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BARRINGTON

Volume II.

By Charles James Lever

With Illustrations By Phiz.

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1907.

FRONTISPIECE.

The Fisherman's Home.

BARRINGTON;

TALES OF THE TRAINS.

BY

CHARLES LEVER.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHIZ.

BOSTON:
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VOLUME II.

CHAPTER I. FIFINE AND POLLY

There are a few days in our autumnal season—very few and rare!—when we draw the curtain against the glare of the sun at breakfast, and yet in the evening are glad to gather around the cheerful glow of the fire. These are days of varied skies, with fleecy clouds lying low beneath a broad expanse of blue, with massive shadows on the mountains, and here and there over the landscape tips of sunlight that make the meanest objects pictures; and, with all these, a breezy wind that scatters the yellow leaves and shakes the tree-tops, while it curls the current of the bright river into mimic waves. The sportsman will tell you that on such days the birds are somewhat wild, and the angler will vow that no fish will rise to the fly, nor is it a scent-lying day for the harriers; and yet, with all this, there is a spring and elasticity in the air that impart themselves to the temperament, so that the active grow energetic, and even the indolent feel no touch of lassitude.

It was on the morning of such a day that Barrington, with his sister and granddaughter, drew nigh the Home. Conyers had parted with them at Dublin, where his regiment was now stationed, but was to follow in a day or two. All the descriptions—descriptions which had taken the shape of warnings—which they had given Josephine of the cottage could not prevent her asking at each turn of the road if that large house yonder, if that sombre tower over the trees, if that massive gate-lodge were not theirs. “I know this is it, grandpapa,” said she, clapping her hands with delight as they came opposite a low wall within which lay the spacious lawn of Cobham Park, a portion of the house itself being just visible through the trees; “don't tell me, aunt,” cried she, “but let me guess it.”

“It is the seat of Sir Charles Cobham, child, one of the richest baronets in the kingdom.”

“There it is at last,—there it is!” cried she, straining oat of the carriage to see the handsome portico of a

very large building, to which a straight avenue of oaks led up from the high-road. “My heart tells me, aunt, that this is ours!”

“It was once on a time, Fifiue,” said the old man, with a quivering voice, and a glassy film over his eyes; “it was once, but it is so no longer.”

“Barrington Hall has long ceased to belong to us,” said Miss Dinah; “and after all the pains I have taken in description, I cannot see how you could possibly confound it with our little cottage.”

The young girl sat back without a word, and, whether from disappointment or the rebuke, looked forth no more.

“We are drawing very near now, Fifine,” said the old man, after a long silence, which lasted fully two miles of the way. “Where you see the tall larches yonder—not there—lower down, at the bend of the stream; those are the trees. I declare, Dinah, I fancy they have grown since we saw them last.”

“I have no doubt you do, Peter; not that you will find the cottage far more commodious and comfortable than you remembered it.”

“Ah, they've repaired that stile, I see,” cried he; “and very well they've done it, without cutting away the ivy. Here we are, darling; here we are!” and he grasped the young girl's hand in one of his, while he drew the other across his eyes.

“They 're not very attentive, I must say, brother Peter, or they would not leave us standing, with our own gate locked against us.”

“I see Darby running as fast as he can. Here he comes!”

“Oh, by the powers, ye're welcome home, your honor's reverence, and the mistresses!” cried Darby, as he fumbled at the lock, and then failing in all his efforts,—not very wonderful, seeing that he had taken a wrong key,—he seized a huge stone, and, smashing the padlock at a blow, threw wide the gate to admit them.

“You are initiated at once into our Irish ways, Fifine,” said Miss Barrington. “All that you will see here is in the same style. Let that be repaired this evening, sir, and at your own cost,” whispered she to Darby, into whose hand at the same moment Peter was pressing a crown piece.

“'T is the light of my eyes to see your honors home again! 'Tis like rain to the new potatoes what I feel in my heart, and looking so fresh and well too! And the young lady, she isn't—”

From what dread anticipation Darby's sudden halt saved him the expression is not for me to say, but that Peter Barrington guessed it is probable, for he lay back in the carriage and shook with laughter.

“Drive on, sir,” said Miss Dinah to the postilion, “and pull up at the stone cross.”

“You can drive to the door now, ma'am,” said Darby, “the whole way; Miss Polly had the road made while you were away.”

“What a clever girl! Who could have thought it?” said Barrington.

“I opine that we might have been consulted as to the change. On a matter as important as this, Peter, I think our voices might have been asked.”

“And how well she has done it too!” muttered he, half aloud; “never touched one of those copper beeches, and given us a peep of the bright river through the meadows.”

As the carriage rolled briskly along, Darby, who trotted alongside, kept up a current narrative of the changes effected during their absence.

“The ould pigeon-house is tuck down, and an iligant new one put up in the island; and the calves' paddock is thrown into the flower-garden, and there's a beautiful flight of steps down to the river, paved with white stones,—sorrow one is n't white as snow.”

“It is a mercy we had not a sign over the door, brother Peter,” whispered Miss Dinah, “or this young lady's zeal would have had it emblazoned like a shield in heraldry.”

“Oh, how lovely, how beautiful, how exquisite!” cried Josephine, as they came suddenly round the angle of a copse and directly in front of the cottage.

Nor was the praise exaggerated. It was all that she had said. Over a light trellis-work, carried along under the thatch, the roses and jessamine blended with the clematis and the passion-flower, forming a deep eave of flowers, drooping in heavy festoons across the spaces between the windows, and meeting the geraniums which grew below. Through the open sashes the rooms might be seen, looking more like beautifnl bowers than the chambers of a dwelling-house. And over all, in sombre grandeur, bent the great ilex-trees, throwing their grand and tranquil shade over the cottage and the little grass-plot and even the river itself, as it swept smoothly by. There was in the stillness of that perfumed air, loaded with the sweet-brier and the rose, a something of calm and tranquillity; while in the isolation of the spot there was a sense of security that seemed to fill op the measure of the young girl's hopes, and made her exclaim with rapture, “Oh, this, indeed, is beautiful!”

“Yes, my darling Fifine!” said the old man, as he pressed her to his heart; “your home, your own home! I told you, my dear child, it was not a great castle, no fine château, like those on the Meuse and the Sambre, but a lowly cottage with a thatched roof and a rustic porch.”

“In all this ardor for decoration and smartness,” broke in Miss Dinah, “it would not surprise me to find that the peacock's tail had been picked out in fresh colors and varnished.”

“Faix! your honor is not far wrong,” interposed Darby, who had an Irish tendency to side with the majority. “She made us curry and wash ould Sheela, the ass, as if she was a race-horse.”

“I hope poor Wowsky escaped,” said Barrington, laughing.

“That's what he didn't! He has to be scrubbed with soap and water every morning, and his hair divided all the way down his back, like a Christian's, and his tail looks like a bunch of switch grass.”

“That 's the reason he has n't come out to meet me; the poor fellow is like his betters,—he's not quite sure that his altered condition improves him.”

“You have at least one satisfaction, brother Peter,” said Miss Dinah, sharply; “you find Darby just as dirty and uncared for as you left him.”

“By my conscience, there 's another of us is n't much changed since we met last,” muttered Darby, but in a voice only audible to himself.

“Oh, what a sweet cottage! What a pretty summer-house!” cried Josephine, as the carriage swept round the copse, and drew short up at the door.

“This summer-house is your home, Fifine,” said Miss Barrington, tartly.

“Home! home! Do you mean that we live here,—live here always, aunt?”

“Most distinctly I do,” said she, descending and addressing herself to other cares. “Where's Jane? Take these trunks round by the back door. Carry this box to the green-room,—to Miss Josephine's room,” said she, with a stronger stress on the words.

“Well, darling, it is a very humble, it is a very lowly,” said Barrington, “but let us see if we cannot make it a very happy home;” but as he turned to embrace her, she was gone.

“I told you so, brother Peter,—I told you so, more than once; but, of course, you have your usual answer, 'We must do the best we can!' which simply means, doing worse than we need do.”

Barrington was in no mood for a discussion; he was too happy to be once more at home to be ruffled by any provocation his sister could give him. Wherever he turned, some old familiar object met his eye and seemed to greet him, and he bustled in and out from his little study to the garden, and then to the stable, where he patted old Roger; and across to the cow-house, where Maggie knew him, and bent her great lazy eyes softly on him; and then down to the liver-side, where, in gilt letters, “Josephine” shone on the trim row-boat he had last seen half rotten on the bank; for Polly had been there too, and her thoughtful good-nature, forgetting nothing which might glad them on their coming.

Meanwhile, Josephine had reached her chamber, and, locking the door, sat down and leaned her head on the table. Though no tears fell from her eyes, her bosom heaved and fell heavily, and more than one deep sigh escaped her. Was it disappointment that had so overcome her? Had she fancied something grander and more pretentious than this lonely cottage? Was it that Aunt Dinah's welcome was wanting in affection? What revulsion could it be that so suddenly overwhelmed her? Who can tell these things, who can explain how it is that, without any definite picture of an unexpected joy, imagination will so work upon us that reality will bring nothing but a blank? It is not that the object is less attractive than is hoped for, it is simply that a dark shadow has passed over our own hearts; the sense of enjoyment has been dulled, and we are sad without a reason. If we underrate sorrows of our youth,—and this is essentially one of them,—it is because our mature age leaves us nothing of that temperament on which such afflictions preyed.

Josephine, without knowing why, without even a reason, wished herself back in the convent. There, if there was a life of sombre monotony and quietude, there was at least companionship; she had associates of her own age. They had pursuits in common, shared the same hopes and wishes and fears; but here—but here—Just as her thoughts had carried her so far, a tap—a very gentle tap—came to the door. Josephine heard it, but made no answer. It was repeated a little louder, and then a low pleasing voice she had never heard before said, “May I come in?”

“No,” said Josephine,—“yes—that is—who are you?”

“Polly Dill,” was the answer; and Josephine arose and unlocked the door.

“Miss Barrington told me I might take this liberty,” said Polly, with a faint smile. “She said, 'Go and make acquaintance for yourself; I never play master of the ceremonies.'”

“And you are Polly,—the Polly Dill I have heard so much of?” said Josephine, regarding her steadily and fixedly.

“How stranded your friends must have been for a topic when they talked of *me!*” said Polly, laughing.

“It is quite true you have beautiful teeth,—I never saw such beautiful teeth,” said Josephine to herself, while she still gazed earnestly at her.

“And you,” said Polly, “are so like what I had pictured you,—what I hoped you would be. I find it hard to believe I see you for the first time.”

“So, then, *you* did not think the Rajah's daughter should be a Moor?” said Josephine, half haughtily. “It is very sad to see what disappointments I had caused.” Neither the saucy toss of the head, nor the tone that accompanied these words, were lost upon Polly, who began to feel at once that she understood the speaker.

“And your brother,” continued Josephine, “is the famous Tom Dill I have heard such stories about?”

“Poor Tom! he is anything rather than famous.”

“Well, he is remarkable; he is odd, original, or whatever you would call it. Fred told me he never met any one like him.”

“Tom might say as much of Mr. Conyers, for, in truth, no one ever showed him such kindness.”

“Fred told me nothing of that; but perhaps,” added she, with a flashing eye, “you were more in his confidence than I was.”

“I knew very little of Mr. Conyers; I believe I could count on the fingers of one hand every time I met him.”

“How strange that you should have made so deep an impression, Miss Dill!”

“I am flattered to hear it, but more surprised than flattered.”

“But I don't wonder at it in the least,” said Josephine, boldly. “You are very handsome, you are very graceful, and then—” She hesitated and grew confused, and stammered, and at last said, “and then there is that about you which seems to say, 'I have only to wish, and I can do it.'”

“I have no such gift, I assure you,” said Polly, with a half-sad smile.

“Oh, I know you are very clever; I have heard how accomplished you were, how beautifully you rode, how charmingly you sang. I wish he had not told me of it all—for if—for if—”

“If what? Say on!”

“If you were not so superior to me, I feel that I could love you;” and then with a bound she threw her arms around Polly's neck, and clasped her affectionately to her bosom.

Sympathy, like a fashionable physician, is wonderfully successful where there is little the matter. In the great ills of life, when the real afflictions come down to crush, to wound, or to stun us, we are comparatively removed from even the kindest of our comforters. Great sorrows are very selfish things. In the lighter maladies, however, in the smaller casualties of fortune, sympathy is a great remedy, and we are certain to find that, however various our temperaments, it has a sort of specific for each. Now Josephine Barrington had not any great cares upon her heart; if the balance were to be struck between them, Polly Dill could have numbered ten, ay, twenty, for her one, but she thought hers was a case for much commiseration, and she liked commiseration, for there are moral hypochondrias as well as physical ones. And so she told Polly how she had neither father nor mother, nor any other belongings than “dear old grandpapa and austere Aunt Dinah;” that she had been brought up in a convent, never knowing one of the pleasures of youth, or her mind being permitted to stray beyond the dreary routine of prayer and penance. Of music she knew nothing but the solemn chants of the organ, and even flowers were to her eyes but the festal decorations of the high altar; and, lastly, she vaguely balanced between going back to the dismal existence of the cloister, or entering upon the troubled sea of life, so full of perils to one unpractised and unskilled as she was. Now Polly was a very pretty comforter through these afflictions; her own home experiences were not all rose-colored, but the physician who whispers honeyed consolations to the patient has often the painful consciousness of a deeper malady within than that for which he ministers. Polly knew something of a life of struggle and small fortune, with its daily incident of debt and dun. She knew what it was to see money mix itself with every phase of existence, throwing its damper over joy, arresting the hand of benevolence, even denying to the sick-bed the little comforts that help to cheat misery. She knew how penury can eat its canker into the heart till all things take the color of thrift, and life becomes at last the terrible struggle of a swimmer storm-tossed and weary; and yet, with all this experience in her heart, she could whisper cheerful counsels to Josephine, and tell her that the world had a great many pleasant paths through it, though one was occasionally footsore before reaching them; and in this way they talked till they grew very fond of each other, and Josephine was ready to confess that the sorrow nearest to her heart was parting with her. “But must you go, dearest Polly,—must you really go?”

“I must, indeed,” said she, laughing; “for if I did not, two little sisters of mine would go supperless to bed, not to speak of a small boy who is waiting for me with a Latin grammar before him; and the cook must get her orders for to-morrow; and papa must have his tea; and this short, stumpy little key that you see here unlocks the oat-bin, without which an honest old pony would share in the family fast: so that, all things considered, my absence would be far from advisable.”

“And when shall we meet again, Polly?”

“Not to-morrow, dear; for to-morrow is our fair at Inistioge, and I have yarn to buy, and some lambs to sell.”

“And could you sell lambs, Polly?” said Josephine, with an expression of blank disappointment in her face.

Polly smiled, but not without a certain sadness, as she said, “There are some sentimentalities which, to one in my condition, would just be as unsuitable as Brussels lace or diamonds. They are born of luxury and indolence, and pertain to those whose existence is assured to them; and my own opinion is, they are a poor privilege. At all events,” added she, rapidly, “they are not for me, and I do not wish for them.”

“The day after to-morrow, then, you will come here,—promise me that.”

“It will be late, then, towards evening, for I have made an engagement to put a young horse in harness,—a three-year-old, and a sprightly one, they tell me,—so that I may look on the morning as filled. I see, my dear child, how shocked you are with all these unladylike cares and duties; but poor Tom and I used to weld our lives together, and while I took my share of boat-building one day, he helped me in the dairy the day after; but now that he is gone, our double functions devolve upon me.”

“How happy you must be!”

“I think I am; at least, I have no time to spare for unhappiness.”

“If I could but change with you, Polly!”

“Change what, my dear child?”

“Condition, fortune, belongings,—everything.”

“Take my word for it, you are just as well as you are; but I suppose it's very natural for one to fancy he could carry another's burden easier than his own, for it was only a few moments back I thought how I should like to be you.”

“To be me,—to be me!”

