Title: King of the Castle

Author: George Manville Fenn

Release Date: December 9, 2010 [EBook #34609]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Nick Hodson of London, England

George Manville Fenn

"King of the Castle"

Volume One—Chapter One.

Part of the Garrison.

"Hullo, Claude, going for a walk?"

"Yes, papa."

"Alone?"

"No: Mary is going with me."

"Humph! If you were as giddy as Mary, I'd—I'd—"

"What, papa?"

"Don't know; something bad. But, Claude, my girl."

"Yes, dear?"

"Why the dickens don't you dress better? Look at you!"

The girl admonished turned merrily round, and stood facing an old bevelled-glass cabinet in the solid-looking, well-furnished library, and saw her reflection—one which for some reason made her colour slightly; perhaps with pleasure at seeing her handsome oval face with soft, deep brown hair, and large dark, well-shaded eyes—a face that needed no more display to set it off than the plain green cloth well-fitting dress, held at the throat by a dead gold brooch of Roman make.

"Well, papa," she said, as she altered the sit of her natty, flat-brimmed straw hat, "what is the matter with my dress?"

The big-headed, grey-haired man addressed gave his stiff, wavy locks an impatient rub, wrinkled his broad forehead, and then smiled in a happy, satisfied way, his dark eyes lighting up, and his smile driving away the hard, severe look which generally rested upon his brow.

"The matter?" he said, drawing the girl on to his knee and kissing her. "I don't understand such things; but your dress seems too common and plain."

"But one can't wear silks and satins and muslins to scramble among the rocks and go up the glen."

"Well, there, don't bother me. But dress better. If you want more money you can have it. You ought to take the lead here, and there were ladies on some of the yachts and on the pier yesterday who quite left you behind.—Yes! What is it?"

"Isaac Woodham, from the quarry, sir, would like to see you," said a servant.

"Confound Isaac Woodham! Send him in."

The servant retired, leaving his master muttering.

"Wants to spend money in some confounded new machinery or something. I made all my money without machinery, Claude, but these people want to waste it with their new-fangled plans."

“But, papa dear, do speak more gently to them.”

“What! let them be masters and eat me out of house and home? Not such a fool.”

“But, papa—”

“Hold your tongue. Weak little goose. You don’t know them; I do. They must be ruled—ruled. There: be off, and get your walk. Seen Mr Glyddyr to-day?”

The girl flushed scarlet.

“Hallo, pussy; that brings the colour to your cheeks.”

“No, papa; indeed I—”

“Yes, I know. I say, Claudie, fine handsome fellow, eh? Bit too pale for a yachtsman. But what a yacht! Do you know he came in for three hundred and fifty thousand when his father died?”

“Indeed, papa?” said the girl carelessly.

“Yes! Old Glyddyr was not like your grandfather, confound him.”

“Papa!”

“Con—found him! Didn’t I speak plain? Glyddyr left his boys a slate quarry in Wales for the eldest, and three hundred and fifty for the younger. Parry’s the younger. Eh? Nice fortune for a handsome young yachtsman, Claudie. There, go and have your walk, and keep Mary out of mischief.—Well?”

This was to a hard, heavy-looking man in working clothes, covered with earth stains and stone dust, who was ushered into the room, and who, ignoring the speaker’s presence, stood bowing awkwardly, cap in hand, and changing it from right to left and back.

“Quite well, thank ye, miss, and sent her dooty to you.”

“I’m very glad, Woodham. Remember me kindly to Sarah, and tell her I shall call at the cottage soon.”

“Yes, yes,” said the old man impatiently, following his daughter to the door; “go on now. I have business with Woodham. Don’t be so familiar with the work-people,” he whispered, as he closed the door after the girl, who ran lightly to the foot of the great carved oak staircase, to call out merrily,—

“Not ready, Mary?”

“Yes; coming, coming, coming,” and a quaint, mischievous-looking little body came tripping down the stairs, halting slightly as if from some form of lameness, which her activity partly concealed. But no effort or trick of dress could hide the fact that she was deformed, stunted in proportion, and with her head resting closely between her shoulders, which she had a habit of shrugging impatiently when addressed.

“Oh, do make haste, Mary, or we shall have no time before lunch.”

“Yes, I know. You’ve seen him go by.”

“For shame, Mary!” said Claude, flushing. “You are always thinking of such things. It is not true.”

“Yes, it is; and I don’t think more of such things than you do. ‘Oh, ’tis love, ’tis love, ’tis love that makes the world go round,’” she sang, in a singularly sweet, thrilling soprano voice, her pretty but thin keen face lighting up with a malicious smile. But the old song was checked by Claude’s hand being clapped sharply over her mouth.

“Be quiet, and come along. Papa will hear you.”

“Well, I daresay he wants to see his darling married. Take away your hand, or I’ll bite it.”

“You’re in one of your mocking moods this morning, Mary, and you really make me hate you.”

“Don’t tell fibs,” said the deformed girl, throwing her arms lovingly about her companion. “You couldn’t hate anybody, you dear old pet; and why shouldn’t you have a true, handsome lover?”

“Oh, Mary, you are insufferable. You think of nothing else but lovers.”

“Well, why not, Claudie?” said the girl with a sigh, and a peculiarly pinched look coming about her mouth, as her clear, white forehead wrinkled up, and her fine eyes seemed full of trouble. “One always longs for the unattainable. Nobody will ever love me, so why shouldn’t I enjoy seeing somebody love you?”

“Mary, darling, I love you dearly.”

“Yes, pet, like the dearest, sweetest old sister that ever was. You worship poor old humpty dumpty?”

“Don’t ridicule yourself. Mary dear.”

“Why not? But I meant no nice, handsome Christopher Lisle will ever want to look in my eyes and say—”

“Will you be quiet, Mary? Why will you be always bringing up Mr Christopher Lisle? I never tease you about Mr Gullick.”

“Because—because—because—” She did not finish her speech, but burst out into a loud, ringing laugh, full of teasing, malicious mirth, till she saw Claude’s flushed face, and then she stopped short.

“There, I’ve done. Which way shall we go?”

“I don’t care. I feel as if I’d rather stay at home now.”

“No, no; I won’t tease. Shall we go as far as the town?”

“No; anywhere you like.”

“Say somewhere.”

“Not I. You’ll only tease me, and say I had some reason. I’ll only go where you choose.”

“Then you shall, dear. We’ll go up the east glen to the fall, and then cross over the hill and come back by the west glen, and you shall tease me as much as you like.”

“I don’t want to tease you.”

Mary made a grimace as she looked sidewise at herself, but she coloured a little, and was silent for a time.

They were already some hundred yards from the great, grey granite mansion, which stood upon a bald bluff of cliff, built within the past thirty years, and by the fancy of its architect made to resemble a stronghold of the Norman times, with its battlements, towers, frowning gateway, moat and drawbridge crossing the deep channel, kept well filled by a spring far up in one of the glens at the back, while the front of the solid-looking, impregnable edifice frowned down upon the glittering sea.

“See how grand Castle Dangerous looks from here,” said Mary Dillon, as they were about to turn up the glen. “Don’t you often feel as if we were two forlorn maidens—I mean,” she cried merrily, “a forlorn maiden and a half—shut up in that terrible place waiting for a gallant knight and a half to come and rescue us from the clutches of ogre-like Uncle Gartram?”

“Mary, darling,” said Claude affectionately, “if you knew how you hurt me, you would cease these mocking allusions to your affliction.”

“Then I will not hurt you any more, pet. But I am such a sight.”

“No, you are not. You have, when in repose, the sweetest, cleverest face I ever saw.”

“Let’s be in repose, then.”

“And you know you are brilliant in intellect, where I am stupid.”

“Oh! if I could be as stupid!”

“And you have the sweetest voice possible. See what gifts these are.”

“Oh, yes, I suppose so, Claudie, but I don’t care for them a bit—not a millionth part as much as having your love. There, don’t let’s talk nonsense. Come along.”

She hurried her companion over a bridge and towards a path roughly made beside the babbling stream which supplied the moat at the Fort, and then in and out among the rocks, and beneath the pensile birches which shed a dappled shade over the path, while every here and there in gardens great clumps of fuchsias and hydrangeas showed the moist warmth of the sheltered nook.

They walked quickly, Claude urged on by her companion, who climbed the steep path with the agility of a goat, till they reached a fall, where the water came tumbling over the hoary, weather-stained rocks, and the path forked, one track going over the stream behind the fall, and the other becoming a rough stairway right up the side of the glen.

“Hadn’t we better go this way?” said Claude timidly, indicating the route to the left.

“No; too far round,” said Mary peremptorily. “Come along,” and she began to skip from rock to rock and rough step to step, up the side of the glen, Claude following her with more effort till they reached the rugged top of the cliff, and continued their walk onward among heather bloom and patches of beautifully fine grass, with here and there broken banks, where the wild thyme made the air fragrant with its scent.

“This is ten times as nice as going through the woods,” cried Mary. “You seem to get such delicious puffs of the sea breeze. *Vorwarts*!”

She hurried her companion on for about a mile, when the track turned sharply off to the right, and a steep descent led them to the banks of another stream which was gradually converging towards the one they had left, so that the two nearly joined where they swept down their rocky channels into the sea.

“This is ten times as good a way, Claudie. I always think it is the prettiest walk we have. Look what a colour the fir trees are turning, with those pale green tassels at the tips; and how beautiful those patches of gorse are. I wish one

could get such a colour in paintings."

She chatted on merrily as they descended the stream, with its many turns and zigzags, through the deep chasm along which it ran; and whenever Claude appeared disposed to speak, Mary always had some familiar object to which she could draw her companion's attention. In fact, it seemed as if she would not give her time to think, as she noted that a quick, nervous look was directed at the stream from time to time.

A stranger might have thought Claude was nervous about the risks of the path as it went round some pool, with the rocks coming down perpendicularly to the deep, dark water. Or that she was in dread of encountering graver difficulties in the lonely ravine, whose almost perpendicular sides were clothed with growth of a hundred tints. Far beneath them, flashing, foaming, and hurrying on with a deep, murmuring sound, ran the little river, from rapid to fall, and from fall to deep, dark, sluggish-looking hole; while in places the trees, which had contrived to get a footing in some crevice of the rock, overhung the river, and threw the water beneath into the deepest shade.

They reached, at length, a more open part, where the sun shone down brightly, and their way lay through a patch of moss-grown hazel stubbs, which after a few steps made a complete screen from the sun's rays, and they walked over a verdant carpet which silenced every footfall.

"We shall have plenty of time," said Mary, as they reached the farther edge of the hazel clump, "and we may as well sit down on the rocks and read."

"No, not now," said Claude hastily. Then in an agitated whisper, as a peculiar whizzing noise was heard: "Oh, Mary, this is too cruel. Why have you brought me here?"

"Because it was not considered good for Adam to live alone in Paradise. There's poor Adam alone and disconsolate, fishing to pass time away. Paradise in the glen is very pretty, but dull. Enter Eve. Now, Claude, dear, show yourself worthy of the name of woman. Go on!"

Volume One—Chapter Two.

Things go Crooked.

Norman Gartram returned to his seat, looking rigid and scowling as he gazed fiercely at the workman.

"Well?" he said sharply.

"Don't believe she can be his bairn," said the workman to himself, as he returned his employers angry stare.

"I said *Well*!"

"I heard you, master. Needn't shout."

"What do you want?"

"Come about the big block at the corner. Time it was blasted down."

"Then blast it down; and how many more times am I to tell you to say *sir* to me?"

"You're my master, and pay me my wage, and I earn it honest. That's all there is between us, for the Lord made all men equal, and—"

"Look here, Isaac Woodham, once for all I will not have any of your Little Bethel cant in my presence. Now about this block; let it be deeply tamped, and the powder put well home."

"I'm going to blast it down with dinnymite."

The elder man flushed up scarlet, and the veins in his forehead swelled up into knotted network.

"Once for all—" he thundered.

"There, don't get in a way, master," said the man coolly. "If you go on like that you'll be having another fit, and I'm sure you oughtn't to cut short such a life as yours."

"Isaac Woodham, one of these days you'll tempt me to knock you down. Insolent brute! And now, look here; I've told you before that I would not have dynamite used in my quarry. I'll have my work done as it always has been done—with powder. The first man who uses a charge of that cursed stuff I'll discharge."

"It's better, and does its work cleaner," grumbled the man sullenly; and he gave his superior a morose look from under his shaggy brows.

"I don't care if it's a hundred times better. Go and blast the block down with powder, as it always has been done, I tell you again. I want my men; and there's no trusting that other stuff, or they're not fit to be trusted with it. Now go, and don't come here again without being summoned."

"Too grand for the likes o' me, eh, Master Gartram?"

"Will you have the goodness to recollect that you are speaking to a gentleman, sir?"

“I’m speaking to another man, I being a man,” said Woodham sturdily. “I don’t know nothing about no gentlemen. I’m speaking to Norman Gartram, quarry-owner, who lives here in riches and idleness upon what we poor slaves have made for him by the sweat of our brows.”

“What does this mean?” cried the old man. “Have you turned Socialist?”

“I’ve turned nowt. But as a Christian man I warn you, Norman Gartram, that for all your fine house and your bags of money, and company and purple and fine linen, ‘the Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away.’”

“You—”

“There, I’m going to do my work honest, master, and earn my wages.”

“And blast that granite down with powder, sir.”

“I know my work,” grumbled the man, and he backed out of the room without another word.

Norman Gartram—the King of the Castle, as he was called at Danmouth—stood listening to the man’s footsteps, at first heavy and dull as they passed over the carpet, and then loud and echoing as he reached the granite paving outside, till they died away, and then, with his face still flushed, he laid his hand gently on his temples.

“A little hot,” he muttered. “A fit? Enough to give any man a fit to be spoken to like that by the canting scum. They’re spoiled, that’s what it is—spoiled. Claude is always fooling and petting them, and the more there is done for them the worse they work, and the more exacting they grow. I believe they think one’s capital is to be sunk solely to benefit them. What the deuce do you want now?”

This to the servant, who had timidly opened the door.

“I beg your pardon, sir.”

“If it’s some one from the quarry, tell him I’m engaged.”

“Mr Glyddyr, sir.”

“Why didn’t you say so before? Where is he?”

“In the drawing-room, sir.”

Norman Gartram sprung at once from his chair, hurriedly crossed the room, stepped out of the window on to the granite paving, which did duty in his garden for a gravel walk, carefully closed the French casement, and locked it with a small pass-key he carried in his pocket, and walked round to the verandah in front of the house, entering by the French window of the drawing-room, where a tall, handsome man of about thirty was leaning against a table, apparently admiring the brown leather shoes which formed part of his yachting costume.

“Ah, Mr Glyddyr, glad to see you. Kept your word, then?”

“Oh, yes; I always do that,” said the visitor, shaking hands warmly. “Not come at an inconvenient time, have I—not too busy?”

“Never too busy to receive friends,” said Gartram. “Sit down, sit down.”

“Miss Gartram none the worse for her visit to the yacht?”

“Oh, by no means; enjoyed it thoroughly.”

“I could see that little Miss Dillon did, but I thought Miss Gartram seemed rather bored.”

“Oh dear, no; nothing of the kind; but you’ll have something?”

“Eh? No, thanks. Too early.”

“A cigar?”

“Cigar? Oh, come, I can’t refuse that.”

“Come into my room, then. Obliged to obey the female tyranny of my household, Mr Glyddyr. I’m supposed to be master, but woman rules, sir, woman rules. My daughter does what she pleases with me.”

“Happy man!”

“Eh?”

“I say happy man, sir, to be ruled by such a queen.”

Norman Gartram gave him a keen look.

“Don’t pay compliments, sir—society compliments. We are out of all society. I’ve kept my daughter out of it. Only a tradesman.”

“Lord Gartram’s brother a tradesman, sir?”

“Yes; why not? Why shouldn’t he be? My father left my brother and me with a few hundred pounds a-piece, and the prestige of being nobleman’s sons, sir. I had to consider what I should do—loaf about through drawing-rooms as a beggarly aristocrat, always in debt till I could cajole a rich girl into making me her poodle; or take off my coat and go to work like a man. Be a contemptible hanger-on, too poor to dress well, or a sturdy, hardworking human being.”

“And your choice, sir?” said the visitor, inquiring for what he knew by heart.

“The latter, sir. I bit my nails down to the quick till I had an idea—sitting out on this very coast. I was yonder smoking a bad cigar which my brother had given me. I couldn’t afford to buy cigars, neither could he, but he bought them all the same. I sat smoking that cigar and thought out what I was sitting upon—granite—and went back to the hotel where we were staying, and told my brother what I had thought out. He called me a fool, and went his way. I, being a fool, went mine.”

“Yes, sir?”

“My brother,” said Gartram, “married a shrewish, elderly woman with some money. I spent all I had in buying a few acres of the cliff land by the side of this coast. Brother Fred said I must be mad. Perhaps I am; but my cliff quarry has supplied granite for some of the finest buildings in England. It has made me a rich man, while my Lord Gartram has to ask his wife for every shilling he wants to spend—when he does not ask me. But here, come along; I never know when to stop if I begin talking about myself. This way.”

He led the visitor into his study, unlocked an oaken door in the wall with a bright key, and it swung open heavily, showing that the oak covered a slab of granite, and that the closet was formed of the same glittering stone.

“Curious place to keep cigars, eh? All granite, sir. I believe in granite. Take one of these,” he continued, as he carelessly placed a couple of cedar boxes on the table. “Light up. I’ll have one too. Bad habit at this time in the morning, but one can’t be always at work, eh?”

“No, sir; and you work too hard, if report is correct.”

“Hang report!” said the old man, taking a cigar, throwing himself back in a chair, and gazing at his visitor through his half-closed eyes. “That a good one?”

“Delicious!” said the visitor laconically, and there was silence.

“What do you think of my place, eh?”

“Solid. Quite stand a siege.”

“I meant it to, sir. There isn’t a spot where I could use granite instead of wood that it is not used. Granite arches instead of beams everywhere. When I have my gate locked at night, I can laugh at all the burglars in Christendom.”

“Yes; I should think you are pretty safe here.”

There was another pause, broken by Gartram saying suddenly, in a loud, sharp voice,—

“Well?”

The visitor was a cool man about town, but the query was so sudden and unexpected that he started.

“Well, Mr Gartram?”

“Why did you come this morning?”

“You asked me to look in—a friendly call.”

“Won’t do. If you had meant a friendly call you would have come in the afternoon. You don’t want to borrow money?”

“Good heavens, sir! No.”

“Then out with it, lad. You are not a boy now. I am an old man of the world; speak out frankly, and let’s get it done.”

“You guess the object of my visit, then, sir?”

“No; I can feel it. Besides, I’m not blind.”

Parry Glyddyr looked at his host with a half-amused, half-vexed expression of countenance.

“No,” he said thoughtfully, in reference to Gartram’s last remark; “I suppose not, sir. Well, it is an awkward thing to do, and I may as well get it over. I will be frank.”

“Best way, sir, if you wish to get on with me.”

Glyddyr cleared his throat, became deeply interested in the ash of his cigar, and lolled back in his easy chair, quite conscious of the fact that his host was scanning him intently.

“I can sail my yacht as well as the master, Mr Gartram; I have a good seat in the hunting field, and I don’t funk my hedges; I am a dead shot; you know I can throw a fly; and I am not a bad judge of a horse; but over a talk like this I am a mere faltering boy.”

“Glad to hear it, sir, and hope it is your first essay. Go on.”

“Well, I came here nine months ago to repair damages after a storm, and you did me several pleasant little services.”

“Never mind them.”

“I came again at the end of another three months in fine weather.”

“And you have been here several times since. Go on.”

“Yes, sir,” said Glyddyr, smiling; “but are all fathers like you?”

“No,” said Gartram, with a hoarse laugh; “I am the only one of my kind. There, we have had enough preamble, Parry Glyddyr. Out with it.”

“I will, sir. You say you are not blind. You know, then, that I was deeply impressed by Miss Gartram the first time we met. I treated it as a temporary fancy, but the feeling has grown upon me, till I can only think of doing one thing—coming to you as a gentleman, telling you frankly I love Miss Gartram, and asking your permission to visit here regularly as her accepted suitor.”

“What does Claude say to this?”

“Miss Gartram?” said Glyddyr, raising his eyebrows, and removing the grey ash from the end of his cigar; “nothing, sir. How could I be other than the ordinary acquaintance without your sanction?”

“Quite right,” said Gartram, looking at him searchingly, “how, indeed?” and he remained gazing at the unshrinking countenance before him, full of candour and surprise at his ignorance of etiquette till he covered his own eyes. “Then Claude knows nothing of this?”

“I hope and believe, sir, that she knows a great deal, but not from my lips. Women, I believe, are very quick in knowing when they are admired.”

“Humph! And you like my daughter, Mr Glyddyr?” said Gartram, exhaling a huge cloud of smoke.

“I love Miss Gartram very dearly, sir,” said the visitor frankly; “so well that I dare not even think of the consequence of a refusal.”

“Broken heart, suicide and that sort of thing, eh?”

“I hope I should never make a fool of myself, Mr Gartram,” said Glyddyr coldly.

“So do I. Now look here, sir. I gave up society to become a business man—slave driver some people politely call me; but as a tradesman I have been so tricked and swindled by everybody, even my banker, that I have grown suspicious.”

“I don’t wonder, sir. Without going into trade, a man has to keep his eyes open to the rascality of the world.”

“Yes,” said Gartram, scanning the speaker keenly still. “Then now, sir, let me ask you a question.”

“By all means; as many as you like.”

“Then pray, sir, if my daughter had been a penniless girl, would you have felt this deep admiration for her?”

“Mr Gartram!” said Glyddyr haughtily, as he flushed deeply and rose from his chair. “Bah!” he added, after a pause, and he let himself sink back, and smoked heavily for a few moments. “Stupid to be so put out. Quite a natural question. Really, sir,” he said, smiling, and looking ingenuously in the old man’s face, “fate has been so kind to me over money matters that fortune-hunting has not been one of my pursuits. In round numbers, my father left me three hundred thousand pounds. Golden armour, sir, against the arrows of poverty, and such as turns aside so fierce a stab as that of yours. Has Miss Gartram any money?”

“Humph! I have,” said the old man roughly.

“If she has, so much the better,” continued Glyddyr, smoking calmly, and evidently thoroughly enjoying his cigar. “A lady with a private purse of her own no doubt occupies a more happy and independent position than one who appeals to her husband for all she wants. I am sorry that our conversation has taken this turn, Mr Gartram,” he added stiffly.

“I’m not, Glyddyr. It has shown you up in another light. Well, what do you want me to say?”

“To say, sir?” cried the young man eagerly.

“Yes. There, I don’t think I need say anything. Yes, I do. I don’t like the idea of Claude marrying any one, but nature is nature. I shall be carried off some day by a fit, I suppose, and when I am, I believe—slave driver as I am, and oppressor of the poor, as they call me, for making Danmouth a prosperous place, and paying thousands a year in wages—I should rest more comfortably if I knew my child was married to the man she loved.”

“Mr Gartram.”

“I haven’t done, Glyddyr.”

There was a pause, during which the old man seemed to look his visitor through and through. Then he held out his hand with a quick, sharp movement.

“Yes,” he said; “I like you, my lad: I always did. You think too much of sport; but you’ll weary of that, and your whole thoughts will be of the best and truest girl that ever lived.”

“Then you consent, Mr Gartram?” cried Glyddyr with animation.

“No: I consent to nothing. You’ve got to win her first. I give you my leave, though, to win if you can; and if you do marry her—well, I daresay I can afford to buy her outfit—trousseau—what you may call it.”

“Mr Gartram—”

“That will do. Be cool. You haven’t won her yet, my lad.”

“I may speak to her at once?”

“If you like; but my advice is—don’t. Lead up to it gently—make sure of her before you speak. There, I’m a busy man, and I’ve got to go up the east river to look at a vein of stone which crops up there. Take another cigar, and walk with me—if you like.”

“I will, sir. Try one of mine.”

“Yes,” said Gartram laconically; and as they went out into the hall, he purposely picked out his worst hat from the stand, and put it on.

“Old chap wants to make me shy at him, and show that I don’t like walking through the town with that hat. Got hold of the wrong pig by the ear,” said Glyddyr to himself.

They walked along the granite terrace, with its crenellated parapet and row of imitation guns, laboriously chipped out of the granite; and then out through the gateway and over the moat, and descended to the village, reaching the path leading to the east glen, and were soon walking beside the rushing salmon river, with Gartram pointing out great veins of good granite as it cropped out of the side of the deep ravine.

“Hang his confounded stone!” said Glyddyr to himself, after he had made several attempts to change the drift of the conversation.

“Fine bit of stuff that, sir,” said his companion, pointing across the river with his heavy stick. “I believe I could cut a monolith twenty feet long out of that rock, but the brutes won’t let me have it. My solicitor has fought for it hard, but they stick to it, and money won’t tempt them. I believe that was the beginning of my sleeplessness—insomnia, as Asher calls it.”

“Asher?”

“Yes; our doctor. You must know him. Pleasant, smooth-spoken fellow in black.”

“Oh, yes; of course.”

“Worried me a deal, that did.”

“And you suffer from insomnia?”

“Horribly. Keep something to exorcise the demon, though,” he said laughingly, taking a small bottle from his pocket. “Chloral.”

“Dangerous stuff, sir. Take it cautiously.”

“I take it as my medical man advises.”

“That is right. Of course I remember Doctor Asher, and that other young friend of yours—the naturalist and salmon fisherman, and—”

“Oh, Lisle. Yes; sort of ward of mine. I am his trustee.”

“Quite an old friend, then, sir?”

“Yes; and—eh?” said the old man laughingly. “Why, Glyddyr, I can read you like a book. Is there, or has there ever been, anything between Claude and Christopher Lisle? I should think not, indeed. Rubbish, man, rubbish! and—”

They had just turned one of the rugged corners of the glen, and there before them in the distance was Chris Lisle helping Claude to catch a fish—his words, of course, inaudible, but his actions sufficiently demonstrative to make Parry Glyddyr press his teeth hardly together, and the owner of the granite castle grip his stick and swear.

Volume One—Chapter Three.

Lesson the First.

Things that seem far-fetched are sometimes simple matters of fact. Just as Claude was glancing back, and feeling as if she would give anything to be back home, a dove among the trees in the fern-clad glen began to coo, and Mary laughed.

“There,” she said, “only listen. You can’t go back now. It would be absurd.”

“But you are so imprudent,” whispered Claude, whose cheeks were growing hotter. “How could you?”

“I wanted to see you happy, my darling coz,” was whispered back. “I saw him coming here with his fishing-rod, and —”

“But, Mary, what will Chris Lisle think?”

“Think he’s in luck, and bless poor little humpy, fairy godmother me, and—no, no, too late to retreat. We have been seen.”

For as they had passed out into an open part of the glen where the river widened into a pool, there, only a short distance from them, and with his bright, sun-browned face directed toward the river, was a sturdy, well-built young fellow, dressed in a dark tweed Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers, busily throwing a fly across the pool till, as if intuitively becoming aware that he was watched, he looked sharply round.

The next moment there was again the peculiar buzzing sound made by a rapidly-wound-up multiplying winch, the rod was thrown over the young man’s shoulder, and he turned to meet them.

“Ah, little Mary!” he cried merrily; and then, with a voice full of tender reverence, he turned, straw hat in hand, to Claude.

“I did not expect to see you here.”

“And I am as much surprised,” she said hastily. “Mary and I were having a walk.”

“And now we are here, Mr Lisle, you may as well show us all your salmon,” said Mary seriously.

“My salmon! I haven’t had a rise.”

“And we have interrupted you, perhaps, just as the fish are biting. Come, Mary. Good-morning, Mr Lisle.”

“Oh!”

Only a little interjection, but so full of reproach that Claude coloured here deeply, and more deeply still as, upon looking round for her companion, she found her comfortably seated upon a mossy stone, and with her head turned away to hide the mischievous delight which flashed from her eyes.

“I’m beginning to be afraid that I have offended you, Miss Gartram—Claude.”

“Oh, no; what nonsense. Come, Mary.”

The stone upon which she sat was not more deaf.

“Don’t hurry away. I thought I was some day to give you a lesson in salmon fishing.”

“I should never learn, Mr Lisle; and, besides, it is not a very ladylike accomplishment.”

“Anything you did, Claude, would be ladylike. Come, I know there are two or three salmon in this pool. They will not rise for me; they might for you.”

“I should scare them away.”

“No,” said the young man meaningly; “you would attract anything to stay.”

“Mr Lisle!”

“Well, what have I said? There, forgive me, and take the rod. You promised I should show you how to throw a fly.”

“Yes, yes; but some other time—perhaps to-morrow.”

“To-morrow comes never,” said the young man laughingly. “No; I have my chance now. Miss Dillon, did not your cousin promise to let me show her how to catch a salmon?”

“Yes; and I am so tired. I’ll wait till you have caught one, Claude.”

“There,” cried the young man hurriedly; and the stronger will prevailing over the weaker, Claude allowed her instructor to thrust the lithe rod he held into her hands, and, trembling and blushing, she suffered herself to be led to the side of the pool.

“I shall never learn,” she said.

“Not learn! I shall be able to come up to the Fort carrying your first salmon, and to say to Mr Gartram: ‘there, sir; salmon fishing taught in one lesson,’ What do you say to that?”

“How can she be so foolish?—Of what am I talking?—Mr Lisle, pray let me go.”

All silent sentences, but as the last was thought Claude raised her eyes to her companion, to meet his fixed upon hers, so full of tender, reverent love that she dropped her own, and fell a-trembling with a joy she tried vainly to crush down, while her heart beat heavily the old, old theme,—

“He loves me well—he loves me well.”

They had known each other since they were boy and girl, and the affection had slowly and steadily grown stronger and stronger, but Chris Lisle had said to himself time after time that it was too soon to tell her his love, and ask for the guardianship of her heart; and he had waited, feeling satisfied that some day Claude Gartram would be his.

“There,” he said playfully, “now for lesson the first. Let me draw out some more line. That’s the way. Now, you know as well as I do how to throw. Try to let your fly fall amongst that foam below where the water rushes into the pool. That’s the way. Bravo!”

“There, Mr Lisle,” cried Claude, after making a very fair cast, “now take the rod, for I must go. Mary, dear, come along.”

“Sha’n’t,” said Mary to herself, as she grew more deaf than ever. “Gather your rosebuds while you may, dear. He’s a nice, good fellow. Ah! how I could have loved a man like that.”

“Mary Dillon is too much interested in her book,” said Chris. “There, that’s plenty of line for a good cast. You must go on now. It isn’t so very wicked, Claude.”

“There, then, this one throw and I must go,” said the girl, her cheeks burning, and her head seeming to swim, for she was conscious of nothing—running river, the foam and swirl, the glorious landscape of rugged glen side, and the bright sun gilding the heathery earth upon which she stood—conscious of nothing save the fact that Chris Lisle was by her, and that his words seemed to thrill her to the heart, while in spite of herself he seemed to have acquired a mastery over her which it was sweet to obey.

“Well back,” he cried; “now then, a good one.”

It was not a good cast, being a very clumsy one, for the fly fell with a splash right out in a smooth, oily looking patch of water behind some stones. But, as is often the case, the tyro is more successful than the tried fisherman. The fly had no sooner touched the water than there was a rise, a singing whirr from the winch, and Chris shouted aloud with joy.

“There!” he cried. “You have him. First lesson.”

“Have I caught it?”

“Yes, yes; hold up the point of your rod.”

Claude immediately held it down, and the line went singing out, till Chris darted close behind his pupil and seized the rod, just over her hands, raising the top till it bent nearly double.

“A beauty!” he cried excitedly. “You lucky girl!”

“Thank you. That’s right. Now, take the rod and pull it out.”

“No, no,” he said, with his lips close to her ear, and she trembled more and more as she felt his crisp beard tickle the back of her neck, and his strong arms tightly press hers to her sides; “you must land him now.”

Away darted the salmon wildly about the pool, but Claude could not tell whether it was the excitement caused by the electric messages sent through the line, or by the pressure of Chris Lisle’s hands as he held hers to the rod.

“Mary, come and see Mr Lisle catch this salmon,” she cried huskily; but Mary only turned over a leaf, and seemed more deaf than ever, while the fish tugged and strained.

“Mr Lisle, loose my hands now. This is absurd. What are you doing?”

“Telling you I love you,” he whispered, in spite of himself, for the time had come, “Claude, dearest, better than my life.”

“No, no; you must not tell me that,” she said, half tearfully, for the declaration seemed to give her pain.

“I must. The words have come at last.”

“And you have lost your fish,” cried Claude for the line had suddenly become slack.

“But have I won you?”

“No, no. And pray let me go now.”

“No?”

There was so much anguish in the tone in which that one little word was spoken, that it went right to Claude’s heart, and as if involuntarily, she added quickly,—

“I don’t know.”

“Claude, dearest,” he whispered, and his voice trembled as the words were breathed in her ear, “for pity’s sake don’t trifle with me.”

“I am not trifling with you. I told you the truth. I don’t know.”

“Ah, that’s not catching salmon,” came sharply from behind them. “Claude, dear, don’t listen to him. He’s a wicked fortune-hunter.”

Chris started away from Claude as if some one had struck him a violent blow.

“Mary!” cried Claude.

“Oh, I beg your pardon. What did I say?”

Whizz!

“Mr Lisle! Help!” cried Claude, for the line had suddenly tightened, the top of the rod bent over in a curve, and the winch sang out as it rapidly revolved.

“Take the rod, please, Mr Lisle,” continued Claude, in a voice full of emotion; and, as he took it without a word, she saw that he was deadly pale, and that his white teeth were pressing hard upon his nether lip.

He played the fish mechanically, and with Claude steadily looking on, and feeling as if she would like to run home to shut herself in her own room and throw herself upon her knees and sob. But the face before her held her as by a chain, and she turned with a bitter look of reproach upon her cousin, as she saw the way in which Chris was stung.

“Don’t look at me like that, dear,” cried Mary, “the words slipped out. I did not mean them, indeed. It’s a big fish, isn’t it, Mr Lisle? Shall I gaff it for you?”

“Thank you,” he said drearily; and Mary picked up the bamboo staff with the glistening hook at the end.

“Oh, I do beg your pardon, Mr Lisle.”

“Granted,” was the laconic reply.

“Don’t, pray, don’t punish me for saying those words,” cried Mary. “There, finish your lesson in love and fishing. Claude,” she whispered, as the young man had to follow the fish a few yards down the stream, “you’ve caught him tightly; shall I gaff him as well?”

“Yes; you had better finish your lesson, Miss Gartram,” said Chris, walking back slowly winding in the line, and speaking in a hard, cold tone.

“No; you had better finish,” she replied hastily; and then, as she saw the cloud deepening on his brow, she stepped forward quickly, and laid her hand on the rod. “Yes, let me finish, Chris,” she said, and she gazed at him with her eyes full of faith and trust.

“Claude,” he whispered, as he gave her the rod, “you couldn’t think—”

“Hallo! What’s this?” cried a harsh voice, and all started, so suddenly had Norman Gartram—followed closely by his visitor—stepped up to where they stood.

“Mr Lisle giving Claude and me a lesson in fishing,” said Mary sharply. “Now, Claude, dear, wind in and I’ll hook him out.”

“Most interesting group,” said Parry Glyddyr, with rather a contemptuous look at the teacher of the art.

“Very,” said Norman Gartram, frowning. “Here, Claude, stop that fooling and come home.”

“Mary, Mary, what have you done?” whispered Claude, as they walked away.

“Made a mess of it, darling, I’m afraid.”

As they turned a corner of the glen, with her father’s guest talking about what she did not know, Claude stole a glance back, to see Christopher Lisle standing with his hands resting upon the rod he held, and a bright, silvery fish lying at his feet.

The girl’s heart went on beating heavily with pulsations that seemed as full of pleasure as of pain.

Volume One—Chapter Four.

“All to Bits!”

Mary Dillon did the greater part of the talking on the way home, Gartram saying scarcely a word, but making great use of his eyes, to see how Glyddyr took the unpleasant *contretemps*.

“And just after what I had said to him,” muttered Gartram. “The insolent young scoundrel! The miserable, contemptible pauper! How dare he?”

But Glyddyr’s behaviour was perfect, and excited Gartram’s wonder.

“He can’t have seen what I did,” he thought, “or he would never talk to her so coolly.”

For, ignoring everything, and as if he was blind to what had passed, Glyddyr dashed at once into a series of inquiries about Danmouth, and the weather in the winter.

“Do the storms affect the place much?” he said, looking at Claude.

“Knock the pots off sometimes, and always wash the slates clean,” said Mary, before Claude could reply.

“Not pleasant for the inhabitants,” said Glyddyr, after giving Mary a quick, amused glance before turning again to Claude. “But at the Fort, of course, you are too high up for the waves to reach?”

“Salt spray coats all the windows, and makes the walls shine,” interposed Mary.

“What will he think of me?” thought Claude; and then she wondered that she did not feel sorry, but that all the time, in spite of her father’s fiercely sullen looks, a peculiar kind of joy seemed to pervade her breast.

Glyddyr talked on, but he was completely talked down by Mary, who felt that the kindest thing she could do was to draw every one’s attention from her cousin, till they had passed through the little town, and nearly reached the Fort, where they were met by a rough-looking workman, who ran unceremoniously towards them, caught hold of Gartram roughly, and cried out, in wild excitement,—

“Come on to the quarry at once.”

“What’s the matter—fall of rock?” cried Gartram.

“Blasting—Woodham—blown all to bits,” panted the man.

“Then he has been using dynamite.”

“Nay; soon as we picked him up, he said it was the cursed bad powder.”

“Bah! Where is he?”

“We took him home, and I fetched the doctor, and then come on here.”

“Run home, girls. No, Mr Glyddyr, see them in. I’m going on to my workmen’s cottages.”

He hurried off, and Glyddyr turned to Claude.

“I’m sorry there is such terrible news,” he began; but Claude did not seem to hear him.

“Make haste, Mary,” she said hurriedly. “Bring brandy and wine, and join me there.”

“My dear Miss Gartram, are you going to the scene of the accident?”

Claude looked at him in an absent way.

“I am going to the Woodhams’ cottage,” she said hurriedly. “Sarah Woodham was our old servant. Don’t stop me, please.”

She hurried along the narrow road leading west, and it was not until she had gone some hundred yards following the messenger, who was trotting heavily at Gartram’s heels, that she realised that she was not alone.

“Mr Glyddyr!” she exclaimed.

“Pray pardon me,” he said, in a low, earnest voice. “As a friend, I cannot let you go alone at a time like this.”

Claude looked up at him wildly, but there was so much respectful deference in his manner that she could say nothing. In fact, her thoughts were all with the suffering man and woman—the victims of this deplorable mishap.

It was nearly half-a-mile along the rough cliff road; and it was traversed in silence, Claude being too much agitated to say more.

The scene was easy enough to find when they were approaching the place, for a knot of rough quarry workmen were gathered round a clean-looking, white-washed cottage, from out of whose open door came the harsh tones of a man’s voice, while the crowd parted left and right, and several placed the short black pipes they were smoking hurriedly in their pockets.

Claude had nearly reached the door when the words which were being uttered within the cottage seemed to act like a spell, arresting her steps and making her half turn shuddering away, as they seemed to lash her, so keenly and cuttingly they fell.

“Curse you! curse you! It’s all your doing. You’ve murdered me. Sarah, my girl, he has done for me at last.”

Gartram's voice was heard in low, deep, muttering tones, as if in reproof; but the injured man's voice overbore it directly, sounding shrill and harsh from agony as he cried,—

"Let every one outside hear it. Hark ye, lads, I wanted to use the dinnymite, but he made me use the cursed old powder again, and he has murdered me."

"My good man," said a fresh voice, which sounded clear in the silence, "you must be calm. It was a terrible accident."

"Nay, doctor, it's his doing; it's his meanness. I wanted him to use the dinnymite, and he would keep to powder. He has murdered me."

There was a low groan, and then a terrible cry; and as Glyddyr mentally pictured the scene within, of the doctor dressing the injuries, he turned to the trembling girl beside him.

"Miss Gartram," he whispered, "this is no place for you. There is plenty of help. Let me see you home."

She shook her head as she looked at him wildly, and, making a deprecating gesture, Glyddyr turned to one of the men.

"Is he very bad?" he whispered.

"Blowed a'most to bits," said the man in a hoarse whisper.

"Did the powder go off too soon?"

"It warn't powder at all," said the man, as Gartram stepped quickly out of the cottage. "It were the dinnymite. He would use it, and he warn't used to its ways."

It was evident from the peculiar tightening of Gartram's lips that he had heard the man's words; and he turned back and re-entered the cottage, for his name was sharply pronounced within.

Then there was another groan, and the injured man cried,—

"Don't, don't; you're killing me."

At that moment a thin, keen-looking woman of about thirty rushed out of the cottage, her eyes wild and staring, and her face blanched, while her hands and apron were horribly stained.

"I can't bear it," she cried; "I can't bear it!" and she flung herself upon her knees in the stony road, and covered her face with her hands, sobbing hysterically.

The sight of the suffering woman roused Claude to action; and as she took a couple of steps forward, and with the tears falling fast, laid her hand upon the woman's shoulder, a low murmur arose among the men, and Glyddyr saw that they drew back respectfully, several turning right away.

"Sarah, my poor Sarah," said Claude, bending low.

At the tender words of sympathy and the touch of the gentle hands, the woman let her own fall from her face, and stared up appealingly at the speaker.

Claude involuntarily shrank away from the ghastly face, for the hands had printed hideous traces upon the woman's brow.

The shrinking away was momentary, for, recovering herself. Claude drew her handkerchief from her pocket, to turn in surprise as it was drawn from her hand, but she directly gave Glyddyr a grateful look, as she saw him step to a rough granite trough into which a jet of pure water was pouring from the cliff, and saturating it quickly, he returned the handkerchief to its owner.

But before the blood stains could be removed, the voice of the injured man was heard calling.

"Sarah! Don't leave me, my girl. He has murdered me."

The woman gave Claude a wild look, rose from her knees, and tottered back to the cottage as the voice of Gartram was heard in angry retort.

"Its like talking to a madman, Ike Woodham," came clear and loud; "but you've got hurt by your own wilful obstinacy, and you want to throw the blame on me."

As he spoke, Gartram strode out of the cottage, and then whispered to his child,—

"Come home, my dear. You can do no good."

"No, no; not yet, papa," she whispered. "I must try if I can help poor Sarah in her terrible trouble."

A low murmur arose from the little crowd, and this seemed to excite Gartram.

"Well," he cried fiercely, "what does that mean? It was his own fault—in direct opposition to my orders; and this is not the first accident through your own folly."

The low, angry muttering continued.

“Here, come away, Claude,” cried Gartram fiercely, as he looked round at the lowering faces.

“He has murdered me, I tell you!” came from the open cottage door.

“Bah!” ejaculated Gartram angrily, and he strode away, but returned directly.

“Are you coming, my girl?”

“Yes, papa, soon. Let me see if I can be of use.”

“Look here, Mr Glyddyr,” said Gartram, speaking in a low, excited voice, “I can’t stop. I shall be saying things that will make them mad. See after Claude, and bring her home. The senseless idiots! If a man bruises himself with his own hammer, it is blamed on me.”

He strode away, and ignoring Glyddyr’s presence, Claude was moving softly toward the door, when the man who had brought the message held out his hand to arrest her.

“Don’t go in, dear bairn,” he said in a husky whisper; “it isn’t for the likes of you to see.”

“Thank you, Wolfe,” she said calmly, “I am not afraid.”

But at that moment, as Glyddyr was about to make a protest, a quiet-looking, gentlemanly man appeared at the door turning down his cuffs, the perspiration glistening upon his high white forehead as he came out into the sun.

“No, no, my dear child,” he said in a whisper, as a low moaning came from within and seemed to be followed by the low soft washing of the waves below. “You can do no good.”

“Is—is he very bad, Doctor Asher?” asked Claude.

He looked at her for an instant or two without replying, and then bent his head.

“Oh!” ejaculated Claude, with a low cry of pain.

“Terribly crushed, my dear; better leave them together alone.”

“But—you do not think—oh, Doctor Asher, you can save him?”

“Is it so bad as that, sir?” whispered Glyddyr, as he saw the peculiar look in the doctor’s face. “Couldn’t you—with more help—shall I send?”

“My dear sir,” said the doctor in a low voice, “half a dozen of the crack London surgeons couldn’t save him.”

“Oh!” sighed Claude again. “But a clergyman. Mr Glyddyr, would you go into Danmouth?”

“Better not, my dear child,” said the doctor quietly. “You know their peculiar tenets. His wife was praying with him when I came out.”

As if to endorse the doctor’s words, the low, constant murmur of a voice was heard from within, and from time to time a gasping utterance was heard, and then twice over the word “Amen.”

Just then Claude stepped softly toward the open doorway, and sank upon her knees with her hands clasped, and her face turned up appealingly toward the sunny sky, while all around seemed full of life, and hope, though the black shadow of death was closing in upon the humble roof. And as Glyddyr saw the sweet, pure, upturned face, with its closed eyes, he involuntarily took off his hat, and gazed wistfully, with something very near akin to love seeming to swell within his breast.

The silence was very deep, though the murmur from the cottage continued, till, in the midst of what seemed to be a painful pause, a loud and bitter wail came upon the stillness, and the doctor hurriedly stepped within.

“Poor Ike’s cottage is to let, mates,” said a rough, low voice; “who wants to make a change?”

“Dead?” asked Claude, with a motion of her lips, as after a short space the doctor returned.

“No; the draught I have given him to dull the pain has had effect: he is asleep.”

“And when he awakes, Doctor Asher?” whispered Claude, as she clung to his arm.

The doctor shook his head.

“Can you do nothing?”

“Only try to lull the pain,” was the reply. And then quickly, “Wanted somewhere else?”

This last was to himself as a man was seen running toward them, and Claude turned if possible paler as she recognised one of the servants from the Fort.

He ran up breathlessly.

“Miss Claude—Doctor Asher,” he panted. “Come at once. Master’s got another of his fits.”

Volume One—Chapter Five.

The Doctor is King.

“Don’t be flurried, my dear,” said Doctor Asher, as, in a calm, business-like way, he saw to Gartram being laid easily on the floor, where he had fallen in the study.

“But he looks so ghastly. You do not think—”

“Yes, I do, my child,” said the doctor cheerfully. “Not what you think, because I know. He has another fit precisely the same as the last, and it was evidently a sudden seizure, just as he had risen from his chair, after writing that letter.”

“Then there is no danger?”

“Oh, dear, no. That’s right, you see. We’ll have this mattress on the floor; and he can lie here. Don’t be alarmed.”

“But I am horribly alarmed.”

“Then you must not be, my child. I will not conceal the fact from you that he will probably be subject to more fits, and may have one at any time.”

“But I feel so helpless.”

“So does a doctor, my dear. We try all we can, but time has to perform the greater part of the cure, after we have done all we can to avoid suffocation, and the patient injuring himself in his struggles. There, there; he’s going on all right, and you’ve been a very good, brave girl. I quite admire your behaviour all through; and another time, if I am not here, you will know exactly how to act.”

“Oh, don’t talk of another time, Doctor Asher.”

“Well, I will not,” he said, smiling. “Now, don’t be alarmed, but keep perfectly cool, for I must go back and see to that poor fellow at the quarry.”

“Yes, of course. But, doctor, if my poor father should be taken worse?”

“He will not be taken worse, but gradually mend. I shall not be very long away.”

“No, no; pray don’t be long.”

“No; and mind you are my assistant. So you must be cool and self-possessed. Shall I send Miss Dillon to sit with you?”

“Yes, please, do,” said the agitated girl, as she gazed wildly at her father’s altered face.

Doctor Asher seemed rather to resemble a very smooth, black tom cat, and, as he drew down his cuffs, and passed his white hands over his glossy coat, an imaginative person would not have been much surprised to see him begin to lick himself, to remove a few specks caused by the business in which he had been engaged.

As he left the study and crossed the hall, with its polished granite flooring, his delicate manner of proceeding toward the drawing-room, and stepping from one to another of the oases of Eastern rugs, was still like the progress of the cat who believed the polished granite to be water, and tried to avoid wetting his paws.

When he laid his hand upon the drawing-room door, a murmur of voices came from within, and, as he entered, Mary Dillon jumped up from the low ottoman upon which she had been seated, talking to Glyddyr, and ran quickly to the doctor’s side.

“How is he?” she said excitedly.

“Better, certainly. Miss Gartram wants you to go and stay with her.”

“Yes, of course. Good-bye, Mr Glyddyr, and thank you for being so kind.”

She spoke as she ran to the door, jerked the last words back over her shoulder, and was gone, leaving the doctor face to face with the visitor.

“How is he?” said the latter. “You can speak plainly to me.”

“To be sure I can, my dear sir. Ah, what a world this is. Yesterday we were taking our champagne in the saloon of your charming yacht, to-day—”

“You are keeping me waiting for an answer,” said Glyddyr, rather stiffly.

“So I am,” said the doctor, smiling. “Well, how is he? Rather bad. Nasty fit of his usual sort.”

“Then he is subject to these fits?”

“Most decidedly.”

“But what caused it?”

“Worry. From what I can gather, he must have some upset when out walking. Our friend has a temper.”

“Ah!” ejaculated Glyddyr.

“Then he has had some quarrel with this poor fellow who is hurt. The terrible accident followed, and, with the customary crass obstinacy of rustic, ignorant workmen, the poor fellow and his comrades lay the blame of a trouble, caused by their own stupidity, upon their employer.”

“Yes, I see. Caused great mental disturbance?”

“Exactly, my dear sir. He being a man who, in the labour of making money, has nearly worried himself to death.”

“Yes.”

“And who now worries himself far more to keep it.”

“Ah, money is hard to keep,” said Glyddyr, with a smile.

“He has found it so, sir. When the old bank broke years ago, it hit him to the tune of many thousands.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes; and that set him building this place for his protection. I shouldn’t wonder if he has quite a bank here.”

“Indeed! The the old man is rich?”

“Rich! I thought every one knew that. Better be poor and happy.”

“As we are, eh, doctor? Well, it’s a terrible worry—money.”

This was accompanied by a peculiar look which the doctor interpreted, and replied to with one as suggestive.

“No danger, I hope, to the old gentleman?”

“No, no. Fits are not favourable to health, though.”

“Well, no danger this time, I hope?”

“Not a bit. He’ll feel the shock for a few days. That’s all.”

“And the other patient?”

“Hah, yes; I’m just going over there.”

“He is very bad, you say?”

“Bad! I expect to find him gone.”

The doctor nodded, and left the room.

“Bah! how I do hate them,” said Glyddyr. “I’d have walked down with him, but I always feel as if I were smelling physic.”

Glyddyr stood tapping the bottom of his watch, which he had just taken from his pocket, as he talked in a low tone, just as if he were conversing with the little round face before him.

“How wild the old boy was—just after he had been talking to me as he had. Pshaw! I don’t mind. Rustic bit of courtship. Half-bumpkin sort of fellow, and poor as Job. Old man wouldn’t have him at any price. The gipsy! Been carrying on with him, then, eh? Well, it’s always the way with your smooth, drooping little violets. Regular flirtation. I don’t mind. I wouldn’t give a dump for a girl without a bit of spirit in her. It’s all right. Friends at court—a big friend at court. But no more fits for friends—at present, I hope. I’ll get him to come on a cruise, and bring her. Tell the old boy it will do him good. Get the doctor on my side, and make him prescribe a trip round the islands, with him to come as medical attendant. Nothing to do, and unlimited champagne. Real diplomacy. By Jupiter, Parry, you are a clever one, though you do get most awfully done on the turf!”

“Yes,” he said, after another look at the watch, for the purpose now of seeing the time, “that’s the plan—a long sea trip round the islands, with sentiment, sighs and sunsets; and, as they said in the old melodramas, ‘Once aboard the lugger, she is mine.’ For, lugger read steam yacht, schooner-rigged *Fair Star*, of Cowes; Parry Glyddyr, owner.”

He laughed in a low, self-satisfied way, and then moved toward the door.

“Well, it’s of no use to wait here,” he said. “They will not show up again. I can call, though, as often as I like. Come again this evening, and see her then. She can’t refuse. I’ll go now and see how the salmon fisher is getting on.”

Volume One—Chapter Six.

In Charge.

“Mary, dear, don’t deceive me for the sake of trying to give me comfort,” said Claude, as she knelt in the study, beside the mattress upon which her father lay breathing stertorously.

“Claude, darling, I tease you and say spiteful things sometimes, but you know you can trust me.”

“Yes, yes, dear, I know; but you don’t answer me.”

“I have told you again and again that your father is just like he was last time, and the best proof of there being no danger is Doctor Asher staying away so long.”

“It’s that which worries me so. He promised to come back soon.”

“Don’t be unreasonable, dear. You know he went to the quarry where that man is dangerously hurt.”

“Yes. Poor Sarah! How she must suffer! It is very terrible. But look now, Mary—that dark mark beneath papa’s eyes.”

“Yes, I can see it,” said Mary, rising quickly, and going to the table, where she changed the position of the lamp, with the result that the dark shadow lay now across the sleeper’s lips. “There, that is not a dangerous symptom, Claudie.”

“Don’t laugh at me, Mary. You can’t think how I alarmed I am. These fits seem to come more frequently than they used. Ought not papa to have more advice?”

“It would be of no use, dear. I could cure him.”

“You?”

“Yes; or he could cure himself.”

“Mary!”

“Yes,” said the little, keen-looking body, kneeling down by her cousin’s side; “uncle has only to leave off worrying about making more money and piling up riches that he will never enjoy, and he would soon be well again.”

Claude sighed.

“See what a life he leads, always in such a hurry that he cannot finish a meal properly; and as to taking a bit of pleasure in any form, he would think it wicked. I haven’t patience with him. Yes, I have, poor old fellow—plenty. He has been very good to miserable little me.”

“Of course he has, dear,” said Claude, throwing her arms about her cousin’s neck and kissing her, with the result that the sharp-looking, self-contained little body uttered an hysterical cry, clung to her, and burst out sobbing wildly, as if all control was gone.

“Mary, darling, don’t, pray don’t. You distress me. What is the matter?”

“I’m miserable, wretched,” sobbed the poor girl, with her face hidden in her cousin’s breast. “I always seem to be doing something wrong. It’s just as if, when I tried to make people happy, I was a kind of imp of mischief, and caused trouble.”

“No, no, no! What folly.”

“It isn’t folly; it’s quite true. See what I did this morning.”

Claude felt her cheeks begin to burn, and she tried to speak, but the words would not come.

“I knew that Chris Lisle had gone up the east river fishing, and I was sure he longed to see you, and I was quite certain you wanted to see him.”

“Mary, be silent,” cried Claude, in an excited whisper; “it is not true.”

“Yes, it is, dear. You know it is, and I could see that he was miserable, and had been since you went on board Mr Glyddyr’s yacht, so I felt that it would be quite right to take you round there, so that you might meet and make it up. And see what mischief I seem to have made.”

“Yes,” said Claude gravely, as she metaphorically put on her maiden mask of prudery; “and you know now that it was very, very thoughtless of you.”

“Thoughtless!” said Mary, looking up with a quick look, half-troubled, half-amused; “didn’t I think too much?”

“Don’t talk, Mary,” said Claude primly. “You may disturb poor papa. It was very wicked and meddlesome and weak, and you don’t know what harm you have done.”

Mary Dillon’s face was flushed and tear-stained, and her eyes looked red and troubled; but she darted a glance at her cousin so full of mischievous drollery, that Claude’s colour deepened, and she turned away troubled, and totally unable to continue the strain of reproof.

She was spared further trouble by a cough heard in the hall.

“Wipe your eyes quickly, Mary,” she whispered; “here is Doctor Asher at last.”

Mary jumped up, and stepped to the window, where she was half hidden by the curtains, as there was a gentle tap at the door, the handle was turned, and the doctor, looking darker and more stern than ever, entered the room.

He whisperingly asked how his patient had been, as he went down on one knee by the mattress, made a short examination, and turned to Claude, who, with parted lips, was watching him anxiously.

“You think him worse?” she whispered.

“Indeed I do not,” he said quickly. “Nothing could be better. He will sleep heavily for a long time.”

“But did you notice his heavy breathing?”

“Of course I did,” said the doctor rising, “and you have no cause for alarm. Ah, Miss Mary, I did not see you at first.”

“Don’t deceive me, Doctor Asher,” said Claude, in agonised tones; “tell me the worst.”

“There is no worse to tell you, my dear child. I dare say your father will be well enough to sit up to-morrow.”

“Thank heaven!” said Claude to herself. Then, turning to the doctor: “How is poor Isaac Woodham?”

“Don’t ask me.”

“How dreadful!”

“Yes; it was a terrible accident.”

“But is there no hope?”

“You asked me not to deceive you,” said the doctor gravely. “None at all.”

Just then the sick man moaned slightly in his sleep, and made an uneasy movement which took his daughter back to his side.

“Don’t be alarmed, my child,” said the doctor encouragingly; “there is nothing to fear.”

“But I am alarmed,” said Claude; “and I look forward with horror to the long night when I am alone with him.”

“You are going to sit up with him?”

“Of course.”

“Divide the night with your cousin.”

“Yes—but—”

“Well—what is it?”

“Oh, Doctor Asher, don’t leave him. Pray, pray, stay here.”

“But I have to go and see that poor fellow twice during the night.”

“I had forgotten him,” sighed Claude. “Couldn’t you stop here, and go and see him in the night?”

“Well, I might do that,” said the doctor thoughtfully; “but really, my child, there is no necessity.”

“If you could stop, Doctor Asher,” interposed Mary, “it would be a great relief to poor Claude, who is nervous and hysterical about my uncle’s state.”

“Very well,” was the cheerful reply. “I’ll tell you what; I’ll sit with you till about nine, and then go and see poor Woodham. Then I’ll come back and stay up with Mr Gartram till about three, when you shall be called to relieve me.”

“But I shall not go to bed,” said Claude decidedly.

“I am your medical man, and I prescribe rest,” said the doctor, smiling. “I don’t want any more patients at present. You and your cousin will go and lie down early, and then come and relieve me, so that I can go and see poor Woodham again. After that I shall return here, and you can let me have a sofa ready, to be called if wanted. There, I am the doctor, and a doctor rules in a sick house.”

“Must I do as you say?” asked Claude pleadingly.

“Yes; you must,” he replied; and so matters were settled.

Doctor Asher walked down to the quarry cottage to see his patient there, and did what he could to alleviate the poor fellow’s pain, always avoiding the inquiring look in the wife’s eyes, and then he returned to the Fort.

“How is he now?” asked Claude anxiously.

“Very bad,” was the reply.

“You will find coffee all ready on the side-table, doctor,” said Claude; “and there is a spirit lamp and the stand and glasses. There are cigars on the shelf; but you will let me sit up too?”

“To show that you have no confidence in your medical man.”

“Oh, no, no; but Mary and I might be of some use.”

“And of none at all to-morrow, my dears. You must both go to bed, and be ready to relieve me.”

“But is there anything else I can do to help you?”

“Yes; what I say—go to bed at once.”

Claude hesitated a few moments, and then walked quickly to the side of the mattress, knelt down, kissed her father lovingly, and then rose.

“Come, Mary,” she said. “And you will ring the upstairs bell if there’s the slightest need?”

“Of course, of course. There, good-night; I shall ring punctually at two.”

He shook hands, and the two girls left the room unwillingly, and proceeded slowly upstairs.

“Well lie down in your room, Mary,” said Claude; “it is so much nearer the bell. Do you know, I feel so dreadfully low-spirited? It is as if a terrible shadow had come over the place, and—don’t laugh at me—it seemed to grow darker when Doctor Asher came into the room.”

“What nonsense! Because he is all in black.”

“Do you think he is to be trusted, Mary?”

“I don’t know. I don’t like him, and I never did. He is so sleek and smooth, and I hate him to call us ‘my dear’ in that nasty, patronising, paternal sort of way.”

“Then let’s sit up.”

“No, no. It would be absurd. I daresay we should feel the same about any other doctor.”

“I do hope he will take great care of poor papa,” sighed Claude; and the door closed after them as they entered their room.

If Doctor Asher was not going to take great care of Norman Gartram, it was very evident that he was going to take very great care of himself, for as soon as he was alone he struck a match, lit the spirit lamp, lifted the lid of the coffee pot, and found that it was still very hot, and then, removing a stopper in the spirit stand, he poured out into a cup a goodly portion of pale brandy.

He had just restored the stopper to the spirit decanter, saying to himself, “Nice, thoughtful little girl!” when Gartram moaned and moved uneasily.

The doctor crossed to him directly, went down on one knee, and felt to see that his patient’s neck was well opened.

“Almost a pity not to have had him undressed,” he said to himself. “What’s the matter with you—uncomfortable? Why, poor old boy,” he continued, with a half laugh, as his hands busily felt round the sick man, “how absurd!”

He had passed a hand through the opening in Gartram’s shirt front, and after a little effort succeeded in unbuckling a cash belt which was round his patient’s waist, drawing the whole out, and noting that on one side there was a pocket stuffed full and hard as he threw the belt carelessly on the table.

“Nice wadge that for a man to lie on. There, old fellow, you’ll be more comfortable now.”

As if to endorse his words, Gartram uttered a deep sigh, and seemed to settle off to sleep.

“Breeches pockets full too, I daresay,” muttered the doctor; “and shouldn’t be surprised if there’s a good, hard bunch of keys somewhere in his coat. Doesn’t trouble him, though.”

He rose, and went back to the tray at the side, filled the already primed coffee cup and carried it to the table, wheeled forward an easy chair, selected a cigar, which he lit, and then threw himself back and sipped his coffee and smoked.

“Yes, sweet little girl Claude,” he thought; “make a man a good wife—good rich wife, and if—no, no, not the slightest chance for me, and I’ll go on as I am, and make the best of it.”

He had another sip.

“Delicious coffee, fine cigar. Worse things than being a doctor. We get as much insight of family matters as the parsons, and are trusted with more secrets.”

He laughed to himself as he lay back.

“Yes, nice little heiress, Claude,” he said again. “Wonder who’ll get her—Christopher the salmon fisher, or our new

yachting friend? I think I should back Glyddyr."

He smoked on, and thought seriously for some time about his other patient, and after a time he emitted a cloud of smoke which he had retained in his mouth, as he turned himself with a jerk from one side of his great easy chair to the other.

"No," he said, "impossible to have done more. The Royal College of Surgeons couldn't save him."

He smoked on in silence, sipping his coffee from time to time, gazing the while at Gartram, upon whom the light shone faintly, just sufficient to show his stern-looking, deeply-marked face.

"Yours is a good head, my dear patient," he mused. "Well-cut features, and a look of firm determination in your aspect, even when your eyes are closed. You miss something there, for you have keen, piercing eyes, but for all that you look like what you are, a stubborn, determined Englishman, who will have his own way over everything so long as his works will make him go. When they run down, he comes to me for help, and I am helping him. Yes, you were sure to get on and heap up money, and build grand houses, and slap your pocket-book and say: 'I am a rich man,' and 'I laugh at and deride the whole world,' and so you do, my dear sir, all but the doctor, who, once he has you, has you all his life, and can do what he likes with you. I have you hard, Norman Gartram, and I am licenced; I have you completely under me, and so greatly am I in possession of you, that I could this night say to you die, and you would die; or I could bid you live, and you would live. A simple giving or a simple taking. A movement with the *tactus eruditus* of a physician, and then the flag would be down, the King of the Castle would be gone, and a new king would reign in the stead—or queen," he added, with a laugh.

"Ah, you people trust us a great deal, and we in return trust you—a very long time often before we can get paid. Not you, my dear Gartram, you always were a hard cash man. But you people trust us a great deal, and our power is great.

"And ought not to be abused," he said hastily. "No, of course not. No one ought to abuse those who trust. Capital coffee this," he added, as he partook of more. "Grand thing to keep a man awake.

"Humph! Tired. Ours is weary work," and he yawned.

"I believe I should have been a clever fellow," mused the doctor, "if I had not been so confoundedly lazy. There's something very interesting in these cases. In yours, for instance, my fine old fellow, it sets one thinking whether I could have treated you differently, and whether I could do anything to prevent the recurrence of these fits."

He smoked on in silence, and then shook his head.

"No," he said, half aloud; "if there is a fire burning, and that is kept burning, all that we can do is to keep on smothering it for a time. It is sure to keep on eating its way out. He has a fire in his brain which he insists upon keeping burning, so until he quenches it himself, all I can do is to stop the flames by smothering it over by my medical sods. You must cure yourself, Norman Gartram; I cannot cure you. No, and you cannot cure yourself, for you will go on struggling to make more money that you have no use for, till you die. Poor devil!"

He said the last two words aloud, in a voice full of pitying contempt. Then, after another sip of his coffee, he looked round for a book, drew the lamp close to his right shoulder, and picked up one or two volumes, but only to throw them down again; and he was reaching over for another when his eye fell upon the cash belt with its bulging contents.

"Humph," he ejaculated, as he turned it over and over, and noted that it had been in service a long time. "Stuffed very full. Notes, I suppose. Old boy hates banking. Wonder how much there is in? Very dishonourable," he muttered; "extremely so, but he has placed himself in my hands."

He drew out a pocket-book.

"Wants a new elastic band, my dear Gartram. Out of order. I must prescribe a new band. Let me see; what have we here? Notes—fivers—tens—two fifties. Droll thing that these flimsy looking scraps of paper should represent so much money. More here too—tens, all of them."

He drew forth from the pockets of the book dirty doubled-up packets of Bank of England notes, and carelessly examined them, refolding them, and returning them to their places.

"What a capital fee I might pay myself," he said, with an unpleasant little laugh; "and I don't suppose, old fellow, that you would miss it. Certainly, my dear Gartram, you would be none the worse. Extremely one-sided sometimes," he said, "to have had the education of a gentleman and run short. Yes, very."

He returned the last notes to the pocket, and raised a little flap in the inner part.

"Humph! what's this? An old love letter. No: man's handwriting:—'instructions to my executors.'"

He gave vent to a low whistle, glanced at the sleeping man, then at the door, and back at his patient before laying down the pocket-book, and turning the soiled little envelope over and over.

"Not fastened down," he muttered. "I wonder what—Oh, no: one can't do that."

He hastily picked up the pocket-book, and thrust the note back into its receptacle, but snatched it out again, opened it quickly, and read half aloud certain of the sentences which caught his attention—"'Granite closet behind book cases—vault under centre of study—big granite chest'."

“Good heavens!” he said, after a pause, during which he read through the memorandum again; then refolding it and returning it to the envelope, he hastily placed the writing in its receptacle, and in turn this was put in the pocket-book. Lastly, the book was returned to the pouch in the belt, which latter was thrust hastily into one of the drawers of the writing-table, the key turned and taken out.

“Give it to Mademoiselle Claude,” he said, with a half laugh. “What an awkward thing if I had been tempted to behave as some would have done under the circumstances.”

He took out a delicate lawn handkerchief, unfolded it, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and then proceeded to do the same to his hands, which were cold and damp.

“That coffee is strong,” he said, “or it is my fancy; perhaps the place is too warm.”

He walked up and down the room two or three times, gazing anxiously at the bookshelves, and then at the table, where the floor was covered with a thick Turkey carpet; but he turned away and refilled his cup with coffee and brandy, found that his cigar was out, and threw the stump away before helping himself to a fresh one, and smoking heavily for some time, evidently thinking deeply.

Then, apparently unable to resist the temptation, he rose and walked to the door, opened it and listened, found that all was silent, closed it again, and after glancing at his patient, who was sleeping heavily, he hastily drew out the key, opened the drawer, and, after a momentary hesitation, took out the belt.

In another minute, the yellow looking memorandum was in his hands, being studied carefully before it was restored to its resting-place, and again locked up.

“I did not know I had so much curiosity in my nature,” he said, with a half laugh. “Well, the study of mankind is man, doesn’t some one say, and I’m none the worse for a little extra knowledge of a friend’s affairs. I might be called upon to give advice some day.”

Oddly enough, the knowledge again affected the doctor so that he wiped his brow and hands carefully, and then sat gazing thoughtfully before him as he sipped and smoked and seemed to settle down into a calm, restful state, which at times approached drowsiness.

Upon these occasions he rose and softly paced the room, stopping to listen to his patient’s breathing, and twice over feeling his pulse.

“Could not be going on better,” he muttered.

Finally, during one of his turns up and down, he heard a step outside the door, followed by a light tap, and Claude entered.

The doctor started, and looked at her wildly.

“Why have you come down?” he said.

“Come down? How is he? I overslept myself, and it is half-past two.”

“Is it so late as that?”

“Doctor Asher!” cried Claude excitedly, as she caught him by the arm, “you are keeping something back.”

Her words seemed to smite him, and he tried vainly to speak. It was as if he had suddenly been startled by some terrible shock, and he stared at Claude with his jaw slightly fallen.

“Why don’t you speak?”

“Keeping something back,” he said hoarsely. “No!”

“No? Why do you say that? You seem so confused and changed. Tell me, for heaven’s sake; my father—”

“Better—better,” he said, recovering himself, and speaking loudly, but in a husky voice. “I—I have been a little drowsy, I suppose, with the long watching. Not correct, but natural.”

She looked at him wonderingly, he seemed so strange, and unable to contain herself, she turned to where her father lay, with her heart throbbing wildly, and something seemed to whisper to her the words, “He is dead.”

Volume One—Chapter Seven.

Sarah Woodham’s Vow.

It was after many hours of stupor, and when Doctor Asher, the physician of Danmouth, had gone back to the Fort, from a hurried visit to his injured patient, that Isaac Woodham unclosed his eyes, and lay gazing at the pale, agony-drawn face of his wife, upon which the light of the solitary candle fell.

“What’s the matter?” he said hoarsely.

“Ike, husband,” whispered the suffering woman.

“Oh, yes; I remember now,” he said, with a piteous groan. “I always knew it would come.”

“Ike, dear, can I do anything?” said his wife tenderly.

“Yes.”

“Tell me what, dear?”

“I’ll tell you soon,” groaned the man. “I knew it would come; I always felt it. Ah, my girl, my girl, I’ve preached to them often, and talked about the end of a good Christian man, but it’s very, very hard to die.”

“Die! oh, Isaac, don’t say that.”

“Yes; and to die through him—through that tyrant, and all to make him rich.”

“No, no; you’ll get better, dear, as Roberts did, and Jackson, who were worse than you.”

“Hah!” he cried, making a gesticulation, as if to cast aside his wife’s vain words; and then, with a sudden access of force that was startling, he caught at her hand.

“Sally, my lass,” he whispered harshly, “Gartram has murdered me.”

“Isaac, my poor husband, don’t say that.”

“It was all his doing. He always thwarted me, and interfered when I had to blast.”

“Pray, pray be still, dear. You are so bad and weak. The doctor said you were to be kept quiet, and not to talk.”

“Doctor knew it was all over. I am a dying man.”

“No, no, my darling.”

“Yes, I’ll say it, and more too while I have time. But for Gartram, I should be well and strong now. Oh, how I hate him! Curse him for a dog!”

“Isaac!—darling husband.”

“Yes; I always hated him, the oppressor and tyrant. He made me mad about blasting that bit of rock, and I felt I must do it—my way; but he bullied me till my hands were all of a tremble, and I was thinking about what he said till I wasn’t myself, and the stuff went off too soon. But it was his doing. He murdered me; and if it hadn’t been for him, I should have been right.”

“Oh, my darling!”

“Hush, don’t cry, my lass. It’s all over now, but I can’t die peaceful like yet.”

“Let me put your poor hands together, Ike, and I’ll pray for you.”

“Yes, my lass, but not yet. I’m dying, Sally—fast.”

“No, no, Ike. There, let me give you a drop of the stuff the doctor left. It’ll do you good.”

“Nothing’ll do me good but you.”

“Ike, dear, be still and I’ll run and fetch the doctor; he’s at the Fort. Gartram has had a bad fit.”

“Curse him!”

“No, no, dear, don’t curse. You make me shiver.”

There was a terrible silence in the gloomy cottage room, where the ghastly face of the injured man seemed to loom out of the darkness, and looked weird and strange. The woman tried to quit his side, but he held her tightly as he lay gazing straight up at her, his breath coming in a laboured way, as if he had to force each inspiration, suffering agony the while; and if ever the stamp of death was set-plainly upon human countenance, it was upon his.

“Sally,” he gasped, and his voice was changing rapidly. “Sally!”

“Yes, dear.”

“Don’t leave me. Where are you?”

“Here, darling; holding your hands.”

“Why did you put out the light?”

“Isaac, my own dear man!”

“Listen. Do you hear me?”

“Yes, dear, yes.”

“I’m dying fast, and I shall never rest without—without you do what I say.”

“Yes, dear, I’ll do anything you tell me—you know I will.”

“That’s right. Quick, before it’s too late.”

“Oh, if help would only come,” moaned the woman.

“No help can come, my lass. Now, put your hand under me and lift my head on your shoulder. That’s right. Ah!”

He uttered a groan of agony, and lay speechless as she raised him; and the wife turned cold with horror, as it seemed to her that he was dead, but his lips moved again.

“Now,” he said, “I can talk without feeling strangled. Gartram has made an end of me, and it’s a dying man speaking to you. It’s almost a voice from the dead telling you what to do.”

“Yes, dear, tell me. What shall I do?”

“You’ll swear to do what I tell you?”

“Yes, Isaac, anything.”

“You’re in the presence of death, wife, with the good and evil all about us, and what you say is registered against you.”

“Yes, dear,” said the woman, shuddering.

“You swear, so help you God, to obey my last words?”

“Yes, dear,” cried the woman, with her eyes lighting up, and a look of exultation in every feature; “I’ll swear to obey you.”

“Then you will measure out to Norman Gartram, and pay back to him all he has paid to me.”

“Isaac!”

“An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, as it says in the Holy Book.”

“Husband!”

“You have sworn to do it, woman, and there is no drawing back. As he murdered me, so you shall cut short his cursed life.”

“Isaac, I cannot.”

“Woman, you have sworn to the dying; you are the instrument, the chosen vessel to execute God’s wrath upon this man. For he shall not live to do more wrong to the suffering people he has been grinding under his heel.”

“No, no: I could not do this thing, Isaac, it is too terrible.”

“She has sworn to do it. She has heard the message, and his days will come to an end as mine have come, and he will go on no longer in his wickedness, piling up riches. Ha! ha! ha! Thou fool—this night shall thy—wife—are you there?”

“Isaac! Husband!”

“Ah, yes. Good wife, my last words. Words from the other world. You will not rest till you have fulfilled your sacred task. I shall not rest till then—you—the chosen vessel—His wrath against the oppressor—as I have been—cut off—so shall Gartram be—cut off—yours the chosen hand, wife—quick—your hand—upon my head—you swear—that you will do my bidding—the bidding of—”

He paused, and she saw his eyes gazing wildly in hers, and it seemed as if the words she whispered were dragged from her—a voice within her seeming to utter them, and the belief that she was but the instrument of a great punishment upon a sinful man appeared to strengthen within her breast.

