford to wait awhile and watch. But watching without occupation, and waiting with nothing to do, is poor work at the best for an impatient mind.

In the meantime she cultivated relationship with the lodging-house keeper Mrs Martin, in the furtherance of her projects: "the parlours" and the basement were on the best of terms.

The spring came and passed, the days spun out their weary length, summer was nigh, summer had come, and yet Clara Kingscott's vengeance was not matured; the fly kept away from the web which the spider had so cunningly woven for him.

But her gratification came at last in reward for her patience.

One night—it was far now advanced in the summer—as she was perspiring in the dingy parlours which she would not relinquish even in the hot weather, notwithstanding that she had nothing to keep her in town, she heard a double knock at the street door.

The knock was nothing unusual in itself. It was a knock which perhaps any gentleman or lady might have given—but there was this point about it, it was undecided. Miss Kingscott had been previously reviewing in her mind all the chain of events that had interwoven her life and her purpose with that of Markworth. She had been tracing down the panorama of the last year from its inception to the part where the canvas had been roughly torn across. There was nothing unusual in this, it was her constant practice to do this nearly every night—to evolve the various thoughts which had been passing through her mind during the day, as they did every day. But by one of those sudden mental clutches which strike across our brain sometimes, she seized upon the past and worked it into the present. Like as a sudden noise which we hear in our sleep—such as the report of a gun, or the sudden exclamation of someone who intrudes on our slumbers—is worked into our dreams and forms the subject of a complete mental phantasmagoria, so this stray knock at the street door of Mrs Martin's lodgings was worked by Clara Kingscott into her present thoughts. "He's here!" she exclaimed to herself in the tumultuous throbbing of her excited imagination. "He's here! I feel it! I have waited long, but he is caught at last!" But she did not go to the door, she waited and watched still: in spite of all, however, she was right for once.

It was Markworth.

By and bye, later in the evening, Mrs Martin came up to tell her the important news. Her former lodger had returned—so poor—so ill-dressed—so changed from what she had formerly remembered him.

What did he want? Had she sent him about his business?

Not she! The worldly lodging-house keeper had still a heart left; and the poor wanderer who had returned had been one of her best tenants. He was worn out, poor fellow—she said—and she had put him in one of her best bedrooms, where she hoped he was sleeping comfortably after all the troubles he had gone through. "It made her heart bleed to hear 'im," said the twenty-five-shillings-a-week-and-coals-extra vampire. There is charity in all of us, friend, if you can find it out; even in a London lodging-house keeper; and some of us, returning prodigals, can quote with the poet, that they found their warmest welcome at an inn. Strangers are sometimes even more compassionate than friends!

"At last! At last!" murmured Miss Kingscott; and she had planned well before what she should do in such an emergency.

Early the next morning, while the wanderer was yet enjoying the soundest sleep he had had since the night he fled like a hunted animal from Havre, the ex-governess was up and doing.

Pressing business this time with Solomonson and Isaacs: they did not refuse now to hear her news, and act upon it too.

Disruption of the prodigal's dreams.

Dire disgust in the Bloomsbury lodgings!

Before twelve o'clock that day, Allynne Markworth was removed in a cab under the escort of two sheriffs officers (much to the disgust of Mrs Martin, who had lent her prodigal lodger five pounds "until he could go to the bank," as he said) to Chancery Lane—or rather a small street running out of the same.

He changed his lodgings a second time, from the worthy Mrs Martin's first-floor to the apartments of a certain Abednego in Curseover Street, who keeps a court of reception—popularly know as a sponging-house, of the class immortalised by Hogarth—for gentlemen under a pecuniary cloud.

Markworth was arrested at the suit of certain *confrères* of Mister Abednego, twixt "Solomonson and Isaacs, solicitors," on a writ for a largish sum of money, which he certainly could not pay.

Was the detainer heavy!

3,000 pounds and costs!

And he hadn't a penny in his pocket but Mrs Martin's five pounds!

Pleasant!

"But your friends will soon come and see you," said the Cerberus of the sponging-house in words of comfort. If Markworth had been arrested for a trifling sum, he would have taken no notice of him whatever. There is a dignity even in debt, if it be large enough! Your paltry insolvents are but small fry: a colossal defaulter is a man to be looked up to and envied, *vide* the annals of the Bankruptcy Court. So Markworth was comfortably treated, and had a private room, as he owed a heavy sum, and, moreover, had money in his pocket.

Oh! yes, there was not the least doubt Markworth's friends would look after him. He had a visitor the very first day of his incarceration, and who it was may easily be guessed.

Volume Three—Chapter Nine.

Pringle "Pecked."

The nuptial couch is not always a bed of roses, and so the young incumbent of Hartwood found out after a time. Not that it was all the fault of his newly-married spouse. Laura loved him in her languid way, and would have endeavoured to make his home happy if she had been left to herself; but the old campaigner stood in the gap: she had became Herbert Pringle's *bête noir*.

Shortly after the happy pair came back from their honeymoon to the parsonage, Lady Inskip made a proposition, which by dint of judicious manoeuvring she managed to carry into operation. Now that her eldest daughter was married, and Carry, "the bold, ungrateful girl," had left her in that scandalous manner, there was no need for her to keep up any longer a special establishment as she had formerly done. She only had her darling boy, Mortimer, now to care for, and Laburnum Cottage would be too big for herself and him only. She suggested to her dear, kind, clever son-in-law what she would do. She would give up the cottage—her time would be out on Lady-day, and it did not want such a very long time now to that date, and come and live at the parsonage with her affectionate children. Nothing could be better! Of course she would insist on paying her share of the housekeeping expenses; but then she did eat so very little; that would be of little count. Would not her dear Herbert and Laura—she put it to them—welcome her? She was such a good manager, and they were so ignorant of the world.

"Of course, dear ma!" said Laura. "That will be so nice; and then I should not have any trouble with the house and that horrid cookery book. I hate it! I wish Soyer had never been born. I'm sure I cannot make head or tail of all his 'economical dishes,' as he calls them."

"Certainly, my love!" responded the campaigner with alacrity. It was wonderful how very sweet and affectionate she could be when she had any point to gain. "I should take charge of all that off your hands, my dear! It *would* be hard if I could not be of use to my own children, whom I only have left to care for."

"That'll be all right, ma, then?" said Laura, considering the matter settled; but the campaigner was not so sure, for her son-in-law had not made any response yet to the offer.

"What does Herbert say, my pet?" exclaimed the old general, playfully, and looked the Rev. Herbert full in the face. "Will he turn his old mother into the street, or—?"

"Oh! certainly, Lady Inskip, certainly!" promptly answered up the young divine, confused at being appealed to. "That is, of course we'll be glad to have you here for a time, and—"

"Oh! I see," interposed the campaigner, with a capital assumption of offended pride and wounded feeling, "I should be intruding when I only offered to come here and help my darling child. Oh! that I have lived to hear this."

"Oh! ma," said Laura, "don't go on so. Herbert didn't mean anything of the kind."

"That I have lived to see this day!" repeated the campaigner, with solemn emphasis, and looking as if she were going to cry; however as she was seldom given to lachrymals, tears did not come so readily as would have now suited her purpose, but she twisted up her eyes, nevertheless, and sniffed ominously.

"Pray don't say so, ma! Don't say so! Say something, Herbert, to her, and don't be so unfeeling!" eagerly ejaculated Laura, turning to her husband, who did not know what to say. He certainly had hoped that he and his wife could have lived together without the services of his honoured mother-in-law, the lady in her own right; but what could he do? Here was she asking, and Laura urging it; and he was a single man against two energetic females. He was helpless, although he wished to do battle on his sister Lizzie's behalf, being certain that she and the campaigner would not get on well together. He was driven to the wall, however, for Laura had called on him to say something, and he must speak!

"Certainly, Lady Inskip, certainly!" he began. "That is, I mean to say, we will be most happy, Laura, and myself, to have you to live with us. Delighted, I'm sure; and Laura can make all the arrangements; but if there's anything you want me to see to, you have only to ask. That's all, and—and—"

"You dear, impulsive creature," interrupted the campaigner; "you are so good. I thought you did not mean to be unkind; but my feelings have been so lacerated of late that a very little affects me now." The campaigner spoke of a very little affecting her as if she were alluding to the imbibition of gin, or some other stimulant. "And so *that's* all arranged, and I can give up the cottage at once. It will be delightful to live here altogether; just like the happy family, won't it?"

"Quite so, Lady Inskip, quite so!" responded the Reverend Herbert; but he did not speak cheerfully, and I fear he had other views in his own mind of what a "happy family" arrangement might be.

"Charming, ma!" chorused Laura. "We'll see about making the arrangements at once, in order to prevent you from changing your mind."

The incumbent's wife need not, however, have been under any anxiety on that score: the campaigner knew very well when she had made a bargain, and she was not going to back out of it.

"I must send the darling boy Mortimer to school, however. It will be so sad parting with him, but it must be done. It would never do to have him here, would it?"

And she looked inquiringly at her son-in-law.

Pringle had sundry experiences of the darling boy's tractable disposition, and was rather disinclined in being so intimately associated with the young hopeful, so he combatted the point.

"You're quite right, Lady Inskip. He'd better be sent to school; not that I'd have any objections to his coming here, but then—"

“Yes,” sighed the campaigner, “I suppose he must go; it would be too much to ask.”

“Oh! have him here, ma. Don’t send him to school, poor little fellow! Herbert won’t mind, will you?” struck in Laura.

The incumbent was again doomed to defeat. He could refuse his young wife nothing when she was so judiciously “backed up” by the campaigner.

“Oh! certainly not, Lady Inskip. Have him here by all means.”

He gave in. He thought as the campaigner was coming the mischief was done; and he would be equally willing now to receive all the rest of the family; even Carry and her military husband, if it was suggested that they should all be invited; and the green parrot, too, the Persian cats, and all the other pets of My Lady’s. He succumbed hopelessly, and was thenceforth a pecked man.

I remember once coming across a little Oriental anecdote which lays particular stress on the relations of connubial folk. Pity that Pringle was not acquainted with it before he committed himself. The story runs as follows:—Once upon a time a gay young fellow married the widow of a great Khan—the scene is laid in Persia. On the wedding night the lady determined to assert her authority, and show who was the real lord and master. She accordingly treated her spouse with great contempt when he entered the ante-room, where she was seated on rose-leaf cushions caressing a large white cat, of which she pretended to be very fond indeed. She appeared very much annoyed at her husband’s entrance, and looked at him out of the corners of her eyes with cold disdain as he came in.

“I hate cats,” observed the young husband, blandly, as if he were only making a casual observation; “they offend my sight.”