“Of course I was wrong, dearest. It was only a passing, fleeting thought, and I now see how absurd I was to wish to be very beautiful, dearly loved, and affectionately cared for, with a beautiful home to live in, and every hour free to be happy. Oh, what a sigh, dearest, what a sigh! but I assure you I have my calamities too; the mice have got at the seeds in my onion-bed, and I don't expect to see one come up.”

If Josephine's first impulse was to feel angry, her next was to laugh out, which she did heartily; and passing her arm fondly round Polly's waist, she said, “I 'll get used to your raillery, Polly, and not feel sore at it; but remember, too, it's a spirit I never knew before.”

“How good and generous, then, to bear it so well!” said Polly, affectionately; “your friend Mr. Conyers did not show the same patience.”

“You tried him, then?” said Josephine, with a half-eager glance.

“Of course; I talked to him as I do to every one. But there goes your dinner-bell.” Checking herself on a reflection over the pretension of this summons of three people to a family meal in a cottage, Polly tied on her bonnet and said “Good-bye.”

CHAPTER II. AT HOME AGAIN

The Barringtons had not been quite a fortnight settled in their home, when a note came from Conyers, lamenting, in most feeling terms, that he could not pay them his promised visit. If the epistle was not very long, it was a grumble from beginning to end. “Nobody would know,” wrote he, “it was the same regiment poor Colonel Hunter commanded. Our Major is now in command,—the same Stapylton you have heard me speak of; and if we never looked on him too favorably, we now especially detest him. His first step was to tell us we were disorderly, ill-dressed, and ill-disciplined; but we were even less prepared to hear that we could not ride. The result of all this is, we have gone to school again,—even old captains, who have served with distinction in the field, have been consigned to the riding-house; and we poor subs are treated as if we were the last refuse of all the regiments of the army, sent here to be reformed and corrected. We have incessant drills, parades, and inspections, and, worse again, all leave is stopped. If I was not in the best of temper with the service before, you may judge how I feel towards it now. In fact, if it were not that I expect my father back in England by the middle of May, I 'd send in my papers and leave at once. How I fall back now in memory to the happy days of my ramble with you, and wonder if I shall ever see the like again. And how I hate myself for not having felt at the time how immeasurably delightful they were! Trust me never to repeat the mistake if I have the opportunity given me. I asked this morning for three days—only three—to run down and see you once more before we leave,—for we are ordered to Honnslow,—and I was refused. But this was not all: not content with rejecting my request, he added what he called an expression of astonishment that an officer so deficient in his duties should care to absent himself from regimental discipline.”

“Poor boy!—this is, indeed, too bad,” said Miss Dinah, as she had read thus far; “only think, Peter, how this young fellow, spoiled and petted as he was as a child,—denied nothing, pampered as though he were a prince,—should find himself the mark of so insulting a tyranny. Are you listening to me, Peter Barrington?”

“Eh,—what? No, thank you, Dinah; I have made an excellent breakfast,” said Barrington, hurriedly, and again addressed himself to the letter he was reading. “That's what I call a Trump, Dinah,—a regular Trump.”

“Who is the especial favorite that has called for the very choice eulogy?” said she, bridling up.

“Gone into the thing, too, with heart and soul,—a noble fellow!” continued Barrington.

“Pray enlighten us as to the name that calls forth such enthusiasm.”

“Stapylton, my dear Dinah,—Major Stapylton. In all my life I do not remember one instance to parallel with this generous and disinterested conduct. Listen to what Withering says,—not a man given to take up rash impressions in favor of a stranger. Listen to this: 'Stapylton has been very active,—written to friends, both at Calcutta and Agra, and shown, besides, an amount of acuteness in pursuit of what is really important, that satisfies me a right good common lawyer has been lost by his being a soldier.' And here, again he recurs to him: it is with reference to certain documents: 'S. persists in believing that with proper diligence these may be recovered; he says that it is a common practice with the Moonshees to retain papers, in the hope of their being one day deemed of value; and he is fully persuaded that they have not been destroyed. There is that about the man's manner of examining a question,—his patience, his instinctive seizure of what is of moment, and his invariable rejection of whatever is immaterial; and, lastly, his thorough appreciation of the character of that evidence which would have most weight with the Indian Board, which dispose me to regard him as an invaluable ally to our cause.'”

“Do me the favor to regard this picture of your friend now,” said Miss Barrington, as she handed the letter from Conyers across the table.

Barrington read it over attentively. “And what does this prove, my dear sister?” said he. “This is the sort of stereotyped complaint of every young fellow who has been refused a leave. I have no doubt Hunter was too easy-tempered to have been strict in discipline, and the chances are these young dogs had everything their own way till Stapylton came amongst them. I find it hard to believe that any man likes unpopularity.”

“Perhaps not, Peter Barrington; but he may like tyranny more than he hates unpopularity; and, for my own part, this man is odious to me.”

“Don't say so, Dinah,—don't say so, I entreat of you, for he will be our guest here this very day.”

“Our guest!—why, is not the regiment under orders to leave?”

“So it is; but Withering says it would be a great matter if we could have a sort of consultation together before the Major leaves Ireland. There are innumerable little details which he sees ought to be discussed between us; and so he has persuaded him to give us a day,—perhaps two days,—no small boon, Dinah, from one so fully occupied as he is.”

“I wish he would not make the sacrifice, Peter.”

“My dear sister, are we so befriended by Fortune that we can afford to reject the kindness of our fellows?”

“I'm no believer in chance friendships, Peter Barrington; neither you nor I are such interesting orphans as to inspire sympathy at first sight.”

Josephine could not help a laugh at Miss Dinah's illustration, and old Barriqgton himself heartily joined in the merriment, not sorry the while to draw the discussion into a less stern field. “Come, come, Dinah,” said he, gayly, “let us put out a few bottles of that old Madeira in the sun; and if Darby can find us a salmon-trout, we 'll do our best to entertain our visitors.”

“It never occurred to me to doubt the probability of their enjoying themselves, Peter; my anxieties were quite on another score.”

“Now, Fifine,” continued Barrington, “we shall see if Polly Dill has really made you the perfect housekeeper she boasted. The next day or two will put your talents to the test.”

“Oh, if we could only have Polly herself here!”

“What for?—on what pretext, Miss Barrington?” said Dinah, haughtily. “I have not, so far as I am aware, been accounted very ignorant of household cares.”

“Withering declares that your equal is not in Europe, Dinah.”

“Mr. Withering's suffrage can always be bought by a mock-turtle soup, and a glass of Roman punch after it.”

“How he likes it,—how he relishes it! He says that he comes back to the rest of the dinner with the freshness of a man at an assize case.”

“So like him!” said Dinah, scornfully; “he has never an illustration that is not taken from the Four Courts. I remember one day, when asking for the bill of fare, he said, 'Will you kindly let me look at the cause list.' Prepare yourself, Josephine, for an avalanche of law anecdotes and Old Bailey stories, for I assure you you will hear nothing for the next three days but drolleries that have been engrossed on parchment and paid stamp duty to the Crown.”

Barrington gave a smile, as though in protest against the speech, and left the room. In truth, he was very anxious to be alone, and to think over, at his leisure, a short passage in his letter which he had not summoned courage to read aloud. It was Withering's opinion that to institute the inquiries in India a considerable sum of money would be required, and he had left it for Barrington's consideration whether it were wiser to risk the great peril of this further involvement, or once more to try what chance there might be of a compromise. Who knows what success might have attended the suggestion if the old lawyer had but employed any other word! Compromise, however, sounded to his ears like an unworthy concession,—a surrender of George's honor. Compromise might mean money for his granddaughter, and shame to her father's memory. Not, indeed, that Withering was, as a man, one to counsel such a course, but Withering was a lawyer, and in the same spirit that he would have taken a verdict for half his claim if he saw an adverse feeling in the jury-box, so he would bow to circumstances that were stronger than him, and accept the best he could, if he might not have all that he ought But could Barrington take this view? He thought not. His conviction was that the main question to establish was the fair fame and honor of his son; his guide was, how George himself would have acted—would have felt—in the same contingency; and he muttered, “He'd have been a hardy fellow who would have hinted at compromise to *him*.”

The next point was how the means for the coming campaign were to be provided. He had already raised a small sum by way of mortgage on the “Home,” and nothing remained but to see what further advance could be made on the same security. When Barrington was a great estated gentleman with a vast fortune at his command, it cost him wonderfully little thought to contract a loan, or even to sell a farm. A costly election, a few weeks of unusual splendor, an unfortunate night at play, had made such sacrifices nothing very unusual, and he would give his orders on this score as unconcernedly as he would bid his servant replenish his glass at table. Indeed, he had no more fear of exhausting his fortune than he felt as to out-drinking his cellar. There was enough there, as he often said, for those who should come after him. And now, what a change! He stood actually appalled at the thought of a mortgage for less than a thousand pounds. But so it is; the cockboat may be more to a man than was once the three-decker. The cottage was his all now; that lost, and they were houseless. Was it not a bold thing to risk everything on one more throw? There was the point over which he now pondered as he walked slowly along in the little shady alley between the laurel hedges. He had no friend nearer his heart than Withering, no one to whom he could unbosom himself so frankly and so freely, and yet this was a case on which he could not ask his counsel. All his life long he had strenuously avoided suffering a question of the kind to intervene between them. Of his means, his resources, his straits, or his demands, Withering knew positively nothing. It was with Barrington a point of delicacy to maintain this reserve towards one who was always his lawyer, and often his guest. The very circumstance of his turning innkeeper was regarded by Withering as savoring far more of caprice than necessity, and Barrington took care to strengthen this impression.

If, then, Withering's good sense and worldly knowledge would have been invaluable aids to him in this conjunction, he saw he could not have them. The same delicacy which debarred him heretofore, would still interpose against his appeal to that authority. And then he thought how he had once troops of friends to whom he could address himself for counsel. There is nothing more true, indeed, than the oft-uttered scoff on the hollowness of those friendships which attach to the days of prosperous fortune, and the world is very prone to point to the utter loneliness of him who has been shipwrecked by Fate; but let us be just in our severity, and let us own that a man's belongings, his associates, his—what common parlance calls—friends, are the mere accidents of his station, and they no more accompany him in his fall than do the luxuries he has forfeited. From the level from which he has lapsed they have not descended. They are there, living to-day as they lived yesterday. If their sympathy is not with him, it is because neither are they themselves; they cross each other no more. Such friendships are like the contracts made with a crew for a particular voyage,—they end with the cruise. No man ever understood this better than Barrington; no man ever bore the world less of ill will for its part towards himself. If now and then a sense of sadness would cloud him at some mark of passing forgetfulness, he would not own to the gloomy feeling; while to any show of recognition, to any sign of a grateful remembrance of the past, he would grow boastful to very vanity. “Look there, Dinah,” he would say, “what a noble-hearted fellow that is! I scarcely was more than commonly civil to him formerly, and you saw how courteous he was in making a place for us, how heartily he hoped I was in good health.”

“I'll send over to Dill and have a talk with him,” was Barrington's last resolve, as he turned the subject over and over in his mind. “Dill 's a shrewd fellow, and I 'm not sure that he has not laid by a little money; he might feel no objection to a good investment for it, with such security.” And he looked around as he spoke on the trees, some of which he planted, every one of which he knew, and sighed heavily. “He 'll scarce love the spot more than I did,” muttered he, and walked along with his head down. After a while he took out Withering's letter from his pocket and re-read it. Somehow, it was hard to say why, it did not read so promisingly as at first. The difficulties to be encountered were very stubborn ones, so much so that he very palpably hinted how much better some amicable settlement would be than an open contest wherein legal subtlety and craft should be evoked. There was so much of that matter always taken for granted, to be proved, to be demonstrated true on evidence, that it actually looked appalling. “Of the searches and inquiries instituted in

India," wrote Withering, "I can speak but vaguely; but I own the very distance magnifies them immensely to my eyes." "Tom is growing old, not a doubt of it," muttered Barrington; "these were not the sort of obstacles that could have terrified him once on a time. He 'd have said, 'If there 's evidence, we 'll have it; if there's a document, we 'll find it.' It's India, that far-away land, that has frightened him. These lawyers, like certain sportsmen, lose their nerve if you take them out of their own country. It 's the new style of fences they can't face. Well, thanks to him who gave it, I have my stout heart still, and I 'll go on."

"Going on" was, however, not the easy task it first seemed, nor was the pleasantest part of it the necessity of keeping the secret from his sister. Miss Dinah had from the first discouraged the whole suit. The adversary was too powerful, the odds against them were too great; the India Board had only to protract and prolong the case and *they* must be beaten from sheer exhaustion. How, then, should he reconcile her to mortgaging the last remnant of all their fortune for "one more throw on the table"? "No chance of persuading a woman that this would be wise," said he. And he thought, when he had laid the prejudice of sex as the ground of error, he had completed his argument.

"Going on" had its fine generous side about it, also, that cheered and elevated him. It was for George he was doing it, and that dear girl, whose every trait recalled her father; for let those explain it who can, she, who had never seen nor even heard of her father since her infancy, inherited all his peculiar ways and habits, and every trick of his manner. Let me own that these, even more than any qualities of sterling worth, endeared her to her grandfather; and just as he had often declared no rank or position that could befall George would have been above his deserts, so he averred that if Josephine were to be the greatest heiress in England to-morrow, she would be a grace and an ornament to the station. If Aunt Dinah would occasionally attempt to curb this spirit, or even limit its extravagance, his invariable answer was, "It may be all as you say, sister, but for the life of me I cannot think my swans to be geese."

As he thus mused and meditated, he heard the wicket of the garden open and shut, and shortly afterwards a half-shambling shuffling step on the gravel. Before he had time to speculate on whose it should be, he saw Major M'Cormick limping laboriously towards him.

"How is this, Major?" cried he; "has the change of weather disagreed with your rheumatism?"

"It's the wound; it's always worse in the fall of the year," croaked the other. "I'd have been up to see you before but for the pains, and that old fool Dill—a greater fool myself for trusting him—made me put on a blister down what he calls the course of the nerve, and I never knew torture till I tried it."

"My sister Dinah has, I verily believe, the most sovereign remedy for these pains."

"Is it the green draught? Oh, don't I know it," burst out the Major. "You might hear my shouts the day I took it down at Inistioge. There was n't a bit of skin left on my lips, and when I wiped the perspiration off my head my hair came off too. Aquafortis is like egg-flip compared to that blessed draught; and I remember well how I crawled to my writing-desk and wrote, 'Have me opened,' for I knew I was poisoned."

"Did you tell my sister of your sufferings?"

"To be sure I did, and she only smiled and said that I took it when I was fasting, or when I was full, I forget which; and that I ought to have taken a brisk walk, and I only able to creep; and only one spoonful at a time, and it was the whole bottle I swallowed. In fact, she owned afterwards that nothing but the strength of a horse could have saved me."

Peter found it very hard to maintain a decent gravity at the play of the Major's features, which during the narrative recalled every dire experience of his medicine.

"Well, come into the house and we'll give you something better," said Barrington, at last.

"I think I saw your granddaughter at the window as I came by,—a good-looking young woman, and not so dark as I suspected she 'd be."

"There's not a handsomer girl in Ireland; and as to skin, she 's not as brown as her father."

"It wouldn't be easy to be that; he was about three shades deeper than a Portuguese."

"George Barrington was confessedly the finest-looking fellow in the King's army, and as English-looking a gentleman as any man in it."

The tone of this speech was so palpably that of one who would not stand the very shadow of a rejoinder, that the Major held his peace, and shuffled along without a word. The thought, however, of administering a rebuke to any one within the precincts of his home was so repugnant to Barrington's nature, that he had scarcely uttered the words than he was eager to repair them, and with a most embarrassed humility he stammered out something about their recent tour abroad and all the enjoyment it had given them.

"Maybe so," rejoined the other, dryly; "but I never saw any pleasure in spending money you could keep."

"My dear Major, that is precisely the very money that does procure pleasure."

"Wasn't that a post-chaise I saw through the trees? There it is again; it's making straight for the 'Home,'" said M'Cormick, pointing with his stick.