“Quick,” gasped the dying man; “your hand upon my head, wife—your lips close to me—let me hear you speak.”

“Isaac! Husband!” she groaned; “must I do this dreadful thing?”

“It is a message from—”

There was a terrible silence in the narrow chamber, and the dying man’s eyes were fixed upon hers as she laid her hand upon his brow and spoke firmly,—

“I swear.”

“Hah!”

A low, rattling expiration of the breath, and as Sarah Woodham gazed in her husband’s eyes, the wild, fiery look died slowly out, to become grave and tender. Then it seemed to her that the look was fixed and strange. She had been

prepared, but not for so sudden a shock as this.

“Ike!” she cried, lowering him upon the pillow. “Ike! Why don’t you speak? Do you hear me?” and her voice sounded peremptory and harsh; “do you hear me?”

She had seized him by the shoulders as she bent over him, and her voice grew more excited and strange.

“You are doing this to frighten me—to keep that oath—but I will do it. Ike, dear, do you hear me? Don’t play with me. It hurts my poor heart—to see you—so fixed and strange—Ike! Husband! Speak!”

In her horror and agony she gripped his shoulders more tightly and shook him.

Then the horrible truth refused to be kept longer at bay, and, starting back from the couch where the fixed, grave eyes seemed to follow her, reminding her of her oath, she stood with her hands raised, staring wildly for a few moments before an exceeding bitter cry escaped her lips.

“No,” she cried; “it can’t be. My darling, don’t leave me here alone in the weary world. Isaac, my own! My God! he’s dead.”

She reeled, caught at the table to save herself, the ill-supported candle dropped from the stick, and she fell with a thud upon the floor, as the candle rolled from the table close to her face, flickered for a few moments to display its ghastly lineaments, and then died out.

But it was not quite dark.

A faint light stole in beside the drawn-down blind, the chill air of morning sighed round the house, and a low murmur came from the waves fretting among the broken granite far below; and it was as if the night, too, were dead, and the low sigh died away in a hushed silence.

Then *pink, pink, pink, pink* came the sharp cry of the blackbird from the tangle of bramble and whortleberry high up the cliff slope, and from the grassy level above, the clear loud song of the lark, as it rose high in the pale morning sky, telling that come sorrow come joy, the world still goes round, and that Nature will have her way, even though murder be on the wing.

Volume One—Chapter Eight.

Claude Opens the Awful Door.

Sarah Woodham sat in her little parlour, sallow of cheek, and with a hard, stern look in her eyes as she gazed straight before her at the drawn-down blind, and listened to the mournful wash of the waves which came with a slow, regular pulsation through the open door.

Hers had been no romantic life. Hard working servant for years at the Fort, till, in a dry, matter-of-fact way, Isaac Woodham, quarryman, and local preacher at the little chapel, and one of the most narrow-minded and bigoted of his sect, had cast his eyes upon her in the chapel and preached to her. He had selected his texts from various parts of the Bible, where it was related that certain men took unto themselves wives, and when he was at work he told himself that Sarah was comely to look upon, and that one of these days he would marry her.

And so it was that previously, on one of these days when he had to go on business to the Fort, he had told the woman in his hard, matter-of-fact way that he had prayed for guidance, and that he felt it was his duty and her duty that they two should wed.

Sarah, in her hard, matter-of-fact way, asked for time to consider the matter herself, and at the end of a year’s cold, business-like term of probation, she gave Isaac Woodham her hand, left the Fort, and went to live at one of the quarry cottages, which became at once the most spotless in the stone-cutters’ hamlet by the sea.

They neither of them ever displayed any great affection one for the other, but led a quiet, childless, orderly life, in which she—with no pleasant recollections of her sojourn at the Fort, but still with a deep, almost motherly kind of affection for the girl whom she had seen grow up to womanhood—listened to and sided with her husband in his harsh revilings of his tyrant.

It was Isaac Woodham’s never-failing theme—his hatred of his master, whom he looked upon with the bitter, narrow-minded envy of his nature. Every sharp word was magnified, every business order was looked upon as an insulting piece of tyranny, and after obeying in a morose, sulky way, he took his revenge by pitying the owner of the quarry, and praying that he might repent and become a better man.

This went on for years, during which Norman Gartram did not repent after his servant’s ideas of repentance; and had he known the circumstances, he would have said he had nothing to repent of, which, as far as his men were concerned, was perfectly just—his greatest sins being the insistence upon receiving a fair return for the wages he paid, and a rather stern way of giving his orders to all, Woodham being the most trusted for his sterling honesty, albeit Gartram sneered at him as being full of cant.

Then came the catastrophe, with Sarah, the newly-made widow, in her bereavement, feeling that in her hard way she had dearly loved the cold, stern man who had been her husband those last few years; and then she shivered as she thought of the oath he had exacted from her, and felt that it was an order from the unseen world.

Her husband had nursed indifference into hatred, till she was as bitter against Gartram as he was himself; and years passed as the sharer of his troubles had made her so much akin that, like her husband, she was full of the bitter letter of the old Scriptures, without the under-current of the spirit of forgiveness and love.

And so it was that she sat there low in spirit, thinking of the few short hours that would elapse before friends would come and bear away the cold, stern-faced form of him who had been her all, straight to the little chapel-yard, with its rough granite walls, beyond the quarry, where he would be laid to rest, well within hearing of the waves, which would lull him in his long sleep, and near to where all day long rang out the crack of the heavy stone hammers, the ring of the tamping irons, and from time to time the sharp report and the following roar of some charge when a mass of the titanic granite was laid low.

Only a few days could elapse, she thought, before, in obedience to the new orders of a cruel master, she would have to leave the carefully kept cottage which had been her pride—the only pride to which she gave harbour in her breast.

And it would be better so, she thought. The sooner Gartram bade her turn out homeless, almost penniless in the world, the easier would be her task. It would give her fresh cause for hatred, a new stimulus for destroying the man who had caused her husband's death.

It was hour by hour, with the dead lying so near, becoming easier to her to think of Gartram as her husband's murderer. Isaac had with his dying lips insisted upon it that this was so, and he could not lie. The seed he had planted then was rapidly growing into a tree, and, accepting the task, she brooded over the deed she was to do, telling herself that it was to give immortal rest to him who was gone before; and once the task was accomplished, she prayed that she might soon rejoin him in the realms of bliss, and look him again in the eyes and say—"It is done."

How was it to be?

She sat there, with a strange, lurid light in her dark eyes, thinking over the vengeance and of those of whom she had read; of how Jael slew Sisera with the hammer and nail—that deadly enemy of the chosen race. Then of Judith; and a strange exultation filled her breast, and in her weak, ignorant way she began to feel herself more and more as one selected to become the instrument of Heavens punishment upon one accursed.

"The way will be opened unto me," she said to herself. "The way will be opened unto me, and the wicked shall perish. Yes, husband, you shall rest in peace."

She started erect in her chair, and turned a fierce look of anger towards the door, as at that moment there was a light step, a shadow fell across the clean white stone, a sweet-toned, tremulous voice uttered her name, and there was the rustling of a dress upon the floor, while the next moment two soft arms were about her neck, her cheeks were wet with another's tears. For Claude was kneeling by her, with her head resting on the hard, heavily-beating heart, and the girl's broken voice fell upon her ears.

"My poor, poor Sarah! I could not come to you before. What can I do to help you? What can I say?"

Claude could not see the wild, agonised face, as she rested upon the trembling woman's breast. There had been kindly, sympathetic, neighbourly words enough spoken to her before, but these—the words of the girl she had years before tended and loved, winning her gentle young love in return—went straight to her overcharged heart. The tears falling for her sorrow seemed to quench the burning glow of bitterness and hate, and the next moment vengeance, and the determination to execute her husband's command, were swept away: her arms were tightening round the slight, girlish form as if it were something to which she could cling for safety, and the tears that had seemed dried up, after searing her brain, poured forth as she bent down sobbing hysterically, and in broken accents calling her visitor, "My darling bairn."

Half-an-hour had passed, and the bitter wailing and hysterical cries had ceased, while the suffering woman's breast heaved slowly now, like the surface of the sea quieting after a storm; but she still held Claude tightly to her, and rocked herself gently to and fro, as in bygone years she had held the girl when some trouble had brought her, motherless, and smarting from some bitter scolding, to seek for consolation and help.

The words came at last to break the silence of the solitary place.

"It was like you to come, my darling, and I shall never, never forget it. It was like you."

"You know I would have come to you before, but poor papa has been so ill, and I dared not come away. But he is better now, and sitting up."

The mention of Gartram seemed to harden the woman once more, and with a catching sigh she sat up rigidly in her chair. The thoughts of him who lay waiting in the next chamber brought with them the terrible scenes through which she had passed, and the scale of tenderness which Claude had borne down now rose upward to kick the beam.

"It was a terrible shock to him," continued Claude. "You have been too full of your own trouble to know, but he was seized with a fit, and when I reached home I thought he was dead."

The woman drew her breath hard, but did not speak; only sat frowning, her brow a maze of wrinkles, her lips drawn to a thin pink line, and her teeth set fast, gazing once more straight before her at the drawn-down blind.

"Hah!" she ejaculated at last. "It has all come to an end."

Claude started, and looked up in the woman's face, the words were spoken in so strange and hard a tone.

"I don't like to talk to you about the future, and hope," Claude said at last; "it seems such a vain kind of way to

comfort any one in affliction.”

“Yes; life is all affliction,” said the woman bitterly; and she frowned now at the kneeling girl.

“No, no; you must not look at things like that, Sarah. But it is hard to bear. How well I remember coming to see your home directly you were married.”

“Don’t talk about it, child,” said the woman hoarsely.

“No, we’ll talk about something else; or will it not be kinder if I sit with you only, and stay as long as I can?”

“No,” said the woman harshly. “Rennals will take poor Isaac’s place. How soon will it be?”

“How soon?”

“Yes; how soon shall I have to turn out of my poor old home?”

“Don’t talk about it now, Sarah,” said Claude gently. “It will be terribly painful for you, I know.”

“Painful!” said the woman, with a bitter laugh, “to go out once more into the cruel world. But a way will open,” she added to herself; “the time will come.”

Her face grew more stony of aspect moment by moment, as she gazed through her nearly closed eyelids straight before her, heedless of the fact that Claude had risen from her knees, and was holding one of her hands.

“Don’t talk of the world so bitterly, Sarah, dear,” said Claude gently. “I must go now.”

“Yes,” said the woman, in a harsh voice.

“Mary is sitting with papa till I go back, or she would have come with me. She sent her kindest and most sympathetic wishes to you. She is coming to see you soon.”

“Yes,” said the woman again, in the same strange, harsh way.

“You know you have many friends and well-wishers who will be only too glad to help you.”

“Yes; Norman Gartram, whose first thought is to turn me out of the home we have shared so long.”

“Don’t be unjust, Sarah, dear. Papa speaks harshly sometimes, but he has the welfare of all his people at heart.”

“And casts me out on to the high road.”

“Nonsense, dear,” said Claude gently. “Don’t speak in that bitter way, when we are all trying so hard to soften your terrible loss. Papa’s business must go on; and Rennals, naturally, takes poor Woodham’s place. I thought it all over this morning, and I felt that you would consent.”

“To give up the house? Of course; it is not mine.”

“And would be of no use to you now.”

“No;—but a way will open to me yet,” she added to herself.

“Sarah, dear old friend, you could not live alone. You will come back to your own old place with us?”

“What?”

The woman sprang to her feet as if she had received some shock, then reeled, and would have fallen, but for Claude’s quick aid.

“I have been too sudden. I ought to have waited, but I thought it would set your mind at rest.”

“Say that again,” whispered the woman, with her eyes closed.

“There is nothing to say. Papa will agree with me that it would be best to have our dear old servant back again; and, as soon as you can, you will come.”

“No, no; no, no; it is impossible,” cried the woman, with a shudder. “I could not return.”

“You think so now; but papa will consent, and I shall insist, too. But there will be no need to insist. It will be like coming back home.”

“No, I tell you,” cried the woman excitedly; and it was as if a wild fit of delirium had suddenly attacked her. “No, no, Isaac, darling, I cannot, I dare not do this thing.”

“My poor old nurse,” said Claude affectionately; “we will not talk about it now. You must wait, and think how it will be for the best.”

“Be for the best!” she cried, in a wild strange way. “You do not know—you do not know.”

“Oh, yes; better than you do, I am sure. Come, I will leave you now. Don’t look so wildly at me. There, good-bye, dear

old nurse—my dear old nurse. Kiss me, as you used when I was quite a child, and try to reconcile yourself to coming to us. It is fate."

Claude kissed her tenderly, and then, not daring to say more, she hurried from the darkened room, to walk swiftly back, glad that the loneliness of the cliff road enabled her to let tears have their free course for a time.

Could she have seen the interior of the cottage, she would have stared in wonder and dread, for, sobbing wildly and tearing at her breast, with all the unbridled grief of one of her class, Sarah Woodham was walking hurriedly to and fro, like some imprisoned creature trying to escape from the bars which hemmed it in.

"His child,"—she cried,—"his poor, innocent child to draw me there. What did she say? It is fate. Yes, it is fate; and we are but the instruments to work His will."

She stopped, gazing wildly towards the inner chamber, pausing irresolutely for a few moments before rushing in and flinging herself upon her knees by the dead.

It was an hour after that she came tottering out, to stand by the chair she had occupied, and by which she found a handkerchief Claude had dropped; and, catching it up, she pressed it to her lips.

"His poor, innocent child to lead me there to execute judgment on the evil doer. And I have prayed so hard—so hard—in vain—in vain. Yes, she is right. We are but instruments; and it is my fate."

She stood with her hands pressed to her brow, as if to keep her throbbing brain from bursting its bonds. Then a strangely-weird, despairing look came across her darkening face, and she let herself sink, as if it were vain to combat more; and there was a terrible silence in the place, as she seemed to be looking forward into the future.

Once again she broke that silence as the turn of her thoughts was made manifest, but her voice sounded harsh and broken, as if the words would hardly come.

"His innocent child—the girl I loved as if she had been my own flesh and blood;" and her voice rose to a wail. Then, after a few moments' silence: "Yes, I must go. I swore to the dead, and the way is opened now. It is my fate."

Volume One—Chapter Nine.

The Beggar.

Christopher Lisle sat in his snug, bachelor room at Danmouth, tying a fly with a proper amount of dubbing, hackle, and tinsel, for the deluding of some unfortunate salmon. The breakfast things were still on the table, and there was a cloud over his head, and another cloud in his brain.

The room was bright and pleasant, overlooked the sea, and was just such a place as a bachelor in comfortable circumstances, with a love for outdoor sports, would have called a snuggery. For it was just so tidy as not to be very untidy, with fishing and shooting gear in all directions; pipes in a rack, tobacco jars and cigar boxes on shelves; natural history specimens in trays and cabinets, from pinned beetles up to minerals and fossils; and under a table, in a case, lay Chris Lisle's largest salmon, carefully cast and painted to fairly resemble life.

The tying of that fly did not progress, and after a good many stoppages it was thrown down impatiently.

"Confound the hook," cried Chris. "That's four times I've pricked my finger. Everything seems to go wrong. Now, what had I better do? He ought to be well enough to see me now, and so better get it over. I'd no business to go on as I did; but who could help it, bless her, holding her in my arms like that, and loving her as I do? Wrong. Oh, it was honest human nature; and any other fellow would have done the same.

"I suppose I ought to have spoken to the old man first. Though who in the world could think of him at a time like that. But how black he looked; and then there was that confounded good-looking yachtsman there."

This was a point in the business which required thinking out; and to do this thoroughly Chris Lisle took up a black pipe, filled it, and after lighting it daintily with a good deal of toying with the flame, he threw himself back in his chair, and began to frown and smoke.

"No," he said aloud, after a long pause. "Nonsense; the old fellow might think something of it, but my darling little Claude—never. And she's not the girl to flirt and play with any one. No; I know her too well for that—far too well. I frightened her, I was so sudden. A woman is so different to a man, and that wasn't put on; it was sheer timidity—poor little darling! How I do long to apologise, and ask her to forgive me. I must have seemed terribly awkward and boorish in her eyes, for I pulled up quite sulkily after that facer I got from Mary Dillon. The nasty, spiteful little minx. It was too bad. Fortune-hunter! Why, I'd marry Claudie without a penny, and be glad of the chance. Hang the old man's money. What do two young people, who love each other dearly, want with money?"

The idea seemed to be absurd, and he sat smoking dreamily for some minutes.

"I'll serve the spiteful, sharp-tongued little thing out for this," he said at last. "No, I will not. Rubbish! She didn't mean it. But I'll go up and hear how the old man is. He ought to be able to see me this morning, and I'll speak out plainly this time, and get it over."

Chris Lisle was not the man to hesitate. He threw aside his pipe, rang for the breakfast things to be cleared away, glanced at the looking-glass to see if he appeared decent, and stuck a straw hat on his crisp, curly hair.

“Not half such a good-looking chap as the yachtsman,” he said, with a half laugh. “Glad of it. Wouldn’t be such a smooth-looking dandy for the world. Why, hang it!” he said with a laugh, as he strode along by the rocky beach in the full tide of his manly vigour, “I could eat a fellow like that. I never thought of it before,” he continued to himself, as he walked on. “Fortune-hunter! I can’t be called a poor man. Two hundred and fifty a year. Why, I never felt short of money in my life. Always seemed to be enough for everything I wanted. Bah! nobody but little midges up there could ever say such a thing as that.”

A peculiar change seemed just then to be taking place in Chris Lisle. The moment before he was swinging easily along, giving a friendly nod here and there to fishermen and loungers, who saluted him with a smile and a “Morn, Mr Chris, sir,” the next he had grown stiff and rigid, as he saw a dingy pulled in to the landing-place some distance ahead, and Glyddyr leap out, the distance fitting so that the young men had to pass each other, which they did with a short nod of recognition.

“Swell!” muttered Chris contemptuous, as he strode on.

“Bumpkin!” thought Glyddyr, as he went in the other direction, and he laughed softly to himself.

A short distance farther along the cliff road Chris came suddenly upon a figure in deep mourning, and he stopped short, with his whole manner changing once more.

“Ah, Mrs Woodham,” he said, in a low voice full of commiseration, “I have not been up to the quarry, but I had not forgotten an old friend. Can I be of any service to you?”

The woman shook her head.

“Don’t do that,” he said kindly. “They will not keep you, but recollect, Sarah, that we are very old friends, and I shall be hurt if you want money and don’t come to me.”

“God bless you, Master Chris,” said the woman hoarsely; “but don’t keep me now.”

She hurried away, and he stood looking after her for a few moments.

“Poor thing!” he said, as he went on. “What trouble to have to bear. Hang it all, I wouldn’t change places with Gartram if I could.”

He went on, thinking deeply about Glyddyr.

“The old man seems to have quite taken to that fellow, and did from the first time he came here with his yacht. Regular sporting chap. Wins heavily on the turf. Bound to say he loses, too. Three hundred thousand pounds, they say, he had when his father died. Well, good luck to him! I hadn’t when mine passed away.”

Chris began to whistle softly as he went on, stopping once to pick a flower from out of a niche where the water trickled down from a crack in the granite, and, farther on, taking out a tiny lens to inspect a fly. Then another botanical specimen took his attention, and was transferred to a pocket-book, and by that time he was up at the castellated gateway and bridge over the well-filled moat of the Fort.

He went up to the entrance, with its nail-studded oaken door, just as he had been hundreds of times before since boyhood, rang, and walked into the hall before the servant had time to answer the bell.

“Anybody at home?” he said carelessly.

“Yes, sir; master’s in the study, and the ladies are in the drawing-room.”

“Mr Gartram well enough to see me, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes, sir. Doctor Asher was here to breakfast, and master’s going out.”

“All right; I’ll go in.”

There was no announcing. Chris Lisle felt quite at home there, and he crossed the stone-paved hall, gave a sharp tap at the study door, and walked in.

“Morning, sir,” he cried cheerily. “Very glad to hear you are so much better.”

“Thankye,” said Gartram sourly; “but I’m not so much better.”

“Get out,” said Chris.

“What?”

“I mean in the open air.”

“Oh. Well, Mr Lisle, what do you want—money?”

“I? No, sir. Well, yes, I do.”

“Then you had better go to a lawyer. I have done all I could with your father’s estate as your trustee, and if you want to raise money don’t come to me.”

“Well,” said Chris, laughing, “I don’t want to raise money, and I do come to you.”

“What for, sir?”

“Well, I’ll tell you,” said Chris, speaking on the spur of the moment, for an idea had occurred to him. “But suppose we drop the ‘sir’-ing. It doesn’t seem to fit after having known me all these years.”

“Go on. I’m not well. Say what you want briefly. I’m going out.”

“I won’t keep you long, but it may be for your benefit. Look here, guardian, you know what I have a year?”

“Perfectly—two hundred and fifty, if you haven’t been mortgaging.”

“Well, I haven’t been mortgaging. It is not one of my pastimes. But it has occurred to me that I lead a very idle life.”

“Bless my soul!” cried Gartram sarcastically. “When did you discover that?”

“And,” continued Chris, “it seems to me that, as you are growing older—”

Gartram’s face twitched.

“Your health is not anything like what it should be.”

Gartram ground his teeth, but Chris was so intent upon his new idea that he noticed nothing, and went on in a frank, blundering, earnest way.

“Worse still, you have just lost, by that terrible accident, poor Woodham, who was your right-hand man. It would not be a bad thing for you, and it would be a capital thing for me, if you would take me on to be a sort of foreman or superintendent at the quarries. Of course, I don’t mean to go tamping and blasting, but to see that the men did their work properly, that the stones were taken to the wharf, and generally to see to things when you were not there or wanted a rest.”

“At a salary?”

“Salary? Well, I hadn’t thought of that—But yes: at a salary. A labourer’s worthy of his hire. It would make you more independent, and me too. Of course, I am not clever in your business, but I’ve watched the men from a boy, and I know pretty well how things ought to be done; and of course you could trust me as you could yourself.”

Gartram’s face was a study. His illness had exacerbated his temper, and over and over again, as the young man went on in his frank, blundering, honest fashion, he seemed on the point of breaking out. But Chris realised nothing of this. He only grew more sanguine as his new idea seemed to be brighter and more feasible the more he developed it, feeling the while that he was untying an awkward knot, and that his proposals would benefit all.

There was not a gleam of selfishness in his mind, and if Gartram had said: “I like your proposal, and I’ll give you fourteen shillings a week to begin with,” he would have accepted the paltry sum, and felt pleased.

“You see,” he continued, “it would be the very thing; you want a superintendent who would take all the petty worries off your mind.”

“And by-and-by,” said Gartram, suffocating with wrath, “you would like me to offer you a partnership?”

Chris’s eyes flashed.

“Yes, Mr Gartram, I should like that dearly. I never felt till just now that I was a poor man; my wants have been so simple. Yes, by-and-by, you might offer me a partnership if you found me worthy, and you should, sir; I swear you should.”

“And with it my daughter’s hand?”

“I was coming to that, Mr Gartram,” said Chris flushing, and with a proud, happy look in his eyes, as he sat gazing straight out of the window to sea. “I felt, naturally, a shrinking about speaking of that, but Claude and I were boy and girl together. I always liked her, and that liking has grown into a man’s honest, true love. I should have come to you before to explain about what you saw in the glen, but of course, I felt how out of place anything would be from me at a time when you were in trouble and ill, and so I waited till this morning.”

“Yes,” said Gartram hoarsely; “go on.”

“I know I ought not to have spoken to Claude as I did without first speaking to you, but it slipped out without thought, and I ought to say I am sorry, sir; but, feeling as I do, I can only say that I am glad.”

“One moment,” said Gartram, speaking perfectly calmly, but with a voice that sounded as if it were iced; “let us perfectly understand one another—you propose that I should engage you as my foreman?”

“Yes, Mr Gartram,” said Chris quietly. “I have had the education of a gentleman—well, I may say it—my father was a gentleman. I am a gentleman, but I am not proud. I quite agree with you that a man should lead a useful life. I wish to lead a useful life.”

“Exactly,” continued Gartram; “to be my foreman at a salary, with a view to future partnership and my daughter’s hand?”

“Yes, Mr Gartram; and I will make your interests my study. What do you say?”

“Say?” cried Gartram, in a voice of thunder. “Damn your impudence!”

“What!”

“You miserable, insolent, conceited young hound! You come here with such a proposition, after daring, on the strength of the freedom I gave you of my house—for your father’s sake—to insult my daughter as you did up that glen.”

“Miss Gartram has not said I insulted her?” cried Chris.

“I say insulted her with your silly, impudent talk about your love. Why, confound it, sir, what are you—a fool, an idiot, or a conceited, presumptuous, artful beggar?”

“Mr Gartram!—No, I will not be angry,” said Chris, subduing the indignant rage which was in him. “You have been ill and are irritable. I have badly chosen my time. Don’t speak to me like that, sir. I have always looked up to you as a guardian ever since I was left alone in the world. You don’t mean those words, sir. Say you don’t mean them, for Claude’s sake.”

“Silence, sir! For Claude’s sake, indeed. Confound you! How dare you! You must be mad to raise your eyes to her. You contemptible, artful, fortune-hunting scoundrel!”

“Mr Gartram!” cried Chris, flushing with anger now. “How dare you speak to me like this?”

“Because I am in my own house, sir. Because a miserable, mad-brained jackanapes has dared to make an attack upon me and upon my child. Silence—”

“Silence, sir, yourself!” raged Chris.

“What? You insolent dog, I’ll have you turned out of the house. I’ll have you horse-whipped. Dare so much as to speak to my child again. Dare so much as to look at her. Dare to come upon my premises again, and damme, sir, I’ll—I’ll shoot you!”

“You don’t mean it. You shall not mean it,” cried Chris hotly.

“Out of my house, sir!”

“Mr Gartram,” cried Chris, as the old man, half mad with rage and excitement consequent upon the reaction from his fit, strode close up to where his visitor stood.

“I say out of my house, sir, before I have you horse-whipped as I would a dog.”

As he spoke, he gave the young man a thrust, half blow, across the chest, just as the door opened, and the servant announced Mr Glyddyr, stood with open mouth, staring for a moment at the scene, and then, as the new visitor entered, ran back, without stopping to close the door, to announce to Claude and Mary that master was going to have another fit.

“Hah!” cried Gartram, as his eyes lit upon Glyddyr; “you, is it? Look here,” he roared, in a voice choked with passion, “this beggarly, insolent upstart—this puppy that I have helped to rear—has had the audacity to propose for my daughter’s hand.”

“What?” cried Glyddyr, taking his tone from Gartram; and, turning upon Chris, he darted a look mingled of incredulity, threatening and contempt.

“Yes; I am weak from illness, or I’d ask no man’s help. You are young and strong. Take him by the collar, and bundle the insolent scoundrel neck and crop out of the place. That’s right: quick!”

Glyddyr advanced straight to where Chris stood, with a blank look of rage and despair upon his countenance, crushed, drooping, half broken-hearted, as he felt how ingenuous he had been to speak as he had to the hard, grasping man of the world before him; but as Glyddyr laid his hand upon his collar, he uttered a low, hoarse sound, like the growl of an angry beast.

“Now, sir, out you go,” cried Glyddyr, with a mocking, sneering look in his countenance, full of triumph. “Out with you before you are kicked out.”

“Take away your hand,” said Chris, in a low, husky whisper.

“What! No insolence. Out with you!”

“Take away your hand.”

“Do you hear me? Now then, out.”

“Curse you, you will have it, then,” cried Chris, shaking himself free; and then, as Glyddyr recovered himself, and tried to seize him again, Chris’s left fist darted out from his shoulder, there was a low, dull sound, and Glyddyr staggered back for a couple of yards, to fall with a heavy crash, just as, with a shriek of horror, Claude, closely followed by Mary, rushed into the room.

“Chris Lisle, what have you done?” cried Claude, while Mary, whom fate had made the busy help of the family, hurried to Glyddyr’s side, and helped him to rise to a sitting position. He did not attempt to get upon his feet.

“Lost my temper, I suppose,” said Chris, who began to calm down as he saw the effect of his blow. “But it was his own doing. I warned him to keep his hands off.”

“Leave my house, ruffian, before I send for the police.”

“You’ll be sorry for all this, Mr Gartram,” said Chris. “Claude—”

“Silence!” shouted Gartram. “Recollect, my girl, that henceforth this man and we are strangers. Everything between us is at an end. Once more, sir, will you leave my house?”

“Yes, I’ll go,” replied Chris slowly, as his eyes rested on Claude’s. “Don’t think ill of me,” he said to her huskily. “I have done nothing wrong.”

Gartram came between them, and, feeling that time alone could heal the terrible breach, Chris made a gesticulation and walked slowly to the door, where he turned.

“Mr Gartram,” he said, “you’ll bitterly repent this. But don’t think that I shall give up. I’ll go now. One of these days, when you have thought all over, you will ask me to come back, and we shall be friends again. Claude—Mary, all this was not my seeking. Good-bye.”

“Not his seeking!” cried Gartram, sinking into a chair and dabbing his face with his handkerchief. “He wants to kill me: that’s what he’s trying to do. How are you now, Glyddyr? Pray forgive me for bringing this upon you. The scoundrel must be mad.”

“Getting better now, sir,” said Glyddyr; and, as his enemy had gone, beginning with a great show of suffering and effort to suppress it, as his eyes sought sympathy from Claude. He found none, so directed his eyes at Mary, who offered him her hand as he made slowly for the nearest easy chair. “I suppose I was a bit stunned. Not hurt much, I think.”

“I don’t know how to apologise enough,” cried Gartram; “and you two girls, have you nothing to say? An outrageous assault on my guest! But he shall smart for it. I’ll have him summoned.”

“No, no, Mr Gartram, I’m getting all right fast,” said Glyddyr, quickly seizing the opportunity to be magnanimous in Claudes eyes. “Mr Lisle was excited, and he struck me. A blow like that is nothing.”

“Mr Christopher Lisle will find out that a blow such as you’ve received means a great deal more than he thinks, sir. Claude, ring the bell. Have the spirit stand and soda-water brought in. Are you sure you are not seriously hurt, Glyddyr?”

“Quite, sir: a mere nothing. Great pity it happened. Why, ladies, it must have regularly startled you. Miss Gartram, I am very sorry. You look pale.”

“Enough to startle any woman, Glyddyr. But there, it’s all over for the present. You had better leave us now, girls.”

“No, no,” cried Glyddyr, “don’t let me drive them away, sir.”

“It is not driving them away, Mr Glyddyr,” said Gartram shortly. “I wish them to go.”

“I beg pardon, I am sure.”

“Granted, sir; but I like to be master in my own house.”

“Papa, dear, pray, pray be calm,” whispered Claude, who had crept to his side.

“Calm! Of course. I am calm. There, there, there; don’t talk to me, but go, and I said ring for the spirit stand.”

“Yes, papa, I did. I’ll go and send it in.”

“Yes, quickly. You are sure you would not like the doctor fetched, Glyddyr?”

“Oh, certain, sir. There, let it pass now. A mere nothing.”

“Oh, my poor darling Claude,” whispered Mary, taking her cousin’s hand as they went out, and kissing her pale face as the large dark eyes gazed pitifully down in hers.

“Do you understand what it all means, Mary?”

“Only too well, coz: poor Chris has been telling uncle he loved you, and that put our dear tyrant in a passion. Then Mr Glyddyr came, and poor Chris got in a passion too, and knocked him down.”

“Yes,” sighed Claude; “I’m afraid that must be it.”

“Yes, my dear, it’s all cut and dried. You are to be Mrs Glyddyr as soon as they have settled it all.”

“Never,” said Claude, frowning and looking like a softened edition of her father.

“And as that sets poor Chris at liberty,” continued Mary, with one of her mischievous looks, “and you don’t want him, there may be a bit of a chance for poor little me.”

“Mary, dear!” said Claude, in a voice full of remonstrance.

“It’s rather bad taste of you, for though Mr Glyddyr is very handsome, I think Chris is the better man. Mr Glyddyr seems to me quite a coward making all that fuss, so that we might sympathise with him. Better have had poor Chris.”

“Mary, dear, how can you make fun of everything when I am in such terrible trouble?”

“It’s because I can’t help it, Claude, I suppose. But oh, I am sorry for you if uncle makes you marry handsome Mr Glyddyr.”

“Mary!”

“I cannot help it, dear; I must say it. He’s a coward. He was hurt, of course, but not so much as he pretended. Chris Lisle knocked him right down, and he wouldn’t get up for fear he should get knocked down again. Didn’t Chris look like a lion?”

“It is all very, very terrible, Mary, and I want your help and sympathy so badly.”

“I can’t help you, coz; I’m too bad. And all this was my fault.”

“No; not all,” said Claude sadly. “Papa has been thinking about Mr Glyddyr for a long time, and dropping hints to me about him.”

“Yes; and you’ll have to take him.”

“No,” said Claude, with quiet firmness; and her father’s stern, determined look came into her eyes. “No, I will never be Mr Glyddyr’s wife.”

“But uncle will never forgive poor Mr Lisle.”

“Don’t say that, Mary. Never is a terrible word. Papa loves me, and he would like to see me happy.”

“And shall you tell him you love Chris?”

“No,” said Claude sternly.

“If you please, ma’am, Mrs Woodham is here,” said one of the servants; and Claude’s face grew more troubled as she asked herself what her father would say to the step she had taken, in bidding the unhappy woman come and resume her old position in the house.

She had not long to wait.

As she rose to cross the room she caught sight of Glyddyr looking back at the windows on leaving the house, and heard the study bell ring furiously.

“Quick, Mary!” she cried, as she rushed through the door, being under the impression that her father had had another seizure.

The relief was so great as she entered the study and found him standing in the middle of the room, that she threw herself in his arms.

“I thought you were taken ill again,” she gasped, as she clung, to him, trembling.

He was evidently in a fury, but his child’s words were like oil upon the tempestuous waves.

“You—you thought that?” he said, holding her to his breast and patting her cheek tenderly. “You thought that, eh? And they say in Danmouth that everybody hates me. That there isn’t a soul here who wouldn’t like to dance upon my grave.”

“Papa, dear, don’t talk like that.”

“Why not? the ungrateful wretches! I’ve made Danmouth a prosperous place. I spend thousands a year in wages, and the dogs all turn upon me and are ready to rend the hand that feeds them. If they are not satisfied with their wages, they wait till I have some important contract on the way, and then they strike. I haven’t patience with them.”

“Father!” cried Claude firmly, “Doctor Asher said you were not to excite yourself in any way, or you would be ill.”

“And a good thing, too. Better be ill, and die, and get out of the way. Hated—cursed by every living soul.”

Claude clung more tightly to him, laid her head upon his breast, and placed her hand across his lips as if to keep him from speaking.

A smile came across the grim face, but there was no smile in his words as he went on fiercely, after removing the hand and seeming about to kiss it, but keeping it in his hand without.

“Everything seems to go against me,” he cried. “Mr Glyddyr—just going—I was seeing him to the door, when, like a

black ghost, up starts that woman Sarah Woodham. What does she want?”

“I’ll tell you, dear, if you will sit down and be calm.”

“How the devil can I be calm,” he raved, “when I am regularly persecuted by folk like this?”

But he let Claude press him back into an easy chair, while, feeling that she was better away, Mary Dillon crept softly out of the room.

“Well, then,” he said, as if his child’s touch was talismanic, and he lay back and closed his eyes, “I’ll be calm. But you don’t know, Claude, you can’t tell how I’m persecuted. I’m robbed right and left.”

“Papa, my dear father, you are as rich as ever you can be, so what does it matter?”

“Who says I’m rich? Nonsense! Absurd! And then look at the worries I have. All the trouble and inquest over that man’s death, and through his sheer crass obstinacy.”

“Why bring that up again, father, dear?”

“Don’t say father. Call me papa. Whenever you begin fathering me, it means that you are going to preach at me and bully me, and have your own way.”

“Then, papa, dear, why bring that up again?”

“I didn’t. It’s brought up and thrust under my very nose. Why is that woman here?”

“Papa—”

“Now, it’s of no use. Claude: that man regularly committed suicide out of opposition to me. He destroyed a stone worth at least a hundred pounds by using that tearing dynamite, which smashes everything to pieces; and then, forsooth, he charges me in his dying moments with murdering him, and the wretched pack under him take up the cry and bark as he did. Could anything be more unreasonable?”

“No, dear, of course not. But the poor fellow was mad with agony and despair. It was so horrible for him, a hale, strong man, to be cut down in a moment.”

“He cut himself down. It would not have happened if he had done as I ordered.”

“You must forgive all that now. He knew no better; and as for the workmen, you know how easily they are influenced one way or the other.”

“Oh, yes, I know them. And now this woman’s here begging.”

“No, papa, dear.”

“I say she is. I could see it in her servile, shivering way, as soon as she caught my eye; now, look here, Claude, I shan’t give her a shilling.”

Claude held his hand to her cheek in silence.

“I won’t pay for the man’s funeral. I’m obliged to pay the doctor, because I contracted for him to attend the ungrateful hounds; but I will not help her in the least, and I’ll have no more of your wretched tricks. I’m always finding out that you are helping the people and letting them think it is my doing. Now, then, I’ve done, and I want to be at peace, so go and send that woman away, or I shall be ill.”

Claude clung a little more closely to her father, nestling, as it were, in his breast.

“Well,” he said testily, “why don’t you go?”

“My father is the leading man in this neighbourhood,” said Claude, in a soft, soothing tone, “and the people don’t know the goodness of his heart as I do.”

“Now, Claudie, I won’t have it. You are beginning to preach at me, and give me a dose of morals. My heart has grown as hard as granite.”

“No, it has not,” said Claude, kissing his veined hand. “It is as soft and good as ever, only you try to make it hard, and you say things you do not mean.”

“Ah, now!” he shouted, “you are going to talk about that Lisle, and I will not have his cursed name mentioned in the —”

“I was not going to talk about Christopher Lisle,” said Claude, in the same gentle, murmuring voice, whose tones seemed to soothe and quiet him down; “I was going on to say that I want the people—the weak, ignorant, easily-led people—about here to love and venerate my dear father’s name.”

“And they will not, do what you will. The more you do for them, the less self-helpful they are, and the more they revile and curse. Why, if I was ruined to-morrow, after they’ve eaten my bread for years, I believe they’d light a bonfire and have a dance.”

“No, no; no, no,” murmured Claude. “You have done too much good for them.”

“I haven’t. You did it all, you hussy, and pretended it was I,” he said grimly, as he played with her glossy hair.

“I did it with your money, dear, and I am your child. I acted as I felt you would act if you thoroughly knew the circumstances, but you had no time. What is the use of having so much money if no good is done?”

“For ungrateful people.”

“We are taught to do good for evil, dear.”

“What! for a race of thieves who are always cursing and reviling us? There, I’m busy and tired, Claudie. I’ve listened to your moral lesson very patiently, and now I want to be at rest. But I forbid you to help that wretched woman. She and her husband always hated me. Confound ’em, they were always insulting me. How dare they—actually publicly insult me—in that miserable little chapel.”

“Insulted you? What do you mean?”

“Why, they prayed for my heart to be softened, hang ’em!”

“Oh, father, dear!”

“There you go again. Papa—papa—papa. Don’t forget that we do belong to the aristocracy after all. Now, go and send that dreadful woman away.”

“I cannot, dear.”

“Cannot?”

“No, papa. She has come to stay.”

“Sarah Woodham? To stay? Here?”

“Yes, dear. Poor thing: she is left penniless, almost, for Woodham did not save.”

“No, of course not. They none of them do.”

“He spent all he had to spare,” continued Claude, in the same gentle, murmuring tone, as she pressed her father’s hand to her cheek. “Everything he could scrape together he gave to the poorer chapel people.”

“Yes, I know; in his bigoted way to teach me what to do. And don’t keep on rubbing your cheek against my hand. Any one who saw you would think you were a cat.”

“So, papa dear, as we want a good, trustworthy woman in the house, and Sarah was with us so long, and knew our ways so well, I arranged for her to come back.”

“Claude!”

“Yes, dear; and these years of her married life, and the sad end, will be to her like a mournful dream.”

“I—”

Norman Gartram made an angry gesture, but Claude’s arms stole round his neck, her lips pressed his as she half lay upon his breast, and with the tears gently falling and hanging like pearls in his grisly beard, she said in a low, sweet voice,—

“And some day, father dear, at the last, as she thinks of what an asylum this has been to her, she will go down to her grave blessing your name for all the good that you have done, and this will make me very happy, dear, and so it will you.”

There was a long silence in the room, and Norman Gartram’s face began to grow less rugged. It was as if there was something of the same look as that in his child’s, when, with a tender kiss upon his brow, she left his arms and half playfully whispered,—

“Am I to go and send Sarah Woodham away?”

“No,” he said hastily, as his old look returned; “you are as bad as your poor, dear mother, every bit. No,” he cried, with an angry flush. “I won’t do that, though. Not a farthing of my money shall go towards paying for that man’s funeral.”

“Father, dear—”

“Papa.”

“Then papa, dear,” said Claude quietly, “I have paid everything connected with poor Woodham’s funeral.”

“You have?”

“Yes; you are very generous to me with money, and I had plenty to do that.”

“Yes; and stinted yourself in clothes. You don’t dress half well enough. Well, there, it’s done now, and we can’t alter it. I suppose these people will think it was my doing.”

“Yes, dear.”

“Of course. Well, as to this woman, keep her and nurse and pamper her, and pay her the largest wages you can; and mark my words, my pet, she’ll turn round and worry us for what we have done.”

“I have no fear, dear. I know Sarah Woodham too well, and I can do anything I like with her.”

“Yes, as you can with me, you hussy,” he cried. “Duke—King—why, I’m like water with you, Claude. But,” he cried, shaking a finger at her, “there are things, though, in which I mean to have my way.”

Claude flushed up, and a hard look came into her eyes.

But no more was said then.

Volume One—Chapter Ten.

Denise.

“What the deuce brought you here?”

“Train my boy. Saw in the shipping news that *The Fair Star* was lying in Danmouth. Felt a bit seedy, and knew that you would give me a berth aboard, and here I am.”

“So I see.”

“Well, don’t be so gloriously glad, dear boy. Don’t go out of your mind and embrace me. I hate to be kissed by a man; it’s so horribly French.”

“Don’t be a fool.”

“Certainly not; but you seemed to be in such raptures to meet me that I was obliged to protest.”

“Now, look here, Gellow, it’s not of the slightest use for you to hunt me about the country. I have no money, and I can’t pay.”

“I never said a single word about money, dear boy.”

“No; but you look money, and think money, and smell of money. Good heavens, man, why don’t you dress like a gentleman, and not come down to the seaside like the window of a pawnbroker’s shop?”

“Dress like a gentleman, sir? Why, I am dressed like a gentleman. These are real diamond studs, sir. First water. Rings, chain, watch, everything of the very best. Never catch me wearing sham. Look at those cuff studs. As fine emeralds as you’d see.”

“Bah! Why don’t you wear a diamond collar, and a crown. I believe you’d like to hang yourself in chains.”

“My dear Glyddyr, how confoundedly nasty you can be to the best friend you have in the world.”

“Best enemy; you are always hunting me for money.”

“Yes; and going back poorer. You are such a one to wheedle a fresh loan.”

“Yes; at a hundred per cent.”

“Tchah! Nonsense! But, I say, nothing wrong about the lady, is there?”

“Hold your tongue, and mind your own business.”

“Well, that is my business, you reckless young dog. If you don’t make a rich match, where shall I be?”

“Here, what are you doing?”

“Ringing the bell, dear boy.”

“What for?”

“Well, that’s fool. I have come all this way from town, had no end of trouble to run you down at your hotel, and then you think I don’t want any breakfast.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Mr Glyddyr wants breakfast in directly. Here, what have you got? No, never mind what you’ve got. I’ll have broiled chicken and a sole. A fresh chicken cut up, mind; none of your week-old, cooked stales. Coffee and brandy. Mr Glyddyr’s order, you know.”

The waiter glanced at Glyddyr where he sat pretending to read the paper, and receiving a short nod, he left the room.

“Now, once more, why have you come down?”

“First and foremost, I have picked up three or four good tips for Newmarket. Chances for you to make a pile.”

“You are very generous,” sneered Glyddyr. “Your tips have not turned out so very rosy—so far.”

“Well, of course it’s speculation. Have a cigar?”

Glyddyr made an impatient gesture.

“Then I will. Give me an appetite for the dejooney.”

The speaker lit a strong cigar that had an East London aroma, and went on chatting as he lolled back in his chair, and played with his enormously thick watch-chain.

“A smoke always gives me an appetite; spoils some people’s. Well, you won’t take the tips?”

“No; I’ve no money for betting.”

“Happy to oblige you, dear boy. Eh? No! All right. Glad you are so independent. It’s going on bloomingly, then?”

“What do you mean?”

“The miller’s lovely daughter,” sang the visitor, laughingly. “I mean the stonemason’s.”

Glyddyr muttered an oath between his teeth.

“Hush! Don’t swear, dear boy—the waiter.”

For at that moment the man brought in a tray, busied himself for a time till all was ready, and left the room.

“That’s your sort,” said Glyddyr’s visitor, settling himself at the table. “Won’t join me, I suppose? Won’t have an echo?”

“What do you mean?”

“Second breakfast. Eh? No? All right. Hah! Very appetising after a long journey—confoundedly long journey. You do put up in such out of the way spots. Quite hard to find.”

“Then stop away.”

“No, thanks. Now look here, Glyddyr, dear boy, what’s the use of your cutting up rusty when we are obliged to row so much in the same boat?”

“Curse you! I’d like to throw you overboard.”

“Of course you would, my dear fellow, but you see you can’t. Rather an awkward remark though, that, when I’m coming for a cruise with you in the yacht—my yacht.”

Glyddyr crushed up the newspaper into a ball, and cast it across to the corner of the room.

“What’s the matter, old man? I say, what a delicious sole! Ever catch any on the yacht?”

The sound of Glyddyr’s teeth grating could be plainly heard.

“Be no good to throw me overboard to feed the fishes, my dear boy. I’m thoroughly well insured, both as to money—and protection,” he added meaningly. “Hope this fish was not fed in that peculiar way. *Tlat*! Capital coffee. Now then, talk. I can eat and listen. How is it going on with the girl?”

“Reuben Gellow, your insolence is insufferable.”

“My dear Gellow, I must have a thou, to-morrow,” said the visitor, mockingly. “Your words, dear boy, when you want money; the other when you don’t want money. What a contrast! Well, I don’t care. Capital butter this! It shows me that everything is progressing well with the pretty heiress, and that Parry Glyddyr, Esquire, will pay his debts like a gentleman. Come, old fellow, don’t twist about in your chair like a skinned eel.”

“Curse you, who skinned me?”

“Not I, dear boy. Half a dozen had had a turn at you, and that lovely epi—what-you-may-call-it of yours was hanging upon you in rags. I only stripped the rest off, so as to give you a chance to grow a new one, and I’m helping you to do it as fast as you can. Come, don’t cut up rough. Be civil, and I’ll keep you going in style so that you can marry her all right, and have two children and live happy ever after.”

“Look here,” said Glyddyr, getting up and pacing the room furiously, while his visitor calmly discussed his breakfast, “you have something under all this, so open it out.”

“No, dear boy, only the natural desire to see how you are getting on. You owe me—”

“Curse what I owe you!”

“No, no, don’t do that. Pay it.”

“You know I cannot.”

“Till you’ve made a good marriage; and you cannot live in style and make a good marriage without my help, my dear Glyddyr.”

“You and your cursed fraternity hold plenty of security, so leave me in peace.”

“I will, dear boy; but I want my trifle of money, and you are not getting on as fast as I could wish, so I’ve come to help you.”

“Come to ruin me, you mean.”

“Wrong. I have my cheque book in my pocket, and if you want a few hundreds to carry on the war, here they are.”

“At the old rate,” sneered Glyddyr.

“No, my dear fellow. I must have a little more. The risk is big.”

“Yes. Might fail, and blow out my brains.”

“Ex-actly! How I do like this country cream.”

Glyddyr threw himself into his seat with a crash.

“That was all a metaphor,” he said bitterly.

“What was, dear boy?”

“About the Devil and Dr Faustus.”

“Of course it was. Why?”

“Faustus was some poor devil hard up, and the other was not a devil at all, but a confounded money-lender. It was a bill Faustus accepted, not a contract.”

“I daresay you are right, Glyddyr. Have a drop of brandy? Eh? No? Well, there’s nothing like a *chasse* with a good breakfast, and this is really prime.”

“Well, I’ll grin and bear it till I’m free,” said Glyddyr. “You want to know how I am getting on. You need not stay.”

“But I want a change, and I can help you, perhaps.”

“You’ll queer the whole affair if you stay here. Once it is so much as suspected that I am not as well off as I was—”

“That you are an utter beggar—I mean a rum beggar.”

“Do you want me to wring your neck?”

“The neck of the goose that lays the golden eggs? No. They don’t kill geese that way.”

”—The whole affair will be off.”

“Old man’s a rum one, isn’t he?”

“How do you know?”

“How do I know?” said Gellow, with a quiet chuckle. “That’s my business. I know everything about you, my dear boy. I have a great personal interest in your proceedings, and every move is reported to me.”

“And, to make matters worse, you have yourself come down to play the spy.”

“Not a bit of it, my dear Glyddyr; but you have cursed and bullied me at such a tremendous rate, that, as I have you on the hook, I can’t help playing you a little.”

“Oh!” snarled Glyddyr furiously.

“But, all the same, I am the best friend you have in the world.”

“It’s a lie!”

“Is it? Well, we shall see. I want you to marry King Gartram’s daughter, and I’ll let you have all you want to carry it out. And by the way, here are three letters for you.”

He took the letters out of his pocket-book, and handed them.

“There you are: Parry Glyddyr, Esq, care of Reuben Gellow, Esq, 209 Cecil Street, Strand.”

“Why, they’ve been opened!”

“Yes, all three—and read.”

“You scoundrel!” roared Glyddyr. “Do you dare to sit there and tell me that you have had the effrontery to open my letters and read them?”

“I didn’t tell you so.”

“But you have read them?”

“Every line.”

“Look here, sir,” cried Glyddyr, rising fiercely, “I found it necessary to have my letters sent to an agent.”

“Reuben Gellow.”

“To be forwarded to me where I might be yachting.”

“So as to throw your creditors off the scent.”

“And you, acting as my agent, have read them.”

“In your interest, dear boy.”

“Curse you! I don’t care what happens now. All is at an end between us, you miserable—”

“Go it, old fellow, if it does you good; but I didn’t open the letters.”

“Then who did?”

“Denise.”

Glyddyr’s jaw dropped.

“Now, then, you volcanic eruption of a man; who’s your friend, eh? I went down to the office yesterday morning. ‘Lady waiting in your room, sir,’ says my clerk. ‘Who is it?’ says I. ‘Wouldn’t give her name,’ says my clerk. ‘Wants money then,’ says I to myself; and goes up, and there was Madame Denise just finishing reading number three.”

“Good heavens!” muttered Glyddyr, blankly.

“‘I came, sare,’ she says, with one of her pretty, mocking laughs, ‘to ask you for ze address of my hosband, but you are absent, it ees no mattair. I find tree of my hosband’s lettaires, and one say he sup-poz my hosband go to Danmout. Dat is all.’”

“Then she’ll find me out, and come down here and spoil all.”

“Divil a doubt of it, me boy, as Paddy says.”

“But you—you left the letters lying about.”

“Not I. They came by the morning’s post. How the deuce could I tell that she would hunt me up, and then open her ‘hosband’s’ letters.”

“I am not her husband;” cried Glyddyr furiously. “That confounded French marriage does not count.”

“That’s what you’ve got to make her believe, my dear boy.”

“And if it did, I’d sooner smother myself than live with the wretched harpy.”

“Yes; I should say she had a temper Glyddyr. So under the circumstances, dear boy, I thought the best thing I could do was to come down fast as I could and put you on your guard.”

“My dear Gellow.”

“Come, that’s better. Then we are brothers once again,” cried Gellow, with mock melodramatic fervour.

“Curse the woman!”

“Better still; much better than cursing me.”

“Don’t fool, man. Can’t you see that this will be perfect destruction?”

“Quite so, dear boy; and now that this inner man is refreshed with food, so kindly and courteously supplied by you, he is quite ready for action. What are you going to do?”

“I don’t know. Think she will come down?”

“Think? No, I don’t. Ah, Parry Glyddyr, what a pity it is you have been such a wicked young man!”

“Do you want to drive me mad with your foolery?”

“No; only to act. There, don’t make a fuss about it. The first thing is to throw her off the scent. She knows you may be here.”

“Yes.”

“Well, she’ll come down and inquire for you. She is not obliged to know about the people at the Fort; your yacht put in here for victualling or repairs.”

“Well?”

“When she comes, she finds you have sailed, and if we are lucky she will feel that she has missed you, and go back.”

“If she would only die!” muttered Glyddyr, but his visitor caught his words.

“Not likely to. Sort of woman with stuff enough in her to last to a hundred. It strikes me, dear boy, that you are in a fix.”

Glyddyr sat frowning.

“And now you see the value of a friend.”

“Yes,” said Glyddyr thoughtfully. “I must go.”

“And you must take me too. If she sees me, she will smell a rat.”

“Yes, confound you, and one of the worst sort. There, ring that bell.”

“What for—brandy? Plenty here.”

“No, man, for the bill; I must be off at once.”

Volume One—Chapter Eleven.

How to Reach the Fair Star.

As Burns said, matters go very awkwardly sometimes for those who plot and plan—as if some malicious genius took delight in thwarting the most carefully-laid designs, and tangling matters up, till the undoing seems hopeless.

Chris Lisle had had a bad time mentally. He was wroth against Gartram and Glyddyr, and far more wroth with himself for letting his anger get the better of him.

“It was as if I had made up my mind to fight against my own interests, for I could not have done that man a greater service than to strike him.”

“That’s it, sure enough,” he said. “This good-looking yachting dandy is the man, and it was enough to make poor Claudie think me a violent ruffian, upon whom she must never look again. But I will not give her up. I’d sooner die; and, bless her, she will never allow herself to be forced into marrying such a man as that, good-looking as he is. Well, we shall see.”

To go up to the Fort and apologise seemed to him impossible, and he spent his time wandering about the shore, the pier, harbour and rocks, everywhere, so that he could keep an eye on Glyddyr’s proceedings.

He told himself that he merely went down to breathe the fresh air, but the air never seemed to be worth breathing if he could not watch the different trimly-rigged yachts lying in the harbour, the smartest and best kept one of all being *The Fair Star*.

Glyddyr stayed at the hotel while his yacht was in the harbour, and Chris avoided that hotel on principle; but all the same he seemed to be attracted to it, and several times over the young men had met, to pass each other with a scowl, but they had not spoken since the day they had encountered up at the Fort.

There was a lurking hope, though, in Chris’s breast, that sooner or later he would meet Claude, and come to an explanation.

“Just to ask her,” he said, “to wait. I know I’m poor; at least, I suppose I am, but I’ll get over that, and force myself somehow into a position that shall satisfy the old man. He will not be so hard upon me when he sees what I have done. How unlucky in my choice of time. He was in a horrible fit of irritability from his illness, and I spoke to him like a weak boy. I ought to have known better.”

Just then he caught sight of a dress in the distance, and his heart began to beat fast.

“It’s Claude!” he exclaimed, and he increased his pace.

“No, it is not,” he said, slackening directly. “Stranger.”

If he could have seen two hundred yards farther, and round a corner, he would not have checked his pace, but then

his were ordinary eyes, and he continued his course, looking half-inquiringly at the figure which had attracted his attention, and gradually grew more curious as he became aware of the fact that the lady was fashionably dressed, and very elegant in her carriage.

The next minute he saw that she was young, and almost directly that she was very handsome, while, to complete his surprise, she smiled, showing her white teeth, and stopped short.

“I demand your pardon, monsieur,” she said, in a particularly rich, sweet voice, and pronouncing the words with a very foreign accent, “but I am so strange at zis place. I want ze small ship yacht *Ze Fair Star*. You will tell me?”

“Oh, certainly,” said Chris quickly; “one, two, three, four,” he continued pointing to where several graceful-looking yachts swung at their buoys. “That is it, the fourth from the left.”

“Ah, but yes, I see. One—two—tree—four, and zat is *Ze Fair Star*?”

There was something droll and yet prettily piquant about her way of speaking, and in spite of himself Chris smiled, and the stranger laughed a little silvery laugh.

“I say someting founay, *n’est-ce pas*?” she said.

“I beg your pardon,” cried Chris. “I don’t think I made myself understood.”

“Ah, perfectly. I am not Engleesh, but I understand. I count one, two, tree, four, and zat is *Ze Fair Star*, nombair four. Is it not so?”

“Quite right,” said Chris.

“But how shall I get to him?”

“You must go down to the landing-place and hail her, or else hire a boatman to take you to her.”

“Hail! What is hail?”

“Call—shout to the men on board.”

“But, yes: I am vairay stupide. But where is ze boat to take me. I am so strange here at zis place.”

“If you will allow me, I will show you.”

“Ah, I tank you so much,” and in the most matter-of-fact way, the stranger walked beside Chris towards the harbour, smiling and chatting pleasantly.

“I make you laugh vairay much,” she said merrily; and then, “aha! ze *charmante* young lady is your friend. I will find my own way now.”

She looked curiously at Chris, who had suddenly turned scarlet and then ghastly pale, for at the lane leading to the harbour they had come upon Claude and Mary, both looking wonderingly at him and his companion, and passing on without heeding his hurried salute.

“No, no,” said Chris, recovering himself quickly; and there was a flash of anger in his eyes as he continued rather viciously, “I will see you to the harbour, and speak to one of the boatmen for you.”

“I thank you so vairay much,” she said; “but I understand you wish to go back to ze two ladies.”

“You are mistaken,” he said coldly; “this way, please. It is very awkward for a stranger, and especially for a foreign lady.”

She smiled, looking at him curiously, and, aware that they were the object of every gaze, Chris walked on by her trying to be perfectly cool and collected; but, as he replied to his companions remarks, feeling more awkward than he had ever felt in his life, and growing moment by moment more absent as in spite of his efforts he wondered what Claude would think, and whether he could overtake her afterwards and explain.

“I am French, and we speak quite plain, what we do tink,” she said laughingly; “here you have been vairay good to me, but you want to go to ze ladies we encounter; is it not so?—Ah!”

The laughing look changed to one full of vindictive anger, as she muttered that quick, sharp cry, and increased the pace almost to a run.

Chris stared after his companion, seeming to ask himself whether she was a mad woman, but almost at the same moment he caught sight of Glyddyr and a showily—dressed stranger, just at the end of the little half-moon shaped granite pier which sheltered the few fishing luggers, brigs and schooners, and formed the only harbour for many miles along the coast.

They were sixty or eighty yards away, and as he saw Chris’s late companion running towards them, Glyddyr stepped down from the harbour wall, and, with less activity, his companion followed, that being a spot where some rough granite steps led down to the water, and where boats coming and going from the yachts were moored.

Chris stood still for a moment or two, and then, carried away by an intense desire to see the end of the little adventure, he walked slowly down towards the pier, gradually coming in sight of Glyddyr and his companion, as the

little gig into which they had descended was pulled steadily out towards the yacht.

There were plenty of loungers close up by the houses beneath the cliff, and sailors seated about the decks of the vessels, but the pier was occupied only by the handsomely-dressed woman, who increased her pace to a run, and only paused at the end, where she stood gesticulating angrily, beating one well-gloved hand in the other as she called upon the occupants of the boat to stop.

The stranger looked back at her and raised his hat, but Glyddyr sat immovable in the stern, looking straight out to sea, while the sailors bent to their oars, and made the water foam.

Chris stopped short some thirty yards from the end.

“It is no business of mine,” he thought. “Is this one of Mr Glyddyr’s friends?”

Then he felt a thrill of excitement run through him as he heard the woman shriek out, shaking her fist threateningly, —

“*Lâche! Lâche*!” And then in quick, passionate, broken English, “You will not stop? I come to you.”

Chris heard a shout behind him, and stood for a few moments as if petrified, for, with a shrill cry, the woman sprang right off the pier, and he saw the water splash out, glittering in the morning sun.

Then once more a thrill of excitement ran through him, as, thinking to himself that there would be ten feet of water off there at that time of the tide, and that it was running like a mill-race by the end of the pier, he dashed along as fast as he could go, casting off his loose flannel jacket and straw hat, bearing a little to his left, and plunging from the pier end into the clear tide.

As he rose from his dive, he shook his head, and saw a hand beating the water a dozen yards away; then this disappeared, and a patch of bright silk, inflated like a bladder, rose to the surface, and then two hands appeared, and, for a moment or two, the white face of the woman.

All the time Chris was swimming vigorously in pursuit.

The tide carried him along well, and as he made the water foam with his vigorous strokes, he took in the fact that Glyddyr was standing up in the gig, and that his companion was gesticulating and calling upon the men to row back. The pier, too, was resounding with the trampling of feet, and men were shouting orders as they came running down.

There was plenty of help at hand, but Chris knew that there was time for any one to drown before a boat could be manned, cast off and rowed to the rescue. If help was to come to the half-mad woman, it must be first from him, and then from Glyddyr’s gig, which seemed to be stationary, as far as the swimmer could see.

But he had no time for further thought; his every effort was directed to reaching the drowning woman, and it seemed an age before he mastered the distance between them, and then it was just as she disappeared. But, raising himself up, he made a quick turn, and dived down and caught hold of the stiff silken dress, to rise the next moment, and then engage in an awkward struggle, for first one and then another clinging hand paralysed his efforts. He tried to shake himself clear and get hold of the drowning woman free from her hands, but it was in vain. She clung to him with the energy of despair, and, in spite of his efforts to keep his head up, he was borne down by the swift tide; the strangling water bubbled in his nostrils, and there was a low thundering in his ears.

A few vigorous kicks took him to the surface again, and, in his helplessness, he looked wildly round for help, to see that Glyddyr’s gig was still some distance away; but the men were backing water, and the stranger was leaning over the stern, holding the boat-hook towards them.

Then the tide closed over his head again, and a chilling sense of horror came upon him; but once more the dim shades of the water gave place to the light of day, and he managed to get partially free, and again to make desperate strokes to keep himself on the surface.

But he felt that his strength was going, and that, unless help came quickly, there was to be the end.

A shout away on the left sent a momentary accession of strength through him, and he fought desperately, but in vain, for again his arm was pinioned, and the water rolled over his head just as he felt a sharp jerk, and, half-insensible, he was drawn up to the stern of a boat.

What happened during the next few minutes was a blank. Then Chris found himself being lifted up the rough granite steps on to the pier, amidst the cheering of a crowd; and in a hoarse voice he gasped,—

“The lady; is she safe?”

“All right, Mr Lisle, sir,” cried one of the men. “She’s all square.”

Then a strange voice close to his ear said hastily,—

“Yes; all right. You go.”

He did not realise what it meant for a few moments, but as he was struggling to his feet, to stand, weak and dripping, in the midst of a pool of water, the same voice said,—

“That’s right, my lad. Carry her up to my hotel.”

“No, no, my lads,” cried Chris confusedly to the too willing crowd of fishermen about him; “I’m all right. I can walk. Who has my jacket and hat?”

“Here, what’s all this?” said another voice, as some one came pushing through the crowd.

“Only a bit of an accident, sir,” said the same strange voice. “Lady—friend of mine—too late for the boat—slipped off the end of the pier.”

“And Mr Chris Lisle saved her, sir.”

“Humph! Whose boat is that—Mr Glyddyr’s?”

“Yes, friend of mine, sir,” said the same strange voice. “There, don’t lose time, my lads. Quick, carry her to my hotel.”

“Can I be of any assistance?” said another voice.

“No, thank you. I can manage.”

“Nonsense, sir; the lady’s insensible. Asher, you’d better go with them to the hotel.”

Chris heard no more, but stood looking confusedly after the crowd following the woman he had saved, and as he began to recover himself a little more, he realised that the strange voice was that of the over-dressed man who had been in Glyddyr’s boat, and that Gartram and then Doctor Asher had come down the pier, and had gone back to the cliff road, while he, though he hardly realised the fact that it was he—so strangely confused he felt—was seated on one of the low stone mooring posts, with a rough fisherman’s arm about his waist, and the houses on the cliff and the boats in the harbour going round and round.

“Come, howd up, brave lad,” said a rough voice.

“Here, drink a tot o’ this, Master Lisle, sir,” said another, and a pannikin was held to his lips.

“Seems to me he wants the doctor, too,” said another.

“Nay, he’ll be all right directly. That’s it, my lad. That’s the real stuff to put life into you. Now you can walk home, can’t you? A good rub and a run, and you’ll be all right. I’ve been drownded seven times, I have, and a drop of that allus brought me to.”

“That’s very strong,” gasped Chris, as he coughed a little.

“Ay, ’tis,” said the rough seaman, who had administered the dose. “It’s stuff as the ’cise forgot to put the dooty on.”

“I can stand now,” said Chris, as the sense of confusion and giddiness passed off; and when he rose to his feet, the first thing he caught sight of was Glyddyr’s gig, by where the yacht was moored.

“Who saved me?”

“That gent in Captain Glyddyr’s boat, my son. Got a howd on you with the boat-hook, and, my word, he’s given you a fine scrape. Torn the flannel, too.”

“Thank you, thank you. I can manage now.”

“No, you can’t, sir. You’re as giddy as a split dog-fish. You keep a hold on my arm. That’s your sort. I’ll walk home with you. Very plucky on you, sir. That gent’s wife, I suppose?”

“Eh? Yes. I don’t know.”

“Didn’t want to be left behind, I s’pose. Well, all I can say is, he’d ha’ been a widower if it warn’t for you.”

By this time they were at the shore end of the pier, but Chris still felt weak and giddy, and leaned heavily upon the rough seaman’s arm, walking slowly homeward, with quite a procession of blue-jerseyed fishers and sailors behind.

Then, as from out of a mist in front he caught a gleam of a woman’s dress, and the blood flushed to his pale face as he saw that Claude was coming toward him, but stopped short, and it was Mary Dillon’s hand that was laid upon his arm, and her voice which was asking how he was.

Volume One—Chapter Twelve.

The Gift of a White Card.

A hasty note had been despatched to the Fort by Glyddyr, announcing that a friend had come down from town, and that to entertain him he was going to take him for a short cruise in his yacht. Then there were the customary hopes that Gartram was better, and with kindest regards to Miss Gartram, Glyddyr remained his very sincerely.

“I don’t like going off like this,” grumbled Glyddyr; “it looks as if I were being scared away.”

“Well, that is curious,” said Gellow, with mock seriousness.

“And it’s like retreating from the field and leaving it to Lisle.”

“Who the deuce is Lisle?”

“Eh? A man I know. Had a bit of a quarrel with him,” said Glyddyr hastily.

“Quarrel? What about?”

“Oh, nothing, nothing.”

Gellow talked in a light, bantering strain, but behind the mask of lightness he assumed, a keen observer would have noticed that he was all on the strain to notice everything, and he noted that there was something under Glyddyrs careless way of turning the subject aside.

“Rival, of course,” thought Gellow.

They were walking down toward the pier, and as they neared the sea Glyddyrs pace grew slower, and his indecision more marked.

“I can’t afford to trifle with this affair,” he said. “I don’t think I’ll go.”

“Well, don’t go. Stop and order a nice piquant delicate little dinner in case Madame Denise comes, something of the *Trois Frères Provençaux* style, and I’ll stop and dine with you, play gooseberry, and keep you from quarrelling.”

“Come along,” said Glyddyr sharply; “we’ll go, but I believe she will not come. No, I won’t go. Suppose she does come down, and I’m not here, and she begins to make inquiries?”

“Bosh! If she comes and finds you are not here, the first inquiry she makes will be for when you went away, the second, for where you went.”

“Possibly.”

“Then let drop to some one that you are going to Redport, or Rainsbury, and she’ll make at once for there.”

“Confound you!” cried Glyddyr sharply. “Nature must have meant you for a fox.”

“You said a rat just now, dear boy. I never studied Darwin. Have it your own way. That our boat?”

“That’s my boat,” said Glyddyr sharply, as they reached the end of the pier.

“In with you, then,” cried Gellow; and then, in a voice loud enough to be heard on the nearest brig in the harbour, “Think the wind will hold good for Redport?”

Glyddyr growled, and followed his companion into the boat, which was pushed off directly.

“I don’t believe she’ll come down,” he whispered to Gellow, as the two sailors bent to their oars, and the boat began to surge through the clear water.

“Not likely,” said Gellow. “Look!”

Glyddyr gave a hasty glance back, and saw that which made him sit fast staring straight before him, and say, in a quick low voice,—

“Give way, my lads; I want to get on board.”

Then followed the excited appearance of the lady at the end of the pier, the cries to them to stop, and the plunge into the water.

“Well, she is a tartar,” whispered Gellow.

“Don’t look back, man.”

“Oh, all right. Water isn’t deep, I suppose?”

“Look, sir,” cried one of the sailors. “Shall we row back?”

“No; go on.”

“Water’s ten foot deep, sir, and the tide’s running like mad,” cried the man excitedly.

“Some one will help the lady out,” said Glyddyr hastily. “Plenty of hands there.”

“Hooray!” cried one of the men, as Chris leaped off the pier.

“Tell them to back water,” whispered Gellow excitedly. “It’s murder, man.”

Glyddyr made no reply, but seemed as if stricken with paralysis, as he looked back with a strangely confused set of thoughts struggling together in his brain, foremost among which, and mastering all the others, was one that seemed to suggest that fate was saving him from endless difficulties, for if the woman whom he could see being swept away by the swift current sank, to rise no more, before his boat reached her, his future would be assured.

He made a feeble effort, though, to save the drowning pair, giving orders in a half-hearted way, trembling violently the while, and unable to crush the hope that the attempt might be unsuccessful.

The men backed water rapidly, and Gellow raised the boat-hook, holding it well out over the stern in time to make the sharp snatch, which took effect in Chris's back, and holding on till more help came and they reached the pier.

"It's all over," whispered Glyddyr bitterly, as willing hands dragged Chris and his insensible companion up the steps.

"Not it," was whispered back. "Will you leave yourself in my hands?"

"I am in them already."

"Don't fool," said Gellow quickly. "You have got to marry that girl for your own sake."

"And for yours."

"Call it so if you like; but will you trust me to get you out of this scrape?"

"Yes, curse you: do what you like."

"Bless you, then, my dear boy; off you go."

"What do you mean?"

"Be off to the yacht, set sail, and don't come back to Danmouth till I tell you it's safe."

"Do you mean this?"

"Of course. But keep me posted as to your whereabouts."

"Here?"

"No; in town."

"But what are you going to do?"

"Fight for your interests, and mine. That woman's my wife, come down after me, and I'm going to take her home. See?"

"Not quite."

"Then stop blind. Be off, quick."

This hurried colloquy took place in the boat by the rough granite stairs, the attention of those about being taken up by the two half-drowned people on the pier, the excited talk making the words inaudible save to those concerned.

"Now, then," whispered Gellow, "you'll leave it to me?"

"Yes," said Glyddyr, hesitating.

"*Carte blanche*?"

"You'll do nothing—"

He did not finish the sentence.

"*Carte blanche*?" said Gellow again.

"Well, yes."

"Right; and every lie I tell goes down to your account, dear boy. Bye-bye. Off you go," he said aloud, as he sprang on the stones. "I'm very sorry, Glyddyr; I apologise. If I had known she would follow me, I wouldn't have come."

"Give way," said Glyddyr, thrusting the boat from the steps; and he sank down in the stern, heedless of the dripping seat, and thinking deeply as the pier seemed to slip away from him, and with it the woman who had for years been, as he styled it, his curse.

He only glanced back once, and saw that Chris Lisle was being helped up into a sitting position, but the little crowd closed round him, and he saw no more, but sat staring hard at his yacht, and seeing only the face of the woman just drawn from the sea.

Then he seemed to see Chris recovering, and taking advantage of his absence to ruin all his hopes with Claude.

"If these two, Claude and Denise, should meet and talk," he thought.

"If Gartram should learn everything. If Denise should not recover. Hah!"

Glyddyr uttered a low expiration of the breath, as he recalled how closely Gellow's interests were mixed up with his own.

“And I have given him *carte blanche*,” he thought; “and he will say or do anything to throw them off the scent—or *do* anything,” he repeated, after a pause. “No, he dare do no harm; he is too fond of his own neck.”

He had come to this point when he reached the side of his long, graceful-looking yacht, and as soon as he was aboard he gave his orders; the mooring ropes were cast off, and the sails hoisted. Then, fetching a glass from the cabin, Glyddyr carefully scanned the pier and shore, but could see nothing but little knots of people standing about discussing the adventure, while the largest knots hung about the door of the hotel.

Almost at the same moment, Gellow was using the telescope in the hotel hall.

“Right,” he said to himself, as he closed it, upon seeing that the sails of the yacht were being hoisted. “Good boy; but you’ll have to pay for it. Well, doctor, how is she?”

Doctor Asher had just come down from one of the bed-chambers.

“Recovering fast,” said that gentleman, following Gellow into a private room, “but very much excited. She will require rest and great care for some days.”

Gellow tapped him on the breast, and gave him a meaning look.

“No, she won’t, doctor,” he said, in a low voice. “I must get her home at once. Most painful for us both to stop. People chattering and staring, and that sort of thing. Most grateful to you for your attention,” he continued, taking out his pocket-book, opening it quickly, and drawing therefrom two crisp new five-pound notes. “Let me see, you doctors prefer guineas,” he said, thrusting his hand into his pocket.

“No, no, really,” protested Asher, as his eyes sparkled at the sight of the notes.

“Ah, well, I shall not press you, doctor; but I’m down and you are down after this painful affair, so what do you say to prescribing for us both pints of good cham and a seltzer, eh? Not bad, eh?”

“Excellent, I’m sure,” said Asher, smiling; “but really I cannot think of—er—one note is ample.”

“Bosh, sir!” cried Gellow, crumpling up both, and pressing them into the doctor’s hand. “Professional knowledge must be paid for. Here, waiter; wine-list. That’s right. Bottle of—of—of—of—Oh, here we are. Dry Monopole and two seltzers—no, one will do. Must practise economy; eh, doctor?”

The waiter hurried out, and Gellow continued confidentially,—

“Bless her! Charming woman, but bit of a tyrant, sir. Love her like mad don’t half express it; but there are times when a man does like a run alone. Just off with a friend for a bit of a cruise when the check-string was pulled tight. You understand?”

“Oh, yes; I begin to understand.”

“Ah, here’s the stimulus, and I’m sure we require it.”

Pop!