If his wife had looked at him with glances of cold disdain before, her eyes now wore an expression of anger and contempt, such as no words can express. She did not even deign to answer him, but took the cat to her bosom and fondled it passionately: her whole heart seemed to be in the cat, and cold was the shoulder that she turned to her husband.

“When any one offends me,” continued her gallant, gaily, “I cut off his head. It is a peculiarity of mine which I am sure will only make me dearer to you.”

Then, drawing his sword, he took the cat gently but firmly from her arms, cut off its head, wiped the blade, sheathed it, and sitting down continued to talk affectionately to his wife as if nothing had happened. After which, says tradition, she became the best and most submissive wife in the world.

A hen-pecked fellow, meeting him the next day as he rode with a gallant train through the market place, began to condole with him.

“Ah!” said the hen-pecked one with deep feeling, “you, too, have taken a wife, and got a tyrant. You had better have remained the poor soldier that you were. I pity you from my very heart!”

“Not so,” replied the other, jollily; “keep your sighs to cool yourself next summer.”

He then related the events of his wedding night with their satisfactory results.

The hen-pecked man listened attentively, and pondered long.

“I also have a sword,” said he, “though it is rusty, and my wife is likewise fond of cats. I will cut off the head of my wife’s favourite cat at once.”

He did so, and received a sound beating. His wife, moreover, made him go down upon his knees and tell her what djinn, or evil spirit, had prompted him to do the bloody deed.

“Fool!” said the lady, when she had possessed herself of the hen-pecked’s secret, with a vixenish vinegar smile on her sallow lips, “you should have done it the first night!”

The moral is obvious: the Persians say “Advice is useless to fools!”

Pringle did not kill the cat at once; hence his position.

The old campaigner sold out at Laburnum Cottage in another week or two, and came with the young imp Mortimer, her Persian cats, and green parrot, and all her multitudinous belongings, settling down like a swarm of locusts on the devoted parsonage. Gone thenceforth were all its tranquil joys.

After a time the Lucca-oil-like-suavity which had formerly distinguished Lady Inskip in Pringle’s mind, disappeared. She appeared now as the concentrated essence of verjuice or tartaric acid, and ruled the whole house with a rod of iron, becoming in truth the master of all. Poor Lizzie’s life was made a burden to her; and she was treated as if she were a presumptuous intruder in her brother’s house. The old campaigner wrung her little heart with continual allusions to the “Young Squire,” and said how glad she “would have been to get him, miss!” making bitter comments on the way she said Lizzie had angled for Tom, and how he had gone off now and left her. “Served her right, too,” she ought not to be “pining and whining and breaking her heart after a man who never cared for her!” When, you may be sure, our little friend answered and stuck up for her rights, whereupon the campaigner would go and complain to the supposed head of the family, and declare that she could not stop in the house with “that virago of a girl,” and Pringle had to timidly urge that he would not keep Lady Inskip against her will for the world. Then the campaigner would commence with a stern philippic on ingratitude, and wind up by bursting into tears and wishing she had never been born to observe that particular day. Here Laura would interfere, Herbert Pringle beg the pardon of his mamma-in-law, and all would be soothed over for a time, and the campaigner would establish a fresh gap in the trenches she was engineering for universal sovereignty.

Pringle suffered in more ways than one. He had to walk now through the parish in discharging his parochial duties, for he could no more “prance about,” as Mrs Hartshorne called it, on his dapple grey pony. The campaigner had impounded that valuable little animal, and no more was it bestridden by the well shaped, albeit diminutive legs of the incumbent. The Macchiaevelli in petticoats said that “her daughter” must have a carriage to go about in, considering she could no longer afford to keep one of her own, which otherwise she would have been happy for Laura to have made free use of. The campaigner had sold her equipage when she cleared out from Laburnum Cottage along with other sundry theatrical “effects” which she had kept up for the sales of entrapping suitors for her daughters’ hands, and now they were both off her hands she melted down her appurtenances into the handier form of a banker’s balance. “No one knew what might come,” as she said to herself, sagely reflective.

She accordingly made Pringle buy a neat basket carriage, and build an enlargement to the parsonage stable for its accommodation. To this vehicle, dapple grey was thenceforth attached, and the campaigner used to drive out in it every afternoon, occasionally but seldom, accompanied by her daughter, and the small boy with the eruption of buttons on him, whom she had retained in her own service when she migrated to the house of her son-in-law. “It was so respectable to have a page,” as she said. Lizzie she never invited to drive with her, not that she would for a moment have consented to the penance of a *tête-à-tête* with the campaigner, whom she disliked as much almost as the other did her, although she tried to bear with her for her brother’s sake, whom she pitied. Lizzie in fact saw clearly that poor Herbert was sadly hen-pecked, not by his wife, for she was two apathetic, but by his mother-in-law.

Instead of the paradise of bliss which he had hoped to enter, by allying himself with Lady Inskip’s eldest daughter, the young incumbent found himself in a very miserable position; and I am inclined to think that he somewhat regretted his hasty step. He loved Laura as much as it was in his nature to do so, and so did she him; but both were very young—he just a boy from College, one might say; and they had yet much to learn of that mutual forbearance principle, and earnest trust and love, without which too many find marriage the “lottery” they declare it. What chance of happiness they had depended upon their being to themselves, without the odious presence of the campaigner; but she had established herself as a fixture, and was not going to stir herself in a hurry; and as Laura as yet took her part, principally because Herbert Pringle had his sister on his side, the pecktive state continued, unhappily for all parties.

No more did the ritualistic young divine devote much attention to his sermons; and the Ciceronian phraseology, which purely distinguished those works of composition, disappeared. He had no heart in his work—for the campaigner was always “nagging” at him at home, and no longer praised his eloquence as she had done at first.

No more did he chant in melodious strains the Psalms to his elaborately embroidered and besmocked congregation of farmers, but read them over hurriedly, in order to get rid of them. Even his ritualistic tendencies began to be toned down: the lectern was seldom made use of, and the white surplices were dispensed with for the boys of the choir.

Pringle was pecked with a vengeance, and its effect was shown, not only in his outward ways, but in his adornment—he became careless about his dress, and not half so particular as he had been for appearances before he became a Benedict. Bottom was very much translated, indeed. Pringle was pecked!

Lizzie saw all that was going on, and sympathised with her brother. The old campaigner she detested, and only the desire not to increase her brother’s miseries by having home broils, made her keep her hostility subdued; she even tried to coax the artful Macchiaevelli for him, all to no effect, as also her endeavours to awaken the languid Laura to a sense of the responsibility owing to her husband.

The campaigner ruled the roast in spite of all; and showed not the slightest desire to conceal her dislike for Lizzie. She tormented her constantly with spiteful allusions to the past, and Lizzie would not have minded so much what she said about herself, but she would abuse Tom, and that she could not stand. Besides, she encouraged the horrid imp Mortimer to spoil all poor Lizzie’s garden, and disarrange her pet conservatory, and even to break up a little artful contrivance for holding plants, which Tom had specially given her. It is true Pringle made up a row on that subject, and threatening to chastise the boy, somewhat checking his horticultural tendencies to the detriment of Lizzie in future. Still, the place was made very unhappy to her, and Lizzie would have been miserable and wished herself dead and out of the way if some consolation had not turned up suddenly for her in a most unexpected manner.

Thenceforth she bore the campaigner’s taunts with stolid and aggravating silence, making that lady wish time and again that Lizzie were “her child,” and she “would soon teach her manners.” Notwithstanding that poor Pringle was so sadly pecked, and the parsonage lost its Eden-like character since the invasion of the serpent, there was balm yet in Gilead for Lizzie.

What had happened? Whence came Lizzie’s consolation?

You would never suspect.

Volume Three—Chapter Ten.

Caught at Last.

“Even the worst laws are so necessary for our guidance, that without them, men would devour one another,” remarks Epicurus—in order to exemplify the frailty of human nature, according to Plutarch, the moralist. Putting the point of cannibalism aside, and thus obviating a trip to the Feejee Islands, or New Zealand, for example, it cannot be disputed that the dictum of the Epicurean philosopher is based on a fundamental truth, which is fairly exhibited in every-day life. Granting, however, that laws are necessary for human progress, the philosophical enquirer is still as much at fault as ever, for he becomes, as it were, like Hamlet, plunged into a sea of troubles, which no opposition will limit, the moment he begins his search into the mysteries of jurisprudence. The progress of the blind goddess with the sinister and dexter scale has been by no means commensurate with the advancement of civilisation, for the name of laws is legion; and between good laws and bad laws, and what may be termed legal laws and moral laws, there are as wide differences and as great discrepancies as exist among the several offenders and offences against the same.

A law may be a good law, and a necessary law, and yet be a bad law, speaking according to law; while a bad and unjust law, merely regarded as a piece of law-making, becomes good when weighed in the same forensic balance. This seems paradoxical, but can be verified readily in overlooking the legal code. Law, itself, is wise, and good, and necessary; but, “too many cooks spoil the broth,” so our original Magna Charta of Liberty has become a hotch-potch pie of precedents, thanks to the many law-makers we have had, who lead the blind goddess into the gutter, and so transform Themis that no one would know her again in her original guise. There are so many cities of refuge provided for criminals within the statutes of the justice book, so many loopholes for chicanery and fraud to sneak through, that no criminal need trouble himself for fear of consequences at committing any offence in the decalogue or calendar, short of murder—even that often becomes justified under the appellative “homicide” in the minds, and under the verdict of “a free and enlightened jury!”—save the mark.

The various turnings and windings of our great national bulwark—the Law—are many and wonderful.

A man who commits a greater offence can only be, perhaps, indicted under a lesser plea, and the small criminal again is treated proportionately more severely than the man who deals in crime wholesale. Some reforms have, indeed, been made already, but more are still needed. Perhaps one of the greatest agitated of late has been the abolishment of imprisonment for debt, one of the most iniquitous statutes we have been cursed with. The debtor had been held on a par with the thief and the murderer, and has often been condemned to a greater term of imprisonment than the criminal who commits a burglary or takes human life. However, this will soon be numbered amongst the other mistakes of the past, like the old Fleet prison.

Following out the analogy, it seems strange that Markworth, who had been deemed guilty of graver offences under the eye of the law should only be caught at last through a *ca ça*, *ex parte* Solomonson, the Jew money lender.

He had puzzled Mrs Hartshorne’s lawyers in proving the abduction; he would have gained a large fortune by his scheming, but through the little mistake of a date; he had evaded the French police, and escaped the arrest of a murderer; and here he was imprisoned at last, in a sponging-house, only on a question of debt—a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. Oh, the anachronisms of the law! But enough has been already said in these pages of its Penelopean web of trickery and evasion.