"Yes," said Peter; "I was expecting a couple of friends to pass a day or so with me here. Will you excuse me if I hurry forward to welcome them?"

"Don't make a stranger of me; I'll saunter along at my leisure," said the Major, as Barrington walked briskly on towards the cottage.

CHAPTER III. A SMALL DINNER-PARTY

Withering and Stapylton had arrived fully two hoars earlier than they were expected, and Miss Dinah was too deeply engaged in the household cares that were to do them honor to receive them. Josephine, too, was

not less busily occupied, for her conventual education had made her wonderfully skilful in all sorts of confectionery, and she was mistress of devices in spun sugar and preserved fruits, which rose in Aunt Dinah's eyes to the dignity of high art. Barrington, however, was there to meet them, and with a cordial welcome which no man could express more gracefully. The luncheon hour passed pleasantly over, for all were in good humor and good spirits. Withering's holiday always found him ready to enjoy it, and when could old Peter feel so happy as when he had a guest beneath his roof who thoroughly appreciated the cottage, and entered into the full charm of its lovely scenery! Such was Stapylton; he blended a fair liking for the picturesque with a natural instinct for comfort and homeliness, and he saw in this spot what precisely embraced both elements. It was very beautiful; but, better still, it was very lovable. “It was so rare”—so, at least, he told Barrington—“to find a cottage wherein internal comfort had not been sacrificed to some requirement of outward show. There was only one way of doing this,” said he, as Barrington led him through the little flower-garden, giving glimpses of the rooms within as they passed,—“only one way, Mr. Barrington; a man must have consummate taste, and strong credit at his banker's.” Barrington's cheek grew a thought redder, and he smiled that faint sad smile which now and then will break from one who feels that he could rebut what he has just heard, if it were but right or fitting he should do so. Of course, amongst really distressing sensations this has no place; but yet there is a peculiar pain in being complimented by your friend on the well-to-do condition of your fortune when your conscience is full of the long watching hours of the night, or, worse still, the first awaking thought of difficulties to which you open your eyes of a morning. It is not often, nor are there many to whom you can say, “I cannot tell the day or the hour when all this shall pass away from me; my head is racked with care, and my heart heavy with anxiety.” How jarring to be told of all the things you ought to do! You who could so well afford it! And how trying to have to take shelter from your necessity under the shadow of a seeming stinginess, and to bear every reflection on your supposed thrift rather than own to your poverty!

If Withering had been with them as they strolled, this, perhaps, might have been avoided; he had all a lawyer's technical skill to change a topic; but Withering had gone to take his accustomed midday nap, the greatest of all the luxuries his time of idleness bestowed upon him.

Now, although Stapylton's alludings—and they were no more—to Barrington's gifts of fortune were such as perfectly consisted with good taste and good breeding, Barring-ton felt them all painfully, and probably nothing restrained him from an open disclaimer of their fitness save the thought that from a host such an avowal would sound ungracefully. “It is my duty now,” reasoned he, “to make my guest feel that all the attentions he receives exact no sacrifice, and that the pleasure his presence affords is unalloyed by a single embarrassment. If he must hear of my difficulties, let it be when he is not beneath my roof.” And so he let Stapylton talk away about the blessings of tranquil affluence, and the happiness of him whose only care was to find time for the enjoyments that were secured to him. He let him quote Pope and Wharton and Edmund Burke, and smiled the blandest concurrence with what was irritating him almost to fever.

“This is Withering's favorite spot,” said Peter, as they gained the shade of a huge ilex-tree, from which two distinct reaches of the river were visible.

“And it shall be mine, too,” said Stapylton, throwing himself down in the deep grass; “and as I know you have scores of things which claim your attention, let me release you, while I add a cigar—the only possible enhancement—to the delight of this glorious nook.”

“Well, it shall be as you wish. We dine at six. I 'll go and look after a fish for our entertainment;” and Barrington turned away into the copse, not sorry to release his heart by a heavy sigh, and to feel he was alone with his cares.

Let us turn for a moment to M'Cormick, who continued to saunter slowly about the garden, in the expectation of Barrington's return. Wearied at length with waiting, and resolved that his patience should not go entirely unrequited, he turned into a little shady walk on which the windows of the kitchen opened. Stationing himself there, in a position to see without being seen, he took what he called an observation of all within. The sight was interesting, even if he did not bring to it the appreciation of a painter. There, upon a spacious kitchen table, lay a lordly sirloin, richly and variously colored, flanked by a pair of plump guinea-hens and a fresh salmon of fully twenty pounds' weight. Luscious fruit and vegetables were heaped and mingled in a wild profusion, and the speckled plumage of game was half hidden under the massive bunches of great hot-house grapes. It is doubtful if Sneyders himself could have looked upon the display with a higher sense of enjoyment It is, indeed, a question between the relative merits of two senses, and the issue lies between the eye and the palate.

Wisely reasoning that such preparations were not made for common guests, M'Cormick ran over in his mind all the possible and impossible names he could think of, ending at last with the conviction it was some “Nob” he must have met abroad, and whom in a moment of his expansive hospitality he had invited to visit him. “Isn't it like them!” muttered he. “It would be long before they'd think of such an entertainment to an old neighbor like myself; but here they are spending—who knows how much?—for somebody that to-morrow or next day won't remember their names, or maybe, perhaps, laugh when they think of the funny old woman they saw,—the 'Fright' with the yellow shawl and the orange bonnet. Oh, the world, the world!”

It is not for me to speculate on what sort of thing the world had been, if the Major himself had been intrusted with the control and fashion of it; but I have my doubts that we are just as well off as we are. “Well, though they haven't the manners to say 'M'Cormick; will you stop and dine?' they haven't done with me yet; not a bit!” And with this resolve he entered the cottage, and found his way to the drawing-room. It was unoccupied; so he sat himself down in a comfortable armchair, to await events and their issue. There were books and journals and newspapers about; but the Major was not a reader, and so he sat musing and meditating, while the time went by. Just as the clock struck five, Miss Dinah, whose various cares of housewifery had given her a very busy day, was about to have a look at the drawing-room before she went to dress, and being fully aware that one of her guests was asleep, and the other full stretched beside the river, she felt she could go her “rounds” without fear of being observed. Now, whatever had been the peculiar functions she was lately engaged in, they had exacted from her certain changes in costume more picturesque than flattering. In the first place, the sleeves of her dress were rolled up above the elbows, displaying arms more remarkable for bone than beauty. A similar curtailment of her petticoats exhibited feet and ankles

which—not to be ungallant—might be called massive rather than elegant; and lastly, her two long curls of auburn hair—curls which, in the splendor of her full toilette, were supposed to be no mean aids to her captivating powers—were now tastefully festooned and fastened to the back of her head, pretty much as a pair of hawsers are occasionally disposed on the bow of a merchantman! Thus costumed, she had advanced into the middle of the room before she saw the Major.

"A pleasure quite unexpected, sir, is this," said she, with a vigorous effort to shake out what sailors would call her "lower courses." "I was not aware that you were here."

"Indeed, then, I came in myself, just like old times. I said this morning, if it 's fine to-day, I 'll just go over to the 'Fisherman's Home.'"

"'The Home,' sir, if you please. We retain so much of the former name." But just as she uttered the correction, a chance look at the glass conveyed the condition of her head-gear,—a startling fact which made her cheeks perfectly crimson. "I lay stress upon the change of name, sir," continued she, "as intimating that we are no longer innkeepers, and expect something, at least, of the deference rendered to those who call their house their own."

"To be sure, and why not?" croaked out the Major, with a malicious grin. "And I forgot all about it, little thinking, indeed, to surprise you in 'dishabille,' as they call it."

"*You* surprise me, sir, every time we meet," said she, with flashing eyes. "And you make me feel surprised with myself for my endurance!" And so saying, she retired towards the door, covering her retreat as she went by every object of furniture that presented itself, and, like a skilful general, defending her rear by every artifice of the ground. Thus did she exit, and with a bang of the door—as eloquent as any speech—close the colloquy.

"Faix! and the Swiss costume doesn't become you at all!" said the Major, as he sat back in his chair, and cackled over the scene.

As Miss Barrington, boiling with passion, passed her brother's door, she stopped to knock.

"Peter!" cried she. "Peter Barrington, I say!" The words were, however, not well out, when she heard a step ascending the stair. She could not risk another discovery like the last; so, opening the door, she said, "That hateful M'Cormick is below. Peter, take care that on no account—"

There was no time to finish, and she had barely an instant to gain her own room, when Stapylton reached the corridor.

Peter Barrington had, however, heard enough to inform him of his sister's high behest. Indeed, he was as quick at interpreting brief messages as people have grown in these latter days of telegraphic communication. Oracular utterings had been more than once in his life his only instructors, and he now knew that he had been peremptorily ordered not to ask the Major to dinner.

There are, doubtless, people in this world—I almost fancy I have met one or two such myself—who would not have felt peculiar difficulty in obeying this command; who would have gone down to the drawing-room and talked coolly to the visitor, discussing commonplaces, easily and carelessly, noting the while how at every pause of the conversation each was dwelling on the self-same point, and yet, with a quiet abstinence, never touching it, till with a sigh, that was half a malediction, the uninvited would rise to take leave. Barrington was not of this number. The man who sat under his roof was sacred. He could have no faults; and to such a pitch had this punctilio carried him, that had an actual enemy gained the inside of his threshold, he would have spared nothing to treat him with honor and respect.

"Well, well," muttered he, as he slowly descended the stairs, "it will be the first time in my life I ever did it, and I don't know how to go about it now."

When a frank and generous man is about to do something he is ashamed of, how readily will a crafty and less scrupulous observer detect it! M'Cormick read Barrington's secret before he was a minute in the room. It was in vain Peter affected an off-hand easy manner, incidentally dropping a hint that the Attorney-General and another friend had just arrived,—a visit, a mere business visit it was, to be passed with law papers and parchments. "Poor fun when the partridges were in the stubble, but there was no help for it. Who knew, however, if he could not induce them to give him an extra day, and if I can, Major, you must promise to come over and meet them. You 'll be charmed with Withering, he has such a fund of agreeability. One of the old school, but not the less delightful to you and me. Come, now, give me your word—for—shall we say Saturday?—Yes, Saturday!"

"I 've nothing to say against it," grumbled out M'Cormick, whose assent was given, as attorneys say, without prejudice to any other claim.

"You shall hear from me in the morning, then," said Peter. "I 'll send you a line to say what success I have had with my friends."

"Any time in the day will do," said the Major, unconcernedly; for, in truth, the future never had in his estimation the same interest as the present. As for the birds in the bush, he simply did not believe in them at all.

"No, no," said Barrington, hurriedly. "You shall hear from me early, for I am anxious you should meet Withering and his companion, too,—a brother-soldier."

"Who may he be?" asked M'Cormick.

"That's my secret, Major,—that's my secret," said Peter, with a forced laugh, for it now wanted but ten minutes to six; "but you shall know all on Saturday."

Had he said on the day of judgment, the assurance would have been as palatable to M'Cormick. Talking to him of Saturday on a Monday was asking him to speculate on the infinite. Meanwhile he sat on, as only they sit who understand the deep and high mystery of that process. Oh, if you who have your fortunes to make in life, without any assignable mode for so doing, without a craft, a calling, or a trade, knew what success there was to be achieved merely by sitting—by simply being "there," eternally "there"—a warning, an example, an illustration, a what you will, of boredom or infliction; but still "there." The butt of this man, the terror of that,

—hated, feared, trembled at,—but yet recognized as a thing that must be, an institution that was, and is, and shall be, when we are all dead and buried.

Long and dreary may be the days of the sitter, but the hour of his reward will come at last. There will come the time when some one—any one—will be wanted to pair off with some other bore, to listen to his stories and make up his whist-table; and then he will be "there." I knew a man who, merely by sitting on patiently for years, was at last chosen to be sent as a Minister and special Envoy to a foreign Court just to get rid of him. And for the women sitters,—the well-dressed and prettily got-up simperers, who have sat their husbands into Commissionerships, Colonial Secretaryships, and such like,—are they not written of in the Book of Beauty?

"Here 's M'Cormick, Dinah," said Barrington, with a voice shaking with agitation and anxiety, "whom I want to pledge himself to us for Saturday next. Will you add your persuasions to mine, and see what can be done?"

"Don't you think you can depend upon me?" cackled out the Major.

"I am certain of it, sir; I feel your word like your bond on such a matter," said Miss Dinah. "My grandniece, Miss Josephine Barrington," said she, presenting that young lady, who courtesied formally to the unprepossessing stranger.

"I'm proud of the honor, ma'am," said M'Cormick, with a deep bow, and resumed his seat; to rise again, however, as Withering entered the room and was introduced to him.

"This is intolerable, Peter," whispered Miss Barrington, while the lawyer and the Major were talking together. "You are certain you have not asked him?"

"On my honor, Dinah! on my honor!"

"I hope I am not late?" cried Stapylton, entering; then turning hastily to Barrington, said, "Pray present me to your niece."

"This is my sister, Major Stapylton; this is my granddaughter;" and the ladies courtesied, each with a degree of satisfaction which the reader shall be left to assign them.

After a few words of commonplace civility, uttered, however, with a courtesy and tact which won their way for the speaker, Stapylton recognized and shook hands with M'Cormick.

"You know my neighbor, then?" said Barrington, in some surprise.

"I am charmed to say I do; he owes me the *denouement* of a most amusing story, which was suddenly broken off when we last parted, but which I shall certainly claim after dinner."

"He has been kind enough to engage himself to us for Saturday," began Dinah. But M'Cormick, who saw the moment critical, stepped in,—

"You shall hear every word of it before you sleep. It's all about Walcheren, though they think Waterloo more the fashion now."

"Just as this young lady might fancy Major Stapylton a more interesting event than one of us," said Withering, laughing. "But what 's become of your boasted punctuality, Barrington? A quarter past,—are you waiting for any one?"

"Are we, Dinah?" asked Barrington, with a look of sheepishness.

"Not that I am aware of, Peter. There is no one to *come*;" and she laid such an emphasis on the word as made the significance palpable.

To Barrington it was painful as well as palpable; so painful, indeed, that he hurriedly rang the bell, saying, in a sharp voice, "Of course, we are all here,—there are six of us. Dinner, Darby!"

The Major had won, but he was too crafty to show any triumph at his victory, and he did not dare even to look towards where Miss Barrington stood, lest he should chance to catch her eye. Dinner was at length announced. Withering gave his arm to Miss Barrington, Stapylton took charge of Josephine, and old Peter, pleasantly drawing his arm within M'Cormick's, said, "I hope you 've got a good appetite, Major, for I have a rare fish for you to-day, and your favorite sauce, too,—smelt, not lobster."

Poor Barrington! it was a trying moment for him, that short walk into the dinner-room, and he felt very grateful to M'Cormick that he said nothing peevish or sarcastic to him on the way. Many a dinner begins in awkwardness, but warms as it proceeds into a pleasant geniality. Such was the case here. Amongst those, besides, who have not the ties of old friendship between them, or have not as yet warmed into that genial good-fellowship which is, so to say, its foster-brother, a character of the M'Cormick class is not so damaging an element as might be imagined, and at times there is a positive advantage in having one of whose merits, by a tacit understanding, all are quite agreed. Withering and Stapylton both read the man at once, and drew out his salient points—his parsimony, his malice, and his prying curiosity—in various ways, but so neatly and so advisedly as to make him fancy he was the attacking party, and very successful, too, in his assaults upon the enemy. Even Barrington, in the honest simplicity of his nature, was taken in, and more than once thought that the old Major was too severe upon the others, and sat in wondering admiration of their self-command and good temper. No deception of this sort prevailed with Miss Barrington, who enjoyed to the fullest extent the subtle raillery with which they induced him to betray every meanness of his nature, and yet never suffered the disclosure to soar above the region of the ludicrous.

"You have been rather hard upon them, Major," said Barrington, as they strolled about on the greensward after dinner to enjoy their coffee and a cigar. "Don't you think you have been a shade too severe?"