“Thanks, waiter. Needn’t wait. Now, doctor: bless her—the dear thing’s health. Hah, not bad—for the country. I may take her back to-day, eh?”

“Well, er—if great care were taken, and you broke the journey if the lady seemed worse—I—er—think perhaps you might risk it,” said Asher, setting down his empty glass. “Of course you would take every precaution.”

“Who would take more, doctor? Put out, of course; but the weaker sex, eh? Yes, the weaker sex.”

He refilled the doctor’s glass and his own.

“An accident. Pray, don’t think it was anything else; and, I say: you will contradict any one who says otherwise?”

“Of course, of course.”

“There are disagreeable people who might say that the poor dear sprang off the pier in a fit of temper at being left behind, but we know better, eh, doctor?”

“Oh, of course,” said Asher, playing with and enjoying his glass of champagne.

“It’s a wonderful thing, temper. Take a cigar?”

“Thanks, no. I never smoke in the daytime.”

“Sorry for you, doctor. Professional reasons, I suppose?”

Asher bowed.

“I was going to say,” continued Gellow, carefully selecting one out of the four cigars he carried, for no earthly reason, since he would smoke all the others in their turn. “I was going to say that it is a wonderful thing how Nature always gives the most beautiful women the worst tempers.”

“Compensation?” hazarded Asher.

“Eh? Yes; I suppose so. Going, doctor?”

“Yes; other patients to see.”

“Then my eternal gratitude, sir, for what you have done, and with all due respect to you and your skill, I hope I may never have to place a certain lady in your care again. Shake hands, my dear sir. Doctor Asher, I think you are called? That name will be engraven on the lady’s heart.”

“You will take the greatest care?” said Asher.

“Of course.”

“And break the journey, if needful?”

“And break the journey if I think it needful. You need be under no apprehension, my dear doctor. Good-morning, and goodbye.

“Yes; bless her! I’ll take the greatest care, Asher, by gad!” said Gellow to himself, as he saw the doctor pass the window, when he filled his own glass, took a hasty sip, and then drew out his pocket-book.

“Shall I make a lump charge on this journey,” he said, “or put down the separate items? Better be exact,” he muttered, and he carefully wrote down,—

“Doctor’s fees, twenty guineas; lunch for doctor, one guinea.”

“Always as well to be correct,” he muttered, as he replaced his pencil in the book, and drew round the elastic band with a snap. “How am I to know about how she is going on? By jingo!”

He started, so sudden was the apparition of the woman, who flung open the door, and closed it loudly, being evidently in a fierce fit of excitement and rage.

“Where is my hosband?” she cried, speaking in a low voice, and through her teeth.

Gellow beckoned her to the window, and pointed out to where *The Fair Star* was careening over, with a pleasant breeze sending her rapidly through the water.

“He is dere,” she said, watching the yacht through her half-closed eyes.

“Yes, he’s off. Gave me the slip while I was helping you. By jingo, ma’am, you had a narrow escape.”

“And you came down here to reveal him I was coming,” she said, turning upon him suddenly, with her eyes widely open and flashing.

“Come, I like that,” he replied, with cool effrontery. “How the dickens should I know that you were coming down here?”

She did not reply, but stood gazing at him searchingly.

“But I wish to goodness you hadn’t come.”

“And why, monsieur, do you wish that I shall not come?”

“Because you spoil sport. Do you know that Glyddyr owes me thousands?”

“Of francs? He is vairay extravagant.”

“Francs, be hanged! Pounds. I came down here to try and get some, and just as I’d got him safe, and he was taking me aboard his yacht to give me some money, you came and had that accident.”

“Yais, I come and had that ac-ceedon,” said the woman through her teeth. “Where to is he gone, monsieur?”

“Glyddyr? Ah! that’s what I should like to know. Going to sail back to London, I expect. Gravesend, perhaps. How are you now?”

“He will come back here?” said the woman, paying no heed to the question.

Gellow burst into a roar of laughter.

“What for you laugh?” said the woman angrily. “Am so I redeeculose in dese robe which do not fit me?”

“Eh? Oh, no. ’Pon honour I never noticed your dress. With a face like yours one does not see anything else.”

“Aha, I see,” said the woman, raising her eyebrows. “You flatter me, monsieur. I am extreme oblige. You tell me my face is handsome?”

“Yes; and no mistake.”

“You tell me somting else I do not know at all.”

“Eh? Oh, very well. I will when I think of it.”

“You tell me now. What for you laugh?”

“Eh, why did I laugh?” The woman screwed up her eyelids, and nodded her head a great deal.

“I remember now. It was at your thinking that Glyddyr would come back here.”

“He has sail away in his leettler sheep—in his yacht. Why will he not come back to-night, to-morrow, the next day?”

“Shall I tell you?”

“Yes; you shall tell me.”

“Because he will say to himself: ‘no, I will not go back to Danmouth, because Madame Denise is so fond of me she will be waiting.’ Do you understand?”

“Oh, yais. I understand quite well. You sneer me, but you are his friend. You are his friend.”

“Ha, ha, ha,” laughed Gellow; “you wouldn’t have said that if you had heard him when I talked about money.”

“Well?”

The abrupt question was so sudden, that Gellow looked at the speaker wonderingly.

“Well what?” he said.

“Why do you look at me? Why do you ask me question? You go your way, I go mine. I want my hosband. I will have my hosband. Why is he here?”

“He isn’t here,” said Gellow, in reply to the fierce question.

“No, I know dat; and you know what I mean. Why comes he here?”

“Well,” said Gellow, “I should think it was so as to get out of my way, and—now, don’t be offended if I tell you the truth.”

“Bah! I know you. You cannot offend me.”

“Well, I’m sorry I am so insignificant in madame’s beautiful eyes.”

“What?”

“I say I am sorry I am so insignificant, but I’ll tell you all the same. I should say that Mr Parry Glyddyr came down to this delectable, out-of-the-way spot so as to be where Mademoiselle Denise—”

“Madame Denise Glyddyr, sare.”

“Ah, that’s what Glyddyr says you are not.”

“What?”

“I beg your pardon; I only tell you what he says.”

“We shall see,” cried the woman, stamping her foot, “what you did not finish yourself?”

“And I don’t mean to,” said Gellow, *sotto voce*.

“Well?”

“I have no more to say, only that I believe he came here so as to avoid you, and he is off somewhere now to be away from you.”

“Yes, it is true,” said the woman bitterly.

“If you had not come down, I daresay he would have run back here.”

“What for?”

“How should I know? Play billiards, read the odds.”

“He has a wife here, then.”

“Do you mean Madame Denise?” said Gellow innocently.

She gave him a scornful look.

“Are you fool, or make fun of me?” she cried fiercely. “Bah, I am too much angry. Is there a lady here?”

“No, I should think not, but we could easily find out. If he has, it is too bad, owing me so much as he does. No, I don’t

think so; stop—yes I do. By Jingo, it's too bad. That's why he did not want to take me out in his yacht."

"What do you mean?" said the woman searchingly.

"If there is one, madame—if he is married, she is aboard his yacht, and yonder they go—no, they don't; they're out of sight."

There was so much reality in Gellow's delivery of this speech, that his *vis-à-vis* was completely hoodwinked. She tried to pass it off with a laugh, but the compression of her lips, the contraction about her eyes, all showed the jealous rage she was in; and it was only by giving one foot a fierce stamp on the carpet, and by walking quickly to the window, that she could keep herself from shrieking aloud.

"Well, madame," said Gellow, "you are getting all right again."

"Oh, yais; I am getting all right."

"And you can do without my services?"

"Oh, yais."

"Then I'll say good-bye. Glad I was near to help you out. Glad to see you again if you like to give me a call in town."

"Where are you going?"

"Going? Back to London as fast as I can."

"And what for, sir?"

"To read up all the yachting news, and see where *The Fair Star* puts in, and then run down and give Master Glyddyr a bit of my mind."

"Stop—an hour—two hours."

"What for?"

"Till I get back my dress all a dry. I go back wiz you."

"Oh, certainly, if you wish it; but I wouldn't; you had better stop here and rest for a few days—a week. I'll write and tell you all I find out."

"I go back wiz you," said the woman decidedly. And she kept her word, for in two hours they caught a train.

The next day came a telegram from Underley, giving that as Glyddyr's temporary address.

Gellow wrote back advising that the yacht should in future sail under another name, with her owner incog, and he added that the coast at Danmouth was now clear.

Volume One—Chapter Thirteen.

Hearts are not Deformed.

"Now Claude, darling, what do you think of me?" said Mary, one morning; "am I beautiful as a flower in spring?"

"No," said Claude gravely; "only what you are, my dear little cousin; why?"

Mary's face was flushed, and her eyes were sparkling as much from mischief as pleasure as she caught her cousin's hand, led her softly to the open window of her bedroom, and pointed down.

Claude looked at her wonderingly, but she was too well used to her companion's whims to oppose her, and she looked down.

"Can you see the goose?" whispered Mary.

"I can see Mr Trevithick walking with papa; I thought they were in the study;" and, she hardly knew why, she gazed down with some little interest at the tall, stoutish man of thirty, with closely-cut dark hair and smoothly shaved face, which gave him rather the aspect of a giant boy as he walked beside Gartram, talking to him slowly and earnestly, evidently upon some business matter.

"Well, that's who I mean," said Mary, laughing almost hysterically, "for he must be mad."

"Now, Mary dear, what fit is this?" cried Claude, pressing her hands and drawing her away, as, a very child for the moment, she was about to get upon a chair and peep down from behind the curtain. "I know how angry papa would be if he caught sight of you looking down."

"Well, the man should not be such a goose—gander, I mean. I thought he was such a clever, staid, serious lawyer that uncle trusted him deeply."

"Of course," said Claude warmly; "and he's quite worthy of it. I like Mr Trevithick very, very much."

“Oh!” exclaimed Mary, in a mock tragic tone, as she flung her cousin’s hands away, “you’ll make me hate you.”

“Mary, you ought to have been an actress.”

“You mean I ought to have been a man and an actor, Claudie. Oh, how I could have played Richard the Third.”

“Hush!”

“Oh, they can’t hear. They’re talking of bills and bonds and lading. I heard them. But Claude, oh! and you professing to love Chris Lisle.”

“I never professed anything of the kind,” cried Claude indignantly.

“Your eyes did; and all the time uncle is engaging you to Mr Glyddyr.”

“Mary! For shame!”

“And in spite of this double-dealing, you must want Mr Trevithick, too?”

“Do you wish to make me angry?”

“Do you wish to make me jealous?”

“Jealous? Absurd!”

“Of course,” cried Mary sharply. “What should a poor little miserable like I am know of love or jealousy or heartaches, and the rest of it?”

“My dear coz,” whispered Claude, placing an arm round her, “I shall never understand you.”

“There isn’t much of me, Claude. It oughtn’t to take you long.”

“But it does,” said Claude playfully. “I never know when you are serious and when you are teasing. I have not the most remote idea of what you mean now.”

“Then I’ll tell you. He’s in love.”

“Who is?”

“Mr Trevithick.”

“Mary!”

“There you go. No: not with you. Of course, it would be quite natural if the great big fellow, coming here every now and then, had fallen in love with his client’s beautiful daughter. But the foolish goose has fallen in love with some one else.”

“Mary, dear, how do you know? With whom?”

“Ah! Of course, you would never guess—with poor Mary Dillon.”

“Oh, Mary, darling! But has he really told you so?”

“I should like to see him dare.”

“Yes,” said Claude quietly; “I suppose that is what most girls would like.”

“Don’t, Claude dearest; pray don’t. My sedate and lovely cousin trying to make jokes. Oh! this is too delicious. But it won’t do, Claudie; it is not in your way at all. I am a natural, born female jester—a sort of Josephine Miller; but—you! oh, it is too ridiculous.”

“Now, tell me seriously, what does this mean?” said Claude, taking the girl’s hands.

“What I told you, darling. Big, clever, serious Mr Trevithick, the learned lawyer, is in love—with me.”

“Mary, you must be serious now. But how do you know?”

“How do I know?” cried Mary, with a curl of the lip. “How does a woman know when a man loves her?”

“By his telling her so, I suppose; and you say Mr Trevithick has not told you.”

“Didn’t you know Chris Lisle loved you before he dared to tell—I mean, to give you instructions in the art of catching salmon?”

Claude was silent.

“No, of course you did not, dear,” said Mary mockingly. “As if it was not only too easy to tell.”

“But, Mary dear, this is too serious to trifle about. You have not given him any encouragement?”

“Only been as sharp and disagreeable to him as I could.”

“But how has he shown it?”

“Lots of ways. Held my poor little tiny hand in his great big ugly paw, where it looked like a splash of cream in a trencher, and forgot to let it go when he was talking to me; looked down at me as if he were hungry, and I was something good to eat—like an ogre who wanted to pick my bones; sighed like the wind in Logan cave, and when I dragged my hand away, all crushed and crumpled up, and without a bit of feeling left in it, he begged my pardon, and looked ashamed of himself.”

“And what did you say?”

“I? I said, ‘Oh!’”

“That all?”

“No; I said, ‘you’ve quite spoiled that hand, Mr Trevithick,’ and then the monster looked frightened of me.”

“I am very sorry—no, very glad, Mary,” said Claude thoughtfully, and looking her surprise.

“Which, dear?”

There was a tap at the door, and Sarah Woodham entered.

“Master wished me to tell you that Mr Trevithick will not stay for dinner, Miss Claude, and said would you come down.”

“Directly, Sarah,” said Claude, rising. “You will not come, Mary?” she whispered.

“Indeed, but I shall.”

“Mary, dear,” protested her cousin.

“Why, if I stop away the monster will think all sort of things; that I care for him, that he has impressed me favourably, that I have gone to my room to dream. No, my dear coz, there are some things which must be nipped in the bud, and this is one of them. It is his whim—his maggot. Oh, Claude, he is six feet two. What a huge maggot to nip.”

They were already part of the way down, to find Gartram and his great legal man of business standing in the hall.

“Better alter your mind, Trevithick, and have a chop with us. Try and persuade him, Claude.”

“We shall be extremely glad, Mr Trevithick,” said Claude; but her words did not sound warm, and her father looked at her as if surprised.

“I am greatly obliged, but I must get back to town,” said their visitor; and he spoke in a heavy, bashful way, and looked at Mary as if expecting her to speak, but she did not even glance at him.

“Well,” said Gartram, “if you must, you must.”

The big lawyer looked at Claude again in a disappointed way, and his eyes seemed to say, “Coax me a little more.”

But Claude felt pained as she glanced from one to the other, for there was something too incongruous in the idea of those two becoming engaged, for her to wish to aid the matter in the slightest way, and she held out her hand for the parting.

“I suppose it will be three months before we see you again, Mr Trevithick,” she said.

“Yes, Miss Gartram, three months; unless,” he added hastily, “Mr Gartram should summon me before.”

“No fear, Trevithick; four days a year devoted to legal matters are quite enough for me.”

“We none of us know, Mr Gartram,” said the big man solemnly. “Good-day, Miss Gartram; good-day, Miss Dillon,” and he shook hands with both slowly, as if unwillingly, before he strode away.

“I don’t think Trevithick is well,” said Gartram.

Volume One—Chapter Fourteen.

A Telegram.

The same old repetition in Chris Lisle’s brain: “How am I to grow rich enough to satisfy the King?”

Always that question, to which no answer came.

Then would come, till he was half maddened by the thought, the idea that Glyddyr had returned after a few days’ absence and had the free run of the Fort, and would be always at Claude’s side.

“Constant dropping will wear a stone,” he would say to himself; “and she is not a stone. I am sure she loved me, and I

might have been happy if I had not been so cursedly poor—no, I mean, if she had not been so cruelly rich. For I am not poor, and I never felt poor till now. But I can't afford to keep a yacht, and go here and there to races, and win money. He must win a great deal at these races.

"Why cannot I?" he said half aloud, after a long, thoughtful pause. She would think no better of me, but the old man would.

"Surely I ought to be as clever as Mr Parry Glyddyr. I ought to be a match for him. Well, I am in brute strength. Pish! what nonsense one does dream of at a time like this. I can think of no means of making money, only of plenty of ways of losing it. Nature meant me for an idler and dreamer by the beautiful river, so I may as well go out and idle and dream, instead of moping here, grumbling at my fate.

"It's a fine morning, as the writer said; let's go out and kill something."

He stepped out into the passage, lifted down his salmon rod from where it hung upon a couple of hooks, took his straw hat, in whose crown, carefully twisted up, were sundry salmon flies, thrust his gaff hook through the loop of a strap, and started off along the front of the houses, in full view of the row of fishermen, who were propping their backs up against the cliff rail.

Plenty of "Mornin's" greeted him, with smiles and friendly nods, and then, as he walked on, the idlers discussed the probabilities of his getting a good salmon or two that morning.

Away in the sheltered bay lay Glyddyr's yacht, looking the perfection of trimness; and as it caught his eye, Chris turned angrily away, wondering whether the owner was up at the Fort, or on board.

Just as he reached the river which cut the little town in two, he saw the boy who did duty as telegraph messenger go along up the path which led away to the Fort, and with the habit born of living in a little gossiping village, Chris found himself thinking about the telegraph message.

"Big order for stone," he said to himself as he studied the water. "How money does pour in for those who don't want it."

But soon after he saw the boy returning, a red telegraph envelope in his hand, and that he was trotting on quickly, as if in search of an owner.

"Not at home," he muttered; and then he became interested in the boy's proceedings in in spite of himself, as he saw the young messenger go down to the end of the rough pier and stop, as if speaking to some one below, before coming quickly back, and finally passing him, going up the path by the river side, as if to reach the old stone bridge some hundred yards up the glen.

"Gartram must be over at his new quarry," said Chris to himself, and as the boy disappeared, he thought no more of the incident till about fifty yards farther, as he had turned up by the bank of the river, he caught sight of him again.

He forgot him the next moment, for his interest was taken up by the rushing water, and he watched numberless little falls and eddies, as he went on, till, as he neared the bridge, he caught sight of a well-known figure seated upon the parapet smoking, and in the act of taking the telegram from the boy.

He tore it open and read the message, crumpled it up, and with an angry gesture threw it behind him into the stream; and as he pitched the boy a small coin, Chris saw the little crumpled-up ball of paper go sailing down towards the sea.

For a moment the young man felt disposed to avoid meeting Glyddyr, as, to reach the fishing ground he had marked down, he would have to go over the bridge, and then along the rugged path on the other side.

"And if he sees me going back, he'll think I'm afraid of him," muttered Chris.

At the thought, he swung his long lithe rod over his shoulder, and strode on, his heavy fishing boots sounding loudly on the rugged stones.

As Chris reached the bridge, Glyddyr was busy with his match-box lighting a fresh cigar, and did not look up till the other was only a few yards away, when he raised his head, saw who was coming, and changed colour. Then the two young men gazed fiercely into each other's eyes, the look telling plainly enough that what had passed and was going on made them enemies for life.

Chris tramped on, keeping his head up, and naturally, as he did not turn towards his rear, he was soon out of eyeshot, when the sharp report of a yacht's gun rang out from behind him, the effect being that he turned sharply round to look at the smoke rising half a mile away.

It was a perfectly natural action, but Chris forgot that he was carrying a long, elastic salmon rod, and the effect was curious, for the rod swung through the air with a loud *whish*, and gave Glyddyr a smart blow on the cheek.

"I beg your pardon," cried Chris involuntarily, as Glyddyr sprang from the parapet into the roadway, with a menacing look in his eyes.

"You cad!" he roared. "You did that on purpose."

"No, I did not," said Chris, quite as hotly. "If I had meant to do it, I should have used the butt of the rod, and knocked you over into the river."

Glyddyr's lips seemed to contract till his white teeth were bare; and, dashing down cigar and match, he advanced towards Chris with his fists clenched, till he was within a couple of feet of his rival.

Chris's face grew set and stony looking, but he did not move. One hand held the rod, and the other was in his pocket, so that he offered an easy mark for a blow such as he felt would pay him back for the one which had sent Glyddyr over in the study at the Fort.

But he knew that the blow would not come, and a curiously mocking smile slowly dawned upon his lip as he saw that Glyddyr was trembling with impotent rage, and dared not strike.

"Well?" said Chris. "Have you any more to say?"

"You shall pay bitterly for these insults," whispered Glyddyr; for he could not speak aloud.

"When you like, Mr Glyddyr," said Chris coolly; "but you dare not ask me for payment. I told you that blow was an accident—so it was."

"You lie!"

Chris flushed.

"Do I?" he said hoarsely. "A minute ago I was sorry that I had struck you inadvertently, and I apologised as a gentleman should."

"A gentleman!" said Glyddyr mockingly.

"Yes, sir, a gentleman; but you called me a cad and a liar, so now I tell you I'm glad I did strike you, and that it wouldn't take much to make me undo the rod and use the second joint to give you a good thrashing. Good-morning."

There was a peculiar sound in the still sunny glen heard above the dull rush and murmur of the river. It was the grating together of Glyddyr's teeth, as Chris turned round once more, and unintentionally brushed the top of his rod against his rival again.

Glyddyr made a sharp movement, as if to snatch hold of and break the rod, but his hand did not go near it; and he stood there watching the fisherman as he turned down to the waterside, and went on up the glen, soon disappearing among the birches and luxuriant growth of heath and fern which crowned the stones.

"Curse him!" muttered Glyddyr, picking up the fallen cigar and lighting it, without smoking for a few minutes. "I'll pay him out yet. Well," he said, with a bitter laugh, "I'm going the right way. Poor devil; how mad he is. He shall see me come away from the church some day with little Claude on my arm, and I'd give a hundred pounds—if I'd got it—to let him see me take her in my arms, and cover her pretty face with kisses."

There was a peculiarly malignant screw in his face as he stood looking up the glen, and then he laughed again.

"Poor devil," he cried. "I can afford to grin at him."

He turned to go, and at that moment a puff of wind came down the glen, rustling a piece of paper in the road, and drawing his attention to the fact that it was the envelope of the telegram.

Then he stooped and picked it up, and shaped it out till it was somewhat in the form of a boat, as he dropped it over the stone parapet, and stood watching as it swept round and round in an eddy, and then went sailing down the stream.

"That's the way to serve you, Master Gellow," he muttered; "and I wish you were with it sailing away out yonder. No, no, my fine fellow, once bit twice shy; once bit—a hundred times bit, but I've grown too cunning for you at last. Now, I suppose some other scoundrel is in that with you. Back it. Not this time, my fine fellow; not this time."

He smoked away furiously as he watched the scrap of paper float down, now fast, now slowly. At one time it was gliding down some water slide, to plunge into a little foaming pool at the bottom, where it sailed round and round before it reached the edge and was whirled away again. Now it caught against a stone, and was nearly swamped; now it recovered itself, and was swept towards the side, but only to be snatched away, and go gliding down once more in company with iridescent bubbles and patches of foam.

"Hah!" ejaculated Glyddyr, "if I only had now all that I have fooled away by taking their confounded tips, and backing the favourites they have sent me. No, Master Gellow, I'm deep in enough now, and I'm not the gudgeon to take that bait. Money, money. There'll be a fresh demand directly, and the old bills to renew. How easy it is to borrow, and how hard to pay it back. If I only had a few hundreds now, how pleasant times would be, and how easy it would be to get what I want."

Oddly enough, just at the same time, Chris Lisle was busily whipping away at the stream in foaming patch and in dark gliding pool, thinking deeply.

"Such a despicable coward!" he muttered. "Why, if a man had served me so, I should have half killed him. What a fate for her if it were possible, and here is he accepted by that sordid old wretch of a fellow, just because he has money. Now, if I had a few thousands! Ha!"

He whipped away, fishing with most patient energy till he reached the pool where Claude had caught her first fish, and where, as he stood by the water side, he seemed to feel her little hands clasping the rod with him as mentor,

instructing her in the art.

But, try hard as he would, no salmon rose. Every pool, every eddy which had proved the home of some silvery fish in the past, was essayed in vain; and at last, after a couple of hours' honest work, he gave it up as a bad job, and determined to try at the mouth of the river, just where the salt tide met the fresh water, for one of the peel which frequented that part.

Winding up his line, and hesitating as to how he should fish, he walked swiftly back, wondering whether Glyddyr would still be on the bridge, waiting to insult him with word and look, and feeling heartily relieved to see that the place was clear.

Reaching the bridge, he went on down by the river on the same side as that on which he had been fishing.

There was no path there, and the way among the rugged stones and bushes was laborious, but he crept and leaped and climbed away till he was within a hundred yards of the sea, where the river began to change its rough, turbulent course to one that was calm and gliding.

It was extremely tortuous here, and in places there were eddies, in which patches of foam floated, just as they had come down from the little falls above, lingering, as it were, before taking the irrevocable plunge into the tide which would carry them far out to sea.

Close by one of these eddies, where the water looked black and dark, the fisher had to make his way down to the very edge of the river, to climb round a rugged point, and so reach the wilderness of boulders below, among which the river rushed hurriedly towards the bar.

It was the most slippery piece of climbing of all, and about half-way along Chris was standing with one foot upon an isolated stone, the other on a ledge of slatey rock, about to make his final spring, when something floating on the surface of the still water took his attention.

It was only a scrap of pinkish paper, printed at the top, carefully ruled and crossed, and bearing some writing in coarse blue pencil.

Chris stared hard at the object, for it was a telegram. Glyddyr had received a telegram, crumpled it up and thrown it into the water, where, in all probability, consequent upon the action of the water, it had slowly opened out till it lay flat, as if asking to be read.

"Bah!" ejaculated Chris, turning away from temptation—as it seemed to him.

The intention was good, but the mischief was done. Even as he glanced at the telegram lying there upon the water he took in its meaning. The writing was so large and clear, and the message so brief, that he grasped it all in what the Germans call an *augenblick*.

"*Back the Prince's filly.—Gellow*."

A curious feeling of annoyance came over Chris as he climbed on—a feeling which made him pick up a couple of heavy stones, and dash them down one after the other into the river.

The second was unnecessary, for the first was so well aimed that it splashed right into the middle of the paper, and bore it down into the depths of the river beneath the rocky bank; and Chris walked on towards the smiling sea, with those words fixed in his mind and standing out before him.

"Back the Prince's Filly."

The thing seemed quite absurd, and he felt more and more angry as he went a few yards farther and prepared his tackle, and began to fish just in the eddy where the stream and sea met. And there goodly fish, which had come up with the tide to feed on the tasty things brought down by the little river from the high grounds, gave him plenty of opportunities for making his creel heavy, but he saw nothing save the words upon the telegram, and could think of nothing else.

It was evidently a very important message to Glyddyr about some race, but for the time being he had no idea what race was coming off. He was fond of sport in one way, but Epsom, Ascot, Newmarket, Doncaster and Goodwood had no charm for him.

But he knew accidentally that Glyddyr was a man who betted heavily, and report said that he won large sums on the turf, while by the irony of fate here was he, possibly Glyddyr's greatest enemy, suddenly put in possession of one of his great turf secrets—undoubtedly a hint from his agent by which he would win a heavy sum.

"Well, let him win a heavy sum," cried Chris petulantly, as if some one were present tempting him to try his luck. "Let him win and gamble and lose, and go hang himself; what is it to me?"

He hurriedly wound in his line, to find that a fish had hooked itself; but, in his petulant state, he gave the rod a sharp jerk, snatched the hook free, and began to retrace his way to the bridge; but before he reached the spot where he had had to step amid the big stones, he caught sight of a scrap of pink paper sailing down to meet the tide, and he could not help seeing the words,—

"*Prince's fil—*"

And directly after another ragged fragment floated by showing, at the torn edge where the stone had dashed

through, the one mutilated word,—

"*Bac—*"

"Any one would think there were invisible imps waiting to tempt me," thought Chris. "How absurd!"

He strode on, leaping and climbing along the rugged bank till he once more reached the bridge, crossed it, and was half-way back to his apartments when he saw Gartram coming along the road with Claude and Mary.

His first instinct was to avoid them. The second, to go straight on and meet them, and this he did, to find that, as he raised his hat, Gartram turned away to speak to Claude, and completely check any attempt at recognition on her part.

"How contemptible!" thought Chris. "Now, if I had been as well off as Glyddyr, I should have been seized by the hand, asked why I did not go up more to the Fort, and generally treated as if I were a son."

"*Back the Prince's filly*!"

The idea came with such a flash across his brain that he started and looked sharply over his shoulder to see if any one had spoken.

"How curious," he thought. "It just shows how impressionable the human mind is. If I gave way to it, I should begin calculating odds, and fooling away my pittance in gambling on the turf. I suppose every man has the gaming instinct latent within him, ready to fly into activity directly the right string is pulled. Ah, well, it isn't so with me."

He walked on, trying to think of how beautiful the day was, and how lovely the silver-damascened sea, with the blue hills beyond; but away softly, describing arcs of circles with the tips of her masts, lay Glyddyr's yacht, and there, just before him, was Glyddyr himself going into the little post office, where the one wire from the telegraph pole seemed to descend through the roof.

"Gone to send a message," thought Chris, with a feeling of anger that he could not for the moment analyse, but whose explanation seemed to come the next moment. To back the Prince's horse, perhaps make more thousands, and then—"Oh! this is maddening!" he said, half aloud; and he increased his pace till he reached the pretty cottage where he had long been the tenant of a pleasant, elderly, ship-captain's widow; and after hanging his rod upon the hooks in the little passage, entered his room, threw the creel into the corner, and himself into a chair.

"Cut dead!" he exclaimed bitterly. "After all these years of happy life, to be served like that."

"*Back the Prince's filly*."

The words seemed to stand out before him, and he gave quite a start as the door opened and the pleasant smiling face of his landlady appeared, the bustling woman bearing in a large clean blue dish.

"How many this time, Mr Lisle?" she said. "Of course you'll like some for dinner?"

"What? No; none at all, Mrs Sarson," said Chris hastily.

"No fish, sir? Why, James Gadby came along and said that the river was just full."

"Yes; I daresay, but I came back. Headache. Not well."

"Let me send for Dr Asher, sir. There's nothing like taking things in time. A bit of cold, perhaps, with getting yourself so wet wading."

"No, no, Mrs Sarson; there's nothing the matter. Please don't bother me now. I want to think."

The woman went out softly, shaking her head.

"Poor boy!" she said to herself; "I know. Things are not going with him as they should, and it's a curious thing that love, as well enough I once used to know."

"*Back the Prince's filly*."

The words stood out so vividly before Chris Lisle that he sprang from his seat, caught up a book, and threw himself back once more in a chair by the window to read.

But, as he turned over the leaves, he heard a familiar voice speaking in its eager, quick tones, and, directly after, there was another voice which seemed to thrill him through and through, the sounds coming in at the open window as the light steps passed.

"No, Mary dear. Let's go home."

There was a ring of sadness in the tone in which those words were uttered, which seemed to give Chris hope. Claude could not be happy to speak like that.

He crept to the window, and, from behind the curtain, watched till he could see the white flannel dress with its blue braiding no more.

"If I were only rich," thought Chris; and then he gave an angry stamp on the floor as he heard a quick pace, and saw

Glyddyr pass, evidently hurrying on to overtake the two girls, who must have parted from Gartram lower down.

Half mad with jealousy, he made for the door, but only to stop with his fingers upon the handle, as he felt how foolish any such step would be, and, going back to his chair, he took up his book again, and opened it, and there before him the words seemed to start out from the page.

“Back the Prince’s Filly.”

He closed the book with an angry snap.

“Look here,” he said to himself, “am I going to be ill, and is all this the beginning of a fit of delirium?”

He laughed the next instant, and then, as if obeying the strange impulse within him, he crossed the room and rang the bell.

“Have you taken away the newspaper that was here, Mrs Sarson?” he said sharply.

The pleasant face before him coloured up.

“I beg your pardon, sir. I didn’t think you’d be back yet, and so I’d made so bold.”

“Bring it back,” said Chris sternly.

“Bless the poor man, what is coming to him?” muttered the landlady, as she hurried out to her own room. “He was once as amiable as a dove, and now nothing’s right for him.”

“Thank you; that will do,” said Chris, shortly; and as soon as he was alone he stood with the paper in his hand.

Volume One—Chapter Fifteen.

Tempted.

It was some minutes before Chris opened that paper, and then he had to turn it over and over before he found the racing intelligence, and even then he did not begin to read, for plainly before him were the words,—

“*Back the Prince’s filly*.”

Then in a quick, excited way he looked down the column he had found, and before long saw that the important race on the *tapis* was at Liverpool, and the last bettings on the various horses were before him, beginning with the favourite at four to one, and going on to horses against which as many as five hundred to one was the odds.

But the Prince’s horse! What Prince? What horse? He stood thinking, and recalled a rumour which he had heard to the effect that the Prince’s horses were run under the name of Mr Blanck, and there, sure enough, was in the list far down:—

“Mr Blanck’s ch. f. Simoom, 100 to 1.” Chris dashed down the paper in a rage.

“What have I to do with such things as this?” he said aloud. “Even if I were a racing man I could not do it. It is too dishonourable.”

Then he set to work to argue the matter out. He had come upon the information by accident, and it might be perfectly worthless. Even if the advice was good, the matter was all speculation—a piece of gambling—and if a man staked his money upon a horse it was the merest chance whether this horse would win; so if he used the “tip,” he would be wronging no one, except, perhaps, himself, by risking money he could not spare.

Anxiety, love, jealousy and disappointment had combined to work Chris Lisle’s brain into a very peculiar state of excitement, and he found himself battling hard now with a strange sense of temptation.

Here was a message giving Glyddyr information how to make money, and it had fallen into other hands. Why should not he, Christopher Lisle, seize the opportunity, take advantage of such a chance as might never come to him again, and back the Prince’s horse to the extent of four or five hundred pounds? Poor as he called himself, he had more than that lying at his bankers; and if he won, it might be the first step towards turning the tables on Gartram, and winning Claude.

True, the information was meant for his rival, but what of that? All was fair in love and war. Glyddyr would stand at nothing to master him: so why should he shrink? It would be an act of folly, and like throwing away a chance.

Then his training stepped in, and did battle for him, pointing out that no gentleman would stoop to such an act, and for the next six hours a terrible struggle went on, which ended in honour winning.

“I would not do such a dirty action; and she would scorn me if I did,” he said to himself. “Eh? Want me, Mrs Sarson?”

“Which it’s taking quite a liberty, Mr Lisle, sir,” said his landlady, who had come for the fifth time into his room; “but if you would let me send for Doctor Asher, it would ease my mind—indeed it would.”

“Asher? Send for him? Are you ill?”

“I? No, my dear boy, but you are. You are quite feverish. It’s terrible to see you. Not a bit of dinner have you tasted, and you’ve been walking up and down the room as if you had the toothache, for hours. Now, do trust to me, my dear, an old motherly body like me; I’d better send for him.”

“My dear Mrs Sarson, he could not do me the least good,” said Chris, smiling at the troubled face before him. “It was a fit of worry, that’s all; but it’s better now—all gone. There, you see, I’m quite calmed down now, and you shall prescribe for me. Give me some tea and meat together.”

“But are you really better, my dear?”

“Yes; quite right now.”

“And quite forgive me for calling you my dear, Mr Lisle, sir? You are so like my son out in New Zealand, and you have been with me so long.”

“Forgive you? Yes.”

“That’s right,” said the woman, beginning to beam; and hurrying in and out she soon had a comfortable-looking and tempting meal spread waiting before her lodgers eager eyes, and he made a determined attack upon that before him.

“That’s more like you, Mr Lisle,” she said, smiling her satisfaction.

“Would you mind opening the window a little more, Mrs Sarson?” said Chris, as he drove the Prince’s horse right out of his mind; and races, jockeys, grand stands, and even Glyddyr faded from his heated brain.

“Certainly, sir. And what a lovely evening it is—beautiful. Hah! there goes that Mr Glyddyr’s boat off to his yacht; and there’s Mr Gartram in it, and the young ladies. Going for an evening sail, I suppose.”

Chris dropped his knife and fork upon his plate.

“Bless me!” ejaculated the landlady, turning sharply round.

“Nothing, nothing, Mrs Sarson,” said Chris hastily; “that will do now. I’ll ring. Don’t wait.”

The landlady looked at him curiously, and left the room; and as soon as she was gone, Chris sprang from his chair, took a binocular glass from where it hung in its case against the wall, focussed it, and fixed it upon the smart gig being rowed out on the bright water.

“I’ve fought all I knew, and I’m beaten,” he muttered, as he saw Glyddyr leaning towards Claude, and talking to her. “Every man has his temptations, and the best and strongest fall if the temptation is too strong. I am only a poor, weak, blundering sort of fellow, I suppose; and I’ve fallen—low—very low indeed.

“Claude, my darling!” he groaned, as he lowered the glass and gazed wistfully out toward the boat, “if it were some good, true fellow whom you loved, and I was going to see you happy, I’d try and bear it all like a man. But you can’t be happy with a fast scoundrel like that; and you love me. I know, I’m sure you do, and I’d do anything to save you from such a fate.”

He pitched the glass on to the sofa, took a time table from where it lay, and, after satisfying himself as to the hours of the trains, he went quickly towards the door, just as it was opened and Mrs Sarson appeared.

“There, my dear,” she said, holding up a large glass dish; “there’s a junket of which any woman might be proud, and —”

“No, no; not now, Mrs Sarson. I’m going out.”

“Going out, sir?”

“Yes; up to London.”

“To London, sir?”

“Yes; for a day or two,” and he hurried by her.

Half-an-hour later, he was on his way in the town fly to the railway station, just as the sun, low down in the west, was shining full on the white sails of Glyddyr’s yacht, as it glided slowly on over the bright, calm sea.

Chris turned his eyes away, and looked straight before him as he mentally conjured up the gathered thousands—the bright green course, the glossy horses making their preliminary canter, with the gay silken jackets of the jockeys filling out as they rose in their stirrups, and flashing in the bright sunshine. There was the trampling of hoofs over the springy turf, the starting as the flag was dropped, the dashing of one to the front, of others challenging, and the minutes of excitement as, in a gathering roar, one horse seemed to glide out from a compressed group, gradually increasing its distance as it sped.

Hiss, rush, roar! Then the vision had parsed away, and Chris Lisle was seated, not in a saddle, but on a cushion in a first-class carriage, the speed increasing and the wind rushing by the windows as, with cheeks flushed, he rode on, his teeth set, and completely now under the domination of one thought alone as he softly repeated to himself the words he had read upon the telegram,—

"*Back the Princes filly*."

and a few minutes later the figures he had seen in that day's news,—

"*100 to 1*."

The simoom seemed to be scorching up his brains.

It was all one whirl of excitement to Chris Lisle—that railway journey to town, and there were moments when he asked himself whether he was sane to go upon such a mission. The night journey of the train seemed like a race, and the rattle of the bridges and tunnels suggested the shouts and cheers of the crowd as the horses swept on. But he had determined to persevere, and with stubborn determination he went on, reached town, and without hesitation laid his money—four hundred pounds, in four different sums so as to insure himself as well as he could, in each case getting the odds of 100 to 1, so that, should the Prince's horse come in first, he would be the winner of forty thousand pounds.

As soon as this was done, he went to a quiet hotel to try and get some rest.

But that was impossible, for he was face to face with his folly. Four hundred pounds gone in an insane hope of winning forty thousand, and he could see now how absurd it was.

"Never mind," he said bitterly; "I shall not be the first fool who has lost money on a race, and I shall have had the excitement of a bit of gambling."

His idea was to stay in town and go to a theatre, so as to divert the current of his thoughts; then have a long night's rest and go to some other place of amusement the next day, so as to pass the time till the race had been run, and he knew the worst.

He dined, or rather tried to dine, and for the first time in his life drank heavily, but the wine seemed not to have the slightest effect.

Then in a feverish heat he went to one of the best theatres, and saw a social drama enacted by the people who filled his brain, what was going on upon the stage being quite a blank.

He saw himself as a disappointed hero, and Glyddyr, as the successful man, carrying all before him, winning Claude's love, and then, in what seemed to be the last act, there was a wedding, and a wretched man going afterwards right along to one of the towering cliffs overhanging the sea, below Danmouth, and leaping off to end his woes.

"I'm glad I came to the theatre," he said mockingly to himself, in one of his lucid intervals. "Better have gone to a doctor for something to send me to sleep."

Then he became conscious of the fact that people in the pit were saying "Hush!" and "Sit down!" and that somebody had risen and come out from the place where he was jammed in, right in the centre of the stalls, just as the climax of the play was being reached.

Then he grew conscious that he was the offender, and breathed more freely as he got out into the cool night air.

It was not ten, and he found a chemist's open near the Strand.

"I'm not very well," he said to the gentlemanly-looking man behind the counter. "Had a lot of trouble, made me restless, and I want to take something to give me a good nights rest. Can you give me a dose of laudanum?"

The man looked at him curiously.

"You ought to go to a doctor," he said.

"Doctor! Absurd! What for? I'm as well as you are. Give me something calming. It will be better than going back to the hotel and taking brandy or wine."

The chemist nodded, and prepared a draught.

"What's that? Laudanum—morphia?"

"No; a mild dose of chloral. Try it. If it does not act as you wish, I should advise you to go to a physician in the morning."

Chris nodded, took the bottle, and strolled back to his hotel, where he at once went to bed after swallowing his draught.

It did not have the desired effect. His idea was to take a draught which would plunge him in oblivion for a few hours; but this dose of chloral seemed to transport him to a plain, surrounded by mountains covered with the most gloriously-tinted foliage, where flowers rippled all over the meadow-like pastures, and cascades of the most brilliant iridescent waters came foaming down, sparkling in the glorious sunshine.

All deliciously dreamy and restful, but when the morning came it did not seem to him that he had slept. Still, he was calmer, and felt more ready to think out the inevitable.

"How many hours shall I have to wait?" he said.

The race would probably be run about three o'clock, and till then he must be as patient as he could.

"Better go back at once," he thought, "and repent at leisure over my madness."

But he did not, for he accepted the last suggestion of his brain, partook of a hurried breakfast, and jumped into a hansom; had himself driven to the station, and soon after was being borne away by the express.

The rest of that day's proceedings were a dreamy whirl of confusion. The rushing noise of the train seemed to bring back the old excitement, and this increased as he reached the station, and had himself driven to the course, where one of the first things he learned was that the case was hopeless; for the horse he had backed had gone down in the betting, till two hundred to one could be obtained, and for the first time he felt sick at heart.

He went up into the principal stand, securing a good place to see the race, and waited while two others were run, the horses flying by without exciting the slightest interest; the only satisfaction he gained was in having them pass, so as to be nearer to the great feature of the day.

At last, just as he had pictured it from old recollections of a minor race he had once seen, there was the shouting and bawling of the odds, the clearing of the course, and then the preliminary canter of the ten competitors, among which he now made out the colours of Simoom, a big ordinary-looking horse, with nothing to draw attention to it, while the three first favourites of the *cognoscenti* were the perfection of equine beauty, and their admirers shouted with excitement as they flashed by.

Then, after five false starts, each of which was maddening to Chris, who, while thinking the worst, could not help a gleam of hope piercing the dark cloud which overshadowed him, the cry arose that they were off, and amid a babel of sounds, as the parti-coloured throng of jockeys swept along the green course and disappeared, spasmodic cries arose, "Lady Ronald," "Safflower—Safflower leads," "Rotten race," "The favourite shows 'em all her heels," "Look! The favourite!"

The horses, after a period of silence, had swept round into sight again, and it was seen that three were together, then there was an interval, and there were four, another interval, and the rest behind.

The second group excited no notice, save from Chris, who made out that his horse was with them; and while every eye was fixed on the exciting race between the favourite and the two horses which strove hard to get abreast, there was suddenly a yell of excitement, for Simoom all at once shot out from among the second lot, and going well, with her jockey using neither whip nor spur, began rapidly to near the leaders.

The shouts increased, and a thrill ran through Chris as he saw the plain-looking mare glide on, but apparently too late to overtake the others.

Another roar as it was seen that the favourite's jockey was beginning to use his whip, and the roar increased as Safflower was level with her shoulder, was head to head, was head in front, and the next moment, hopelessly beaten, the favourite was passed by Lady Ronald as well, who now challenged Safflower, and they were racing level for fifty yards.

The excitement grew frantic. "Safflower! Lady Ronald! Safflower! Safflower!"

"No, no, no!" shouted a man on Chris's left. "Look!"

Chris heard all he said, and stood there bending forward, his lips apart, and eyes starting, as if turned to stone, living a very life in those seconds, as, amid a roar like the rushing of the tempest itself, the contemned mare came on.

"By George, sir, if the course had been a hundred yards more, she'd have won," roared the man on Chris's left. "Safflower's done. It's Lady Ronald; by—, no. Hurrah! Simoom! Simoom!" and in the midst of the frantic excitement, the mare upon which Chris's hopes were fixed passed Safflower. There was a quick touch of the whip and she was alongside of Lady Ronald, and then Simoom's nose showed in front, and in the next few bounds she was half-a-length ahead, and swept past the post—winner.

The man on Chris's left suddenly seized his arm.

"Hurrah for the dark horse," he cried. "Just for the fun of the thing, I put a sov on her, and I've won two hundred pounds. I beg your pardon, sir, I see you're hit. Forgive my excitement. Don't be down-hearted; come and have a glass of champagne."

"Thank you," said Chris quietly; but he did not move, for the place seemed to be spinning round him, and he held tightly by the rails till a hand was laid upon his arm.

"Can I help you? You look ill."

"Help me? No; I'm all right now," said Chris, making an effort. "It was so sudden."

"Have you lost heavily?"

"Lost?" said Chris, looking at him wildly. "No; I've won."

He felt his hand being shaken warmly, and then he sank back into a wild, confused dream, in the midst of which he knew that he was being borne back by one of the express trains, with the roar of the race in his ears, and the sight of the horses sweeping by before his eyes.

As he neared town he began to grow more calm, and he found himself repeating the words,—

“Forty thousand pounds! I’ve won; but shall I win her now?”

And then, like a dark cloud, came the recollection of how he had obtained the information upon which his success was based.

“I can never name it to a soul,” he muttered. “I must have been mad.”

Volume One—Chapter Sixteen.

Gartram Takes his Dose.

“It’s all right, I tell you, my dear boy. You don’t understand women yet. A girl who says *snap* the moment you say *snip*, isn’t worth having. A good, true woman takes some wooing and winning; and no wonder, for it is a tremendous surrender for her to make.”

“Yes, sir, you are quite right, but—”

“Yes; never mind the buts, Glyddyr. I could put my foot down, and say: ‘Claude, my dear, there’s your husband,’ but it would mean a scene, and a lot of excitement, and I should be ill—perhaps have one of my confounded fits.”

“But without going so far as that, sir, couldn’t you—just a little, you know—parental authority—you understand. I am kept back so terribly as yet.”

“No, my lad, I should not be serving your cause,” said Gartram firmly. “You see, she had always been so intimate with that fellow Lisle. Boy and girl together. It will take a little time to wean her from the fancy, and if I pull out the authoritative stop I shall be making him into a hero and her into a persecuted heroine. I may as well tell you that she is a bit firm, like I am, and any angry discussion on my part would perhaps make her stubborn.”

“Then, perhaps, you had better not speak, sir.”

“Decidedly not. There, you have the run of my place. Set to and win her like a man. Get along with you, you dog. Smart, handsome fellow like you don’t want any help. It’s only a matter of time. Don’t seem to push your suit too hard. Treat it all as a something settled; and all you have to do is to get her used to you and her position as your betrothed. Bah! it will all come right, so don’t let’s risk opposition. You will win.”

“You are right, sir,” said Glyddyr. “I’ll be patient.”

“Of course you will. That’s right. I say, though, that little upset?”

“Little upset, sir?” said Glyddyr starting.

“I mean about your friend, the visitor from town, whose wife came after him.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Glyddyr. “I didn’t know what you meant.”

“Rather an exciting affair, that. Strikes me that if it had had a tragic termination, your friend would not have broken his heart. I say, here you are in a hurry to get married, and you never know how the lady may turn out.”

“Ah, that was an exception, sir,” said Glyddyr hurriedly.

“Yes; but depend upon it, my dear boy, that was a hasty marriage. The gentleman said *snip*, and she said *snap*. Wasn’t it so?”

“Yes; I think you are right,” said Glyddyr.

“What a temper that woman must have. They tell me she deliberately stepped off the pier to follow him, or drown herself in a fit of passion.”

“Well, I’ll take your advice, sir,” said Glyddyr, hurriedly changing the conversation. “Of course, I can’t help feeling impatient.”

“No, of course, no,” said Gartram. “Come in,” he added, as there was a timid knock at the door.

“I beg pardon, sir, but Doctor Asher said I was to be particular as to time.”

Sarah Woodham entered the room with a small tray, bearing glass and bottle.

There was a peculiar, shrinking, furtive look about the woman, that would have impressed a stranger unfavourably; but Glyddyr was too intent upon his own business, and Gartram already disliked his old servant, and did not shrink about showing it.

“Oh!” he said roughly. “Well, pour it out. Won’t take a glass, I suppose, Glyddyr?”

“Oh, no, thanks. Not my favourite bin.”

“Thank your stars. Nice thing to be under the doctor’s hands. Hard, isn’t it? Regular piece of tyranny.”

“Oh, you’ll soon get over that, Mr Gartram. Temporary trouble.”

“Ah, I don’t know, my lad. Here, that’s more than usual, isn’t it, Sarah?”

“No, sir. Exactly the quantity.”

“Humph! Bah! Horrible!”

He had gulped the medicine down, and thrust the glass back on the tray.

“There, take it away,” he said.

The woman looked at him furtively, and slowly left the room.

“How I do hate to see a nurse in black,” exclaimed Gartram impatiently. “When a man’s ill, the woman who attends upon him ought to look bright and cheerful. That woman always gives me a chill.”

“Why not make her dress differently?”

“Can’t. Widow of that poor fellow who was killed.”

“Oh, yes; I remember.”

“Whim of Claude’s to have her here.”

“Yes, I know. Your old servant. Well, it was a graceful act on Miss Gartram’s part.”

“Of course; but it worries me.”

“The medicine makes you feel a little irritable, perhaps.”

“No, it does not, man. It’s tonic, and I’m taking chloral, which is calming, or I don’t know what I should do.”

“Chloral?” said Glyddyr.

“Yes; curse it—and bless it. I don’t know what I should do without it. Tell you what though. You must give me some more sails in your yacht. Cuts both ways?”

“I shall be most happy.”

“Yes; does me good and gives you pleasant opportunities, eh? I ought to be ashamed to say it, perhaps, but I am not. Confound that medicine! What a filthy taste it does leave in one’s mouth; quite makes one’s throat tingle, too.”

“When will you have another sail, sir?”

“Oh, I don’t know. When did we go last?”

“Tuesday.”

“To be sure; and this is Thursday. That medicine seems to confuse me a bit sometimes. Well, say this evening. By-the-bye, Glyddyr, that was a pleasant little idea of yours.”

“What idea, sir?”

“Quite startled my girl when that puss Mary drew her attention to it. How cunning you young fellows grow now-a-days.”

“I don’t quite grasp what you mean, sir.”

“Altering the name of the yacht.”

“Oh!”

“A very delicate little compliment, my lad, and it does you credit.”

“But Miss Gartram, sir?” said Glyddyr hurriedly; “is she in the drawing-room?”

“In the drawing-room? no,” said Gartram, with a strange display of irritability. “I told you when you first came that she had gone for a long walk up the glen with her cousin.”

“I beg your pardon, sir. I don’t think—”

“Now, damn it all, Glyddyr, don’t you take to contradicting me; and perhaps by this time that confounded scoundrel Lisle has followed her.”

Glyddyr leaped from his seat.

“No, no; I don’t mean it,” said Gartram, calming down. “Lisle is not at home. Gone to London, I think, or I wouldn’t

have let them go. There, my lad, don't you take any notice of me," he continued, holding out his hand; "it's that medicine. I wish Asher was hung. So sure as I take a dose, I grow irritable and snappish, just as if a fit was threatening; but it keeps 'em off, eh?"

"I should say so, decidedly; and I wouldn't dwell upon the possibility if I were you."

"Well, curse it all, man, who does?" cried Gartram fiercely. "There, I beg your pardon. Go and meet the girls and come back, and we'll have an early dinner, and then you can take us for a sail. Well, what the devil do you want?" he roared, as Sarah re-entered the room; "haven't I just taken the cursed stuff?"

"Beg pardon, sir, a telegram."

"Well, don't stand staring like a black image. Give it to me."

"For Mr Glyddyr, sir—the boy heard from the sailors at the pier that he was here, and brought it on."

"Well, then, give it to him; and look here, I'm sure you must have given me too strong a dose this morning."

"No, sir; Miss Claude measured it before she went. I took the bottle and glass to her."

"Humph! Feels wrong somehow. Is it fresh stuff?"

"No, sir; the same."

"Humph! Well, Glyddyr, good news?"

"Ye-es," said Glyddyr, with a peculiar look in his eyes. "Only from my agent in town. You'll excuse me now?"

"To be sure. Go round by the bridge and you'll meet 'em. Dinner at five. Hi, Sarah! Mind that: five."

"Yes, sir," said the woman, and she glided like a black shadow out of the room after Glyddyr, who hurried along the terrace down to the beach, where he could light a cigar and smoke.

"I feel as if they were poisoning me amongst them," said Gartram quite savagely. "Not trying to put me out of the way, are they, for the sake of my coin? How I do hate to see that woman going about like a great black cat. Bah! I'm as full of fancies as a child."

Glyddyr lit his cigar and took out his telegram again and read it.

"*My congratulations. Hope you put it on heavy. I did. Coming down.—Gellow*."

The curse which Glyddyr uttered was, metaphorically speaking, glowing enough to fuse the sand.

The next minute he began walking swiftly along under the towering granite cliffs, so as to get out of sight and hearing while he gave vent to his feelings, for he felt that he could not command himself.

The telegram meant so much.

"I shall have to kill that man before I have done. Yes; I shall have to kill that man," said Glyddyr.

He started and looked up, for, plainly heard, some one seemed to repeat his words, "Kill that man."

"Bah!" he cried impatiently, as he looked in the direction from which the sounds came, to find he was facing a huge wall of rock. "Frightened at echoes now!"

End of Volume One.

Volume Two—Chapter One.

The Looming of a Storm.

"Well, my dear," said Gartram, as Claude entered the room; "want to see me?"

"Yes, papa; you sent for me."

"I sent for you? Oh, to be sure; I forgot."

He was seated in an easy-chair, leaning back as if half-asleep, and he raised himself slowly as Claude came to his side.

She looked at him keenly, and felt a curious sensation of sinking and dread, as it struck her that her father was suffering from the effects of the sedative in which he indulged.

"Well," he said smiling, "what are you looking at?"

"At you, dear; are you well?"

“Never better, my dear. Sit down; I want to talk to you.”

Claude shrank inwardly as she took a chair, but he was not satisfied.

“Come a little nearer, my dear.”

She obeyed, and the shrinking sensation increased as she felt that there was only one subject upon which her father was likely to speak.

“That’s better,” he said, taking her hand. “Mr Glyddyr has been here this morning?”

“No, father.”

“Ha!” he exclaimed rather sharply. “Now, I don’t quite like the tone in which you said that ‘No, father,’ my dear; and I think it is quite time that you and I came to an understanding. Claude, my dear, you have been thinking a good deal lately about what young people of your age do think of a great deal—I mean marriage.”

“Oh, no, papa,” said Claude emphatically.

“Don’t contradict, my dear. I am not blind, and it is perfectly natural that you should think of such a thing now.”

Claude was silent.

“You and Christopher Lisle were a good deal thrown together.”

Claude’s cheek began to deepen in colour.

“You were boy and girl together, and if not brother and sister in your intimacy, at least like cousins.”

“Yes, papa.”

“Well, presuming upon that, Master Christopher must suddenly forget he was a boy, and came to me with the most impudent proposals.”

“Papa!”

“There, I am not going to say any more about him, only I have taken that as a preface to what will follow.”

Claude drew a deep, long sigh.

“Now, of course, that was all boyish folly, and I bitterly regret that we should have had such a scene here; but the natural course of events was, that I should think very seriously of your future settlement in life.”

“I am settled in life, father,” said Claude firmly. “I do not intend to leave you.”

“Thank you, my darling. Very good and filial of you,” said Gartram, taking and holding her hand. “One moment, the room is very warm; I’ll open the window.”

“Let me open it, dear,” said Claude; and she went and threw open the French window, returning directly to sit down, her countenance growing a little hard.

“Now, then, child, we may as well understand each other at once.”

“Yes, papa, if you wish it.”

“Well, my darling, I began life as a very poor man. I had a good name, but I was a pauper.”

“Not so bad as that, papa?”

“Worse. The worst kind of pauper—a gentleman without an income, and with no means of making one. But there, you know what I have done; and I can say now that, thanks to my determined industry, I have honourably made a great fortune. Well, you don’t look pleased.”

“No, dear; I often think you would have been happier without the money.”

“Silly child! You have had your every wish gratified, and do not know the value of a fortune. Some day you will. Well, my dear, I am growing old.”

“No, not yet.”

“Yes, yes, my dear, I am; and my health is getting completely wrecked.”

“Then let’s go away and travel.”

“No; I have another project on hand, Claude. It has long been my wish to see you married.”

“Papa!”

“To some good man who loves you.”

“Oh!”

“A man of wealth and some position in the world, and that man I believe I have found in Parry Glyddyr.”

“Papa, I—”

“Hush, my dear, let me speak; you shall have your turn. Glyddyr is the representative of a good old Welsh family. He had three hundred thousand pounds at his father’s death, and, best of all, he loves my darling child very dearly. Now, what do you say to that?”

“I do not love Mr Glyddyr,” replied Claude coldly.

“Tut, tut, tut. Nonsense, my dear, not yet. It is the man who loves first; that makes an impression upon the woman, who, as soon as she feels the influence of the man’s affection, begins to love him in return. A man’s love begins like a flash; a woman’s is a slow growth. That is nature, my dear, and you cannot improve upon her.”

“Papa, I—”

“Now, don’t be hasty, my child. Glyddyr is a very good fellow—a thorough gentleman. I like him, he loves you, and if you will only put aside all that boy and girl nonsense of the past, you will soon like him too—more than you can conceive. But, as he reasonably enough says, you don’t give him a chance.”

“Did Mr Glyddyr say that?” said Claude, with her lip curling.

“Yes; and really, Claude, you are sometimes almost rude to him with your coldness. Come, my dear, I want you to see that it is the dearest wish of my life to have you happy.”

“Yes, papa dear, I know it is, but—”

“Now, let’s have no buts. I favour Glyddyr’s suit because he is all one could desire, and he came to me like a frank gentleman and told me how he saw you first and took a fancy to you, but thought he should forget it all; then felt his love grow stronger, and, as he has shown us—he has waited months and months to prove himself—felt that you were the woman who would make him happy and—”

“I could not make Mr Glyddyr happy, papa.”

“Nonsense, dear! What do you know of such things? I say you can, and that he can make you very happy and me, too, in seeing you married well.”

“Papa, dear, I don’t think you quite understand a woman’s heart,” said Claude.

“I understand a girl’s, my dear—yours in particular—so now I want you to set aside some of this stiff formality, and to meet Glyddyr in a more friendly way. Of course I don’t want you to throw yourself at his head. You are an extremely wealthy heiress. I’ve made my money for you, my pet, and you can afford to be proud, and to hold him off. Make him know your value, and woo and win you, but, hang it all, my child, don’t turn yourself into an icicle, and freeze the poor fellow’s passion solid.”

“Papa, dear, you said I should speak soon.”

“And so you shall, my darling; but I have not quite done. I want you to think all this over, and to look at it as a duty first, then as a matter of affection. Oh, it’s all right, my pet. I’m glad to see so much maiden modesty and dutiful behaviour. I didn’t want him to think he had only to hold out his hand for you to jump at it; certainly not. You are a prize worth winning, and you are quite right to teach him your value, you clever little jade. There, I think I’ve nearly done. Only begin to melt a little now, and give the poor fellow a bit of encouragement. And you must not be piqued at his saying you were so distant. I drew that out of him. He did not come to complain, though I must say he had good cause. There, now, I have quite done, and I am sure my darling sees the common sense of all this. I don’t want to lose my Claudie, and I shouldn’t at all dislike a trip on the Continent with her. There’s no hurry—a year—two, if you like. I’ll let my pet make her own terms, only let’s give the poor fellow a chance. Then I may tell Glyddyr?”

“No, father dear,” said Claude firmly; “you must not tell Mr Glyddyr anything.”

“What?”

“He is a man I do not like.”

Gartram’s countenance changed a little, but he kept down his anger.

“Not yet, my dear, not yet, of course. It is not natural that you should, but you will in time, and the more for feeling a bit diffident now. Come, we understand one another, and I won’t say a word to the poor boy. You will let him feel that the winter is passing, the thaw beginning. Give him a little spring first, and the summer in full swing by-and-by.”

Claude shook her head.

“It is impossible, papa, dear. I could never like Mr Glyddyr.”

“Now, my dear child, don’t make me angry by adopting that obstinate tone. You are too young yet to understand your own mind.”

“I know I could never love Mr Glyddyr sufficiently to be his wife.”

“Now, look here—”

“Don’t be angry with me, dear. You wish me to be always frank and plain with you?”

“Of course, but—”

“I must know about a matter like this. I do not and cannot love this man.”

“Absurd, Claude.”

“I don’t want to marry. Let me stay here with you. I can be very happy amongst the people I know, and who know me, and require my help.”

“Yes; a gang of impostors sucking my money through you.”

“No, no. What I give is to make you loved and venerated by the poor people who are sometimes in distress.”

“Now I don’t want a lecture on the relief of the poor, my dear,” said Gartram quickly. “I want you to quietly accept my wishes. I am your father, and I know what is for your good.”

Claude was silent, for she knew by familiar signs that the tempest was about to burst.

“Do you think I wish you to marry some penniless scoundrel, who wants to get my money to make ducks and drakes with it? There: I was getting cross, but I am not going to be. Once more, there is no hurry. Thaw by degrees. It will prove Glyddyr to you, and let you see that the poor fellow is thoroughly sincere. Come, my pet, we understand each other now? Hang it all, Claude, don’t look at me like that!”

“My dearest father,” she cried, after a moment’s hesitation, and she threw herself upon his breast and nestled to him, “are you not making a mistake?”

“No; I am too much of a business man, my dear. I am not making a mistake, unless it is in being too easy with you, and pleading when I might command. There, I’m glad you agree with me.”

“No, no, papa; I cannot,” she said tearfully.

“Now, Claude, my darling, don’t make me angry. You know what my health is, and how, if I am crossed, it irritates me. You are my obedient child, and you agree with what I say?”

“No, papa,” she said imploringly; “I cannot.”

“Then you are thinking still of that beggarly, fortune-hunting scoundrel Lisle?”

“Father, dear, don’t speak like that of Christopher Lisle. He is a true gentleman.”

“He is a true money-seeking vagabond, and I have forbidden him my house for the best of reasons. I would sooner see you dead than the wife of a man like that.”

Claude shrank away from him, and her convulsed face hardened, with the faint resemblance to her father beginning to appear.

“You are unjust to him.”

“It is false, madam,” he cried excitedly, with his brow beginning to grow knotty. “I know the scoundrel by heart, and as you are refusing to meet me on the terms full of gentleness and love which I propose, you must be prepared for firmness. Now, please understand. It is the dearest wish of my heart that you should marry Parry Glyddyr. I like him; he is the man I wish to have for my son-in-law; and he loves you. Those are strong enough points for me, and I’ll have no opposition.”

“Father!”

“Silence! I will not hurry matters, but you may look upon this as a thing which is definitely settled. Glyddyr is coming here this morning, as I told you before. I shall tell him that we have come to an understanding, and that he may consider himself as accepted, with a long probation to go through. There, you see, I am quite calm, for I make that concession to you—plenty of time.”

“Father, dear, listen to me,” cried Claude passionately.

“No! I’ll listen to no more. You can go now and think. You will come to your senses by-and-by, I have no doubt, even if it takes time.”

Claude caught his hand in hers, but he withdrew his own with an angry gesture, and she shrank back for a moment. There was that, though, in his face which made her hesitate about saying more, and reaching up, and kissing him hurriedly, she left the room, thinking that he would calm down.

He stood watching her as she left, and then, grinding his teeth with rage, his face flushing and his temples beating hard, he strode across to the door, locked it securely, and drew a curtain across.

“The scoundrel! He has poisoned her mind. But I’d sooner kill him—I’d sooner—Oh, it’s maddening,” he cried, as he went to a drawer, fumbled with the key on a bunch he drew from his pocket, and had some difficulty in opening it, for

his hand trembled with suppressed passion.

Then he drew open the receptacle, and from the back took out a ring with three curiously formed keys. These clinked together with the involuntary movements of his hands as he crossed to a bookcase, took out a couple of books, opened a little door behind them, and thrust another key in at the side. There was a sharp click, and he started back, withdrawing the key, and stood and gave his head a shake as if to clear it.

“How I do hate to be put out like this,” he muttered, as he laid his hand in a particular way upon the end of the bookcase, which slowly revolved on a pivot, and laid bare a large iron door.

“I don’t feel at all myself,” he continued, as he used the third and largest key, which opened the great door of his safe, and exposed a massive-looking closet built in the wall with blocks of granite, at the back of which were half-a-dozen iron shelves.

“Hah!” he exclaimed, as he stood in the opening, reaching forward and taking down a small square box, which was heavy. “He’d like to have the pleasure of spending you, no doubt, but I can checkmate him. Now,” he continued, “let’s finish counting.”

He carried the box to the table, set it down, and then took out, one by one, five canvas bags, one of which he untied, and poured out a little heap of sovereigns. This done, he went back to the safe and took a small, thick ledger from another shelf, walked back to the table, opened the book, and made an entry of the date therein, then, leaving the pen in the opening, seated himself once again to count the coins into little piles of twenty-five.

“No,” he murmured; “I haven’t worked all these years to have my money swallowed up by a fortune-hunter. No, Master Chris Lisle.”

He started from his seat, overturning a pile of sovereigns, for at that moment, sweet and clear, came the song of a robin seated upon a tamarisk just outside the window.

“Good heavens! I must be mad,” he cried. “Who opened that window? Yes; Claude, I remember,” he muttered; and he was in the act of crossing to close it when he stopped short, threw out his hands, and fell with a heavy thud upon the thick Turkey carpet, to lie there with his face distorted, struggling violently, and striking his hands against a chair.

Volume Two—Chapter Two.

Chris Visits the Museum.

Racing did not agree with Chris Lisle, for the morning after his return from town he rose with a bad headache; and as he lived one of the most regular lives, he knew that it could not be caused by errors of diet. It would have been easy enough to have attributed it to the true cause—constant worry—but he was not going to own to that, as it seemed weak, so he set it down to his hair being too long.

“No wonder my head’s hot,” he said to himself; and, acting upon impulse, he hurried out of the room, and walked straight along the cliff road toward where, a few minutes before, Michael Wimble had had his head out of his door, looking for customers, after the fashion in which a magpie looks about for something to secrete.

He was a dry, yellow-looking man, thin, quick and sharp in action as the above-named bird, one to which his long nose and quick black eyes gave him no little resemblance; and this he enhanced by his habit of thrusting his head out of his door, laying his ear on his shoulder, and looking sidewise in one direction, then changing the motion by laying his other ear upon the fellow shoulder, and looking out in the opposite direction.

The Danmouth people, as a rule, always looked straight out to sea in a contemplative fashion, in search of something which might benefit them—fish, a ship in distress, flotsam and jetsam; but Michael Wimble looked for his benefits from the shore, and seldom gazed out to sea.

His place of business was called generally “the shop,” in spite of an oval board bearing upon it, in faded yellow letters upon a drab green ground, the word “*Museum*” as an attraction to any strangers who might visit the place, and be enticed by curiosity to see what the museum might contain, as well as by a printed notice pasted on each door-post, “Free admission.” Once within, they might become customers for shaving, haircutting, a peculiar yellow preparation which Michael Wimble called “pomehard,” or some of the sundries he kept in stock, which included walking-sticks, prawn nets, fishing lines, and white fish hooks, made of soft tinned iron, so that, if they caught in the rough rocky bottom, or some stem of extra tough seaweed, a good tug would pull them through it—bending without breaking—a great advantage and saving, so long as they did not behave in this way with a large fish.

Michael Wimble was very proud of his museum, and took pleasure in telling the seaside visitors that he had collected all his curiosities himself, and very much resented upon one occasion its being called a “Marine store” by a gentleman from town.

The museum began as a labour of love, for Michael had cast his eyes upon the fair elderly motherly widow, Chriss landlady, and, since the commencement of his collection, he had laboured on, in the belief that, as it increased in importance, so would the woman soften toward him; and that some day all his four-roomed dwelling would become museum and business place, while he would go and reside at the widow’s house—widow no longer, but Mrs Wimble—his own.

The beginning of the museum was a star-fish, with four small rays and one of enormous size, that he picked up during his regular morning walk along the sea shore, wet or dry, summer or winter, at six o’clock, as near to the edge

of the water as he could get, returning close under the cliffs in time to have his place of business opened by eight.

The star-fish was duly dried and admired, and talked about by his regular customers; and this seemed so satisfactory that it was soon supplemented by a cuttlefish bone.

A piece of wood well bored by teredoes followed. Then a good-sized chump of ship timber, with a cluster of barnacles attached, was carried in one morning to commence the fine, fusty, saline, sea-weedy odour which smothered completely the best hair oil, the pomade and the scented soap.

The museum grew rapidly: hanks of seaweed, more cuttlefish bones, native sponges, shells of all sorts and sizes, some perfect, and some ground thin and white by long chafing in the shingle. Stones of all kinds, from spar to serpentine, and grey and ruddy granite; sharks' teeth, pieces of mineral of metallic lustre, fragments of spar, and fossils, including great ammonites, chipped out of a bed of rock which presented its water-washed face to the advancing tide.

There was always something to bring home to suspend from the wall, arrange on shelf, or give a place of honour in one or other of the glass cases, which by degrees were purchased; and as Wimble's museum increased, so it became of local celebrity.

Michael Wimble had been peering out when a customer appeared, and after due soaping and softening with hot water, the barber was operating with a thin razor, which scraped off the harsh bristles off the fisherman with a peculiar metallic ring.

The final triumphant upper scrape was being given when Chris entered the museum, and the barber's eyes twinkled, for there were signs about Chris which suggested a new customer, one who was in the habit of getting his professional aid in the county town.

"At liberty in a moment, sir," said the barber obsequiously; and he rapidly wrung out a sponge, removed the unscraped-off soap from the fisherman's face, and threw a towel at him with a look which seemed to say, "Take that and be off."

"Nyste mornin' this, Mis' Lisle, sir," said the fisherman, wiping his face slowly. "Long time since you've had a run after the bahss."

"Yes, 'tis," said Chris shortly.

"Ay, 'tis as you say, sir, that it is; but when you feel in the right mind you've only got to say so, and I'm your man, punt and all."

"Cut or shave, sir?" said the little barber, with a look at his regular customer which seemed to say, "Go." And he went.

"Cut," said Chris laconically; and he took his seat in the operating chair.

The barber looked disappointed as he drew his professional print cloth round his customer, giving it a shake, and then securing it about his neck like a Thug with a new victim.

"Much or little off, sir?" continued Wimble, with a preliminary snip in the air.

"Much; but don't make it a confounded crop," said Chris sourly; for he had a natural dislike to the barber, and was vexed with himself for not having had his hair cut in London.

"Much, but not too much," said Wimble thoughtfully; and then, with the customary chatter of his profession, he started a topic.

"Been up to the quarry, sir, lately?"

"No."

That was a negative strong enough to have crushed some men, but it only acted as a spur on the proprietor of the museum.

"Then I should advise you to go up, sir. I was there this morning, just casting an eye round for spars and crystals, and natural hist'ry specimens in general, and Mr Gartram's men have blasted out some of the finest stones I think I ever saw."

Wimble waited for an answer, but none came; and, after a little snipping, which was all done with the operator's head very much on one side, he continued—

"Fine property, that of Mr Gartram's, sir. Grand estate."

Chris felt as if he would have liked to gag the barber with his own lather brush. But he sat still, holding his breath while the man prattled on.

"You said much off, sir? yes, sir; very good plan, sir; keeps the head cool, and after a wash or a shampoo, just a rub with the towel and there you are. I often admire our visitor, Mr Glyddyr, for that, sir."

Chris flinched.

“Don’t be alarmed, sir; only the scissors touched the skin; cold steel, sir. Keeps his hair very short, sir; quite like a Frenchman. Wonderfully fond of our town, sir. His yacht’s always here.”

Chris grunted, and wished he had not come to have his hair cut, as the man innocently prattled on.

“If I might take the liberty of saying so, why don’t you take to a yacht?”

“Can’t afford it,” said Chris bluntly.

Wimble uttered a little laugh that suggested disbelief.

“They do say, sir, as this Mr Glyddyr is making up to Miss Gartram, sir.”

Chris set his teeth hard. He could not jump up and run out of the place with his hair half cut.

“And that Mr Gartram is set upon it, sir. Well, it’s a fine opening for any young man, I’m sure. Mr Gartram must have a deal of money up yonder. I often wonder he has never been robbed—that’s it, sir. The other side, please: thank you. Stone walls and bolts and bars are all very well, but, as I said to Doctor Asher when I was cutting him the other day—If a man wants to commit a robbery, stone walls and iron bars is no use. ‘No, sir,’ I says, ‘there’s sure to be times when doors is open and iron bars undone, and those are the times that a thief and a robber would choose.’”

“Humph!” ejaculated Chris. “So you think there are times when a man might easily rob Mr Gartram?”

“I do, sir, indeed; and if you’ll believe me there, I wouldn’t have his money and live as he does for anything.”

“Ah, well, I won’t believe you,” said Chris drily.

“But you may, sir. Yes, sir, it isn’t safe to live with so much money in your house.”

“Well, I’ll tell Mr Gartram what you say.”

The scissors dropped on the floor with a crash, and Wimble stood, wide-eyed, and harrowing his thin whiskers with his comb.

“What’s the matter?”

“I beg pardon, sir,” faltered the barber; “you said—”

“That I’d tell Mr Gartram.”

“I—I—I beg your pardon, Mr Lisle, sir; don’t do that. Mr Gartram’s my landlord—a hard man, sir, in paint and repairs; and if he knew that I’d said such a thing about him being robbed or murdered, why, I do believe, sir, he’d turn me out of house and home.”

“I shouldn’t wonder,” said Chris gruffly. “Lesson to you to hold your tongue.”

This was so decided a rebuff that Wimble frowned, picked up his scissors, and went on snipping in silence for nearly half a minute, when the desire to talk, or habit of using his jaws in concert with the opening and shutting of his scissors, mastered him again.

“If I might be so bold as ask, sir, Mrs Sarson quite well?”

“Yes, quite well.”