To return to our hero, perhaps the best example of terror which could be mentioned, is that of seeing a drove of wild animals on the prairies of the far west, flying from a bush fire. The herds of buffalo, deer, and even bears and panthers, are then seized with a maddening influence of fright and flight combined, and rush pell mell in front of the blazing torrent of fire which spreads behind them. They do not care where they go, and will encroach even upon the haunts of men, of whom they are generally afraid, the panther running by the side of the bison, which does not now mind the proximity of its enemy, all flying in their wild scare for safety, with heaving flanks and panting breath.

It was under the influence of such a fright that Markworth fled from the heights of Ingouville, when he escaped from Clara Kingscott’s clutches: he could fancy that he still heard Susan’s wild shriek ringing in his ears.

The accusation of Clara Kingscott had paralysed him with a morbid terror. His first impulse was, when Susan disappeared over the precipice, to rush down and save her. Then he had been stopped so unexpectedly, and on the governess accusing him of murdering the girl, his mind had rapidly grasped the circumstances attending, and he saw how strong the proof of circumstantial evidence would be against him.

The cries of Clara Kingscott would now have alarmed the neighbourhood. Morbid terror possessed him. How to escape! Was there time to fly?

And he fled with all the fear of a hunted animal.

He did not know in which direction he went, but he suddenly arrested his fleeing footsteps: he saw somebody in the distance, and turned back.

It would never do to continue the path down which the body of Susan might be lying; if he were to be found near at hand he might be lost.

He bent aside and rapidly made his way down the steep incline, and after wheeling around in various directions so as to discern any possible pursuit, he made up his mind to go first to the lodgings in the Rue Montmartre. He must get off out of the way, and as nobody would search for him yet awhile—it was so late, and quiet, and dark—he could find time to collect his things, and get on board some steamer in the harbour before anyone would dream of searching for him. Besides, there might be no pursuit at all, he thought to himself, his native courage rapidly returning as he got further and further from the scene of action. He would proceed cautiously; but he must go away: yes, it was best to go away. What was the use in remaining now? Susan was the only link that bound him to Havre, and now she was providentially put out of his way. Poor girl! He pitied her; but it was, perhaps, best as it was, and somebody else would see after her now. It would have been an unpleasant business if he had stopped by her at any rate. She even might not be dead after all: somebody else would see to her; that devil Clara was there at all events.

These thoughts flitted through his brain, as he walked leisurely along the now deserted streets of the town. It would never do to appear in a hurry, for Havre was respectable, and went to bed at an early hour, with the exception of the fisher folk, who were still carousing in the low cabarets down by the quays.

By this time he had reached his door, and opening it with his pass key, he let himself in.

In the passage he met the little husband of the Mère Cliquelle, whom he told that *Madame sa femme*, was unwell and stopping at a friends, and he was going out again for her. He then went into his rooms and began to pack a portmanteau leisurely, for he thought "if they are hunting for me this is the last place they would seek for me." And so he arranged matters quite at his ease.

He had nearly a hundred pounds left in money, and that he thought would see him through a good deal. He could not stop in England, he considered, and on the other hand Clara Kingscott would make the Continent too hot to hold him. Where should he go?

America, he decided, in a moment. That blessed land for aliens and criminals would receive him and offer him a convenient shelter; besides, if all he heard was true, he was in no doubt that he could pick up a living by his wits amongst his transatlantic cousins. The moment he came to this determination he proceeded to act upon it.

At all events, there was no use in stopping in the Rue Montmartre any longer, so he opened the door, after putting the things in order, and taking up the valise in his hand, he walked towards the passage.

"*Bon soir*!" he shouted to the Mère Cliquelle and her husband above, who thought the evening's proceedings rather strange on the whole but consoled themselves with the reflection that "*Ces Anglais sont drôles*!"

"*Bon soir, Monsieur! Au revoir*!" they responded; and Markworth walked out of the Mère Cliquelle's house for the last time. It was now nearly ten o'clock, and all was quiet about the street, which was quite dark. He was unnoticed, and free to go where he pleased, and so he turned his steps this time down towards the steamboat quay. There, although it was so late, he managed to come across a fisherman, who was just starting off in his little boat.

For a small consideration, as it lay in his way, the man consented to land him over at Honfleur, on the opposite banks of the Seine, Markworth telling him that he had a sick wife, whom he must visit that night.

"*Pauvre fille*!" said the *Ignobile Pescatore*, with a sympathetic shrug, "we must take you to madame;" and setting his brawny arms to work, in addition to the lugsail, for there was little wind, Markworth was, after the lapse of a short interval, set ashore at length at Honfleur, leaving the broad and muddy Seine between himself and his Nemesis. He could now breathe freely. His plans were made up, and he had only to wait until the early morning for carrying them into execution.

At an auberge in the centre of the town he got a lodging for the night, and in the early morning was travelling north.

From Paris to Brussels—train again—miles of railroad—on, on to Bremen, or rather Bremenhaven as the port is properly called. Time to catch one of the German American steamships of the *Nord Deutsche* line, that ply between that port and New York, touching at Southampton on the way. Caught it! Be certain tho' that Markworth landed not at the stopping-place on the route! He had too wholesome a dread of his creditor, Solomonson, and the possibilities of a "capias" or "ca ça" administered by one of the greasy hands of mine host of Curseover Street, Chancery Lane. No more treading on British soil for him!

Bremen to Southampton—a two days' trip. One day more lying there alongside the railroad dock, and afterwards far out in the harbour, where the hull of the steamer looked like a gigantic lizard, or the far-famed sea-serpent. Then, on a Wednesday morning, he finally sailed for the land of the setting sun—"the home of the brave and free;" where, according to the poetical license of transatlantic eulogists, "the Bird o' Freedom claps her wings in exultation over the star-spangled banner in the ethereal expanse of perennial blue."

On landing in New York, Markworth found it very similar to any other city of the old world in which he had been. There was no Eldorado here: the streets were not profusely strewn with gold for the needy to pick up. New York was only another temple of Mammon, where he who had money was a brave gentleman, and he who had none might starve and be hanged to him!

For labouring men and mechanics, there is a wide field for industry in the Empire City and the adjacent country round about; but for clerks, "gentlemen," and Chevaliers d'Industrie, New York possesses few facilities, and it is harder work to pick up a living there than even in our own over-crowded London.

Markworth's available funds melted down into greenbacks, and the wretched paper currency that forms the circulating medium of our transatlantic brethren, did not stretch very far. The essays he made to increase his store by his wits shrunk his purse still less.

Although "enterprise" is one of the proverbial characteristics of Jonathan, still there is no country in the world, in spite of all the fabulous anecdotes we hear of swindling and "bogus" schemes, where adventurers without capital have such small chances of success. Jonathan may take in other people with his wooden nutmegs, pewter dollars, and Connecticut clocks, warranted to go for eight days, but a person is required to "get up extremely early in the morning" to get over him. The land of humbug, which possesses its native Barnums in shoals, is one of the "cutest countries in creation, I guess," and can "whip" any "coon" that comes from "tother side of Jordan."

Markworth thought himself shrewd; but here, in the race of wits, he found himself a sluggard.

He had at last to take to gambling, but even there he was no match for the smart Yankees with whom he played. Talk of Homburg and Baden-Baden! They cannot hold a candle to the Faro banks and other gambling hells of New York and Saratoga. Gambling is supposed to be contrary to the laws of the United States, but when their senators and law-makers practise it, it cannot be wondered that the people hold it up *en masse*, while justice winks at their doings.

Finding chance no ally, all his endeavours to get employment vain, and the country with its people and belongings hateful to him, Markworth became possessed with that intense home longing, which none but those who have experienced it can appreciate. It is strange, the effects of that same *maladie du pays*, as the French call it. Numbers of conscripts die from it every year in Algiers, pining for their *belle France* to the last; only the Ethiopian, or modern negro, seems unaffected by its influence. Even he, too, may long to be back again in his beloved Congo, when sweltering in the shambles of Cuba, where, thank goodness, slavery only now exists; there, however, it is also doomed to be mercifully blotted out.

While suffering from this home sickness, homeless, friendless, nearly penniless, Markworth had a sudden and lucky *coup* at Faro, which just gained him sufficient money wherewith to pay his passage back to England. Sick he was of the Yankees, but he blessed them now!

He eagerly jumped at the chance, and without a thought of the consequences of debt and imprisonment, or of the harpies looking out for him, he paid his passage money—“third class” this time—and was on his way home in one of those steamships that land at London, some six months or so after he had gone out so valiantly, a man of money, to the New World. He did not care, however: his one dream was to get back home again—“home,” though it be ever so homely, and he—but in rags.

He arrived at last; he landed, and he was cast upon the sea of London life without a penny in his pockets, and no luggage to overburden him.

Markworth, however, did not mind this. He had been hard pushed before; and having always managed to wriggle himself out of pecuniary difficulties, he saw no reason why he should not raise himself again, even though his fortunes were at such a very low ebb. Indeed, he did not doubt his ability so to do for a moment.

His first care was to get a little money to go on with, and he had no fear but that Joseph Begg, his former *confidant*, would readily assist him, as he could soon pay him back in his own time; for a habitation, of which he had also to be careful, he determined to go back to his old lodgings at Mrs Martin’s in Bloomsbury.

Begg’s billiard rooms in Oxford Street accordingly formed his first destination. As it was getting late, and “pool” the natural thing at the time, he was certain of finding Joseph Begg in; but he was doomed to be disappointed.

On inquiring for his old friend of an Irish marker, who alone was in the room, he heard to his astonishment that Joseph Begg was dead!

“Yis, yer ’anner,” said this man, with a strong Dublin brogue; “he’s did an’ bur’d mor’n foor month. He wint to dhrink a pint of rhum agin some City swell or other for a bet of a fife-pun-nut, and be Jabers! it kilt poor Begg enthirely! Shure, yer ’anner, he jist dhropped down did on the flure, he did, yer ’anner. Good luck till him! Faith he wor one of the raal sort, too, and he desarved to win, but the rhum was too much for him—bad cess to it!”

It seemed another link in the chain of ill-luck which had enwrapped him ever since his marriage with Susan Hartshorne; and Markworth turned away with a heavy heart to seek his quarters at Mrs Martin’s, while the Irish lad was crooning out some ditty about a “gintlemun” who—

> “Turned up his nose,
> And the tips of his toes,
> To the roots of the daisies, oh!”

But he readily found an asylum in Bloomsbury, as he had thought; still even there his fate still pursued him, and he was arrested next day, as already told.

The first visitor who came to see him in the sponging-house was she who had last held him on the heights of Ingouville, and called him murderer. He was proportionately glad to see her: a mutual pleasure, without doubt!