"It will do them good. They wanted to turn me out like a bagged fox, and show the ladies some sport; but I taught them a thing or two."

"No, no, M'Cormick, you wrong them there; they had no such intentions, believe me."

"I know that *you* did n't see it," said he, with emphasis, "but your sister did, and liked it well, besides; ay, and the young one joined in the fun. And, after all, I don't see that they got much by the victory, for Withering was not pleased at my little hit about the days when he used to be a Whig and spout liberal politics; and the other liked just as little my remark about the fellows in the Company's service, and how nobody knew who they were or where they came from. He was in the Madras army himself, but I pretended not to know it; but I found his name written on the leaf of an old book he gave me, and the regiment he was in: and did you see

how he looked when I touched on it? But here he comes now.”

“Make your peace with him, M'Cormick, make your peace!” said Barrington, as he moved away, not sorry, as he went, to mark the easy familiarity with which Stapylton drew his arm within the other's, and walked along at his side.

“Wasn't that a wonderful dinner we had to-day, from a man that hasn't a cross in his pocket?” croaked out M'Cormick to Stapylton.

“Is it possible?”

“Sherry and Madeira after your soup, then Sauterne,—a thing I don't care for any more than the oyster patties it came with; champagne next, and in tumblers too! Do you ever see it better done at your mess? Or where did you ever taste a finer glass of claret?”

“It was all admirable.”

“There was only one thing forgotten,—not that it signifies to me.”

“And what might that be?”

“It was n't paid for! No, nor will it ever be!”

“You amaze me, Major. My impression was that our friend here was, without being rich, in very comfortable circumstances; able to live handsomely, while he carried on a somewhat costly suit.”

“That 's the greatest folly of all,” broke out M'Cormick; “and it's to get money for that now that he's going to mortgage this place here,—ay, the very ground under our feet!” And this he said with a sort of tremulous indignation, as though the atrocity bore especially hard upon *them*. “Kinshela, the attorney from Kilkenny, was up with me about it yesterday. 'It's an elegant investment, Major,' says he, 'and you 're very likely to get the place into your hands for all the chance old Peter has of paying off the charge. His heart is in that suit, and he 'll not stop as long as he has a guinea to go on with it.'

“I said, 'I 'd think of it: I 'd turn it over in my mind;' for there's various ways of looking at it.”

“I fancy I apprehend one of them,” said Stapylton, with a half-jocular glance at his companion. “You have been reflecting over another investment, eh? Am I not right? I remarked you at dinner. I saw how the young brunette had struck you, and I said to myself, 'She has made a conquest already!'”

“Not a bit of it; nothing of the kind,” said M'Cormick, awkwardly. “I 'm too 'cute to be caught that way.”

“Yes, but remember it might be a very good catch. I don't speak of the suit, because I agree with you, the chances in that direction are very small, indeed, and I cannot understand the hopeful feeling with which he prosecutes it; but she is a fine, handsome girl, very attractive in manner, and equal to any station.”

“And what's the good of all that to me? Wouldn't it be better if she could make a pease-pudding, like Polly Dill, or know how to fatten a turkey, or salt down a side of bacon?”

“I don't think so; I declare, I don't think so,” said Stapylton, as he lighted a fresh cigar. “These are household cares, and to be bought with money, and not expensively, either. What a man like you or I wants is one who should give a sort of tone,—impart a degree of elegance to his daily life. We old bachelors grow into self-indulgence, which is only another name for barbarism. With a mistaken idea of comfort we neglect scores of little observances which constitute the small currency of civilization, and without which all intercourse is unpleasing and ungraceful.”

“I'm not quite sure that I understand you aright, but there's one thing I know, I 'd think twice of it before I 'd ask that young woman to be Mrs. M'Cormick. And, besides,” added he, with a sly side-look, “if it's so good a thing, why don't you think of it for yourself?”

“I need not tell an old soldier like *you* that full pay and a wife are incompatible. Every wise man's experience shows it; and when a fellow goes to the bishop for a license, he should send in his papers to the Horse Guards. Now, I 'm too poor to give up my career. I have not, like you, a charming cottage on a river's bank, and a swelling lawn dotted over with my own sheep before my door. I cannot put off the harness.”

“Who talks of putting off the harness?” cried Withering, gayly, as he joined them. “Who ever dreamed of doing anything so ill-judging and so mistaken? Why, if it were only to hide the spots where the collar has galled you, you ought to wear the trappings to the last. No man ever knew how to idle, who had n't passed all his life at it! Some go so far as to say that for real success a man's father and grandfather should have been idlers before him. But have you seen Barrington? He has been looking for you all over the grounds.”

“No,” said Stapylton; “my old brother-officer and myself got into pipeclay and barrack talk, and strolled away down here unconsciously.”

“Well, we 'd better not be late for tea,” broke in the Major, “or we 'll hear of it from Miss Dinah!” And there was something so comic in the seriousness of his tone, that they laughed heartily as they turned towards the house.

CHAPTER IV. A MOVE IN ADVANCE

How pleasantly did the next day break on the “Home”! Polly Dill arrived in the best of possible spirits. A few lines from Tom had just reached them. They were written at sea; but the poor fellow's notions of latitude and longitude were so confused that it was not easy to say from whence. They were cheery, however, he was in good health, his comrades were kind-hearted creatures, and evidently recognized in him one of a station above their own. He said that he could have been appointed hospital sergeant-if he liked, but that whatever reminded him of his old calling was so distasteful that he preferred remaining as he was, the rather as he was given to believe he should soon be a corporal.

“Not that I mean to stop there, Polly; and now that I have n't got to study for it, I feel a courage as to the

future I never knew before. Give my love to Mr. Conyers, and say that I 'm never tired of thinking over the last night I saw him, and of all his good nature to me, and that I hope I 'll see his father some day or other to thank him. I suppose father does n't miss me? I 'm sure mother does n't; and it 's only yourself, Polly, will ever feel a heavy heart for the poor castaway! But cheer up! for as sure as my name is Tom, I 'll not bring discredit on you, and you 'll not be ashamed to take my arm down the main street when we meet. I must close now, for the boat is going.

“P. S. I dreamed last night you rode Sid Davis's brown mare over the Millrace at Graigue. Would n't it be strange if it came true? I wish I could know it.”

“May I show this to my friend here, Polly?” said Barrington, pointing to Withering. “It's a letter he 'd like to read; and as she nodded assent, he handed it across the breakfast-table.

“What is your brother's regiment, Miss Dill?” said Stapylton, who had just caught a stray word or two of what passed.

“The Forty-ninth.”

“The Forty-ninth,” said he, repeating the words once or twice. “Let me see,—don't I know some Forty-ninth men? To be sure I do. There's Rep ton and Hare. Your brother will be delighted with Hare.”

“My brother is in the ranks, Major Stapylton,” said she, flushing a deep scarlet; and Barrington quickly interposed,—

“It was the wild frolic of a young man to escape a profession he had no mind for.”

“But in foreign armies every one does it,” broke in Stapylton, hurriedly. “No matter what a man's rank may be, he must carry the musket; and I own I like the practice,—if for nothing else for that fine spirit of *camaraderie* which it engenders.”

Fifine's eyes sparkled with pleasure at what she deemed the well-bred readiness of this speech, while Polly became deadly pale, and seemed with difficulty to repress the repartee that rose to her mind. Not so Miss Dinah, who promptly said, “No foreign customs can palliate a breach of our habits. We are English, and we don't desire to be Frenchmen or Germans.”

“Might we not occasionally borrow from our neighbors with advantage?” asked Stapylton, blandly.

“I agree with Miss Barrington,” said Withering,—“I agree with Miss Barrington, whose very prejudices are always right. An army formed by a conscription which exempts no man is on a totally different footing from one derived from voluntary enlistment.”

“A practice that some say should be reserved for marriage,” said Barrington, whose happy tact it was to relieve a discussion by a ready joke.

They arose from table soon after,—Polly to accompany Miss Barrington over the garden and the shrubberies, and show all that had been done in their absence, and all that she yet intended to do, if approved of; Withering adjourned to Barrington's study to pore over parchments; and Stapylton, after vainly seeking to find Josephine in the drawing-room, the flower-garden, or the lawn, betook himself with a book, the first he could find on the table, to the river's side, and lay down, less to read than to meditate and reflect.

A breezy morning of a fine day in early autumn, with slow sailing clouds above and a flickering sunlight on the grass below, besides a rippling river, whose banks are glowing with blue and purple heath-bells,—all these and a Waverley novel were not enough to distract Stapylton from the cares that pressed upon his mind; for so it is, look where we may on those whom Fortune would seem to have made her especial favorites, and we shall find some unsatisfied ambition, some craving wish doomed to disappointment, some hope deferred till the heart that held it has ceased to care for its accomplishment. To the world's eyes, here was a man eminently fortunate: already high up in the service, with health, vigor, and good looks, a reputation established for personal gallantry in the field, and an amount of capacity that had already won for him more than one distinction, and yet all these, great and solid advantages as they are, were not sufficient to give the ease of mind we call happiness.

He had debts, some of them heavy debts, but these sat lightly on him. He was one of those men creditors never crush, some secret consciousness seeming to whisper that, however ill the world may go with them for a while, in the long run they must triumph; and thus Mr. Hirman Davis, to whom he owed thousands, would have cashed him another bill to-morrow, all on the faith of that future which Stapylton talked about with the careless confidence of a mind assured.

He had enemies, too,—powerful and determined enemies,—who opposed his advancement for many a year, and were still adverse to him; but, like the creditors, they felt he was not a man to be crushed, and so he and his ill-wishers smiled blandly when they met, exchanged the most cordial greetings, and even imparted little confidences of their several fortunes with all that well-bred duplicity which so simulates friendship.

He had been crossed,—no, not in love, but in his ambition to marry one greatly above him in station; but her subsequent marriage had been so unfortunate that he felt in part recompensed for the slight she passed upon him; so that, taking it all and all, fate had never been cruel to him without a compensation.

There are men who feel their whole existence to be a hand-to-hand struggle with the world, who regard the world as an adversary to be worsted, and all whose efforts are devoted to reach that point upon which they can turn round and say, “You see that I have won the game. I was unknown, and I am famous; I was poor, and I am rich; I was passed over and ignored, and now the very highest are proud to recognize me!” Stapylton was one of these. All the egotism of his nature took this form, and it was far more in a spirit against his fellows than in any indulgence of himself he fought and struggled with Fortune. Intrusted by Withering with much of the secret history of Barring-ton's claim against the India Company, he had learned considerably more through inquiries instituted by himself, and at length arrived at the conclusion that if old Barring-ton could be persuaded to limit his demands within moderate bounds, and not insist upon the details of that personal reparation which he assumed so essential to his son's honor, a very ample recompense would not be refused him. It was to induce Barrington to take this course Stapylton had consented to come down with Withering,—so, at least, he said, and so Withering believed. Old lawyer that he was, with a hundred instincts of distrust about him, he had conceived a real liking for Stapylton, and a great confidence in his judgment.

“We shall have to divide our labors here, Major,” said he, as they travelled along together; “I will leave the ladies to your care. Barrington shall be mine.” A very brief acquaintance with Miss Dinah satisfied Stapylton that she was one to require nice treatment, and what he called “a very light hand.” The two or three little baits he had thrown out took nothing; the stray bits of sentimentality, or chance scraps of high-toned principle he had addressed to her, had failed. It was only when he had with some sharpness hit off some small meanness in M'Cormick's nature that she had even vouchsafed him so much as a half-smile of approval, and he saw that even then she watched him closely.

“No,” said he, half aloud to himself, “that old woman is not one easily to be dealt with; and the younger one, too, would have a will of her own if she had but the way to use it. If Polly had been in her place,—the clever, quickwitted Polly,—she would have gone with me in my plans, associated herself in all my projects, and assured their success. Oh for a good colleague just to keep the boat's head straight when one is weary of rowing!”

“Would I do?” said a low voice near. And, on looking up, he saw Josephine standing over him, with an arch smile on her face as though she had surprised him in a confession.

“How long have you been there?” asked he, hurriedly.

“A few seconds.''

“And what have you heard me say?”

“That you wanted a colleague, or a companion of some sort; and as I was the only useless person here, I offered myself.”

“In good faith?”

“In good faith!—why not? I am more likely to gain by the association than you are; at least, if you can only be as pleasant of a morning as you were yesterday at dinner.”

“I 'll try,” said he, springing to his feet; “and as a success in these efforts is mainly owing to the amount of zeal that animates them, I am hopeful.”

“Which means a flattery at the outset,” said she, smiling.

“Only as much as your friend Mr. Withering would throw out to dispose the court in his favor; and now, which way shall we walk? Are you to be the guide, or I?”

“You, by all means, since you know nothing of the locality.”

“Agreed. Well, here is my plan. We cross the river in this boat, and take that path yonder that leads up by the waterfall. I know, from the dark shadow of the mountain, that there is a deep glen, very wild, very romantic, and very solemn, through which I mean to conduct you.”

“All this means a very long excursion, does it not?”

“You have just told me that you were free from all engagement.”

“Yes; but not from all control. I must ask Aunt Dinah's leave before I set out on this notable expedition.”

“Do nothing of the kind. It would be to make a caprice seem a plan. Let us go where you will,—here, along the river's side; anywhere, so that we may affect to think that we are free agents, and not merely good children sent out for a walk.”

“What a rebel against authority you are for one so despotic yourself!”

“I despotic! Who ever called me so?”

“Your officers say as much.”

“I know from what quarter that came,” said he; and his bronzed face grew a shade deeper. “That dilettante soldier, young Conyers, has given me this character; but I 'd rather talk of you than myself. Tell me all about your life. Is it as delightful as everything around would bespeak it? Are these trees and flowers, this sunny bank, this perfumed sward, true emblems of the existence they embellish, or is Paradise only a cheat?”

“I don't think so. I think Paradise is very like what it looks, not but I own that the garden is pleasanter with guests in it than when only Adam and Eve were there. Mr. Withering is charming, and you can be very agreeable.”

“I would I knew how to be so,” said he, seriously, “just at this moment; for I am going away from Ireland, and I am very desirous of leaving a good impression behind me.”

“What could it signify to you how you were thought of in this lonely spot?”

“More than you suspect,—more than you would, perhaps, credit,” said he, feelingly.

There was a little pause, during which they walked along side by side.

“What are you thinking of?” said she, at last

“I was thinking of a strange thing,—it was this: About a week ago there was no effort I was not making to obtain the command of my regiment. I wanted to be Lieutenant-Colonel; and so bent was I on gaining my object, that if giving away three or four years of that life that I may hope for would have done it, I 'd have closed the bargain; and now the ambition is gone, and I am speculating whether I 'll not take the cottage of your friend Major M'Cormick,—he offered it to me last night,—and become your neighbor. What say *you* to the project?”

“For us the exchange will be all a gain.”

“I want your opinion,—your own,” said he, with a voice reduced to a mere whisper.

“I'd like it of all things; although, if I were your sister or your daughter, I'd not counsel it.”

“And why not, if you were my sister?” said he, with a certain constraint in his manner.

“I'd say it was inglorious to change from the noble activity of a soldier's life to come and dream away existence here.”

“But what if I have done enough for this same thing men call fame? I have had my share of campaigning, and as the world looks there is wondrous little prospect of any renewal of it. These peace achievements suit

your friend Conyers better than me.”

“I think you are not just to him. If I read him aright, he is burning for an occasion to distinguish himself.”

A cold shrug of the shoulders was his only acknowledgment of this speech, and again a silence fell between them.

“I would rather talk of *you*, if you would let me,” said he, with much significance of voice and manner. “Say would you like to have me for your neighbor?”

“It would be a pleasant exchange for Major M'Cormick,” said she, laughing.

“I want you to be serious now. What I am asking you interests me too deeply to jest over.”

“First of all, is the project a serious one?”

“It is.”

“Next, why ask advice from one as inexperienced as I am?”