“Most amiable woman, sir,” said the barber, “Her house always seems to me as if it might take a prize—so beautifully kept, sir—so delicately clean.”

“Yes.”

“I often wonder she hasn’t married again.”

Chris had heard hints from his landlady about an offer of marriage from the owner of the museum, but it had slipped from his memory till now, when the suggestive remark brought it all back, and a mischievous spirit seemed to enter into him.

He could not find it in his heart to bully the man, whose prattling gossip was a part of his trade, but he could vex him and revenge himself in another way for the annoyance Wimble was inflicting, and with boyish love of mischief he replied—

“Yes; so do I. But perhaps it is probable.”

Wimble checked his scissors as they were half-way through a tuft of hair.

“Indeed, sir?” he said, as he went on snipping. “Yes; of course you, being, as you may say, one of the family, and living on the premises, would know.”

“Yes,” said Chris, in a tone suggestive of much knowledge; and then there was an interval of snipping, and Wimble coughed.

“If one might say so, sir,” he said, “that was a most gallant act of yours the other day.”

“Eh? What was?”

“Swimming out after that handsome French lady, and saving her life.”

“Pooh! Nonsense!” said Chris pettishly.

“But it was, sir. People talk about it a deal.”

“More fools they.”

“Yes, sir; but people will talk.”

“Yes,” said Chris meaningly; “they will.”

“Yes, sir; and it’s wonderful what a man will go through for a woman’s sake—I mean a gentleman for a lady.”

“You miserable little pump,” muttered Chris to himself.

“Elderly gentleman, or young, sir?” said Wimble insinuatingly.

“Eh? What do you mean?”

“What you said, sir, about Mrs Sarson, sir—her future, sir.”

“Oh, you mustn’t ask me, Mr Wimble. It would be very much out of place for me to say anything. Done?”

“One minute, sir. Anything on, sir? Lime cream?”

“No; just a brush.—Thanks; that will do.—Good morning.”

Trifling words do a great deal of mischief sometimes, and Chris Lisle’s had the effect of making the owner of the museum stand at his door with his head sidewise, watching his last client till he was out of sight, and as he went down the street, dark thoughts entered his mind about age and good looks and opportunity; of the result of his own observations in life as to the weakness of elderly ladies for youth; and one by one ideas came into his mind such as had never been there before.

“If it does turn out so,” he muttered, as he slowly went back into his place of business, and apostrophised the head of a huge dog-fish which had been preserved and furnished with two glass eyes, asquint, and whose drying had resulted in a peculiar one-sided smile; “yes, if it does turn out so, I hope, for his sake and mine, he will not come here to be shaved.”

His thoughts had such a terrible effect upon Michael Wimble, that he took a razor from where it reposed in one of a series of leather loops against the wall, opened it, seized a leather strap which hung by one end from a table, and began to whet the implement with a degree of savage energy that was startling.

Chris had his hair cut, and his head felt easier, but the barber’s did not.

Volume Two—Chapter Three.

Glyddyr Sees the Golden Cave.

Faithful to his time of tryst with Gartram, Glyddyr made his way up to the Fort that morning, thinking deeply of his position, and wondering whether Gartram had good news to report.

He reached the frowning gateway, went along the granite-paved passage, and was passing the end of the terrace walk which ran along the front of the house, when he caught sight of a dress just as the wearer passed round the corner of the house to the garden formed at the end.

“Claude or Mary,” he said to himself. “Shall I? The old man likes me to make myself at home, and it may mean a *tête-à-tête* there, overlooking the sea. I will.”

With a sinister smile he turned off to the left, instead of going up to the door. He went by the bay window of the dining-room, and was in the act of passing that of Gartram’s study when the robin flew out of the feathery tamarisk, and as he was looking at the flight of the bird, he turned sharply, for a curious, gasping cry came from the room on the right.

He ran into the room, instinctively feeling what was wrong, and in nowise surprised to find that Gartram was struggling in a fit upon the carpet.

His first act was to drag away the chairs nearest to the suffering man, and then to try and place him in a position so that he would not be likely to suffer from strangulation.

“It’s very horrid,” he muttered, “and will frighten the poor girl almost to death; but I must ring—no: I’ll go for help.”

He stopped short, for his eyes lit upon the bags and loose coin upon the table, and then upon the open safe, towards

which he seemed drawn, as if fascinated.

“By George!” he muttered, after glancing back at where Gartram lay, perfectly insensible to what went on around him. “Monte Christo, and—”

He paused, and looked stealthily about, feeling giddy the while, as a great temptation assailed him, making him turn pale.

But he mastered the feeling directly, and after a moments thought swept the money back into the receptacle, and carried it and the book to the safe.

“Poor old chap!” he thought. “I needn’t stoop to steal when he is so ready to give it all.”

He closed the door quickly, and locked it, then drew back and grasped the idea of how it was hidden directly, turning the great panel of the bookcase on its pivot, and closing in the iron door.

He had just finished this and relocked the place, which he was able to do after a little puzzling, when he saw that the fit was growing more severe, and at the same time noted the open drawer in the table.

“Keep the keys there,” he said to himself, as he replaced them and closed the drawer. “There, that’s what he would have wished his son-in-law elect to do for him, so now for help.”

He bent over Gartram for a moment, and shrank slightly from the distorted face and rolling eyes. Then, going to the door, he turned the handle.

“Locked!” he exclaimed, “to keep out interruption and prying eyes. Well, old fellow, I am in your secret, and know the open sesame of the golden cave, so we shall see.”

He turned the key, threw open the door, and hurried into the hall, but ran back directly, and, glancing at Gartram as he did so, pulled the bell sharply.

Almost as he reached the door, Sarah Woodham and one of the servants entered the hall.

“Here, you,” he said quickly to the dark, stern-looking woman, “send at once for the doctor; your master is in a fit.”

Sarah turned to her fellow-servant, gave her the required instructions, and followed Glyddyr back into the study.

“Where are the young ladies?” he said. “Don’t let them come.”

“They must know, sir,” said the woman, going down on one knee to place Gartram’s head in a more natural position. “Miss Claude would not forgive me if she was not told.”

Almost at the same moment, a step was heard on the terrace outside. Mary came by, humming a tune to herself, glanced in, and, seeing what was wrong, darted away.

The next minute she and Claude were there, aiding in every possible way till the doctor’s step was heard in the hall.

He came in directly, and gave two or three short, quick orders, almost the first being to dismiss every one but Sarah Woodham.

“Go into the drawing-room,” he said. “I’ll call if I want any help. He’ll soon come round now. What has been the matter; some fresh excitement?”

Claude’s countenance was full of trouble, but she made no reply. Still, she could not help glancing at Glyddyr, and to her shame and annoyance found that he was looking at her in an eager, imploring way, as he held open the door for her to pass out, and then followed.

“He’s coming into the drawing-room, Mary,” Claude whispered. “I cannot speak. Pray say something to send him away.”

There was no need for Mary to speak. Glyddyr came up to Claude at once, and took her hand.

“I cannot tell you how grieved I am, Miss Gartram,” he whispered, in a voice full of sympathy. “Your father invited me to call upon him this morning, and when I came I found him lying in his room as you saw.”

He did not explain which way he entered, and for the time no one thought it strange.

Then there was silence, and Claude, after a vain attempt to control her emotion and speech, tried to withdraw her hand, but it was held fast.

“I am on the horns of a dilemma,” continued Glyddyr—“puzzled. I want to show my sympathy, and to be of help, but I cannot see in which way I can be of most service—by staying or by leaving at once.”

“By going, Mr Glyddyr. Pray leave us now. You can indeed do nothing.”

“I will obey your lightest wish,” he said eagerly. “You have only to speak.”

“Then, pray, go.”

He raised the hand he held to his lips, and pressed it long and tenderly, till it was hastily withdrawn, and then, bowing only to Mary, he went quickly from the room.

“Bless the fit!” he said to himself. “Brought me a bit nearer to her haughty ladyship. Bah! it’s only a question of time.”

It was in Claude’s heart to relate her interview with her father that morning, but she shrank from speaking; and her attention was taken up by the entrance of the doctor.

“Better,” he said; “decidedly better.”

“Can I go to him?”

“If you wish it. But your entrance might disturb him now, as he has just sunk into a peaceful sleep. Mrs Woodham is watching him, and will call you if there is any need. But, believe me, there will be none. He’ll sleep for some hours, and then wake quite himself; but, of course, very irritable and strange. You will then see that he has the medicine I have left for him, and after an hour that which I shall send on.”

“Yes, doctor.”

“Either administer it yourself, or let that woman give it to him. Don’t trust Mr Gartram.”

“Not trust him?”

“No; he will neglect it, and then take a double dose to make up for it, and that will not do. Regularity, and keeping himself under the influence of the drug, is what we want.”

“I will attend to it myself,” said Claude.

“And when you are going to be away, let Mrs Woodham administer it. Perhaps it would be better to leave it entirely to her.”

“Oh, no; I would rather keep it under my own eye. You will come in again soon?”

“I begin to be ashamed of coming so often,” said the doctor, smiling, “and ask myself whether my treatment is right.”

“Oh, I have perfect faith in that,” said Claude, “and so has my father.”

“Thank you,” he said smiling.

“Now, please, tell me, Doctor Asher, the simple truth.”

“Why, of course.”

“You smile, and you say that out of mere politeness, and to make me comfortable. I want to know the truth.”

“Now, my dear child—”

“But I am not a child, Doctor Asher. Once a child to you is to be always a child. Can you not see that I am a grown woman, full of a woman’s trouble’s?”

“I beg your pardon, Miss Gartram. You shall not complain again.”

“Then tell me without any disguise—is my father’s life in danger?”

“Rest assured that it is not.”

“Thank heaven!”

“But I must tell you this—I can do nothing to arrest these fits—”

“These terrible fits!” sighed Claude.

”—Without I have his co-operation, for so much depends upon his living a quiet, peaceful life, without throwing himself into these violent fits of temper. You force me to speak plainly, but, of course, it is between us. If he knew that I said what I do, it would have a bad effect upon him, and send him into another passion.”

“But what can I do?” said Claude her eyes filling with tears.

“Use your woman’s wit. I can give you no better counsel. You must be the cooling oil to stop the friction when you see it arising; and, above all, never thwart him in anything upon which he has set his mind.”

A great sob struggled for exit in Claude’s breast as she heard the doctor’s words, which were more full of meaning to her than he realised, and she glanced round, to see that her cousin was watching her closely.

“I will do my best,” she said.

“That’s well,” said Asher, giving his white hands a soft rub together as he smiled from one to the other. “‘What can’t be cured must be endured,’ young ladies; but I do not say that this cannot be cured. We will do our best, but the patient must be made to help. Does he take his medicine regularly?”

Claude shook her head.

“I thought not. Flies to it, I suppose, when he feels bad, and neglects it at other times.”

“But that other medicine, doctor—the chloral which he takes—is it good for him?”

Asher shook his head.

“Then why do you let him have it?”

“My dear young lady, is not that rather unreasonable? Now, look here; supposing I were to say, ‘Mr Gartram, chloral is ruining your system,’ what would he reply?”

Claude shook her head.

“I appeal to you, Miss Dillon; what do you think your uncle would say?”

“Go to the devil!” said Mary quietly.

“Mary!”

“Well, he would, Claudie, and you know it.”

“Miss Dillon is quite right,” said the doctor, rubbing his hands. “Strong but truthful; chloral he will have, and if he keeps to it as I prescribe—in moderation—it will not do him much harm, but tend to calm him. There, I’ll look in again. He is going on as well as can be.”

“Shall we go and sit with him?”

“N-no; I hardly think it necessary. You can do no good. I have given Sarah Woodham the fullest instructions, and I’ll come in again this evening.”

The doctor left, and as soon as he was gone, Mary Dillon shook her head.

“Poor Claudie!” she whispered. “Mustn’t thwart uncle in any of his wishes. And it means so much, doesn’t it?”

“Master would like to see you, Miss Claude,” said Sarah Woodham, coming to the door.

“Not worse, Sarah?”

“No, miss; better, I think.”

Claude followed her into the passage on her way to her father’s room, but the woman arrested her.

“Miss Claude, may I say a word to you?”

“Yes, certainly. What is it?”

“I’ve been thinking this all over, my dear, and after giving it a fair trial, I want you to let me go again.”

“Now, Sarah—”

“Pray listen to me, miss. Master does not like me, for I make him think of poor Woodham; and I’m a bad nurse, and I feel sometimes as if I couldn’t bear it.”

“You are not a bad nurse,” said Claude, taking the woman’s hand; “but you feel it hard work to settle down again—that is all.”

“No, no, miss, it isn’t only that,” said the woman wildly. “But let me speak to you again, my dear; he wants you now.”

Claude nodded to her smilingly, and hurried into her father’s room, leaving the woman standing with knitted brow, and hands clasped.

She looked fixedly at the door, uttered a sigh, and went to her room, to sit thinking deeply of the duty she was called upon to perform, just as her love for Claude was fast growing.

Volume Two—Chapter Four.

In the Shadow.

“Don’t you think papa seems much better, Sarah?” said Claude one day.

She was busy in the store-room, playing the part of mistress at the Fort, and giving out sundry and domestic necessaries to the old servant, who was watching her intently, and leaning over her with a singularly intent look in her eyes which seemed to soften her hard countenance.

“Yes, my dear; it is some time since he has had a fit.”

“Let me see; you will want rice and more coffee.”

“And maccaroni,” said Sarah quietly.

“No; don’t have rice and maccaroni. Tell cook not to send up two farinaceous puddings the same day. It annoys papa.”

“Because they are good for him,” said Sarah drily.

“Ah!” said Claude, turning upon her sharply, but with a playful manner; “you must not censure sick people. Why, Sarah, what makes you watch me so intently?”

There were tears in the woman’s eyes, as, with a hysterical catching of the breath, she took hold of the hand which was passing her a package, and pressed it passionately to her lips, kissing it again and again.

“Sarah!”

“Don’t be angry with me, my dear. I’m not the same as I used to be. Trouble has changed me; I couldn’t help it. When I see you grown up into such a beautiful woman, so calm and quiet and ladylike, quite the mistress of the house, and talking as you do, it gives me a catching in the throat.”

“You are not well.”

“Yes, my dear, quite well; but it makes me think of the tiny girl who used to love me so, and whose pretty little arms were thrown about my neck, and who kissed me every night when she went to bed.”

“Yes; but I was a little girl then.”

“You were, my dear; and don’t you remember, when I heard you say your prayers, it was always, ‘Pray God, bless Sarah,’ as well as those whom it was your duty to pray for. Ah, Miss Claude, you used to love me then.”

“And how do you know that I do not love you now?”

“Ah, that’s all changed, my dear. You are no longer a little girl.”

“But I do love you now.”

“No, no, my dear; not as you used to.”

“And keep still to the simple old form of prayer I was taught as a child, with a word for the poor, stricken old friend who was always so tender and loving to me.”

“No,” said the woman sadly.

“Sarah!”

“Yes, yes, yes; you do, my own darling,” she cried, as she sank upon her knees and pressed Claude’s hand to her cheek. “You do, you must, and you have shown it to me by what you have done. I’m a wicked, ungrateful wretch.”

“No, no, no; be calm, be calm,” whispered Claude soothingly.

“No, my dear, there is no more happiness and rest for me. You do not know—you do not know.”

“I know my poor old nurse is in sad trouble, and that there must be times when she feels all the past cruelly. But do you forget what we are taught about patience under affliction? Do you ever pray for help to bear all this as you should?”

“No, no,” cried the woman fiercely; “I feel sometimes as if I dare not pray.”

“There, there,” said Claude, laying her hand tenderly upon the woman’s arm, “you must not talk like that. You are ill and upset to-day. Try and be patient. Come, you are not quite alone in the world, Sarah. I am your friend.”

The woman kissed her hand again passionately, as she moaned to herself in the agony of her spirit, for there before her she seemed to see her husband’s reproachful eyes, and to hear his voice as he bade her be strong, and keep down all weak feelings of love for others till she had accomplished the terrible revenge.

“Come, come, come,” said Claude gently. “I was in hopes that you were growing happier and more contented. Try to be. Time will soften all this pain. I know how terribly you have suffered, and that my words must sound very weak and commonplace to you; but you will be more patient, and bear all this.”

The agonising emotion seemed to choke all utterance, for a fierce battle was going on within the woman’s breast. Love for her young mistress strove with the feeling of duty to the dead, and the superstitious horror of breaking that vow voluntarily; and at last, excusing herself, she hurried away to her room to lock herself in, and throw herself upon her knees to pray for help—to pray that she might be forgiven, and spared from the terrible task placed upon her as a duty to fulfil.

But no comfort came, only a hard sensation of fate drawing her on till she grew feverish and restless. Red spots burned in her sallow cheeks, and she rose from her knees at last with a heavy, lowering look in her eyes, as she muttered to herself—

“Yes, it must be done. It is fate. He knew better than I, and saw with dying eyes what was right. Yes, I cannot go back now.”

That night Sarah Woodham lay long awake, suffering a mental agony such as comes to the lot of few. Her woman’s nature rebelled against her fate, for beneath the hard, morose shell there was an abundance of the gentle milk of human kindness; but her long married training in the hard letter of the sect to which her husband belonged had placed her self-styled duty so to the front that it had become an idol—a stern, tyrannical idol, who must at all costs be obeyed, and she shrank with horror, as at a sin of the most terrible nature, from daring to disobey the injunction laid upon her by the dead.

Religion belief and superstitious dread joined hand in hand to force her onward, and she lay shivering in her bed, reproaching herself for striving to escape from the fulfilment of her husband’s last command.

Night after night she suffered a martyrdom; but upon this particular occasion it seemed to her that she was in close communication with the unseen, and, with eyes wild and strained, she kept trying to pierce the darkness, lying in anticipation of some severe reproof for tarrying so long.

Hours had passed, but sleep would not come; and at last, in a desponding voice, she moaned—

“It is too much. I am only a poor weak woman. Isaac, Isaac, husband, my burden is greater than I can bear.”

The words she had uttered aloud startled her, and she lay trembling, but they seemed to have relieved her over-burdened heart, and a feeling of calm restfulness gradually stole over her, and she slept, with the tears slowly stealing from beneath her closed lids.

“Isaac, husband, for her sake don’t ask me to do this thing.”

The words came in a hurried whisper, telling too plainly that, even in sleep, the rest had not quite calmed her tortured brain, for the task was there, and she moaned again and again piteously, as if continuing her appeal for mercy.

But in her imagination there was none. Her eyes had hardly closed before she seemed to be back in the cottage listening to the dying man’s utterances, full of bigoted intolerance and hate, bidding her avenge him; and at last she started up in bed with a cry of horror, to sit there pressing her wet dark hair back from her brow, and staring wildly into the darkest corner of the room.

“Yes, I hear,” she said, in a hoarse whisper. “I have tried indeed; but you don’t know. I am only a poor, weak creature, and it is so hard—so hard, but I will—I will.”

She sat there for fully two hours rocking herself to and fro, weeping, praying, but finding no relief. She threw herself down at last, and for a few moments the cool pillow relieved the agony of her throbbing temples; but only for the time, and then it was as hot as her fevered head.

“If I could only sleep,” she groaned; “if I could only sleep and forget.”

But the sleep that gathers up the ravelled sleeve of care would not come; and at last in despair she rose, bathed her burning temples, and then hurriedly began to dress.

“I cannot bear it longer,” she muttered; “I cannot bear it.”

Drawing the curtain aside, she saw that it was still night, and that her sleep, with its agonising dreams, must have been of the briefest kind, and going to her dressing-table she took her watch—the heavy silver watch that had been her husband’s—from the stand where it hung to act as a little timepiece; but though she held it in various positions close to the window, the reflection of the moonlight which bathed the farther side of the house was not sufficient, and she opened the watch and trusted to her sense of touch.

Here she was more successful, for, passing her forefinger lightly over the dial, she arrived at a fairly accurate knowledge of the time—half-past two.

Setting her teeth hard, she went on dressing, muttering the while, a word from time to time being perfectly audible, and telling the direction of her thoughts.

“I must—fought against it. Maddening—wrong or right—must—poor master—must—I must.”

Each word was uttered in company with a jerk given to every button or string; and at last she stood thinking by the door, not hesitating but making up her mind as to her course.

The dread and its accompanying trembling were gone now. In their place was active determination as to the course she meant to take, and with a long-drawn breath she unfastened her door, and passed out into the utter darkness of the passage and landing.

There was something weird and spiritualised about her appearance as she passed on to the stairs, and descended, the faint light shed by the glimmering stars through a skylight just making it evident that something was moving slowly down the steps, while the faint brushing sound of her dress seemed more like the whispering of the wind than a noise made by some one passing down the hard granite flight.

She paused for a few moments by the door of Claude’s room, as if listening; and again a sigh escaped her as she went on silently, awake to the fact that the slightest noise might arouse her master, who would, if not plunged in a

drug-contrived stupor, be lying sleepless listening to every sound.

But she passed on down the last flight of steps, across the hall, and without hesitation laid her hand upon the handle of the study door.

“Locked!” she said to herself, the thought occurring directly that the reason was hers, for she recalled fastening the door.

There was a slight grating sound and a sharp crack as she turned the key; but they had no effect upon the woman who, now that she had determined upon her course, seemed as if she would stop at nothing.

The darkness in the study was profound; not even a gleam from the stars passing through the window, which was shuttered, and the curtains drawn. But, as if light were not needed in her mission, the woman went on across the room, avoiding the various articles of furniture in a way that was marvellous, and hardly making a sound till she turned the key of the oak cabinet, which creaked sharply as the door was thrown open.

Then came the clink of bottle against bottle, and the squeaking sound of a cork, followed by the gurgling of a liquid being poured out. The noise of the cork, the tap of the bottom of the bottle on being replaced, and then the closing and locking of the door followed.

Sarah Woodham was about to cross the room back to the door, satisfied with the successful issue of her mission, which would have been thwarted had there been no key in the lock, when the sound of the handle of the door being moved made her start towards the window. Her first idea was to throw one of the curtains round her, but there was no time, and she stood motionless in the dark, listening, under the impression that Claude had heard her come down, and had followed.

A low cough undeceived her, and a chill of horror ran through her frame as she realised the fact that it was her master.

He must have been awake and watchful, and she stood there trying to stop the beating of her heart, as she felt that she had been discovered.

But Gartram slowly crossed the room, and in imagination she saw his hands outstretched as he felt his way to avoid coming in contact with the table. The next moment her spirits began to rise, for she understood why he had come down. There was no doubt about it, for she heard his hands touch the cabinet, the lock snap, and then there was a sharp, clicking sound, and she knew that he had knocked over a bottle on the shelf.

“Confoundedly dark!” he muttered; and Sarah Woodham held her breath as she heard him move, and another sound.

She knew well enough what it meant. He had gone to a side table, and was feeling for the silver match-box which always stood beside the inkstand.

Sarah stretched out a hand behind her as she took a step backward. Then she paused, for a sudden silence in the room warned her that Gartram was listening. But the next moment the rattling of the matches was heard, and *crick, crick, crack*, the striking of one upon a metallic box, and a line of faint sparks threw up for the moment the figure of Gartram, with his back to her bending over the table—a black silhouette seen for a moment, and then all profound darkness once more.

Crick, crick, crack! two bright points of light, then a flash, but the curtain was drawn aside, and fell back in front of the woman as the match blazed up; and, though she could not see, Sarah Woodham felt that Gartram had turned sharply and was holding up the burning wax match to give a hasty glance round the room, before he applied it to a candle standing in the bronze inkstand.

The perspiration oozed out upon her brow, for she felt that her master must have seen the curtain quivering, and be coming to drag it aside.

“What shall I say?” she thought.

But Gartram did not come to the curtain; and, gaining courage, Sarah peered cautiously, but with her heart beating wildly, through the narrow opening between the two curtains, to see him go back to the cabinet, pick up the fallen bottle, remove the cork, pour a certain amount into a medicine glass, set it down, after he had tossed off the liquid, and then close the cabinet.

“Hah!” he ejaculated, with a sigh of satisfaction; and Sarah Woodham shivered again as the cold dank moisture gathered together, first in dew, then in the great drops of agony upon her face, and slowly trickled down.

It did not seem as if Gartram was suspicious, and likely to come toward the window; but the terror from which she suffered became so acute that she felt as if she must cry out in her alarm; for it seemed as if fate was now working with her, and that now she would be able to sleep without the haunting horror of her husband’s presence always near her, always upbraiding her for the task she had left undone.

“Hah!” ejaculated Gartram again; and she heard him move, but she did not dare to stir to see if he were coming toward the curtain.

It appeared like an hour before the light was suddenly extinguished, and a heavy, dull sound of steps going over the carpet was heard; then the door handle rattled, and she felt that she was safe. But it was only for a moment; a low muttering arose, and the steps came back into the room; then there was a heavy creaking noise of springs and of stiff leather, and she knew that Gartram had thrown himself into the big easy-chair.

There was a pause, during which the listener could count the heavy, slow beating of her heart, which seemed to stop directly, as Gartram spoke aloud—

“The very sight of a bed seems to drive it away. As if there was no more rest. Rich beyond my wildest dreams, and what is it but a curse! If I could only sleep—if I could only sleep!”

There was a long, low, piteous sigh, followed by mutterings, some slow and gently uttered, others quick and angry. Then a long pause, during which, with heavily-beating heart, the woman stood listening for her masters next utterances, and thinking of how this man prayed for sleep. What then if it came now? He took these drugs for sleep; suppose that sleep were to come—the long, long, restful sleep from which there is no waking here?

Her eyes seemed to pierce the heavy cloth which hung between them, and she saw him going off into a deeper and deeper sleep, saw the day come stealing in through the cracks, and a faint and ghastly ray fall athwart the hard, stern face of the sleeping man, which she felt, as in a nightmare, compelled to watch, as it grew more grey and hard and fixed. Then there were sounds without—in the hall. She knew the step, it was Claude’s, and there was a tap at the door, and a voice calling gently,—

“Father—papa. Father, dear, are you there? Are you asleep?”

“Claude, my darling,” she moaned, as the girl entered and went softly to the chair to lay her hand gently upon his brow; and then there was a sigh as she bent down, kissed him, and then went softly out.

Sarah Woodham’s heart seemed still and frozen within her, and the horrible feeling of dread and despair increased, so real had all this seemed. But it was a vision conjured up by a guilty brain, for it was still dark, and there was no sound in the room but a regular, heavy breathing, telling that Gartram had found at last the sleep that refused to obey him in his chamber.

Sarah listened. He was asleep, and the trembling and dread came upon her again, to be horribly emphasised, but to be followed by a sensation full of resentment, as Gartram turned suddenly in his chair, and said loudly,—

“Curse him! It was no fault of mine. He seems to haunt me. Is there never to be any peace?”

Sarah Woodham had clutched the curtain, and held it tightly in her hand as he spoke, and she stood there in the darkness gazing in the direction of the chair, resentful and fierce now; the feelings of remorse were all swept away, and the cold, stern determination with which she had received her husband’s commands came back.

An hour must have passed before she attempted to move; then her hand went slowly to a bottle thrust into her breast, and she stepped slowly out from the embayment of the window to stand close by the sleeping man, listening to his heavy, stertorous breathing for some time before silently crossing the study, and passing out into the hall.

A few minutes later she was in her own room, heaving a piteous sigh as she gazed out at the faint light in the east before throwing herself, dressed, upon the bed, and sleeping heavily at once.

Volume Two—Chapter Five.

Approaching a Crisis.

“Here I am again, Glyddyr. How are your old chap?”

Glyddyr was seated in the cabin of his yacht, thinking over his position, and of how long it would be before Claude would consent to the marriage taking place.

He had no fear of his ultimate success, for he had seen enough of Gartram to know that his will was law, and that, even if Claude were thoroughly opposed to the match, she would be obliged to consent.

But he could not conceal from himself the fact that it might be a long time first, press it on how he might; and till then he would be the abject slave of the man in whose clutches he had placed himself.

He had not seen the boat leave the shore, where his men had gone to obtain stores, and, taking advantage of its being at the harbour, Gellow had stepped in, had himself rowed on board, and, walking along the deck giving the little crew a supercilious look, he had gone down to where Glyddyr was seated, and addressed him.

“What do you want?” was the reply, delivered in a surly voice.

“What do I want? Why, as the little ragged boy said in *Punch*, ‘heverythink.’ In my case, specially money.”

Glyddyr made an impatient movement.

“Oh, it’s a fact, dear boy. Times have not been rosy lately, and I’ve got low in the banking account. So, as my dear old friend Glyddyr has had his little slice of luck, I said I’d run down and tap him.”

“What do you mean—what slice of luck?”

“The wind that blows no one any good, dear boy; but the ill wind must have blown you a lot of good.”

“What do you mean?”

“What did you put on her?”

“Nothing.”

“What?”

“I said nothing.”

“Oh, yes. You said so, and you didn’t mean it.”

“I tell you I did not back the horse.”

“But I sent you the last tip—one worth a hundred thousand pounds. I was thinking of sending it to the Marquis, but he’s a mean cuss, and I knew you’d stump up handsome afterwards to the man who helped you. Come—between friends, you know—what did you land?”

“I tell you I did not back the horse.”

“Get along with you! None of your games. Come along, old fellow, let’s have it. What did you pocket?”

“Nothing.”

“Glyddyr, my dear boy, don’t say that you didn’t get the telegram in time.”

“No; I got it in time.”

“Oh, come, that’s right; and you did back it. Get out with your talking like that. You gave me a cold chill all down my back.”

“Hang it, man, how many more times am I to speak? I tell you I did not back the horse.”

“What! You let such a chance go by? You actually fooled away money like that!”

“I don’t know what you mean by fooled away money.”

“Why, it is fooling away money to let such a chance as that go by you.”

“How was I to know it was a good chance?” cried Glyddyr savagely.

“Why, didn’t I send it to you?”

“Yes; and how many times have you sent me tips which have turned out frauds, and I’ve lost my money?”

“Well, but nobody can be sure, that’s a certainty.”

“No! Yours never were.”

“Oh, but this is absurd. No. I see through your game. You’re gammoning me. You did work it all right.”

“Hark, here,” cried Glyddyr; “if you wish me to kick you out of my cabin, say that again.”

Gellow blew out his cheeks, and quickly sucked them in. Then he threw his right leg over his left, and then he threw his left over his right, balanced his ivory-handled crutch-stick, and ended by bringing the end down upon the cabin floor in the attempt.

“Oh, very well,” he said coldly, and the man’s manner completely changed. “I won’t brave you to kick me out of my own cabin, Mr Glyddyr. You see I could just sign a paper or two, and then I could kick you out.”

“What!”

“Without lifting my foot, sir. I’ve always been a gentleman to you, Mr Glyddyr, and you’ve always been a bully to me. I wanted to be friends, and I’ve helped you with money till I’ve pinched myself, and I’ve helped you to throw your wife off the scent.”

“She is not my wife.”

“I don’t know anything about that. Out of politeness one is bound to believe a lady, and she says she is your wife, sir.”

“It is false.”

“Ah, well, that’s nothing to me, sir. That’s your own affair. Settle it between you. Why, I consider that I’ve put two fortunes in your way, sir. You’ve kicked over one; what are you going to do with the other?”

Glyddyr scowled at him.

“Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr Glyddyr. Like my confounded impudence to ask. I’m off back to town. No message for Madame Denise, I suppose?”

“No.”

“Very good, very good, sir. Good day.”

“Good day,” said Glyddyr shortly, and his visitor walked to the door of the tiny saloon, set his hat jauntily on one side, and then turned and came back, and rested his hands upon the back of the nearest seat.

“Oh, by the way, Mr Glyddyr, I think I did hint that I was rather short of the ready. Be good enough to write me a cheque for a thou, on account.”

Glyddyr winced.

“I have no money in hand,” he said abruptly.

“All nonsense, my dear sir; don’t trifle with a man. You must be rolling in coin. One thou, please.”

“I tell you I have no money.”

“Very well, then, my dear sir, very well; be good enough to get it. I shall rely upon you, for I must have some within a week.”

He turned right round and walked to the door again, and then turned and said smilingly—

“Sorry to trouble you, but may your men row me ashore?”

“Yes, of course. But stop. Look here, Gellow.”

“Very sorry to have worried you, Mr Glyddyr. One thou, please, within seven days.”

“But it will be inconvenient. I can’t raise the money in the time. I—look here. Why, confound the man! Here, Gellow!”

There was no reply, and angry, mortified, humbled by his impecunious position, Glyddyr hurried on to the deck, and found that his visitor was already in the boat, and several yards away from the yacht’s side.

“Look here, Gellow,” he cried.

“Eh? Please write. Can’t stop. Be just able to catch the next train and get in by to-morrow morning. Pull away, my lads; a shilling a-piece for beer if you look sharp.”

Glyddyr ground his teeth with rage as he gazed after his spider, and felt how thoroughly he had been bound up like a fly of fashion in the wretched schemer’s web.

He could have yelled after him to come back, but his men were on deck and in the boat which bore his tyrant away; and in those moments the man seemed to live a life of repentance for having placed himself in the power of such a creature as this. As it was, he could only stand looking at the receding boat in a nonchalant manner, and then turn slowly round, and descend to the cabin.

“What am I to do?” he said to himself. “I must write to him apologetically, and ask for time. No; I can’t do it. I’d sooner suffer anything than be humbled further by the wretched cad!”

He flung himself in an easy-chair, and began to agitate it to and fro, grinding his teeth the while with rage.

“If I could only borrow the money! If I could only get hold of enough to clear myself from this brute, I could—”

He stopped short, and sat staring before him through one of the little open round port windows over the glittering sea, at the Fort, which stood up clearly cut and grey in the vivid sunshine; and as he gazed at the great castellated building, a strange idea came to him, one which made him picture the interior of that study as it appeared to him on the occasion of his entering through the window to find Gartram lying there insensible upon the floor.

“A thousand within seven days,” he muttered to himself, and once more he glanced sharply round to see whether he was overheard.

He rose and paced the little cabin, only a few strides and a turn, but no idea came.

One moment he was for following Gellow, and pleading to him for time, the next the thought seemed too degrading, and he shrank from having to plead and humble himself before the common, insolent man who had him in his power.

“If he would only leave me alone I should soon be in a position to clear myself off, for Gartram is as rich as Croesus.”

As that thought came to him, he saw again the interior of the study and the open safe.

“And of course that is a mere nothing,” he thought; “the eccentric old fellow would not have much of his money there. A thousand pounds. Why, it would be a trifle to him, and if I asked him he would lend it in an instant.”

Glyddyr stopped short in his argument there.

“Would he lend it in an instant?”

“No,” said Glyddyr to himself directly afterwards. “He is too keen and hard a man. His idea is that I am above all money troubles, and if I try him it will be like killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. No; it would be ruin to attempt that and destroy all.”

With the impression upon him, though, that, he would get out of his dilemma by Gellow repenting, knowing as he did that the sharp, sordid money-maker would calculate his chances of repayment too accurately to run any risks, Glyddyr returned on deck, to find that the gig had just returned from the shore after landing his incubus.

Springing in, he signed to the men to give way, and had himself rowed across to the rough pier, where he hesitated for a few minutes as to what he should do.

The sight of Chris Lisle striding along the cliff road decided him. A malicious look came into his face, and, thrusting his hands down in his pockets, he began to saunter along the pier, taking the short cut which led to Gartram's private path, cut in a zig-zag up the cliff face, a direction which would only be taken by one going up to the Fort.

It was meant for Chris to see, and he saw it, suffering just as his rival intended, for there was a painful sting in the thought that this stranger should be free to come and go, while he, who had had the run of the place from boyhood, should be forbidden to approach.

Chris was no dissembler, there was no diplomatic concealment of the feelings in his actions; he suffered, and he showed that he did as he encountered Glyddyr at the intersection of their ways, and retorted with a fierce look of anger when Glyddyr passed him with a supercilious smile full of contempt.

"How I could enjoy wringing that dog's neck!" said Chris to himself. "He is going up there to the Fort to be made welcome and caressed, and treated as if he belonged to them, and—Oh, it does make me feel savage!"

He turned up into the stiff slope running away to the cliff top, and in a short time was where he could look down on the Fort and get glimpses of the garden, where, to his infinite rage and pain, he soon after caught the glint of a white dress, then of one of the palest blue, and directly after there was a third party to form a trio, which sauntered up and down till he could bear it no longer, and walked right on.

"It's of no use," he said to himself; "I must see Claude and ask her what it all means. I can't go on like this, seeing that man go to and fro as if he were accepted. It is too hard to be borne."

He threw himself down at the top of the cliff, and lay gazing out to sea as he tried to settle his next proceedings. One thing was certain; he must see Claude, and come to a thorough understanding about their future. Then perhaps he could wait.

But how was he to obtain an interview?

Mary Dillon.

No; she had refused point blank to act against her uncle's wishes, though she sympathised with both of them.

Claude would not meet him, nor yet correspond, but had told him to wait.

"And who can wait at a time like this?" he cried. "If she only would not be quite so obedient," he continued, though all the time he knew in his heart that he loved her the more for her fulfilment of her fathers commands.

No; it was of no use to think that she would consent to meet him by appointment, and there was no one person whom he cared to trust.

"It is so degrading," he said, "to have to place yourself and her at the mercy of some common, vindictive kind of creature, who has to be paid."

He was out of sight of the garden now, and its occupants, for he shrunk from watching Claude and her companion; but he was still well within view of a portion of the Fort and its defences.

"It is all very well," he thought, as he threw himself back, with his straw hat off, and his hands behind his head; "but if a clever, resolute burglar made up his mind to get into the old man's stronghold after all was locked up, how easy it would be. Why, I could climb up the sea-face quickly enough, and over the south wall, and then there is nothing to hinder one but the moat, across which a man might wade in a pair of fishing-stockings."

A curious tingling sensation here attacked Chris Lisle, and the colour mounted into his cheek at the thoughts which came rushing through his brain.

Suppose he played the part of burglar, not to obtain any of the old man's hoarded-up coin, but that which was the sole desire of his life? Claude would never consent to a meeting, but if he took her by surprise, and once more clasped her in his arms, she could not really be so very angry, for she loved him; of that there could, after all, be no doubt, and for the sake of that sweet delight he would risk her displeasure. It would only be right, for he would be showing her how his heart was hers, and hers alone.

The cliff face? A bit dangerous, but he could do it easily, even the wall. Bah! he could climb a higher wall than that, while as to the drop of water in Gartram's moat, if he couldn't have waded it, he could have swam it, and would a thousand times so as to be once more near her.

"It's a puzzle," said Chris aloud. "Why, I ought to have done it long enough ago. How was it I didn't think of it before?"

There was no mental answer to this, and his thoughts took another direction. He was comparatively a rich man now, but somehow he did not feel disposed to go and speak out again to Gartram, whose first question would be, "And, pray, how did you get this money?"

The cash had in each case been paid over to him the settling day with quite commercial promptitude, and lay at his bankers at Toxeter; but somehow Chris felt no richer, and the exultation he had expected was not there. Forty thousand pounds all his own, but he did not feel proud of it, and had sat up a night in his own room thinking of how little difference it made to a man, and, on the whole, feeling rather disappointed than otherwise at the result of his speculation.

But when was it to be? That night? The next night?

“I’ll try till I do meet her, and if the old man sees me, and flies at me—

“I wonder whether he keeps that revolver loaded?” said Chris, half aloud, as he rose and began to descend the cliff. “Bah! If he does, he couldn’t hit me in the dark, and hurry of his aim.”

All the same, though, his active imagination was hard at work, showing him a series of dissolving views, in one of which a gallant youth was wading a deep fosse, with an irate parent standing on the bank, firing shot after shot, till in the dim light there was a fall and a splash as the aforesaid gallant youth fell back into the moat as he was crawling out, and not found until the next day.

Would Claude weep and break her heart? Would—

“A fellow of my age, with an ordinary share of brains, to go on dreaming and mooning over such sentimental nonsense!” cried Chris, half aloud. “He’d better shoot at me. If he does, hang me if I wait. I’ll coax her into coming right away.

“By Jove! I’ll try to-night. I wonder whether Mary would help me if she knew?”

Volume Two—Chapter Six.

Getting Languid.

If Chris Lisle had had a binocular with him when he climbed the great cliff slope, and looked down into Gartram’s garden, he would not have felt those poignant, jealous pangs. His eyes were good, and he could see that female figures were in the garden, and, naturally enough, he concluded that they were Claude and Mary. Then he saw that another figure was there, a male—he could make that out—and he quite as naturally, as he had seen Glyddyr on his way to the Fort, concluded that this was he.

But, as it happened, when Glyddyr reached the house, he was shown into Gartram’s room, where he was warmly received by that gentleman, who kept him talking and in torture, for there was the particular piece of the bookcase which he knew would open, and behind which lay sums of money, any fraction of which would set him free; and through the open window, echoing from the stone walls, came the sounds of voices in the garden, where he longed to be.

“Oh, yes, infinitely better, my dear boy, and I want you to come up and dine here to-night. No ceremony. Quiet dinner, and cigars and coffee afterwards. Little music in the drawing-room, and a walk afterwards round the garden and on the terrace, eh? You see I don’t forget your interest, Glyddyr, now do I?”

“No, sir; indeed, I only wish that—”

“Claude would throw herself at your head. Nonsense! You like her all the better because she holds you off. Better worth the wooing, my boy. No hurry. Give me time. She’s yours, Glyddyr, and as to her fortune—there, she’s my only child, and I’m very simple in my tastes and outlay, so you leave that to me.”

What an opportunity for asking a loan!

“No; it would be madness,” thought Glyddyr, and he refrained, but a curious sensation attacked him, and thoughts ran through his brain, some of which startled him.

“Is that Miss Gartram in the garden?” he said.

“Yes, my boy, yes. Asher is out there having a chat with them. Come up to see me about these confounded attacks of mine. Sort of change in one’s system, I suppose. Better soon. The worst of it is, that when I have one of these fits it seems to leave my brain a complete blank as to what has gone before. That last one, for instance, I can’t recall how I was seized, nor what upset me. Ah, here they are.”

Steps were heard outside, and directly after the little party appeared in sight, passing along the terrace by the study window towards the private entrance.

“Here! Hi! All of you come in this way,” shouted Gartram, and then turned to Glyddyr. “There, you see, not much the matter with me to have a doctor always hanging about. But I can’t sleep, Glyddyr, I can’t sleep. Well, doctor, what do you think of the garden?”

“Delightful, my dear sir. Perfect.”

“No, not perfect. Sea winds cut the things up too much. Regularly blast them sometimes. Here, come on one side; I want to talk to you about something else.”

He looked sharply at Claude, who was listening politely to some remarks of Glyddyr, while Mary was turning over the leaves of a book.

“Mary, my dear, I wish you would go and write to those people about the carriage; it’s quite time we heard from them. Oh, and by the way, there’s your aunt; write to her.”

“May I write here, uncle?”

“Eh? No. I shall want to sit down and write myself directly.”

Claude’s lips twitched, but she made no other sign, and Mary turned towards the door.

“It’s very clever of you, uncle dear,” she said to herself; “but it is of no use whatever.”

As the door closed, Gartram, who had risen, took the doctor’s arm, and walked with him towards the window.

“Look here,” he said, “I wanted to speak to you about that stuff. It isn’t strong enough. It used to be right, but I suppose I’ve got accustomed to it. Six months ago a dose sent me into a comfortable sleep. Now, two doses seem to have no effect whatever.”

Glyddyr heard his words, and a singing noise came in his ears, but Claude was beside him, and her father was evidently giving him a chance for a *tête-à-tête*.

“Will you have the bottles made stronger?” continued Gartram.

“Really—” began the doctor.

“There, now, you are going to make an excuse about my nerves being weak, or something of that sort. Nonsense, my dear sir; I’m as strong as a horse. Make it more powerful.”

“No. Really, Mr Gartram—”

“Oh, very well; then I shall take three times as much, and so get over you, doctor. You see you cannot help yourself. Claude, my dear,” he continued, turning sharply, “did you show Doctor Asher that new bamboo—how it is getting on?”

“No, papa; I did not think of it,” said Claude, rising hastily.

“No, no. Just like you forgetful girls. I’ll show him. This way, doctor. What is it?—*Bambusa Metake*. I think that’s right. Come along. Rather a rare plant for this neighbourhood.—Give the young folks a chance, doctor, eh?”

“Yes, I see,” said Asher, nodding and smiling, as he followed his patient out on to the terrace. “*Bambusa Metake*, eh?”

“Bamboo—bamboozle, doctor,” cried Gartram, laughing. “Now, then, about this stuff. I must have it mixed up stronger.”

“But it will be very bad for you. It is my duty to warn you of that.”

“Not half so bad as to lie in bed all night cursing my misery because I cannot sleep. What is the use of life to me if I am to suffer like this? The fits are bad enough, but when they are over, they’re over, and if I can get to lead a little more tranquil life, I dare say they will not trouble me so much.”

“That is quite right, my dear Mr Gartram; but you must see that this is a growing habit.”

“Don’t lecture, doctor; prescribe. I vow here, if you do not, I shall get the stuff from some London chemist, and prescribe for myself.”

“My dear sir! For heaven’s sake don’t do that!”

“There, you see I have the whip hand of you. You’re afraid of losing your patient, eh?”

“I should be so sorry to see you do anything reckless, Mr Gartram, that I will act as you wish. Unwillingly, mind, and only under a promise that you will be very careful, and take the medicine with great discretion.”

“Oh, yes, I’ll promise anything; only give me rest at night.”

“Very well.”

“That’s right. Now then, what do you think of the bamboozler?” cried Gartram, laughing, as he pointed to what looked like a fountain of verdure springing out of a moist, warm, well-sheltered part of the garden.

“Beautiful!” exclaimed the other. “Quite a tropic plant.”

“Yes. Too graceful to give it only a glance. Here, light a cigar and let’s take time to contemplate its beauties—and growth,” he added, with a dry laugh. “There’s no hurry, eh?”

“Well, I have another patient to see; but—”

“He can wait a little longer, eh? What do you say to a seat and a light? There, now, we can contemplate the beauties of nature all a-growing and all a-blowing,” he added, after sending out a great puff of smoke.—“By the way, recollect you dine with us to-night,” said Gartram, after about half-an-hour’s conversation.

“To-night?” said the doctor, hesitating.

“Yes. No nonsense; and you can bring me a fresh bottle in your pocket. Now, I think we may as well join them indoors, eh?”

The doctor rose and walked with his host to the study window, where Gartram ground out an oath between his teeth.

“You miserable, stupid little jade!” he muttered; “couldn’t you see that you were not wanted here?”

Mary’s eyelids drooped.

“Oh, yes, uncle dear,” she said to herself. “I understand your funny little ways, but I’m not going. Of course, I knew that I was not wanted by one, but I was by the other, and as the other was poor Claude, why, I had the letters done in five minutes, and I’ve been here ever since.”

“Why didn’t you write those letters, Mary?” said the old man fiercely.

“I did write, dear, and there they are on your table, ready for you to read over. Would you like to do it now?”

“No,” said Gartram, in his harshest voice. “Going, Glyddyr?” he continued, as the latter rose.

“Yes; I’ll walk back with Doctor Asher.”

“Ah, well, we shall see you this evening.—Don’t forget, doctor.”

He walked to the drawbridge with them, leaving Mary and Claude alone.

“There, Claudie; if any one tells you that you haven’t got a good little cousin, even if she is a bad shape—”

“Mary, darling!” cried Claude, clinging to her, “I can’t thank you enough. I felt that I must rush away out of the room, and should have done so if you had not come.”

“Was he so very dreadful, Claudie?”

“Dreadful! It was horrible. Oh, Mary, darling, pray that you may never have to listen to a man who loves you.”

“When you love somebody else, you mean?”

“Oh, yes, yes, yes,” cried Claude excitedly.

“Poor darling coz,” said Mary affectionately; “but I need not pray, dear. There’s no need. No man will ever sit down by me and take my hand and tell me he loves me. I shall be spared all that.”

“And now I’ve wounded you with my thoughtless speech, Mary, dear. Ah, my darling, if you only would not think of your appearance; I never do.”

“No, dear, you are beautiful.”

“Beautiful, Mary? Ah! how gladly I’d change places with you.”

“What? Young, pretty, rich, and with two lovers dying for you.”

“It is not true,” cried Claude, flushing up. “This man loves me for the money, and—”

She stopped short.

“Shall I finish?” said Mary maliciously; “and that man loves me for myself.”

“No,” said Claude sadly. “If he had loved me as he said, he would not have let himself be driven away from me so easily as he has.”

“Hist! uncle,” whispered Mary, as a heavy step was heard on the granite slabs without, and Gartram entered, scowling.

“Mary,” he cried harshly, “I thought you had some brains in your head, but you are no better than a fool.”

“I’m very sorry, uncle,” said the poor girl humbly.

“There, be off, both of you; I have some letters to write. See that the dinner is good, Claude, my dear, and—yes,” he added, as he referred to his watch, “send that woman with my medicine; it is just time.”

As he spoke, there was a tap on the panel, and Sarah Woodham, looking dark and stern in her black widows dress, entered with a glass and phial.

“Your medicine, sir,” she said in a low, impressive voice.

“Well, hang it all, woman, don’t speak as if you had come to poison me,” said the old man fiercely.

Sarah Woodham’s lips seemed to whiten, and as she drew the squeaking cork from the bottle and poured out the mixture, the neck tapped softly against the edge of the glass.

Volume Two—Chapter Seven.

For Money’s Sake.

“Yes, fine old man,” said the doctor, as he and Glyddyr walked down the well-paved path together. “Good for any number of years.”

“In spite of the fits?”

“Oh, yes, my dear sir, in spite of the fits. They will not hurt him. Come on after any fresh excitement, and prostrate him a bit afterward, but there’s nothing much to mind.”

“But his sleeplessness? He complains a good deal of that.”

“Hum! Well, yes, that is a bad symptom. But he has his cure in his hands. He will worry himself about money, always striving to make more, when I’ll be bound to say he already has plenty.”

“So report says, doctor.”

“Oh, yes, and I daresay it’s true enough but that’s nothing to us. If he will only leave off worrying about the increase, he’ll be able to sleep well enough. But you said you would like a word with me.”

“Yes. Nothing much the matter, but I think I do want setting up a little.”

“Come into my consulting-room, and we’ll see,” said Asher, leading the way through a dainty-looking hall, full of the tasteful collections of a man who had evidently an eye for beauty, and had turned his home into quite a little museum.

“Why, doctor,” cried Glyddyr, in astonishment, “I didn’t know you had this sort of taste?”

“Indeed? Oh, yes. Regular lover of bric-à-brac, as far as my income will allow. This way.”

The next minute he had his new patient seated in a consulting-room that was the very opposite of the mausoleum-like abode of gloom into which a London physician has his patients shown.

“Take that seat, my dear sir. Don’t be alarmed; it is not an operating chair. A man who has to exist in this out-of-the-way part of the world need have some tastes. Hum, ha! pulse, tongue, heart, lungs. Look here, my dear Mr Glyddyr, I am very glad you have called upon me, or rather called in my services.”

“What?” said Glyddyr anxiously. “You find something wrong?”

“Nothing at all, my dear sir. Just the sort of patient I like. Sound as a roach; wants a dose now and then, and can afford to pay me my fees.”

“Come, you are frank,” said Glyddyr.

“Most commendable quality in a doctor, sir. You have not been living quite so regularly lately as you should. You have some anxiety on your mind, and it has upset your digestion. Then, feeling a bit low, I should say you had been drinking some bad champagne instead of an honest drop of good Scotch whisky. That’s all.”

“I say, doctor, are you a necromancer or a magician?”

“Bit of both, my dear sir. Here, I’ll begin and give you a dose at once.”

“No, hang it all, doctor, not quite so soon,” said Glyddyr, glancing at the shelves with their large array of bottles.

“Stitch in time saves nine, sir,” said the doctor, taking out his keys, opening a closet of quaint old carved oak, and bringing forth tumblers, a seltzogene, and a large, curiously-cut decanter. “There, take one third of that to two-thirds of the carbonic water, and one of these,” he continued, handing a cigar box.

“Oh, come!” said Glyddyr, laughing. “Doctor Asher, if you’ll come to town I’ll guarantee you a fortune.”

“Thank you,” said the doctor, helping himself mechanically to that which he had prescribed; and as soon as he had lit his cigar, throwing himself back in another chair. “But no, my lot seems cast here, and I don’t think I shall change. Drop of good whisky, that?”

“Delicious; but is this all the medicine I’m to have?”

“No, I’ll send you a box of pills. Take a couple now and then, and leave the champagne alone.”

“I beg pardon, sir, you are wanted at the hotel,” said the servant, after a tap at the door, from behind which she spoke without attempting to enter.

“Yes: directly.”

Glyddyr took a good sip of his whisky and water, and was in the act of rising when the doctor promptly clapped his hands on his shoulders, and pressed him back.

“No, no, my dear sir, sit still. I don’t suppose I shall be many minutes. I have a patient there who thinks he is very bad. I want to finish my cigar with you.”

He hurried out, leaving Glyddyr leaning back smoking; but, as soon as he was alone, he sat up and his eyes began to search the three rows of bottles before him, and to read the Latin inscriptions upon the drawers beneath, one of which was pulled half out.

He sat forward listening intently to the retreating step of the doctor, after which all was still as death, save the regular beat of a timepiece on the mantelpiece.

Then he threw himself back frowning, and took out his handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from his forehead, though the room was perfectly cool, and the window open.

“It’s madness,” he muttered; “impossible!”

He stretched out his hand, seized his glass, and gulped its contents down quickly, then, taking the decanter, poured out some more and drank that.

“Dutch courage,” he muttered, setting down the glass. “No spirit. But it’s impossible,” he said again, and he laid down his cigar, listening intently.

And yet it seemed so easy, for there before him, in the upper row, with its black letters on a gold ground, was the bottle that would do the work.

“No, no,” he said, in a husky whisper; but he rose all the same, and stood listening in the midst of a silence that seemed death-like.

“I should hear his step a minute before he could get here,” he thought; and with the mocking face of Gellow before him, and his threat, he strode across the room, looked sharply about him, and saw that in the half-opened drawer there were a number of clean phials, each with a cork fitted loosely in.

Taking one of these quickly, he drew the cork with his teeth. Then, raising his hand, he was in the act of taking down the bottle upon which he had fixed his eye, when—

Paugh!

A hoarse, braying, trumpet-like sound of stentorian power, and he started away as if he had received a blow.

“Only a confounded steam tug,” he muttered, with his face glistening with perspiration; and taking down the bottle he removed the stopper, half filled the phial, replaced the stopper and bottle, safely corked the phial, and, trembling violently now, placed the stolen liquid in his breast, just as he heard a step outside.

Quick as his trembling hands would allow him to act, he struck a light, re-lit his cigar, and sank back in his chair with a sigh of relief as the steps came nearer and nearer; still he suffered an agony of apprehension lest the doctor on his entrance should notice his agitation.

“So easy to plan and act,” thought Glyddyr, as he listened, “but so hard to retain one’s nerve.”

Another five minutes would have enabled him to recover himself, but the steps were already at the door; and as he drew in a long breath and lay back, closing his eyes, his cigar between his fingers hanging over the arm of his chair, and his head on one side in a very bad imitation of one asleep, the steps passed on.

A false alarm.

Glyddyr breathed more freely. He had time to glance round and see that he had done nothing to betray himself; the bottle was replaced, he had spilled nothing, and the phial was safe in his pocket.

He sank back again with a sigh, the cold perspiration ceased to ooze from his temples, and his pulse throbbed with less violence, as he smoked slowly, beginning now to look ahead as he felt the little phial.

He had his plan about ready as the step for which he listened was now heard approaching, and directly after the doctor entered the room.

“Five hundred apologies, Mr Glyddyr. You see what a slave a doctor is—everybody’s slave. No matter where he is or how he feels, if somebody has an ache or a pain, the doctor must go—yes, even,” he added bitterly, “if it is to face death in the form of some deadly fever; and generally, in addition to his pay, he hears that he is not clever because he could not perform impossibilities.”

“Not an enviable life, doctor.”

“Disgusting, sir, at times. Bah! what am I talking about? Don’t smoke that cigar; take another. No? Going?”

“Yes; I’ll get on board the yacht,” said Glyddyr. “I feel all the better for your prescription.”

“That’s right. Well, I shall see you again this evening.”

“And I am not to touch any of the old man’s champagne, eh?”

“We-ell,” said the doctor, with a quaint, smile, “Gartram’s wine is sure to be good, and a glass or two will not do you much harm. An exceptional case, my dear sir. A glass or two will brighten you, and put you in good key for conversation with the ladies.”

He smiled, and shook hands warmly with his new patient.

“Don’t throw me over by-and-by, Mr Glyddyr,” he said. “I have been the family doctor for some time now. There, forgive me. Very indiscreet remark of mine.”

“Nothing to forgive, my dear sir. Till this evening, then.”

“Till this evening,” said the doctor; and Glyddyr went down towards the harbour, with the doctor standing at the window watching him.

“Lucky fellow,” he said; “the old man favours it, and the girl—well, girls have to give way.”

Volume Two—Chapter Eight.

After Dinner.

“What! you again, Woodham?”

“Yes, sir,” said the woman, in her quiet, grave way. “The time soon passes. Every three hours.”

“Humph! six o’clock,” said Gartram, looking at her uneasily, as she shook up the bottle and poured out the accustomed dose.

“Bah! Filthy! Sugar.”

There was a lump laid on the little tray, and the big strong man took it as hurriedly as a schoolboy.

“Shall I bring the medicine here at nine, sir?”

“No; those gentlemen will be here smoking, perhaps. Put the next dose in the glass, and leave it on the chimney-piece. I’ll take it when I come in.”

“I beg your pardon, sir; but will you remember it?”

“Of course; if I don’t, you can remind me. I don’t want to have to be taking stuff before visitors, do I?”

Sarah Woodham shook up the medicine, poured out another glassful, placed it on the mantelpiece as directed, and left the room.

Half-an-hour later, the doctor and Glyddyr arrived together, and were received by Claude, Gartram not being quite dressed.

Five minutes later he came down and hurried into the study, taking out his key as he crossed the room.

“Hallo, little lady,” he said sharply, as he found Mary standing by the fireplace with a wine glass in her hand; “what are you doing here?”

“I was only looking round, uncle,” she said quickly, “to see that everything was left straight. You’ll have the coffee brought in here, I suppose, after dinner?”

“Yes, of course,” he said rashly; “but you ought to be in the drawing-room. What are you doing with that glass?”

“It is a dirty one, uncle,” said the girl, in a hurried manner; “I was going to take it away.”

“You please to put it back, and don’t meddle with things in my room.”

“I’m very sorry, uncle dear,” she said; and replacing the glass quickly, she hurried out of the room.

“I mustn’t forget that,” said Gartram, as he opened the cabinet in which he kept his cigars, and then joined his guests in the drawing-room.

Five minutes after, dinner was announced, and Glyddyr took in Claude, who trembled as she felt what a quiet, respectful manner he had adopted, and how it seemed to indicate a feeling of satisfied assurance that, sooner or later, she would be his.

It was impossible to be quite calm under the circumstances; but she strove hard to keep away all such thoughts, and, in her quality of mistress of the house, did the honours of the table admirably, till it was time to rise and leave the gentlemen to their wine.

“We sha’n’t sit very long, Claude,” said Gartram; “and after a cigar, we shall want some music.”

“Yes, papa,” said Claude gravely; and she moved toward the door, which Glyddyr had hurried to open, fixing his eyes upon her in a dreamy, pleading way as she went out, and making her catch Mary’s arm nervously as soon as they were alone.

“Mary, dear,” she said excitedly, “if it were not for papa’s health, I should run away to aunt’s, and stay there. This man seems so persistent, and his quiet way thoroughly frightens me.”

“Sapping and mining, instead of bold assault,” said Mary.

“Shall I ever be such a coward as to consent?”

“Bah! How do we know what may not happen long before it is time to be obliged to say yes.”

“Nothing seems likely to happen to set aside my father’s wishes,” sighed Claude.

“Ah, you don’t know. It is the unexpected which they say always happens. So we are to sing to-night?”

“Yes. Is anything the matter with you, Mary, dear?”

“With me?” was the reply, with a forced laugh. “How absurd, dear. No, of course not; nothing. Why, Claude, you are making your great eyes look goggles. You don’t think I have done anything, do you?”

“I don’t think you can be well, Mary, dear,” said Claude, taking her hand and kissing her brow; “why, your hands are cold and your forehead quite hot.”

“Of course they are. Haven’t we just had dinner?”

Claude looked at her wearily, but her cousin laughed in a quick, excited way, and crossed to the canterbury to begin turning over the music.

“They’ll soon be here now,” she said.

But there did not seem to be much prospect of the gentlemen coming, for in a very few minutes after they were left alone, Gartram passed on the claret jug.

“Wine, gentlemen,” he said. “Asher, you would prefer a glass of old port?”

“Indeed, no, my dear sir; nothing more for me. I have to ask you to excuse me soon.”

“What!” cried Gartram.

“For about half-an-hour. A patient.”

“What a nuisance!” said Gartram. “Must you go?”

“Without fail.”

“Then come in the study and have a cup of coffee and a cigar first.”

“To be sure. I am with you there.”

Gartram threw open the door; they crossed the hall and entered the study, where a shaded lamp was burning, the window, wide open, and the soft subdued light of the moon, as it rose slowly over the glistening sea, flooded the room.

“What a glorious night!” said the doctor, as he went to the table, filled a cup with coffee, and then took a cigar and cut off the end before looking round, and then walking to the chimney-piece, while Glyddyr threw himself in a chair and began to help himself.

“Give me a cup too, my dear boy,” said Gartram, as he took a cigar. “Doctor does not cut down my smoking yet. No matches?”

“All right; here they are on the chimney-piece,” said the doctor, and as he spoke the flame of the little wax match gave his face a peculiar aspect in the dim room. “But, hallo! What have we here? Secret drinking. What is this?” and, as he spoke, he took up a glass standing on the chimney-piece.

“Secret drinking, indeed!” grunted Gartram. “It’s your confounded tonic, put there ready for me to take by-and-by.”

“A thousand pardons,” said the doctor, coming forward and taking up his coffee, while Glyddyr lay back in an easy-chair, gazing at the dimly-seen glass upon the mantelpiece, and smoking thoughtfully.

“You’ve no light, Glyddyr,” said Gartram, rising and going to the chimney-piece, where, with his back to his guests, he took up the wine glass, but uttered an impatient ejaculation, set it down again, and took up the match stand, which he placed beside Glyddyr, and then tossed off his coffee. “What do you say to finishing our smoking out on the terrace?”

“To be sure; yes,” said the doctor. “A most glorious night.”

He moved with his host toward the open French window, where the two men stood for a few moments darkening the

room, and looking like two huge silhouettes to Glyddyr, as he lay back in his chair with his cigar half out.

Then suddenly Gartram turned and looked at him with a peculiar smile.

“You won’t join us, I suppose?” he said.

“I—thanks—if you will excuse me,” said Glyddyr, in a faltering voice.

“Excuse you, my dear boy? of course. Come along, Asher, the sea looks lovely from the upper seat.”

Glyddyr’s whole manner changed, and grew cat-like in its quick, soft movements as the pair walked away from the window along the granite terrace, Gartram’s boots creaking loudly as they walked.

There was a death-like silence then in the room, which made Glyddyr’s long-drawn, catching breath sound strangely loud as he rose from his seat and walked silently over the thick carpet to stand listening by the window, his figure in turn looking perfectly black against the moonlight; and as he stood there, from outside there came the low murmur of the men’s voices, and from the house, all muffled, the music of the piano in the drawing-room.

With a quick, gliding movement Glyddyr walked to the chimney-piece, thrusting his hand into his breast-pocket. Then, taking up the glass, he crossed to the window, and with a quick movement threw its contents sharply away, the liquid breaking up into a tiny sparkling shower in the soft yellow moonlight, and then it was gone.

Quickly and silently Glyddyr stole back to the chimney-piece, and replaced the glass. There was a faint, squeaking noise, as of a cork being removed from a phial, then the tap of glass upon glass, a faint gurgling, and another tapping of glass upon glass, as if his hand trembled.

A low, catching sigh followed, then a repetition of the faint squeak of the cork, and Glyddyr once more moved towards the window, satisfied himself that the others were nowhere near, and then he drew back a little, extended his arm behind him, and hurled the little phial away with all his might.

There was the quick rustle and jerk of clothes, then silence; then a faint sound, and Glyddyr drew a long breath, as if of satisfaction as he felt that all had gone as he wished, and the bottle had shivered to atoms on the rocks far below, while the next tide would cover the fragments, and wash them into crevices among the granite boulders as it destroyed all trace of the contents.

Glyddyr stood thinking for a few moments, and then he gulped down his coffee, and went out into the hall, which he crossed, hesitated again for a few minutes, and then entered the drawing-room, where, as the door closed, a low fresh murmuring arose, and was succeeded a minute later by the sound of the piano and Claude’s voice, which came sweet and pure to the hall, as a *portière* was drawn aside, and the dark figure of Sarah Woodham came forward into the light.

She stood listening by the drawing-room door for a few minutes, and then her dress rustled softly as she went across to the study, listened, tapped lightly, turned the handle and entered, closing the door after her.

The murmur of voices came from the terrace, and the woman replaced the coffee cups on the silver tray, and was in the act of lifting it, gazing out through the open window the while, but she set the tray down again, walked to the window, listened, and then went quickly to the chimney-piece. Then there was an ejaculation that was almost a moan as she raised the glass, and then, after listening intently, she held it up to the light, uttered a piteous sigh, and crossing quickly to the tray, emptied the contents into one of the fresh-used coffee cups, and replaced the glass on the chimney-piece. Then once more there was the faint squeaking of a cork in a bottle neck, the low gurgling of fluid being poured out, the replacing of the cork; and as the woman glided to the table, where the coffee tray remained, the light of the moon shone upon her dark dress and white apron, and showed her hurried movements as she thrust a bottle into the pocket among the folds of her dress.

A low sigh once more escaped her lips, and she muttered softly as she took up the tray and left the room.

“Not more than half an hour,” said a voice, which echoed from the terrace wall, and there were approaching steps.

“Make all the haste you can. I’ll have my nap while you are gone. I say, doctor.”

“Yes,” said Asher, pausing in the moonlight by the open window.

“Don’t disturb them in the drawing-room.”

“No, no, I understand,” said the doctor; and he stepped softly into the room, smiling as he went to the table, helped himself to a cigar, bit off and spat out the end, then took up the match stand, struck a light, and walked slowly across the room as he lit his cigar, stopping for a few moments puffing heavily to get it well alight before he set down the matches in their old place.

Five minutes after, Gartram’s creaking boots were heard as he came along the terrace, entered the room, went straight to the chimney-piece, tossed off the contents of the glass, and then threw himself in an easy-chair.

“There, Master Glyddyr,” he said; “you have the field to yourself, and you will not mind my having a nap.”

Claude played well, and after a little entreaty she sang an old ballad, in a sweet low voice that would have thrilled some men, but to which Glyddyr listened in an abstracted way, as if his attention was more taken up by what was going on without.

After a time the urn was brought in, and Claude was about to rise from the piano, but Glyddyr seemed to become all at once deeply interested, and begged so very earnestly that she stayed, a duet was produced, and Mary Dillon, directly after the prelude, took the first part in a voice so clear and piercing, so birdlike in its purity and strength, that for a few moments the visitor sat gazing at her in admiration.

But he soon became abstracted again, and as the final notes of the combined voices rang out, he rose with a sigh, and walked to the window, while Claude proceeded to make the tea.

“And never said ‘thank you,’” whispered Mary. “Poor young man. He is terribly in love.”

At that moment steps were heard passing down the stone pathway toward the gate.

“Doctor Asher gone to give some poor creature physic,” said Mary merrily; and Glyddyr came slowly back toward the table.

“You will take some tea, Mr Glyddyr?” said Claude.

“I? No, thanks; I rarely take it,” he replied. “I’m afraid I am rather a burden upon you two ladies, and if you will excuse me I will go and have a chat with Mr Gartram, as he is alone.”

“I am afraid you will not find papa very conversational,” said Claude gravely. “He will be having his after-dinner nap.”

“Ah, well, I shall not disturb him. I will go and have a cigar.”

He left the room in a hurried way, and as soon as the door was closed, Mary burst into a merry fit of laughter.

“Mary!”

“Well, I can’t help it, Claude,” she said. “Oh, how grateful you ought to be to me. I have saved you from no end of love-making. Did you see how wistfully he kept on looking at us?”

“No,” said Claude, with a sigh of relief.

“But he did, dear. Talk about the language of the eye; you could read his without a dictionary. It was, ‘do go, my dear Miss Mary. I do want a *tête-à-tête* with Claude so very, very badly.’”

“Pray be silent, Mary.”

“Yes, dear, directly. Mute as a fish; but it was such fun to watch his pleading looks and refuse silently all his prayers—for your sake, darling. Remember that.”

“You are always good to me, Mary.”

“You don’t half know, my dear. Then, after a time, a change came over the man, and he grew cross. I could see him growling mentally, and calling me names for a little crook-backed female Richard the Third, and once I thought he was going to kick me out of the door, or throw me out of the window, for being such an idiot as to stay.”

“Mary, what nonsense you do talk.”

“It is not nonsense, dear. Uncle kept the doctor out in the garden, so that Mr Glyddyr could come and have a sweet little chat with you; and I ought to have left the room, of course, but, to oblige you, I sat here like an ice, and kept the enemy at a distance. Oh, how he must hate me!”

“Mary, dear, pray be serious.”

“Oh, yes, I’ll be serious enough, dear. There, I am solidity itself; I could not be better, I’m sure, when the enemy approaches,” she whispered, as steps were once more heard crossing the hall.

“Shall I go, dear? Perhaps I had better now.”

She rose from her seat and set down her cup, but Claude laid her hand upon the thin little arm, and motioned towards a chair.

The door opened, and Glyddyr re-entered.

“I beg your pardon,” he said; and the matter-of-fact man of the world seemed to have quite lost his ordinary *aplomb*, and came on in a quiet, hesitating way.

“I’m afraid I was very rude leaving you like that,” he said; “and I did not thank you for the duet.”

“We needed no thanks, Mr Glyddyr,” said Claude gravely.

“No, no, of course not,” he said. “I meant to thank you. Mr Gartram is asleep, and if you will not think me rude, I will go and sit in the study and smoke a cigar.”

“Pray do, Mr Glyddyr,” said Claude; and he once more left the room.

“Well, I couldn’t have believed it, Claudie. The lion completely tamed by love. Why, my poor darling, you’ve turned him from a sarcastic, sharp-tongued, clever London society man to a weak, hesitating lover.”

“For goodness’ sake, don’t talk like that, Mary,” cried Claude; for the picture her cousin painted seemed to her terrible. She literally shuddered at the idea of this man really loving her, and sat looking aghast before her, while Glyddyr went slowly back, so excited that the perspiration oozed from his brow, and made him unconsciously take out his pocket handkerchief to wipe the palms of his hands.

Upon the first occasion he had strung himself up and walked quickly to the study determined to carry out his plans.

“It will only be a loan,” he told himself; “only borrowing what is to be my own some day, and he would never miss it.”

Closing the door behind him, and merely glancing at the easy-chair in which Gartram lay back, with his face in the shade, and his white shirt-front standing out of the gloom like some peculiar creature, Glyddyr walked to the mantelpiece, looked at the glass; then crossed to the table, and began picking and choosing from the cigars in the box, as in a furtive way he listened to his host’s slow, heavy breathing, and wondered whether he was sufficiently sound for him to attempt to get his keys.

The breathing came very regularly, and at last, after hesitating a great deal on the selection of a cigar, he said aloud —

“Where do you get your cigars, Mr Gartram?”

No reply; only the heavy breathing.

“I said where did you get your cigars?” said Glyddyr, still more loudly.

“He must be safe,” he thought to himself; and to make sure he walked carelessly to the side of the chair, and gazed full in Gartram’s face.

“He would have winced if there had been any pretence,” he thought. And then, “Pooh! what a fool I am.”

He glanced at the table in whose drawer the keys reposed, looked at the great section of the bookcase which swung round as upon a pivot, and then he walked quickly to the window and looked out right and left, listening the while to the beating of the waves upon the rocky coast far below.

“While I am hesitating,” he thought, “I might do it. The doctor can’t be back yet, and no one is likely to come.”

There was a step outside.

He took a couple of strides, and then sharply threw himself into an easy-chair near the bookcase, and lay back in almost profound darkness, for the rays of the moon cut right across from the window, bathing the carpet with a soft light, but leaving beyond the well-defined line a deep shadow.

He had hardly taken his place when there was a faint tap at the panel of the door, the handle turned, and, silent and ghastly-looking in the gloom, Sarah Woodham came into the room, closed the door behind her, and walked across to Gartram’s chair.

Volume Two—Chapter Nine.

An Unpleasant Position.

“It’s enough to drive a man mad,” said Chris Lisle, as he sat in his room with a book in his hand, one which he had been vainly trying to read. “To think of him having the run of the Fort, and constant opportunities of being at her side. But I will not think about it.”

He settled himself back in his chair, raised the open book once more to his eyes, uttered a mocking laugh at his own expense, and threw the volume passionately across the room, for he had realised that he had been sitting there for a full hour making pretence of reading with the book upside down.

“I could not have believed that I was such a fool,” he growled fiercely; “but always with her!” he added softly, as the wearing, tormenting thought uppermost in his brain asserted itself.

“Women are naturally weak, and it is Gartram’s wish. How could I be surprised if she yielded? No, she would not; she is too firm, and I am a contemptible brute to want faith in her.”

He felt a little better after that, roundly taking himself to task; and it was like a mental stimulus; but, like the action of most stimulants, the effect was not lasting.

“It is not as if she had confessed her love for me, and promised to be my wife some day. If she had pledged herself to me, I would not have cared, but I have nothing to hold on by; and if she obeyed her father’s wishes, what right have I to complain? Oh, it will drive me mad!” he muttered, as he leaped up and paced the room.

At that moment there was a tap at the door.

“Come in!” roared Chris, as impatiently as if he had answered half-a-dozen times.

“It’s only me, Mr Lisle,” said his landlady, “and I’m sure I beg your pardon for coming in; but it does worry me so to hear you walking up and down so in such agony. Now do be advised by me, sir; I’m getting on in years, and I’ve had some experience of such things.”

“Oh, yes, yes, Mrs Sarson; but, pray, don’t bother me now.”

“Indeed, no, sir, I won’t; but though I can’t help admiring the fortitude you show, it is more than I can bear to sit in my little room and hear you walking up and down in such pain. Now mark my word, Mr Lisle, sir, it’s *not* toothache.”

“No, no,” he said impatiently; “it is not toothache.”

“No, sir. Which well I know. It’s what the doctors call newrallergeer.”