But his troubles had much shaken him, and Markworth was not the Markworth of before—the cool collected man of the world with a strong spice of the devil-may-care element; he was cowed and beaten.

“What do you want here with me, Clara Kingscott?” he growled out, as he cowered from her fixed gaze of hate. “What do you want now, for God’s sake! I paid you, at all events!”

“What do I want, Allynne Markworth? I wanted to see you caged at last, villain! and now I’m satisfied!”

“Well, you’ve seen me now, so you may go away and be happy! But I don’t know why you hate me so, I’m sure; I don’t owe you any money at all events!”

“Money, money, money! that has always been the burden of your song—and now you see its worth!”

“I know it would take me out of here; that’s what I know!” he replied, with a faint attempt at a jocular laugh—it was a very faint one.

“Would it? Do you know who put you here?”

“Solomonson, I suppose; my worthy friend to whom I am slightly indebted. I don’t think he’ll get his money, though; for I am hanged if I don’t go through ‘the Court.’” He laughed, still keeping up appearances.

The governess went on, however, in her cold grating voice, without apparently noticing his interruption.

“I placed you here!” she said, with bitter emphasis. “I got you arrested. I knew that you came to those lodgings last night! I have been watching for you for weeks; and I went down this morning to those attorneys, and told them where you were. I would have gone last night if it had not been so late! You have got to thank me for your arrest!”

“You! you she devil! Why, what on earth have I done to you?” he exclaimed, in astonishment.

“Done to me! If you have forgotten ten years ago, and the way you deceived me, Allynne Markworth, I have not!”

“Good God, Clara! I thought that was all past and gone. No one could have regretted it more than I! and you, yourself, said we had better let bygones be bygones! Why, you accepted money from me, you—”

“Yes, I did! It was only to work your own ruin!”

“Good God, Clara! Don’t go on like that; I’m hunted down now, or I would do anything you wanted. Don’t hit a man when he’s down!”

She still continued, working herself up into a frenzy of passion as she spoke, without noticing his words, although gazing steadily in his face with her basilisk eyes, which were widened with fury and hate.

“Do you know that if that flaw had not been discovered in the date of the girl’s age—and I only wish that I had made it and discovered it!—and that if your case had gone to trial, I would have come forward as evidence against you, and would have sworn to having assisted you to abduct that poor idiot Susan Hartshorne? Do you know that I would have sworn to this, no matter how I implicated myself, only to get you ruined? Did you ever think of that?”

“No, for God’s sake, Clara! I kept to my bargain.”

“Did you keep your bargain ten years ago? If you forget, Allynne Markworth, I do not! Now, thank God, I have got you caught at last!”

“Have you, you she devil, fiend!” he said, “You will be baulked again, my lady! Don’t make too sure! curse you, she cat! What do you come here to torment me for?”

“What do I come for, eh? I told you before—to see you caged at last—you deceiver! swindler! murderer!” she hissed between her teeth. “Ha! does not that touch you up at last? You will get out, will you! Do you forget Havre? Do you forget Susan Hartshorne, the same as you forgot me once before? Have you forgotten the murder I saw, murderer? Ah!”

“Woman! you are mad! Get out, and leave me in peace! I am no murderer, although you almost persuade me to be one now! Get out, or by God I’ll—”

“No! You won’t murder me. You cannot get away from me like you ran from Havre! I am not afraid of you, although I am a woman.”

“You are no woman, or you would not come here to torment me like this. You *know* I never hurt that girl. God knows I did not do it; whatever else I may have done, I am innocent of that crime, and if the poor girl is dead, no one would wish to get her back to life more than I do, as she could prove my innocence. For God’s sake, Clara, stop. You must be mad, or you would not talk like this. Think of the past between us, think of—”

“Yes, I do think of the past, and that makes me act now. I am no more mad than you are; but I have sworn to ruin you, and I will keep my oath. Do you know where I am going to now?”

“I don’t know, and I don’t care,” he said sullenly, “only for God’s sake, leave me in peace, and go away.”

He was quite broken down now, and the expression of the woman’s strong hate, coupled with all he had gone through, made him nerveless and hopeless. She still went on in the same tone of fiendish glee: her feelings seemed to have overcome her reason.

“I am going now to have you charged with murder. Murder, do you hear? The French police were on your track. We will see what the English police will do now. You will get out, will you? You think you will escape! Bah! Just wait and see.”

“Hang you! Go away, will you. You are raving!” he said: he really thought her mad.

“Hang me? Not quite; but you will be hanged though, and then I will die happy!” she exclaimed, with the passion still in her eyes, in her gestures, in her very form and figure.

Markworth was seated in a corner of the private room in which they were speaking (Mr Abednego charged a guinea a day for the accommodation of the same), and his attitude betokened intense misery and hopelessness. It was not so much the words of his adversary, but the thought that she, too, was against him, like all the rest of the world. He was quite broken down, now.

“Do your worst,” he replied, “only go away. I can’t bear this any longer.”

“I will do my worst, never fear,” she said, as she moved towards the door. She was satisfied to see that her enemy was at length abased, and to think that she had brought down his pride.

She was now at the door; her mission had been accomplished, and, as she glanced back, the bright summer sun, streaming through the open window with its iron bars, on his bent figure, discovered the streaks of silver in his dark hair, painted by time and trouble, not forgetting the thinness of the long, sinewy hands that hid his face from her view.

A pang of compunction smote her, and stirred her heart for a moment with the thoughts of days gone by, and she seemed to hesitate before she left him, although no intention of relinquishing her purpose crossed her mind.

“Go! go!” he murmured, in a broken voice, “leave me in peace.”

And she went out, and left him alone with his misery.

Volume Three—Chapter Eleven.

The Age of Miracles.

> “I sat by his mother one midsummer day,
>   And she looked me through and through
> As I spoke of her lad who was far away,
>   For she guessed that I loved him too!”

Maggie’s Secret.

“Lizzie, pull that pillow more under my head, will you, dear? I think, too, my feet are getting cold; I wish you would throw that shawl over me.”

The speaker was our old acquaintance the dowager; but wonderfully changed both in appearance and voice since we last saw and heard her; and the young lady addressed in that affectionate and trusting manner was our own little Lizzie, the young incumbent’s sister, the beloved of Master Tom.

Fancy her being now on such terms of intimacy with Tom’s mother! But it is a fact. *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*: this is the age of miracles, and we must not be surprised at anything that happens in our daily life when so many startling changes in science and art are worked out every day in the world around us.

I don’t know how the first advance was made from the parsonage to The Poplars, but the worthy old doctor managed it all. That man, I venture to say, sir, or madam, who may be reading these lines, was most unhesitatingly one whom we used to term in schoolboy phraseology, a trump. He was a trump most certainly, even although all the other suits at cards be of fair and equable measure! A trump of trumps, a *rara avis*, even amongst a horde of good fellows, and I affectionate him much, as our foreign friends put it.

The doctor had already told Miss Lizzie that he would be glad to make use of her services as soon as the old lady was a little more sensible, and Lizzie had gladly consented to be made use of when the proper time should arrive.

Doctor Jolly, from the experiences of the past, when he had so satisfactorily played the go-between in Tom and Lizzie’s young loves, was pretty well aware of the state of things between those two young persons. His own nature being an ardent one, and having often—to Deb’s intense misgivings and alarm—cultivated the tender passion himself, he was quite competent to sympathise with all lovers whose course of true love might not, through the stern opposition of unfeeling parents and worldly relations, run smooth. He could do this quite apart from his good nature, which would have forced him to befriend any one in trouble. But when he naturally liked a sighing lover like Master Tom, and had such a paternal interest in him, and when Miss Lizzie—the object beloved—was one of his own especial pets, one cannot wonder that the doctor threw himself into the breach with all the ardour of his ardent nature and good nature combined. He determined that he would befriend this young couple to the best of his ability. Although Fate had unkindly nipped all his little *affaires du coeur* in the bud, and destroyed all his tender Platonisms, he would have the satisfaction, at least, of seeing others happy.

Accordingly, our friend Aesculapius having played go-between, subsequently became the trusted confidant to both the lovers. Tom, before his departure for the land of the Queen of Sheba’s descendants, had breathed out his heartburnings, his rage, his morbid determination, sighing furiously all the while, like Shakespeare’s typical furnace; and after Tom’s Hegira, Lizzie, with many little tender protestations and pearly sacrifices, had also unfolded her troubles to him. It was not for a long time, however, that Lizzie did this—not until the little heart had been wrung by keeping its trouble to itself for a very long, long time; but she need not have held back her confidence from the doctor—he knew all about it, and even if Tom had not told him of the ruthless separation which Fate had brought about, he could have easily guessed it from Andromeda’s martyr-like face.

The dowager’s illness now enabled Doctor Jolly to befriend Lizzie, and consequently Tom also, much more efficiently than he might otherwise have been able to do.

Putting aside the necessity which he thought existed for establishing the *entente cordiale* between Lizzie and the mother of her adored, the good doctor was full of sympathy—in which he forgot all her former bad temper and malevolence towards him—for the poor old woman was lying grievously ill—sick unto death nearly, at 1 The Poplars. She was so ill, so changed, so friendless and deserted, only tended by strangers and hired servants, that Doctor Jolly thought that the best thing for her in common charity was to get some one to come and see her, and minister, who would be actuated in so doing by a higher and more of a brotherly-kindness principle than that of mere wage. With this idea revolving strongly in his head, the doctor could think of no one better suited for the post than Lizzie. By employing her, he would be able to achieve two purposes at once—kill two birds with one stone. Tom’s lady-love was willing and happy enough at the thought; the only thing that remained was to gain the old dowager’s consent for the arrangement, and this Doctor Jolly found much more easily done than he had thought possible.

For a long time the old lady had remained speechless, and of course nothing could be done about it then. She was in such a state that the mere sight of a new face might have affected her fatally, much less the sight of a face which could be connected in her mind, if she could think, with former times and her quarrel with her son. But, by-and-bye, as the dowager became more sensible and was able to express her wishes by writing on a slate, and afterwards to speak when she got back her voice—what a changed voice it was!—the doctor mooted the matter.

He suggested that she should have some one to sit and read with her for company's sake, as he told her: it was bad for her to be alone with only a servant, and it would delay her recovery if she were not roused out of herself.

She had at first given a vehement veto against the suggestion. She thought the doctor was going to prepare Miss Kingscott's society for her, remembering Aesculapius's old partiality in that quarter. But when he indignantly denied this, and told her he would not propose her company for any decent person—the doctor had learnt the governess's treachery from Mr Trump—the old lady accepted very agreeably the offer of Lizzie Pringle's society. She thought it quite a satisfactory substitute for the old lady whom she had dreaded the doctor was going to invite to wait on her.