“Because it is not counsel I ask,—it is something more. Don't look surprised, and, above all, don't look angry, but listen to me. What I have said now, and what more I would say, might more properly have been uttered when we had known each other longer; but there are emergencies in life which give no time for slow approaches, and there are men, too, that they suit not. Imagine such now before you,—I mean, both the moment and the man. Imagine one who has gone through a great deal in life, seen, heard, and felt much, and yet never till now, never till this very morning, understood what it was to know one whose least word or passing look was more to him than ambition, higher than all the rewards of glory.”

“We never met till yesterday,” said she, calmly.

“True; and if we part to-morrow, it will be forever. I feel too painfully,” added he, with more eagerness, “how I compromise all that I value by an avowal abrupt and rash as this is; but I have had no choice. I have been offered the command of a native force in India, and must give my answer at once. With hope—the very faintest, so that it be hope—I will refuse. Remember I want no pledge, no promise; all I entreat is that you will regard me as one who seeks to win your favor. Let time do the rest.”

“I do not think I ought to do this—I do not know if you should ask it.”

“May I speak to your grandfather—may I tell him what I have told you—may I say, 'It is with Josephine's permission—'”

“I am called Miss Barrington, sir, by all but those of my own family.”

“Forgive me, I entreat you,” said he, with a deep humility in his tone. “I had never so far forgotten myself if calm reason had not deserted me. I will not transgress again.”

“This is the shortest way back to the cottage,” said she, turning into a narrow path in the wood.

“It does not lead to my hope,” said he, despondingly; and no more was uttered between them for some paces.

“Do not walk so very fast, Miss Barrington,” said he, in a tone which trembled slightly. “In the few minutes—the seconds you could accord me—I might build the whole fortune of my life. I have already endangered my hopes by rashness; let me own that it is the fault I have struggled against in vain. This scar”—and he showed the deep mark of a sabre-wound on the temple—“was the price of one of my offendings; but it was light in suffering to what I am now enduring.”

“Can we not talk of what will exact no such sacrifice?” said she, calmly.

“Not now, not now!” said he, with emotion; “if you pass that porch without giving me an answer, life has no longer a tie for me. You know that I ask for no pledge, no promise, merely time,—no more than time,—a few more of those moments of which you now would seem eager to deny me. Linger an instant here, I beseech you, and remember that what to *you* may be a caprice may to *me* be a destiny.”

“I will not hear more of this,” said she, half angrily. “If it were not for my own foolish trustfulness, you never would have dared to address such words to one whom you met yesterday for the first time.”

“It is true your generous frankness, the nature they told me you inherited, gives me boldness, but it might teach you to have some pity for a disposition akin to it. One word,—only one word more.”

“Not one, sir! The lesson my frankness has taught me is, never to incur this peril again.”

“Do you part from me in anger?”

“Not with *you*; but I will not answer for myself if you press me further.”

“Even this much is better than despair,” said he, mournfully; and she passed into the cottage, while he stood in the porch and bowed respectfully as she went by. “Better than I looked for, better than I could have hoped,” muttered he to himself, as he strolled away and disappeared in the wood.

CHAPTER V. A CABINET COUNCIL

“What do you think of it, Dinah?” said Barrington, as they sat in conclave the next morning in her own sitting-room.

She laid down a letter she had just finished reading on the table, carefully folding it, like one trying to gain time before she spoke: “He's a clever man, and writes well, Peter; there can be no second opinion upon that.”

“But his proposal, Dinah,—his proposal?”

“Pleases me less the more I think of it. There is great disparity of age,—a wide discrepancy in character. A certain gravity of demeanor would not be undesirable, perhaps, in a husband for Josephine, who has her moments of capricious fancy; but if I mistake not, this man's nature is stern and unbending.”

“There will be time enough to consider all that, Dinah. It is, in fact, to weigh well the chances of his fitness to secure her happiness that he pleads; he asks permission to make himself known to her, rather than to make his court.”

“I used to fancy that they meant the same thing,—I know that they did in my day, Peter,” said she, bridling; “but come to the plain question before us. So far as I understand him, his position is this: 'If I satisfy you that my rank and fortune are satisfactory to you, have I your permission to come back here as your granddaughter's suitor?'”

“Not precisely, Dinah,—not exactly this. Here are his words: 'I am well aware that I am much older than Miss Barrington, and it is simply to ascertain from herself if, in that disparity of years, there exists that disparity of tastes and temper which would indispose her to regard me as one to whom she would intrust her happiness. I hope to do this without any offence to her delicacy, though not without peril to my own self-love. Have I your leave for this experiment?'”

“Who is he? Who are his friends, connections, belongings? What is his station independently of his military rank, and what are his means? Can you answer these questions?”

“Not one of them. I never found myself till to-day in a position to inquire after them.”

“Let us begin, then, by that investigation, Peter. There is no such test of a man as to make him talk of himself. With you alone the matter, perhaps, would not present much difficulty to him, but I intend that Mr. Withering's name and my own shall be on the committee; and, take *my* word for it, we shall sift the evidence carefully.”

“Bear in mind, sister Dinah, that this gentleman is, first of all, our guest.”

“The first of all that I mean to bear in mind is, that he desires to be your grandson.”

“Of course,—of course. I would only observe on the reserve that should be maintained towards one who honors us with his presence.”

“Peter Barrington, the Arabs, from whom you seem to borrow your notions on hospitality, seldom scruple about cutting a guest's head off when he passes the threshold; therefore I would advise you to adopt habits that may be more suited to the land we live in.”

“All I know is,” said Barrington, rising and pacing the room, “that I could no more put a gentleman under my roof to the question as to his father and mother and his fortune, than I could rifle his writing-desk and read his letters.”

“Brother Peter, the weakness of your disposition has cost you one of the finest estates in your country, and if it could be restored to you to-morrow, the same imbecility would forfeit it again. I will, however, take the matter into my own hands.”

“With Withering, I suppose, to assist you?”

“Certainly not. I am perfectly competent to make any inquiry I deem requisite without a legal adviser. Perhaps, were I to be so accompanied, Major Stapylton would suppose that he, too, should appear with his lawyer.”

Barrington smiled faintly at the dry jest, but said nothing.

“I see,” resumed she, “that you are very much afraid about my want of tact and delicacy in this investigation. It is a somewhat common belief amongst men that in all matters of business women err on the score of hardness and persistence. I have listened to some edifying homilies from your friend Withering on female incredulity and so forth,—reproaches which will cease to apply when men shall condescend to treat us as creatures accessible to reason, and not as mere dupes. See who is knocking at the door, Peter,” added she, sharply. “I declare it recalls the old days of our innkeeping, and Darby asking for the bill of the lame gentleman in No. 4.”

“Upon my life, they were pleasant days, too,” said Barrington, but in a tone so low as to be unheard by his sister.

“May I come in?” said Withering, as he opened the door a few inches, and peeped inside. “I want to show you a note I have just had from Kinshela, in Kilkenny.”

“Yes, yes; come in,” said Miss Barrington. “I only wish you had arrived a little earlier. What is your note about?”

“It's very short and very purpose-like. The first of it is all about Brazier's costs, which it seems the taxing-officer thinks fair and reasonable,—all excepting that charge for the additional affidavits. But here is what I want to show you. 'Major M'Cormick, of M'Cormick's Grove, has just been here; and although I am not entitled to say as much officially on his part, I entertain no doubt whatever but that he is ready to advance the money we require. I spoke of fifteen hundred, but said twelve might possibly be taken, and twelve would be, I imagine, his limit, since he held to this amount in all our conversation afterwards. He appears to be a man of strange and eccentric habits, and these will probably be deemed a sufficient excuse for the singular turn our interview took towards its conclusion. I was speaking of Mr. Barrington's wish for the insertion in the deed of a definite period for redemption, and he stopped me hastily with, “What if we could strike out another arrangement? What if he was to make a settlement of the place on his granddaughter? I am not too old to marry, and I 'd give him the money at five per cent.” I have been careful to give you the very expressions he employed, and of which I made a note when he left the office; for although fully aware how improper it would be in me to submit this proposal to Mr. Barrington, I have felt it my duty to put you in possession of all that has passed between us.'”

“How can you laugh, Peter Barrington?—how is it possible you can laugh at such an insult,—such an outrage as this? Go on, sir,” said she, turning to Withering; “let us hear it to the end, for nothing worse can remain behind.”

“There is no more; at least, there is not anything worth hearing. Kinshela winds up with many apologies, and hopes that I will only use his communication for my own guidance, and not permit it in any case to prejudice him in your estimation.” As he spoke, he crumpled up the note in his hand in some confusion.

“Who thinks of Mr. Kinshela, or wants to think of him, in the matter?” said she, angrily. “I wish, however, I were a man for a couple of hours, to show Major M'Cormick the estimate I take of the honor he intends us.”

“After all, Dinah, it is not that he holds us more cheaply, but rates himself higher.”

“Just so,” broke in Withering; “and I know, for my own part, I have never been able to shake off the flattery of being chosen by the most nefarious rascal to defend him on his trial. Every man is a great creature in his own eyes.”

“Well, sir, be proud of your client,” said she, trembling with anger.

“No, no,—he 's no client of mine, nor is this a case I would plead for him. I read you Kinshela's note because I thought you were building too confidently on M'Cormick's readiness to advance this money.”

“I understood what that readiness meant, though my brother did not. M'Cormick looked forward to the day —and not a very distant day did he deem it—when he should step into possession of this place, and settle down here as its owner.”

Barrington's face grew pale, and a glassy film spread over his eyes, as his sister's words sunk into his heart. “I declare, Dinah,” said he, falteringly, “that never did strike me before.”

“'It never rains but it pours,' says the Irish adage,” resumed she. “My brother and I were just discussing another proposal of the same kind when you knocked. Read that letter. It is from a more adroit courtier than the other, and, at least, he does n't preface his intentions with a bargain.” And she handed Stapylton's letter to Withering.

“Ah!” said the lawyer, “this is another guess sort of man, and a very different sort of proposal.”

“I suspected that he was a favorite of yours,” said Miss Dinah, significantly.

“Well, I own to it. He is one of those men who have a great attraction for me,—men who come out of the conflict of life and its interests without any exaggerated notions of human perfectibility or the opposite, who recognize plenty of good and no small share of bad in the world, but, on the whole, are satisfied that, saving ill health, very few of our calamities are not of our own providing.”

“All of which is perfectly compatible with an odious egotism, sir,” said she, warmly; “but I feel proud to say such characters find few admirers amongst women.”

“From which I opine that he is not fortunate enough to number Miss Dinah Barrington amongst his supporters?”

“You are right there, sir. The prejudice I had against him before we met has been strengthened since I have seen him.”

“It is candid of you, however, to call it a prejudice,” said he, with a smile.

“Be it so, Mr. Withering; but prejudice is only another word for an instinct.”

“I 'm afraid if we get into ethics we 'll forget all about the proposal,” said Barrington.

“What a sarcasm!” cried Withering, “that if we talk of morals we shall ignore matrimony.”

“I like the man, and I like his letter,” said Barrington.

“I distrust both one and the other,” said Miss Dinah.

“I almost fancy I could hold a brief on either side,” interposed Withering.

“Of course you could, sir; and if the choice were open to you, it would be the defence of the guilty.”

“My dear Miss Barrington,” said Withering, calmly, “when a great legal authority once said that he only needed three lines of any man's writing 'to hang him,' it ought to make us very lenient in our construction of a letter. Now, so far as I can see in this one before us, he neither asks nor protests too much. He begs simply for time, he entreats leave to draw a bill on your affections, and he promises to meet it.”

“No, sir, he wishes to draw at sight, though he has never shown us the letter of credit.”

“I vow to Heaven it is hopeless to expect anything practical when you two stand up together for a sparring-match,” cried Barrington.

“Be practical, then, brother Peter, and ask this gentleman to give you a quarter of an hour in your study. Find out who he is; I don't expect you to learn what he is, but what he has. With his fortune we shall get the clew to himself.”

“Yes,” chimed in Withering, “all that is very businesslike and reasonable.”

“And it pledges us to nothing,” added she. “We take soundings, but we don't promise to anchor.”

“If you go off again with your figures of speech, Dinah, there is an end of me, for I have one of those unhappy memories that retain the illustration and forget what it typified. Besides this, here is a man who, out of pure good nature and respect for poor George's memory, has been doing us most important services, written letters innumerable, and taken the most active measures for our benefit. What sort of a figure shall I present if I bring him to book about his rental and the state of his bank account?”

“With the exercise of a little tact, Barrington,—a little management—”

“Ask a man with a club-foot to walk gingerly! I have no more notion of getting at anything by address than I have of tying the femoral artery.”

“The more blunt the better, Peter Barrington. You may tumble into the truth, though you'd never pick your way into it. Meanwhile, leave me to deal with Major M'Cor-mick.”

“You'll do it courteously, Dinah; you'll bear in mind that he is a neighbor of some twenty years' standing?” said Barrington, in a voice of anxiety.

“I 'll do it in a manner that shall satisfy *my* conscience and *his* presumption.”

She seated herself at the table as she said this, and dashed off a few hasty lines. Indeed, so hurried was the action, that it looked far more like one of those instances of correspondence we see on the stage than an event of real life.

“Will that do?” said she, showing the lines to Withering.

The old lawyer read them over to himself, a faint twitching of the mouth being the only sign his face presented of any emotion. “I should say admirably,—nothing better.”

“May I see it, Dinah?” asked Peter.

“You shall hear it, brother,” said she, taking the paper and reading,—

“'Miss Barrington informs Mr. Kinshela that if he does not at once retract his epistle of this morning's date, she will place it in the hands of her legal adviser, and proceed against it as a threatening letter.'”

“Oh, sister, you will not send this?”

“As sure as my name is Dinah Barrington.”

CHAPTER VI. AN EXPRESS

In the times before telegraphs,—and it is of such I am writing,—a hurried express was a far more stirring event than in these our days of incessant oracles. While, therefore, Barrington and his sister and Withering sat in deep consultation on Josephine's fate and future, a hasty summons arrived from Dublin, requiring the instantaneous departure of Stapylton, whose regiment was urgently needed in the north of England, at that time agitated by those disturbances called the Bread Riots. They were very formidable troubles, and when we look back upon them now, with the light which the great events of later years on the Continent afford us, seem more terrible still. It was the fashion, however, then, to treat them lightly, and talk of them contemptuously; and as Stapylton was eating a hasty luncheon before departure, he sneered at the rabble, and scoffed at the insolent pretension of their demands. Neither Barrington nor Withering sympathized with the spirit of the revolt, and yet each felt shocked at the tone of haughty contempt Stapylton assumed towards the people. “You'll see,” cried he, rising, “how a couple of brisk charges from our fellows will do more to bring these rascals to reason than all the fine pledges of your Parliament folk; and I promise you, for my own part, if I chance upon one of their leaders, I mean to lay my mark on him.”

“I fear, sir, it is your instinctive dislike to the plebeian that moves you here,” said Miss Dinah. “You will not entertain the question whether these people may not have some wrongs to complain of.”

“Perhaps so, madam,” said he; and his swarthy face grew darker as he spoke. “I suppose this is the case where the blood of a gentleman boils indignantly at the challenge of the *canaille*.”

“I will not have a French word applied to our own people, sir,” said she, angrily.

“Well said,” chimed in Withering. “It is wonderful how a phrase can seem to carry an argument along with it.”

And old Peter smiled, and nodded his concurrence with this speech.

“What a sad minority do I stand in!” said Stapylton, with an effort to smile very far from successful. “Will not Miss Josephine Barrington have generosity enough to aid the weaker side?”

“Not if it be the worst cause,” interposed Dinah. “My niece needs not to be told she must be just before she is generous.”

“Then it is to your own generosity I will appeal,” said Stapylton, turning to her; “and I will ask you to ascribe some, at least, of my bitterness to the sorrow I feel at being thus summoned away. Believe me it is no light matter to leave this place and its company.”