“My dear Mrs Sarson—”

“No, no, my dear, don’t be cross with a poor woman whose only idea is to try and do you good. No one knows what it is better than I do. I’ve had your gnawing toothache, which is bad enough for anything; but your jig, jigging newrallergeer is ten times worse, and it makes me pity you, Mr Lisle.”

“Yes, thank you, Mrs Sarson, I am greatly obliged to you, but—”

“Take my word for it, sir, ’tis your stomach, and you won’t be no better till you’ve had a tonic.”

“Nonsense, nonsense, Mrs Sarson,” cried Chris impatiently.

“No, sir, it is not nonsense, and I don’t a bit mind you being impatient with me, for it’s quite natural; but do let me ask Doctor Asher to call in.”

“No, no, no,” cried Chris, with increasing loudness and emphasis. “And now, pray, go and leave me to myself.”

The landlady sighed, and slowly left the room.

“This woman will send me crazy,” muttered Chris. “What shall I do? Go right away for a long trip, and try and forget it all.” And he went and leaned against the side of the window and looked out over the sea, thinking only of Claude seated alone with Glyddyr, listening to his words, and that, as the stone yields before the constant dropping, so would she at last.

“I must see, and will see her, and get her promise,” he said at last excitedly; and, taking his hat, he strode out of the cottage and went right out up the east glen with the intention of getting away round over the high ground by the cliffs, and continuing under the shelter of the night to go up to the Fort by the back, so as to get within the garden, and perhaps manage to call either Claude’s or Mary’s attention by creeping round to the drawing-room window.

It was a miserable, clandestine proceeding, and he felt all the nervous trepidation of a boy on his way to rob an orchard. Two or three times over he hesitated and turned to go back; but the next moment the sweet, pleading face of Claude seemed to appear before him, and that of Glyddyr mocking and triumphant.

“I can’t help it,” he cried. “I must, I will see her to-night, if it’s only for a minute.”

It was not so easy a task as he had told himself; and, as he descended the cliff towards where, on a separate little eminence cut off from the main cliff by a deep rift, the Fort stood, he noted for the first time that it was bathed in the soft yellow moonlight which rose above the sea.

This checked him for the moment, till it occurred to him that though the moon shone brightly in parts, there were plenty of spots where he could approach the place in the deep shadows; and taking advantage of the clumps of furze, and the ragged, stunted pines, which had obtained a foothold for their precarious existence here and there, he crept on and on, selecting the narrow little gully for his course, down which gurgled the tiny spring which supplied the moat with water.

“It’s easy enough,” muttered Chris, as he lowered himself down here, clung to a rock there, and managed all the time to keep in the shadow till he was at the end of the gully, where it opened on the moat, beyond which, and about fifty yards away, rose the fantastic, granite-built home of the woman he loved.

There was the moat to cross, and, beyond, the massive wall, beyond which again was the well-planted garden, with its southern wall covered with well-trained fruit trees.

It was for this part of the garden that Chris Lisle aimed, with every step of the way bringing up old remembrances of boy and girl life, and the hours he had spent in the grounds with Claude.

“And will again,” he muttered. “I am not a beggar now.”

After a glance or two at the back of the house, which he was facing, he took hold of one of the pendant boughs overhanging the moat, stepped to the very edge, and then lowered himself into the water.

It was deeper than he had anticipated, rising at once to his middle, and he paused for a moment, wondering whether he should have to swim; but fortunately, as he advanced, the depth was only increased by a few inches, and in a few seconds he had waded across, and was half dragging himself up by the ivy, half climbing to the foot of the wall, where, without thinking of what he was doing, he stood for a time to drain, the clear stream water trickling down, and forming a pool beneath the ivy at his feet.

All seemed still, and he crept through the abundant ivy to where a huge, massive buttress sloped down from the top of the wall to the rock, where the architect had studied the strength of his work as regarded the attacks of time, and not those of men who had designs upon the wealth Gartram would not trust in the banks. This buttress, when first

built, might have been climbed by an active boy, while now, it was so densely coated with the ivy of many years' growth that Chris had no difficulty in making his way to the top of the wall, where he lay down for a few moments to reconnoitre, and, finding all still, he had only to make use of the trunk of a pear-tree, whose horizontally trained bows were as easy to descend as a ladder.

He felt perfectly determined, but, all the same, a sensation of shame, mingled with dread, assailed him as he thought of how contemptible a figure he would cut if he were discovered.

That was but a momentary thought, chased away by the recollection that he was once more within the walls which held the woman he loved; and, perfectly familiar with every foot of the ground, he soon crossed the rather open part devoted to fruit-growing, and made his way to the shrubs surrounding the upper and lower lawns.

Here there were plenty of shadowy spots, among which he crept till he was brought to a standstill by the sound of steps coming along the terrace walk, and he recognised the voices at once as those of Gartram and Doctor Asher.

The hot blood flushed the young man's face for two reasons.

If he stayed there, he would be forced to play the eavesdropper; and for the second reason, Gartram and the doctor being together, it, in all probability, meant that Glyddyr had been left alone with Claude.

At the risk of being heard, he drew back among the bushes, and crept slowly away, the voices seeming to follow him as he made from the side to the back of the house, and then in and out among the trees till he was right on the other side, where a light shone out from the drawing-room windows, and where, by a little manoeuvring, he was able to look in.

His heart beat faster as he caught sight of a black coat and the bright dress of Claude. It was just as he thought; and, unable to contain himself, he was about to cross the narrow patch of lawn, and make straight for the room, when a female figure passed the window, and he recognised Mary Dillon.

He drew a catching breath, full of relief, and remained in the shade.

Thank heaven! they were not alone.

Still, there seemed to be no opportunity for a word with Claude, and to have done what he felt he would like to do—go boldly in and speak to her—would only mean a scene with her father, and pain to her. There was nothing for it but to wait, and he remained there hidden, with his eyes fixed upon the window, and seeing, if he could not hear, much that was going on.

He heard, though, the doctor's step, and knew when he left, his heart beating fast as he saw Glyddyr leave the room.

This was his opportunity, and he cautiously approached the window, meaning to risk all, and tap upon the pane, but before he put his plan into effect the door re-opened, and Glyddyr returned, sending Chris back among the bushes, where, unable to bear the sight of his rival in Claude's presence, playing the part of the accepted lover, he stole off, intending to make his way round to the other side of the house, hoping that Gartram might be by this time following out a custom perfectly familiar to Chris, and having his after-dinner nap.

By means of a little scheming he contrived to get down among the bushes below the terrace in front of the study, but it was no easy task, for the cliff, in whose interstices the bushes were placed, sloped rapidly down here, and a false step or slip would have meant a fall of fifty or sixty feet.

Accustomed to rough climbing, though, as he was, he did not hesitate, and raising himself up till he could look over the edge, he was in time to see the study door open, and Sarah Woodham enter the room.

It was a little disappointing, for at the first glimpse of the woman's dress he thought it was Claude; and, in utter ignorance of the fact that his opportunity had come, and that the ladies were now alone in the drawing-room, he remained watching for a time, and then crept slowly back, wishing that he had had the foresight to bring a note, for, had he borne one, he could easily have contrived to send it, with a pebble inside, through Claude's open window.

Low-spirited and despondent, ready to take himself to task for coming upon so mad an expedition, he made his way cautiously back towards the garden, hesitating still as to whether he should go away, or wait about on the chance of getting a word with Claude. Common sense and manly pride advocated the return, but there was the natural desire to see the woman he loved, even if he were playing the part of a spy; and with a sigh he crept from bush to bush, keeping well in the shadowy till once more he was within range of the drawing-room window, and in the act of parting two boughs to gaze between, when there was a rustling sound, a strong hand held him by the collar, another grasped his wrist, and a deep voice said—

"I've got you, have I? What are you doing here?"

Stung to the quick by shame and annoyance, Chris swung himself back to make a desperate leap and escape—feeling that he had been discovered by Gartram, and like a flash the degradation and bitterness of what was to come seemed to blaze through his brain.

But there is a good old saying: Look before you leap.

Chris Lisle did not look before he leapt, and the consequence was that he went with a crash in among the elastic boughs of a short sturdy Weymouth pine, and was thrown back into his captor's arms.

"Oh, no; you don't," rang in his ears, as he was borne to the ground, falling back on the grass with his face right out

in the moonlight.

“Mr Lisle!”

“You, Brime!” whispered Chris huskily, as the hands were taken from his collar, and he struggled up, to stand facing the gardener.

“Why, sir, if I didn’t think it was one of them young dogs from down the harbour after the fruit. They’ve got a dinner party on, and I come out of the house and ketched sight of you. I beg your pardon, sir, I didn’t know you were asked.”

“Hush! Don’t talk so loud. No, I was not asked, Brime, but—that is—I thought I’d—I was looking at the drawing-room window.”

“I understand, sir. I see, sir; but how did you manage to get in?”

“Don’t—don’t ask me questions, man. I—there, for heaven’s sake, hold your tongue. Take this. Get yourself a glass.”

“Thankye, sir.”

“And don’t say you saw me here.”

“Oh, dear, no, sir; certainly not.”

“It was a bit of a freak, Brime,” continued Chris, feeling his cheeks burn, as he faltered and stumbled in his words, ready to bite out his own tongue at being compelled to lower himself like this to the man, as he was sure to go and chatter to the maids about how he had caught Mr Chris; and perhaps give Claude the credit of a clandestine meeting.

“Yes, sir; young gents will have their larks sometimes,” said the gardener drily, and mentally adding to himself, “Shabby beggar! Sixpence! Bound to say if it had been Mr Glider he’d ha’ made it half-a-crown.”

“I trust to your discretion, Brime. Can you let me out through the side gate?”

“Oh, yes, sir: of course. I’ve got the key in my pocket. But don’t let me interrupt you, sir, till you’ve quite done.”

“Done! What do you mean?” cried Chris in an angry whisper, as he fancied he detected a sarcastic ring in the man’s voice.

“Oh, nothing, sir. I thought perhaps you might be going to see somebody, and I’m in no hurry to go back home.”

“No, no; nonsense. I am not going to see anybody,” said Chris hurriedly. “Go on first; and look here, Brime, once more I must beg of you not to speak to any one of this meeting. It might cause trouble.”

“You may trust me, sir,” said the man sturdily.

“Thank you. Of course,” said Chris hastily, as the man led the way to a door in the thick wall of the garden, which door he opened, and Chris passed out.

“Who’d ever think as such games as that was being carried on?” muttered the gardener; “and Miss Claude all the while so prim, and looking as if butter wouldn’t melt in her mouth. If it had been Miss Mary I shouldn’t have wondered, for she can be a bit larky. But he wouldn’t come to see her, poor little crooked wench. Now, I wonder what Mr Glider would say if he knowed,” continued the gardener, as he thoughtfully turned the key, and went slowly back towards the house. “There’d be a row, and I’ll bet a tanner that he’d come down handsome if I told him; and it would serve t’other right—a mean snob. Sixpence! Yah!”

He turned the coin over in his hand, and looked at it in the bright moonlight before putting it in his pocket.

“Sixpence!” he said, half aloud. “Why, I’d have given a bob myself if it had been me, and—well! That it is! Half-a-suffrin! He’s a trump, and I wouldn’t let out about it for any money.

“Why, of course!” he continued, “I might have known. So he came to see Miss Claude on the sly when the governor was asleep, and couldn’t see her because there’s company. Well, why not? He’s a good sort, that’s what he is, and if I can help him without getting into trouble with the gaffer, I will, and no mistake. Half-a-suffrin! why, that may be just like a bean as I sticks in the ground. It may come up and have lots more half-suffrins. I’m glad I come up to-night. Better than gardening ever so much, that it is. Now, if I knowed exactly when he was coming next, I might happen to be here again—by accident, of course.”

He stopped for a few minutes, thinking, and then walked slowly up towards the back entrance, musing slowly and deeply, as gardeners will muse.

“I don’t seem to move her yet much, but I’m not going to give up. Hang me if I didn’t for a moment think he might have been after her. But no; he couldn’t be. Poor lass! so quiet and serious, and full o’ trouble, just the sort o’ woman a man could trust to bring all his savings to. Now, I wonder what it is in a widow as leads a chap on so. I don’t know, but she’s leading me on, and the day as she’s been a widow twelve month, sir, I’ll speak to her like a man.”

Reuben Brime, the biggest fool in Danmouth, according to his mother, opened the back door, and went into the house just at the same moment that Doctor Asher entered up the front.

Meanwhile, Chris Lisle had walked quickly down the narrow paved stone alley leading to the main path, crossed the lower drawbridge, and, with his teeth set, felt ready to curse himself for his folly.

“The contemptible, degrading position,” he muttered. “To be under the thumb of a servant who will look at me furtively, and whom I shall have to bribe into silence for fear of his confounded tongue. Oh, my darling, forgive me. It was for your sake I came, but I must have been half-mad.”

He was walking quickly down the roadway leading to the public cliff path, so intent upon the events of the night that he was right upon some one coming in the other direction before he realised the fact, and they met just in a part where the moon shone clearly.

“Ah, Mr Lisle,” said the doctor’s cheery voice, “nice evening, isn’t it?”

He passed on, and Chris almost staggered and reeled.

“Good heaven!” he groaned to himself. “I can’t ask him, and now he will go and tell them all that he met me coming from the house. What will Claude think. What will Gartram say?”

He went on, trying to find some excuse for his presence in that private roadway, but there was none. Any one coming along there must have been up to the Fort, and he had done a bad night’s work in yielding to his passionate desire to see Claude, and hear from her lips words of encouragement such as would make the situation more bearable—a worse night’s work than he realised for some time to come.

Chris Lisle went straight back to his lodgings, for the glorious night and the glittering sea had no attraction for him now. His landlady looked at him pityingly, and longed to ask him whether he was better, but did not dare.

“Poor young man,” she said to herself, as she heard him go up to bed early; “a good night’s rest is better than balm.”

She was quite right; but Chris Lisle had neither rest nor balm, but lay in his bed all night wakeful, seeing a pale, despicable looking man discovered like a thief in the Fort garden after he had waded the moat and climbed the wall.

“I shall have to meet Gartram and face him, and listen to his sneers and insolent bullying reproaches. Oh, how could I be such a fool?”

Chris Lisle lay awake all night working up his defence, the more strongly that he felt that he now stood more upon an equality with Claude’s father; but the slip he had made troubled him sorely.

“There’s only one way out of the difficulty,” he said at last, as the sun shone brightly in through his window. “Go up to him, confess what one has done, and boldly and frankly ask him once more to give me a chance.”

There was something so refreshing in that thought, backed as it was by forty thousand pounds, that Chris Lisle turned over and went to sleep.

But it might have been because he was utterly tired out.

Volume Two—Chapter Ten.

Parry Glyddyr is Unwell.

Doctor Asher did not go straight up to the Fort and tell every one that he had seen Chris Lisle coming down from the house. In fact, he hardly gave the meeting a second thought, for his mind was full of other matters.

“Well, young ladies,” he said cheerily, “all alone? I hope I am not too late for a cup of the boon. No? That’s right. Bless the man who first brought tea from China—the deliciously refreshing beverage we drink out of china, eh, Miss Dillon?”

“But you always have it in china, Doctor Asher,” said Mary quaintly.

“No, no, no, no, no,” said the doctor, smiling, as he tapped his cup with his spoon. “I am not going to be inveigled into a chop-logic or punning encounter with you, my dear, because I should be beaten. Come, now, if you want an argument, step on to my ground and give a poor man a chance. Now, what is your opinion of the effect of a vegetable alkaloid on the digestive function?”

“A very poor one,” said Mary quietly. “Can’t argue.”

“Ah, well, but you can sing. Will you?”

“If you wish me to.”

“If I wish you, eh,” said the doctor. “You know I do. But where is Mr Glyddyr? Gone.”

“He went to smoke in the study,” said Claude quietly.

The doctor turned round sharply.

“To burn vegetable alkaloid for his digestive function,” said Mary.

At that moment there was a step in the hall, and Glyddyr came in, looking rather sallow.

“Just in time, Mr Glyddyr,” said the doctor; “we are going to have a song.”

“Indeed?” said Glyddyr. “I am very glad.”

“When I marry—that is, if I marry,” said the doctor—“What delicious tea. A little too strong. Miss Gartram, would you kindly—a drop of milk—I mean cream. Thanks. What was I saying? Oh! I remember. When I marry—if I marry—I shall ask a lady who is a clever musician to share my lot. By the way, is Mr Gartram coming?”

“Sound asleep still,” said Glyddyr quickly. “I spoke to him when I finished my cigar, but he didn’t reply.”

“Not well, Mr Glyddyr?” said the doctor, between two sips of his tea.

“Well, really, to be frank,” said Glyddyr hastily, “I don’t think I am quite the thing. That last cigar was of a peculiar brand, I suppose, one I was not accustomed to; and if you will excuse me, Miss Gartram, I will say good-night.”

“Let me prescribe. A cup of strong coffee, or a liqueur of brandy. Miss Gartram, may I ring?”

“I will go and see that they are brought in,” said Mary, leaving the piano, where she was arranging a piece of music.

“No, no; I beg you will not,” said Glyddyr. “I’ll walk down to the harbour in the fresh night air. My men will be waiting. I said ten—they must be there now. Better soon.”

“Mr Gartram does have some strong cigars,” said the doctor quietly. “Singular that nicotine from one leaf affects you more than another.”

“I am sorry you feel unwell, Mr Glyddyr,” said Claude, in the most matter-of-fact tone.

“Mere trifle—nothing. Most absurd in me.”

“Pray let me ring for the spirit stand.”

“Indeed, no. Good-night—good-night, Miss Dillon. I’m going to be independent of you, Doctor Asher. Good-night.”

“Smokes too much, I’m afraid,” said the doctor, as the door was closed on Glyddyr’s retreating figure. “Seems unnerved. I shall be called upon to prescribe for him, only I’m afraid that you would quarrel with my medicine, Miss Gartram.”

“I?” said Claude quickly.

“I am afraid I have been indiscreet. Elderly men will presume upon their years, my dear Miss Gartram, and think that they have a right to banter young ladies. I was only going to say that my prescription would be, go away for a good long sea trip.”

“Is not papa sleeping an unusually long time, Mary?” said Claude, ignoring the doctor’s remark, as she proceeded to refill his cup.

“Oh, I don’t know,” replied Mary; “I’ll go and see.”

She left the room, and Claude at once turned to the doctor.

“Do you think papa is acting rightly about the medicine he takes?”

Asher raised his eyebrows, and gave his shoulders a slight shrug.

“It makes me terribly uneasy,” said Claude. “Of course, I know very little about these matters, but I have naturally learned how the use of narcotics grows upon those who indulge in them; and papa seems to fly more and more to that chloral.”

The doctor pursed up his lips in the most professional way.

“Really, my dear young lady,” he said, “you are, to speak vulgarly, putting me in a corner.”

“Pray do not trifle with me, doctor. You cannot think how I suffer.”

“I will be perfectly frank with you, my child. No he is not acting rightly, and the use of this drug is doing him harm.”

“Ah!” ejaculated Claude; and then, with eyes flashing and an indignant look, “How can you let him go on taking it, then?”

“Because I cannot help myself, my dear madam; and as I have before observed, it is better that he should take it under my supervision than left to himself, though even now I am helpless. I prescribe certain quantities, but I cannot prevent his taking more.”

“But why don’t you tell him that it is bad for him?”

“I have done so a score of times.”

“And what does he say?”

“That I am a fool, and am to mind my own business.”

“Oh!” ejaculated Claude, with the troubled look in her face increasing.

“He tells me plainly that if I do not choose to go on attending him as he wishes, he will call in some one else. My dear Miss Gartram, your father is not a man to drive; he always insists on holding the reins himself.”

“But, Doctor Asher, cannot anything be done?”

“I am doing all that is possible, my dear. I am giving him tonic medicine with the idea of counteracting any evil produced by the sedative dose he takes. If you can suggest a better line to pursue, pray let me hear it.”

“No, no,” said Claude sadly; “I am very ignorant and helpless. Does he really require this medicine?”

“Yes, and no, my child. He suffers terribly from insomnia, and nothing can be worse for a weary man than to be lying sleepless, night after night. It is a serious complaint.”

“Yes,” sighed Claude.

“He must have sleep, and to my mind the chloral seems the best thing to get it.”

“But you said *yes* and *no*, doctor?”

“I did. Well, then, no. Your father does not require this medicine if he will only change his course of life.”

Claude sighed.

“Do you wish me to speak plainly as your friend?”

“Yes; of course.”

“Then here is the case. All this insomnia is the consequence of an over-excited brain. Your father has certain ideas, and unfortunately they grow upon him. He has struggled hard to be rich. Now, of course, I know very little about his affairs, but everything points to the fact that he is a very rich man.”

“Yes,” sighed Claude; “he is, I think, very rich.”

“We will take it to be so. Well, then, why cannot he be content, and not be constantly striving for more?” Claude sighed again.

“I like money, wealth, power, and the rest of it; and I could go into London, say, and work up a prosperous practice; but I am happy here, with just enough for my needs; so I say to myself, ‘why should I stir?’”

“You are right, doctor. But my father’s case—what can we do?”

“I’ll tell you. Let me have your co-operation more. I want him weaned from this hunt for wealth; and the only way to achieve this is for you and your cousin to give way to him in everything. Never thwart him, for fear of bringing on one of those terrible fits.”

“I will try in every way,” replied Claude.

“Any opposition to his will would be seriously hurtful. Then, as to his life, it really rests with you to wean him in every way from his present pursuits. Company, visits, travel, anything to diver his attention from the constant struggle for more of the sordid dross.”

“But if you told him all this, doctor? I feel so helpless.”

“I have told him again and again, without success, but if we all combine more and more to keep up the pressure, we may win at last.”

“And in the meantime?”

“In the meantime we can quiet our consciences with the knowledge that we are doing what is right.”

“Fast asleep, dear,” said Mary, entering the room just then; and Claude directed an uneasy look at the doctor.

“Papa does not often sleep so long as this,” said Claude, after an uneasy interval.

“But it seemed a pity to disturb him,” replied Mary, and the doctor bent his head gravely. “He seemed to be so comfortable. Woodham was there when I went in. She had been shutting the window, as it was growing chilly.”

“Quite right,” said the doctor.

“She said she had been in before to remove the coffee cups; and I waited some time to see if he would wake, but, as he did not, I came away. That’s what is the matter with uncle.”

The doctor looked round sharply.

“Sleeping in the day time, and in the evenings. Why doesn’t he save it all up till night?”

They sat a few minutes longer, and then, unable to keep back the feeling of uneasiness which troubled her, Claude rose, excused herself, and left the drawing-room to see if her father was awake.

“Still asleep?” said Mary, as she returned.

“Yes,” said Claude, looking in a troubled way from one to the other; but the doctor seemed to be so very calm that she felt ashamed of the uneasy sensation which was troubling her, and, telling herself that she was foolishly nervous, she joined in the conversation. Then Mary sang a song, which the doctor insisted upon being repeated.

“I always felt and said that if ever I married it would be a lady with a charming voice.”

“Well,” said Mary sharply, “every one says I have a charming voice.”

“You have indeed,” said the doctor enthusiastically.

“I need have something charming about me by way of compensation,” cried Mary, as she made a grimace. “Perhaps, Doctor Asher, you had better propose for me.”

“Mary!” exclaimed Claude, flushing up to the roots of her hair.

“I don’t mean it, dear,” said Mary demurely. “The tongue is an unruly member, you know.”

“Well,” said the doctor, as he leaned back in his chair, with his eyes half closed, “some young ladies do not object to marrying a man thirty years their senior. Why not?”

“Shall I stand up and walk round, so that you may see all my graces and action?” said Mary banteringly.

“A young man looks at the outward graces of form and complexion,” said the doctor gravely; “a man of my age looks for those of the mind. He wants a companion who can talk.”

“Oh, I can talk,” said Mary merrily; “can’t I, Claude?”

“Mary, dear, I must request that you will not speak like this,” said Claude, very gravely. “You hurt me; and would you mind going in again and seeing if papa is awake.”

“Are you going to send me to bed, too, for being a naughty girl?” said Mary, rising.

Claude made no reply, but there was a good deal conveyed in her intent gaze, which for that moment Mary seemed to resent; but directly after her bright eyes beamed upon her cousin, and she passed close behind her chair, giving her an affectionate tap on the shoulder as she passed.

As she reached the door she turned, and there was a merry, yet half-pathetic look in her eyes as she said quickly—

“No, thank you, Doctor Asher, I am a kind of lay nun.”

“Mary says a great deal sometimes that she does not mean,” said Claude quickly. “But as papa does not seem to come, you would like a little seltzer water and the spirits, would you not?”

“I? No, no, my dear child, no,” said the doctor, taking out his watch. “I do take these things sometimes for sociability’s sake, but I always avoid them if I can, and I have a good opportunity here. Eleven o’clock. How the time flies. I must be off.”

“Pray don’t say no because the spirits are not in the room.”

“Believe me, I am so old a friend now, that I should not scruple to ask for them if I was so disposed.—Hah! Yes, that is one of the things which teach us that we are growing old.”

“I do not understand you.”

“I meant your cousin’s acuteness; when a man is about fifty, young ladies consider him a safe mark for their shafts.”

“Don’t think that, Doctor Asher. There is no malice in my dear cousin, but her deformity has caused her to be petted and indulged. She has not had a mother’s constant care.”

“Neither have you, my child.”

“No,” said Claude quietly; “but believe me, my cousin would be deeply grieved if she knew that she had said—Yes. What’s the matter? Papa?”

Claude had started from her chair, for, after giving a sharp tap at the door, Sarah Woodham had entered, looking ghastly, her dark eyes so widely open that they showed a white ring about the iris, her lips apart, and her hands convulsively twisting and tearing the apron she held out before her.

“Master, my dear. He frightens me.”

“Don’t be alarmed,” said the doctor quickly, as he rose perfectly cool and collected, and followed Claude out of the room, while, as the door swung to, the woman uttered a hoarse, panting sound, threw herself upon her knees, and clasping her hands together, she rocked herself to and fro.

“Oh, Isaac! husband!” she moaned, “it is too terrible. Heaven help me! Why did I come here?”

“Mary! Papa!” cried Claude, as she ran into the study, followed by the doctor.

“Hush! Don’t be alarmed,” said Mary. “I only thought that he was not breathing quite so naturally as he should, and I

sent Woodham to fetch you."

Claude flew to her father's side, and caught his hand, looking intently in his face and then inquiringly at the doctor, who advanced in a calm, professional way, removed the lamp shade, drew the light so that it would fall upon the patient's face, proceeded to feel his pulse, and then opened his eyelid to gaze attentively in the pupil.

"Quick, tell me!" cried Claude, in an excited whisper; "is it another fit?"

"No," said the doctor gravely. "Be calm and quiet. I should like him to wake up naturally. There is nothing to mind."

Claude uttered a sigh of relief, and closed her eyes for a few moments.

"What is the matter?" she said then.

"I am not sure yet, but I fear that it is what we said—an overdose."

"Oh, Doctor Asher!"

"Hush, my child; don't be agitated. There, he will sleep more easily now," he continued, as he unfastened the insensible man's collar and drew off his tie.

"You are not deceiving me?"

"Deceiving you?" said the doctor reproachfully.

"Can I do anything, ma'am?" said Woodham, softly entering the room.

"No, I think; nothing," said the doctor thoughtfully. "I am very glad I had not gone."

"Then you think—there is danger?"

"Danger? No, no, my dear child. There, let him rest. Miss Dillon, will you draw back that lamp and replace the shade? That's it. Better let him sleep it off quietly."

Woodham quickly raised the lamp and set it down in its old place, while Mary carefully put on the shade, with the effect that the room was once more gloomy of aspect, save where the bright light was condensed upon the table.

As soon as this was done, Claude looked appealingly in the doctor's face, her eyes seeming to ask—What next?

The question was so plainly expressed that Asher said, with a smile—

"What next? Oh, we must let him sleep it off. I don't suppose that he will be very long before he wakes."

Claude's hands seemed to go naturally together, and she passed one over the other, while Sarah Woodham stood gazing intently at Gartram, and a curious shudder ran through her from time to time.

"But, Doctor Asher," said Claude at last, "I do feel so helpless—so lonely. I—"

"Oh, come, come," cried the doctor encouragingly; "don't look at it so seriously. It is a heavy sleep, and may last for hours. I'll stop for a bit, and then come in quite early in the morning. Perhaps it would be as well for somebody to sit up."

Claude tried to speak, but she could not. She laid her hand upon the doctor's arm, and stood, with her lip quivering, gazing down at her father till she could command her voice, and then she whispered huskily,—

"Don't go."

She could say no more, but stood looking appealingly in his eyes.

"You mean stay till he wakes?"

She nodded quickly.

"Oh, certainly, if you wish it; but I ought to tell you that I hardly think it necessary."

"I do wish it," said Claude. "Do not you. Mary?"

"Yes."

"By all means."

"I will sit with you. Mary, too, will keep us company."

"No, no," said the doctor in a whisper, "there is no need for that. If I stay, it is with the understanding that you both go to bed."

Sarah Woodham was standing back in the shadow, but she appeared to be listening eagerly to every word.

"But we should make it less dull for you," pleaded Claude.

“I am never dull when I sit up with a sick person,” said the doctor didactically. “These are my hours for study of my patient. No, no; if I am to stay it is as the doctor—the master of the situation. You will go to bed.”

“But you will want refreshments—somebody within call.”

“To be sure, and there will be our old friend Mrs Woodham. You will sit up?”

“Yes, sir, of course,” said the woman eagerly.

“That’s right. Now, then, ladies, if you please, we must have utter silence till Mr Gartram wakes.”

Claude sighed, but she bowed her head, and turned to leave the room with Mary; but as she reached the door, she hurried back to where her father was seated, and bent over him to kiss his forehead.

“Must I go, doctor?” she whispered.

“Certainly,” he said quietly.

“But if he seems worse, you would have me called?”

“Directly.”

The two girls left the room, Claude beckoning to Sarah Woodham, who followed them out.

“You will make coffee for Doctor Asher.”

“Yes, ma’am, of course.”

“Go back and ask him when he would like it brought to him; and, Sarah, you will come and tell me how papa is. I shall not undress—only lie down.”

“You may depend on me, Miss Claude.”

“But you—is anything the matter? You look so ill.”

“I was a bit startled at master’s way of breathing, my dear. I thought he was going to be much worse.”

Claude went back into the drawing-room with Mary Dillon, neither of them noticing how wild and excited the servant grew, and a few minutes after they went slowly upstairs to Claude’s room.

Sarah Woodham softly retraced her steps to the study, tapped gently, and the door was opened by the doctor, who stood in the opening, book in hand.

“When will I have coffee? Oh, about four o’clock. I have only just had tea. Go and lie down somewhere within call—where I can find you.”

“I am not sleepy, sir.”

“No; but you may be by-and-by. Go and lie down on the sofa in the dining-room, I can easily find you there. Why, my good woman, you look ghastly.”

Sarah Woodham shrank away.

“Don’t disturb me till I ring. No: I’ll come for you. Sleep is the best thing for him.”

“Sleep is the best thing for him,” said Sarah Woodham in a hoarse whisper, as she went slowly back into the hall, and then into the servants’ quarters, from whence, after a few minutes, she returned to go about in a silent way like a dark shadow, closing and fastening doors, before listening for awhile on the study mat, and then going into the dining-room, where she seated herself on one of the chairs, resting her chin upon her hands, and gazing straight before her in the darkness. Then for a time all was still, save a low sigh, almost like a moan, which came from the suffering woman’s breast, followed by a shiver and a start, for it was as if the hand of the dead had just been laid upon her shoulder.

Volume Two—Chapter Eleven.

The Night Alarm.

“Asleep!”

“You, sir? I—I suppose I must have been,” faltered Sarah.

“Well, why not? I just came to see if you were within reach, in case I wanted you.”

“Master, sir?”

“Just the same.”

The doctor went out just as silently as he had entered, and Sarah heard the study door softly close, when once more

she uttered the same low, moaning sigh, and rocked herself to and fro in her chair as she seemed to see the hard, thin face of her husband gazing straight at her, as she had seen it when he was dying in their cottage, and laying upon her the terrible duty she was to fulfil.

How long she sat like that she could not tell, but hours must have passed unnoted—hours during which, with eyes unvisited by sleep, she had gone on and on through her old life, and the scenes, when her husband had returned from his work, bitterly reviling Gartram for some real or fancied wrong, and then a light seemed to flash into the room like the light she had been expecting, and the doctor stood before her with a curious, intense look in his countenance, one she recalled vividly as having been there on the day her husband died.

Meanwhile Claude and Mary had sat talking for some time about the strange ending of the evening. Claude, in spite of her anxiety on her father's behalf, feeling half pleased, half frightened by Glyddyr's acts.

He appeared so strange, she thought, so shrinking in her presence, and so fearful of intruding upon her, even to be ready to go away.

Was this the man's real love for her? Did he really care for her? and was she misjudging him in thinking that his desire was for her future prospects alone—her money?

She shuddered with dread lest he really should love her, and then her heart sank lower and lower, for the stern, upbraiding look of Chris Lisle was before her. The face of the boy companion, for whom she had always felt a warm affection, one which she knew in her heart, though she had not confessed it, had ripened into woman's love for man.

"Are we going to sit up, or try to sleep, Claude?" said Mary at last.

"I am going to sit up, Mary. You are going to lie down and sleep."

"Doctor Asher said that we were both to lie down and rest."

"Yes; and you will do so. I could not sleep if I did. It is impossible."

"But uncle is not seriously ill now, dear."

"How do we know, Mary? He is not as he should be. I know—I feel that he is in an unnatural state."

Mary slowly rose, walked across the room to the washstand, and stood there for some minutes before turning to her cousin.

"There," she said; "now I feel as you do—that it would be impossible to sleep. Let's have a quiet talk about uncle, and see if we cannot devise some means for making him think less about the quarry and money. Oh, Claudie, what a happy world this would be if there were no money and no love."

Claude made no reply but sat gazing out through the window at the sea, where the moon, now high in the heavens, sent a path of silvery light along the dark waters, while, from far below, the waves washed and whispered among the rocks with a musical, plashing sound that rose in a drowsy murmur to the window against which she sat.

"Claude, dear, shall I shut the window now? Isn't it too cool on a night like this?"

Claude turned to her, and looked rather vacantly in her face.

"The tide is going out fast, Mary," she said, in a low, dreamy whisper. "Don't you ever feel that there may be some truth in what they say, that people who are near the end pass away from us with the falling tide?"

"Claudie, dear, are you going to be ill?"

"I hope not."

"And so do I; but do you know you are talking a lot of dreamy nonsense, such as is most distressing at a time like this. We haven't got anybody near the end. Oh, what nonsense! It's all old-fashioned silliness."

Claude shook her head.

"No," she said, "there is something in it all, Mary, and to-night it is as if some great trouble were coming upon us."

"Are you going to set up for a prophetess, dear?"

"Shall we go down and see how my father is, Mary?"

"And insult Dr Asher by setting his commands at defiance. No; I am going to sit here patiently till morning, unless he sends word to us that uncle has woke up, and that he has gone to bed like a Christian. Claude, dear, your father must be a very unhappy man."

"Then it is our duty to try and make him happy."

"By doing everything he wishes us to do?"

Claude felt the hot blood flush into her cheeks again and she made no reply. She only turned to look out at the broad path of light stretching far away over the sea, and, as the water murmured about the rocks, it was as if some solemn spell of silence had fallen upon them, influencing Mary so that she ceased speaking, leaving the bantering remarks

ready, unsaid. Claude put her arm around her cousin, and laid her head upon her shoulder, thinking of the words that had been spoken, and of why they were sitting up, till her heart almost sank, and the sea began to be to her full of strange whisperings and portents of some trouble to come.

And so hour after hour glided by, till they were chilled by the cold night air, but neither moved till they were electrified by a quick, light tapping on the door, which was opened before they could reach it, and from out of the darkness came a husky voice which sounded familiar.

“Come down, Miss Claude, at once.”

“Ah! Woodham? How is he?”

“Don’t ask me, my dear, but make haste down. You may be wanted. Doctor Asher wishes me to go and fetch Doctor Rixton.”

“But why? What for?”

“Miss Claude, dear, don’t ask me,” said the woman, in suffocating tones, as she turned slowly away.

Claude hurriedly followed her down toward the study door, where she stood trembling for a few moments, feeling that there had then been a meaning in the portent which had troubled her that night. Then, turning the handle, she went into the room.

“Well, back so soon?” said the doctor, whose face was from her. “Is he coming?”

“Doctor Asher.”

“You, Miss Gartram!” he said, in a hoarse whisper, as he turned sharply round. “What is it? Why have you come?”

“Woodham called me. What is the matter? Is he worse?”

“Hush!” said the doctor, in a hurried way, as he took her hand. “Don’t be agitated. We must hope for the best, and—”

“Then he is worse,” cried Claude, breaking from him and running to her father’s side, but only to shrink back.

For the light had been shifted so that it should fall upon Gartram’s fixed, stern face, in which she read so terrible a reality that it was as if a hand of ice had clutched her heart, paralysing thought and action, so that she stood there with staring eyes and parted lips, feeling that she was in the presence of death.

Then the reaction came, and, uttering a gasp, her womanly, helpful nature came to the front.

“I am not a child,” she said in a quick, passionate voice. “Tell me; how is this? When was he taken worse? Doctor Asher, why don’t you speak to me? Tell me what I can do to help.”

He shook his head.

“I am doing everything possible, and have sent Mrs Woodham for Doctor Rixton to share the responsibility.”

Claude caught him in turn by the wrist, drew him right to the far side of the room, by the panel of the bookshelves which formed the masked door, and in a whisper, as if she were afraid that her father should hear, she said—

“Is he dead?”

“No, no—no, no, my dear Miss Gartram. It is only what I have always feared, but he would not be advised. Look, my child, look!”

He went quickly to Gartram’s side, and drew something from his breast-pocket and held it before Claude in the light.

“Yes, I know,” she said, “the medicine bottle—the sedative draught.”

“Yes,” said Asher, quietly. “You saw that he had it in his breast.”

“It is generally in that cabinet. He keeps it there.”

“Yes,” said the doctor; “but I found it in his breast-pocket as I was trying to place him in an easier position. What can a medical man do when his patient acts in direct opposition to his wishes?”

“I don’t understand you—that is the medicine you prescribed for him.”

“Yes, my child,” said the doctor, in quick, angry tones; “but if I order a patient to take a tablespoonful of brandy, I don’t mean him to take a bottle.”

“Oh!” ejaculated Claude, the word coming from her breast like a moan.

“You see he had this to take, but he has been in the habit of carrying it in his pocket, to apply to as a drunkard does to a flask. I suspected to-night that he had taken a stronger dose than usual, or at more frequent intervals, and thought that the effect, as he was so inured to it, would pass off, but—”

“It will, doctor—oh, say it will,” whispered Claude. “Why don’t you give him something? Would wine or spirits be of

any good? Ah, here is Doctor Rixton."

She ran to open the door as steps were heard in the hall, but it was Sarah Woodham who entered, holding her hand to her side, haggard and breathless, as she staggered into the room, only just able to pant forth, "Coming directly," before she reeled and would have fallen, had not Claude supported her, and let her sink into a chair.

"Hold up, woman!" whispered the doctor, savagely; "you must not give way."

"I—ran—there—and—back—Miss Claude," whispered the woman, and then to herself, as she lay back with her eyes closed, "It is too horrible, too horrible!"

The doctor went to the table and poured out some brandy, as Claude crept with a glass of wine to her father's side, knelt by him, and, taking his hand, laid her other across her breast.

A chill crept through her, and a hysterical sob struggled to her lips, as she felt that the hand she held was growing clammy. But making an effort, she told herself that, in cases of sudden illness, the extremities did grow cold, and that this was not a matter for alarm. There was the doctor's assurance, too.

Just then she turned her head and saw Sarah Woodham thrusting back the glass the doctor had held to her lips.

"No, no," she said with a shudder; and the doctor turned away impatiently and set the glass upon the table.

"Miserable teetotal whims," he muttered; and he went back to Gartram's side, ignoring Claude's presence and inquiring looks as he bent over his patient for a moment, and then hurriedly crossed to the door, flung it open, and went out into the hall, and then to the front door, which he threw open, and stood out in the air wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"He ought to be here by now," he muttered, "he ought to be here by now."

"Sarah! Sarah!"

The wretched woman opened her eyes with a start, and gazed in a frightened way at her mistress, who was standing over her, and had shaken her shoulder.

"Tell me—you were here?"

"No, my dear. He sent me to lie down in the dining-room to wait till he called me, but I did not go to sleep. I was sitting there—in the dark—thinking, when he came to me and said, 'I want more help. Your master is worse.'"

"Oh, Sarah, Sarah!" moaned Claude, clinging to her; "tell me it is not so bad as I think. He will not die?"

The woman shuddered as she rose to her feet, and, in a curiously furtive weird way, she crossed to where Gartram lay back in his chair. Pausing once and shrinking away, but evidently overcome by the attraction, she once more advanced, battling the while with that which mastered her, and which drew her unwillingly on, till she stood close to the great easy-chair, and bent down over the form thereon.

Then, drawing herself up to her full height, she stood there erect, gazing straight before her into space, and muttering strangely to herself.

Claude gazed at her in alarm.

"Sarah," she whispered, "Sarah! why don't you speak? Sarah!"

There was no reply, and at last Claude laid her hand upon the woman's arm, with the result that she turned slowly, muttering to herself the while, in a curiously absent manner, as if all the while unconscious of her mistress's presence.

"Sarah," whispered Claude again, as she gazed in affright at the woman's strange, drawn face, "speak to me! I want comfort—tell me—he is not dead?"

"And I tried so hard," said the woman, hoarsely. "I tried to do that which was right and just.—With all his sins upon his head, unrepentant, harsh and cruel to the last."

"Sarah!"

"Hush, my child, hush!" said the woman in a low voice, full of deep passionate emotion. "I never had a child to love—to call me mother. Oh, my poor dear, helpless, motherless, fatherless girl; and I tried so hard—I tried so hard."

"Sarah," cried Claude, struggling from the woman's encircling arm, "you don't think—"

"This way, please—quick, sir, quick."

The door was thrown open, and Doctor Asher entered, followed by a tall grave-looking man, who bowed to Claude, and laid his hat upon the table, looking then inquiringly at Asher.

"Yes; of course," said the doctor. "My dear Miss Gartram, you will go now."

"But, doctor—"

“No appeal, please; we must consult over the case and be alone. Trust me; we will do our best. There, you will come back soon.”

Claude reluctantly allowed herself to be led out of the room, and then, as she stood in the great sombre-looking hall; she in turn staggered and would have fallen, but for Sarah Woodham’s arm, and she suffered herself to be led into the drawing-room, where, with the awful truth beginning to grow and grow till it overshadowed her like a cloud she was about to fling herself sobbing in a chair, when a low sigh caught her ear.

Looking up, it was to see Mary Dillon coming slowly into the room, her eyes closed, and feeling her way along by the door, and then supporting herself by the various pieces of furniture she passed.

“Mary!” cried Claude.

“Yes; I have been there—in there all the time. You did not see me, but I heard everything. Oh, Claude, is it all true?”

She did not wait for a response, but sank down, covering her face with her hands, and completely prostrated by her grief.

“No, no,” whispered Claude, going to her, kneeling by her side, and, hungering for love and sympathy, drawing the weeping girl to her breast. “Doctor Asher said that it was not so, Mary darling,” she whispered; “help me to pray. He must not—he cannot die.”

Sarah Woodham stood near them hearing every word, and a shiver swiftly ran through her as she listened to the allusions to death, and again and again, with her face working, she stretched out her hands as if to try and comfort the two weeping girls, but only to shake her head sadly, and draw back from where they were now clasped in each other’s arms.

And the time went on.

Every few moments Claude rose to go to the door, and after opening it, stood listening intently, but the most she could hear was the low muffled sound of voices, and each time she returned to her cousin’s side with a despairing sigh.

“We seem so helpless,” she exclaimed. “Surely I might go back now.” But she made no attempt to disobey the doctor’s commands, and waited and waited till the low sobbing gave place to silent despair; and with eyes fixed upon the door, all sat waiting for the tidings that they dared not hope now would be good.

A step at last in the hall, and Claude flew to the drawing-room door, and flung it open, but only to shrink away, as she saw that it was not Asher, but the strange doctor—a new comer to the place—and one whom they had hardly spoken to before.

He came slowly across the hall, and bowed his head gravely as he entered, looking from one to the other, as if waiting to be interrogated, but no one spoke; and as the door swung to, the light of another day came stealing though the windows, and between the half-drawn blinds in a curious ghastly way, making everything look unreal, and the candles lit upon the table burn with a sickly glare.

Claude made an effort to speak twice, but the words failed upon her lips. She felt that she must rush by this strange, solemn-looking man, and seek the information she wanted in her father’s room, but her limbs refused to act, and she stood holding on by the back of a chair, while the new doctor now fixed his eyes on Sarah Woodham, who stood there wild-looking and motionless, her eyes appearing to burn.

“I grieve to say,” said the new doctor at last, and then he turned, for the woman’s eyes glared at him so fiercely that he ceased, paralysed.

“Well,” she said harshly, “Why do you not speak?”

“Doctor Asher has given me a history of the case,” he said, with an effort. “It is a most regretful incident. No one to blame. Perhaps Doctor Asher might have—but no—I should probably, under the circumstances, have been guilty of the same error.”

He paused in his low, faltering delivery, for Sarah Woodham had taken a step toward him, bending forward, and fascinating him with her wild, dark eyes.

Then, after a painful interval, as a low, querulous wail arose from outside, followed by what sounded like a fiendish chorus of chattering laughter from the rocks below, where a flock of gulls were quarrelling over some refuse cast up by the sea, the doctor continued—

“We have done everything possible under the circumstances, but the case was beyond our power. Ladies, this is a most painful communication for me to have to make. Doctor Asher—completely prostrated by grief. His most prominent patient, and—”

Claude stretched out one hand blindly fur that of her cousin, and took a step toward the door, but, as they reached it, Mary uttered a low cry and shrank back, withdrawing her hand.

Claude did not notice the action, but went slowly out of the room, as one goes deliberately on when walking in sleep.

They followed her to the door and saw her cross the hall, into which the soft glow of morning was now stealing fast, and there was something weird and strange about her movements as she went on and slowly opened the study door,

to pass from their sight, as it were, from day into night.

One moment, the morning light bathed her light dress and gave her a look that was mistily transparent; the next, as she passed through the doorway into the shuttered and curtained room, the glow from the lamp within made her black and strange.

Then the door swung to behind her as she walked silently over the thick carpet.

“Miss Gartram! You have come?”

Claude made no reply, but walked straight to the couch upon which her father had been laid, and there she stood mentally stunned and unable to realise the fact.

His face looked stern and hard, but no more stern and hard than she had often seen it when she had stolen into the room where he had been lying asleep—as he appeared to be lying now—after some tiresome, wakeful night. Everything was the same, even to the faint odour of drugs and spirits which pervaded the place.

For one instant a flash of hope illumined her dark heart, but it was only for a moment. No: he would wake no more. The end had come; and as the truth forced itself deep down into her heart, she sank slowly upon her knees, placed her hands gently round the stalwart figure, and laying her cheek against the stony face, she whispered softly—

“Father, father! I loved you very dearly. Left—left alone!”

Volume Two—Chapter Twelve.

Her Own Mistress.

Chris Lisle sat at the table, over his breakfast, but nothing was good.

He had all that money lying at his bank, and after trying all kinds of subterfuges to satisfy his conscience that he had as good a right to it as anybody—that if he had not won it some one else would—that people who gambled deserved no sympathy—that all was fair in money wars, as he dubbed gaming—and that he would do more good with the money than any one else—and the like, his conscience refused to be bamboozled and told him constantly that he had won that money by a clever piece of dishonourable sharping, and that he ought to be ashamed of himself.

And he was.

That was one non-appetiser; the other was his interview with the gardener the previous night, and over this, after waking with it ready to confront him, he had been metaphorically gnashing his teeth.

“How I could have made myself such an ass! How I could have been such an idiot as to run such risks! It is like dragging her down to be the common talk and gossip of the place. Why, I shall always be that scoundrel’s slave. What an idiot he must have thought me!”

No wonder the coffee tasted bitter, and that the bacon was too salt, while he thrust the butter away as rancid, and the bread as being dry.

“If it were not for one thing I’d—Well, Mrs Sarson?”

The landlady had run in hastily, looking pale and excited, and then stood speechless before him.

“Is anything the matter?” exclaimed Chris, the blood rising to his cheeks, as with boyish dread he seemed to read in his landlady’s eyes the fact that she knew of the past night’s escapade.

“Matter, indeed, sir! Then you have not heard?”

“Heard what?”

“Mr Gartram, sir—dead!”

“What!”

Chris Lisle sprang from his chair and stood feeling as if the room was swimming round him, while the landlady went on hurriedly.

“I’ve just this minute heard, sir. There was a dinner party; Doctor Asher and that Mr Glyddyr, who has the yacht, were there; and they say he was taken bad about eleven. Doctor Asher stopped, and, in the middle of the night, the new doctor was fetched, too.”

“Oh, it can’t be true,” cried Chris, and dashing out of the room he seized his hat and hurried along the street, but had not gone far before he was conscious of the fact that groups of people were standing about talking.

Further on he saw that shutters were closed; and as he reached the harbour there, lying off some distance was Glyddyr’s yacht, with a flag up, half-mast high, while, as soon as he came in sight of the Fort—Gartram’s pride—in place of the bright glistening windows, every opening had a dull dead look, and appeared to be staring at him blankly. There was no doubt now—every blind was drawn down.

Chris uttered a groan.

“My poor darling, it will break her heart! Poor old fellow! Cut off like that.”

Resentment, bitterness, died out in this great sorrow; and Chris could only see now the fine-looking, masterful, elderly man, who had always been his friend, till ambition had led him astray, and he had discarded the suitor who had grown up to love his child.

It seems too horrible! One of these terrible fits.

He was on his way up to ask to see Claude, and try to administer some consolation, but he paused. It would be an outrage to go now. It would be indecent to force his way there in disobedience to the wishes of the man who was lying blank and cold—blank and cold as the edifice he had so proudly reared with the money he had fought for so long.

“No,” thought Chris. “I must go back and write.”

In the manly frankness of his disposition, up to that moment, no thought of obstacle removed, or the future that lay before him, had come across his brain, till just then he caught sight of the gardener coming quickly along the town street, when, like a flash, came back to him the scene of the past night, and his discovery. Then, with the incongruity of human nature, there came a feeling of satisfaction in the thought that Gartram could never now sting him with contemptuous allusions to his wretched escapade, and that now he need not fear this man.

Momentary thoughts, which he chased away with a feeling of indignation against himself as he stopped the gardener.

“Is it—true?”

“Yes, sir. It’s true enough. He was a hard master, one as come down upon you awful if he see a weed; but I’d give that there right hand to have him alive and well before me now.”

Chris bowed his head and walked slowly back, to start aside and gaze fiercely in the eyes of the man whom he encountered a few yards farther on, for, as he was approaching the post-office, Glyddyr came out suddenly with a telegraph form in his hand.

The two young men paused as if arrested by some power over which they had no control, and as they stood gazing at each other, Chris, waiting for Glyddyr to speak, a crowd of thoughts flashed through his brain.

Claude—alone—her own mistress, what of your triumph now!

Very different were Glyddyr’s thoughts. Claude was somehow mixed up with them, but he read in his rival’s eye distrust, suspicion, and a hidden knowledge of his latest acts; and they passed on rapidly through his mind, till he saw Chris Lisle denouncing him as a murderer and about to seize him then.

Neither spoke, and after the long, intense gaze of eye into eye had lasted some moments, each went his way, one back to his yacht to try and make up his mind whether he ought to call at once, the other home to sit down and write to Claude, and tell her that he was always hers, and that in this, her terrible hour of affliction, he was longing to try and share her pain.

“And if I said that,” thought Chris, as he slowly tore up the letter, “she would think it an insult, and that I am triumphing over the dead.”

So Chris’s letter, full of the tender love he felt, never reached Claude’s hand.

Volume Two—Chapter Thirteen.

Glyddyr Communes with Self.

Glyddyr gave the orders to unmoor and make sail, after a great deal of hesitation, and then countermanded those orders, and went down into his cabin. There he made the man who acted as steward and valet open for him a pint of champagne, which he tossed off as if suffering from a burning thirst.

That seemed to do him good. His hand ceased to shake, and the peculiar sensation of sinking passed off for the time as he sat by the cabin window, lit a cigar, and let it out again while he watched the Fort, with its drawn-down blinds, and thought over the last night’s proceedings.

“It was an accident,” he said to himself, “a terrible mistake, and all in vain. Good heavens! who could have thought that a little drop of clear white-looking stuff could have done that; and him so used to taking it.”

He shrank away from the window, dashed away his cigar and sat down there in the cabin, with his face buried in his hands.

“I ought to have summoned help when I saw how strange and cold he turned. It would have saved him, poor old fellow! I wouldn’t for all the world that it should have happened, it seems impossible, and I can’t even believe it yet.”

With a start of childish disbelief, he straightened himself and looked out of the cabin window, as if he had half-expected to see the blinds drawn up, and the Fort looking as usual.

But there was no change, and, with a groan of agony, he turned away and stamped his foot with impatient rage.

“Just like my cursed luck,” he cried. “Any one but me would have made a pot of money over Simoom. I could have made enough to free me from this wretched bondage, but now it’s just as if something always stood between me and success, and baulked all my plans.”

He let his head sink upon his hands, and sat thinking again, but only to raise himself in an angry fashion and ring the bell.

“You ring, sir?” said the steward at the end of a minute.

“Of course, I rang,” said Glyddyr with petulant rage. “You heard me ring, and knew I rang, or you wouldn’t have come. Well, where is it?”

“I beg pardon, sir?”

“I say, where is it?”

“Where is what, sir?”

“The pint of champagne I told you to bring.”

“Beg pardon, sir, I did bring it and you drank it.”

“What?” roared Glyddyr. “Yes, of course, so I did. I had forgotten. Bring me another.”

“Guv’nor on the house?” said one of the sailors.

“Hold your row. Upset over that affair up at the toyshop,” said the steward in a whisper, and he took in the fresh pint of wine.

“Set it down.”

“Yes, sir.”

The steward beat a retreat, and Glyddyr tossed off another glass, poured out the remainder, and sat gazing at it vacantly for a few minutes before taking it up, his hand once more trembling violently.

“If I weren’t such a cursed coward,” he said, “I could get on. He must have had a lot before, and that’s what did it. By George, it gives me the horrors!”

He tossed off the wine.

“No,” he muttered as he set down the glass; “it wasn’t what I gave him. It wasn’t enough, and to think now that there was all that lying ready to my hand, without my having the pluck to take what I wanted. I must have been a fool. I must have been mad.”

“Curse these bottles!” he cried, after a pause. “Pint? They don’t hold half—a wretched swindle. I believe there are thousands lying there; and I might have borrowed what I wanted, and all would have been well; but I was such a fool.”

“No, I wasn’t,” he cried, as if apostrophising someone. “How could I get it with that woman coming in and out, and the feeling on me that one of the girls might open the door at any moment. They’d have thought I meant to steal the cursed stuff. Then, too, it seemed as if he might wake up at any moment. Bah! How upset I do feel. That stuff’s no better than water.”

He rose angrily, and opened a locker, from which he took out a brandy decanter, and placed it on the table. “Let’s have a nip of you. I seem to want something to steady my nerves.”

He poured out a goodly dram and tossed it off.

“Ah, that’s better! One can taste you. Seems to take off this horrible feeling of sinking.—Poor old fellow! Seemed as if he would wake up. Never wake up again.”

He started up and looked sharply round, trembling violently; and then wiped his forehead with his hand.

“This will not do!” he muttered. “I mustn’t show the white feather. I’ve got nothing to fear. Nothing at all. Why should I have? It was an accident; I didn’t mean it. No: wouldn’t hurt a hair of the old man’s head—no, not a hair. Yes: it was an accident.”

He drew up his head and picked up the cigar he had thrown down, re-lit it, and after a puff or two, threw it down once more.

“Wretched trash!” he muttered, taking out his case and fiercely biting the end off another. One of Gellow’s best. “Ah,” he cried, as he brought down his fist upon the table heavily. “Only let me once get clear of that man! And I might have done it so easily,” he continued, as he lit the cigar, “so very easily, and been free of that cursed incubus for a time.”

He let his cigar go out again, and his head sank upon his hands as he stared in a maundering way at the cabin door.

“But it’s always my luck—always my luck; and I’m the most miserable wretch that ever crawled.”

There was no one present to endorse his words, as the maudlin tears rose to his eyes and dripped slowly down between his feet, nature seeming to distil the wine and spirits he had been imbibing all the morning ever since he had left the cot in which he had lain tossing in a fever of fear all through the night.

But after a time champagne and brandy had their effect, and the abject shivering man of half-an-hour before seemed to have grown defiant as to the future.

He was in the act of snapping his fingers with a half-tipsy laugh, when a boat bumped up against the side, and he heard a trampling on the deck, and the buzz of voices.

“What’s that?” he panted, completely sobered now, and trembling violently, as he suddenly turned to one of the most abject-looking and white-faced creatures it is possible to imagine. “What’s that?” he panted, with his voice trembling; and he took up the brandy to help himself again. “Bah! some boat has struck us. That’s all.”

“Beg pardon, sir,” said a voice; and the steward stood in the doorway.

“Yes; what is it?”

“Boat from the shore, sir, with a policeman in the stern and another man.”

“Policeman? Other man?” faltered Glyddyr in a low, faint voice; “what do they want?”

“You, sir,” said the man; and then, “Oh, here they are.”

Glyddyr sat back, staring at the men wildly.

“Well,” said the steward to himself; “I have seen the guv’nor a bit on, but this beats all. I say, you might have waited till you were asked to come down.”

This to a policeman who was stooping down to enter the cabin, while Glyddyr clutched the table, and held on, for the sickening sensation in his head threatened a complete collapse.

Volume Two—Chapter Fourteen.

Wimble finds a Curiosity.

Any one who could have watched Michael Wimble shaving himself at early morn would have wondered whether the man were really sane, for, as he performed the operation upon himself, he worked as if it was for practice—to keep his hand in, just as acrobats and instrumentalists go through their tasks constantly, so as to keep a tight hold upon that which has taken them so much time and labour to acquire.

Being a barber, he considered that those who shaved should shave well, and that the wearing of moustache, or the very smallest morsel of whisker was but a wreak pandering to the savages who had introduced or followed the moustache movement in the time of the Crimean war.

“It’s filthy, that’s what it is, filthy,” Wimble used to say; “and how a man can go about with his face like the back of a wild beast, beats me.”

Consequently, soon after springing from his solitary bed, the owner of the Museum used to set light to a spirit lamp to boil a small shaving pot of water, and then, as there were signs of ebullitions at the side, the brush was dipped in, and the performance commenced with a tremendous lathering.

There were no half-measures. Wimble passed the brush deftly all over his quaintly wrinkled face, till masses of lather hung on to his ears, and covered his cheeks, so that only his eyes were seen. Then, as he glared at himself in a shaving glass, he set to and scraped and scraped his countenance all over, applied the brush again and again in obstinate places, and finished off by grinning hideously in the little mirror, as he stood, with the razor passing over the skin in a way that would have suggested horrors about to be perpetrated by a maniac, weary of his life, to any one who could have seen the process.

Clever as he was, too, in the manipulation, there were at times, however, suggestions that a looker-on might have been right in his ideas. As, for instance, upon the morning in question, when a slip or a pimple—it is needless to say which—necessitated the use of sponge and sticking-plaster.

Then the task was done, and Michael Wimble finished dressing, talking to himself rapidly the while, sundry words which were spoken more loudly than others, giving the key to the subject of the man’s thoughts—the old, old theme, love. Other words told too of disappointment and jealousy, and all this tended to make Mr Wimble go the wrong way when he started for his regular morning walk along the shore.

His way was always west, but he went east, so as to pass Chris Lisle’s lodgings; and as he did so, staring hard at the drawn-down blinds, and the chimney pot innocent as yet of smoke, he gnashed his teeth softly, for there were two new flowers in Chris’s bedroom window—a fuchsia and a geranium, in pots of dazzling red, and the mignonette box, full of nasturtiums, which flowed over and hung down, had been newly painted a delicate green.

Fresh attentions to the lodger. The previous week clean muslin curtains had been put up, and the week before there

was a new cover over the little table in the window upon which lay the big History of England which Mrs Sarson had taken in, or been taken in with, in shilling numbers, by a book canvasser, and had bound afterwards for one pound fifteen and sixpence, gilt lettered, and blind tooled, the canvasser had said.

That table cover, when Wimble saw it through the half-open window, was composed of crochet work and green satin, and must have been the widow's handiwork, and a delicate compliment to her lodger.

That was bad enough, but the two new flower pots in the bedroom window were beyond all bearing.

"But wait a bit," said Wimble to himself. "I can wait;" and he went on, turned up the glen path, struck off to the left, where he reached the bridge, and, by passing along by the backs of the cottages, he made his way to the alley by the public-house at the harbour head, and from there round by the boats and down to the sea shore.

Mr Wimble thought of the widow, and walked fast, gathering shells and scraps of weeds washed up by the tide, and paused from time to time to examine fragments of driftwood and pieces of rotten rope.

Everything was thrown away though, for he had plenty of duplicates at home, and only exceptional finds were now worthy of a place in the museum.

So limpets, and turritellas, and pectens were passed as unworthy of notice. A pelican's foot shell was transferred to his pocket, but nothing more; and growing quite low-spirited at last, for three reasons—his ill-luck, love, and the want of his breakfast—he turned at last, made for the cliffs, and came along close under the land, in and out among the rocks where the soft sand lay thick and smooth, past the hollows where the old boots and shoes were washed up in company with the other *disjecta membra* with which shore-dwellers insult the ocean, in the belief that the tide will play the part of scavenger and sweep everything away, a task that the sea mostly scorns.

And so it was that in sundry corners beneath the mighty granite rocks, piled high like titanic walls, Michael Wimble thought of the widow, and made his way among old baskets, fish-heads, scraps of worn-out netting and tangles of rusty steel, half-covered with rotten fabric suggesting female attire.

No objects these for his museum, for, though old, they were not old enough. Had a few centuries passed since they were cast into the waves, that would have made all the difference, and a thousand years would have made them treasures great as gold.

But it was a barren hunt that morning. There had been no storm to tear away the sand and sweep bare the rock, to leave exposed tarnished old coins once cast ashore from an Armada galley; no serpula encrusted gem; nothing worthy of notice; and Wimble, with his thoughts turning eagerly now from the widow and her lodger to the toast and the rasher of bacon, he passed over his bachelor rival and stepped out till he came beneath the rocky point upon which Gartram had built his home, and was half-way by when a ray of sunshine flashed from something lying among the rocks in a little patch of soft, dry sand.

It might be a diamond, or at least a crystal ground out of the rocks!

But it was only a clear phial bottle—short, unlabelled, tightly corked, and holding about a teaspoonful of some clear fluid at the bottom.

A disappointment; but a clean bottle was always useful, and, after a brief examination, the barber transferred it to his pocket, but not until he had removed the cork, sniffed, replaced it, and looked round, asking himself whether it had floated there in the last spring tide.

No; it seemed too fresh. The cork was too new and dry. It could only have come from about—been thrown from Gartram's windows, and—

Wimble got no further in his chain of reasoning. The vacuum which his nature abhorred was giving him strong hints which he was glad to obey; and the breakfast he had that morning was excellent for a jealous man in love.

Afterwards he rose, took off his coat to put on his apron, found the bottle in his pocket, put it carelessly in a drawer to wait till it could be washed, and declared himself ready for business. He had not long to wait, for one of his regular customers came for a shave. "Heard the news, of course?"

"News? no," said Wimble, stopping short in the stropping of a razor. "What news? What is it?"

"The King of the Castle—dead."

Volume Two—Chapter Fifteen.

The Dead tell no Tales.

"What's the matter with him?" said one of the men who had come off from the shore to Glyddyr's yacht, after performing the duty he had in hand.

"Well," said the steward, laughing, "he's my boss, so it ain't for me to say; but if it had been you, I should have said you had been looking into a brandy glass till you were too giddy to stand."

"Well; that's what I thought," said the coroner's officer, "but being a gentleman, I held my tongue. Thought gents never did take too much."

“Oh, no; never,” said the steward, sarcastically. “But don’t talk about it; the guvnor’s a good deal upset about the affair at Mr Gartram’s.”

“’Nough to upset any one. Who’d have thought it. Well, good morning.”

“Don’t want me as a witness, do you?”

The officer laughed, and was rowed back to the shore, while Glyddyr sat in his cabin watching the progress of the boat, and asking himself, as he glanced from time to time at the summons to the inquest which he held in his hand, whether he had committed himself in any way by word or look in the presence of the coroner’s officer.

Twice over he turned to the brandy decanter in search of courage, but he shrank from it with a fresh chill of dread.

“It may make me talk too much,” he said; “I might say something I couldn’t take back.”

Hurriedly thrusting the temptation from him, he well bathed his burning temples, and felt refreshed by the cold water.

“Now,” he said, setting his teeth and trying to be firm; “there’s only one man who knows the rights of this case, and I am that man. If I go straight no one can find it out, and there’s a rich wife for me at the end of a few months, and freedom from this cursed load of debt. Well, I’ll go through it in spite of everything. I will face it out.”

But even as he tried to screw himself up his own words struck him with terrible force—

“A rich wife!”

How would he dare to continue his advances towards the child of the man he had murdered?

“I can’t do it. I dare not do it,” he said in a despairing way. “She will be looking me through and through, and some day she might find out. No; Gellow must do his worst, I can’t go on.”

But as he thought all this his eyes were directed towards the Fort, with its blank-looking casements, and though he shuddered as he thought of the dead man lying there behind one of those blank windows—his work—the man whose hand he had grasped only the night before in friendship, and whom he had cut off by that one act—though he thought of all this with shudders, and vainly tried to screen himself from the darts of conscience by holding up as shield the word accident—the place had a terrible fascination, and he felt that he must go on now, for there was the sweet young girl heiress to so great a property, there was the ideal seaside home for a man who had yachting proclivities. The place was pretentious, and the mockery of an old Norman castle jarred upon his tastes; but there was the place waiting for him, ready to be his if he only had patience and manly force enough to keep his own counsel.

“And I will,” he said, as he clenched his fists. “It isn’t cowardice; it’s overstrung sensibility. I have the strength, and I will face it all out, come what may.”

He felt cooler now, and began to hesitate as to what he should do. The coroners inquest was to him the enemy, and he would have to view the body.

“No, no,” he muttered, “how confused I am—that is, for the jury. I am only a witness called because—Yes, I remember, what the man said now, because I saw the deceased last night.”

“Yes, I saw him last night,” groaned Glyddyr; “and I feel as if I shall always be seeing him now.”

Once more he made an effort to collect himself, and took the situation in the full. He had nearly been committing the grave error of running away, but he had fortunately paused.

“It would have been madness,” he thought, “and only inviting pursuit by attracting attention to my actions.”

He walked on deck, his nervous excitement having completely counteracted the effect produced by the spirits and wine, and ordered his men into the boat to row him ashore.

He had made up his mind what to do, and as soon as they reached the landing steps he walked straight up to the Fort for the second time that morning.

He was cool now, for he was fully awake to the fact that his life depended upon his calmly facing facts.

Half-way up, towards the bridge, he met Doctor Asher and his colleague, the latter bowing and passing on, but Asher stopped short, and took Glyddyr’s extended hand.

“Going in?” he said.

“Yes; how is she—Miss Gartram?”

“Terrible state, poor girl; broken-hearted; I only saw her for a few moments. Dreadful accident, is it not?”

Glyddyr felt his blood run cold, and his eyes seemed to him to be vacant, as he gazed straight at the doctor. “Accident?” he said, huskily.

“Oh, yes; no doubt about that. But you understand, do you not?”

“No—yes—I think I do,” said Glyddyr, whose throat felt dry.

“Of course. Poor fellow, I warned him against it over and over again, but it is of no use with a man who once becomes a slave to a drug.”

“Yes, I see,” said Glyddyr, staring hard at the doctor, but not seeing him.

“I feel as if I were to blame, but, on dispassionate consideration, what could I do?”

“Of course,” answered Glyddyr, “what could you do?”

“It was better that he should take the drug under my supervision than recklessly alone.”

“Yes; much,” said Glyddyr, vacantly.

“And yet on the face of it one can’t say that it seems so. But what could a medical man do in such a case? ‘I am suffering for want of sleep,’ he used to say, ‘and I must have this stuff.’ ‘It is madness to take it,’ I said. ‘If you don’t give it me, I shall get it myself at the druggists.’ So, of course, I had to give way and exhibit safe doses, but no foresight can prevent a man taking double or triple the quantities prescribed.”

“No; I see,” said Glyddyr, in the same vacant way. “But do you think he did get more at the druggist’s?”

“That was my first thought, and I telegraphed to the two nearest and most likely men, but they say in each case, ‘no.’ Most awful accident, Mr Glyddyr. It ought to be a warning to people not to tamper with drugs which they do not understand, eh?”

“Yes, of course.”

“How can anyone know how much to prescribe or take? A medical man of long experience has to go very cautiously, for what is a safe dose for one constitution is certain death to another. But, there: I must go. My colleague, to whom I have every reason to be grateful for his loyal aid, is waiting for me. I wanted help, for I cannot recall when I have been so overcome as by this case. The shock was terrible. Dining with him—called away—returning to find that he was asleep. Let me see you were with him, were you not?”

“Yes, part of the time,” faltered Glyddyr, as he felt a thrill of dread run through him under the doctor’s searching eyes, which seemed to be reading his inmost thoughts; and he found himself wondering whether this man had really been called away upon two occasions, or had made excuses, so as to watch his every act.

“And did you notice anything particular?”

“N-no,” faltered Glyddyr; and then, in response to the sharply applied goad of dread, “no, nothing; only that he breathed rather heavily.”

“To be sure; yes. But, there: good-bye. We shall meet again at the inquest, I suppose I I am not surprised at you looking so pale and overcome.”

“Do I look pale and overcome?” said Glyddyr hastily, the words slipping from his lips.

“Terribly, my dear sir, terribly. Good morning.”

Glyddyr stood looking after him as the doctor walked away, and a fit of trembling came on.

“He was pumping me, and he is suspicious,” thought Glyddyr. “Curse him! These doctors have a way of reading a man, and seeing through you. But he could only suspect; and what is suspicion where they want certainty?”

“What could he say,” he thought; “and how does it stand? He gave him chloral; Gartram took it himself, and if a little more was given, well, what could they prove unless they saw?”

“No; unless I betray myself, I am safe,” he muttered, as he walked up to the principal entrance and rang; but as the loud clangour of the bell ran through the place, the shiver of dread returned, and he was conscious from his sensations that he must be looking ghastly, and that his lips be white and cracked.

The door was opened by one of the maids.

“Ask Miss Gartram if she can see me for a few minutes,” he said, in a voice he hardly knew as his own.

The maid drew back for him to enter, and showed him into the drawing-room, where the yellow gloom of the light passing through the drawn-down blinds seemed to add to the oppression from which he suffered. Then, as he stood there, his hot eyes fixed themselves upon the chair which had been occupied by Claude when he was there the previous night; and he found himself wondering what he should say to her; and then a singular feeling of confusion came over him as he asked himself why he had come.

A footstep in the hall made him tremble, and he felt as if he could have given anything to be away from the place, for now, in its full force, he felt the terror of the interview he had to go through with the child of the man he had murdered, and who must now be lying still and stark not many yards away, while in the spirit, where was he?—perhaps about to be present to guard his child.

“If I only had more strength of mind!” groaned Glyddyr, as he vainly tried to string himself up. Then the door was opened, and he was face to face with Mary Dillon.

He drew a breath of relief, and his brain began to grow clearer, as if a mist had been wafted away, and, recovering himself, he advanced with extended hand.

“Will you be seated, Mr Glyddyr?” said Mary, ignoring the extended hand, and sinking wearily on the couch to half close her eyes and wrinkle up her brow.

“Thank you,” he said in a whisper; “I ought to apologise for coming, but—at such a time—dear Claude must—”

His words began to trail off slowly into silence, and he sat gazing at Mary helplessly, as if he could not command the flow of that which he wished to say.

“It is very good of you to come,” said Mary slowly, as if she were repeating a lesson when her thoughts were far away. “But poor Claude is completely prostrate. She cannot see you. It is cruel of you to ask for such a thing.”

“Yes, I suppose so,” he said meekly. “But, occupying the position as I do—she in such distress—I felt it a duty, let alone my own warm feelings. Miss Dillon, is there nothing I can do?”

He stopped short now, wondering at his own words, for they had come quickly, and sounded thoroughly natural in their ring.

“No,” said Mary, looking at him piercingly now; but he seemed nerved by the instinct of self-preservation, and the knowledge that everything depended upon him being calm.

Mary paused, and appeared to be struggling with her emotion for a few moments. Then, in a cold, hard way, she faced Glyddyr, as if she were defending her cousin from attack.

“No,” she said, in clear firm tones. “My cousin is seriously ill, Mr Glyddyr. Broken-hearted at our terrible loss, and anyone who feels respect for her, and wishes to be helpful at such an hour as this will leave her in peace till time has done something toward blunting the agony she is in.”

“Yes,” said Glyddyr, “you are quite right.”

He stood for a moment undecided, and as if he were about to go; but as he looked straight before him at the door, he saw mentally Gartram’s study; and a vision of wealth greater than any of which he had ever dreamed, appeared to be lying there waiting for him to call it *mine*; and the dazzling prospect began to drive away his terrors, and strengthen him in his belief that he was safe. No, he could not go back now, he felt, even if the figure of the dead were to rise up before him in defence of his hoards.

The dead tell no tales, he fancied he heard something within him say; and then—can the dead know?

Mary was looking at him inquiringly, and as he became conscious of this, he turned to her sadly and gravely.

“Yes; you are right,” he said, “it must be the kindest treatment to leave her to herself. It was my love for her that brought me here. Tell her, please, from me that my heart bleeds for her, and that I will wait until she can see me. I can say no more now. I trust you to be my faithful messenger. Good-bye.”

He held out his hand, and for a few moments she ignored his action, but as he stood there with his fingers outstretched, she felt unable to resist, and at last she placed her own within his, and he raised them to his lips.

The next minute she listened to his retiring steps as he went along the granite terrace, talking to himself.

“I did not think I could have done it,” he said; “but I have only to keep on, and the rest will come easy. I am too much a man of the world to be frightened at shadows after all.”