Doctor Jolly took Mrs Hartshorne at her word, and sent Lizzie up the very same afternoon that he got permission, for fear that the dowager might withdraw the same. He did not doubt that the moment the old lady knew Lizzie she would take to her, and then the rest lay in Lizzie's own hands.

Aesculapius was right. Within a week, the tender graces, and kindness, and soft ways of the young girl, had made way in the heart of the old woman which you would have never suspected, and she afterwards could hardly bear her out of her sight.

Lizzie and the dowager were on the most affectionate footing. She, winning, ministering like an angel of mercy: the old lady accepting all her kindness, not saying much in words, but feeling in her heart an unknown love towards this little girl, who was winding herself into her affections in spite of herself.

And Lizzie, you may be sure, was happy—happy at doing good—happy at ministering to affliction; above all, happy at helping Tom's mother. Thus did Andromeda's grief lessen: thus was she able to bear all the snapping and snarling of the old campaigner at home. This was her source of balm, which you might never have suspected.

It was a strange association between the two: between the dowager of former days, with her harsh voice and querulous temper, and the gentle little girl who had won Tom's love. There never would have been, one would think, any sympathy or companionship; but the dowager was very much altered now.

"Wonders will never cease," says the proverb; and Solomon adds, that "there is nothing new under the sun." Consequently putting that and that together, as the old folks say, we ought not to be surprised at this unexpected *rapport* between Tom's mother and Lizzie.

Far more wonderful than that wonderful recovery of reason poor Susan Hartshorne, under Markworth's superintending care, was this change in the dowager, and the amelioration in her temper. But sickness and mental anxiety work strange changes! She *was* changed!

When the old lady's recollection came back, she grieved very much over the death of her daughter, and seemed to accuse herself on that account. She told Lizzie that if she had not been so harsh and unlike a mother to Susan, all the past might never have happened. Lizzie tried to soothe her self-reproaches somewhat ineffectually, but when Dr Jolly combatted the old lady's arguments, and had a long explanation with her, the dowager seemed much relieved, although she would express fervent hopes of seeing her daughter again—in heaven, and she did not any longer fret so much about Susan as she had done.

The old lady's thoughts and conversation after this turned on her dear Tom principally.

Mrs Hartshorne was a very shrewd old lady, and as she got better her old shrewdness returned.

She had not by any means forgotten the name of Miss Lizzie Pringle. She remembered very well Tom's explanation with reference to that young lady and his crude ideas of wishing to get married; after a time she startled Lizzie nearly out of her seven little senses, by abruptly mentioning the subject, asking her what arrangement she had come to with Tom, and if they were still engaged.

Lizzie told her "no," indignantly: she would enter into no engagement with anyone whose family objected to her.

The dowager was very much pleased at her pride in not holding Tom to his word when she had related the affair, and she probed Lizzie's heart further by enquiring whether she loved Tom still.

She did not care for him, if it would harm his prospects that is, and—and—The dowager looked very kind and cheerful and not stern at all, and all Lizzie's love for the graceless Tom who had abandoned her in his senseless anger for her strict regard for duty, was poured out again into very sympathising ears, the dowager told her to cheer up—and "all would yet be well."

After this many were the dialogues between the old lady and the young girl about the absent warrior, and suggestions made about the probable time of his return, and surmises—on the older lady's part—the junior only blushed and said nothing—as to what would happen when Tom did come back.

The young man's letters home to his mother were read out by Miss Lizzie. She took no interest in them at all, of course; but the old lady's sight being somewhat defective and Tom's calligraphy none of the clearest, it was absolutely necessary that the old lady's companion should read them out for her. You may be quite certain that Lizzie did not peruse them afterwards quietly to herself, and enter with deep interest into all the young man's deeds and doings. How the army was getting on satisfactorily towards Magdala: how splendid the scenery was: how he had had a monkey hunt, and had not caught one; and what fine figures the Abyssinian girls had. Of course Miss Lizzie did not toss her head at this, and say "Well, to be sure, sir; I wonder what next!"

Whether she did or did not, Master Tom's doings seemed to have great interest for the two. When they were talking about him, the old lady would recount with a maternal pride, which from a former knowledge of her character you might never have dreamt she possessed, incidents connected with the childhood of the warrior, to which Lizzie would listen with spell-bound attention.

The dowager would relate how gentle Tom was when teething; how wonderfully he had borne that infantile malady, the measles; what marvellous escape he had had from breaking his neck when he tumbled down the back staircase. And then she would glide on to later experiences, and tell how well Tom got on at school; and how the old colonel of his regiment liked him, as indeed all did with whom the Saxon youngster came in contact.

Lizzie would drink in all this with greedy ears; and never tire of hearing of the deeds and doings of this most extraordinary young man.

So the time passed on, and Lizzie became even more domesticated at The Poplars than she was at the parsonage.

Tom's mother got to love her; and the young incumbent's sister, much as she loved her brother, took a deeper interest in the big house and its belongings than she did in Herbert Pringle's mansion.

Thus while the latter was being pecked *ad libitum* by the campaigner, Lizzie generally "made herself scarce," and went up to The Poplars to talk about Tom—the never wearisome subject—with the old dowager.

The campaigner's rule might be rigid enough, but Lizzie laughed it to scorn. Instead of bandying words with the veteran, our little friend abandoned the field to her completely, and left her "alone in her glory."

She was unhappy no longer. There was balm in Gilead. Jupiter *tonans* was propitious: the doctor's plans successful: the dowager gained over to Lizzie's cause: the field fought: the battle won.

Who would have thought of the "Fiddle-de-dee"-asserting-dowager ever being in Lizzie's favour?

The course of true love looked, for a wonder, as if it were going for once to run smooth. Miracles certainly will never cease: this is the age of them!

Volume Three—Chapter Twelve.

"Too Late! Too Late!"

Markworth still sat in the same position in the untidy, ill-furnished private room at the sponging-house after the governess, his enemy, had left him—with his face hidden between his hands and his head bent down, the summer sun still streaming down on him, for the sun shines for rich and poor alike: for those in captivity, and for those that are free!

Clara Kingscott, meanwhile, directed her steps once more to the offices of Mr Trump and his partner, in Bedford Row. She did not dread a refusal this time: she did not hold back for fear of being denied admission: she had news—news! to communicate now, and they must see her!

"Mr Trump was out," said one of the clerks.

Miss Kingscott was in no hurry—although she was out of breath with the haste she had made from the hotel *restante* of Abednego—she "would wait until Mr Trump came in."

That would never do, thought the clerk; his master wouldn't be pleased to find his *bête noir* seated there in his outer office, ready to pounce upon him when he made his appearance. So fearful of a probable blowing up, the embryo Sheepskin tried again.

"Mr Trump was busy; he could not see anyone to-day."

Miss Kingscott, however, was invincible—"she would wait until the lawyer was disengaged," she said, calmly taking a seat unbidden.

Worse and worse for Sheepskin, who was in an agony of terror as to what to do. In the midst of the excitement enters Mr Trump himself from his inner sanctum, accompanied by Doctor Jolly.

"Bless my soul, Miss Kingscott!" exclaimed the latter; "who would have thought of seeing you here." But the doctor seemed embarrassed; he did not offer his broad palm to the governess as he would have done in the old days at The Poplars; and his ruddy countenance was suffused with a deeper shade of crimson than was really habitual. Mr Trump advanced, however, to Miss Kingscott, and spoke out curtly in his cold, business voice.

"What do you want here, madam? You have no business with me! and I told my clerks to say I was not in whenever you came here!" glaring round at the solitary embryo sheepskin, who quaked in his shoes; the other grisly clerk, whose hair had the semblance of the fretful porcupine, was not there—probably he was at lunch, and would "return in ten minutes," as they all say.

Miss Kingscott was not staggered by the lawyer's facer; she was far too much wrapt up in her purpose to take notice of any rebuff, as she had had many already. She went in straight to her point, gasping with excitement as she spoke.

"He's found! He's found!" she exclaimed.

"Who's found? What do you mean, madam?" said Mr Trump, who, thinking the governess was going to make a dash at him, cautiously retired behind the doctor: the latter uttering his usual, "God bless my soul!" was staring at his quondam flame in astonishment.

"He's caught at last! Caught at last!" continued the governess hysterically, waving her arms frantically all the while.

"Who's found? Who's caught at last? Really, I do not comprehend you, madam; what is it to me whom you find or catch?"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the doctor, hopelessly bewildered.

"Fool!" exclaimed Miss Kingscott, in cutting bitterness—so sharp and short was her tone, that the word sounded like a pistol-shot. "Fool! Markworth is caught at last! Caught at last, do you hear? And I have caught him!"

Mr Trump and the doctor stared at one another in blank surprise; the former recovered himself first.

"Whew!" he whistled, between his closed teeth. "Oh, that's it, is it! Well, and supposing he is caught, and that you have caught him, what is that to me?"

It was the governess's turn to be now surprised; she stared at Mr Trump in bewilderment.

"Why—I thought—what do you mean?" she stammered.

"I mean what I say, madam. What is it to me?" said the lawyer, coolly.

"Bless my soul!" still ejaculated the doctor, in that stage of astonishment where one is described as "looking nine ways for Sunday."

Miss Kingscott now recovered herself.

"You must be mad, I think," she said, in her cold, grating voice. "Why, it is everything to you, as it is to me! Markworth is captured, do you hear? He is now arrested for debt; but the charge of murder has to be brought against him, and it is your place to accuse him. I have just left him," she went on hurriedly, dashing out her short, sharp sentences. "He knows that he can expect no mercy from me, or anyone else! The law must now do its part! A warrant must be at once obtained! If you will not come forward and do your duty, I will! The blood of Susan Hartshorne cries out aloud for vengeance!"

"Bless my soul!" said the doctor, aghast at the change in the bashful, timid governess of his former acquaintance, and staring with widening eyes at the stern Medea before him. "Bless my soul! Trump, why she does not know!"

"Whew!" whistled the lawyer again. "And you have told him this?" he inquired aloud of Miss Kingscott. "A fiend of a woman!" he muttered, aside to the doctor.

"Of course I have!" she exclaimed, indignantly. "Who had a better right than I to beard him at last? Have I not waited long enough, and tracked him all these months to have only that satisfaction? But it is come at last! I shall see him hanged, and then I shall be happy; my vengeance will be complete!"

"God bless my soul!" murmured the doctor, in a tone of warm congratulation to himself. "Bless my soul—that she did not catch *me*! Why, she's a regular devil! Worse than twenty dowagers!"

The lawyer, meanwhile, was interrogating Miss Kingscott calmly, without apparently noticing her excitement. He had a wonderful sedative presently wherewith to cool this excitement down.

"And where is Markworth now?" he asked.