“But only for a season, and a very brief season too, I trust,” said Barrington. “You are going away in our debt, remember.”

“It is a loser's privilege, all the world over, to withdraw when he has lost enough,” said Stapylton, with a sad smile towards Miss Dinah; and though the speech was made in the hope it might elicit a contradiction, none came, and a very awkward silence ensued.

“You will reach Dublin to-night, I suppose?” said Withering, to relieve the painful pause in the conversation.

“It will be late,—after midnight, perhaps.”

“And embark the next morning?”

“Two of our squadrons have sailed already; the others will, of course, follow to-morrow.”

“And young Conyers,” broke in Miss Dinah,—“he will, I suppose, accompany this—what shall I call it?—this raid?”

“Yes, madam. Am I to convey to him your compliments upon the first opportunity to flesh his maiden sword?”

“You are to do nothing of the kind, sir; but tell him from me not to forget that the angry passions of a starving multitude are not to be confounded with the vindictive hate of our natural enemies.”

“Natural enemies, my dear Miss Barrington! I hope you cannot mean that there exists anything so monstrous in humanity as a natural enemy?”

“I do, sir; and I mean all those whose jealousy of us ripens into hatred, and who would spill their heart's blood to see us humbled. When there exists a people like this, and who at every fresh outbreak of a war with us have carried into the new contest all the bitter animosities of long past struggles as debts to be liquidated, I call these natural enemies; and, if you prefer a shorter word for it, I call them Frenchmen.”

“Dinah, Dinah!”

“Peter, Peter! don't interrupt me. Major Stapylton has thought to tax me with a blunder, but I accept it as a boast!”

“Madam, I am proud to be vanquished by you,” said Stapylton, bowing low.

“And I trust, sir,” said she, continuing her speech, and as if heedless of his interruption, “that no similarity of name will make you behave at Peterloo—if that be the name—as though you were at Waterloo.”

“Upon my life!” cried he, with a saucy laugh, “I don't know how I am to win your good opinion, except it be by tearing off my epaulettes, and putting myself at the head of the mob.”

“You know very little of my sister, Major Stapylton,” said Barrington, “or you would scarcely have selected that mode of cultivating her favor.”

“There is a popular belief that ladies always side with the winning cause,” said Stapylton, affecting a light and easy manner; “so I must do my best to be successful. May I hope I carry your *good* wishes away with me?” said he, in a lower tone to Josephine.

“I hope that nobody will hurt you, and you hurt nobody,” said she, laughingly.

“And this, I take it, is about as much sympathy as ever attends a man on such a campaign. Mr. Barrington, will you grant me two minutes of conversation in your own room?” And, with a bow of acquiescence, Barrington led the way to his study.

“I ought to have anticipated your request, Major Stapyl-ton,” said Barrington, when they found themselves alone. “I owe you a reply to your letter, but the simple fact is, I do not know what answer to give it; for while most sensible of the honor you intend us, I feel still there is much to be explained on both sides. We know scarcely anything of each other, and though I am conscious of the generosity which prompts a man with *your* prospects and in *your* position to ally himself with persons in *ours*, yet I owe it to myself to say, it hangs upon a contingency to restore us to wealth and station. Even a portion of what I claim from the East India Company would make my granddaughter one of the richest heiresses in England.”

Stapylton gave a cold, a very cold smile, in reply to this speech. It might mean that he was incredulous or indifferent, or it might imply that the issue was one which need not have been introduced into the case at all. Whatever its signification, Barrington felt hurt by it, and hastily said,—

“Not that I have any need to trouble you with these details: it is rather my province to ask for information regarding *your* circumstances than to enter upon a discussion of *ours*.”

“I am quite ready to give you the very fullest and clearest,—I mean to yourself personally, or to your sister; for, except where the lawyer intervenes of necessity and *de droit*, I own that I resent his presence as an insult. I suppose few of us are devoid of certain family circumstances which it would be more agreeable to deal with in confidence; and though, perhaps, I am as fortunate as most men in this respect, there are one or two small matters on which I would ask your attention. These, however, are neither important nor pressing. My first care is to know,—and I hope I am not peremptory in asking it,—have I your consent to the proposition contained in my letter; am I at liberty to address Miss Barrington?”

Barrington flushed deeply and fidgeted; he arose and sat down again,—all his excitement only aggravated by the well-bred composure of the other, who seemed utterly unconscious of the uneasiness he was causing.

“Don't you think, Major, that this is a case for a little time to reflect,—that in a matter so momentous as this, a few days at least are requisite for consideration? We ought to ascertain something at least of my granddaughter's own sentiments,—I mean, of course, in a general way. It might be, too, that a day or two might give us some better insight into her future prospects.”

“Pardon my interrupting you; but, on the last point, I am perfectly indifferent. Miss Barrington with half a province for her dower, would be no more in my eyes than Miss Barrington as she sat at breakfast this morning. Nor is there anything of high-flown sentiment in this declaration, as my means are sufficiently ample for all that I want or care.”

“There, at least, is one difficulty disposed of. You are an eldest son?” said he; and he blushed at his own boldness in making the inquiry.

“I am an only son.”

“Easier again,” said Barrington, trying to laugh off the awkward moment. “No cutting down one's old timber to pay off the provisions for younger brothers.”

“In my case there is no need of this.”

“And your father. Is he still living, Major Stapylton?”

“My father has been dead some years.”

Barrington fidgeted again, fumbled with his watch-chain and his eye-glass, and would have given more than he could afford for any casualty that should cut short the interview. He wanted to say, “What is the amount of your fortune? What is it? Where is it? Are you Wiltshire or Staffordshire? Who are your uncles and aunts, and your good friends that you pray for, and where do you pray for them?” A thousand questions of this sort arose in his mind, one only more prying and impertinent than another. He knew he ought to ask them; he knew Dinah would have asked them. Ay, and would have the answers to them as plain and palpable as the replies to a life assurance circular; but he could n't do it. No; not if his life depended on it.

He had already gone further in his transgression of good manners than it ever occurred to him before to do, and he felt something between a holy inquisitor and a spy of the police.

Stapylton looked at his watch, and gave a slight start.

“Later than you thought, eh?” cried Peter, overjoyed at the diversion.

Stapylton smiled a cold assent, and put up his watch without a word. He saw all the confusion and embarrassment of the other, and made no effort to relieve him. At last, but not until after a considerable pause, he said,—“I believe, Mr. Barrington,—I hope, at least,—I have satisfactorily answered the questions which, with every right on your part, you have deemed proper to put to me. I cannot but feel how painful the task has been to you, and I regret it the more, since probably it has set a limit to inquiries which you are perfectly justified in making, but which closer relations between us may make a matter far less formidable one of these days.”

“Yes, yes,—just so; of course,” said Barrington, hurriedly assenting to he knew not what.

“And I trust I take my leave of you with the understanding that when we meet again, it shall be as in the commencement of these pleasanter relations. I own to you I am the more eager on this point, that I perceive your sister, Miss Barrington, scarcely regards me very favorably, and I stand the more in need of your alliance.”

“I don't think it possible, Major Stapylton,” said Barrington, boldly, “that my sister and I could have two opinions upon anything or anybody.”

“Then I only ask that she may partake of yours on this occasion,” said Stapylton, bowing. “But I must start; as it is, I shall be very late in Dublin. Will you present my most respectful adieux to the ladies, and say also a goodbye for me to Mr. Withering?”

“You'll come in for a moment to the drawing-room, won't you?” cried Barrington.

“I think not. I opine it would be better not. There would be a certain awkwardness about it,—that is, until you have informed Miss Dinah Barrington of the extent to which you have accorded me your confidence, and how completely I have opened every detail of my circumstances. I believe it would be in better taste not to present myself. Tell Withering that if he writes, Manchester will find me. I don't suspect he need give himself any more trouble about establishing the proofs of marriage. They will scarcely contest that point. The great question will and must be, to ascertain if the Company will cease to oppose the claim on being fully convinced that the letter to the Meer Busherat was a forgery, and that no menace ever came from Colonel Barrington's hand as to the consequences of opposing his rule. Get them to admit this,—let the issue rest upon this,—and it will narrow the whole suit within manageable limits.”

“Would you not say this much to him before you go? It would come with so much more force and clearness from yourself.”

“I have done so till I was wearied. Like a true lawyer, he insists upon proving each step as he goes, and will not condescend to a hypothetical conclusion, though I have told him over and over again we want a settlement, not a victory. Good-bye, good-bye! If I once launch out into the cause, I cannot tear myself away again.”

“Has your guest gone, Peter?” said Miss Dinah, as her brother re-entered the drawing-room.

“Yes; it was a hurried departure, and he had no great heart for it, either. By the way, Withering, while it is fresh in my head, let me tell you the message he has sent you.”

“Was there none for *me*, Peter?” said she, scofflngly.

“Ay, but there was, Dinah! He left with me I know not how many polite and charming things to say for him.”

“And am I alone forgotten in this wide dispensation of favors?” asked Josephine, smiling.

“Of course not, dear,” chimed in Miss Dinah. “Your grandpapa has been charged with them all. You could not expect a gentleman so naturally timid and bashful as our late guest to utter them by his own lips.”

“I see,” said Withering, laughing, “that you have not forgiven the haughty aristocrat for his insolent estimate of the people!”

“He an aristocrat! Such bitter words as his never fell from any man who had a grandfather!”

“Wrong for once, Dinah,” broke in Barrington. “I can answer for it that you are unjust to him.”

“We shall see,” said she. “Come, Josephine, I have a whole morning's work before me in the flower-garden, and I want your help. Don't forget, Peter, that Major M'Cormick's butler, or boatman, or bailiff, whichever he be, has been up here with a present of seakale this morning. Give him something as you pass the kitchen; and you, Mr. Withering, whose trade it is to read and unravel mysteries, explain if you can the meaning of this unwonted generosity.”

“I suppose we can all guess it,” said he, laughing. “It's a custom that begins in the East and goes round the whole world till it reaches the vast prairie in the Far West.”

“And what can that custom be, Aunt Dinah?” asked Josephine, innocently.

“It's an ancient rite Mr. Withering speaks, of, child, pertaining to the days when men offered sacrifices. Come along; I 'm going!”

CHAPTER VII. CROSS-EXAMININGS.

While Barrington and his lawyer sat in conclave over the details of the great suit, Stapylton hurried along his road with all the speed he could summon. The way, which for some miles led along the river-side, brought into view M'Cormick's cottage, and the Major himself, as he stood listlessly at his door.'

Halting his carriage for a moment, Stapylton jumped out and drew nigh the little quickset hedge which flanked the road.

“What can I do for you in the neighborhood of Manchester, Major? We are just ordered off there to ride down the Radicals.”

“I wish it was nearer home you were going to do it,” said he, crankily. “Look here,”—and he pointed to some fresh-turned earth,—“they were stealing my turnips last night.”

“It would appear that these fellows in the North are growing dangerous,” said Stapylton.

“'T is little matter to us,” said M'Cormick, sulkily. “I'd care more about a blight in the potatoes than for all the politics in Europe.”

“A genuine philosopher! How snug you are here, to be sure! A man in a pleasant nook like this can well afford to smile at the busy ambitions of the outer world. I take it you are about the very happiest fellow I know?”

“Maybe I am, maybe I'm not,” said he, peevishly.

“This spot only wants what I hinted to you t'other evening, to be perfection.”

“Ay!” said the other, dryly.

“And you agree with me heartily, if you had the candor to say it. Come, out with it, man, at once. I saw your gardener this morning with a great basketful of greenery, and a large bouquet on the top of it,—are not these significant signs of a projected campaign? You are wrong, Major, upon my life you are wrong, not to be frank with me. I could, by a strange hazard, as the newspapers say, 'tell you something to your advantage.'”

“About what?”

“About the very matter you were thinking of as I drove up. Come, I will be more generous than you deserve.” And, laying his arm on M'Cormick's shoulder, he halt whispered in his ear; “It is a good thing,—a deuced good thing! and I promise you, if I were a marrying man, you 'd have a competitor. I won't say she 'll have one of the great fortunes people rave about, but it will be considerable,—very considerable.”

“How do you know, or what do you know?”

“I 'll tell you in three words. How I know is, because I have been the channel for certain inquiries they made in India. What I know is, the Directors are sick of the case, they are sorely ashamed of it, and not a little uneasy lest it should come before the public, perhaps before the Parliament. Old Barrington has made all negotiation difficult by the extravagant pretensions he puts forward about his son's honor, and so forth. If, however, the girl were married, her husband would be the person to treat with, and I am assured with him they would deal handsomely, even generously.”

“And why would n't all this make a marrying man of you, though you were n't before?”

“There's a slight canonical objection, if you must know,” said Stapylton, with a smile.

“Oh, I perceive,—a wife already! In India, perhaps?”

“I have no time just now for a long story, M'Cormick,” said he, familiarly, “nor am I quite certain I 'd tell it if I had. However, you know enough for all practical purposes, and I repeat to you this is a stake I can't enter for,—you understand me?”

“There's another thing, now,” said M'Cormick; “and as we are talking so freely together, there's no harm in mentioning it. It 's only the other day, as I may call it, that we met for the first time?”

“Very true: when I was down here at Cobham.”

“And never heard of each other before?”

“Not to my knowledge, certainly.”

“That being the case, I 'm curious to hear how you took this wonderful interest in me. It wasn't anything in my appearance, I 'm sure, nor my manner; and as to what you 'd hear about me among those blackguards down here, there's nothing too bad to say of me.”

“I'll be as frank as yourself,” said Stapylton, boldly; “you ask for candor, and you shall have it. I had n't talked ten minutes with you till I saw that you were a thorough man of the world; the true old soldier, who had seen enough of life to know that whatever one gets for nothing in this world is just worth nothing, and so I said to myself, 'If it ever occurs to me to chance upon a good opportunity of which I cannot from circumstances avail myself, there's my man. I'll go to him and say, “M'Cormick, that's open to you, there's a safe thing!” And when in return he 'd say, “Stapylton, what can I do for you?” my answer would be, “Wait till you are satisfied that I have done you a good turn; be perfectly assured that I have really served you.” And then, if I wanted a loan of a thousand or fifteen hundred to lodge for the Lieutenant-Colonelcy, I 'd not be ashamed to say, “M'Cormick, let me have so much.”'”

“That's *it*, is it?” said M'Cormick, with a leer of intense cunning. “Not a bad bargain for *you*, anyhow. It is not every day that a man can sell what is n't his own.”

“I might say, it's not every day that a man regards a possible loan as a gift, but I 'm quite ready to reassure all your fears on that score; I'll even pledge myself never to borrow a shilling from you.”

“Oh, I don't mean that; you took me up so quick,” said the old fellow, reddening with a sense of shame he had not felt for many a year. “I may be as stingy as they call me, but for all that I 'd stand to a man who stands to *me*.”

“Between gentlemen and men of the world these things are better left to a sense of an honorable understanding than made matters of compact. There is no need of another word on the matter. I shall be curious, however, to know how your project speeds. Write to me,—you have plenty of time,—and write often. I 'm not unlikely to learn something about the Indian claim, and if I do, you shall hear of it.”

“I'm not over good at pen and ink work; indeed, I haven't much practice, but I'll do my best.”

“Do, by all means. Tell me how you get on with Aunt Dinah, who, I suspect, has no strong affection for either of us. Don't be precipitate; hazard nothing by a rash step; secure your way by intimacy, mere intimacy: avoid particular attentions strictly; be always there, and on some pretext or other—But why do I say all this to an old soldier, who has made such sieges scores of times?”

“Well, I think I see my way clear enough,” said the old fellow, with a grin. “I wish I was as sure I knew why you take such an interest in me.”

“I believe I have told you already; I hope there is nothing so strange in the assurance as to require corroboration. Come, I must say good-bye; I meant to have said five words to you, and I have stayed here five-and-twenty minutes.”

“Would n't you take something?—could n't I offer you anything?” said M'Cormick, hesitatingly.