“It was perfect,” thought Mary Dillon, as she stood alone in the darkened drawing-room, “nothing could have been better, but I hate him and distrust him. Somehow he makes me shrink away with horror. But its only prejudice for poor Claude’s sake. I’d kill him first. He’d break her heart, and spend her money, and—yes, I’d kill him before he should do all that.”

She went slowly out into the hall, and stood hesitating for a few minutes. She appeared to be listening, and there was a curious weird look in her fine eyes as she glanced quickly here and there before drawing a long breath, and going across to the study door.

Here she paused on the thick wool mat, and tapped softly, but only to utter a faint hysterical cry, and press her hands to her lips, as if to keep back more, for the act had been one to which she was accustomed, and a thrill ran through her as she realised what she had done, and that the familiar, harsh voice could never again call to her “Come in.”

She turned the handle, and entered the darkened room to walk firmly across to where Gartram lay, and she stood for some minutes gazing at the dimly-seen figure covered by a white sheet, through which the prominent features of his face stood out.

For a moment she looked as if she were about to raise the white linen cover to gaze upon the face of the dead, but she did not stir, only remained there as if turned to stone, as, from out of the gloom, a low groan arose, and for the moment it seemed to her that the sheet moved and the body heaved.

Mary Dillon felt her heart throb as if it had burst the bond which regulated its slow action; a terrible feeling of fear paralysed her, and for a time her sufferings were acute.

Then reason came to her aid.

“He is not dead,” she said; and trembling violently, she ran to the window to draw aside the curtain, looking over her shoulder in a frightened way; but before light could shine in upon the solemn chamber she stopped short.

“Woodham!” she exclaimed, “you here!”

There was a quick rustling sound, and the startled occupant of the room rose from her knees by the dead man’s side, and stood shrinking from her questioner, and looking as if she was about to flee from the room.

For a few moments the only sounds heard were those of quick breathing and the low hissing wash of the sea among the rocks, for the tide was well in now beneath the walls of the Fort. Then Mary Dillon recovered from her surprise, and went to the woman’s side, and laid her hand upon her arm.

“Come away,” she whispered.

Sarah Woodham jerked herself free, and stood as if at bay, her eyes in the gloom flashing with anger; but with quiet firmness Mary Dillon followed her, took hold of her wrist, and led her from the chamber of death, and out across the hall to the drawing-room.

“Why, Woodham!” said Mary, gently, “what does this mean?”

The woman looked at her fiercely, as if resenting the question, and half turned away.

“Don’t be angry with me for asking,” said Mary gently. “It was so strange.”

“Is it strange for a woman to pray, Miss?” was asked in solemn tones.

“No, no, of course not; but I could not help feeling surprised to see you kneeling there.”

“We all need forgiveness, Miss, for the sins we commit.”

Mary Dillon winced and looked angrily at the woman, for it sounded to her like an insult to the dead for this woman, their servant, to take upon herself so sacred a duty.

“Yes, Miss, we all need forgiveness for what we have done. Don’t keep me, please, I cannot hear to talk now.”

“I am sorry if I have said anything to wound you,” continued Mary. “I ought to have been pleased; I am sure my poor cousin will for your sympathy and thoughtful ways.”

“You think I was praying for him, Miss Mary?”

The girl nodded her head quickly, and remained silent, for she could not trust herself to speak.

Sarah stood gazing before her in a strangely absent way, and went on muttering softly—

“Isaac, poor husband, you can rest now. If you can see all from where you are, look down upon me. You must feel content—you must be content, and forgive me for keeping you waiting so long.”

“Woodham,” said Mary gently, after standing watching the strange, weird face before her, and catching a word here and there, “you are ill; the shock of poor uncle’s death has been too much for you. There, try and be calm.”

“Miss Mary,” said the woman hoarsely, and her eyes glowed with her great excitement, “what do you mean? Have I been talking, like, in my sleep?”

“Yes,” said Mary, smiling in her troubled face, and trying to soothe her.

“Yes! What did I say? Quick; tell me. I didn’t say anything aloud?”

“Yes, you did. I heard parts of what you spoke.”

“Tell me!” cried the woman, excitedly. “Quick! What did I say?”

“You talked about prayer and forgiveness, and spoke about your poor husband. There, there; try and be calm. This has been too much for you, and has brought up all your old sorrows. You want rest and a good long sleep.”

“What else did I say?”

“Oh, I don’t remember much more.”

“You must,” cried the woman angrily; “I will know.”

“Very little else. I think you said that you hoped your husband was looking down upon you, or words to that effect. There, don’t let us talk about it any more. Go and lie down, and when you are well rested come and help me again. We have so much to do. My poor cousin is completely prostrate.”

“Yes,” said the woman, looking at her searchingly. “Poor Miss Claude! Broken-hearted. He worshipped her, in his way—in his way.”

“Come,” said Mary, gently, as she tried to lead her from the room, for the woman seemed to her as one distraught.

“Tell me again; try to recollect. What did I say?”

“Surely I have told you enough,” said Mary. “There, you are ill.”

“Yes, ill—sick at heart—sick with horror,” whispered the woman, clinging to her with convulsive strength. “I came in and looked at his poor appealing face, and it was like seeing Isaac—my husband, again—snatched away so suddenly, just when he was so strong and full of what he meant to do; and it was as if master’s eyes were staring at me and read my heart, and knew everything—everything, and it was too horrible to bear.”

The woman burst into a passionate fit of hysterical weeping, and sank upon her knees, covering her face with her hands, rocking herself to and fro, and bending lower and lower, till her arms were upon her knees.

Mary spoke to her, knelt beside her, and tried to whisper words of comfort, about resignation and patience, but without avail. Nothing she said appeared to be heard; and at last—weary, hopeless, and suffering, too, from the terrible trouble which had fallen upon the house—she knelt there in silence beside the moaning and sobbing woman, her hands clasped in her lap, and her eyes fixed upon vacancy, as she thought of how happy they had all been by comparison a few hours before.

Mary Dillon was startled from her fit of sad musing by the opening of the drawing-room door.

“Claude!” she exclaimed, “I thought you were asleep.”

Her cousin gave a look that was almost reproachful, and came slowly to where Sarah Woodham crouched.

As Claude laid her hand upon the sobbing woman’s shoulder, it was as if the latter had received a shock. She looked up wildly, and hurriedly rose to her feet, pressed her hair back from her eyes, and made a tremendous effort to master the emotion to which she had given way. Then, with a heavy sigh she grew calm, her distorted features resumed their old saddened dreamy expression, and she moved towards the door.

Claude tried to speak to her, and her lips moved, but no words came, for her face began to work, and she was turning away when the woman seized her hand, kissed it passionately, and hurried from the room.

“We are not alone in our suffering, Mary,” said Claude at last; and she drew her cousin to her breast and wept silently upon her shoulder, while Mary gave her the most loving form of consolation that woman can give to woman, the silent pressure that tells of heart beating for heart in sympathetic unison, as they stood together in the darkened room.

Volume Two—Chapter Sixteen.

Mr Wimble Rakes for Information.

An enormous increase has taken place during the past five-and-twenty years in local journalism. England seems to have been almost Americanised in respect of news, for every centre worthy of the enterprise has been furnished with its newspaper, in which everything is told that is worthy of chronicling, and very often, from want of news, something unworthy of the paper upon which it appears. Notably that celebrated paragraph about So-and-So’s horse and cart, which, left untended, moves on; the horse is startled by shouts, begins to trot, then gallops, and is finally stopped. “It was fortunate that the accident occurred before noon, for at that hour the children would have been leaving school, and,” etc, etc—suggestion of the horror of what might have been.

But Danmouth was not a centre worthy of the enterprise, and, with the exception of a few copies of the county paper which came in weekly to partly satisfy the thirst for news, the inhabitants had no fount to depend upon save Michael Wimble, and to him they gravitated for information respecting the proceedings all around, from a failure, scandal, or accident on shore up to a shipwreck.

Consequently, Wimble’s business on the morning of Gartram’s death was so great that he began to think that he must hire a boy to lather, and the leather slipper nailed up against the wall to serve as a quaintly original till had to be emptied twice.

As a rule, the “salt” personages who hung about the cliff, staring into the sea, came to be shaved on Saturdays, but the news on the wing prompted every man to have a clean shave that morning, and many a stalwart fisher lady regretted that she had not a hirsute excuse for visiting the shop.

Wimble made the most of such information as he was able to glean, and as the morning advanced, he was able to keep on making additions, till the one little seed he received first thing came up, grew and blossomed into a news plant that would have been worth a good deal in town.

Towards evening, though, the excitement at Wimbles museum had fallen off, and gathered about the Harbour Inn, where the gossips of the place, clean shaven, and looking unusually like being in holiday trim, were able to quench their double thirst.

Michael Wimble sighed as he stood at his door looking towards that inn.

“Ah,” he said to himself, “now, if I had a licence to sell beer by retail to be drunk on the premises,”—he was quoting from a board with whose lettering he was familiar—“they would have stopped; and my place being nearest to the Fort, the coroner would have held the inquest there.”

“Hah!” he said aloud, after a pause, “how it would have read in the paper: ‘An inquest was held at Wimble’s Museum, Danmouth’—eh? I beg your pardon, Mr Brime, sir; I didn’t hear you come up. Shave, sir? Certainly, sir. Come in.”

Wimble’s heart beat high as he thought of the chance. His customers had pumped him dry, and gone away; and here, by a tremendous stroke of luck, was the commencement of a perfect spring of information to refill his well right to the brim.

Reuben Brime, who looked worried and haggard, entered the museum, took his place in the Windsor arm-chair, was duly covered with the print cloth, after removing collar and tie, and laid his head back in the rest.

“Why, you look fagged out, Mr Brime, sir,” said Wimble, quietly walking to the door, closing it, and slipping the bolt.

The gardener from the Fort was nervous and agitated. Death in the house—sudden death—had unhinged him. His master might have been poisoned, either by his own hand or by that of an enemy. That would be murder. He was bound, as it were, for the sacrifice; there were a dozen razors at hand; the barber’s aspect was suspicious, and he had closed the door. What did it mean?

“I say,” cried the gardener, sitting bolt upright, “what did you do that for?”

“Do what, Mr Brime? Fasten the door? I’ll tell you. I’ve been that worked this day that I haven’t had time for a decent meal, and I won’t shave another chin. That’s what I mean.”

“Oh!” said Brime, calming down a little.

“I don’t hold with working oneself to death, sir. Do you?”

“No; certainly not,” said the gardener, with divers memories of idle pipes in the tool-house when “Master” had gone in the quarry.

“And so say I, sir,” said Wimble. “Nobody thinks a bit the better of you if you do.”

“That’s true,” said the gardener, letting his head sink back with a sigh, as Wimble stood before him working up the lather in his pot to a splendid consistency.

“Anxious time for you people at the Fort, sir,” said Wimble, beginning to lather gently, and taking care to leave his customer’s lips quite free.

“Yes,” said the gardener shortly.

“Poor man! Ah, I wonder how many times I have shaved him, sir.”

The gardener stared straight before him in silence, frowning heavily.

“In the midst of life we are in death, Mr Brime, sir, parson says o’ Sundays,” continued Wimble, pausing to tuck the cloth a little more in round his customer’s neck.

No acquiescent reply.

“Just like things in your profession, Mr Brime, or, as I might say, in mine. Flowers and grass comes up, and the frost takes one, and the scythe the other; or beards comes up and the hair grows, and it’s the razor for one, and the shears for the other, eh?”

“Humph!”

“Yes, sir; you are quite right,” said Wimble, replacing the brush in the pot, and proceeding to rub the soap into his customer’s cheeks, throat and chin with a long, lissome finger.

Silence.

“Wonderful stiff, wiry beard yours, Mr Brime, sir. Pleasure to shave it, though. I hate your fluffy beards that lie down before the razor. Yours is a downright upright one, which meets the razor like crisp grass. What a difference in beards. Not in a hurry, sir, I hope?”

“No.”

“Then I’ll do it well, sir, so as to make it last. Ah, many’s the time I’ve shaved poor Mr Gartram, sir! Hard man to please over pimples, while a nick used to make him swear terrible, and there are times when you can’t help just a touch, sir.”

“No,” said Brime, thinking of slips with the scythe.

“Good customer gone,” said the barber, resuming the brush once more, but still keeping clear of the lips. “Always a shilling for going up and shaving him, Mr Brime. Yes, a capital customer gone.”

Here the shaving pot was set down, and a razor taken out of a loop to re-strop.

“Bad job for me, Mr Brime. Won’t affect you, I suppose, sir?” continued Wimble, finishing off the keen-edged razor on his palm with a loud *pat, pat, pat*.

“Not affect me?” said the gardener, sitting up sharply; for the barber had touched the right key at last, and the instrument began to sound. “But it will affect me. How do I know what’ll take place now, sir? Saved up my little bit o’ money, and made the cottage comfortable and fit for a wife.”

“Indeed, Mr Brime, and you’d been thinking of that sort o’ thing, sir?”

“P’raps I had and p’r’aps I hadn’t,” snarled the gardener, savagely. “Not the first man, I suppose, as thought of it.”

“No, sir, indeed. I’ve been thinking of it for years, and making my bits o’ preparation; but,”—he said with a sigh—“it hasn’t come off yet.”

A brother in disappointment. The gardener felt satisfied and disposed to be confidential, although the lather was beginning to feel cold and clammy, and the tiny vesicles were bursting and dying away.

“Yes, I were thinking about it, Mr Wimble,” he said bitterly; “and I were going to speak, and I dessay afore long you’d ha’ heared us asked in church, and now this comes and upsets it all.”

“Don’t say that, sir,” said the barber, still stropping his razor gently. “Like everything else, it passes away and is forgotten. You’ve only got to wait.”

“Got to wait!” cried the gardener; “why, the trouble has ’most killed her, sir, and how do I know what’s going to happen next?”

“Ah, bad indeed, sir.”

“Our young Miss’ll never stop in that great place now; and, of course, it’s a month’s warning, and not a chance of another place nigh here.”

“Oh, don’t say that, Mr Brime, sir. That’s the worst way of looking at it.”

“Ay, but it’s the true way.”

“You’re a bit upset with trouble now, sir. You wait. Why, there’s a fine chance here for a clever man like yourself to set up for himself in the fruit and greengrocery. See what a job it is to get a bit of decent green stuff. I never know what it is. Leastways, I shouldn’t if it weren’t for a friend bringing me in a morsel o’ fruit now and then.”

“Ah, it’s all over with that now, Mr Wimble. Poor master; and we may as well give up all thoughts o’ wedding. Strange set-out it’s been.”

“Ah!” said Wimble; and *pat, pat, pat*, went the razor over his hand as the lather dried.

“I can’t see much chance for Mr Glyddyr now.”

“Ah! he was going to marry Miss Gartram, wasn’t he?”

“He’d ha’ liked to, and the poor guvnor was on for it; but I know a little more about that than he did.”

“Ah, yes, Mr Brime, lookers-on sees more of the game. I always used to think—but of course it was no business of mine—that it was to be Mr Christopher Lisle, till he seemed to be chucked over like—and for looking elsewhere,” he added between his teeth.

“Looking elsewhere? Gammon!”

“Oh, but he does, sir.”

“Yah! Not he, Wimble. He’s dead on to the young missus.”

“No, no, Mr Brime, sir,” said Wimble, waving his razor; “you’ll excuse me. You’re wrong there.”

“Wrong?” cried the gardener, excitedly. “Bet you a shilling on it. No, I don’t want to rob you, because I know.”

“Well, you may know a deal about gardening, Mr Brime,” said Wimble deprecatingly, as he shook his head shrewdly; “but fax is fax.”

“Not always, Wimble. You won’t let it go no further, because he’s a good sort.”

“If you feel as you can’t trust me, Mr Brime, sir,” said the barber, laying down the razor and taking up the brush and shaving pot once more to dip the former very slowly in the hot water.

“Oh, you won’t tell,” said Brime, who had calmed his excitement with a great many glasses of the household ale at the Fort. “You’re all wrong. Mr Lisle’s after our young Miss still; and—you mark my words—as soon as they decently can, they’ll marry.”

“No, sir, no,” said Wimble, shaking his head, with his eyes fixed upon his best razor, and his mind upon Mrs Sarson; “you’re wrong.”

“Why, he was up at our place to see her only last night.”

“No!”

“He was, and I ketched him on the hop.”

“You don’t say so.”

“But I do. He owned what he was up there for, poor chap, for the guv’nor was very rough on him at last. I took him for a boy after our fruit.”

“Are you talking about last night, when your Master died?” said Wimble, breathlessly.

“Yes, of course.”

“Where was he then?”

“Down our garden, on the sly.”

Wimble’s face was a study.

“It was like this. He didn’t know there was company, and he was trying to get a word with Miss Claude; but, of course, she couldn’t get to him, because there was Mr Glider and the doctor there.”

“Well, you do surprise me, Mr Brime.”

“Yes: where would your shilling be now, eh?”

“Well, young folks will be young folks; but I was deceived.”

“Yes, you were. Poor chap. He little thought when he left me in low spirits, because he couldn’t get to see his lass, how soon his chances were going to mend. Bah! Miss Claude didn’t care that for the other one—a mean, sneaking sort of fellow. How the poor guv’nor could have taken to him as he did, I don’t know.”

“Well, you do surprise me,” said Wimble, re-tucking in the cloth which had been disarranged by Brime’s “don’t care that” and snap of the fingers.

“Yes, I thought I could; but keep it quiet.”

“By all means, Mr Brime. Your girl’s in sad trouble, I suppose?”

“Crying her eyes out, poor lass. Master was as hard as his own stone; but they had been very fond of each other.”

“Yes; and I s’pose he was a good-hearted, generous man underneath. Give away a great deal to the poor.”

“Not he, Wimble. There was a deal given away, but it was Miss Claude did all that, bless her. Master—there; I’m not going to say a word again’ the dead.”

“No, no, of course not, sir; but what trouble you must be in!”

“Trouble, sir! When I heard of it this morning, you might have knocked me down with a feather.”

“Hah! very awful really, sir,” said Wimble, beginning to lather again, and this time in so thoughtful a manner that the gardener’s mouth disappeared in the soapy foam, and the desire for more information seemed to have gone.

“Was Chris Lisle up at the Fort last night? Was our suspicions unjust, then?”

“Then, it must be all on her side,” thought Wimble, beginning to strop his razor again fiercely, and he operated directly after with so much savage energy, that the gardener’s hands clutched the sides of the chair, and he held on, with the perspiration oozing out upon his forehead, and causing a tickling sensation around the roots of his hair.

“Find it hot, Mr Brime, sir?” said the barber, as he gave a few finishing touches to his patient’s chin.

“Very,” said the gardener, with a sigh of relief, as the razor was wiped and thrown down, and a cool, wet sponge removed the last traces of the soap; “you went over me so quick, I was afraid of an accident.”

“No fear, sir. When a man’s shaved a hundred thousand people, he isn’t likely to make a mistake. Thank you, sir; and I hope you will get everything settled all right up yonder. When’s the funeral?”

“Don’t know yet, sir. When the doctors and coroners have done, I suppose.”

“Hum!” said Wimble to himself, as he ran over the gardener’s words. “Then, perhaps I have been wrong about him, but I can’t be about her. She wouldn’t have held me off all this time if she hadn’t had thoughts elsewhere.”

He was standing at the door as he spoke, probably meaning to receive more customers after all, for he did not slip the bolt.

“Up there in the garden, last night, to see the young lady, and the next morning Mr Gartram found dead. Well, it’s a terrible affair.”

Michael Wimble had obtained more information than he had anticipated, and of a very different class.

End of Volume Two.

Volume Three—Chapter One.

An Angry Encounter.

Night, and the tramping of many feet on the granite-paved path and terrace.

The wind from off the sea rushing and sighing round the house, making, as the great hall door was opened, the lightly-hung pictures on the walls swing gently to and fro, as if ghostly hands touched them from time to time.

Claude and Mary were waiting, dressed, in the drawing-room, ready to go to the inquest, and the latter held her cousin's hand tightly as they listened, and in imagination painted, by the help of the sounds, all that was going on.

There were whispers in men's voices, muffled footsteps on the thick rugs in the paved hall, with the sharp sound from time to time as a foot fell on the bare granite.

Then came the opening of the study door, and a piteous sigh escaped from Claude's breast as in imagination she saw the darkened room into which the jurymen passed one by one, to stay a few moments, and then pass out.

Then more whispers, more trampling, muffled and loud; the closing of the study door; and then the sighing and moaning of the wind ceased suddenly, as the great hall door was shut; voices came more loudly as steps passed along the terrace, and grew fainter and fainter as they filed out, and once more the house was still.

Down by the inn, affected most by the fishermen from its proximity to the harbour, the principal part of the inhabitants of the place were gathered, waiting in knots and discussing Gartram's death, till such time as the jury returned. Then a lane was opened for them to pass through into the great room of the inn, the fishermen crowding in afterwards, while two men drawn, one by summons, the other for reasons of his own, to the inquest, found themselves, by the irony of fate, side by side, and compelled to walk in this way down the long passage packed in by the crowd, and upstairs to the room where the inquest was to be held.

Parry Glyddyr had grown more calm and firm as the day had worn on, while Chris had, on the other hand, become more excited; and, finding himself thus thrown close beside his rival, he could not help turning a sharp inquiring look upon him, as if asking what he had to say.

But no word was spoken, and, forced on by the crowd behind, they at last found themselves close up to the head of the table, listening to the coroners words as the various witnesses were examined, a low murmur arising when Claude's name was called, and a way clear made for her to pass through, and give the little evidence she could as to her father's habits, and then she was led, silently weeping, away.

Sarah Woodham—cold, dark and stern now—was called to speak of her duty in taking to her master his tonic draught, and she could tell of his habit in using a narcotic to produce sleep.

Other witnesses were examined, including both the doctors. As her gravely and deprecatingly stating how he had prescribed for his patient. The new doctor gave his opinion upon what he had seen; the coroner summed up; and the jury, sworn to do their duty in the inquiry, had no difficulty in unanimously agreeing that it was a case of accidental death, and gradually melting away with the crowd. Glyddyr, one of the last to leave the room, breathing more freely since he had given his evidence relative to seeing Gartram lying asleep, but feeling that he was ghastly pale, and afraid to meet Chris Lisle's eye, as he passed out of the inquiry room, and out on to the cliff to let the soft, cool night air fan his cheeks.

His knees seemed to give way beneath him, and he was glad to move a little to one side, and rest against the iron rail that guarded the edge of the cliff, for he was giddy with emotion as he felt how narrow an escape he had had from destruction.

"But they could not tell," he said to himself. "It was his heart; and no doctor could have analysed the case sufficiently to have said who gave him a larger quantity than he usually took.

"Yes, safe," he muttered, with a feeling of relief and elation. But the giddy sensation returned, and he could gladly have gone into the inn and call for brandy, had he dared, the thought that such an action on his part might cause suspicion keeping him back.

He could hear the people, grouped about, discussing the event, and though it horrified him, and moment by moment as he stood leaning over the rail and gazing out to sea, he anticipated hearing something said which would fix suspicion upon him, he could not tear himself away.

His men were waiting for him at the harbour steps, but he shrank from moving, though he suffered agony in staying there, for out before him, on the dark sea with the stars reflected, and looking up at him like eyes, he felt that there was danger, and that he would not dare to go out to his yacht.

And yet he kept asking himself what there was to fear.

"Dead men tell no tales," he kept saying to himself; but nothing seemed to check his nervous dread.

"Suppose all should be discovered?"

At last he tore himself away, determined to get on board the yacht, have a good stiff glass of brandy and water, and go to bed early; but, instead of turning off to the left and down to the end of the pier, he found himself led as it were

up the cliff-path towards the Fort; and with the full intention of going right to the door to inquire how the ladies were, so as to force down and master the cowardly dread, he passed on, and when close to the drawbridge, stopped short.

A firm, elastic step was coming in the other direction, and a new dread assailed him.

Thought flies quickly, and in a few moments he had analysed his position.

He had, in his endeavour to obtain money, destroyed Gartram's life. He had tried to make himself believe that he was only going to borrow part of what would be his anon; but, in his hurry and fear, he had failed to obtain the money, and he had removed Gartram.

What would be the result? Claude would doubtless have become his wife when urged by her father, but that father was dead, and he was face to face with the fact that he had destroyed his chances. For Claude had evidently a strong leaning towards Chris Lisle; and while he had been shiveringly and nervously leaning against the cliff rail, Chris had quickly made his way to the ladies' side, had walked home with them, and now was returning master of the situation, and in another few moments would be standing face to face with him.

A fierce feeling of resentment sprang up in his breast, and, as his hands clenched, he could feel the veins in his forehead tingle and start.

Chris was coming slowly down the path, with his head bent, thinking deeply of Claude's sorrow, and in spite of the angry words which had passed during their last interview, full of sorrow for the hard, passionate man cut off so suddenly; but as he suddenly found himself confronted by Glyddyr, he felt the blood flush up into his temples, and his hands shook,

It was momentary. His hands dropped easily to his sides, and he told himself that he need not fear Glyddyr now. He had only to wait patiently till the time of mourning and sorrow had passed away, and then Claude would naturally turn to him; and for the first time he felt glad that he had made that *coup*.

"I am not going to make an enemy of this man," he said to himself. "I can afford to be generous;" and, breaking the silence, he said quietly, "Going up to the house, Mr Glyddyr?"

"Sir?"

"I said, are you going up to the house?"

"The man's angry and disappointed," thought Chris, and he spoke in the same quiet, inquiring tone.

"And, pray, by what right do you question me?" said Glyddyr angrily, and glad of something which roused him from the trembling, morbid state in which he was grovelling.

"I can hardly call it a right," replied Chris, "and only speak as a very old friend of the family."

"Friend? Why, confound you, sir; Mr Gartram ordered you never to enter his house again."

"Let Mr Gartram rest," replied Chris, gravely, and his tones were so impressive and seemed so full of suggestion that Glyddyr shrank again, and was silent. "I only wished to say that Miss Gartram is ill—utterly prostrate—and that an intrusion—"

"Intrusion!" cried Glyddyr, recovering himself, and beginning to quiver with jealous rage.

"Yes, sir; intrusion upon Miss Gartram at such a time would be as cruel as uncalled for."

"Intrusion! Such insolence! Are you aware, sir—"

"I am aware of everything, sir, everything," said Chris firmly; and once more Glyddyr, ridden by coward conscience, shivered, that word "everything" conveyed so much. "This is neither time nor place to discuss such matters. That poor gentleman is lying dead yonder; his child is broken-hearted, and I ask you, as a gentleman, to refrain from going up there now."

There was silence for a few moments, during which Glyddyr battled hard with his feelings, and Chris felt that, had it been any one else, he would not have spoken in this way.

"And suppose, sir, I refuse?" cried Glyddyr at last.

There was another pause, for the smouldering hatred against this man deep down in Chris Lisle's breast began to glow, and there was a curious twitching about his fingers; but the thoughts of what had taken place, and Claude's pale, sorrowful countenance, rose before him, and he said quietly,—

"You cannot refuse, sir."

"But I do," raged Glyddyr. "Do you hear? I do refuse, and tell you it is a piece of insolent assumption on your part to dictate to me what I shall do."

Chris was silent, and Glyddyr misinterpreted that silence in his excitement, or he would not have gone on with a passionate rage that was almost childish.

"Confound you for daring to come here at all. What do you mean, fellow? And now, understand this: if you intrude your presence upon that lady or her cousin again, I'll have you horse-whipped and turned off the place. Do you hear

me—go!”

“Parry Glyddyr,” said Chris gently, “at a time like this, every instinct within me prompts me to try and behave like a gentleman—”

“You—a gentleman!” sneered Glyddyr.

“To one who was that poor man’s friend, and whom I should fain have believed—”

“Curse your insolence!” sneered Glyddyr. “Leave this place. Go back to your kennel, dog. Don’t preach to me.”

“You have totally forgotten yourself, sir, and I can only attribute it to your having been drinking. I will not quarrel with you now, I once more appeal to you to go.”

“And I once more order you to go!” cried Glyddyr, whose mad rage for the moment rode over his natural cowardice. “What! You will not go? It is an insult to every one here. Be off!”

“Have you forgotten trying to turn me away from here once before?”

“When you took a cowardly advantage of me, sir. I have not forgotten it, but—bah! I have no time to quarrel with such a cad. Be off, and if you come here again, take the consequences.”

He turned on his heel to go up to the house.

“Stop,” said Chris, in a low deep trembling voice. “Mr Glyddyr, I appeal to you once more. Don’t go up there to that place now,” and he laid his hand upon his shoulder.

Glyddyr turned upon him, and made a backhanded blow at his face.

The flame flashed out for an instant, and then it was smothered down.

Quick as lightning Chris Lisle’s firm, strong hand gripped his rival by the wrist; there was a savage wrench given to the arm, and, after a miserable attempt at resistance, Glyddyr leant over to ease the agony he felt.

“If I did what nature seems to prompt me to do,” whispered Chris, “I should throw you into that moat; but, I will try and keep my temper. You are half-drunk. You are not fit to go up to that house. I am not afraid of your going there, but I will not have her insulted by your presence to-night. Come down here.”

His grip was like that of some machine as he gave Glyddyr’s arm another wrench, and then marched him right away down the path to the harbour, and then along the pier to the end.

Before they reached this point, Glyddyr had made another feeble attempt to free himself, and there was a momentary struggle, which brought both to the edge of the south pier, where there was a fall into deep water.

“Come quietly, or, by all that’s holy, I’ll throw you in,” said Chris hoarsely; and Glyddyr ceased struggling, and suffered himself to be led to the end, where the crew of the yacht’s gig were waiting, smoking, till their master came.

“Now,” whispered Chris, “go and sleep off your drunken fit. Another time, when you can act and think like a man, we may both have something more to say.”

He loosened his grip of Glyddyr’s arm.

“Here, my lads,” he said, “get your master aboard; he is not fit to be alone.”

“Drunk or mad,” said Chris to himself, as he strode quickly along the pier to get back to his own room, and try to grow calm.

“I suppose a man must feel like I did to-night,” he thought, after a time, “when the devil comes into him, and he kills his enemy. If he had known what was in me then, he wouldn’t have dared to say all that. But I’m better now.”

Volume Three—Chapter Two.

At the Grave.

All Danmouth gathered to see the funeral procession wind down the granite-paved path to the cliff, and then along by the harbour to the little church on the rock shelf at the entrance of the glen.

Gartram had been hated, but death had destroyed all petty dislikes, and the people only remembered now the many acts of charity he had performed.

It was unwittingly, and by proxy, for he never knew one half of the kindly actions done in his name, and as the procession wound through the place, there was many a wet eye among the lookers-on, and the saying that ran among the simple folks, quarrymen’s and fishers’ wives, was: “A hard man;” and then, “but oh, so generous and good.”

It was against the etiquette of the sad ceremony, but Claude had said that she should follow her father to the grave, and the cousins walked behind the plain massive coffin, swung at arm’s-length by the handles, and carried by three

relays of Gartram's stout quarrymen, all ready to say: "Yes, a good master after all."

Every blind was down, every one was in the street or along the cliff, for "The King of the Castle" was dead, and, for the most part, Danmouth seemed to have been made by him. So its people felt real sorrow for themselves as they said: "What is to be done now?"

On and on, with the slow tolling of the bell echoing right up the glen, and startling the white-breasted gulls which floated here and there, uttering their querulous cries as the procession wound its slow way on to the granite-built lych-gate—Gartram's gift; and as they passed on to the church, Claude was conscious more than ever that Chris Lisle was standing bareheaded by the church door till they passed, and then, through her tear-blinded eyes, she saw that Glyddyr was within, pale and ashen, as he rested one hand upon a pew door.

Then out to the wind-swept churchyard, and there, after a few minutes, it seemed to Claude that she was standing alone, to place a few flowers which she carried upon the hollow-sounding oaken case.

"Come," whispered a voice at her side, and she took the hand held out to her by her cousin, and was led away, feeling that she was alone now in the world. Wealth, position, such as few women at her age could claim, all seemed as nothing. She was alone.

As the mourners went sadly away, Chris Lisle walked slowly up to the entrance of the vault, and stood gazing down at the shining breastplate.

"Good-bye," he said softly. "I will not say I forgive you, only that you did not know me. It was a mistake."

As he moved away, he was aware of a ghastly countenance at a little distance, as Glyddyr stood watching him; but his attention was taken off directly by a tall, dark figure going slowly to the door of the vault, to stand there with hands clasped, and looking down.

He could not have told afterwards what it was that checked him from following the returning procession, but he stayed to watch that one figure, as, regardless of those around, it drooped for a moment, and then sank slowly upon its knees, and cover its face with its hands, and remain there as if weeping bitterly.

There was a group of rough quarrymen close at hand, all waiting to go up and have a last look at "the master," before discussing among themselves, once more, their project to cut and erect a granite pillar over Gartram's tomb.

They were so near Chris that he could hear the words, as one of the party said,—

"Poor Ike Woodham's widow. Ay, lads, she's lost the pride of her life once more. He was downright good to her when Woodham went."

Chris took a step or two forward, for the solitary figure attracted him, and then another and another, quietly, as he heard a low, piteous wail, and saw the woman rise tottering to her feet, swaying to and fro.

"Forgive me! oh, forgive me!" she sobbed; and then she threw up her hands to clutch at vacancy.

Another moment, and she would have fallen heavily into the great granite vault, but Chris was in time: he flung an arm round her, and snatched her back insensible. She had swooned away, and had to be carried into the church till a vehicle had been procured; and Glyddyr had the satisfaction of seeing Chris enter the rough carriage and support the suffering woman till they reached the Fort.

"Thank you, Mr Chris," she said hurriedly; "I'm better now," and as he left her immediately, she hurried up to her room, opened her box, and poured out a portion of the contents of a phial into a glass.

Half an hour later, Claude was roused from her sad musings by one of the servants, who announced that Mrs Woodham was "took bad."

It was something to divert Claude's thoughts, and she hurried up to the bedroom to lay her hand upon the woman's burning brow.

"Are you in pain, Sarah?"

"Hah!"

A long sigh, as if the cool, soft hand had acted like a professors rod in an electrical experiment, and the pain had been discharged.

"No, no—no pain."

The woman's eyes were closed, now that she had taken hold of the hand that had seemed to give her rest, and clung to it, keeping it by her cheek as she half-turned over in her bed; while Claude sent word that she was going to stay there and watch. And there, in spite of Mary Dillon's prayers to let her stay, she did watch, and listen to Sarah Woodham's muttered words.

"At rest now," she cried twice. "Now he will sleep; or will he meet him face to face?"

Toward morning she slept calmly, and when, at daybreak, Mary stole into the room, exhaustion had done its work, and Claude was sleeping too.

Volume Three—Chapter Three.

Glyddyr Requires a Pick-me-up.

“Guv’nor aboard?”

Glyddyr was seated in the cabin, restlessly smoking a cigar, and gazing through the open window at the Fort, where it stood up grey and glittering in the sunshine, and holding within it, protected by the memory of its builder, the two objects for which Parry Glyddyr longed.

He had made up his mind a dozen times over to go straight to the place and see Claude, but the recollection of that horrible night kept him back, and he gave up, to go on pacing the little saloon, talking to himself wildly.

For how, he said, could he approach Claude now—he, the destroyer of her father’s life—go and ask her to listen to him, talk to her and try to lead her into thinking that, before long, she must become his wife—tell her that it was her duty, that it was her father’s wish, when all the time it would seem to him that the mocking, angry spirit of the dead would be pervading his old home, looking at him furtively from his easy-chair, from his window and door, as he had seen him look a score of times before.

No: it was too horrible; he dared not.

Three times since Gartram’s death he had, with great effort, written kindly letters—he could not go to the Fort and speak—telling Claude that she was not to think him unfeeling for not calling upon her, but to attribute it to a delicacy upon his part—a desire not to intrude upon her at such a time; and that he was going away for a cruise, but would shortly be back, then he would call.

Three times he did set sail, and as many times did he come back into the harbour after being out for a few hours, to the disgust of the crew.

“The skipper’s mad,” they said; “drinks a deal too much, and he’ll have the ‘horrors’ if he don’t mind. He used to be able to cruise a bit, and now, if there’s a screw loose in the engine, she careens over, or there’s a cloud to wind’ard, he’s back into port, and here we are getting rusty for want of a run.”

It was always so. So soon as they were a few miles away, Glyddyr saw his rival taking advantage of his absence, and winning Claude over to his side, and with her the wealth that was to have been his.

“If I hadn’t been such a fool,” he would mutter, “I might have had it easy enough.” And he would sit day after day watching the Fort with his double glass, thinking of the wealth lying there—how easily it could be snatched by foul means, seeing how well he knew the place.

But common sense would step in then, and remind him that everything would be locked up now, perhaps sealed, and that Gartram’s arrangements were secure enough to set even burglars at defiance. No; it must be by fair play. He must lose no more time, but go to the Fort, and quietly show Claude that he was waiting, and contrive to make her confide in him—let him help her, so that he might gradually strengthen his position.

“And it wants no strengthening,” he said angrily; “it was her father’s wish, and we are betrothed.”

Then a fit of trembling assailed him, and he shrank from going up to the place, where it would seem as if Gartram were standing at the entrance, stern and forbidding, to keep him back.

He flew to brandy again, to steady his shaking nerves.

“No,” he gasped, as he drained his glass; “I can’t do it. I’m bad enough, but I can’t go and court the daughter after—”

“Curse you, be quiet!” he cried, smiting himself across the mouth. “Do you want to blab to everybody the story of the accident?”

He seized the binocular again to watch the way up to the Fort, in jealous dread lest Chris Lisle should go up there; but, though he was constantly watching, and often saw Chris go out from his lodgings, it was mostly with his rod upon his shoulder, and in the other direction—toward the bridge and the glen.

And so the days glided by, till one morning, as he sat watching, longing to go up to the Fort, but putting off his visit till time had made him more confident and firm, he suddenly caught sight of a figure—the tall, sturdy figure of a man—going up to the entrance-gate.

Glyddyr was all excitement on the instant. A stranger—a well-dressed man—going up there! What could it mean?

He hardly left the little porthole through which he watched that day, but was constantly directing his glasses at the grey building.

Towards afternoon he saw the tall man come out from the study window, and begin walking up and down with his hands behind his back; then he stopped in a corner sheltered from the wind, and directly after there came a faint film of blue smoke rising, and Glyddyr looked on as the stranger walked to and fro.

“One of the old man’s best cigars, I’ll be bound,” muttered Glyddyr, laying down the glass, and biting his nails. “Who can he be?”

Ten minutes after, as Glyddyr sat there, glass in hand, he saw two figures in black come out of the front entrance,

and go along the terrace a little way, to stand watching the sea.

He had it all there in miniature within the double circle of those glasses: Claude and Mary Dillon; and he could almost make out the expression upon the two pale countenances, till they moved slowly away and joined the tall gentleman who was walking up and down, and for the next hour they were in his company, ending by going in together, and the terrace was blank.

“A visitor—seems to be young—on familiar terms. There is no brother; I never heard of a cousin. Who can it be?”

Glyddyr gnawed his moustache, for here was a fresh complication. He could see no other reason for a visitor to be at Gartram’s house than as a fortune-hunter in search of Claude’s hand. This, then, was a new danger—from a man who was openly received there, and seemed quite at home. So that, while he was watching for the dangers of an assault upon the Fort by Chris Lisle, another had entered and taken possession.

“While I, like a cursed coward, have hung about, not daring to renew my suit.”

“Guv’nor aboard?”

Glyddyr had heard no splash of oars, nor the light jar of a boat touching his yacht side, but that voice made him start to his feet, and stand grinding his teeth.

“All right, I’ll go down.”

The next minute he was face to face with Gellow, dressed in a jaunty-looking yachting suit, and smoking a very strong cigar.

“Well, Guvnor,” he said, with an unpleasant grin, as he looked Glyddyr in the face, “there’s my hand if you like to take it; if you don’t, you can leave it alone, for it’s all the same to me. We parted huffy and short, and I’ll own up I was going to be very nasty. You kicked out, and it made me feel it. I was going to bite, Glyddyr, but I said to myself: ‘No; we’ve been good friends, and I won’t round upon him now.’”

“Why have you come down?”

“Now, come, don’t talk like that to a man who wants to help you. Come down to see you, of course.”

“For money—to badger me for payment of some of your cursed bills.”

“Oh, Glyddyr, my dear boy, what a fellow you are! No; I forgive you your nastiness, and I haven’t come down for money—there.”

“Then why have you come?”

“Two reasons.”

“Well?”

“To see how you were getting on.”

“That’s only one.”

“To have a chat with you about a certain lady.”

Glyddyr winced, and Gellow noticed it, but made no sign.

“We’ll talk that over after a bit. But how are you getting on over yonder?”

Glyddyr made an impatient gesture.

“Your digestion’s wrong, dear boy—that’s what’s the matter with you. But I congratulate you.”

“Con—what?”

“Gratulate you, dear boy. Of course, I saw all about that poor old chap dying of a drop too much.”

Glyddyr shivered.

“But it’s a grand thing for you. Easy for you to go and hang up your hat behind the door of as nice a bit of property as I ever saw. Pretty young wife, and your yacht, and a racehorse or two: you’ll be able to do that. By George, you’re a lucky man.”

Glyddyr drew a long breath, and Gellow threw himself on the padded seat.

“Might as well have shaken hands,” he said; “but, bah! it’s only form. Very sad about the old chap, but a grand stroke of fate for you. I’m glad you’ve stopped on here. Very wise: because, of course, there’s sure to be a shoal of poor relatives wanting to nibble the cake—your cake—our cake, eh?”

“So that’s why you’ve come down?”

“Yes. Been sooner, but a certain lady has taken up a lot of my time. You didn’t want her here now. I’ve plenty of time,

though. I knew you were on the spot, and that nothing would be done till the old gentleman had been put away quietly, and the lady had time to order the mourning. Oh, I say, Glyddyr! you'll excuse me, but—"

"But what, man?"

"Don't be so snaggy to a man who is helping you. But what bad form."

"I don't understand you."

"Look at yourself in the glass. Promised wife in deep mourning, and you in blue serge and a red tie. Why, you ought to be as solemn looking as an undertaker."

Glyddyr involuntarily glanced at himself in a mirrored panel at the side of the saloon.

"Change all that, dear boy. That's where I come in so useful, you see."

Glyddyr moved impatiently.

"You see, I'm not a lawyer, but I'm quite as good, or better. There are not many legal dodges I'm not up to, and you can take me with you to the house, introduce me to the young lady, and I can put her up to saving hundreds in rental on the estates. When are you going next?"

"I don't know."

"You'll want a bit of money, too. Don't stint yourself—I'm at your back all ready, so that you may cut it fat right through. By George, Glyddyr, you are lucky. The estate is about as good as a million of money."

"How do you know?" said Glyddyr savagely.

"How do I know, man?" said Gellow, laughing. "Used my wits. Fine thing wits. You began life with a pot of money. I began life with tuppence. But it's you fellows who get the luck, and turn out millionaires."

"Look here, Mr Gellow—"

"Nonsense, nonsense, man. How huffy you will be to your best friend! Come, you must want my help, so let's talk business over quietly. When are you going over yonder?"

"I told you I don't know."

"Gammon! Don't be absurd, man, and talk rough just because we were a little out last time I was down. That's all over. You talk as if you wanted to throw me over, and get your millions without my help; but you can't do it, my dear boy. Let alone what you owe me, you know, I must stand in here."

"Stand in! What do you mean?"

"You know."

"Why, you scoundrel—"

"Now, there you go again. You force me to take up the cudgels in my defence."

"Leave this room."

"Cabin, dear boy, cabin. But what for? To go ashore, walk up to Gartram's Fort—I mean Glyddyr's Fort, if I like it to be—ask to see the young lady, and tell her exactly what you are, and how you stand with a certain person."

Glyddyr stared at him helplessly.

"No: you wouldn't drive me to do such a thing—such a cowardly thing as it really would be—in self-defence. No, no, my dear boy; you are really too hard on an old friend—far too hard."

Glyddyr's teeth grated together in his impotent rage.

"Come, come, come, shake hands, and let me help you to pay your debts like a gentleman, and to drop into this good thing easily and nicely as can be."

There was no response.

"Tell me how matters stand. I know pretty well, but I should like to hear from you."

"You'll hear nothing from me."

"Very well. I'll tell you what I know. You can correct me where I am wrong, eh? Now, then, to begin with. Papa told the young lady she was to marry you. That ought to be good enough to carry the day, but—there's your little but again—there's a gentleman, a Mr Christopher Lisle—old friend, playmate, and the rest of it—whom the lady likes, eh?"

Glyddyr uttered an ejaculation.

"And then there's something else on. Tall, big gent stopping at the house. Young lady and he are shut up together a

deal."

"How do you know all this?" cried Glyddyr, thrown off his guard by a dread lest, after all, Claude should escape him.

"How do I know? Now, come; isn't there a tall, biggish gent staying at the house?"

Glyddyr nodded.

"Of course there is. I don't say things unless they are right. Now, what does he want?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know! Well, how long has he been there?"

"I don't know that either."

Gellow sat up suddenly, and glared at Glyddyr.

"Look here; you are not playing with a good thing, are you?"

Glyddyr shook his head.

"When were you there last?"

"Mr Gellow, I object to the line of cross-examination that you are taking."

"Do you? Then look here, Mr Parry Glyddyr, you'll have to object. If you don't know what's good for you, I must. Now, then: when were you there last?"

"I have not been there since Mr Gartram died."

"Well, I am!" cried Gellow. "You're engaged to the young lady, and haven't been since the father's death. Why?"

Glyddyr was silent.

"Good heavens, man, don't turn stunt like that. There isn't a tiff on, is there?"

"I felt it better not to go near the house while the poor girl is in so much trouble."

"Hark at him!" cried Gellow excitedly, "when every day he stops away may mean ten thousand pounds."

"She may have been ill, and I have been unwell," said Glyddyr sullenly.

"And all the time the old man's money might be running down the sink hole, or into the poor relatives' pockets. What are you at?"

"I tell you I couldn't go to the house with that old man lying there dead," cried Glyddyr, with a half-suppressed shudder.

"Look at him!" cried Gellow angrily, "shivering and shaking as if he had been on the drink for six months. Not afraid of a dead man, are you?"

"Your language is revolting," cried Glyddyr passionately.

"Well, ain't it enough to make any man revolt? Why, you ought to have hold there; you ought to have taken possession and looked after everything. It's as good as your own. Oh, where would you be if I didn't look after you. Now, then: you'd better get over there at once."

"No," said Glyddyr, "not yet;" and, in spite of himself, he shuddered, and then glanced at his visitor to see if it had been noticed.

"Look at him! Why, the old man isn't there now. There, I won't bully you, dear boy. I see how it is. Ring the bell; have in the steward, and let me mix you a pick-me-up. You're down, regularly down. I'll soon wind you up, and set you going again. I'm like a father to you."

Glyddyr obeyed in a weak, helpless way, ringing for the steward, and then ordering in the spirits.

"Bring in the *liqueurs* too, my lad—Curaçoa, Chartreuse, anything.—You want me now, old fellow, but you must take care. You're as white as wax, and your hand's all of a tremble. It won't do. You don't drink fair. Now, as soon as your man brings in the tackle, I'll give you a dose, and then you've got to go over yonder."

"No," said Glyddyr hoarsely, "no: not to-day."

"Yes, to-day. You don't want two chaps cutting the ground from under your feet.—Hah, that's your sort, steward. Better than being aboard ship, and having to put your hand in your pocket every time you want a drink. Needn't wait."

The man left the little saloon, and Gellow deftly concocted a draught with seltzer and *liqueurs*, which Glyddyr took with trembling hand, and tossed off.

“Talk about making a new man!” cried Gellow. “You feel better already, don’t you?”

Glyddyr nodded.

“Of course you do. Now, then, let’s take the boat and go over yonder. I’m curious to see the place.”

“No: impossible,” said Glyddyr, flushing.

“Not a bit impossible. Come on, and I’ll back you up.”

“No: I will not take you there.”

“Coming round more and more,” said Gellow, laughing. “Well, will you go alone?”

“Not to-day.”

“You’ll leave those two chaps to oust you out of what is your own?”

“No. I’ll go and call.”

“When?”

“Now: at once.”

“That’s your sort,” cried Gellow. “Never you say I’m not your friend.”

Ten minutes later the boat was manned, and Glyddyr was ready to step in, but Gellow laid his hand upon his arm, and drew him back.

“Don’t,” he said, almost with tears in his eyes; “don’t go like that, dear boy.”

“What do you mean?”

“Go and change that tie. If you haven’t got a black one, put on a white.”

Glyddyr obeyed him sullenly, and changed his tie before starting, while his visitor went down into the saloon, helped himself to a cigar, and took up a glass and the brandy decanter.

“A nip wouldn’t do me any harm,” he said with a laugh, and, removing the stopper, poured out a goodly dram.

It was half-way to his lips when he stopped, and poured it back.

“No,” he said quickly, “I want a clear head now; I can enjoy myself when I’ve got Master Glyddyr quite in trim.”

He went on deck, to begin smoking and asking questions of the two men left on board; but all the time he had an eye on Glyddyr’s boat, watching it till it reached the pier-steps, and then he was able to see its owner at intervals, till he disappeared among the houses.

After this, Gellow went below and used the binocular, fixing it upon the Fort till he made out Glyddyr approaching the house, where he stood in the entry for a few moments talking to a servant, and then turned away.

Gellow set down the glass, thrust his hands in his pockets, and stood with the cigar in the exact centre of his lips, puffing away rapidly—“For all the world like a steam launch,” said one of the men left on board when talking about it afterwards—till Glyddyr came on board.

“Out,” said the latter laconically.

“Fashionable slang for engaged with another chap,” said Gellow, with a sneer.

Glyddyr turned upon him fiercely.

“Don’t be waxey, dear boy,” said Gellow; “but it was quite time I came down.”

The progress of affairs at the Fort had been business-like meanwhile.

“I beg your pardon, miss.”

“It is nothing, Woodham; come in,” said Claude quietly, as the woman was withdrawing after giving an unheeded tap, and entering the room.

“Mr Trevithick’s compliments, ma’am, and would you see him in the study?”

“Yes, at once,” said Claude; and both thought how she had seemed to change during the past few weeks, from the slight girl into the dignified woman. “Come, Mary.”

“Isn’t it private business?” said Mary, shrinking back strangely.

“Yes, dear; our private business,” said Claude, and they passed out, Sarah Woodham holding open the door.

Claude gave her an affectionate smile, and crossed to the study; and, as the door closed after them, Sarah Woodham stood alone in the doorway, with her hands clasped and eyes closed as she muttered softly—

“And let me live for her—die for her, grateful for her undeserved love, in expiation—oh, my God, in expiation!”

“Ah!” said Trevithick, rising from a chair at the table covered with papers, and looking like the great, heavy, bashful Englishman he was, as he placed chairs opposite to where he had been seated, “I am sorry to trouble you, Miss Gartram, Miss Dillon too,” he said with a smile, as he beamed upon her.

Mary gave him an angry, resentful look, and he turned chapfallen on the instant, and became the man of business again, then cold, and seeming to perspire figures.

“Miss Dillon takes part in our little conference, Miss Gartram?” he said, rather stiffly.

“Of course. My cousin is, as it were, my sister, Mr Trevithick.”

“Yes, of course,” he said, as he slowly resumed his seat, pursed up his lips a little, and then he took up a pen, with the holder of which he scratched his head as he studied a paper before him on the table. “Are you ready, Miss Gartram?”

“Quite.”

“Well, then, I have very bad news for you, I am sorry to say.”

“I am used to bad news, Mr Trevithick.”

“My dear madam, I spoke too bluntly. I meant bad news as to money matters. Forgive me my rough way. I am a man of business—a mere machine.”

Claude smiled her thanks, for the words were uttered with a manly sympathy that was pleasant to her ears, and Mr Trevithick felt better, and beamed again at Mary.

Mary once more resented that beam, and Trevithick passed his hand through his hair, which more than ever resembled a brush, and sighed, and said—

“I have gone over all papers and accounts, Miss Gartram, over and over again, and an auditor may perhaps find an error, but for the life of me I can’t tell where, for I have studied the figures night and day ever since I came here last, and I cannot bring them right. I was wrong to the extent of one, seven, eight; but I found a receipt afterwards, evidently carelessly thrown into the drawer before entering, and I wish I could find the other.”

“What other?” said Mary sharply.

“That other,” said Mr Trevithick, beaming at her again, being silently snubbed, and collapsing once more. “As I make it, Miss Gartram,” he continued, in the most stern and business way, “you inherit from my late respected client, your father, the freehold quarry, this residence, also freehold and of great value, while the quarry is almost inexhaustible; the furniture and plate, good debts, etcetera, and five hundred and twenty-seven thousand eight hundred and forty-nine pounds, seven shillings and four-pence, including half-a-sheet of stamps.”

“Indeed?” said Claude, with a sigh.

“What bad news!” said Mary, with preternatural solemnity.

“That is to come, Miss Dillon,” said Trevithick, with a look of triumph which met so sharp a glance that it was turned aside on the instant, and he took refuge in his papers.

“Yes, madam,” he repeated, “that is to come. There is a very serious deficit, Miss Gartram. I find that there should have been five hundred and sixty-eight thousand, eight hundred and forty-nine, seven and four-pence—a deficit, you see, of forty-one thousand pounds—I need not add, a very large sum.”

“Yes,” said Claude quietly.

“Yes,” said Trevithick. “Well, madam, what have you to say?”

“Nothing, Mr Trevithick.”

“But really, my dear madam, I think you ought to say something about this sum, and give me some instructions what to do to recover it.”

Claude shook her head gravely.

“No,” she said, “I cannot regard this as a loss in the presence of one so much greater. Thank you very much, Mr Trevithick, for all that you have done; and now, pray, give me some advice as to what to do with this money.”

“Good, my dear madam, and that I am sure you will do.”

“I mean as to its investment.”

“To be sure. I was coming to that, for the sooner this heavy amount is out of your hands the more comfortable you will be.”

“I said something like this to my cousin a little while back, Mr Trevithick,” said Mary sharply. “Pray give her some better advice than that.”

The solicitor looked disconcerted, but he recovered himself.

“Well, Miss Gartram, I have plenty of clients who want money, and would agree to pay five per centum; but, excuse me, you don’t want to make money, and, as your father’s trusted legal adviser, I shall give his daughter the most valuable advice I can.”

“And what is that, Mr Trevithick?”

“Let me at once invest all this money for you in Consols. Only two and a half now, but there will be no fluctuations, no heavy dividend one year, nothing at all the next, and some day perhaps failure. It is very poor advice, perhaps, but safe as the Bank of England.”

“Take the necessary steps at once, Mr Trevithick,” said Claude decisively.

“Thank you, madam,” making a note; “it shall be done.”

“And that is all?” said Claude.

“Oh, no, my dear madam. The next question is this residence. If you will part with it, I have a client who will give a very handsome sum—its full value—and take it, furniture and all. Cash.”

“And is that all?” said Claude quietly.

“No, madam, there is the quarry. I should advise you to sell that to a small company. You can get your own price, for it is very valuable, and retain shares in it if you liked; but I should say no—sell; add the purchase money to that for this house, and let me invest it in Consols also.”

“No,” said Claude, rising, and speaking firmly, though with tears in her eyes; “the opening of that quarry was my father’s dearest enterprise, and the building of this house his greatest pleasure. While I live, his quarry and his people shall be my life business, and nothing shall be touched, nothing shall be changed in this his house.”

“My dear Miss Gartram,” said the lawyer, colouring like a girl, as he rose and stretched out his hand to take Claude’s, which he raised reverently to his lips, “I feel proud of the confidence you placed in me. I feel far more proud now, and I honour you for what you have just said. Your wishes shall be carried out. One word more. You will require some assistance over the commercial matters of the quarry—a gentleman learned in stone, and—”

“No, Mr Trevithick, I shall only want help as to the monetary affairs of the business. That I hope you will oblige me by supervising yourself. The workpeople will help me in the rest.”

The lawyer bowed, and once more beamed on Mary, but looked stern again.

“Now, have you done, Mr Trevithick?” said Claude.

“Not quite. The deficit.”

“If, as you say, there is a deficit, it must remain. There is enough.”

“But my late client would not have rested till it was put straight.”

“No,” said Claude dreamily; “but my father may have had some project of which we are ignorant. We had better wait. You will stay with us a few days longer?”

“I should say no,” replied Trevithick; “but I cannot conscientiously leave these premises till this money is safe. Till then, my dear madam, I am your guest.”

Claude would have spoken again, but the look she cast round the study brought up such a flood of painful memories that she could only make a sign to Mary to follow, as she hurried from the room.

“A woman any man might love,” said the lawyer, as soon as he was alone. “I hope no money-hunting scoundrel will catch her up. No; she is too strong-minded and firm. Now, what have I done to offend little Mary?” he added, with a sigh. “Bless her, I don’t get along with her as I could wish.”

He was quiet and thoughtful for a few moments, and then began tapping the table.

“Gartram had that forty—one thousand. His books say so, and he was correct as an actuary. Some one knew the secret of this room, and got at that cash.”

“Yes. I should like to find that out. It would please little Mary, too.”

Volume Three—Chapter Four.

Wimble Seizes the Clue.

“Love is blind,” said Michael Wimble, with a piteous sigh. “Yes, love is blind.”

He had been a great many times past Mrs Sarson's cottage, always with a stern determination in his breast to treat her with distance and resentment, as one who shunned him for the sake of her lodger; but so surely as he caught a glimpse of the pleasant lady at door or window, his heart softened, and he knew that if she would only turn to him, there was forgiveness for her and more.

Upon the morning in question he had had his constitutional, and found a splendid specimen of an auk washed up, quite fresh, which he meant to stuff and add to his museum.

An hour later a neat little servant-maid came to the door with a parcel and a letter.

"With missus's compliments."

Wimble took the letter and parcel, his hands trembling and a mist coming before his eyes, for it was Mrs Sarson's little maid.

"We are all wrong," he said, as he hurried in, his heart beating complete forgiveness, happiness in store, and everything exactly as he wished.

He turned back to the door, slipped the bolt, and then seated himself at the table with his back to the window, and cut the string of the parcel with a razor.

"She has relented, and it is a present," he said to himself, as he tingled with pleasure; "a present and a letter."

He stopped, with his fingers twitching nervously and his eyes going from parcel to note and back again.

Which should he open first—note or parcel?

He took the parcel, unfastened the paper, and found a neat cardboard box; and he had only to take off the lid to see its contents, but he held himself back from the fulfilment of his delight by taking up the note, opening it, and reading —

"Mrs Sarson would be greatly obliged by Mr Wimble's attention to the enclosed at once. To be returned within a week."

"Attention—returned—a week!" faltered Wimble; and with a sudden snatch he raised the lid, and sat staring dismally at its contents.

"And me to have seen her all these times and not to know that," he groaned, as he rested his elbows on the table and his brow upon his hands, gazing the while dismally into the box. "Ah! false one—false as false can be. Why, I've gazed at her fondly hundreds o' times, but love is blind, and—yes," he muttered, as he took the object from the box and rested it upon his closed fist in the position it would have occupied when in use, "there is some excuse. As good a skin parting as I ever saw. One of Ribton's, I suppose."

There was a long and dismal silence as Michael Wimble, feeling that he was thoroughly disillusioned, slowly replaced the object in its box.

"How can a woman be so deceitful, and all for the sake of show? And me never to know that she wore a front!"

"All, well!" he sighed, "I can't touch it to-day," and rising slowly he replaced it in the box, dropped the note within, roughly secured the packet, and opened a drawer at the side.

As he pulled the drawer sharply out, something rolled from front to back, and then, as the drawer was out to its full extent, rolled down to the front.

He picked it out, dropped the cardboard box within, and shut it up, ignoring the bottle he held in his hand as he walked away to slip the bolt back and throw open the door.

He was just in time to receive a customer in the shape of Doctor Asher, who entered and nodded.

"I want you, Wimble," he said. "When can you come up? Beginning to show a little grey about the roots, am I not?"

"Yes, sir, decidedly," said Wimble, as the doctor took off his hat, and displayed his well-kept dark hair.

"When will you come, then?"

"When you like, sir," said Wimble, unconsciously rubbing the tip of his nose with the cork of the little bottle he held in his hand.

"To-morrow afternoon, then," said the doctor sharply; "and you needn't shake the hair dye in my face."

"Beg pardon, sir? Oh, I see! That's not hair dye, sir."

"What is it, then? New dodge for bringing hair on bald places?"

He held out his hand for the bottle, and the barber passed it at once.

"Oh, no, sir," he said, "nothing of that kind."

With the action born of long habit, the doctor took out the cork, sniffed, held the bottle up to the light, shook it,

applied a finger to the neck, shook the bottle again, tasted the drug at the end of his finger, and quickly spat it out.

“Why, Wimble, what the dickens are you doing with chloral?”

“Nothing, sir, nothing; only an old bottle.”

“Throw it away, then,” said the doctor hastily. “Don’t take it. Very bad habit. Recollect that’s how poor Mr Gartram came to his end. Good-day. Come round, then, at three.”

“Yes, sir, certainly, sir; but you forgot to—”

“Oh, I beg pardon. Yes, of course,” said the doctor, handing back the bottle, and then, beating himself with his right-hand glove, he walked hastily out of the place.

Wimble stood looking after his visitor till he was out of sight, and then walked slowly back into his museum to operate upon the dead bird, which lay where he had placed it upon a shelf ready for skinning.

“Ah,” he said mournfully, as he rubbed his nose slowly with the cork of the little bottle, “what a world of deception it is. There is nothing honest. Were all more or less like specimens. A front, and me not to have known it all this time. If she had taken me sooner into her confidence, I wouldn’t have cared. The doctor did. Hah! I wonder who ever suspected him, with his clear dark locks, as I keep so right. Yes, he’s a deceiver, and without me what would he look like in a couple of months?—Deceit, deceit, deceit.—And I trusted her so. It’s taking a mean advantage of a man.

“Well, it was a mark of confidence, and perhaps I have been all wrong. It shows she is waiting to trust me, and ought I to? Well, we shall see.”

Michael Wimble looked a little brighter, and then his eyes fell upon the bottle, which he shook as the doctor had shaken it, took out the cork, applied a finger to it, and tasted in the same way, quickly spitting it out as he became aware of the sharp taste.

“What did he say: chloral? Don’t take any of it. No, I sha’n’t do that.”

Wimble suddenly became thoughtful and dreamy as he replaced the cork, and he seemed to see the bright ray of light once more on the dry patch of sand beyond where the tide had reached.

Then he thought about Gartram’s death by chloral.

“Might have been the same bottle,” he said thoughtfully; “took what he wanted, and then threw it out of the window.”

He looked at the tiny drop in the bottom, turned it over and over, and his thoughts seemed to run riot in his brain, till he grew confused at their number. But after a time he followed the one theme again.

“What a piece of evidence to have brought up at the inquest. How important a witness I should have been. But why should he have thrown the bottle out of the window? He didn’t poison himself. He wasn’t the man to do that. Thousands upon thousands of money. Everything he could wish for. Regular king of the place. He wouldn’t do that—he couldn’t.”

Wimble stood with his brow wrinkled up, and then all at once, as if startled by the suddenness of a thought, he dropped the bottle on the oilcloth and drew back, gazing at it in a horrified way, his eyes dilating, and the white showing all round.

“Somebody must have given it to him.”

“No, no. They wouldn’t do that; it would be murder. No one would try to murder him.”

He passed his hand over his forehead, and drew it away quite wet.

“His money!” he half whispered, as the thought seemed to grow and grow. “They say he kept thousands up there. Or some one who hated him, as lots of people did.”

Wimble dropped into his shaving chair, and sat thinking of the numbers of workpeople who had quarrelled with Gartram and spoken threateningly; but he did not feel that it was possible for any one of these to have done such a deed.

“Some one who hated him—some one who wanted to get rid of him—some one who, who—no, no, no, it’s too horrible to think about. I wouldn’t know if I could.”

He lifted the little bottle between his finger and thumb, and drew back with his arm extended to the utmost to hurl the little vessel across the road, and right out toward the sea.

But he checked himself thoughtfully, drew back, and went across his shop to the side. Here he stood, bottle in hand, thinking deeply, before slowly opening the drawer and placing it in a corner.

“It would be very valuable,” he said softly, “if that was the bottle some one used to poison the old man; and if it was, why, I haven’t got a specimen in my museum that would attract people half so much. ‘The Danmouth murder; the bottle that held the poison,’ Why, they’d come in hundreds to see it.”

He took the phial out again, for it seemed to have a strange fascination for him, and after staring at it till his hands

grew moist, he took out a piece of white paper, carefully rolled it therein, and placed it in another drawer, which he had to unlock, and fastened afterwards with the greatest care.

“That bottle’s worth at least a hundred pound,” he said huskily, as he put the key in his pocket. “It will be quite a little fortune to me.

“Somebody who hated him—somebody who wanted him out of the way,” he said, as he tapped his teeth with the key. “No, I can’t think, and won’t try any more. I’m not a detective, and I don’t want to know.

“Some one who hated him and had quarrelled with him, and who wanted him out of the way.”

In spite of his determination not to think any more of the subject, it came back persistently, and at last, to clear his brain and drive away the thoughts, he took down his hat, and determined to let the museum take care of itself for an hour, while he walked down along the beach.

He knew, as he came to this determination, that he would go straight down beneath the Fort, and look at the spot where he found the bottle; but, all the same, he felt that he must go, and, putting on his hat, he took the key out from inside of the door, and standing just inside the shop, began to put the key into the outer portion of the lock, as the thought came again more strongly than ever—

“Some one who hated him and had quarrelled with him, and wanted him out of the way.”

He was in the act of closing his door as a quick step came along the path, and as the door closed, a voice said to some one—

“How do, Edward?” and the speaker passed on with creel on back and salmon rod over his shoulder.

Wimble darted back into the museum, shut the door, and stood trembling in the middle of the place.

“Oh!” he said, in a hoarse whisper, as the great drops stood out upon his brow. “What did Brime say?”

He shivered, and his voice dropped into a whisper.

“Mr Chris Lisle! He was there that night!”

Volume Three—Chapter Five.

Mr Wimble is in Doubt.

“Want lodgings, sir?” said Reuben Brime taking his short black pipe from his lips, and gazing straight out to sea, as if he thought there was plenty of room for a good long rest out there. Then straightening himself from having a good, thoughtful lean on the cliff rail, where he had been having his evening’s idle after the day’s work done, he turned, and, looking thoughtfully at a youngish man in tweeds, as if he were a plant not growing quite so satisfactorily as could be wished, he said again, in a tone of mild inquiry,—“Lodgings?”

“Yes, lodgings,” said the new-comer shortly.

“Well, I was trying to think of some, sir; and I could have told you of the very thing if something as I had in hand had come up—I mean off.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes, sir,” said the gardener thoughtfully. “I don’t mind who knows it. I’d got as nice a little cottage in my eye as any man would wish to have there, the money to buy all the furniture, as much more as was wanted, theirs being very old; and I could have said to you, ‘There’s a bedroom and a setten’-room, and the best of attendance.’”

“But it is not in hand, eh?”

“In hand, sir? No, sir; nothing like in hand.”

“How’s that?”

“Ah, well, I don’t care who knows it now, sir. Mebbe if she heard how it’s talked about, and the man’s disappointment, she may get better, and alter her mind.”

“She? The lady?”

“Yes, sir; the lady, as I may say I’d engaged myself to; but she’s took bad and strange, and I suppose it’s all off.”

“Ah, well, I’m sorry to hear that,” said the stranger, looking amused, and as if he thought the man he addressed was a little wanting in brains.

“Thank you, sir, kindly. Lodgings?—no. You see this isn’t a seaside place.”

“Then what do you call it?” said the stranger.

“Call it, sir? Well, we calls it Danmouth, or, mostly, Dan’orth, because you see it’s shorter, and more like one word.”

“Oh, yes, I know the name; but what do you call it if it isn’t a seaside place?”

“I calls it a port, sir, and as good a little port as there is anywheres about this coast. Dinton and Bartoe and Minxton’s seaside places, with lots of visitors and bathing machines, and bands and Punch and Judies. Lodgings, eh? Let me see. Lodgings for a gentleman? What do you say to the Harbour Inn? They’ve got as good a drop of beer there as a man could wish to drink.”

“No, no, I don’t want to be at a public house. I’m here for a fortnight’s fishing, and I want nice, comfortable apartments.”

“And you want comfortable apartments?” said Brime respectfully, as he rubbed his sunburned face with the stem of his pipe. “Fishing, eh? You mean pottering about with a rod and line; not going with a boat and nets?”

“Quite right.”

“I’ve got it,” said the gardener. “Mrs Sarson; she lets lodgings. Stop a moment. I’ll take you on to the museum.”

“Museum! Hang it all, man, I’m not a specimen.”

Brime laughed for the first time for a month.

“No, sir, you don’t look as if you was stuffed. I was going to take you to our barber’s. He knows everything; and he’ll tell us whether Mrs Sarson can take you in.”

“Is it far—the museum?”

“Only yonder. Just where you see that man looking out of the door.”

“Ah, yes,” said the stranger sharply. “Yours seems a busy place.”

“Tidy, sir, tidy.”

“Whose castle’s that?”

“Mr Gartram’s, sir. Leastwise it was. He’s gone.”

“Oh! Dead?”

“Yes, sir. The hardest and the best master as ever was. Some on us’ll miss him, I expect.”

“Curious kind of master, my lad, and likely to be missed. Gartram? Oh, yes, I know; the stone quarry man. Mr Trevithick, in our town, has to do with his affairs.”

“If you talked all night, sir, you couldn’t say a truer word than that. Mr Trevithick, sir, very big man, lawyer.”

“Yes; they call him Jumbo our way.”

Kck!

Brime burst out into a monosyllabic half laugh, and then stopped short as Wimble was drawing back into his den to let them pass.

“Here, Mr Wimble, sir, this gent wants to ask something about Mrs Sarson.”

“Eh! Yes!” said the barber sharply; and the suspicious look which had been gathering of late in his face grew more intense. “Step in, sir, pray,” he added eagerly.

“Oh, that’s not worth while now,” said the stranger, passing his hand over his chin. “Give you a look in to-morrow. My friend here thought you could tell me about Mrs Sarson’s lodgings.”

“Yes,” said Brime; “and—of course, this gent wants to go fishing, and Mr Lisle’s always fishing.”

“Mr Lisle?” said the stranger. “Christopher Lisle?”

“That’s the man, sir,” said the barber sharply. “You know anything about him, sir?”

“Only that he has a good heavy account with our bank.”

Wimble looked sharply at the stranger, with his head on one side, and more than one eager question upon his lips. But the new-comer felt that he had made a slip by talking too freely, and prevented him by asking a question himself.

“Do you think Mrs Sarson could accommodate me?”

“No, sir,” said Wimble, looking at him searchingly. “No: she has no room, I am sure. Take the gentleman up to Mrs Lampton’s at the top of the cliff road. I daresay she could accommodate him.”

“Why, of course,” said Brime; “the very place. I never thought of that.”

“No, Mr Brime,” said Wimble patronisingly, as he looked longingly at the visitor with cross-examination in his breast. “Say I recommended the gentleman.”

“All right. Come along, sir, I’ll show you; and if you want a few worms for fishing, I’m your man.”

“Worms?” said the visitor, laughing. “I always use flies.”

“Most gents do, sir. Mr Chris Lisle does. But the way to get hold of a good fish in a river is with a whacking great worm.”

“Do you know Mr Lisle?”

“Know him? Poor young man, yes.”

“Poor? I don’t call a gentleman who lately came in for a big fortune poor.”

“Big fortune, sir? Mr Chris Lisle come in for a big fortune, sir? Hurrah! Our young lady will be glad.”

The visitor was ready to pull himself up again sharp, for this was another mistake.

Brime stopped, smiling, at a pretty cottage, where fuchsias and hydrangeas were blooming side by side with myrtles, and was going off, when the visitor offered him a shilling for his trouble.

“Thankye, sir, and I hope you’ll be comfortable,” said the gardener, descending the chief path.—“Well, I am glad. Come in for a large fortune. Now, if I were him, I’d just send Mr Glyddyr to the right about, and get the business settled as soon as it seemed decent after master’s death. He is a good sort, is Mr Lisle, and he’s fond enough of her. Why, they’ll be married now, and keep up the old place just as it is; and if I speak when we want more help, he isn’t the gent to tell a hard-working man to get up a bit earlier and work a bit later. Not he. He made a friend of me when he gave me that half-sov’rin, and I made a friend of him when I caught him. My, what a lark it was when I dropped on to him, and he thought it was the governor! I know he did.”

Reuben Brime smiled as he had not smiled for days, and a minute or two later he grinned outright. From his point of vantage, high up the cliff side, he could see to the mouth of the glen, and there, to his intense delight, he could just make out two figures in deep mourning, one tall and graceful, and the other short, and her head low down between her shoulders, walking away from him in the distance, and, not far behind, a sturdy-looking man in light brown tweeds, with a fishing creel slung at his back, and a rod over his shoulder, trying hard to overtake the pair in front.

“Wouldn’t give much for Mr Glyddyr’s chance,” thought Brime, as he watched the trio out of sight. “Been an awfully cloudy time, but the sun’s coming strong now, and things’ll grow. What a fellow I am to give up because she was a bit off. Friends with the new guv’nor means friends with the new missus, and as Sarah about worships her, and’ll do what she tells her, why, it’ll come right in the end.”

He walked on, building castles as he went, and in the height of his elation he said, half aloud—

“It’s only six pounds a year, and I could let it till she said yes. Hang me if I don’t take the cottage after all.”

“Well, Mr Brime,” said a voice at his elbow, “did Mrs Lampton take the gentleman in?”

“Eh? Oh, I don’t know, as I didn’t stop. But she’d be sure to.”

“Oh, yes, it will be all right,” said Wimble. “But you’ll come in, Mr Brime?”

“No. I think I’ll get back now, and finish my pipe by the cliff.”

“With a beard like that, sir? Better have it off.”

“Eh? No, it isn’t shaving day.”

“Your beard grows wonderfully fast, Mr Brime, believe me, sir. I wonder at a young man like you being so careless of his personal appearance. You’ll be wanting to marry some day, sir, and there’s nothing goes further with the ladies than seeing a man clean-shaved.”

It was not quite a random shot, for Wimble had wheedled out a little respecting the gardener’s future, and he had only to draw back with a smile for the man to follow him in, passing his hand thoughtfully over his chin, wondering whether it had anything to do with the very severe rebuff he had more than once received.

Once more in the chair, tied up in the cloth, and with his face lathered, he was at Wimble’s mercy; and as the razor played about his nose and chin, giving a scrape here and a scrape there, the barber cross-examined the gardener in a quiet, unconcerned way, that would have been the envy of an Old Bailey counsel. In very few minutes he had drawn out everything that the gardener had learned, and so insidiously soft were the operator’s words, that Brime found himself unconsciously inventing and supplying particulars that the barber stowed up in his brain cell, ready for future use.