"He is where I've just left him, I believe. He was arrested this morning for a debt he owed to a Jew named Solomonson, who had advanced him money for carrying on that suit. He is locked up in a place somewhere in Chancery lane."

"Oh! yes; I know," said Mr Trump, interrupting her; "Abednego's, is it not?"

"Yes, that's the name," answered the governess.

"Hum-m!" ejaculated Mr Trump, musingly. "And you are going to bring this charge of murder against him, eh?"

"I am!" she answered, sternly.

"Well, Miss Kingscott, if you will wait a short time, I will go with you."

"I've waited long enough," she said, impatiently. "Cannot you come now?"

"No, I have some matters to settle first; but, I will not delay; and, besides, I must see Markworth himself first, before anything can be done."

“See Markworth! What do you want to see him for?” she exclaimed, in surprise. “Why I have seen him there already!”

“That’s my business,” Mr Trump said, curtly; “but it will be better for you if you leave it in my hands. Will you meet me in half-an-hour at Abednego’s place in Chancery lane?”

“I suppose I must,” said the governess, after hesitating a moment, for I “cannot act very well without you. But you will be certain to be there, won’t you?”

“I always keep my word,” answered the lawyer, sententiously; “I will be there in half-an-hour.”

“Very well,” said the governess; and she went to the appointed place and passed the time in restlessly walking up and down the pavement in front of the sponging-house, until Mr Trump should come.

At the time appointed—it was now late in the afternoon, and legal hours were nearly over—as punctual as clockwork, Mrs Hartshorne’s lawyer made his appearance. He was accompanied by Doctor Jolly and a lady dressed in deep black, with her face closely veiled.

“Who is she?” asked the governess, pointing to this lady, who leant on the doctor’s arm, and was trembling, as Miss Kingscott could see, although she could not distinguish her face. “Who is she? No stranger has any business with him or me!”

“She has a right to be here,” answered the lawyer, as he rang the bell at the door of the sponging-house; “you will soon know all.”

Miss Kingscott gazed searchingly at the stranger, and gave a start of half-amazement, half-terror; but the lawyer did not give her time to say anything. He asked for Markworth on the door being opened, and the Cerberus told him that he was upstairs in the private room, where he had given orders not to be disturbed.

Mr Trump said he was his lawyer. Cerberus knew his vocation very well, for Mr Trump had paid many visits to clients in Abednego’s retirement before—and he was admitted after a little parley at the door, facilitated by the application of palm oil.

“He’s upstairs on the second floor, the door right fronting you,” shouted the man, after them. “You’ll be sure to find him at home,” he added, with a chuckle at his own joke.

The lawyer led the way up the dirty staircase, followed by Miss Kingscott: while the Doctor and the strange lady were close behind.

Arrived at the door of the room in which Markworth was, Mr Trump knocked in vain for some time. He at length turned, the handle, and the four visitors walked in unbidden.

Markworth was in the corner of the room: they could all see him.

The lawyer called out to him, but got no answer: he went up to him.

The man was dead!

Markworth was sitting in the same place where the governess had left him in his misery. His bowed head lay between his clasped hands: the sun had gone down now, and no longer shone upon him with its golden gleams: his sun also had sunk to rest!

The Doctor went forward and examined him. He had been dead more than an hour he said: cause—heart disease, probably brought on by strong excitement, or a sudden shock.

All were startled at this unexpected appearance of pale death; even his enemy and Nemesis relented as she gazed on the lifeless mask of him whom she had so ruthlessly pursued, and drew back in horror at what she had done.

But the stranger darted forward, and threw herself with a burst of grief on the motionless form of the dead man: sorrow and sympathy, friendship or hate, could no longer affect him now!

As she did so, the stranger threw aside her veil: and the face of the mourner was the face of Susan Hartshorne, whom the dead man had been accused of having murdered.

“Poor thing! poor thing!” murmured the doctor, as he turned away his head and walked towards the window to conceal his emotion. “Bless my soul! It’s a sad pity—a sad pity! But it is better as it is.”

Volume Three—Chapter Thirteen.

Retrospective and Progressional.

In order to explain Susan’s reappearance under these exceptional circumstances, it will be necessary that we should retrace our steps and return to a date some months back in our narrative.

It will be remembered that when Doctor Jolly paid his visit to Havre in the previous winter, he, after enquiring unsuccessfully for Susan at the house of the Mère Cliquelle, in the Rue Montmartre, went off for a walk (to pass the time until his ward should return) in the very same direction that Markworth and Susan, with Clara Kingscott dogging their heels, had taken—towards the heights of Ingouville.

The Doctor picked his steps carefully, for it was dusk, and he was in a strange place, and he wished to establish certain landmarks in his mind, by which he might regain the Rue Montmartre when his stroll was over, and he should think it time to return.

Doctor Jolly had the address of his hotel on a printed card in his pocket: he was not going to make another mistake, such as he had made earlier in the day; and if any doubts arose in his mind as to his exact latitude and longitude, he had resolved to hand the card of the hotel, which he had previously secured, to the nearest policeman or cabman. Oh! the doctor was very ’cute and business-like.

But he did not wish to return there just yet. He wanted to see Susan, and have his mind set at rest about her before the night was over. And so the doctor walked on in a desultory way, carefully studying the topography of the street as he sauntered along, and pondering over recent events in his mind.

He was wondering at the chain of circumstances which had brought him wandering about “this confounded foreign, outlandish place!” at nightfall, and “in the depth of winter too, by Gad!” he soliloquised, as he inhaled the foggy air of the dull November night, which made him puff and wheeze beneath the comforter, which in remembrance of Deb’s solicitude, he still kept carefully wrapped round his neck.

When he came to one of the roads leading up to the heights above, the doctor paused a moment to recover his breath; he had never been “any great hand at walking,” as he would have told you himself; and the distance he had already traversed, short though it was, had by this time affected his wind.

While he was resting a moment, and debating in his mind whether he should ascend the footpath in front of him, or yet retrace his steps to the Rue Montmartre, he heard a sound near him as of one groaning in pain. It was like the noise of the battle to the war-horse, or the salt smell of the sea to a mariner; and the doctor pricked up his ears, all his senses aroused at the idea of pain and suffering being suggested to him: to minister to the ills of nature was his special vocation.

He searched about and followed the sound—it led him up higher to a ledge on the cliff above; and there in the dim twilight he made out the form of a human figure lying stretched on the *débris* which had fallen away with it apparently from the summit above.

To see and perceive was, with the staunch old doctor, but secondary to acting.

He climbed up as hastily as his portly form would permit to the ledge, and bent over a figure, which was nearly motionless. “Bless my soul!” he ejaculated in alarm and surprise. “God bless my soul! Why, it is poor Susan! How on earth did she come here?” As he bent to lift her up she lay like a log in his arms.

The doctor however did not waste any time in vain regrets or in exclamations of wonder: he was a medical man, and his first care was to examine the motionless form of the girl, to see how far she was hurt. She had only fainted, he shortly perceived, and he set to work at once to revive her.

Thanks to a pocket flask of brandy, which he had fortunately brought with him, he soon contrived to put a little life into the girl; and he was able after a time to raise her up, when she opened her eyes and gave a groan of pain. She apparently did not know where she was or recognise the doctor; she only moaned, “Take me home! Take me home!”

One of her arms broken, and a cut on her head; but, otherwise, she had most providentially escaped. She had probably fainted at the time she shrieked out before falling backwards over the cliff. Being thus supine, she could not struggle; so instead of receiving fatal injuries as a man might have done, who attempted to resist his fall she was unhurt, with the exception of a few trifling injuries, which time would soon repair. But she was very much shaken, and the doctor did not know what to do with her, as she could hardly walk, and he was not strong enough to carry her, as he might have done in his earlier days.

The place was quite deserted. The doctor could not see a soul, and much as he disliked Frenchmen, he would have been glad to come across then the most “miserable foreign vagabond” who might have been sent on his way; but no one came, and as it was getting darker and darker, and night coming on, the doctor had to pull his wits together.

He was a man of action: to wager with possible improbabilities his creed, so he did not hesitate long. While the girl was sobbing and moaning to herself, and crying out in half-incoherent language “Allynne! Allynne!” he lifted her up bodily, and tried to get her home to her own place in the *Rue Montmartre*.

But the night was dark, as has been before observed, and the doctor missed the landmarks, which he had so carefully jotted down on the tablets of his memory. He was in the right direction, but when he got to the foot of the street of which he was in search, he lost altogether his *carte du pays*. Just then he saw a *fiacre*, and at the same time he arrived at a sudden determination; what it was, will be presently shown.

The doctor bethought him that he had come over to Havre especially to try and get Susan home, and separate her from Markworth. Why on earth should he take her back now to the place where she would still be with him? Here she was unconscious, and he was her proper guardian appointed by her father. He would—“Yes, I will, I’ll be damned if I don’t!” he said, to himself; “take her back to England on my own account, without asking anybody’s leave or license!” And the doctor carried his determination into effect between that night and the next day.

The *fiacre* arriving opportunely, the doctor hailed it; and lifting Susan in, gave the driver the card of his hotel, “The Queen of Savoy,” which he had kept so carefully in his waistcoat pocket for such an emergency as losing his way: he and his charge—now more recovered—were presently set down at that famous hostelry, where the doctor had Susan at once put to bed, guarding her all the while with jealous watchfulness: he was afraid Markworth might step in at the last moment to claim her, and that his trouble would be thrown away.

In the morning—Susan being still nearly unconscious—he had her carried on board the early packet for England; and the same evening the doctor, to his intense satisfaction, had her on English ground.

At Southampton, Susan was unfortunately taken very ill; and Doctor Jolly could not carry out his intention of removing her at once to his own house as he had intended.

The shock, the fall, the mental anxieties she had suffered, brought on an attack of brain fever; and Susan was for days struggling between life and death. When she was out of danger, the doctor, leaving her in the care of a trustworthy nurse, went home to see about his practice—which he thought must be at sixes and sevens from his prolonged absence—and to make preparations for Susan’s return to The Poplars.

When he got to Bigton, however, the doctor heard of the alarming illness of the old dowager, and his plans became upset.

He went off at once to Hartwood village, and found the old lady unconscious, although the respectable Dobbins, his *locum tenens* had treated her, the doctor allowed, as well as he could have done himself under the sudden paralytic shock she had sustained.

Doctor Jolly had consequently to neglect Susan for a few days, in order to attend to her mother; and when he did go back for her, he determined that he would not bring her home to The Poplars—where everything would remind her of her former life—but would take her to his own house at Bigton.