“Nothing, thanks. I lunched before I started; and although old Dinah made several assaults upon me while I ate, I managed to secure two cutlets and part of a grouse-pie, and a rare glass of Madeira to wash them down.”

“That old woman is dreadful, and I'll take her down a peg yet, as sure as my name is Dan.”

“No, don't, Major; don't do anything of the kind. The people who tame tigers are sure to get scratched at last, and nobody thanks them for their pains. Regard her as the sailors do a fire-ship; give her a wide berth, and steer away from her.”

“Ay, but she sometimes gives chase.”

“Strike your flag, then, if it must be; for, trust me, you 'll not conquer *her*.”

“We 'll see, we 'll see,” muttered the old fellow, as he waved his adieux, and then turned back into the house again.

As Stapylton lay back in his carriage, he could not help muttering a malediction on the “dear friend” he had just parted with. When the *bourgeois gentilhomme* objected to his adversary pushing him *en tierce* while he attacked him *en quarte*, he was expressing a great social want, applicable to those people who in conversation will persist in saying many things which ought not to be uttered, and expressing doubts and distrusts which, however it be reasonable to feel, are an outrage to avow.

“The old fox,” said Stapylton, aloud, “taunted me with selling what did not belong to me; but he never suspects that I have bought something without paying for it, and that something himself! Yes, the mock siege he will lay to the fortress will occupy the garrison till it suits me to open the real attack, and I will make use of him, besides, to learn whatever goes on in my absence. How the old fellow swallowed the bait! What self-esteem there must be in such a rugged nature, to make him imagine he could be successful in a cause like this! He is, after all, a clumsy agent to trust one's interest to. If the choice had been given me, I'd far rather have had a woman to watch over them. Polly Dill, for instance, the very girl to understand such a mission well. How adroitly would she have played the game, and how clearly would her letters have shown me the exact state of events!”

Such were the texts of his musings as he drove along, and deep as were his thoughts, they never withdrew him, when the emergency called, from attention to every detail of the journey, and he scrutinized the post-horses as they were led out, and apportioned the rewards to the postilions as though no heavier care lay on his heart than the road and its belongings. While he rolled thus smoothly along, Peter Barrington had been summoned to his sister's presence, to narrate in full all that he had asked, and all that he had learned of Stapylton and his fortunes.

Miss Dinah was seated in a deep armchair, behind a formidable embroidery-frame,—a thing so complex and mysterious in form as to suggest an implement of torture. At a short distance off sat Withering, with pen, ink, and paper before him, as if to set down any details of unusual importance; and into this imposing presence poor Barrington entered with a woful sense of misgiving and humiliation.

“We have got a quiet moment at last, Peter,” said Miss Barrington. “I have sent the girls over to Brown's Barn for the tulip-roots, and I have told Darby that if any visitors came they were to be informed we were particularly occupied by business, and could see no one.”

“Just so,” added Withering; “it is a case before the Judge in Chamber.”

“But what have we got to hear?” asked Barrington, with an air of innocence.

“We have got to hear your report, brother Peter; the narrative of your late conversation with Major Stapylton; given, as nearly as your memory will serve, in the exact words and in the precise order everything occurred.”

“October the twenty-third,” said Withering, writing as he spoke; “minute of interview between P. B. and Major S. Taken on the same morning it occurred, with remarks and observations explanatory.”

“Begin,” said Dinah, imperiously, while she worked away without lifting her head. “And avoid, so far as possible, anything beyond the precise expression employed.”

“But you don't suppose I took notes in shorthand of what we said to each other, do you?”

“I certainly suppose you can have retained in your memory a conversation that took place two hours ago,” said Miss Dinah, sternly.

“And can relate it circumstantially and clearly,” added Withering.

“Then I 'm very sorry to disappoint you, but I can do nothing of the kind.”

“Do you mean to say that you had no interview with Major Stapylton, Peter?”

“Or that you have forgotten all about it?” said Withering.

“Or is it that you have taken a pledge of secrecy, brother Peter?”

“No, no, no! It is simply this, that though I retain a pretty fair general impression of what I said myself, and what he said afterwards, I could no more pretend to recount it accurately than I could say off by heart a scene in 'Romeo and Juliet.'”

“Why don't you take the 'Comedy of Errors' for your illustration, Peter Barrington? I ask you, Mr. Withering, have you in all your experience met anything like this?”

“It would go hard with a man in the witness-box to make such a declaration, I must say.”

“What would a jury think of, what would a judge say to him?” said she, using the most formidable of all penalties to her brother's imagination. “Wouldn't the court tell him that he would be compelled to speak out?”

“They'd have it out on the cross-examination, at all events, if not on the direct.”

“In the name of confusion, what do you want with me?” exclaimed Peter, in despair.

“We want everything,—everything that you heard about this man. Who he is, what he is; what by the father's side, what by the mother's; what are his means, and where; who knows him, who are his associates. Bear in mind that to us, here, he has dropped out of the clouds.”

“And gone back there too,” added Withering.

“I wish to Heaven he had taken me with him!” sighed Peter, drearily.

“I think in this case, Miss Barrington,” said Withering, with a well-affected gravity, “we had better withdraw a juror, and accept a nonsuit.”

“I have done with it altogether,” said she, gathering up her worsted and her needles, and preparing to leave the room.

“My dear Dinah,” said Barrington, entreatingly, “imagine a man as wanting in tact as I am,—and as timid, too, about giving casual offence,—conducting such an inquiry as you committed to my hands. Fancy how, at every attempt to obtain information, his own boldness, I might call it rudeness, stared him in the face, till at last, rather than push his investigations, he grew puzzled how to apologize for his prying curiosity.”

“Brother, brother, this is too bad! It had been better to have thought more of your granddaughter's fate and less of your own feelings.” And with this she flounced out of the room, upsetting a spider-table, and a case of stuffed birds that stood on it, as she passed.

“I don't doubt but she 's right, Tom,” said Peter, when the door closed.

“Did he not tell you who he was, and what his fortune? Did you really learn nothing from him?”

“He told me everything; and if I had not been so cruelly badgered, I could have repeated every word of it; but you never made a hound true to the scent by flogging him, Tom,—is n't that a fact, eh?” And consoled by an illustration that seemed so pat to his case, he took his hat and strolled out into the garden.

CHAPTER VIII. GENERAL CONYERS

In a snug little room of the Old Ship Hotel, at Dover, a large, heavy man, with snow-white hair, and moustaches,—the latter less common in those days than the present,—sat at table with a younger one, so like him that no doubt could have existed as to their being father and son. They had dined, and were sitting over their wine, talking occasionally, but oftener looking fondly and affectionately at each other; and once, by an instinct of sudden love, grasping each other's hand, and sitting thus several minutes without a word on either side.

“You did not expect me before to-morrow, Fred,” said the old man, at last.

“No, father,” replied young Conyers. “I saw by the newspapers that you were to dine at the Tuileries on Tuesday, and I thought you would not quit Paris the same evening.”

“Yes; I started the moment I took off my uniform. I wanted to be with you, my boy; and the royal politeness that detained me was anything but a favor. How you have grown, Fred,—almost my own height, I believe.”

“The more like you the better,” said the youth, as his eyes ran over, and the old man turned away to hide

his emotion.

After a moment he said: “How strange you should not have got my letters, Fred; but, after all, it is just as well as it is. I wrote in a very angry spirit, and was less just than a little cool reflection might have made me. They made no charges against me, though I thought they had. There were grumblings and discontents, and such-like. They called me a Rajah, and raked up all the old stories they used to circulate once on a time about a far better fellow—”

“You mean Colonel Barrington, don't you?” said Fred.

“Where or how did you hear of that name?” said the old man, almost sternly.

“An accident made me the guest of his family, at a little cottage they live in on an hish river. I passed weeks there, and, through the favor of the name I bore, I received more kindness than I ever before met in life.”

“And they knew you to be a Conyers, and to be my son?”

“It was Colonel Barrington's aunt was my hostess, and she it was who, on hearing my name, admitted me at once to all the privileges of old friendship. She told me of the close companionship which once subsisted between you and her nephew, and gave me rolls of his letters to read wherein every line spoke of you.”

“And Mr. Barrington, the father of George, how did he receive you?”

“At first with such coolness that I could n't bring myself to recross his threshold. He had been away from home when I arrived, and the day of his return I was unexpectedly presented to him by his sister, who evidently was as unprepared as myself for the reception I met with.”

“And what was that reception,—how was it? Tell me all as it happened.”

“It was the affair of a moment. Miss Barrington introduced me, saying, 'This is the son of poor George's dearest friend,—this is a Conyers;' and the old man faltered, and seemed like to faint, and after a moment stammered out something about an honor he had never counted upon,—a visit he scarcely could have hoped for; and, indeed, so overcome was he that he staggered into the house only to take to his bed, where he lay seriously ill for several days after.”

“Poor fellow! It was hard to forgive,—very hard.”

“Ay, but he has forgiven it—whatever it was—heartily, and wholly forgiven it. We met afterwards by a chance in Germany, and while I was hesitating how to avoid a repetition of the painful scene which marked our first meeting, he came manfully towards me with his hand out, and said, 'I have a forgiveness to beg of you; and if you only know how I long to obtain it, you would scarce say me no.'”

“The worthy father of poor George! I think I hear him speak the very words himself. Go on, Fred,—go on, and tell me further.”

“There is no more to tell, sir, unless I speak of all the affectionate kindness he has shown,—the trustfulness and honor with which he has treated me. I have been in his house like his own son.”

“Ah! if you had known that son! If you had seen what a type of a soldier he was! The most intrepid, the boldest fellow that ever breathed; but with a heart of childlike simplicity and gentleness. I could tell you traits of him, of his forbearance, his forgiveness, his generous devotion to friendship, that would seem to bespeak a nature that had no room for other than soft and tender emotion; and yet, if ever there was a lion's heart within a man's bosom it was his.” For a moment or two the old man seemed overcome by his recollections, and then, as if by an effort, rallying himself, he went on: “You have often heard the adage, Fred, that enjoins watching one's pennies and leaving the pounds to take care of themselves; and yet, trust me, the maxim is truer as applied to our morals than our money. It is by the smaller, finer, and least important traits of a man that his fate in life is fashioned. The caprices we take no pains to curb, the tempers we leave unchecked, the petty indulgences we extend to our vanity and self-love,—these are the great sands that wreck us far oftener than the more stern and formidable features of our character. I ought to know this truth; I myself lost the best and truest and the noblest friend that ever man had, just from the exercise of a spirit of bantering and ridicule which amused those about me, and gave me that pre-eminence which a sarcastic and witty spirit is sure to assert. You know already how George Barrington and I lived together like brothers. I do not believe two men ever existed more thoroughly and sincerely attached to each other. All the contrarieties of our dispositions served but to heighten the interest that linked us together. As for myself, I was never wearied in exploring the strange recesses of that great nature that seemed to unite all that could be daring and dashing in man with the tenderness of a woman. I believe I knew him far better than he knew himself. But to come to what I wanted to tell you, and which is an agony to me to dwell on. Though for a long while our close friendship was known in the regiment, and spoken of as a thing incapable of change, a sort of rumor—no, not even a rumor, but an impression—seemed to gain, that the ties between us were looser on my side than his; that George looked up to *me*, and that I, with the pride of a certain superiority, rather lorded it over *him*. This feeling became painfully strengthened when it got about that Barrington had lent me the greater part of the purchase-money for my troop,—a promotion, by the way, which barred his own advancement,—and it was whispered, so at least I heard, that Barrington was a mere child in my hands, whom I rebuked or rewarded at pleasure. If I could have traced these rumors to any direct source, I could have known how to deal with them. As it was, they were vague, shadowy, and unreal; and their very unsubstantiality maddened me the more. To have told George of them would have been rasher still. The thought of a wrong done to *me* would have driven him beyond all reason, and he would infallibly have compromised himself beyond recall. It was the very first time in my life I had a secret from him, and it eat into my heart like a virulent disease. The consciousness that I was watched, the feeling that eyes were upon me marking all I did, and tongues were commenting on all I said, exasperated me, and at one moment I would parade my friendship for Barrington in a sort of spirit of defiance, and at another, as though to give the lie to my slanderers, treat him with indifference and carelessness, as it were, to show that I was not bound to him by the weight of a direct obligation, and that our relations involved nothing of dependence. It was when, by some cruel mischance, I had been pursuing this spirit to its extreme, that the conversation one night at mess turned upon sport and tiger-hunting. Many stories were told, of course, and we had the usual narratives of hairbreadth escapes and perils of the most appalling kind; till, at length, some one—I forget exactly who it was—narrated a single-handed encounter

with a jaguar, which in horror exceeded anything we had heard before. The details were alone not so terrible, but the circumstances so marvellous, that one and all who listened cried out, 'Who did it?'

“'The man who told me the tale,' replied the narrator, 'and who will probably be back to relate it here to you in a few days,—Colonel Barrington.'

“I have told you the devilish spirit which had me in possession. I have already said that I was in one of those moods of insolent mockery in which nothing was sacred to me. No sooner, then, did I hear Barrington's name than I burst into a hearty laugh, and said, 'Oh! if it was one of George Barrington's tigers, you ought to have mentioned that fact at the outset. You have been exciting our feelings unfairly.'

“'I assume that his statement was true,' said the other, gravely.

“'Doubtless; just as battle-pieces are true, that is, pic-torially true. The tiger did nothing that a tiger ought not to do, nor did George transgress any of those “unities” which such combats require. At the same time, Barring-ton's stories have always a something about them that stamps the authorship, and you recognize this trait just as you do a white horse in a picture by Wouvermans.'

“In this strain I went on, heated by my own warmed imagination, and the approving laughter of those around me. I recounted more than one feat of Barrington's,—things which I knew he had done, some of them almost incredible in boldness. These I told with many a humorous addition and many an absurd commentary, convulsing the listeners with laughter, and rendering my friend ridiculous.

“He came back from the hills within the week, and before he was two hours in his quarters he had heard the whole story. We were at luncheon in the mess-room when he entered, flushed and excited, but far more moved by emotion than resentment.

“'Ormsby,' said he, 'you may laugh at me to your heart's content and I'll never grumble at it; but there are some young officers here who, not knowing the ties that attach us, may fancy that these quizzings pass the limits of mere drollery, and even jeopardize something of my truthfulness. *You*, I know, never meant this any more than I have felt it, but others might, and might, besides, on leaving this and sitting at other tables, repeat what they had heard here. Tell them that you spoke of me as you have a free right to do, in jest, and that your ridicule was the good-humored banter of a friend,—of a friend who never did, never could, impugn my honor.'

“His eyes were swimming over, and his lips trembling, as he uttered the last words. I see him now, as he stood there, his very cheek shaking in agitation. That brave, bold fellow, who would have marched up to a battery without quailing, shook like a sickly girl.

“'Am I to say that you never draw the long-bow, George?' asked I, half insolently.

“'You are to say, sir, that I never told a lie,' cried he, dark with passion.

“'Oh, this discussion will be better carried on elsewhere,' said I, as I arose and left the room.

“As I was in the wrong, totally in the wrong, I was passionate and headstrong. I sat down and wrote a most insolent letter to Barrington. I turned all the self-hate that was consuming *me* against my friend, and said I know not what of outrage and insult. I did worse; I took a copy of my letter, and declared that I would read it to the officers in the mess-room. He sent a friend to me to beg I would not take this course of open insult. My answer was, 'Colonel Barrington knows his remedy.' When I sent this message, I prepared for what I felt certain would follow. I knew Barrington so well that I thought even the delay of an hour, then two hours, strange. At length evening drew nigh, and, though I sat waiting in my quarters, no one came from him,—not a letter nor a line apprised me what course he meant to take.

“Not caring to meet the mess at such a moment, I ordered my horses and drove up to a small station about twenty miles off, leaving word where I was to be found. I passed three days there in a state of fevered expectancy. Barrington made no sign, and, at length, racked and distressed by the conflict with myself,—now summoning up an insolent spirit of defiance to the whole world, now humbling myself in a consciousness of the evil line I had adopted,—I returned one night to my quarters. The first news that greeted me was that Barrington had left us. He had accepted the offer of a Native command which had been made to him some months before, and of which we had often canvassed together all the advantages and disadvantages. I heard that he had written two letters to me before he started, and torn them up after they were sealed. I never heard from him, never saw him more, till I saw his dead body carried into camp the morning he fell.