“There, Mr Brime,” he said, after delivering the final upper strokes with a dexterity that was perfect, though thrilling, from the danger they suggested, “I think you will say, sir, that a good shave is not dear at the price.”

These last words were accompanied by little dabs with a wet sponge, to remove soapy patches among the thick whiskers, and then the towel was handed, and the victim walked to the glass.

“Yes, it does make a difference in a man,” he said, as he dabbed and dried.

“Difference, sir? It’s a duty to be clean-shaved. To a man, sir, speaking from years of experience, a beard is hair,

natural hair. To a woman, sir, it is nothing of the kind. A woman cannot help it, sir; it is born in her, but to her, sir, a beard is simply dirt."

"Hah!" ejaculated the gardener, and he thought deeply.

"Yes, sir; I've often heard them call it so. Even on the properest man, it is, in their eyes—dirt."

Brime paid and took his departure, while Wimble plunged at once among his own dark thoughts.

"That man is blind as a mole," he said, "and can see nothing which is not just before his eyes. He can dig a garden, but he cannot dig down into his own brain. How horrible! how strange! And how the slackest deeds will come out in a way nobody who is guilty suspects. Yesterday, quite a poor man—to-day, very rich—a heavy banking account—come in for a fortune. Yes, it's all plain enough now. Now, ought I to do anything—and if so, what?"

Volume Three—Chapter Six.

Two Meetings.

After a long stay within the walls of the Fort, Claude had yielded to her cousin's importunity, and gone out.

She felt the truth of the French saying before she had gone a hundred yards from her gates. It was only the first step that cost, for, as she passed along the little row of houses facing the harbour, there was a smile from one, a look of glad recognition from another, and several of the rough fishermen who were hanging about waiting for signs of fish doffed their hats with a hearty "How do, miss?"

A thrill of pleasure ran through her, and a feeling of awakening as from a time of sloth, as she realised that life could not be passed as a time for mourning.

She turned to speak to Mary, after another or two of these friendly salutations to the lady of the Fort, and was met by a smile and a nod.

"There, I told you so, Claudie. It was quite time you came out. It was a duty."

Claude felt her cheeks burn slightly as she noted the direction in which they were going, but she kept on, feeling truly that she would have felt the same whichever direction they had taken.

It was a glorious evening, with the sun turning the whole of the western sky to orange and gold; and, as she breathed in the soft elastic air, watched the brilliant shimmer of colour as of liquid flames at sea, she listened to the murmurs of the ripple among the boulders, where the little river ran swiftly down from the glen, and the twitter of the birds in birch and fir. The joyous sensation that filled her breast was painful, even to drawing tears.

It was to her like the first walk after a long illness, when there is a feeling akin to ecstasy, and life seems never to have been so beautiful before. She could not speak, but wandered on beside her cousin—over the bridge, where they paused to gaze down at the golden-amber water, sparkling and foaming on its way to the sea. Ever onward and up the glen, but not far before the sound of a large pebble, kicked by a heavy boot out into the rippling water, where it fell with a splash, told them that they were not alone, and the next minute Chris had overtaken them and held out his hand.

There was a look almost of reproach in Claude's eyes, as, with quivering lip, she laid her hand in his, and yielded it, as he gently and reverently carried it to his lips.

"I have not been to you; I have not written," he said, in a deep voice. "I felt that it was a duty to respect your sorrow. I have felt for you none the less deeply."

She stood looking gravely in his eyes, and he went on—

"Under the painful circumstances, I could not come to you; I was driven from your side. But Claude, dearest," he continued, with the passion within him making his words vibrate, as it were, in her breast, and her heart flutter as it had never beaten before. "I love you more clearly than ever; and listen, darling—I would not say it, but cruel words have been spoken about my mercenary thoughts."

"Don't, don't," she murmured.

"But one word—for your sake."

"No, no," she cried piteously.

"Then for mine," he pleaded.

"What do you wish to say?"

"Then I am no longer the poor beggar I was called."

"Chris!"

"But comparatively rich, love. I only said that so that those who would see evil in my acts may meet something to act as a shield to cast off these malicious darts. No, no, don't withdraw your hand, dearest. I know how you have

suffered. I have suffered too—sorrow for you—bitter jealousy of that man."

"Chris," she whispered, with a look of appeal, "for pity's sake! I am weak and ill—I cannot bear it."

"Forgive me," he cried; "what a selfish brute I am! There, I hold your dear hand once more, and I am satisfied. I will not say another word, only go and wait patiently. My Claude cannot be anything but all that is kind and just to me. I'll go and wait."

She stood looking in his eyes, and he clasped her hand, while the soft, ruddy glow which struck right up the glen seemed to bathe them both in its warm light. Her lips moved to speak, but no sound came, though her eyes were full of joy and pride in the brave, manly young fellow whose words had thrilled her to the core.

"If it could have been," she felt. And then a pang of agony shot through her, and she shuddered.

"How worn and thin you look, darling," he said tenderly. "My poor, poor girl."

This seemed to unloose the frozen words within her; the tears gushed from her eyes, and she tried to withdraw her hand, but it was too tightly held.

"Chris," she said at last, and she clung to his hand as she spoke, "I do not doubt you. I know all you say is the simple truth, but it seems cruel to me now."

"Cruel! My darling!"

"Hush, pray hush. It would be cruel, too, in me to let you speak like this about what can never, never be."

"Claude! What are you saying?"

"That I have my poor father's words still ringing in my ears. He forbade it, and I cannot go in opposition to his washes."

"Claude!"

"I cannot help it. It is better that the words should be spoken now, and the pain be over. Chris, when we meet again it must be as friends."

"No," he cried passionately; "you must meet me as my promised wife."

"It is impossible," she said faintly, after a painful pause. "No, Chris, as my friend—brother, if you wish, but that is at an end."

"But why—no, no; don't answer me. You are ill and hysterical, dear. You think seriously of words that will grow fainter and of less import as the time goes on. There, come. Let us put all this aside now. I am content that we have met, and you know the truth—that I have spoken, and so plainly, once again."

"No; you must hear me now," she said with a sigh, that seemed to be torn from her breast.

"Well, then, speak," he said, with a smile full of pity.

"Once more," she said, after a pause; "you must never speak to me again as you have to-night."

"Why?"

"You know, Chris, my father's wish."

"The result of a mistake. Claude, you love me."

She made an effort once more to free herself, and stood with her eyes fixed upon the ground.

"Claude," he cried passionately, "you will tell me that."

"I cannot," she said firmly.

He let her hand fall from between his, and a curiously heavy look came slowly into his face as the jealous anger within him began to seethe.

"You cast at me your father's words," he said hurriedly.

"I am obliged to remind you of his wish."

"That you should marry this man, this Glyddyr. Claude, you cannot, you dare not tell me this."

"I do not tell you this," she said, quickly and excitedly. "No, that is impossible. I could not be his wife: I must not be yours."

"You are speaking in riddles."

"Riddles that you can easily read," she said sadly. "Chris, my life is marked out for me. I have my duties waiting. I cannot, I will not marry a man I do not love, but I will not disobey my poor dead father and listen to you. Good-bye now—I can bear no more. Some day we can meet again patiently and calmly as in the happy old times."

“Yes,” he said, with the angry feeling passing away, “I shall wait contented, for you will not marry this man—you promise me that?”

“Claude, dear; Claude.”

They had neither of them given Mary a thought, and she had discreetly walked away but to return now quickly, and as they raised their eyes it was to see her close at hand, and some fifty yards away Parry Glyddyr advancing fast.

Claude saw that Glyddyr looked white and strange, but it was the rage in Chris Lisle’s eyes which startled her, as Glyddyr strode up, with extended hand, ignoring the presence of her companion.

“Claude, don’t leave them alone, as there’ll be trouble,” whispered Mary, and her cousin’s words seemed to cast a lurid light upon the situation.

She did not give Glyddyr her hand, but turned to Chris and said gently—

“Good-bye. It will be better that we should not meet again—not yet.”

He took the hand gravely, let his own close over it in a firm, warm clasp, and released it silently.

“Mary.”

Claude turned to go, and her cousin went to her side white as ashes. Glyddyr stood looking from one to the other, as if hesitating what to do.

“Claude, do you hear me,” whispered Mary.

“Mr Glyddyr, are you going this way?” said Claude in a low deep voice.

“Yes, of course,” he cried, with his face lighting up, and darting a look of triumph at his rival, who stood motionless, with one hand resting upon his rod as though it were a spear, he went on down the glen by Claude’s side.

“Mr Lisle—Chris—do you not hear? Good-bye.”

Chris started back as it were into life, and saw that Mary had run back and laid her hand in his.

“Ah, little woman,” he said, with a gentle, pitying tone in his voice, “I was thinking, I suppose. Good-bye, Mary, and don’t fall in love, dear; it’s a mistake.”

“Chris,” she cried, with the tears in her beautiful eyes, as she gazed at the broad-shouldered sturdy fellow, “why do you talk like that?”

“Why do I talk like that?” he said bitterly. “Because I am a weak fool, I suppose. Look there.”

He pointed down the glen.

“Chris!”

“There, run after them, and play propriety, little lady,” he said bitterly. “Or no—they do not miss you; better stop behind, or shall I see you home?”

“Chris, dear Chris,” she whispered.

“Don’t talk to me,” he cried. “I’m half mad. Good-bye, Mary, good-bye.”

He turned sharply and hurried away up the glen, and as Mary watched, she heard his reel begin to sing as he walked on down by the stream, making casts blindly among the boulders.

“Poor fellow,” she said, as she turned and walked swiftly away. “I wish I had not said a word.”

She gave one more glance back and hurried after the retreating pair. Had she looked long enough she would have seen Chris Lisle stride into the first clump of trees and throw himself down with his face buried in his arms, and there he was lying still long after darkness had come on, and the stars were peering down and glistening in the rushing stream.

Volume Three—Chapter Seven.

Glyddyr Endorses a Note.

“There, I’m off back to London town to keep a certain party quiet. You are going on all right here. You are bound to win, but don’t be rash—play her very carefully.”

Glyddyr nodded.

“And now take my advice; go and see a doctor—that man—what’s his name? Get him to set you up, dear boy. There: good-bye. Bless you, my son. It’s perhaps a million. Don’t play with it.”

“Haven’t got it to play with.”

“No; but you will have it by-and-by. There: once more, good-bye. Be gentle with her. Go early in the day, and promise me you’ll call at the doctor’s.”

“Yes, I promise,” said Glyddyr; and he stood watching Gellow, as he was rowed ashore, cursing him bitterly the while, but confessing in his own mind that he was right.

“Yes, I’ll go and see Asher,” he muttered. “He’ll set me up. I must go on with it. I’ll be a good husband to her. It’ll be like doing penance for the past—ugh!”

He shuddered and looked ghastly.

“It’s being low makes me think of it so much,” he continued. “Yes; as soon as the boat gets back I’ll go and see Asher.”

Vacillating to a degree, he was firm in this, and stepped into the boat as soon as it reached the yacht, ordering the men to put him ashore, and this done, the men watching him as he walked sharply away, clinging to the hope that a strong tonic would calm his feelings and give him strength to go on with his plans, and trusting to time to dull the agony of his thoughts.

“Seems horrible to go on,” he said. “But it will be like penance; and, poor old boy, he did wish it.” Then aloud —“Doctor Asher at home?”

He was shown into the doctor’s consulting-room to be warmly received.

“Yes, of course,” said the doctor. “I don’t wonder you are a bit run down. I’ll soon set you right.”

Then after a short examination, and a little professional business.

“Wonder whether he knows what’s really the matter with me;” thought Glyddyr.

“Wonder whether he thinks me such a fool as not to know that he is saturated with brandy?” said the doctor to himself, as he composed a draught, while Glyddyr took up a card box from the chimney-piece, opened it mechanically, and then, as the doctor raised his hand to the shelf where the chloral bottle stood, the box slipped through Glyddyr’s fingers, fell on the edge of the fender, burst open, and the cards were scattered over the rug, and beneath the fireplace.

“I beg your pardon.”

“Oh, never mind! Don’t stop to pick them up.”

Glyddyr paid no heed, but nervously collected the pack together, rose with them in his hands, and then, watching the doctor as he wrote out the directions on a label, involuntarily, and as if naturally from feeling the cards in his hands, began to shuffle them slowly.

The doctor smiled.

“You play a bit, I see.”

“Oh! yes, of course,” said Glyddyr, hastily setting down the pack. “Confoundedly stupid of me to drop them.”

“Nonsense! Very unprofessional to have them here, eh?”

“You play, then?” said Glyddyr, repeating the doctor’s query.

“Not often. No one to play with. A game now and then would do you good.”

“Yes, yes,” said Glyddyr, eagerly. “Come on board. I’m very dull there.”

“Most happy if you’ll have a game here sometimes.”

Glyddyr accepted the proposal so readily that in a few minutes they were seated together at piquet, and when the patient rose he was ten pounds in the doctor’s debt.

“I shall have to give you my IOU, doctor,” said Glyddyr, “I have no cash down here.”

“All right, my dear sir,” said the doctor, smilingly; and Glyddyr wrote the indebtedness upon half a sheet of notepaper, to go away feeling better for his visit, and after the doctor had promised to go on board the yacht that night and give him his revenge.

This was given, Glyddyr managing to win twenty pounds, and receiving back his IOU and a ten-pound note.

“You London gentlemen are too clever for me,” said the doctor, laughingly. “But never mind; I shall have to win that back.”

“Mustn’t win much off him if I’m to take his medicine,” said Glyddyr to himself. “Might give me too strong a dose. Ugh! What a fool I am to think such things as that.”

“I believe he’s half a sharper,” said the doctor to himself as he was rowed ashore. “But never mind; let him marry her. He will be another patient to the good, and I dare say I can manage him, clever as he is.”

The next day Glyddyr called at the Fort, and found Claude at home. She received him with Mary by her side, and the triumphant feelings that filled his breast after the last encounter with Chris slowly filtered away.

He was not himself he knew, feeling nothing like so strong and well, through having gone to bed the previous night perfectly sober, and refraining that morning from taking what he called a peg to string himself up, for fear that the odour should accompany him on his visit.

He told himself that he never showed to worse advantage, for he was troubled all through the visit by a horrible sensation of nervous dread, starting at every sound, and hurriedly bringing his visit to a close.

On the other hand, Claude thought she had never liked her visitor so well.

“He seemed so full of respectful deference,” she said.

“Yes,” said downright Mary, “but I wish he would take a dislike to the place. I’m sick of seeing his yacht moored in the harbour. It’s beginning to blow. I wish the wind would blow it right away.”

But Glyddyr had not the least intention of going. In spite of his hurried ending to his visit, he came away feeling better.

“It’s natural that I should feel uncomfortable there, but it will soon wear off, and it’s plain enough to see that I am gradually becoming welcome. Gellow’s right,” he said, recalling one of their conversations. “Patience is the thing.

“I’m all right. Wish I could feel like this when I am there.”

“Good-morning.”

“Ah, doctor.”

“Why it’s ‘ah, patient.’ You’re better, Glyddyr, decidedly. You must keep on with that tonic.”

“Yes, ever so much better,” said Glyddyr, who was flushed with hope. “Come on board and dine with me.”

“Thanks, no. I’m not such a very bad sailor, but not good enough to enjoy my dinner with the table dancing up and down. Going to be a gale.”

“Humph! Yes, I suppose it will be a bit rough, even if we shift the moorings. Never mind, come and dine with me at the hotel and we can have a private room, and a hand at cards with our coffee.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said the doctor, hesitating.

“Yes, come,” said Glyddyr eagerly. “I’m dull and hipped. Want a companion. Do me more good than your tonics. At seven.”

“Very well,” said the doctor, “seven be it. Do me good, too, perhaps,” he muttered, as he went away. “Better for him to marry her. Yes, I can turn him round my finger.”

He went home musing deeply, and, punctual to time, joined Glyddyr at the hotel, to find him looking flushed and excited.

“Hallo! That’s not the tonic,” he said.

“Eh! Tonic? No, it’s the weather. Storm always affects me a little. I was obliged to have a pint of champagne to pull me up.”

The doctor laughed as he shook his head, for he saw in the half-wrecked man before him, a life annuity, if the cards were rightly played, and during the dinner he once or twice told himself that his game was to hurry on the engagement between Claude and Glyddyr.

“If he is wise,” the doctor said to himself, “Glyddyr will play the trump card. It would take the trick. Your father’s wish, my dear. Poor old gentleman.”

They parted almost sworn friends, for the real cards had been kindly to both, and neither had lost or won.

“It’s rather rough for going on board to-night,” said the doctor.

“Pish! Not a bit I’m not afraid of a few waves.”

“Well, don’t get drowned.”

“Those who are bound to be hanged will never be drowned,” came into Glyddyr’s head as the doctor departed, and the old saw sent quite a chill through him.

“Confound it. What a coward I am,” he muttered angrily. “I felt so much better all the evening. Here,” he said roughly to the waiter, who had come in accidentally, as waiters do when the guests begin to stir. “My bill.”

That document was quite ready; and after glancing at it, Glyddyr took a bank-note from his pocket-book, and laid it upon the tray.

The waiter bowed, went out, and returned with the note, crossed to a side table where there was a blotting case and inkstand, both of which he brought to where Glyddyr was smoking.

“What’s the matter? Not a bad one, is it?”

“Oh dear no, sir,” said the waiter, with a deprecatory cough, “only master said would you mind putting your name on the back?”

“Damn your master,” cried Glyddyr, snatching the pen and scribbling down his name. “There: you ought to know me by this time.”

“Yes, sir; of course, sir; but we always do that with notes, sir.”

“Get out, and bring me my change.”

“Yes, sir; directly sir.”

“It was your father’s wish, Claude—your father’s latest wish. You will not refuse me. I can wait.”

Glyddyr was muttering this as the waiter brought his change, and the words kept on running in his head as he walked down to the pier, to find his men waiting for him. The words haunted him, too, as he rode over the rough waves in the little harbour.

“Bah!” he thought, as he reached his cabin and threw himself down, flushed and in high spirits now, “it was an accident, and I am a fool to shrink with a prize like that waiting for me. I will go on, and she can’t refuse me if I only have plenty of pluck. I’ve been a bit out of order, and weak. It’s all right now. That cad hasn’t a chance. My wife before six months are gone, and then, Master Gellow, if I don’t send you to the right about I’ll—”

He stopped, for he remembered Denise.

“No,” he muttered uneasily, “one’s obliged to keep a cad to do one’s dirty work, and Gellow can be useful when he likes.”

Volume Three—Chapter Eight.

Mrs Sarson’s Appeal.

“Sit down, Mr Wimble, and how’s all Danmouth? I was coming over in a day or two perhaps, to stay at the Fort, and if I do, I dare say I shall have to make a call on you.”

“Glad to see you at any time, sir,” said Wimble, looking uneasily at the portly figure of the lawyer as he sat back in his chair, after a long study over Gartram’s papers.

For, in spite of Claude’s decision, that missing sum of money troubled Trevithick.

“It’s a reflection on me, as his business-man,” he said to himself. “Forty thousand in notes gone and nobody knows where. I’ll trace that money. I shall not rest till I do.”

He had some thought, too, that if he did triumphantly trace that missing sum, Claude would be pleased, and Mary Dillon more than satisfied. So he worked on in secret, and he was busy when his clerk announced the Danmouth barber.

“And now, what can I do for you?” said Trevithick.

The barber hesitated, looked round, and then back at the calm, thoughtful man before him.

“You need not be afraid to speak, Mr Wimble,” said Trevithick looking very serious but feeling amused, “no one can hear.”

“Sure, sir?”

“Quite.”

“Because it’s horribly private, sir.”

“Indeed! What is it? Want to borrow a little cash?”

“Me, sir?” cried the barber jumping up indignantly. “No, sir; I’ve got my little bit saved up and safely invested at five per cent.”

“I beg your pardon, and congratulate you. Then what is it?”

Wimble went on tiptoe to the entrance, opened the door, peeped out, and, after closing it, came stealthily back close to the table, upon which he rested his hand, bent forward till his face came within a foot of the lawyer’s, and gazed at him wildly.

“Well, Mr Wimble, what is it?” said Trevithick at last, for his visitor was silent.

“It’s murder, sir,” whispered the barber.

“What?”

“Murder, sir.”

“Well, then, you had better go to the police, man, for that’s not in my way.”

“If you’ll excuse me, sir, it is. You are Mr Gartram’s lawyer, and have to do with his affairs.”

“Good heavens, man, what do you mean?”

“That Mr Gartram was murdered, sir—poisoned, and I’ve got the clue.”

“What?”

“I thought I wouldn’t say a word, sir. That it was too horrible, and that no matter what one did, it wouldn’t bring the poor man back to life; but when I see the murderer going on in his wickedness, spending the money he must have stolen, and pretending he has come in for a fortune, and on the strength of it trying to delude weak widows he lodges with, and carrying on with other ladies too, it is time to speak. The human heart won’t hold such secrets without a busting out.”

The lawyer started at the sound of the word *money*, for it seemed to strike a chord within his own breast.

“Look here, Mr Wimble,” he said; “do I gather aright that you think that Mr Gartram was murdered?”

“Poisoned, sir.”

“Good heavens! But by whom?”

“One who had sworn to have revenge upon him—one who wanted his money; and who was seen and caught lurking about the Fort, sir, one dark night, waiting for his opportunity, for he knew the place well from a boy.”

“Great heavens, man, whom do you mean?”

“The man who has blighted my life, sir, Mr Christopher Lisle.”

“Rubbish!”

“What, sir?”

“You’re mad.”

“I wish I was, sir, and that I could say to myself you’re fancying all this; I should be a happier man, sir. But I can’t. I’ve fought with it and smothered it down, but it’s one living fire, sir, and it’s kept burning the day through.”

“Mr Christopher Lisle?”

“Yes, sir. Him as was turned away, and heard to say threatening things against poor Mr Gartram.”

“But found on the premises?”

“Yes, sir; the night Mr Gartram died of poison, no matter what the doctors said; and that night the deed was done this bottle of stuff was thrown out of the window down among the rocks and sand.”

“How do you know?”

“Because I found it early next morning,” said Wimble, holding up the bottle; “and I can swear it was not there the day before.”

“Nonsense, nonsense, man! It’s impossible.”

“That’s what I said to myself, sir, but nature argued it out inside me. ‘Here’s Mr Chris Lisle,’ it said, ‘wanted Miss Claude, and her father refused him, and was going to give her to Mr Glyddyr, of the yacht.’ There’s one reason. Mr Chris was thrown over, because he was poor. That’s another reason. Mr Chris is rich now. How did he become rich? Nobody knows. Mr Chris was found in the garden, hiding, on the night Mr Gartram died, and the window was open.—What do you say to that? This bottle, with some poison in it, was found under the window by me.”

“Let me look.”

“No, sir. That bottle’s mine now. I wouldn’t part with it for a hundred pounds.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s a curiosity, sir, as thousands would come to see. That bottle killed a man.”

“Let me look. I’ll give it you back.”

“Honour bright, sir?”

“Yes.”

Wimble unrolled the bottle from its cover and handed it to the lawyer, who took and examined it.

“Pish!” he said, looking at the limpid fluid within. “Water.”

“I was told it was chloral, sir.”

“Chloral?” cried Trevithick; “he died of an overdose of chloral.”

“Of course he did, sir,” said the barber triumphantly. “Now, sir, am I mad?”

Trevithick rose, and walked heavily up and down the room, like a small elephant seeking to quit its enclosure, but professional training came to his aid directly, and he reseated himself, looking quite calm.

“This is a terribly serious thing, Mr Wimble,” he said sternly. “You are charging Mr Lisle with murder.”

“Terribly serious thing to take Mr Gartram’s life, sir.”

“If he did, my man—if he did. But it must be all a mistake.”

“I hope it is, sir, indeed.”

“If the police knew of this, it would be awkward for Mr Lisle.”

“Of course it would, sir.”

“But, my good man, you are taking the view that he is guilty. I tell you that it is impossible.”

“I hope it is, sir; but I’ve gone over it in my bed till I’m obliged to believe Mr Lisle did it; and I feel I couldn’t keep the secret any longer.”

“And so you came to me?”

“Yes, sir, as Mr Gartram’s business-man.”

“Dear, dear—dear, dear!” ejaculated Trevithick excitedly, as the man began to overcome the lawyer. “There are the ladies, Wimble. We must be very careful. If this reached their ears it would be horrible.”

“Yes, sir, of course; but the wicked ought to be punished.”

“You don’t like Mr Lisle?” said the lawyer, looking at him searchingly.

“Well, sir, if I must speak out, no: I don’t like Mr Lisle.”

“And so you magnify this suspicion, and seek to do him harm by setting about the story.”

“Steady there, sir, please. I don’t set about a story without good proof. Now, let me ask you, sir, was Mr Gartram the sort of man to go and kill himself with an overdose of that stuff?”

“By accident, man; yes.”

“Not a bit of it, sir. He was too clever. I don’t want to prove Mr Lisle guilty, but there’s the case. He was hanging about the grounds that night.”

“Who saw him?”

“The gardener, sir, Brime. Caught him there after he had been forbidden the place, and he persuaded the man to hold his tongue.”

“Look here, Wimble,” said Trevithick, sternly, “there may be a slight substratum of probability in what you say, but it is most unlikely that this young man can have committed such a crime. Now, then, I’ll tell you what it is your duty to do.”

“Yes, sir,” said Wimble eagerly.

“Go back to Danmouth, and keep your own counsel for the present. You can do that?”

“Hold my tongue, sir? Of course.”

“Don’t mention this to a soul.”

“And hush it up, sir—a murder?”

“Pish! It is no murder. Let the matter rest while I try to make out whether there is anything in what you say.”

“Ah, you’ll find it right, sir. Young men like Mr Chris don’t get rich in a day.”

“Never mind about that. I’ll go into the matter quietly. Recollect that it would be your ruin if it was known that you had, without foundation, made this horrible charge against Mr Lisle.”

“My ruin, sir?”

“Of course. You could not stay in the town afterwards. There, go back and hold your tongue. I’m coming over to Danmouth to-morrow, and after I have carefully weighed all you have said, I will see you again.”

“Come in and see me to-morrow, sir. You can easily do that, sir. Nobody would think it meant anything more than coming in to be shaved.”

“Well, I’ll call; and now, mind this: not a soul in the place must hear a word. It is our secret, Wimble.”

“Yes, sir, I see,” said the barber. “You may trust me. I came straight to you, sir. Oh, I can be as close and secret as grim death, sir, you’ll see.”

“That’s right, my man. And take my advice, don’t think any more of it. I confess that it looks bad, but we shall find out that it is all imagination, and I hope it is, for every one’s sake. Close, Mr Wimble, perfectly close, mind, at all events for the present.”

“Trust me, sir. I’m glad I came to you, and you shall find me close as a box.”

Wimble spoke in all sincerity, and he returned to Danmouth, feeling glad that he had seen the lawyer; but when he spoke he did not realise that there was a key that would open that box.

He had no necessity for going round by Mrs Sarson’s cottage, it was quite out of his way, but it was in the dusk of evening, when love will assert itself even in middle-aged minds.

“All alone there at the mercy of a murderer,” thought Wimble. “I’ll just walk by and see if she is quite safe.”

It was rather a hopeless thing to do, he owned, for there was not likely to be anything in the outside walls to indicate whether the widow was safe or no. All the same, he went round that way to find that all looked right; but as he passed very slowly by, he found that the window of Chris’s room was open, and he stopped short as if spellbound, for a familiar voice said, in tones which indicated that the speaker was shedding tears—

“No, no, my dear; you can’t think how much I think about you.”

The voice ceased as Wimble gave a very decided knock at the door.

Mrs Sarson came to answer it slowly, for she was wiping her eyes after a long, long talk with Chris, whom in a motherly way she had been trying to rouse from the reckless, despondent state into which he had fallen, and tried in vain.

Consequently there was a wet gleam on her cheeks, as, candle in hand, she answered the door.

“You, Mr Wimble!” she said, starting, and feeling a little confused. “So bold of him to come and call,” she thought.

“Yes, Mrs Sarson, I want to speak to you particularly.”

“Not to-night, Mr Wimble. I—I am not quite well.”

“Yes; to-night.”

“But Mr Lisle is at home.”

“Yes, I know,” he said, with a dark look in his eyes; and—fluttered and trembling before the strange, stern manner of her visitor—she drew back, allowed him to enter, closed the door, and led the way to the snug back room—half kitchen, half parlour—and then looked at him wonderingly, her heart fluttering more and more as she saw his wild look, and that he carefully closed the door.

“Goodness me, Mr Wimble, what is the matter?” she said faintly.

“Everything,” he cried, making a snatch at her wrist, and holding it tightly. “Woman, you know how for years I have had hopes.”

“Well, Mr Wimble, you made me think so; but it’s quite impossible, I assure you. Neighbours, but nothing more.”

“Why, woman, why?” he said, in a whisper.

“Because—because I am quite happy and contented as I am, Mr Wimble, with my little bit of an income and my lodger.”

“Yes,” cried Wimble, with a laugh, “that’s it. Ah, woman, woman, that you could throw yourself away upon a creature like that?”

“Mr Wimble, what do you mean?”

“Knowing how I worshipped you, for you to consort with a vile creature, who cheats and abuses your confidence—a villain too bad to be allowed to live—a man whom the law will seize before long.”

“Mr Wimble, are you mad?”

“Yes, madam, with shame and horror, to think what must come when you find out that this serpent who has wound himself about you is a convict, a murderer, who stops at nothing.”

“Mr Wimble, whom do you mean?”

“Mean? who should I mean,” he cried tragically, “but that wretch in yonder room?”

“A murderer!”

“Yes, of the man who drove him from his home. I denounce him as the murderer of poor old Gartram, and—”

There was a wild shriek, and as Chris Lisle rushed into the room to see what was wrong, Wimble remembered his promise to the lawyer; but too late: the box was wide open now.

“Mrs Sarson—Wimble! what is the matter?”

“Oh, Mr Lisle,” cried the widow, sobbing wildly. “Oh, my poor darling, he says you murdered Mr Gartram. Tell him he is mad.”

Sarah Woodham was seated an hour later that night sewing, when she was startled by the sudden entrance of Reuben, the gardener, looking wild-eyed and strange, and she involuntarily rose from her chair, and stood upon the defensive, the other servants being down the town, and her heart telling her that “this foolish man,” as she termed him, was about to renew advances which he had been making before.

“Don’t be frightened,” he said, quickly grasping the meaning of her action; “I wasn’t going to say anything about that now. Have you heard?”

“Heard what?”

“I’ve just come from the harbour, and they’re all talking about it.”

“Yes? What—some wreck?”

“No; about Mr Chris Lisle.”

“What about him—dead?” said Sarah Woodham, in a hoarse whisper, as she laid her hand upon her side and thought of Claude.

“Better if he was, my dear,” said the gardener hoarsely, and in her excitement the woman did not think to resent his familiarity. “They are saying that he murdered master with poison.”

Sarah reeled, and would have fallen, so great was the shock the words gave her, but Brime caught her in his arms.

She recovered herself, and thrust him away.

“Mr Chris Lisle? Impossible.”

“So I thought, but he was skulking about our grounds that night, for I caught him hiding.”

“Oh, it can’t be true. You people are always inventing foolish scandals. What nonsense! Let him rest in his grave in peace.”

She looked so ghastly that even the unobservant gardener noticed it, and made a remark.

“Look white? of course,” she said, with a curious laugh. “Any woman would turn pale on hearing such talk as that. There, go away.”

“You needn’t be cross with me, Sarah Woodham,” said Brime, paying no heed to her last words, and only too glad of an excuse to hold her in conversation. “I knew how you liked Miss Claude, and the news was about her young man, and I thought it better to tell you than go and tell her.”

“What! you would not dare to tell her such a thing.”

“Well, somebody will if I don’t. She’s sure to know.”

“Hush, man! Don’t dare to speak of it again. It is a miserable scandal of some of the tattling gossips, and it will be forgotten, perhaps, to-morrow. There, not another word.”

“But, Sarah, let me talk of something else.”

She went to the door and opened it, pointing out.

“Go,” she said.

Brime sighed deeply, and went away slowly without another word.

“Poor fellow,” said the woman softly, “better for him to jump into the sea than to go on thinking about that.”

She stood for a few moments with her hands to her forehead, as if to dull the excitement from which she was

suffering, uttering a low moan from time to time.

“How horrible!” she gasped. “It seems more than I can bear. Poor child, if she was to hear!”

She stood staring before her at last, with her lips moving, and her eyes fixed upon the darkness in the farther corner of the room, as if she saw something there.

“I cannot bear it,” she muttered at last; and hurriedly passing out, she hurried up to her room, and threw herself upon her knees by the bedside.

How long she remained there she did not know. Suddenly she started up, believing that she heard voices below.

“They will have heard it, perhaps,” she said excitedly; and, hurrying out, she found that the two servants who had been out had returned, and were talking quickly.

Sarah Woodham turned cold with apprehension, under the impression that the women were retailing the scandal they had heard to their mistress, and she uttered a sigh of relief as she heard Mary Dillon say quickly—

“And they are talking about it everywhere you say?”

“Yes, miss; and we thought you ought to hear.”

“Hush!—Oh, Woodham, these two have come back with a silly tale that—”

Sarah Woodham laid a thin hand upon her arm.

“That—have you heard? Oh, how horrible! But what absurd nonsense. There, go away, all of you. It is too dreadful to talk about, and you must let it die a natural death.”

“But they say, miss, that the police will take Mr Christopher Lisle, and that he will be hung for murder,” whispered the cook in awe-stricken tones; “and if Miss Claude should hear that—Oh!”

Claude had quietly opened the drawing-room door and stepped out into the hall, coming in search of her cousin, the low whispering without having attracted her attention.

“You heard what I said,” cried Mary, quickly. “Why don’t you go?”

“Stop!” said Claude, in a strangely altered voice.

“No, no, Claude, dear,” said Mary, crossing to her. “It is nothing you need listen to. Only a wretched tattling from down on the beach.”

“I know what they said,” replied Claude, hoarsely. “Sarah Woodham, have you heard this—this dreadful charge?”

The woman did not answer with her lips, but her dark eyes were fixed wildly on those of her mistress.

“Then it is true!”

“Claude, dear; pray come,” whispered Mary, clinging to her; but she was thrust away.

“I will know everything,” she cried, excitedly. “You, Sarah Woodham, speak out, and tell me all the truth.”

“No—no,” whispered the woman, and she stood trembling as if with ague.

“I will know,” said Claude, catching her up by the arm. “I heard what was said—that Mr Lisle was charged with murder. It could not be.”

“No, no, Claude, of course not.”

“Silence, Mary! Speak, woman, or must I go down to the beach and ask there. Tell me. It was a quarrel; they met and fought. Is Mr Glyddyr dead?”

They gazed at her wonderingly—stricken for the moment—the silence being broken by the two servants exclaiming in a breath—

“No, no, miss. It was master they said he killed.”

“What?”

“Come away, Claude,” whispered Mary, who was white and trembling. “It is a horrible invention. There is no truth in it. Come back into the drawing-room, and I’ll tell you quietly, dear, what I have heard.”

“Go on,” said Claude, fixing the two women with her eyes as she held her cousin’s arm and half forced her back. “Tell me everything you have heard.”

Between them, trembling the while before the wild eyes which seemed to force them to speak, the women related confusedly the report they had heard, one which had grown rapidly as is the custom with such news; and out of the tangle, as Sarah Woodham and Mary both strangely moved, stood speechless and silent, Claude learned the charge which had arisen against the man she loved, to the bitter end, struggling the while to make indignant denial of that

at which her soul felt to revolt. But no words would come. Her reason, her soul, both cried out aloud within her that this was an utter impossibility, but the rumours mastered them with a terrible array of facts, till she was forced to believe that, stung to madness by the treatment he had received, and hurried on by a lust for gold, Chris, her old playmate and brother as a child, the man at last she had grown to love, had been tempted to commit this deed.

“It is not true—it is not true,” something within her kept on saying as she gazed wildly from one to the other, seeing the gap—the black gap—already existing between her and her lover, widening into an awful, impassable chasm, in which were buried her life’s hopes and happiness for ever.

Volume Three—Chapter Nine.

A Debate.

Glyddyr had undoubtedly gone backward in health with rapid strides since he and the Doctor had last met, not many hours before. His face was of a sickly yellow; there were dark marks under his eyes, and his hands trembled as he weakly arranged the flower in his button-hole, and played with his blue serge yachting cap.

“How terrible!” he murmured at last. “Poor girl! What a shock!”

“Yes; enough to give her brain fever,” said the Doctor, speaking quickly. “The wretched, cackling fools.”

“Terrible! terrible!” muttered Glyddyr. Then, after a pause, as he took a turn up and down the Doctor’s little surgery, as if it were his own cabin, he passed his tongue over his dry lips, and turned quickly to the Doctor, who was watching him curiously. “Here, I say: I’m completely knocked over. For heaven’s sake give me a dose.”

“Yes, of course.”

“No, no, not that cursed stuff,” cried Glyddyr, as he saw the Doctor’s hand raised toward the ammonia bottle. “Brandy—whisky, for goodness’ sake!”

Asher gave him a quick look, then took his key, and, opening a cellaret, poured a goodly dram of brandy into a glass, and placed it on the table.

“There’s water in that bottle,” he said.

Glyddyr made an impatient gesture, and tossed off the raw spirit.

“Hah!” he cried, setting down the glass, “I can talk now. What—what do you think of this report?”

“Oh, all madness, of course,” cried the Doctor hastily.

“Yes—yes—all madness, of course,” said Glyddyr, letting himself sink down in a chair. “All madness, of course. He couldn’t, could he?”

The two men gazed in each other’s eyes, and there was silence for quite a long space.

“But they found that bottle,” continued Glyddyr, as if speaking to himself. “Ugly piece of evidence, isn’t it?”

“Oh, but that proves nothing,” said Asher.

“And he being found in the garden that night, when Gartram was having his after-dinner nap,” continued Glyddyr, looking at the door.

“Yes, looks bad,” said the Doctor, “but all nonsense. Why can’t they let the old man rest?”

“You—you don’t think he poisoned him?” said Glyddyr.

“No, certainly not.”

“It would have been impossible, of course. But they say he is rich now; has plenty of money. How could he come by that?”

“Who can say?”

“Yes; and a large sum was missing—a very large sum.”

“That is the worst argument yet,” said the doctor. “But, pooh, pooh, my dear sir, the old man died from an overdose of chloral. My colleague and I were satisfied about that. There, don’t look so white.”

“Do I look white?” said Glyddyr, picking up the glass he had used and draining the last drops. “Oh, I feel much better now. But, Doctor, what do you think of it all? They’ll arrest that young man, I suppose. It would be very horrible if he were to be tried and condemned to death.”

“Horrible!”

“Do you think he will be taken?”

“No.”

“I’m—I’m glad of that,” faltered Glyddyr, with his trembling hands playing about his watch chain. “So horrible. He was a friend, you see, of Miss Gartram’s. Of course, with such a charge as that against him, he could never speak to her again.”

“Look here, Glyddyr,” said the Doctor, “you and I may as well understand each other.”

“What do you mean?” cried Glyddyr, sinking back in his chair.

“That we have somehow become friends, and we may as well continue so. You mean to marry Claude Gartram?”

“Yes, yes, of course,” assented Glyddyr drawing a long hoarse breath.

“And, I’m sure, you feel all this very deeply. Terrible shock for the poor girl.”

“Yes, terrible,” whispered Glyddyr.

“I don’t wonder that you are so completely prostrated this morning.”

“No; it is no wonder, is it?”

“Not the slightest.”

“And I feel it, too, about young Lisle. I—I shouldn’t like him to be hung.”

“Make yourself easy, man; he will not be. There will be nine days’ talk about it, and that is all. The old man was examined; our evidence was taken, and he is at rest in his grave. The law can’t take any notice of these scandals.”

“Do—do you feel that—it will not take him and imprison him for life, say.”

“No, man, it will not; but as far as he is concerned with Claude Gartram, it will be just as if he had been put out of the way. Last night’s reports will be the making of you.”

“What do you mean?”

“You know. Claude had a lingering liking for that fellow, but she can never speak to him again; and if you play your cards right, her pretty little hand will some day be laid in yours. You’ll give her a new name, and take possession yonder.”

Glyddyr looked at him rather wildly.

“Why, you don’t seem glad, man. Hallo!”

There was a sharp knock just then, and the two occupants of the surgery listened intently to the opening, and the low murmuring of voices.

The servant tapped on the surgery door directly after.

“Mr Trevithick, sir, would be glad to speak to you.”

“Show him in,” said the Doctor. “No, don’t go, Glyddyr. He has come over about that rumour.”

The lawyer entered, and shook hands with both.

“Did not want to interrupt you, Doctor; but I should like a few minutes’ conversation.”

“About that rumour concerning Gartram? By all means. Mr Glyddyr and I were discussing the matter.”

“Well, what is your opinion?”

“That it is all nonsense.”

“You have heard everything; the report of the money, the finding of a bottle, and Mr Lisle being seen that night in the grounds?”

“Yes—oh, yes; but what does all that prove?” said the Doctor decisively. “We were quite satisfied how Gartram met with his end. Let the rumour blow over, as it will do, and let the old man rest.”

The lawyer sat looking very thoughtful for a few moments, as he ran over in his mind all that had passed.

“By the way, how did you hear of it?”

“I am not at liberty to say.”

“Then I’ll tell you,” said Asher quickly. “That crazy barber came over to you yesterday. He found a bottle, and showed it to me. Bah! all rubbish. The man’s half mad.”

“I am beginning to think you are right,” said Trevithick.

“I’m sure I am.”

“But it is a bad thing for Mr Christopher Lisle to have such a charge made against him, especially after being on such friendly terms with the family.”

“Well, gentlemen, you must excuse me; I am going up to the house,” cried the Doctor.

“I will walk with you,” said Trevithick quietly.

“And I am to be left out in the cold,” muttered Glyddyr, as he followed them slowly out, only to stop hesitating, as he caught sight of the principal object of his thoughts.

“That don’t look like guilt, Mr Trevithick,” said Asher, who had seen Chris before Glyddyr had caught sight of him.

“Might be clever cunning,” said the lawyer quietly.

“Might be, but it is not. Oh, hang it all, sir, don’t let us harbour the thought for a moment. The young man’s as innocent as you are. Good-morning, Mr Lisle.”

“Ah, glad to see you, Doctor,” cried Chris, whose face looked drawn and old. “Morning, Mr Trevithick. You have heard the rumour?”

The Doctor bowed his head.

“I will not stoop to deny it, of course. The insensate fools! As if it were possible,” he cried excitedly.

“Of course no one believes such an absurd rumour—I mean no one with brains—eh, Mr Trevithick?” said Asher.

The lawyer coughed, and the pair moved on.

Chris was left standing by himself as the Doctor and lawyer went on up to the house. He stood gazing after them for a time, and then turned to go all alone towards the beach. At that moment he became aware of the fact that Glyddyr was watching him, and the feeling of love and sympathy for Claude, and the desire to clear himself in her eyes, turned to bitterness and jealousy.

“Of course,” he said savagely; “ready to believe ill of me! Ah, how I could enjoy half-an-hour with you, Parry Glyddyr, alone!”

He walked on, to become conscious directly of that which, in his excitement, he had not before observed.

There were not many people visible, but those who were hanging about in knots were evidently talking about and watching him; and as he passed on toward his home, he found that men who had known from boyhood suddenly turned away to enter their houses, or begin talking earnestly to their companions. Not one gave him look or word of recognition.

“Has it come to this?” he said, savagely. “A pariah—a leper to be avoided. Well, let them. Oh! you!” he muttered, as a great stout fisherman, whose boat he had used scores of times, passed him with his hands deep down in his pockets, staring straight out over his left shoulder to sea.

Chris’s fists involuntarily clenched, and he strode away, not once looking back or he would have seen heads thrust out of doors, and knots gathering together to discuss his case, and the burden of all the converse was: “How soon will he be took and put in gaol?”

“Hah! my dear,” ejaculated Mrs Sarson, as he reached his lodgings. “You’ve got safely back. Mr Wimble came by just now, and though I wouldn’t listen to him, he said the police were going to take you over to Toxeter and lock you up for committing murder.”

“They will if that man don’t mind, Mrs Sarson,” cried Chris, as he hurried into his room. “Curse him! I feel as if I could go at once, get hold of him, and wring his neck.”

“Mr Christopher!” cried the poor woman, bursting into a fit of sobbing; “don’t—don’t do anything rash.”

“Look here, old lady,” he cried, catching her by the arm; “you are not going to join this wretched crew, are you, and to believe I could be such a wretch?”

“Oh, no, my dear! Oh, no.”

“That’s right. But think twice. If you have the least thought of the kind, I’ll go at once.”

“Indeed, no, my dear,” she sobbed; “and even if you had done it, I couldn’t be such a cruel wretch as to tell against you, for you must have been mad.”

“Hang it, woman! if you talk like that, you’ll make me mad.”

“I’ve done, my dear. There, I won’t say another word, only to defend you. But tell me, my dear, what are you going to do?”

“What an honest man should do, Mrs Sarson,” said Chris, excitedly. “Mind I’m not wild with you, only with the wretched fools out yonder,” he said more gently, as he took his landlady’s hands. “There, my good old soul, it’ll all

come right some day, here or hereafter."

"But you'll go and tell the magistrate, won't you, that it's all false?"

"No," said Chris, sternly, and with his face growing hard and old. "I'm not going to deny anything. I'm an Englishman, Mrs Sarson, a strong-willed, stubborn Englishman, let them say what they like—do what they like, I'm here, and here I stay till they drag me away, and I do not care whether they do or do not now."

"But one thing, my dear, one word, and I won't ask you another question. Were you at the Fort that night, and did Reuben Brime find you?"

"Yes, Mrs Sarson."

"Oh!—But why were you there, my dear, like that?"

"You asked one question, but I'll answer the other. Because I am a weak young fool—in love with somebody who seemed to have cared little for me, and I wanted to get one word with her. Yes, I was a weak young fool. That seems years ago now," he continued, half-talking to himself, "and I seem to have grown much older. Old enough to be firm and strong."

"But you didn't tell me, my dear, what you mean to do."

"Mean to do?" cried Chris, with a bitter laugh. "I'm going to live it down."

Volume Three—Chapter Ten.

Coming Back on Friday.

Chris found it a harder task than he had anticipated. "Give a dog a bad name, and then hang him," says the old saw; and in his case Chris used to say bitterly to himself that he might as well have been hung out of his misery.

For Wimble's shop had always been the fertile manure heap from which, fungus-like, scandals sprung, and their spores were carried away in all directions, to start into growth again and again in all directions. Often enough one scandal would grow, flourish, and then seem to die right away, but that was only the belief of the parties concerned. Just as they were hugging themselves upon the fact there had been a nine days' wonder, and it had come to an end, a little round toadstool-like head would spring up in quite a different direction, and grow, and seed and spread itself more strongly than ever.

Even minor scandals died hard, if they died at all, in Danmouth; but, for the most part, they proved evergreen, and lived on long after the authors had been gathered to their fathers and forgotten.

This being the case with the lesser, it was not likely that one of the greatest ever known should drop away; and though weeks and months glided on, the story of the bottle found under the library window of the Fort was as fresh as ever, and people, after an easy shave, would ask quietly to see it, to have it taken with great show of secrecy from the drawer where it reposed, shaken so as to form globules of solution of chloral, and, if favoured customers, the cork might be removed and the contents smelt.

Wimble was quite right. That bottle proved to be the finest curiosity he possessed, and bade fair to become worth quite a hundred pounds to him, if not more.

As time went on, the ingenious idea occurred to him that it would be advisable to add to its attractions by giving the contents a perceptible odour, and this he did by introducing one single drop of patchouli, a scent not familiar to the lower orders of the little fishing port, and whose inhalation was thoroughly enjoyed by many a gaping idiot, who shook his Solon-like head, and said "Hah!" softly and mysteriously, before handing back the bottle and whispering, "'nuff to kill any man."

The treasure might have had additional piquancy if Chris Lisle had been tried for murder and hanged; but as he was not, Wimble said he must make the best of things, and went on profiting by his possession; but as he felt that his declaration to the widow that night had not advanced his suit, he spent his spare time watching her house, and wondering how long it would be ere Chris Lisle realised the fact that, as public opinion let him exist, it was his duty to live somewhere else.

But Chris was as stubborn as public opinion, and, regardless of side-long glances, and the fact that he was regularly avoided, he went on just as of old, apparently living his old life, and waging war upon the salmon, trout, and fish that visited the mouth of the river; but they had an easy time.

Claude had left Danmouth, but she made no sign before she went away, and Chris was too stubbornly proud to make any advance.

"If she believes so ill of me, she may," he used to say to himself. "A woman who can love like that is not worth a second thought from any man."

He used to say that often, and tell himself that he could never tire. He could live it all down, and that some day he would enjoy a keen revenge on those who had doubted him. He was happy enough, he said, and the fools might think what they liked so long as they did not molest him.

The little mob of Danmouth had gone near this though once, when, soon after the news was spread, they found that no steps were taken to bring the crime home to the murderer. For Trevithick, though terribly exercised in spirit about that missing sum of money, felt himself bound to agree with the Doctor that no steps could be taken, and consequently Gartram was left in peace beneath the handsome granite obelisk cut from his own quarry.

So the wrath of those who would have liked to take the law in their own hands cooled down, and their enmity found its vent in scowls and avoidance, at which Chris laughed scornfully, or resented with looks as fierce in public; but there was a hard set of lines growing more marked about the corners of his mouth and his eyes, and there were times when he broke down in secret far up the glen, and told himself that life was not worth living. He would be better dead.

Claude went to recover her strength in the south of France, and Sarah Woodham was left in charge of the house, about which Reuben Brime sighed as he mowed the grass, and groaned as he drove in his spade; but Sarah did not heed, and he too used to think to himself that he might as well put out his pipe some night by taking a plunge off the end of the pier.

Glyddyr stayed on in the harbour till the day after Claude and Mary left, when the yacht glided slowly out, and Chris watched it till it disappeared beyond one of the headlands far away; and then the time seemed like years as he went on setting public opinion at defiance, wrestling with it still.

There were those in the place who would have met him on friendly terms, notably Asher; but Chris met all advances curtly, and went his way.

“They shall not tolerate me,” he said bitterly. “I will live in the full sunshine. Till I do, I can be content with the shade.”

There was one, though, whom he encountered from time to time when wandering listlessly whipping the streams, not very often, but on the rare occasions when she sought some solitary spot far away out on the rocky moorland to dream over the past.

The first time they met, Chris’s heart hounded, and his eyes flashed as he was about to speak.

“No,” he said, checking himself; “I shall not stoop. The advance shall come from her.”

A month passed, and again on a cold, windy day of winter he was aware of a dark-looking, thickly-wrapped figure going along the track, and his heart whispered to him, “You have only to go back a few dozen yards to speak to her, and hear the news for which, in spite of all you say, you are hungering.”

Chris nearly yielded, but the will was too stubborn yet, and he stood firm.

Then came a day in spring when the promise of the coming time of beauty was being given by swelling bud, green arum, and the tender blades of grass which peeped from among last year’s drab dry strands. It had been a cruel, stormy time for weeks, cruelly stormy, too, in Chris’s heart, for the load was more heavy than ever, and the young man’s heart was very sore.

He was going up the glen near where he had first told Claude of his love, and the time of year seemed to bring with it hope and a longing for human intercourse and sympathy; and though he would not own it, he would have given anything for news of the one who filled his thoughts.

She came upon him suddenly this time, and they were within half-a-dozen yards of each other before either was aware of the other’s presence.

“Ah, Sarah Woodham!” he said; and she stopped short to stand looking at him, with her fierce dark eyes softening, and the vestige of a smile about her thin parched lips. “Well,” he continued carelessly, though his heart beat fast, “hadn’t you better go on? You’ll lose caste if any one sees you talking to me.”

“Mr Lisle,” she said reproachfully.

“Well, am I not a murderer?”

“Oh!”

The woman shuddered, and looked at him wildly.

“Mr Lisle! Don’t talk like that!”

“Why not?”

“No one worth notice could think such a thing of you.”

“Not even your mistress!” he said, with boyish irritability; but only to feel as if he would have given all he possessed to recall it.

“Don’t say cruel things about her, sir. She has suffered deeply.”

“Yes, but—”

He checked himself, and though Sarah Woodham remained silent and waiting, he did not speak.

“What changes and troubles we have seen, sir, since the happy old days when, quite a boy then, you used to come to

the quarry with Miss Claude."

"Bah! You never seemed to be very happy, Sarah. You were much brighter and happier before you were married."

The woman glanced at him sharply, and then her eyes grew dreamy and thoughtful again.

"Woodham was a good, kind husband to me, sir," she said gently.

"Yes; but see what a cold, stern, hard life you lived. He—"

"Hush, sir, please," said the woman gently; "he was a good, true man to me, and we all misjudge at times."

"Is that meant for a cut at me, Sarah?" said Chris cynically.

"Yes, sir," said the woman naïvely. "I don't think you ought to be one to cast a stone—at the dead."

He turned upon her angrily, but she met his sharp look with one so grave and calm that it disarmed him, and, led on by the fact that he had hardly spoken to a soul for weeks, he said—

"Few people have such cause to be bitter as I have."

"We all think our fate the hardest, sir."

"Going to preach at me, Sarah?"

"No, sir," she said, with her eyes lighting up, and a pleasant look softening her face; "I only feel grieved and pained to see the bonnie, handsome boy, who I always thought would naturally be my dear Miss Claude's husband, drifting away to wreck like one of the ships we often see."

"Silence, woman!" cried Chris. "For God's sake don't talk like that!"

"I will not, sir, if you tell me not," said Sarah quietly; "but I think you deal hard with poor Miss Claude for what she cannot help."

"What?"

"She has tried to do her duty—that I know."

"Yes," he said bitterly; "every one seems to have tried to do his or her duty by me."

There was a dead silence, during which the woman stood gazing at him wistfully, and more than once her lips moved, and her hand played restlessly about her shawl, as if she wanted to lay it upon his arm, and say something comforting to one who appeared so lonely and cast out.

"Miss Claude is coming home on Friday, sir," she said at last; and she saw the fervour of hope and joy which beamed from the young man's eyes—only to be clouded over directly, as he said bitterly—

"Well, she has a right to. What is it to me?"

"Mr Chris!"

"Oh, don't talk to me!" he cried passionately. "The world has all gone wrong with me, and I am a cursed and bitter man. God knows that I am, or I could not speak as I do. They'll find out some day that I am not a murderer and a thief.—I'm losing time, for the fish are rising fast."

She stood looking after him wistfully as he strode along by the river side, and then walked away with the old dull, agonised look coming back into her face.

"Poor boy!" she said softly. "Poor boy!"

"Coming back on Friday—coming back on Friday!"

Sarah Woodham's words kept repeating themselves in Chris Lisle's ears as he walked on up the glen, waving his fishing-rod so that the line hissed and whistled through the air, and at every repetition of the words his heart bounded, and the young blood ran dancing through his veins.

"Coming back on Friday!"

It was as if new life were rushing through him; his step grew more elastic, his eyes brightened, and he leaped from rock to rock, where the brown water came flashing and foaming down.

"Coming back," he muttered; "coming back."

The past was going to be dead; the clouds were about to rise from about him, and there was once more going to be something worth living for.

"Bah!" he ejaculated, "I've been a morose, bitter, disappointed fool, too ready to give up; but that's all past now. She is coming back, and all this time of misery and despair is at an end."

It seemed to be another man who was hurrying along the margin of the river, in and out over the mighty water-worn

stones, with the water rushing between, till he was brought up short by the whizzing sound made by his winch, for the hook had caught in a bush, and his rod was bent half double.

“I can’t fish to-day,” he said, turning back, and winding in till he could give the hook a sharp jerk and snap the gut bottom. “I must go home and think.”

He hurried back, with the feeling growing upon him that all the past trouble was at an end. For the moment he felt intoxicated with the new sense of elation which thrilled him, and it was as if all the young hope and joy which were natural to his age, and had been clouded now, had suddenly burst forth like so much sunshine. But this was short lived.

As he reached the bridge, a couple of fishermen whom he had known from boyhood were standing with their backs to the parapet, chatting and smoking, but as soon as they saw him approach they turned round, leaned over the side, and began to stare down at the river.

It was like a cold dark mist blown athwart him, but he strode on.

“Fools!” he muttered; and increasing his pace, he began to note more than ever now that his coming was the signal for people standing at their doors to go inside, and for the fishermen to turn their backs.

All this had occurred every time he had been out of late, but he had grown hardened to it, and laughed in his stubborn contempt; but this day, after the fit of elation he had passed through,—it all looked new, and he hurried on chilled to the heart; the bright, sunshiny day was clouded over again, and all was once more hopeless and blank.

So bitter was the feeling of despair which now sunk deep into his breast, that he shrank from Wimble, who was standing at his door in the act of saying good-day to a customer, both looking hard at him till he had entered the cottage.

Volume Three—Chapter Eleven.

Under the Cloud.

“Better go away,” said Chris to himself.

But he stayed, and in contempt of the avoidance of those he met, he was constantly going to and fro during the next twenty-four hours.

Now he was down on the beach, close to the sea; now wandering high up on the moorland, and seeing, from each point of view, trifles which showed that the mistress of the Fort was coming home.

He called himself “idiot,” and asked mentally where his pride had gone, and determined to shut himself up with his books, but the determination was too weak, and he could not rest. It was something, if only to see the home that would soon again contain the woman who held him fast.

“She will meet me again,” he said, with his hopes rising once more toward the evening of the next day. “I’ll go up boldly like a man. My darling! And all this misery will be at an end. Nine weary months has she been away, and it has seemed like years. Why didn’t I write? Why didn’t I crush down all this foolish pride and obstinacy? I ought to have gone to her, instead of letting myself be maddened by that miserable scoundrel, believing she could listen to him, even if it was her father’s wish.”

He had strolled down the pier and lit a cigar, to stand gazing out to the west, where the sun was setting behind a golden bank of cloud which began to darken with purple as the plainly-marked rays spread out towards the zenith, while the calm sea gently heaved, and began to glow with ruby, topaz and emerald hues.

Far out beyond the shelter of the headland and the long low isle which acted like a breakwater to the bay, the sea was ruffled by the gentle evening breeze; and as Chris loitered, with his breast once more growing calm, he could see lugger after lugger, that had been tugged out with the large oars, hoisting sail to catch the soft gale and then glide slowly away, the tawny sails catching the reflected light, till all around was beautiful as some golden dream.

Chris turned and looked back at the Fort, to see that its windows were aglow, and the cliffs that rose behind and on either side were more lovely than ever.

“What a welcome home for her!” he said softly. “My darling! Oh, if she could see her old home now! if she would only come, and I could be the first to welcome her and take her by the hand.”

“Yes,” he said, as he turned and gazed out to sea and shore, heedless of the fact that a group of sailors were slowly coming down the pier. “I will be there to meet her and take her by the hand. She could not have believed it; and, now that the time of sorrow is at an end, she will—she shall listen to me. Heaven give me strength to master this bitter, cruel pride and foolish jealousy. I will hope.”

“Bet yer a gallon it is,” cried a voice behind him.

“Yah! Yer don’t know what yer talking about. Such gashly stuff!”

“Oh, you’re precious clever, you are. Think that there schooner lay here all those many months and I shouldn’t know her again? Here, let’s go up to the point, and get the coastie to lend us his glass.”

“I don’t want no glass,” said another voice. “My eyes are good enough for that. Jemmy Gadly’s right enough. I could swear to her.”

The speaker made a binocular of his two hands, and gazed out to sea, at where the white sails of a yacht came well into view from beyond the island.

Chris heard every word, but he did not turn. He stood gazing at the yacht, which with every stitch of canvas set, was running fast for the harbour, beautiful in the evening light—a picture in that gleaming sea.

“Ay,” said the man at last, as he dropped his hands and turned to Chris, who was gazing out to sea with a strange singing in his ears, and a sensation at his temples as if the blood was throbbing hard. “Ay, that’s Mr Glyddyr’s yacht, sure enough, and he’s come back o’ course to meet young Miss. Oh, it be you?”

This last as Chris turned round upon him with a ghastly face glaring at him wildly.

“Lor’! Look at that,” cried the man addressed as Gadly, and with an ugly grin overspreading his face as the love of baiting came uppermost. “Come away, Joe; he means mischief. Look out or there’ll be another murder done.”

Thud!

It was as quick as lightning. Chris Lisle’s left fist flashed out, caught the man full in the cheek, and he staggered back, tried to save himself, and then tripped over a rope and fell heavily upon the stones, while his assailant glared round seeking another victim as a low angry murmur rose.

“You coward!” he growled between his teeth.

“Ay, and sarve him gashly well right,” said the sturdy fisherman, who had had his hands up to his eyes, and had addressed Chris. “He is a coward to say that there. Howd off, my lads, and let him bide. There’s been quite enough o’ this gashly jaw. I don’t believe you did kill the old man, Mr Chris, sir, and there’s my hand on it.”

He thrust out his great brown hairy, horny paw, and it was like help held forth to a drowning man. Chris grasped the hand with both of his, and stood gazing full in the rough fellow’s eyes, his face working, his breast heaving, and a great struggle going on as he tried to speak, while the little group around looked on at the strange scene.

It was the first kindly word man seemed to have spoken to him all those weary months, and Chris, completely overcome, strove hard to utter his thanks, but for a time nothing would come. At last it was in a low, hoarse murmur that he said—

“God bless you for that, my man!” and hurried back to his room.

“And you call yourselves mates,” growled the fisherman, who had prudently kept in a reclining position, and who now slowly rose; “and you call yourselves mates. Why, you ought to ha’ chucked him off the wall.”

“And I felt so happy!” groaned Chris; “and I felt so happy!”

“How did he know she was coming back?” he cried suddenly, as he sprang up and caught a telescope from where it lay upon a row of books, adjusted it, and stood looking out of the open window.

“Yes, its his boat; and there he stands using a glass watching her home.”

He shrank away, with his eyes looking dull and sunken as he laid the glass upon the shelf.

“How did he know—how did he know?”

He sank down in a chair, and buried his face in his hands, as a flood of surmises rushed through his brain, every one full of agony, and all pointing to the idea that Claude must have been in communication with Glyddyr, or he never could have timed his return after all these months like that.

Half-an-hour had passed, and then he started from his chair, for there was a loud report.

He sank back in his seat again, with a mocking laugh.

“Beer!” he said bitterly. “Beer! What a world this is!”

And in imagination he saw the white smoke curling up from the mouth of the little cannon which stood by the flagstaff in front of the Harbour Inn, knowing, as he did, that the piece had been loaded in honour of Glyddyr’s return, and fired with the taproom poker, made red for the purpose.

Then there arose a boisterous burst of cheering, taken up again and again, as Glyddyr’s gig was rowed up to the steps, and he stepped out upon the pier.

“Yes, cheer away, you idiots,” cried Chris, rising from his seat in his jealous agony; “cheer and shout, and go down on the stones and grovel before him.”

Bang!

“That’s right! Again. Again. Down with you, and let him walk in triumph over your necks. The new man—the new master of the Fort.”

“They know it,” he groaned, as he dashed to the window, and then backed away, after seeing that he was right, and that Glyddyr was coming along the pier, scattering coins among the little crowd that had gathered round, while the sound of hurrying feet could be heard as men and boys, attracted by the gunfire, were running down to the harbour.

“Yes, they know it. The new lord of the Fort, and I stand here instead of joining them, and cheering too for the new king of the castle. My God, what a world it is!”

He stopped short, pale and ghastly, as the cheering came nearer, and just then, looking proud and elate, Parry Glyddyr passed the window on his way to the hotel.

“And leave him to triumph over my death!” muttered Chris, in a low fierce voice. “No,” he added, after a pause; “I’ve been too great a cur as it is. Not yet: it has not come quite to the worst.”

Chris was right. There had been communication between Claude and Glyddyr, and quiet pertinacity, mingled with the greatest show of gentle respect and consideration, had not been without result.

It was only a short run across to Ettreville, and one morning, during a walk with Mary, Glyddyr came up to salute Claude with grave, respectful courtesy.

They had just put in for a few hours, he said, and they sailed again that afternoon. He was so glad to see Miss Gartram again, and he was sure she was better for the change.

Only a few minutes’ conversation, and he was gone.

A fortnight later he was there again, and the stay was a little longer; but there was always the same shrinking show of respect for her, and even Mary could say nothing.

And so time wore on, till the coming of the yacht and a stay for at least a few days was no uncommon thing.

“No, I wouldn’t say a word,” said Gellow, in conference with his man. “Keep quiet, dear boy, till she gets back, even if it’s months yet, and then strike home.”

“But I’m getting sick of it.”

“Never mind, dear boy. It’s a very big stake, and I can’t understand, seeing what a darling she is, how you shy at her so. No other reason, have you?”

“No, no,” said Glyddyr hurriedly.

“But it looks as if you had, even when you say no. But there, it’s all right. Give her plenty of time. You have hooked her. If you are hasty now, she’ll break away, and never take the fly again. Wait till she goes back into her own quiet little groove. Then be quite ready; job the landing-net under her with a sure and steady hand, and though she’ll kick and struggle a bit, and try to leap back into deep water, the pretty little goldfish will be yours. And well earned, too.”

So Glyddyr waited his time, knew exactly when Claude would return home, and was ready to incite the fishermen and the workers at the quarry to get up a reception in her honour.

This was done, and as Chris Lisle stayed at home, gnawing his lips with agony, he knew that flags and banners were being strung across from house to house, that yachts’ guns were to be fired, and that the band from Toxeter was to be there.

It was short time for preparation, but enthusiasm was at high pressure, and the first dawning Chris had of the hour at which Claude would return was given by the band.

For a moment he hesitated. Jealousy said stay, but the old boyish love carried all before it, and, reckless of the lowering looks which greeted him, he hurried along the beach, and made for the Fort, so as to be one of the first to welcome its mistress back.

The bells in the little church began to ring musically, for Glyddyr had well done his work, and then the guns were fired, and as this was supplemented by the distant music, a fierce pang shot through Chris Lisle’s heart.

“Why did I not think to do all this?”

He went on, and joined the little crowd by the gateway of the Fort, where the school children were in front, ready with handkerchiefs and coloured ribbons, for there were no flowers to be had.

As he approached to take his stand by the gate, the children began to cheer, and he bit his lip angrily as he heard them rebuked and hushed into silence.

But he forgot all this directly, for fresh firing and the nearing of the band told that Claude must be close at hand—she for whom his heart yearned—she whom his eyes longed to see, and they grew dim in the excitement, as, forgetful of all past trouble, he strained them to catch her first glance.

Would she smile at him? Would she stop and stretch out her hands, and in spite of all those gathered around her, should he clasp her in his arms?

All excited thoughts, as there was the crashing sound of wheels, the loud cheering caught up now by the children as the carriage which had been to meet her rolled slowly up toward the gateway.

At last. Bending forward with her pale face flushed, her eyes humid, and her black gloved hand waving her white kerchief in answer to the bursts of cheers.

Chris strained forward, and was about to press up to the carriage-door as it came slowly into the gateway to avoid crushing those who flocked round.

“Three cheers for the Queen of the Castle!” cried a loud voice; and then to Chris Lisle it was as if heaven and earth had come together.

For the voice was the voice of Glyddyr, who had risen from his seat beside Claude, unseen till then; and as the answering chorus rang out, sick almost unto death, his brain swimming and a dull throbbing at his breast, Chris shrank away without encountering Claude Gartram’s eyes, veiled almost to blindness by her tears.

Volume Three—Chapter Twelve.

Conscience Pricking.

“It does seem so hard to think that we have been away all these months, Claudie,” said Mary the next morning. “Aren’t you glad to be back once more in the dear old home?”

“Yes, dear; and no,” said Claude sadly.

“Now, who is to understand what that means? But, Claude, dear, I did not speak last night—”

“What about,” said Claude quickly.

“I don’t like to say. The subject is tabooed.”

Claude turned toward the window, so that her cousin should not see her face.

“The last time I mentioned his name you scolded me.”

Claude remained silent.

“Did you see him yesterday when we came up to the gate?”

“No.”

“He was there, and coming up to the carriage when he saw Mr Glyddyr get up to call for three cheers, and then he shrank away.”

Claude shivered, as if from a sudden chill, but she remained silent.

“May I say what I think?” asked Mary.

Claude turned upon her an agonised look.

“If you wish to give me pain,” she said, almost in a whisper; and at that moment Sarah Woodham entered the room.

“Mr Glyddyr, ma’am. He asks you to excuse his calling so early, but if you would see him for a few minutes he would be grateful.”

The shiver ran through Claude again, but she smothered her emotion.

“Show Mr Glyddyr in,” she said calmly, and Sarah Woodham’s face grew harder as she left the room.

“What are you going to say, Claude?” said Mary quickly.

“Say?”

“Yes. Why do you put on that air of ignorance? You know why he has come.”

“Mary!”

“Yes, I will speak. All these quiet calls have meant that, I am sure. He has only been waiting till you came home to ask you to be his wife.”

“Hush!”

The door opened, and Glyddyr entered, looking sallow and nervous; but he began to brighten a little, as if the presence of Mary were a reprieve from the task he had set himself to do.

It was only a short one, though, for, after the first greetings, Mary rose to go.

Claude looked at her wistfully.

“Don’t let me drive you away, Miss Dillon,” said Glyddyr quickly.

Claude uttered no word to stay her, but sat gazing straight before her at a large photograph of her father, her eyes wild and fixed with the emotion from which she suffered, and for a few moments after the door was closed neither spoke.

“Miss Gartram—Claude,” said Glyddyr, at last, in a husky voice, and at his words she started, as if from a dream.

Her look seemed to freeze him, but he had taken the step now, and he rose and crossed to her side, taking the hand she surrendered to him unresistingly.

“Claude, you know how all these weary months I have been silent,” he whispered; “how I have feared to intrude upon you in your grief, though all the while I have suffered painfully too.”

“Yes,” she said gently, “you have been very patient with me, I know.”

“Because I dared to hope that the time might come when I could speak to you as I do now. You know how I love you, and—forgive me for saying what I do—you know how my happiness is in your hands. Tell me to be patient even now, and I will wait.”

Her wild fixed look intensified as she listened to his impassioned prayer, for she saw only the face of her father as she had seen him last in life.

“I hardly dare to say the words,” he went on; “it seems like putting pressure on one whom I want to love me of herself, to make me happy by her own gentle confession; but I must speak now, even if it gives you pain. Claude, dearest, it was his wish. Tell me you will be my wife.”

He uttered his last sentence or two in a hesitating whisper.

“You heard what I said, dearest?” he whispered.

“Yes—yes,” said Claude dreamily.

“You will not hold me off longer. Claude, dearest, what can I say to move you? Is it to be always thus?”

She looked at him wildly for a few moments, and he was about to speak again, but her lips moved, and she said slowly—

“You say it would make you happy?”

“Happy?” he exclaimed passionately, “oh, if I had but words to tell you all.”

“Hush!” she said, slowly withdrawing her hand. “Six months ago I thought I saw my course marked out for me; but now all appears changed. You know how, long before we ever met—”

“Yes,” he cried eagerly, “I know everything you would say, but, Claude, dearest, it is impossible. If that was to make you happy, I would have gone away, and patiently borne all, but it is impossible.”

“Yes,” she said, shuddering slightly, “it is impossible.”

“Then you will let me hope?” he cried quickly.

“It was my dear father’s wish,” she said dreamily; “I have thought of this, and what was my duty, left as I am, his child and the steward of his great wealth.”

“Yes—yes!” he cried excitedly.

“It was all darkness—black, black darkness for a time, but by slow degrees the light has come.”

“Claude, my love!”

“Oh, hush: pray hush!” she said with a slight shiver as she gazed straight past her wooer at the photograph upon the table. “It was his wish; and if you desire this, Parry Glyddyr, I will try to be your true and faithful wife.”

“My own!” he whispered, and he tried to pass his arm around her, but she shrank back with so pained a look that he forbore. “There,” he said, “I will be patient. I have waited all these long months, and I know now how your love for me will come. I can wait. But, Claude, let me go away quite happy. How soon?”

“It was his wish.”

“In a month from now?” he whispered tenderly.

“Yes,” she said, still gazing past him at the photograph.

“My own!” he cried, “I had not dared to hope for this. But, Claude, dearest, why do you look so strange?”

He felt as if a hand of ice had touched him, and his own closed upon hers with a spasmodic grip, as he looked sharply round and saw the photograph, the counterfeit presentment gazing sternly in his eyes.

But Claude was too intent upon her own thoughts to notice his ghastly pallor, and, uttering a low sigh, she at last withdrew her hand.

“Do not say more to me now, Mr Glyddyr,” she sighed faintly. “I am weak. The shock of coming back here has been almost more than I can bear. You will go now. Do not think me unkind and cold, but you will leave me till to-morrow.”

“Yes, yes,” he cried huskily, as he forced himself to take her hand which felt like ice, and, bending over it, he pressed his lips upon the clear transparent skin. “Yes, till to-morrow,” he said; and, carefully keeping his eyes averted from the photograph, he walked quickly from the room.

“Claude! Claude!” cried Mary entering, but there was no reply. “Claude!” and she laid her hand upon the girl’s shoulder, to start back in alarm at the waxen face that was slowly turned towards her. “Claude, darling, don’t look like that. Tell me. He did ask you?”

Claude nodded.

“And you refused him?”

She shook her head sadly.

“Oh, Claude!” cried Mary reproachfully. “And poor Chris!”

“Silence!” said Claude excitedly. “Never mention his name again.”

“But you can’t—you don’t think that horrible charge was true?”

“I think it was, my dear—my dead father’s wish that I should wed Mr Glyddyr. I have prayed for strength to carry out his will.”

“And you have accepted him!”

“Mary, a woman cannot live for herself. It was my duty. In a month I shall be Parry Glyddyr’s wife.”

Volume Three—Chapter Thirteen.

A Strange Wooing.

Chris Lisle heard the news without showing the slightest emotion, and as soon as he was alone he sat down and wrote as follows:—

“*I pray God that you may be happy*.

“Chris Lisle.”

That was all, and he dropped it into the post-box himself, turned back to meet Trevithick on his way to the Fort, nodded to him and went straight to his room, where he stood for a few moments in silence.

“Yes,” he said slowly and solemnly, “I pray God that you may be happy.”

Then, after a pause:

“But,” he cried, with terrible earnestness, “if—”

There was another pause in which he silently continued that which he might have said. Then, with a fierce light flashing from his eyes, he clenched his hands and said in a whisper more startling than the loudest words—

“I’ll kill him as I would some venomous beast.”

He threw himself into a chair and sat looking white and changed for quite an hour before he rose up and drew a long deep breath.