Here, accordingly, Susan was removed as soon as she was able to travel from Southampton; and here the good old Deb, the doctor’s sister, nursed the girl back to life, and to a knowledge of the past and present, with more than a mother’s care, tenderly aided by the doctor himself.

It may be remembered by the reader, in our retrospect, that Mr Trump met Doctor Jolly soon after he returned from abroad; and the two had some explanation together, which resulted in the fact of the lawyer being pleased with himself at having taken no active part in the proceedings of the French police after Susan’s disappearance and supposed death—although he had inserted a mortuary notice in the *Times*.

Mr Trump’s gratulation is thus easily explained. The advertisement of Susan’s death was not contradicted, in the first place because it was rather late in the day to do it now, and in the second, the doctor advised no steps being taken in the matter, or else Markworth might return and claim the girl.

Mr Trump, however, made one omission, which, as a lawyer, he ought to have attended to earlier. He did not communicate with the French police until some weeks had elapsed—not until in fact after Miss Kingscott had left Havre, in disgust at not hearing anything there of the hunted man, and come to prosecute her watch in London. Thus it was that she knew nothing of these revelations; and the polite Chef did not think it worth his while, or the expenditure of a *dix centimes* stamp, to inform *cette femme diable*, as he termed her, any more about the matter.

When Susan recovered her senses and her memory, the only thing remained fixed in her mind was the idea that Markworth had gone off and left her. She seemed to remember only the words which he had spoken before she had been alarmed and started back to the edge of the cliff that night. She remembered nothing of the fall, and her subsequent removal by the doctor to England. All the present was easily explained to her mind as a natural consequence of what Markworth had told her, that he had to go away, and that he was going to send her back home again; here she was accordingly.

As she became well, however—there could be no question of her reason now, for she was as sensible as possible, although timid in manner, as she always would be—she appeared to dread the idea of being taken back to her mother’s house, which very naturally the doctor had suggested.

As soon as the old lady was able to bear the unexpected news—the doctor and Lizzie had broken to her very gently the fact of Susan, her daughter, whom she supposed dead, and whose death she accused herself of causing, was still alive!—the dowager wanted her immediately to be brought to The Poplars; but when the doctor proposed it to Susan, she shrank back in alarm at the suggestion. The poor girl had such a nervous dread of ever beholding the painful scenes of her miserable childhood, and any allusion to the place or to her mother caused her such trembling fits, and seemed to make her to withdraw herself into herself, that the doctor saw that, for some time at least, the eventuality of Susan’s removal must be postponed.

When matters were explained to the dowager, she agreed with Doctor Jolly that Susan had better remain at his house, although she would not hear of it until he consented to accept remuneration. Fancy how changed the dowager was when she now was anxious to force money on one unwilling to receive it!

Susan still lived, therefore, at Bigton, undisturbed, with the doctor and his worthy sister; indeed, Deb took such a fancy to Susan, with her fair, grief-marked face, and frightened manner, that in a little while—although she at first grumbled at her coming there to interrupt the *tête-à-tête* life of Damon and her Pythias—she could not bear the idea of parting with her: there is no such pet in the world as an “old maid’s child.”

By-and-bye, when Susan was quite recovered, as she expressed a desire to see Havre again, and the house where she had lived so happily with Markworth, the doctor took her over. The Mère Cliquelle and her *petit bon homme*, were delighted to see *La belle Madame* again—it seemed like a resurrection from the dead to them, and they were in a great puzzle about all the circumstances of the case, which the doctor’s explanation, although delivered in his loudest voice, utterly failed to solve.

The Mère Cliquelle and her husband still let lodgings in their comfortable little house in the *Rue Montmartre*; and if you want *un appartement bien garni*, a cheerful hostess, and a landlord who “spiks Inglis,” decidedly broken, and has a partiality for chewing chocolate and bon-bons, you cannot do better than "take their first-floor!"

Although she was anxious to re-visit these scenes again, Susan did not care to stop after she got there. The place made her sad and melancholy, and she said she wished to go away the next day: the doctor, you may be certain, did not oppose her, and they returned to England immediately.

They crossed the Channel, however, *via* Folkestone, and went through London, as Mr Trump wished for Susan to sign some documents referring to the property she inherited under her father's will—property which there was now no chance or loophole left for Markworth to lay claim to.

Thus it was that Doctor Jolly and Susan were both in London on the spot where Clara Kingscott had caught the man she pursued at last.

And here they now were in company with the lawyer, and the woman who so persistently hated him, in the presence of the dead man!

It was a sad shock to Susan; but a more fearful one to Clara Kingscott, who felt herself a betrayer, like Judas Iscariot when he discovered our Saviour with his accursed kiss. Remorse preyed upon her and gave her no rest. She afterwards, it is believed, entered a convent in the South of France, and is now a lay sister of the order of the Bleeding Heart!

Markworth's death released him from all his liabilities! It can be imagined what a wail went up in Jewry when the knowledge that he had escaped them became fully known to those modern Shylocks, Solomonson and Isaacs. They tore their beards, they wept, they cursed by their gods the Gentile who had out-witted them; but it was of no use, they could not get their money back. Death is regardless of human bonds and obligations, and although the Shylocks got much additional avoirdupois weight of flesh beyond their original pound, the Jews thought themselves sadly victimised. They got no pecuniary satisfaction for the large sums they had advanced their former client; even the change which had been left out of Mrs Martin's five pound note did not come to them: it was taken out of the pockets of the dead man by the Cerberus of the sponging-house, who thought it better to appropriate the said moneys to his own use rather than leave them to be a source of wrangling to others.

Seeing that nothing could be got out of him now, the harpies left Markworth's body to its fate. An inquest was held, a verdict given, "Died by the visitation of God," and the unfortunate schemer would have been buried at the expense of the parish, had it not been for Mr Trump, who defrayed the cost out of his own pocket.

Thus ended Markworth's life. He had schemed and planned, it is true, to enrich himself at the expense of others, but he was not, perhaps, so bad altogether, as one would, perhaps, at the first blush suppose. If we were to analyse the men around us, and enquire into the motives which plan their actions, independently of the actions themselves, we might find many whose principles are like those of the man who has been depicted in these pages—many, perhaps, far worse.

Volume Three—Chapter Fourteen.

"See the Conquering Hero comes."

The Abyssinian war was ended! that gallant exploit of British arms, however marvellous in its inception, and second only to the march of Cyrus to the Sea that we read of in Xenophon, was actually *un fait accompli*! The captives were rescued, and the host returned, leaving Abyssinia pretty much as it was before it set out, with the exception of King Theodore being no longer in the land of the living. Peace to the bones of his sable majesty, who deserves some credit for his pluck, even if his ideas on the subject of diplomacy were at fault.

Although we have been saddled with a debt of some ten millions more or less—probably more, on account of the expedition—still it was a glorious feat for our country.

That "Britons never will be slaves," or allow their fellow-countrymen to remain in captivity, is a remarkably comfortable axiom to hug to one's heart cannot be denied; and beyond the credit we have gained from the successful termination of the "war," and the kudos for the manner in which it was carried through from first to last, in spite of apparently insurmountable difficulties, the Abyssinian mission has done much to restore our old Continental reputation.

Sadly tarnished has the latter been of late years by the "old womanish" policy of certain foreign secretaries of ours, in *re* Denmark, and one or two other like matters, not to speak of the moral cowardice and practical stupidity we displayed in the non-recognition of the ill-fated Confederate party in America; but we have not heard the last of that question yet! *Vide* Mr Sumner and the Alabama claims.

It would be useless to the point of our story, as well as out of place here, to chronicle the different steps of the Abyssinian army, so ably detailed by the graphic author of "The March to Magdala."

Suffice it to say that the expedition started and succeeded in its purpose; and our hero, Master Tom, as one of its component parts, may be said to have gone, and seen, and conquered like one of the rest, and was, after a time, on his way home again.

Tom Hartshorne was ignorant of most that had occurred since he left home. He had read and grieved over the intelligence of his sister Susan's death, which he had come across in a stray copy of the *Times* at Zoulla; but his grief was of very short duration, for the very next day after he read the announcement he received a letter from Mr

Trump, telling him that it was all a mistake, and Susan was not dead at all, although his mother, the dowager, was seriously ill. Beyond this—and puzzled he was, too, with the conflicting accounts—Tom knew nothing of the chops and changes brought about at The Poplars and in its neighbourhood during his absence; he had no one to correspond with him, and although he had written frequently to his mother in the meanwhile, the lawyer's letter was the only communication he had received about home matters since he left England, and home, and Lizzie, the year before, for the far East.

His means of information being thus so scant, you may be sure that Tom's imagination was additionally busy; and Tom had plenty to occupy his mind in thinking of a past most important episode in his life, which you may guess was connected with somebody—"you know who"—and allowing his thoughts to dwell on the future, his future, so pregnant for him of joy or sorrow. Which was it to be?

Time alone could tell; and Time, that ill-featured old gentleman, who will persist in playing with edged tools, decided favourably, in spite of his usual malevolence.

Tom came home at last, to find his way smooth, and his lot cast in pleasant places; but it was some time before he did so.

You see he was connected with the staff, and had to return to Bombay with the major portion of the expeditionary army; and there he was detained, arranging this thing and that, until it was waxing late in the summer, when he gazed on the Sunderbunds behind him; late in the summer when he beheld again the donkey boys of Cairo; still latter when he steamed down the Mediterranean and past "The Rock," and up the Bay of Biscay, and landed at Southampton; but he came at last, although the month of August had again come round ere Tom set foot on British soil, and revisited his native place.

The dowager had been "picking up," as Doctor Jolly said, all this time; and although she could not walk about—one of her sides was paralysed still—yet she was very cheerful, and could speak fluently enough.

Lizzie was in the room—the parlour where his mother had told him "Fiddle-de-dee!" when he told his love—with her when he came home—and you may guess the meeting between the three. How the mother sobbed over her darling boy; how she grieved over the change in him; how Lizzie's face wore little tell-tale blushes when he spoke to her; and how he, too, blushed, when his mother called out to him, when he was going to shake hands with her politely—

"Why don't you kiss her, Tom? You know you would, you scamp, if I were not here."

But the old lady would not let him out of her sight; and although Tom was dying to have more explanation with Lizzie, he had to wait for a chance.

When Lizzie rose to go it was late in the afternoon, a bright August afternoon. Tom told her he wanted to speak to her, as she was going to the door, and asked her if he might come down to the parsonage. "He wanted to see Pringle:" he was actually dying to see the young incumbent.

And Lizzie, with a still more tell-tale blush, and a sudden casting down of the pretty violet eyes, and a resting of the long black lashes on her cheek, had murmured to him—

"Come!"

Later on, when the mother and son had had still quieter conversation, and Tom got away, he bent his steps towards the parsonage, his mother wishing him "God speed" on his errand. What on earth could that errand be?