“Dead!” he said softly; “dead! Now, then, to bear it—like a man—and show no sign.”

There was a gentle tap at the door.

“May I come in, sir, please?”

“Eh? Oh yes, Mrs Sarson. What is it?”

“I was going to—Oh my dear, dear boy!”

The poor woman caught his hand in hers, and kissed it, as her tears fell fast.

“Why, Mrs Sarson,” he said, smiling, “what’s the matter?”

“Oh, my dear,” she said; “you haven’t lived here with me all these years from quite a boy as you were, without me feeling just like a mother to you. And you so alone in the world. I know what trouble you’re in, and what you must feel; and it hurts me too.”

“There, there. You’re a good soul,” he said. “But that’s all over. Why, I’ve had the aching tooth taken out, and I’m quite a new man now.”

“Oh, my dear—my dear!”

“I’m off for a few hours’ fishing, and I shall want a good meat tea about six. I sha’n’t be later.”

He nodded cheerfully, and took his creel and rod from the passage, Mrs Sarson hurrying to the window, and watching till he was out of sight, “Ah!” she said, shaking her head; “but it don’t deceive me. I’ve read of them as held their hands in the fire till they were burned away; and he’s a martyr, too, as would do it, without making a sign. But he can’t deceive me.”

Meanwhile Trevithick had gone up to the Fort to see Claude about certain business matters connected with the quarry, and with the full intent to ask her a few questions about the missing money in spite of her former words; but on his way that morning he had heard startling news, which made his face look peculiarly serious, and he said to himself—

“Well, it was her father’s wish, but if I don’t make the tightest marriage settlements ever drawn up I’m not an honest man.”

He was admitted by Sarah Woodham, and shown into the library, where, quite at home, he took his seat, unlocked his black bag, and began to arrange a number of endorsed papers, tied up with red tape.

“Mrs Woodham does not seem to approve of the wedding,” he said to himself. “Not a cheerful woman.”

Then he looked round the room, and in imagination searched Gartram’s safe and cash receptacles for the hundredth time.

“No,” he said, giving one ear a vicious rub, “I can’t get it that way. It was someone who knew him and his ways pretty well stole that money, or there would have been some record left. All those thousands short. He never omitted keeping account of even trifling sums.”

“And Miss Dillon does not approve of the wedding,” he said to himself as Mary entered, her eyes plainly showing that she had been weeping.

“Good-morning,” she said, taking the chair placed for her with heavy courtesy. “My cousin is unwell, Mr Trevithick, and cannot see you. Will you either come over again or state your business to me?”

“I shall be only too glad,” he said, smiling.

“I thought you would,” replied Mary. “Of course you will make a charge for this journey.”

Trevithick looked at her aghast; and then flushed and perspired.

“I said I should be only too glad to discuss the business with you, Miss Dillon,” he said stiffly.

“No, you did not, Mr Trevithick.”

“I beg pardon. That is what I meant.”

“Oh! then please go on.”

“Why will she always be so sharp with me?” thought the lawyer, as he looked across the table wistfully.

“Yes, Mr Trevithick? I am all attention.”

“Yes; of course,” he said, suddenly becoming very business-like, for he could deal with her then. “The little matters of business can wait, or perhaps you could take the papers up for Miss Gartram’s signature.”

“Yes; of course,” said Mary, sharply. “Where are they?”

“Here,” he said, quietly; “but there is one, I might say two things, I should like Miss Gartram’s opinion upon. Will you tell her, please?”

“Do speak a little faster, Mr Trevithick, I have a great deal to do this morning.”

“I beg your pardon. Will you please tell Miss Gartram that I am, in spite of her commands, much exercised in mind about that missing money. Tell her, please, that I have studied it from every point of view, and I am compelled to say that it is her duty to Mr Gartram deceased—that most exact of business men—to instruct me to make further inquiries into the matter.”

“It would be of no use, Mr Trevithick. I am sure your cousin would not allow it. Is that all?”

“Will you not appeal to her from me?”

“No. I am sure she would not listen to any such suggestion. Now, is that all?”

Mary spoke in a quick, excited way, as if she wanted to get out of the room, and yet wished to stay.

“Well—no,” he answered softly, as he kept on taking up and laying down his papers in different order.

“Mr Trevithick!”

“Pray, give me time, Miss Dillon,” he protested. “The fact is I have heard very important news this morning.”

“Of course you have. You mean about my cousin’s approaching marriage.”

“Then it is true?”

“Of course it is.”

Trevithick sighed.

“Well, Mr Trevithick, is that all?”

“No, madam, I may say that I am very sorry.”

“Well, is that all?” cried Mary, impatiently.

“No. As the late Mr Gartram’s trusted, confidential adviser, I was aware that this was his wish, but, all the same, I am deeply grieved.”

“Of course, and so is everybody else,” said Mary passionately. “I mean,” she said, checking herself, “it seems sad for it to be so soon. That is all, I suppose.”

“No, Miss Dillon; this being so I should have liked to discuss with Miss Gartram the question of the settlements. I presume, as she has continued to trust me as her father trusted me, that she would wish me to see to all the legal matters connected with her fortune.”

“What a stupid question. Why, of course.”

“Well, forgive me; hardly a stupid question. Perhaps too retiring—for a lawyer.”

“Mr Trevithick, you are not half decided and prompt enough. Well, then; my cousin anticipated all this, and said, ‘tell Mr Trevithick to do what is right and just, and that I leave myself entirely in his hands. Tell him to do what he would have done had my father been alive.’”

“Ah!” said the lawyer slowly. “Yes; then I will proceed at once. It is a great responsibility, as Miss Gartram has neither relative nor executor to whom she could appeal. A very great responsibility, but I will do what is just and right in her interest, tying down her property as under the circumstances should be done.”

“Do—do Mr Trevithick—dear Mr Trevithick, pray do,” cried Mary, starting from her seat, and advancing to the table—her old, sharp manner gone, and an intense desire to hasten the lawyer’s proposals flashing from her eyes.

“I will,” he said firmly; and he held out his hand. “You will trust me, Mary Dillon, as your cousin trusts me?”

“Indeed, I will,” she said eagerly, and she placed her thin little white hand in his.

“Hah!” he ejaculated with a long expiration of the breath; and his great hand closed and prisoned the little one laid therein. “You told me just now that I was not decided and prompt enough.”

“Yes, I did. But you are holding my hand very tightly, Mr Trevithick.”

“Yes,” he said quietly, “I am. That is because you are wrong. I am very decided and prompt sometimes, and I am going to be now. Mary Dillon, will you be my wife?”

“What!” she cried, flushing scarlet, and struggling to release her hand, as her eyes flashed and seemed to be reading him through and through. “Absurd!”

“No—no,” he said gravely; “don’t say that, even if my way and manner are absurd.”

“I did not mean that,” she cried quickly. “I meant to—Oh, it is absurd!” she said again, though her heart was throbbing violently, and she struggled vainly to withdraw her hand. “Look at me—weak, misshapen, pitiful. Mr Trevithick, you are mad.”

“Don’t try to take your hand away,” he said slowly; it makes me afraid of hurting you; and don’t speak again like that—you hurt me very—very much.

“But, Mr Trevithick! It is too dreadful. I cannot—I must not listen to you.”

“Why? You are quite free; and you are not an heiress.”

“I!” she cried bitterly. “No; I have nothing but a pitiful few hundred pounds. Now you know the truth. Do you hear me? I am a pauper, dependent on my cousin’s charity.”

“I am very glad,” he said, gazing at her thoughtfully, and still speaking in his slow and deliberate way. “I was afraid that perhaps you had money of which I did not know. But you will say ‘yes’?”

“No; impossible. Are you blind? Look at me.”

“I might say, ‘Look at me,’” he retorted, with a frank, honest laugh, which lit up his countenance pleasantly. “I wish you could look at me as I do at you, and see there something that you could love. Yes,” he said, his genuine passion

making him speak fluently and well; “for all these long, long months, Mary, I have always had your sweet, earnest eyes before me, and your clever, bright face. I have seemed to listen to your voice, and sometimes I have been sad as I have asked myself what a woman could find in me to love.”

“Ah!” ejaculated the trembling girl.

“And I’ve felt that, when you have said all those many sharp, hard things to me, that they were not quite real, and when your words have been most cruel, I’ve dared to fancy that your eyes seemed to be sorry that your tongue could be so bitter.”

“Mr Trevithick, pray!”

“And then I’ve hoped and waited, and thought of what you were.”

“Yes,” said Mary bitterly, as she made a gesture with one hand.

“Bah!” he cried, “what of that? An accident when you were a child. I would not have you different for worlds. I want those two dear eyes to look into mine, true and trustful and clever. You, to whom I can come home from my work for help and counsel, to be everything to me—my wife. Mary dear, in my slow and clumsy way I love you very dearly, and your cousin’s wedding has brought it all out. I didn’t think I could make love like that.”

He took her other hand, and gazed at her very fondly as she stood by his side, with the tears streaming down her cheeks.

“You are not angry with me, dear?”

“No,” she said gently; “I am sorry.”

“Why?”

“For you. See how the world will sneer.”

“What!” he cried eagerly. “Then you will?”

She looked at him searchingly, as if a lingering doubt were there, and a shadow of suspicion were making her try to see if he was truly in earnest.

“No, no,” she said, as a sob burst from her lips; “it is impossible.” And she struggled hard to get away.

“Impossible!” he said, as he tightened his grasp. “Tell me one thing, Mary. You knew I loved you?”

She nodded quickly.

“And—you don’t think me ridiculous?”

“I think you the truest, most honest gentleman I ever saw,” she sobbed; “but—”

“Ah!” he said, with a pleasant little satisfied laugh, “that settles it, then. The impossibility has gone like smoke. Mary dear, I never hoped to be so happy as you have made me now.”

His great arms enfolded her for a moment, during which she lay panting on his breast, then, struggling to free herself, she caught and kissed one of his hands.

“Hah!” he ejaculated, “now we must think of some one else.”

He led her gently back to her chair, and bent down to kiss her forehead. Then, returning to his seat as calmly as if nothing had happened—

“I can talk freely to you now, Mary,” he said. “Is not this a great mistake?”

“Yes,” she said, with an arch look, full of her newly-found joy.

“No, no; you know what I mean. We must be very serious now. I don’t like this Mr Glyddyr.”

“I hate him,” cried Mary.

“Well, that’s honest,” he said, smiling. “But it was her father’s wish, and I suppose it is to be.”

“Yes; it is to be. Nothing would turn her now.”

John Trevithick did not say, “And is this to be soon?” but he thought it, and set the idea aside.

“No,” he said to himself; “we must wait.” And soon after, calm, quiet and business-like, he went away to draw up the marriage settlements tightly on Claude’s behalf, and wandered whether he could ever manage to trace that missing cash.

He took out a pocket-book, and turned to a certain page covered with figures, and ran it down.

“Only a few of these notes have reached the bank. Well, some day I may come upon a clue in a way I least expect.

“Impossible, eh?” he said, with a smile of content. “Bless her sweet eyes! I won’t believe in the impossible now.”

Volume Three—Chapter Fourteen.

“And this is being Married.”

“You are sure you don’t mind me talking about it, sir?”

“Mind! Oh, no, Mrs Sarson, say what you like.”

“Well, you see, sir, even if one is a widow and growing old, one can’t help feeling interested in weddings. I suppose it’s being a woman. Everybody’s dreadfully disappointed.”

“Indeed,” said Chris coldly.

“And, yes, indeed, sir. No big party; no wedding breakfast and cake; no going away in chaises and fours. If poor Mr Gartram had been alive, it wouldn’t have been like this. Why, do you know, sir, the quarry folk were getting ready powder and going to fire guns, and make a big bonfire on the cliffs; but Mr Trevithick, the lawyer, went to them with a message from Miss Claude, sir, asking for them to do nothing; and they’re just going to the church and back to the big house, and not even going away.”

“Indeed!”

“Oh, yes, sir, and I did hear that Miss Claude actually wanted to be married in black, but Miss Mary Dillon persuaded her not. I heard it on the best of authority, sir.”

Chris made no reply, and, finding no encouragement, Mrs Sarson cleared her lodger’s breakfast things away, and left the room.

The moment he was alone, Chris started from his chair to stand with his back to the light; his teeth set hard and fists clenched as a spasm of mental agony for the moment mastered him.

“No,” he said, after a few moments, with a bitter laugh, “this won’t do. What is it to me? I can bear it now like a man. She shall see how indifferent I am.”

For it was the morning of the ill-starred wedding—a morning in which Nature seemed to be in the mood to make everything depressing, for the wind blew hard, bringing from the Atlantic a drenching shower, through which, with Gellow for his best man, Glyddyr would have to drive to the little church. Meanwhile, he was having so severe a shivering fit at the hotel where he had been staying, that his companion had become alarmed, and suggested calling in the doctor.

“Bah! nonsense! Ring for some brandy.”

“And I’ll take a flask to the church,” said Gellow to himself, “or the brute will breakdown. We’re going to have a jolly wedding seemingly. Only wants that confounded Frenchwoman to get scent of it, and come down, and then we should be perfect.”

“That’s better,” said Gellow, after the brandy had been brought. “But what a day! What a cheerful lookout! I say, Glyddyr, am I dreaming? Is it a wedding this morning or a funeral?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, it looks more like the latter. I say: Young Lisle won’t come and have a pop at you in the church?”

Glyddyr turned ghastly.

“You—you don’t think—”

“Bah! My chaff. You are out of sorts; on your wedding-day, too. Hold hard with that brandy, or it will pop you off, and not Lisle. Steady, man, steady.”

“Gellow, it’s all over,” gasped the miserable man. “I shall never be able to go through with it.”

“Oh, if I can only get this morning over,” said Gellow to himself; and then aloud—

“Nonsense, my dear boy, you’re a bit nervous, that’s all. I suppose a man is when he’s going to be married. You’re all right. Come, have a devilled kidney or a snack of something. You don’t eat enough.”

“Eat?” said Glyddyr, with a shudder. “No; I seem to have no appetite now.”

“Come on, and let’s get it over. Here’s the carriage waiting. Steady, man, steady. No; not a drop more.”

“The carriage is at the door, sir,” said the waiter; and striving hard to be firm, and to master a tremulous sensation about his knees, Glyddyr walked out into the hall, where a buzzing sound that was heard suddenly ceased till the pair were in the carriage, from whose roof the rain was streaming. Then, after banging too the door, the waiter dashed back under shelter, the dripping horses started off, and the carriage disappeared in the misty rain.

“Looks as if he was going to execution,” said the man, with a laugh, as he dabbed the top of his head with his napkin. “Well, it do rain to-day.”

At the Fort everything had gone on that morning in a calm, subdued way that seemed to betoken no change. Claude came down to breakfast as usual, and sat looking dreamily before her, while Mary, red-eyed and sorrowful, had not the heart to speak.

Trevithick had slept there the previous night, and was the only guest, for Doctor Asher had declined to be present, on the score of professional calls.

“I’m afraid there is very little chance of its holding up,” said Trevithick, when they rose from the scarcely-touched breakfast.

“No, Mr Trevithick,” said Claude quietly. “I think we shall have a very wet day. Mary, dear, we must take our waterproofs. It is fifty yards from the lych-gate to the church door. Isn’t it time we went up to dress?”

She moved towards the door, but came back, and held out her hand to the lawyer.

“Forgive me for being so absent and strange with you,” she said, with a faint smile. “You have been very good and kind to me, but I dare say you think all this odd and unnatural.”

“Oh, no; not at all,” said Trevithick, colouring like a girl.

“It was the only thing in which I asked to have my way—to let the wedding be perfectly quiet. Don’t be long, Mary.”

Trevithick looked at his little betrothed as the door closed, and she looked up at him.

“I say, Mary, dear,” he said, “is she quite—you know what I mean. I feel almost as if I ought to interfere.”

“Oh, John, John,” cried the little thing, bursting into a passionate fit of weeping; “if we could only stop it even now!”

She sobbed on his breast for a few seconds, and then hastily wiped her eyes.

“There, I’m better now,” she said. “I’ve talked to her till I’m tired, but it’s of no use. ‘It’s my *duty*’ is all she will say. Oh! why did people ever invent the horrid word. Don’t say anything, John, dear. Let’s get it over, and hope for the best; but if there’s any chance of our wedding being like this, let’s shake hands like Christians, forgive one another, and say good-bye.”

She ran out of the room, and Trevithick sat watching the rain trickle down the window-panes, and tried to follow the course of a big ship struggling up Channel, its storm topsails dimly seen through the mist of rain.

“I wouldn’t be on that ship for all I’ve saved,” he said, shaking his head. “Looks as if there was going to be a wreck.

“So there is,” he said, after a pause, “a social wreck, and I’m going to assist. No, I’m not. I’m looking after the salvage. Poor girl! Gartram must have been mad.”

His meditations were broken in upon by the sound of wheels. Half-an-hour later the door was thrown open.

“Now, Mr Trevithick, please,” said Mary; and he hurried into the hall to find Claude ready and looking very calm and composed.

“Good-bye,” she was saying to first one and then another of the maids, who, catching the contagion, burst into tears.

“As if it wasn’t wet enough already,” said Reuben Brime, who stood with the footman by the carriage-door.

“Good-bye, Woodham, dear,” said Claude, holding out her hand, but snatching it back directly as she yielded to a sudden impulse, and threw her arms around the stern-looking woman’s neck. “Thank you for all that you have done.”

“Good-bye! Why did she say good-bye?” thought Woodham, as Trevithick handed the bride into the carriage, the drops from the edge of the portico falling like great tears upon her hair. “Yes: good-bye to youth and happiness and your sweet young life.”

The carriage-door was banged, and banged again, for the wet had made it hard to shut. Then, as the footman mounted to his place on the box, the gardener hurried round in front of the horses, and ran for the short cut over the cliffs to the church.

“Shouldn’t you go, Mrs Woodham?” said one of the maids.

Sarah Woodham shook her head.

“They will soon be back,” she said. “I’m going to stay to meet the new master.”

“Why does not something happen to stop this hateful match?” she muttered to herself. “My poor girl. My poor, dear girl.”

The carriage sped on through the driving rain, and the little party descended at the church gate, where a few fishermen were gathered in their yellow and black oilskins to follow them, dripping, into the little church, while it seemed to Claude that it was only the other day that her father was borne to his resting-place. And there they were, standing face to face before God’s altar, she pale, sad and composed, having to give her whole love and life to the

pale trembling man who faced her, and who, though she knew it not, exhaled a strong odour of the spirits he had taken to enable him to go through the task.

But Claude saw nothing, realised nothing but the words of the clergyman, repeating every response in a low, earnest tone right on to the end, when, as the last words of the service was uttered, there was the sound of some one drawing a long, deep breath.

It was only Gellow's way of congratulating himself on the fact that his money and much more were safe at last.

"Now!" he muttered, as he hugged himself. "Now you may have *DT*, or anything you like."

The book was signed, and the few fishermen and women who had braved the storm began to go clattering out of the church as Glyddyr, making an effort to look happy and content, held his arm to his newly-made bride to lead her down the little nave.

"Father, dear, it was your wish," said Claude softly, and, with a sigh, she raised her eyes towards the faint light which came through the west window.

Then she stopped short, gazing wildly at where Chris Lisle stood like a black silhouette against the dim lattice panes, as he had stood with folded arms right through the service.

He made no sign; he uttered no sound, his features hardly visible from the position against the light; but the sight of that figure was enough to bring like a flood the recollections of the past, and of what might have been, but for her irrevocable step; and, snatching her hand from her husband's arm, Claude clasped her forehead as she uttered a low, faint cry, and fell heavily upon the floor.

"Keep back, all of you!" cried Glyddyr excitedly. "Do you hear, keep back. The carriage, there. Do you hear me? Keep back!"

He lifted Claude from where she lay, and bore her out, holding her tightly in his arms, as if he feared that she might be snatched away by him who had caused this shock.

"Curse him!" he muttered, as the carriage was driven back to the Fort at a canter; "but he's too late. The dark horse has won, Chris Lisle, and the stakes are mine."

Claude was still insensible when the carriage stopped, and Glyddyr resigned her to Sarah Woodham's arms.

"A bit faint, that's all," he said, with a half laugh. "She'll be better soon."

"You—you are married, sir?" faltered the woman, looking at him wildly.

"You bet!" he snarled, as he turned away, and strode into the library, but came back looking ghastly and slamming the door. "Here, some one bring the spirits into the dining-room; not in there. Quick! don't you see your mistress is taken ill?"

"Open the door," whispered Woodham; "we'll take her in there."

"No; in the dining-room—anywhere," cried Glyddyr. "Don't take her there.

"And this is being married!" he muttered, as soon as he was alone. "The cad! The coward! But I've bested him, and I'm a free man once again, and master here."

They had carried Claude into the dining-room; and, hardly caring where he went, Glyddyr had entered the drawing-room, thrown to the door, and was walking hurriedly up and down, till, as he uttered the last words, his eyes fell upon the large photograph of Gartram.

He stopped short, with his eyes showing a ring of white about the iris, and the cold sweat glistening upon his forehead till the spasm of dread passed away. Then dashing forward, he was about to tear the likeness from its easel and frame, but the door was suddenly opened, and he recovered himself, and turned to face Trevithick and his best man, for he had not heard the wheels as the second carriage stopped.

Volume Three—Chapter Fifteen.

"Only Wait."

The occupants of the Fort were broken up into little parties on that eventful day. Claude seemed to go from one fit into another, and her cousin and Sarah Woodham did not leave her side.

Brime had been despatched for Doctor Asher, but had come back with a message that the doctor had been taken ill, and could not leave his home, but they were not to be alarmed. It was only hysteria, he wrote, and all needed was quiet and rest.

Trevithick had betaken himself to the library, where he sat alone, waiting for tidings, and had at last taken his note-book from his pocket, as if inspired by the place, and began to run over the numbers of the missing notes.

"I can't go away till afternoon," he had said to himself; "and till I have had a quiet few minutes with Mary."

In the dining-room Glyddyr was now alone with Gellow, and there had been a scene.

“Look here,” said the latter, after partaking heartily of the breakfast, “I’m not a man who boasts, and I suppose my principles, as people call ’em, are not of the best, but, ’pon my soul, Glyddyr, if I couldn’t show up better after marrying a girl like that, I’d go and hang myself.”

“Bah!”

“No, you don’t; not a drop more,” continued Gellow, laying his hand upon a bottle of champagne that Glyddyr was about to take. “You’ve had too much now. When I’m gone, you can do as you like. You’re master here, but I won’t sit and see you go on like this.”

“It don’t hurt me. I’m as sober as you are.”

“P’r’aps so, now; but what will you be by-and-by? Hang it all, Glyd, you’ve got the girl, and the money, and you can pay me off. She’s a little darling, that’s what she is, and I’d turn over a fresh leaf—clean the slate and begin square now, I would, ’pon my soul. Do you hear?”

“Yes, I hear.”

“And now I think I’ll go back to the hotel; you don’t want me.”

“Eh! What? No, no; don’t go,” said Glyddyr excitedly.

“Not go?”

“No, man, no; don’t go and leave me here alone.”

“Well, upon my soul, Glyddyr, you are a one.”

“That fellow, Lisle. You saw him in the corner. He means mischief. I’m sure he does.”

“Let him. You’re King of the Castle now. Keep him out. Don’t be such a cur.”

“He’s half mad. I know he is. I don’t want a scene. I should kill him if he came.”

“Yes, you look as if you would.”

“And I haven’t done much for you yet. We shall want to talk business.”

“What, on your wedding-day! Nonsense. I’ll go back to the hotel.”

“No, no. There is plenty of room in the place—for a friend. You must stop here for a few days.”

“Oh, very well. Play policeman, eh, and keep t’other fellow off. I see your little game. Cheerful for me, though, all the same.”

“Help me to get rid of that lawyer; I don’t want him hanging about.—Gellow.”

“Well?”

“Why didn’t I insist upon going over to Paris or Baden as soon as we were married?”

“How should I know? I suppose I may light a cigar now. Your wife won’t object?”

“It was her doing,” said Glyddyr thoughtfully. “She insisted on staying.”

“No, you don’t. If I’m to play policeman, no more drink, or very little, do you have to-day.”

Gellow drew the bottle farther away again, and Glyddyr threw himself back in his chair and began gnawing his nails.

“Ugh!”

“What’s the matter now?” said Gellow, as Glyddyr shuddered.

“I don’t know. Somehow I don’t like this place.”

“Buy it off you, if you like. But, I say, hadn’t you better ring and ask after your wife?”

About this time, as John Trevithick sat cogitating over his memoranda, seeking for the light where all was dark, the door opened, and Mary came in.

“Ah! How is she now?”

“Very ill. I have left her for a few minutes in the drawing-room with Sarah Woodham,” said Mary, with a catching of the breath. “Oh, John, how cruel of Chris Lisle to come and do that.”

“I don’t know,” said Trevithick thoughtfully. “I’m afraid I should have acted the same. But there: the mischief is done. I’m glad you’ve come. I wanted to see you before I went.”

“Before you went? Oh!” exclaimed Mary, catching at his hand, “you must not go.”

“Not go? Oh, I’m not wanted here.”

“You don’t know,” cried Mary excitedly. “Don’t leave us, John. I’m frightened. It all seems so horrible. Suppose Chris Lisle were to come?”

“Chris Lisle would not be so mad.”

“I don’t know. I saw his face, poor fellow, and it looked dreadful, and I have just seen Mr Glyddyr. I went to the dining-room to see if you were there. He looks ghastly, and he has been drinking. For Claude’s sake, pray stay.”

“You do not know what you are saying, my dear,” said the big lawyer gently. “Mr Glyddyr is master here now. But I’m afraid you are right. He had been drinking before he came. I cannot interfere.”

“Not to protect her?”

“No, I have no right.”

“Then stop to protect me, John, dear,” she whispered.

“The law gives me no right,” he said slowly, “but if you put it in that way, why, hang the law!”

“And you will stay?”

“Yes, my dear, if I have to wring Parry Glyddyr’s neck.”

“Ah, now you are speaking like yourself,” cried Mary, drawing a breath full of relief. “I’m not a bit afraid now.”

Just then a bell rang, and Mary ran out of the room, to find Sarah Woodham anxiously awaiting her, for Claude was pacing the floor wildly, her face flushed, and the excitement from which she suffered finding vent in rapid, almost incoherent words.

She ran to Mary and clung to her, sobbing out—

“Don’t—don’t leave me again, dear. Stay with me. I cannot bear it. Oh, Mary, Mary, I must have been mad—I must have been mad.”

“Hush, darling! Be calm; try and be calm.”

“Calm! You do not know—you do not know. Stop!” she cried wildly, as she saw Woodham cross gently towards the drawing-room door. “Don’t leave me. If you care for me now, pray stay.”

“Claude, dear, this is terrible,” said Mary firmly. “You are acting like a child.”

Claude sank upon her knees and buried her face in her cousin’s dress.

“Don’t think me cruel or unfeeling to you, but what can we do or say? You are Mr Glyddyr’s wife.”

“Yes, I know,” wailed Claude. Then, looking excitedly in her cousin’s face, “I did not know then. I was blind to it all. Mary, what have I done? Tell me—that man—he has married me—for the fortune—tell him to take all and set me free.”

“My own darling cousin,” whispered Mary, sinking upon her knees, to draw Claude’s face to her breast. “No, no, no; all that is impossible. This fit will pass off, and you must be brave and strong. Try and think, dear, of what you said. It was poor uncle’s wish.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” said Claude wearily; and she struggled to her feet, to throw herself into one of the lounges and sit wringing her hands involuntarily, dragging at one finger until the little golden circle, lately placed there, passed over the joint, and at last flew off, to fall trinkling in the fender.

Claude uttered a faint cry, and covered her face with her hands, while Woodham and Mary stood gazing at each other till the former crossed softly and picked up the ring from where it lay.

“Claude, darling,” said Mary, as, after a little hesitation, she took the ring from Woodham, and gently drawing her cousins hand from her face, began to slip the little token back into its place.

There was no resistance, only a helpless, dazed expression in Claude’s face, as she dropped her hand into her lap, and sat back gazing down at her cousin’s act, shuddering slightly, and then closing her eyes.

They drew back, watching her for some time, and at last Woodham crept cautiously forward, peering anxiously into her mistress’s face, watching the regular rise and fall of her breast, and then gave Mary a satisfied nod, as they stole very softly away to the far end of the room, and sat down to watch.

“Exhausted, Miss Mary, asleep,” whispered Woodham. “Oh, my dear, what can we do?”

“Nothing,” whispered back Mary bitterly; “only wait.”

The wind increased, setting in more and more for one of the western gales. The rain beat at the windows and the

storm came in fierce squalls, as if to tear down the unhappy house; but hours went by, and Claude had not moved, remaining plunged in a kind of stupor more than sleep.

And so the weary hours went on, broken only by the sound of an opening or closing-door, and faintly heard voices which made the watchers start and glance anxiously towards the door in anticipation of Glyddyr's coming; but he did not leave the dining-room, and Trevithick remained still in the library, where, through Woodham's forethought, refreshments had been taken to him twice.

As the night closed in, a lamp was lit, and a screen drawn before the table where it stood so as to leave the spot where Claude lay back in darkness, and once more the watchers sat waiting.

It was about eight o'clock, when, after for the twentieth time stealing across to her cousin's side, and returning, Mary placed her lips to Woodham's ear.

"I am getting frightened at her state," she whispered; "surely we ought to send over for the doctor."

"No, my dear," said Woodham sadly. "Let her rest. It will be better than anything the doctor can do."

"Woodham," whispered Mary again, "it seems horrible to say, but I feel as if I could poison that man and set her free."

Sarah Woodham's jaw dropped, and as she sank back, Mary could see that her eyes were wide and staring.

"Sarah, you foolish woman, don't take what I say like that."

The woman struggled to recover herself, and she gasped—

"It was so horrible, Miss Mary; for thoughts like that came to me."

"But, Sarah," whispered Mary, "I did not think of it before; when she wakes, if she is wild like that again, there is some of poor uncle's medicine in the library—there is a bottle of that chloral that had not been opened. Would it be wise to give her some of it to make her calm?"

"Miss Mary!" gasped Woodham, as she pressed her hand to her side. "Hush! Don't! You—oh, pray, pray, don't talk of that!"

Mary looked at her wonderingly, the woman's excitement seemed so wild and strange.

"No, it would not be wise," she said.

At that moment there was the sound of the dining-room door being opened, and Claude sprang to her feet.

"Mary! Woodham!" she panted. "He is coming."

"Claude! Claude, darling!" cried Mary, with a sob, as she flew to her cousin's arms.

"Keep Woodham here too. He's coming! Do you hear?"

"But, Claude, dearest, he is master here. You made him so. You are his wife."

"Yes, Mary. I was blind and mad. I forced myself to it, thinking it must be my father's will—my duty to the dead. But it is too horrible. Chris could not have done this thing."

"No, no, my poor darling; he could not have been so vile."

And as the cousins clung together, Mary felt the heart that beat against hers fluttering like that of some prisoner bird. There was the sound of an angry voice in the hall, and then a door was opened.

"Oh, you're there, are you?"

"Yes, Mr Glyddyr, I am here."

"Then why didn't you come into the dining-room like a man, not stop hiding there. What the hell do you mean?"

"Don't go on like that, old fellow," said another voice. "Here, come back into the dining-room. Mr Trevithick will join us, perhaps."

"Hold your tongue, curse you! Here, you—you can go back into your hole; and as to you, Gellow, I know what I'm about. Come along."

The voices died away, as if the speakers had gone back into the dining-room, and the door swung to.

"Ah!" ejaculated Claude, with a piteous sigh.

"I know what I'm about," came loudly again, followed by the banging of a door and a step in the hall.

"Mary!"

"Claude, dear, you must. He is your husband."

“And I love Chris still with all my heart.”

“Claude!” whispered Mary, as the door was thrown open, and Glyddyr strode in.

“Here, Claude, where are you? Why don’t you have more lights? Oh, there you are, and our little cousin, eh? Now, woman, you can go.”

Sarah Woodham gave her mistress one wild, pitying look, and then left the room.

“Ah, that’s better,” said Glyddyr, whose face was flushed, but his gait was steady, and there was an insolent smile upon his lips. “Only been obliged to entertain my best man,” he said, with a laugh; and he gave his head a shake, and suddenly stretched out a hand to steady himself. “But kept myself all right.”

It was plain to Mary that the man had been drinking heavily, and her spirit rose with indignation and horror, mingled with excitement at her cousin’s avowal.

“Mary, don’t leave me,” whispered Claude.

“Now, then, little one, you go and talk to the other fellows; I want to have a chat with my wife.”

He laughed in a low, chuckling way, for he had long ago mastered Gellow’s opposition, and been told to drink himself blind if he liked. And he had drunk till his miserable feeling of abject dread had been conquered for the moment, while, inured as he was to the use of brandy, he only seemed to be unsteady at times.

“Do you hear?” he said sharply. “Why don’t you go?”

“Claude, dearest, what shall I do?” whispered Mary.

“Stay with me, Mary, pray,” panted Claude. And she looked wildly round for a way of escape, her eyes resting last upon the window, which opened over a steep portion of the cliff.

“Oh! what are you thinking?” said Mary wildly.

“Ah!” exclaimed Glyddyr, with a savage expression crossing his face, “the window? No; he’s not there. Curse him! I could shoot him like a dog.”

Claude, covered her quivering face with her hands.

“Yes, madam, it’s time we came to a little explanation about that, and then we can go on happily. No trifling with me. —Now then,” he cried fiercely, “will you go?”

“No,” cried Mary, turning upon him so sharply that he dropped the hand he had raised to seize her by the shoulder. “How dare you come into my cousin’s presence like this? Shame upon you! She is ill—agitated—not fit to meet you now, and you dare to force your way to her like this—drunken as one of the quarrymen at his worst.”

“What!”

“Is this the gentleman who begged and pleaded and humbled himself to her? You shall not stop here now, master or no master—husband or no husband. She is my dear cousin, and—”

“She is my wife,” thundered Glyddyr. “My slave if I like; and as for you—”

“Oh, would that my uncle were alive to see his cruel work!”

Those last words were like a sharp blow in Glyddyr’s face, and he stepped back, looked quickly round, and a shudder ran through him as he turned pale. But it was momentary. The potent brandy was strong in its influence still, and he recovered himself.

“Bah! nonsense!” he cried, with the flush coming back into his face. “I’m not to be fooled like that. There; be off at once.”

He took a couple of steps forward.

“Come, Claude; there has been enough of this.”

Claude flinched away toward the window, and Mary sprang between them.

“Not while you are like this,” she cried.

Glyddyr uttered an angry snarl, seized Mary savagely by the arm, and gripped the frail limb so cruelly that, in spite of her determined courage, she uttered a piercing cry for help.

“Silence, you little vixen.—Hah!”

It was as if the arm of a giant had suddenly interposed, for Glyddyr was seized by John Trevithick, dashed staggering back, to totter three or four yards, catch at a little table to save himself, and drag it over with him in his fall.

“Curse you!” he roared, as he rose to his hands and knees; and then, uttering a wild cry of horror, he backed away from the picture he had dragged with him to the floor, one which had fallen, with its little velvet-covered table-easel

to which it had been secured, on end, and close to his face.

It was as if Gartram had come back to him from the dead to interpose between him and his child; and, with that shriek of horror, Glyddyr fell over sidewise, his face contorted, his eyes staring, his teeth gnashing, and the foam gathering upon his lips.

“Take him away! take him away!” he shrieked, and then lay uttering strangely inhuman sounds as he writhed in the agonies of a fit.

Volume Three—Chapter Sixteen.

How John Trevithick hung about.

For weeks Parry Glyddyr lay almost at the point of death, and there were times when Sarah Woodham shuddered and left the room, barring the door against all comers, as the poor wretch raved in his delirium about poison, and the dead coming back to torture him and drag him down.

His ravings were so frightful that at times the hard, stern woman was quite unnerved; but she refused all assistance, and returned to her post, keeping the young wife from being present at all such scenes.

Asher had sternly refused to attend him, after being present during one of Glyddyr’s fits of raving. So the rival from the upper part of the little Churchtown took his place, and after a week’s attendance laid before Claude and her friends the necessity for calling in further help.

The result was that the young wife insisted upon the presence of an eminent medical man from London, and was present afterwards when the great magnate had been in consultation.

“It is most painful, madam,” he said, “to have to speak out before you; but since you insist—”

“Yes; I do insist,” said Claude firmly. “Let us all know the truth.”

“The truth is this, madam,” he said; “Mr Glyddyr—”

He paused, and looked round the drawing-room, where Mary, Trevithick and Gellow were seated.

”—Mr Glyddyr, though apparently naturally of a good constitution, has completely shattered his health by terrible excesses in the use of stimulants. Our friend here, my brother practitioner, has done everything possible, and has accepted a few suggestions of mine which I hope will have good results.”

“But you will save his life, Doctor?” said Claude piteously.

“I hope yes, my dear madam. I think I can say you may rely upon our friend here. It will be a long and tedious recovery, no doubt, and afterwards it will rest with you to save him from the temptation of further indulgence.—And if he is not an idiot he will thank his stars for his fate,” added the great Doctor himself.

“And I will try so hard, so hard,” vowed Claude. “It was like a judgment upon me. Yes, I will try to be his good, true wife, and bring him back to a better life.”

Thus, on her knees that night, ere she lay down to rest.

“Talks, does he, of murder, eh?” said Gellow. “Yes, Mr Trevithick, they do at times. Never had *DT*, I suppose?”

“No, sir; I never had.”

“Good job for you. I had once, and that was enough for me. I didn’t swear off, but I swore a little way on. I’ve had ’em, sir. Snakes in your boots—blue-devils, things crawling all over you; it’s enough to make you shiver to think of it.”

“I suppose so.”

“You won’t believe me, but I couldn’t keep him away from the stuff.”

“Then he has been in the habit of drinking a great deal?”

“Great deal isn’t half big enough, sir.”

“Then don’t you think it would have been your duty to warn Miss Gartram of the character of the man she was about to wed?”

“Split on my friend; get up an action for slander; set the young lady against me; and perhaps have poor old Glyddyr knock me on the head. No, sir: I’m not that sort of man. There, good evening. If you want me, I shall be at the hotel. I seem to be the poor chap’s only friend, and I can’t go back to town till I see him safe.”

“I don’t like that man,” said Trevithick. “He has some hold on Glyddyr, I am sure.”

As the great doctor prophesied, it was a long, slow recovery, and there were returns of the delirium and horrible nights when Glyddyr appeared to be haunted by one who was always reproaching him for some deed, and Sarah

Woodham would sit, looking at him wildly, and with the past and her oath to her dead husband slowly revolving in her mind.

Then the invalid began to mend, and became constant in his demands for Claude.

“Where is she?” he would ask with a quick, jealous eagerness if she were away from his room for an hour; and on her return from one of the walks necessary for her health, he would cross-examine her, gazing at her searchingly, as to where she had been and whom she had seen.

Claude had nothing to conceal, and she answered him quietly and without resentment; but she did not—and she knew it—allay the pang of mad jealousy in her husband’s breast.

“It is a judgment on me,” she used to say, “for I gave him cause.”

Time glided on, and Glyddyr began to be about, at first in an invalid chair, and then he was able to walk up and down a little on the terraces of the Fort; and as the rough fishermen of the place saw him, there was a quiet nudge passed on, as they said that the new King of the Castle was not like the old.

As he grew better, he looked a haggard, sallow being, with wild, restless eyes, which appeared to be always on the lookout for some anticipated danger or trouble, and the sight of Chris Lisle passing in the distance was sufficient at any time to make him turn angrily upon his wife, and, clinging to her arm, bid her help him in doors.

Claude never showed even that she was hurt, but bore his taunts and peevish remarks patiently, always with the same grave, calm pale face. But in the solitude of her own room, or when clasped in Mary’s arms, she sobbed wildly at times to relieve her overladen breast.

Trevithick had his legal business to transact at the Fort, but he never resented the sneers and snarls of its owner, who was constantly making allusions as to the probable length of his bill.

“And I deserve it all, Mary, dear,” Trevithick used to say. “I could do it all by means of letters, except when I wanted a signature witnessed; but of course I sha’n’t charge.”

“But why do you come?” asked Mary demurely; “I’m sure this place is miserable enough. It’s a perfect purgatory.”

“For shame!” he said, with a quiet, happy smile; “why, its a perfect paradise, dear, and unless I’m very hard at work, I’m wretched unless I’m here.—Mary, dear?”

“Yes.”

“When is it to be?”

“What?”

“Our wedding.”

“How can you ask me such a thing? As if I could ever think of leaving poor Claude. And besides, after such a lesson upon what matrimony really is, I wonder that you should ever renew the subject.”

“No, you don’t, dear,” he said, gaining possession of the little white hand, which pretended to escape, and then resigned itself to its fate, while Trevithick’s countenance told how truthful were his words.

“Tell me when it shall be,” he said in a whisper.

“When I can see Claude happy.—John, couldn’t she have a divorce?”

“For what reason?”

“Because she does not love him; and the way in which he treats her with his horrid jealousy is maddening.”

“That’s no reason.”

“No reason? Why, I thought people could be divorced if they could prove cruelty.”

“Yes—legal cruelty. No, my dear, jealousy and suspicion will not do.”

“Why did you come over to-day?”

“Business. I had to see old Mrs Sarson at the cottage where Mr Lisle lodges. She’s ill.”

“What for? You are not a doctor.”

“No,” he said, with a chuckle, “but about her affairs. She thinks it time to make a will and arrange about her savings. Curious old body.”

“Why?”

“Troubled with poor Mr Gartram’s complaint.”

“What do you mean?”

“Distrust. She has all her savings hoarded up, and next time I go she has promised to place them in my hands for investment.”

“Don’t talk about that. I hate the very name of money. I wish poor Claude hadn’t a shilling, and we were both free girls, able to do what we liked.”

Trevithick laughed.

“How can you be so cruel, sir?” cried Mary. “Oh, John, dear, that man is killing poor Claude. Seriously, can’t you discover some way to separate them?”

Trevithick shook his head.

“Then Claude will separate herself.”

“I wish she could. But how?” said Trevithick, with a sigh.

“By dying.”

“What?”

“Yes,” said Mary, with the tears in her eyes. “I can see beneath all that calm, patient way of hers. Her heart is broken, John; and before six months are over she will—”

Poor Mary could not finish, but sank upon her knees at Trevithick’s feet, laid her face in her hands, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Volume Three—Chapter Seventeen.

A Climax in Glyddyr’s Life.

There was a scene one day at the Fort when, after finishing the business in connection with a heavy sum which had been raised to pay over to Gellow, the lawyer had taken upon himself to suggest that it was not fair to his old client’s daughter that such a heavy drain should be kept up on the fortune she had brought him.

This was sufficient to send Glyddyr into a fit of passion, with the result that Trevithick was ordered to give up all charge of the estate for the future, and hand his papers over to another solicitor, who was named.

“Very good, Mr Glyddyr,” said the lawyer quietly. “As far as you have claims I will do so; but I must remind you that I am your wife’s trustee, and even if she wished to obey you, I cannot be ousted from that.”

Claude suffered bitterly for this when the lawyer was gone, but she forbore to speak. She felt that she was forced to give up the hints and friendly counsel of one whom her father trusted, and she trembled lest there should be a breach with regard to Mary, and that she should lose her. Sarah Woodham had been abused and insulted almost beyond bearing a hundred times, and ordered to go, but she always smiled sadly in Claude’s face afterwards.

“Don’t you be afraid, my dear,” she used to say. “Let him say what he will, I’ll never leave you.”

One day Sarah Woodham entered the room to find Mary in tears, but as they were hastily dried, they were ignored.

“I beg pardon, miss; I thought Mr Trevithick was here.”

“Why should you think that?”

“Because I saw him at the hotel half-an-hour ago.”

“No; he has not been, and is not likely to come after such treatment as he received from Mr Glyddyr a fortnight ago.”

“Going out, miss?” said Sarah, as she saw Mary beginning to dress hurriedly.

“Yes. Where is your master—in the garden?”

“No, miss. He has gone down to the quarry.”

“With your mistress?”

“No, Miss Mary. She is in the garden.”

Mary shuddered as she thought of the future, and of Glyddyr’s recovery of his health.

“Are you cold, Miss Mary?” said Woodham earnestly.

“Yes—I mean no. That is—nothing. If Miss Claude—”

She stopped short.

“I mean, if your mistress calls for me, say I have gone for a walk. No, no, no,” she cried passionately. “I must not go. If he knew that I had been out, it would cause trouble.”

Sarah Woodham sighed. The words were incontrovertible.

Mary began to take off her things, but changed her mind and put them on again.

“I will go. I must see him,” she said. “You shall go with me, Sarah. It would not look so then—would it?”

“I think, as Mr Trevithick cannot come here now, you have a perfect right to go and see him.”

“Mr Trevithick!” cried Mary, with her face aflame; “why do you say that? I did not speak of going to see Mr Trevithick.”

“No, Miss Mary—no, my dear; but do you think I did not know. And I’m very, very glad.”

Mary was looking at her with flashing eyes, but the flames were put out by her tears, and she caught and pressed Sarah’s hand.

“You don’t seem like a servant to us,” she whispered quickly. “Come with me, please.”

Five minutes later they were on their way down the slope to the beach, with Mary trembling at what she thought was her daring behaviour; and as she walked on everybody she passed seemed to know where she was going, and to crown her confusion, just as they were nearing Mrs Sarson’s, Chris Lisle came out, nodded to her, changing colour a little, and was about to pass her, but he stopped short.

It was the first time they had met for months.

“Will you shake hands, Mary?” he said, raising his own hesitatingly.

“You know I will,” she cried eagerly, as she placed hers in his, glad of the relief from her thoughts.

“I am very, very glad to speak to you again, dear,” he said, in a subdued way. “You look so well, too, with that colour. There, I will not keep you. Perhaps some day we may meet again, and be able to have a friendly chat. Good-bye!”

He walked hurriedly away, and the tears rose to her eyes.

“Poor dear Chris!” she said. “I always seemed to love him as if he were my brother.”

“Who could help liking him, Miss Mary?”

“Sarah?”

“Yes, miss. You were speaking aloud. Ah! poor lad, we don’t often see him about now. Look, miss; Mr Trevithick.”

Mary had already seen the lawyer as he stepped out of the hotel and came towards them slowly, till he appeared to see them suddenly, when he turned sharply upon his heel and went back to the hotel.

Mary crimsoned with mortification, and then felt as if she would sink beneath the weight of her misery. Nearly a fortnight had passed, and her lover had made no sign; and now, when they were on the point of meeting, he had openly avoided her.

Mary’s heart felt as if it sank down into the darkness. There could be but one interpretation, she said. He had repented of the engagement, and his eyes had been opened to what a poor, misshapen little thing she was.

“Sarah!” she whispered hoarsely, “I cannot see where I am going; please take me home quickly, so that I am not—”

“No, no, my dear, let’s walk up here first and over the bridge into the glen. You are too agitated to be seen. Try and be firm, my dear—try and be firm.”

Totally unnerved, the poor girl clung to the sturdy woman by her side, and readily allowed her to guide her right away up into the calm, silent glen, where, making a sign, she let Sarah Woodham assist her to one of the detached rocks, where she sat down to let her tears of misery have full vent.

“And I was so happy,” she moaned at last, as she looked up piteously in Sarah Woodham’s face. “Is there real happiness, Sarah, for poor creatures such as we? Life appears to be all misery and care.”

It was only about the third walk that Glyddyr had taken alone, and he left home reluctantly, and with a shadow as it were following every step.

“I oughtn’t to have gone and left her,” he muttered. “It’s of no use trying to deceive myself; all that quiet, calm way means something, and I’m sure they meet—I could swear it. She never dares to look me straight in the face. I won’t stay away long. I won’t stay here long either. I see him; he’s always hanging about trying to catch sight of her. Does he think I’m blind? I know! I know!”

He walked on hurriedly toward the quarry, but he had over-rated his strength, and grinding his teeth with rage, he sat down and began to wipe his wet brow.

“This cursed weakness,” he groaned. “But I’m stronger and better now. If I could have a drop of brandy now and then—not much—I should soon be all right.”

“Yes,” he said, after a pause, during which he had been looking nervously round, “I’ll go away and take her on the

Continent for our wedding trip. In another week I shall be strong and well enough, and we'll go away, and Chris Lisle may grind his teeth, and say the grapes are sour.

"I wonder whether they ever have met while I was so ill and at my worst? He knows the way. He was found in the grounds that night. Would she dare?

"No, no," he muttered, after a long pause. "She wouldn't dare, but he might persuade her. Curse him! Why does he stay in the place?

"There, there; this won't do. I'm getting hot and excited, and I can't bear it yet. I'll go on now and see what the scoundrels are doing with the stones. I know they rob me because I'm ill and don't understand the trade; but I'll startle some of them.

"Now, then, I'm better now. The old strength's coming back, and—No," he cried, with a whine of misery, "I can't go on. If I go there it will seem as if he's back and at my elbow always. It's bad enough at home. He seems to haunt the cursed place, and I'm always fancying he's there. That doctor does me no good; no good. I want strength, strength. There, I'll go back."

He was so weak that, short as the distance was, he was well-nigh spent, and had to sit down twice. But as he reached the end of the hollow road, overshadowed by trees, and came out in the open, where he could see the sea and feel the cool breeze, he recovered himself.

"Yes, there she lies," he said, as he let his eyes rest upon his yacht. "What a time since I have been aboard! Yes, why not at once? We'll go to-morrow and sail across to France, and coast down to the Pyrenees. Get away from here; curse the place. It will be long before I come back."

He panted a little as he turned up the slope and passed through the gateway, to pause on the terrace, and look once more upon the yacht, as she lay about a quarter of a mile from where he stood.

"I was a fool not to think of it before. Get her right away; she daren't refuse. No, no; not so bad as that. She wouldn't have dared. And yet it would have been so easy while I was lying by."

He entered the hall with curious thoughts buzzing through his brain.

"A miserable, puling, white-faced thing! Where is she? I'll tell her to get ready. We will go to-morrow."

He went into the drawing-room, but Claude was not there, and in an instant suspicion was master of his brain. Where was she?

He crossed the room and looked out through the open window, but no Claude. Then, hurrying to the dining-room, he saw that she was not there.

As he came out, he caught sight of a skirt just passing through a swing-door, and he dashed after it.

It was one of the maids.

"Here," he said, in a half-whisper. "Your mistress—upstairs?"

"No, sir. In the library, I think. A gentleman came."

"That'll do," he said sharply. "No; stop. Where is Miss Mary?"

"Gone out, sir, with Mrs Woodham."

He turned quickly and swung to the door, with a look in his face that was diabolical.

"Gun—pistol?" he muttered. "No, no; not that—not murder. Better revenge. Lot of the money's mine. Free, free! Let him take her—let him—curse him! I wish I was strong once more."

As if impelled by the wave of passion that came over him, he walked quickly to the library door, and as he reached it, he heard a peculiar clang, as of the closing of the book-shelf doors which screened the iron safe.

A peculiar look of rage and cunning distorted his face; and, twisting the handle round, he threw open the door and rushed in, as, with her face wild from excitement, Claude turned towards him.

"Hah!" he cried, with a look of fierce triumph, as he caught her by the wrist, "I've come back." And he uttered a low laugh as he pointed to the great safe.

Claude tried to speak, but no words would come, and she clung to the hand which held her to keep herself from falling.

"Didn't expect me back, eh? Didn't expect me back?"

"Come away quick; come away!" panted Claude, in a voice hardly above a whisper.

"Yes, of course," he snarled, as he held her at arm's-length, nearly fainting from terror and agony. "Come away, so as not to disturb our dear Chris!"

Claude looked at him wildly.

“Parry Glyddyr!” she cried, as a look of horror dilated her eyes, and she tried to cling to him and push him towards the door, for no further words words would come.

“Yes! Parry Glyddyr, your lawful husband,” he yelled. “Found out at last!”

Volume Three—Chapter Eighteen.

The Lawyer is Busy.

John Trevithick would, in an ordinary way, have finished the little business in connection with Mrs Sarson’s savings in a very short time, but he quite fluttered the widow by the importance he attached to the deed, and the way in which he was going to invest the money.

“You will not have any savings left, Mrs Sarson, when he sends in his bill,” Chris said to her grimly; and, on Trevithick’s next visit, the poor woman, in an agitated way, touched upon the topic of the bill of costs.

“Nonsense!” said Trevithick, smiling. “My dear Mrs Sarson, I always charge what the legal men call *pro rata*.”

“Oh, do you, sir?” she said. “Then that way is not very expensive?”

“Certainly not. You don’t understand. If you were very rich, the bill would be high; but in your case, if you trust to me, your costs shall be very small indeed.”

“Thank you kindly, sir; and will you take the money to-day?”

“No; you have kept it safely so far, and a few days will not hurt. I’ll take it next time.”

When “next time” came, John Trevithick said the same, and at his next visit he once more put her off.

“What a shame!” he said to himself on his next visit to Danmouth. “It is imposing on the poor woman. I must find some other excuse for coming over. By George!”

He slapped his great knee, and laughed with delight at his happy thought.

“I’ll open an office here in Danmouth; take Mrs Sarson’s second parlour, and come over twice a week. Do her good and do me good, and, who knows, it may bring clients.”

Full of this idea, he called upon Mrs Sarson one morning about a fortnight before the incidents of the last chapter, and on being closeted with her, opened out his business at once in a quick, legal way.

“Now, then, my dear madam, if you will hand me that money, I’ll take charge of it, complete the little mortgage, and you can have the deeds of the premises upon which your money is to be lent at five per cent, or I will keep them for you—which you please.”

“Oh, I should like, if you don’t think it would be wrong, Mr Trevithick, to keep the deeds myself, as I shall not have the money.”

“Very good.”

Mrs Sarson, who had recovered from the rheumatic attack which had frightened her into making arrangements about her savings, rose from her chair, and, in a very feminine way, sought for the key, which was kept hidden in an under pocket—one of the make of a saddle bag—whose security depended on the strength of two tape strings.

The lawyer smiled to himself, and thought of his own iron safe, built in the wall of the office, as the widow brought out her key, and opened a large tea-caddy standing upon a side table.

“Not a very safe place, Mrs Sarson, eh?”

“Ah, you don’t know, sir,” said the woman, with a smile, as she threw up the lid, took up a large cut glass sugar basin full of white lumps from the centre compartment, and then first one and then the other of the two oblong receptacles, each well filled with fragrant black and green, for she opened them, and laughingly displayed their contents.

This done, she thrust her hand down into the round velvet-lined hole from which the sugar basin had been lifted, gave it a knock sideways, and then lifted out the whole of the internal fittings of the caddy, set it on the table, and held it on one side, showing that the bottom was the exact size of a Bank of England note, one for ten pounds being visible.

“There!” she said, with a sigh; “that was my dear husband’s idea. He was a cabinetmaker, sir, and he was quite right. They have always been safe.”

“Yes, Mrs Sarson,” said the lawyer; “but you have lost your interest.”

“Lost what, sir?”

“Your interest! How many years have they been lying here?”

“Oh, a many, sir. Some were put there by my poor husband, and I’ve gone on putting in more as often as I could save

up another ten pounds, for I kept the sovereigns in my pocket till I had ten, and then I used to change them for notes."

"Humph, yes!" said Trevithick, wetting a finger, bank-clerkly, and counting the notes. "Twenty-seven. All tens. Two hundred and seventy pounds. I only want two hundred and fifty, Mrs Sarson. You shall put two back for nest eggs."

He took the two top notes off, before turning the parcel over and looking at the bottom note, one that looked old and yellow, and he read the date.

"Forty years old that one, Mrs Sarson."

"Yes, sir; but that don't matter, does it?"

"Oh, no; the Bank of England never refuses its paper. And this top one is dated—let me see. Ah! two years old, and pretty new—Good God!"

The number had struck his eye, and he had turned it over, and read a name written upon the back.

"Oh, Mr Trevithick! Don't, pray don't say it's a bad one!"

"Eh? Bad?" cried the lawyer absently. "Where did you get this note?"

"From the hotel, sir," cried the poor woman, in a broken voice. "They always change my gold for me there. But they shall give me a good one, for I can swear that I got it there."

"Wait a moment," cried Trevithick excitedly. "No; those are quite right."

"Oh, thank goodness for that!" cried Mrs Sarson, who was trembling so that the notes she took back rustled in her hand. "But do, do look again at the others and see if they are good."

"Yes, yes, all good, Mrs Sarson," said Trevithick, looking over them hurriedly.

"Then give me that one, sir, and I'll take it back to them at once."

"No, no, Mrs Sarson, the note is quite good," said the lawyer, putting on his business mask, and looking quite calm, though his heart was thumping heavily.

"Oh, dear! and you gave me such a fright, sir. You are sure it is a good one?"

"So good, Mrs Sarson, that I'd give you ten golden sovereigns for it. Five hundred if it were necessary," he said to himself; and after being witness to the replacing of two notes in the caddy, and giving a receipt for those confided to his charge, he made his way back to Toxeter in a state of excitement that was new to him, and did not rest till he was locked up in his own private room.

"It seems impossible," he thought, as he compared the note with the closely written figures he had in his pocket-book, and then examined the signature at the back.

"Yes; there's the clue I have sought for so long—dropped into my hands like this. Oh!"

He sat back with the perspiration gathering on his forehead, and the look of excitement on his face changing slowly into horror as bit by bit the meaning of the name on the back of that note gradually unfolded itself till he was gazing upon a picture of horror that appalled him.

"No, no, no! It's too shocking," he cried at last, as he wiped his brow. The man could not be such a wretch.

"But he is a wretch! A cold-blooded, swearing, drinking brute; and with all his flash and show, and yacht, I know that he was always hard up for money, and being hunted by that usurious scoundrel Gellow."

Trevithick wiped his brow again.

"Why, he must have had it all. Robbed the poor old man who had taken him to his hearth. Yes, I daresay to pay off that scoundrel and get time. Yes, there's his name to the note. He must have changed it at the hotel. I knew that money was missing. Robbed him—the man who welcomed him as a son, and encouraged him to win his daughter. The black-hearted traitor. I always hated him. A cowardly, despicable thief, stealing the money that some day would have been his."

Trevithick leaped from his seat, and in his excitement struck a penholder, and knocked over the ink.

"Good Heaven!" he exclaimed, "he murdered him!"

Trevithick stood with his hands pressed upon his brow, trying to think calmly, but his head became hotter as the idea grew strong.

"Yes," he said, "died of an overdose of chloral, they said. He could never have taken that money without. He must have got to know, and—yes, he must have drugged him to death, so as to get the heavy sum. Christopher Lisle! Bah! This was the man!

"No, no; I'm growing wild—I must be calm."

He caught a glass, and poured out some water from a table-filter, drank it hastily, and began to walk up and down the room for a time, till, feeling more himself, he took a seat to try and think the matter out, raising up every point strongly in Glyddyr's favour.

"No man could be such a wretch as to murder another, and then marry his child," he said at last firmly; but the accusation came more strongly, and with supporting evidence, as something began to whisper to him, "But what was the meaning of all that drinking—of that conduct on the wedding-day—of the abject dread of Gartram's picture, and of the delirious wanderings about being haunted?

"He is the man!" cried Trevithick at last, as he brought his fist down heavily into his left palm. "Gartram was murdered—accidentally, perhaps—but murdered, and—Great Heavens! what shall I—what ought I to do?"

He sat long, turning the matter over and over, viewing it from every point, and at last coldly and clearly it all seemed to stand out before him.

"No," he said, "I cannot keep silence. He is a curse to that poor girl. Poor blind old Gartram favoured him, and the fiend played upon the poor girls filial duty. Yes, I know that well enough. Poor Claude would almost give her life to be free from the wretch who is dissipating her property to clear off debts to Gellow. And is he an accomplice?

"Accomplice in forcing on the marriage; but that wretch must have done the deed, and, Heaven helping me, I'll bring it home to him, and set the poor girl free.

"Stop. I'm going on too fast. It may be remorse and horror for the robbery. He could not have murdered Gartram. Poor fellow, he did indulge in chloral, and the doctor said it was an overdose. No, Gartram was too clever and experienced in his treatment of himself for that. I can't help it; something seems to impel me. I must go.

"And Claude!

"I can't help it. I feel so sure. Better the shock and be free, than be slowly tortured to death by a man who is little better than a devil.

"Yes," he cried finally, "I am sure, but I'll take other advice before I proceed very much further."

The consequence was that poor Mrs Sarson was horrified at not receiving her mortgage deed to hide away, and shivered as she credited the lawyer with going off to London to spend her savings of a life, for she could only obtain from his office the news that he was out on business.

As shown, Mrs Sarson was not the only one who had misjudged Trevithick, for, in his abstraction and earnest following of the quest upon which he was now engaged, there were no more meetings with Mary; and his avoidance of her when they met was for very special reasons of his own.

"I can save her from the scene," he had said, "though I cannot save poor Claude."

He was wrong, for he found her hurrying back with Sarah Woodham, and when he hurriedly tried to stay her, she turned upon him angrily, and refused to hear.

And so it was that Claude was seated alone in the library that day, sick at heart, as she thought of her future, and asking herself what she could do to win her husband's love and bring herself to love him, when one of the maids announced that a gentleman wanted to see master.

"Yes, Mr Glyddyr," said a quiet, firm voice, and the man, who had followed the servant, stepped in, signed to the girl to go, closed the door after her, and then turned to face Claude, who had risen and was standing trembling, as if from a suspicion of some terrible trouble to come.

The visitor took in her agitation directly.

"Sort of body who will try to screen him," he said to himself.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" said Claude, trying to be calm.

"Business, ma'am. Sorry to trouble you. Where's Mr Glyddyr?"

"Mr Glyddyr is out."

The man smiled pityingly.

"You will excuse me, ma'am—Mrs Glyddyr?"

"Yes; I'm Mrs Glyddyr."

"Servant did not say he was out. Too ill to go out. Where is he, please? You see I know."

"I told you Mr Glyddyr was out. What do you want?"

"Business, ma'am—important business. Must see him at once."

"You must call when he is at home."

"Sorry to be rude to a lady, but your face, ma'am, says he is at home, and will not show up."

“What do you want?”

The man looked sharply round, and his eyes rested on the ajar door of the safe, with its casing of books, its old purpose being now at an end.

“Way into another room,” he said to himself; “he’s there.—I want Mr Glyddyr,” he continued firmly. “Now, look here, ma’am; I can feel for you, though I am a police officer, but I have my duty to do.”

“Your duty?”

“Yes, ma’am, my duty; and Mr Glyddyr is in there; he may as well come out like a gentleman, and let it all be quietly done. He must know that the game is up, and that any attempt at getting away from me is worse than folly. Will you let me pass?”

“Stop!” cried Claude excitedly, as, like lightning, thought after thought flashed through her mind; for at that moment she heard a cough and a step that she recognised only too well. And this man—police—it must be to arrest.

“Tell me,” she cried quickly, “what is it? Why have you come?”

“I’ll tell Mr Glyddyr himself, ma’am, please. Stand aside. I don’t want to be rude, but I’ve got my duty to do, and do it I will.”

He passed Claude sharply, brushing against her arm, and seized the thick door to draw it open, while the thought flashed through her brain—

“I am his wife. I prayed for a way to win his love—to give him mine. This man will arrest him, and I must save him if I can.”

Without pausing to consider as to the folly of her impulse, she turned on the man as he threw open the door and bent forward, and, thrusting with all her might, she sent him staggering in.

The door closed upon him with a loud clang.

“He is my husband,” panted Claude, mad with dread and excitement. “O Heaven help me! what has he done?”

At that moment, wild with jealous rage and doubt, Glyddyr came into the room, and ended, as she clung to him, speechless with emotion, by striking her savagely with such force as he possessed.

Claude uttered a low moan, and fell insensible across the entrance to the safe; while, after wrenching out the key, Glyddyr hurried panting from the library, closed and locked the door, and stood thinking.

“Yes,” he said, with a malignant look; “I’ll do that. Witnesses—witnesses! They shall all know.”

He crossed the hall to the drawing-room, and dragged at the bell so violently that, as he returned, the servants came hurrying through the swing-door.

“Here, quick, I want you,” he said hoarsely. “Ah, just in time,” he cried, as at that moment the entrance door was darkened, and Mary Dillon entered, with Trevithick trying to detain her, and closely followed by Sarah Woodham. “Better and better,” he said, with a grin. “This way—this way, witnesses, please.”

He unlocked and threw open the library door, and drew back for the others to go past.

“John Trevithick, quick! there is something wrong,” cried Mary, as she ran in—to shriek wildly and loudly, “Help! he has murdered her!”

“You villain!” roared Trevithick, seizing Glyddyr, but he wrested himself free.

“Bah! great idiot!” he cried. “There, look, she is only fainting—with joy, can’t you see?” he continued, as Claude uttered a sigh, and moved one hand. “Now then, witnesses,” he cried, with a savage laugh, “I have been out; I have just returned. This is my dear wife, who wishes for a divorce; and this,” he almost yelled, as he threw open the great book-covered door of the safe, “is our dear friend Mr—”

He ceased speaking, with the malignant grin frozen upon his face, as the quick, stern-looking man staggered panting, half-suffocated from the safe, stared wildly for a few moments, and then, before Glyddyr could realise his position, recovered himself sufficiently to clap his hand upon the scoundrel’s shoulder.

“Mr Parry Glyddyr,” he cried, “you are my prisoner. I arrest you for murder!”

Volume Three—Chapter Nineteen.

Two Wives.

Chris Lisle caught Trevithick, too, by the shoulder as he was leaving Danmouth that day, and, half wild with excitement, implored him to say whether the rumour was true.

“True enough, Mr Lisle. Mr Glyddyr is arrested, and his friend, who is believed to be an accomplice, was taken yesterday in London.”

Chris fell back, staring like one who has received some mental shock, and then walked slowly along the main street of the place to get to the bridge and go up the glen, so as to try and think quietly of all that it might mean to him.

As he went along he became dimly conscious of the fact that first one and then another touched his cap, or gave him a friendly nod; but he was too much dazed to pay any heed, and he could only come to one conclusion: that there must be as great a mistake here as there was over the rumour about himself.

“It is too horrible to be true,” he said, with a shudder.

At the Fort, Claude lay prostrate, unable to realise the truth of what had taken place, and shuddering from time to time as the terrible scene kept coming back.

“I would have spared her if I could,” Trevithick had whispered to Mary before leaving; “but it was better that she should suffer sharply for a time than all her life.”

Mary could not speak—she dared not trust herself for fear of saying words of which she would afterwards repent, for there was a great joy in her heart now that she knew the reason for Trevithick’s silence, and she could not even go to Sarah Woodham’s side, lest she should open her heart there.

Then came days of wild excitement in the place, with event after event occurring to keep the gossip at white heat. There were the examinations of Glyddyr, at which he preserved a stubborn silence. And a fresh excitement in the presence, at the second examination, of a handsome, sharp-looking woman fashionably dressed, who took up her abode after the examination at the hotel.

She had seated herself in the court by the help of a friendly—made friendly—policeman, where she could face Glyddyr; and when, at last, their eyes met, he started and changed colour, but composed himself directly, for another trouble was but a trifle compared to that overhanging his life.

It was no friendly look that he had encountered, neither was the keen glance directed at Gellow, who, upon the second morning, was placed beside Glyddyr in the dock. For Denise showed her teeth slightly in the malicious smile, watching and listening intently to the end.

“I did not know that I should find him through the newspapers,” she said to herself. “I was fooled by that man into believing that he was gone abroad, when I might have come down and seen this madam whom he has married. But it is well.”

Then came fresh fuel to keep the excitement at white heat. A gentleman was down from London, and it was known that orders had been given from high quarters that Gartram’s remains were to be taken from the vault. That there was to be a *post mortem* examination, and a great chemist in London was to assist in bringing the crime home to the prisoner under remand.

This was true enough, and Doctor Asher and his colleague were called upon to assist. Two other doctors were also going to be present, on behalf of the prisoner and the Government.

When Asher received his instructions he shuddered, and the paper dropped from his hand.

“It is too horrible!” he muttered. “I will not be dragged into it again.” But he had hardly uttered the words when his colleague arrived to talk the matter over with him.

“It is as horrible as it is absurd,” Asher said.

“Yes, but we have received our instructions, and cannot refuse.”

“But we performed our examination for the inquest,” protested Asher. “It is so unnecessary. The man is innocent. We know well enough the cause of death.”

The other shrugged his shoulders, and finally went away; while the next night it was being whispered, with bated breath, that the examination had been made, and there was talk of sealed bottles and the analytical chemist in London.

A week later, while the prisoners were lying under remand at the county gaol, Mrs Sarson tapped softly at Chris Lisle’s door, and entered.

He did not move, for he was thinking deeply of how he would give the world if he dared go to the Fort as a friend and say a few words to Claude.

“And I can make no sign; I dare make no sign,” he was muttering, as his landlady’s hand was laid upon his arm.

“I thought you’d like to hear the news, sir,” she said respectfully.

“Yes. What news?”

“I have just heard, sir, that Mrs Glyddyr is going over to Toxeter this morning to see Mr Glyddyr. Mr Trevithick has come to fetch her.”

A spasm ran through Chris, and he turned away his head.

“Yes,” he said; “suppose it is her duty.”

“And Doctor Asher is very bad indeed, sir, this morning, and two other doctors are there. He is worse than when I spoke to you last night.”

“Did you speak to me about him last night?”

“Why, surely, sir, you don’t forget? But I have heard this morning what is the matter.”

“Yes?” said Chris vacantly.

“It is very horrible, sir; but the new doctor told one of his patients that Doctor Asher’s knife slipped during the terrible examination of Mr Gartram the other day, and the cut has gone bad with some name he called it.”

“Blood poisoning!” exclaimed Chris, startled by the news; “how shocking.”

“Shocking indeed, sir. I didn’t think poor little Danmouth could have had such trouble as all this; but the Lord be thanked that the whole truth has come out at last, and you can hold up your head once more. Poor fellow!” she muttered softly, “he don’t seem to hear a word I said.”

But Chris had heard; and, as soon as he was alone, he slipped a small glass in his pocket, and tramped out to the back of the place, and up the highest piece of cliff, where he could lie upon his breast and watch the Fort.

He did not wait long, for the carriage soon drew up to the front entrance, and directly after Trevithick appeared, leading out Claude, in deep mourning and thickly veiled. Then Mary came out, to step into the carriage; and it was driven away, while Sarah Woodham, thin and sallow-looking, stood on the steps watching till it had disappeared, and at last Chris saw her as she turned, holding her hands to her temples, as if they throbbed.

“Will she come back to-night?” said Chris to himself. “I’ll wait and see.”

A couple of hours later, Trevithick led Claude slowly up towards the prison gates, for his companion had to cling to his arm for support, and he could feel the struggle that was going on as she strove to perform this duty to her husband.

They were within about fifty yards of the place, when Claude reeled and would have fallen but for the lawyer’s strong arm.

“Take my advice,” he whispered gently. “You can do no good, and you are not strong enough to go through such an interview as this.”

“I am better now,” she said feebly. “A little faint, that is all.”

“Put it off till another day.”

“No,” she said more faintly. “It is a duty to him. I will not believe that it can be true.”

Trevithick was silent.

“Let us go on now,” she said; and they had nearly reached the prison gates when there was a quick step, and a tall, fashionably-dressed woman stepped before them.

“Where are you going?” she said sharply in a strangely accented way.

“To see Mr Glyddyr, madam,” said Claude, meekly. “I am his wife.”

“You! Bah! You are nothing, girl,” cried the woman, her dark eyes blazing with vindictive spite. “He is mine. He married me five years ago from his yacht, in Marseilles. Yes, I, Denise Leschalles. Yes. And you, my faith, what could I not do to you?”

Claude uttered a faint cry and threw up her veil, to gaze wildly at the woman.

“My faith, you look. Yes, I am his wife, I tell you again. You are nothing.”

“Woman, is this true?” said Trevithick sternly.

“Bah! I say it not again. Go ask him, but he will only lie. Aha! and he could leave me to marry that! She is poor and weak. Take her away. I have the power to go and see my husband. This woman shall not pass.”

“Tell me where you are staying,” whispered Trevithick quickly. “Ah, I remember now. I saw you at Danmouth, at the hotel.”

The woman made no reply, but went on up to the gate, while Claude clung to the strong arm which supported her.

“Mr Trevithick, can this be true?” she whispered.

“Heaven only knows,” he said; “but you cannot go there now.”

Chris Lisle’s watch proved to be far shorter than he could have hoped, his patience being rewarded by the sight of the young mistress of the Fort as she was supported back into her home.

Volume Three—Chapter Twenty.

The Truth.

The next day was a more eventful one still in the annals of Danmouth, and people stood in knots about the place discussing the new horror.

Doctor Asher was dying, and his colleague had sent for the nearest magistrate that morning, to take down the dying man's deposition in the presence of witnesses, Trevithick being of those summoned to the bed.

The deposition was brief, but convincing, telling how the dying man had, when attending Gartram, found in his pocket-book sundry directions to his executors, explaining how his wealth was bestowed. The temptation had been too great for him, and after waiting long for an opportunity, he had taken advantage one evening of being at the house to add a certain drug to the chloral Gartram was in the habit of taking from time to time.

"As a dying man about to appear before my Maker," he said, "I swear I had no intention of taking his life. I wished to make his sleep so sure that I could easily take what notes I wished, and this I did, to the amount of forty thousand pounds, but I did not calculate that the drug would be so strong, and I was horrified when I found that I could not bring him back from his deadly sleep."

"What was the drug?" asked the magistrate, in the midst of a terrible silence.

"Better that it should not be known," said the dying man feebly. "I have told the truth. The money is in the iron safe in my study. All but a few hundred pounds or so I sent abroad, and a note or two I passed beside. I gave Glyddyr that one by mistake, and—"

The words that would have followed were never uttered, for insensibility supervened, and Doctor Asher never spoke again.

The law moves slowly, but it is pretty sure, and in due course the two men accused of complicity in Gartram's death were discharged without a stain upon their character, so it was said, but Glyddyr was re-arrested upon another charge.

A guilty conscience had kept him silent about the accusation of murder, for he had added to the draught Gartram was in the habit of taking, but other hands had thrown this away. Still, he had always suffered mentally from the idea that he had murdered the man who had chosen him as a son.

Against the charge of bigamy he fought savagely, for there was the impending punishment to dread, and the loss of an almost princely fortune; but Denise made good her claim. The pleas of her being an alien fell to the ground, and the law cut asunder the tie that held Claude Gartram to one who passed for ever from her sight. Glyddyr's term of imprisonment was but short, for his health had been so shattered that he was shortly after set at liberty, to die in Denise's arms.

Of the rest of the actors who played their parts in this life drama, no more need be said than is contained in the French proverb: *Cela va sans dire*.

The End.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™

works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future

for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.