Fortunately, not only was the old campaigner away for the day—she had taken to visiting and bullying the young incumbent's sick parishioners for him now, and priming them with tracts when a cheerful word would have better suited their ailments; but Pringle was also out with his wife, and Tom found Lizzie alone at home—alone in a very little conservatory, which had witnessed his love-tale before, and where he had parted from her, telling her that she was a heartless jilt.

Lizzie was in the self-same little conservatory, pretending to be very busy putting pots up, and poking about with her trowel, as if horticulture was the ultimate aim and end of existence. She was trying to be very unconscious—oh! what a very feeble pretence it was—and endeavoured to receive Master Tom as if he were an ordinary afternoon caller. Such a very faint endeavour it was.

Tom went forward eagerly. He was not going to be baulked this time, and his military experience had taught him that a determined assault was the best way of securing an enemy's capitulation.

He went forward, and with one hand he seized the little taper fingers of the young lady; his other arm, the unblushing dog placed round her waist, forcing Miss Lizzie to drop her trowel, and thus reducing her means of defence.

He looked down into the deep violet eyes which were looking up into his own with—what shall you call it?—wonder or indignation?

"Well, Lizzie!" Tom said.

Lizzie said nothing; but it appeared to be "well." And then what a long tale had to be told. What a number of explanations and conjectures, and enquiries, and assertions!

Tom wanted her to tell him here, in this very spot, where she had treated him so cruelly, that she was sorry for what she had done. Of course she was, and it "should not occur again," with such a supplicating little gesture.

Then Lizzie must be informed over and over again in the strongest terms of assertion that the English language was capable of, whether Tom "really" loved her and cared for her so much.

Imagine the protestations that ensued: the multiplicity of lover's honied words and oaths: then Tom's enquiries to the same effect, which had also to be confirmed, and so *da capo*.

It took a good many "wells" before the interview was satisfactorily terminated, and Tom returned exultant to The Poplars to tell his mother of his happiness.

Volume Three—Chapter Fifteen.

Grand Tableaux.

Typical characteristics, however decided, vary with the effects of time and change; and so the dowager had altered very much for the better, as regards her temper and disposition applied to the amenities of daily life, after that attack of paralysis she had had: the arrival of Tom at home again also did much to effect a cure, and she was now by far a more agreeable old woman than when she was first introduced to our notice.

The certainty that Susan was alive and well, and the knowledge that she was comfortably situated, and no questions of money remaining between them, also tended to preserve the old lady's equanimity; and her direct wish was now to see Tom married and done for—then she said, she would be satisfied, and could go to her grave in peace beneath the green turf of Hartwood churchyard, where many a generation of the Hartshorne's of The Poplars slept their last sleep. Her one desire was to see "her boy" united to her pet Lizzie—that very Lizzie whom she had formerly railed at acrimoniously for "an artful minx!"

Miss Lizzie had certainly played her cards well. She could not have succeeded better in gaining her object if she had schemed ever so shrewdly, like our old friend the campaigner, instead of acting according to the dictates of her own truthful, tender little heart.

The mistress of The Poplars now idolised her, and could not bear the quondam minx to be ever out of her sight. Although Lizzie used to come up every day to see her from the parsonage—now by no means her happy home—and spend long hours reading to her, or casting up her farm accounts, or else working silently by her side, the old lady would grudge her going away; and long before the hour when she generally came up of a day to make her visit, the old lady would be eagerly looking out for her.

The dowager had never relied so on anyone else but herself within the memory of anyone acquainted with her. It was a wonderful transformation in her, and "Garge" and the other servant would canvas each other on the state of the "ould leddy," and since she had given up her scolding and general cantankerousness, they voted unanimously that "she warn't all right—that she warn't," although they, too, took to Lizzie as much as their mistress.

Under these circumstances Lizzie perceived that her presence was so much required at The Poplars that she must make a virtue of necessity, and consent to take the graceless Master Tom for a partner for better or worse. You see Master Tom was so pleading, and he had gone through such a deal for her sake, that she must reward him somehow or other for his constancy; and then old Mrs Hartshorne told her she already looked upon her as a daughter, and entreated her so tenderly to be so in reality, that Lizzie, who as I have said before had a very tender little heart, could not resist all these pleadings combined. Tom did say such nonsense, and went on so, that she must put a stop to it, and they did not want her at the parsonage now! So hadn't she better?

She debated the point, and as a woman who hesitates—Byron tells us, and he ought to have known—generally capitulates, Lizzie "wouldn't," and wound up by consenting. The magnet was very strong, and her heart was such a very susceptible little bit of steel, that she was attracted to the ultimate goal of love, and "the happy day" was fixed.

Summer was gay now again. A year had passed since Tom and Lizzie became first acquainted; and what a wonderful year of events that had been! But it was not so very extraordinary. What a change one year—nay one month, brings to some of us stragglers in the sea of ever-moving life around us!

But the year had passed with all its hopes and fears—with all its troubles and trials, and summer was come again to gladden their heart once more: a summer not only of the season, but one also of joy and happiness, and new-sprung gladness in their hearts. A summer in their lives—May it be the precursor of many such.

The grass was green, so were their memories of what had been, and their thoughts of the future. The sky was bright, so was their horizon of expected bliss. The birds sang gaily, so did their hearts with pent-up happiness. Time, the great arbitrator, ruled propitiously.

On the day Tom Hartshorne came of age, he and Lizzie were married in the gaily-decked chapel at Hartwood. It was a very quiet little wedding though; quite a contrast to the gorgeous ceremony which had taken place so many months previously at Bigton, under the campaigner's auspices, and that worthy lady turned up her nose at the whole affair, and would not grace it with her presence. Indeed, quite a little disagreement had arisen between herself and her son-in-law, the young incumbent, in consequence, the upshot of which was that the campaigner removed her bag and baggage from the parsonage, shaking off the metaphorical dust from her feet, and wondering how "they would get on without her."

They did get on, however, much more satisfactorily. With the era of a mother's abdication, the languid Laura became much more bustling and busy, and the parsonage more like home to its occupants, Pringle appearing again quite in his old colours, and preaching far better sermons now than he had since he entered the bonds of matrimony: he had been quite weighted down by the campaigner's metal.

Lady Inskip, it is believed, husbanded her anger against Carry, and offered to go and conduct the household of the other son-in-law, but the wily Captain Miles having politely declined the offer, the campaigner retreated to a boarding house at Southsea, where she lorded it over the other boarders and watched over the education of her young hopeful, that imp "Morti-mer," who was being instructed in the elements of navigation, at a naval academy, at the well-known watering place, contiguous to the old port of Portsmouth: there we leave her.

Tom Hartshorne was married by the Reverend Jabez, of Bigton, that divine having ceased to regard the young incumbent so unfairly, ever since the Bishop of Chumpchopster had recognised him; and besides, the offices of the Reverend Herbert Pringle were required to give away the bride, the charming little Lizzie.

The solitary bell of the old church rang out as joyfully as it could, and seemed to be a peal all in itself: the affair went off most satisfactorily, the old dowager being wheeled down in a bath chair, in order to be present; and then Tom and Lizzie went off for a three weeks' honeymoon to the Isle of Wight, that blessed spot for novitiates in matrimony.

They then returned, and settled down at The Poplars, and long may they live there happily. Why, it was only the other day they were married, so much cannot be said of their after life. Knowing the fair-haired Saxon Tom, however, and sweet violet eyes so well, you may be pretty certain that you would search long and widely to find a happier couple in the country round.

It was apparently rather young for Tom to marry and settle down, but he was, with his twenty-one years and experience, older than a good many people of nearly ten years advance in age. Some people look and are older than the calendar puts them down. I shall never forget a well-known military friend, who got into the army under age, in consequence of his old looks. He had a magnificent beard at sixteen, and looked as old as thirty. His brother officers in the mess used to swear that poor — was "born" with whiskers!

Poor fellow! He afterwards fell at Lucknow.

Susan still lives at the old doctor's house in Bigton, with the cheery Damon and the austere virgin, "Pythiasina," as she ought to be called. Perhaps when the cycle of cradles and pap and babydom once more come round at The Poplars, and little voices are heard in the grim old house—grim now no longer, but lighted up by Lizzie's presence—the daughter of the house may return again to their old home, and "Garge" be charmed once more with the presence of his dearly loved "Leetle Mees."

She seems very happy in her present place, and has quite recovered from the shock of Markworth's death, and is a very different Susan from the girl of a twelvemonth or so back.

The old dowager is quite changed, too, and is "as merry as a grig, God bless my soul," as the doctor says. She does not grind down the tenants so much now, however, and quite startled a farmer the other day by letting him off a portion of back rent, which he had gone up in fear and trembling to The Poplars to excuse himself from paying just then.

And now, reader, the play is nearly ended—the landscape is completed. The prompter's bell rings, the curtain is about to rise or fall, it does not matter which, and the last touches only remain to be put to the picture, ere the public be admitted to the view, or the scene closes.

In conclusion, it behoves the *Deus et Machina* of the puppet show—the painter of the canvas—to offer some little explanation touching the characters introduced, explanation which will tend, perhaps, to elucidate apparent anachronisms with regard to persons and purposes, and acting like the stray *soupçon* of Chinese white on the superstratum of the finished pencil drawing, heighten the effects of light and shade.

An attempt has been made to portray the struggle of Will *versus* Power, of Opportunity against Destiny; and to show the contests which sometimes arise between the worse and better feelings of our nature, and how each and all of us are often "Caught in a Trap" of our own making! It depends upon the reader to decide whether the attempt has been a success or a failure; and he or she can fit on each passion or feeling to the particular human peg or character on which they think it best should hang.

Above all, the writer wished to draw attention to the looseness of the law, and its vagaries applied to our social and moral life, as evinced in Susan's case. The character and history of the girl is no romance, for Susan is taken from actual existence; still the fallacy of the current ideas on the subject of lunacy and its laws has been already exposed by an abler pictorial pen than that of the writer.

Markworth and Clara Kingscott are no unusual types: search the daily police and criminal intelligence, and you will come across their "doubles." Speaking in the language of the *cuisine*, the meats provided have been fair and hearty, and if the *plat* be over-seasoned or not sufficiently spiced, the blame rests on the *chef*, and not on the viands.

Ring away, prompter! Lower the curtain. The play is ended: *le jeu est fait*. The scene closes on the well-known forms and faces; and, as the curtain drops on the general tableau at the end, I can still see the cheery, weather-beaten face of Doctor Jolly, and hear him exclaiming, in his usual way, with his hearty voice and contagious *bonhomie*—

"Bless my soul, sir! How are you? How-de-doo?"

The End.

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