“I must get to the end of this quickly, Fred, and I will tell you all at once, for it is a theme I will never go back on. I came to England with despatches about two years after Barrington's death. It was a hurried visit, for I was ordered to hold myself in readiness to return almost as soon as I arrived. I was greatly occupied, going about from place to place, and person to person, so many great people desired to have a verbal account of what was doing in India, and to hear confidentially what I thought of matters there. In the midst of the mass of letters which the post brought me every morning, and through which, without the aid of an officer on the staff, I could never have got through, there came one whose singular address struck me. It was to 'Captain Ormsby Conyers, 22d Light Dragoons,' a rank I had held fourteen years before that time in that same regiment. I opined at once that my correspondent must have been one who had known me at that time and not followed me in the interval. I was right. It was from old Mr. Barrington,—George Barrington's father. What version of my quarrel with his son could have reached him, I cannot even guess, nor by what light he read my conduct in the affair; but such a letter I never read in my life. It was a challenge to meet him anywhere, and with any weapon, but couched in language so insulting as to impugn my courage, and hint that I would probably shelter myself behind the pretext of his advanced age. 'But remember,' said he, 'if God has permitted me to be an old man, it is *you* who have made me a childless one!'”

For a few seconds he paused, overcome by emotion, and then went on: “I sat down and wrote him a letter of contrition, almost abject in its terms. I entreated him to believe that for every wrong I had done his noble-hearted son, my own conscience had repaid me in misery ten times told; that if he deemed my self-condemnation insufficient, it was open to him to add to it whatever he wished of obloquy or shame; that if he proclaimed me a coward before the world, and degraded me in the eyes of men, I would not offer one word in my defence. I cannot repeat all that I said in my deep humiliation. His answer came at last, one single line, re-

enclosing my own letter to me: 'Lest I should be tempted to make use of this letter, I send it back to you; there is no need of more between us.'

"With this our intercourse ceased. When a correspondence was published in the 'Barrington Inquiry,' as it was called, I half hoped he would have noticed some letters of mine about George; but he never did, and in his silence I thought I read his continued unforgiveness."

"I hope, father, that you never believed the charges that were made against Captain Barrington?"

"Not one of them; disloyalty was no more his than cowardice. I never knew the Englishman with such a pride of country as he had, nor could you have held out a greater bribe to him, for any achievement of peril, than to say, 'What a gain it would be for England!'"

"How was it that such a man should have had a host of enemies?"

"Nothing so natural. Barrington was the most diffident of men; his bashfulness amounted to actual pain. With strangers, this made him cold to very sternness, or, as is often seen in the effort to conquer a natural defect, gave him a manner of over-easy confidence that looked like impertinence. And thus the man who would not have wounded the self-love of the meanest beggar, got the reputation of being haughty, insolent, and oppressive. Besides this, when he was in the right, and felt himself so, he took no pains to convince others of the fact. His maxim was,—have I not heard it from his lips scores of times,—'The end will show.'"

"And yet the end will not show, father; his fame has not been vindicated, nor his character cleared."

"In some measure the fault of those who took up his cause. They seemed less to insist on reparation than punishment. They did not say, 'Do justice to this man's memory;' but, 'Come forward and own you wronged him, and broke his heart.' Now, the accusation brought against George Barrington of assuming sovereign power was not settled by his death; his relatives forgot this, or merged it in their own charge against the Company. They mismanaged everything."

"Is it too late to put them on the right track, father; or could you do it?" asked the youth, eagerly.

"It is not too late, boy! There is time for it yet. There is, however, one condition necessary, and I do not see how that is to be secured."

"And what is that?"

"I should see Mr. Barrington and confer with him alone; he must admit me to his confidence, and I own to you, I scarcely deem that possible."

"May I try—may I attempt this?"

"I do not like to refuse you, Fred: but if I say Yes, it will be to include you in my own defeated hopes. For many a year Mr. Barrington has refused to give one sign of his forgiveness; for in his treatment of you I only recognize the honorable feeling of exempting the son from the penalty due to the father. But perhaps defeat is better than self-reproach, and as I have a strong conviction I could serve him, I am ready to risk a failure."

"I may make the attempt, then?" said Fred, eagerly. "I will write to Miss Barrington to-day."

"And now of yourself. What of your career? How do you like soldiering, boy?"

"Less than ever, sir; it is only within the last week or two that we have seen anything beyond barrack or parade duty. Now, however, we have been called to repress what are called risings in the northern shires; and our task has been to ride at large unarmed mobs and charge down masses, whose grape-shot are brickbats. Not a very glorious campaign!"

The old man smiled, but said nothing for a moment.

"Your colonel is on leave, is he not?" asked he.

"Yes. We are commanded by that Major Stapylton I told you of."

"A smart officer, but no friend of yours, Fred," said the General, smiling.

"No, sir; certainly no friend of mine," said the young man, resolutely. "To refuse me a week's leave to go and meet my father, whom I have not seen for years, and, when pressed, to accord me four days, is to disgust me with himself and the service together."

"Well, as you cannot be my guest, Fred, I will be yours. I 'll go back with you to headquarters. Stapylton is a name I used to be familiar with long ago. It may turn out that I know his family; but let us talk of Barrington. I have been thinking it would be better not to link any question of his own interests with my desire to meet him, but simply to say I 'm in England, and wish to know if he would receive me."

"It shall be as you wish, sir. I will write to his sister by this post."

"And after one day in town, Fred, I am ready to accompany you anywhere."

CHAPTER IX. MAJOR M'CORMICK'S LETTER

As it was not often that Major M'Cormick performed the part of a letter-writer, perhaps my reader will pardon me if I place him before him on one of these rare occasions. If success would always respond to labor, his would have been a real triumph; for the effort cost him many days, two sleepless nights, a headache, and half a quire of paper.

Had not Stapylton retained him by an admirably selected hamper of good things from a celebrated Italian warehouse in the Strand, I am afraid that M'Cormick's zeal might have cooled down to the zero of forgetfulness; but the reindeer hams and the Yarmouth bloaters, the potted shrimps and the preserved guavas, were an appeal that addressed themselves to that organ which with him paid the double debt of digestion and emotion. He felt that such a correspondent was worth a sacrifice, and he made it That my reader may appreciate the cost of the achievement, I would have him imagine how a mason about to build a

wall should be obliged to examine each stone before he laid it, test its constituent qualities, its shape and its size,—for it was thus that almost every word occasioned the Major a reference to the dictionary, spelling not having been cultivated in his youth, nor much practised in his riper years. Graces of style, however, troubled him little; and, to recur to my figure of the stone-mason, if he was embarrassed in his search for the materials, he cared wonderfully little for the architecture. His letter ran thus, and the reader will perceive that it must have been written some weeks after the events recorded in the last chapter:—

"Mac's Nest, October, Thursday.

"Dear S.,—A touch of my old Walcheren complaint has laid me up since Tuesday, and if the shakes make me illegible now, that's the reason why. Besides this the weather is dreadful; cold east winds and rains, sometimes sleet, every day; and the turf so wet, it 's only smoke, not fire. I believe it is the worst climate in Europe, and it gets wetter every year.

"The hamper came to hand, but though it was marked 'Carriage paid, this side up,' they upset it and broke two bottles, and charged seven and fourpence-halfpenny for the bringing it, which is, I think, enormous; at least, Tim Hacket got over a thrashing-machine from Scotland last spring for twelve and four, and there 's no comparison between the two. Thanks to you, however, all the same; but if you can get any of this charge reduced, so much the better, not to speak of the bottles,—both mixed pickles—which they ought to make good.

"I am glad to see you are touching up the Radicals in the North; powder and ball will do more to bring them to reason than spouting in Parliament. The papers say there was nine killed and twenty-three wounded; and one fellow, the 'Stockport Bee,' says, that 'if the Butcher that led the dragoons is n't turned out of the service with disgrace no gentleman will degrade himself by entering the army.' Isn't the Butcher yourself? Miss Barrington, always your friend, says it is; and that if the account of another paper, called the 'Ægis,' be true, you 'll have to go to a court-martial. I stood stoutly to you through it all, and declared that when the niggers was up at Jamaica, we had n't time to take the names of the prisoners, and we always cut one of their ears off to know them again. Old Peter laughed till the tears ran down his face, but Dinah said, 'If I did not suppose, sir, that you were inventing a very graceless joke, I'd insist on your leaving this room and this house on the instant.' It was ten o'clock at night, and raining hard; so you may guess I gave in. Bad as she is, the young one is her equal, and I gave up all thoughts of what you call 'prosecuting my suit' in that quarter. She isn't even commonly civil to me, and when I ask her for, maybe, the mustard at dinner, she turns away her head, and says, 'Darby, give Major M'Cormick the salt.' That's French politeness, perhaps; but I'll pay them all off yet, for they can't get sixpence on the mortgage, and I 'm only drinking out that bin of old Madeira before I tell them that I won't advance the money. Why should I? The women treat me worse than a dog, and old B. is neither more nor less than a fool. Dill, the doctor, however he got it, says it's all up about the suit with the India Company; that there's no proof of the Colonel's marriage at all, that the charges against him were never cleared up, and that nothing can come out of it but more disgrace and more exposure.

"I wish you 'd send me the correct account of what took place between you and one of your subalterns, for old Dinah keeps harping on it in a sort of mysterious and mischievous way of her own, that provokes me. Was it that he refused to obey orders, or that *you*, as *she* says, used such language towards him that he wrote to report you? Give it to me in black and white, and maybe I won't try her temper with it. At all events, make out some sort of a case, for the old woman is now intolerable. She said yesterday, 'Major Stapylton, to whom I write by this post, will see that his visit here must be preceded by an explanation.' There's her words for you, and I hope you like them!

"I think you are right to be in no hurry about purchasing, for many say the whole system will be changed soon, and the money would be clean thrown away. Besides this, I have been looking over my bauk-book, and I find I could n't help you just now. Two bad harvests, and the smut in the wheat last year, are running me mighty close. I won't finish this till to-morrow, for I 'm going to dine at 'The Home' to-day. It is the granddaughter's birthday, and there was a regular shindy about who was going to be asked. Old Peter was for a grand celebration, and inviting the Admiral, and the Gores, and God knows who besides; and Dinah was for what she called a family party, consisting, I suppose, of herself and Darby. I 'll be able, before I close this, to tell you how it was ended; for I only know now that Dill and his daughter are to be there.

"Wednesday.—I sit down with a murdering headache to finish this letter. Maybe it was the pickled lobster, or the ice punch, or the other drink they called champagne-cup that did it. But I never passed such a night since I was in the trenches, and I am shaking still, so that I can scarce hold the pen. It was a grand dinner, to be sure, for ruined people to give. Venison from Carrick Woods, and game of every kind, with all kinds of wine; and my Lord Car-rickmore talking to Miss Dinah, and the Admiral following up with the niece, and Tom Brabazon, and Dean of Deanspark, and the devil knows who besides, bringing up the rear, with Dill and your obedient servant. Every dish that came in, and every bottle that was uncorked, I said to myself, 'There goes another strap on the property;' and I felt as if we were eating the trees and the timber and the meadows all the time at table.

"It 's little of the same sympathy troubled the others. My Lord was as jolly as if he was dining with the King; and old Cobham called for more of the Madeira, as if it was an inn; and Peter himself—the heartless old fool—when he got up to thank the company for drinking his granddaughter's health, said, 'May I trust that even at my advanced age this may not be the last time I may have to speak my gratitude to you all for the generous warmth with which you have pledged this toast; but even should it be so, I shall carry away with me from this evening's happiness a glow of pleasure that will animate me to the last. It was only this morning I learned what I know you will all hear with satisfaction, that there is every probability of a speedy arrangement of my long-pending suit with the Company, and that my child here will soon have her own again.' Grand applause and huzzas, with a noise that drowned 'Bother!' from myself, and in the middle of the row up jumps the Admiral, and cries out, 'Three cheers more for the Rajah's daughter!' I thought the old roof would come down; and the blackguards in the kitchen took up the cry and shouted like mad, and then we yelled again, and this went on for maybe five minutes. 'What does it all mean,' says I, 'but a cheer for the Court of Bankruptcy, and Hip, hip, hurray! for the Marshalsea Prison!' After that, he had half an hour or more of flatteries and compliments. My Lord was so happy, and Peter Barrington so proud, and the Admiral so

delighted, and the rest of us so much honored, that I could n't stand it any longer, but stole away, and got into the garden, to taste a little fresh air and quietness. I had n't gone ten paces, when I came plump upon Miss Dinah, taking her coffee under a tree. 'You are a deserter, I fear, sir,' said she, in her own snappish way; so I thought I 'd pay her off, and I said, 'To tell you the truth, Miss Barrington, at our time of life these sort of things are more full of sadness than pleasure. We know how hollow they are, and how little heart there is in the cheers of the people that are so jolly over your wine, but would n't stop to talk to you when you came down to water!'

“'The worse we think of the world, Major M'Cormick,' says she, 'the more risk we run of making ourselves mean enough to suit it.'

“'I don't suspect, ma'am,' says I, 'that when people have known it so long as you and I, that they are greatly in love with it.'

“'They may, however, be mannerly in their dealings with it, sir,' said she, fiercely; and so we drew the game, and settled the men for another battle.

“'Is there anything new, ma'am?' says I, after a while.

“'I believe not, sir. The bread riots still continue in the North, where what would seem the needless severity of some of the military commanders has only exasperated the people. You have heard, I suppose, of Major Stapylton's business?'

“'Not a word, ma'am,' says I; 'for I never see a paper.'

“'I know very little of the matter myself,' says she. 'It was, it would appear, at some night assemblage at a place called Lund's Common. A young officer sent forward by Major Stapylton to disperse the people, was so struck by the destitution and misery he witnessed, and the respectful attitude they exhibited, that he hesitated about employing force, and restricted himself to counsels of quietness and submission. He did more,—not perhaps very prudently, as some would say,—he actually emptied his pockets of all the money he had, giving even his watch to aid the starving horde before him. What precise version of his conduct reached his superior, I cannot say; but certainly Major Stapylton commented on it in terms of the harshest severity, and he even hinted at a reason for the forbearance too offensive for any soldier to endure.'

“She did not seem exactly to know what followed after this, but some sort of inquiry appeared to take place, and witnesses were examined as to what really occurred at Lund's Common; and amongst others, a Lascar, who was one of the factory hands,—having come to England a great many years before with an officer from India. This fellow's evidence was greatly in favor of young Conyers, and was subjected to a very severe cross-examination from yourself, in the middle of which he said something in Hindostanee that nobody in the court understood but you; and after this he was soon dismissed and the case closed for that day.

“'What do you think, Major M'Cormick,' said she, 'but when the court of inquiry opened the next morning, Lal-Adeen, the Lascar, was not to be found high or low. The court have suspended their sittings to search for him; but only one opinion prevails,—that Major Stapylton knows more of this man's escape than he is likely to tell.' I have taken great pains to give you her own very words in all this business, and I wrote them down the moment I got home, for I thought to myself you 'd maybe write about the matter to old Peter, and you ought to be prepared for the way they look at it; the more because Miss Dinah has a liking for young Conyers,—what she calls a motherly affection; but I don't believe in the motherly part of it! But of course you care very little what the people here say about you at all. At least, I know it would n't trouble *me* much, if I was in your place. At all events, whatever you do, do with a high hand, and the Horse Guards is sure to stand to you. Moderation may be an elegant thing in civil life, but I never knew it succeed in the army. There's the rain coming on again, and I just sent out six cars to the bog for turf; so I must conclude, and remain, yours sincerely,

“Daniel T. M'Cormick.

“I 'm thinking of foreclosing the small mortgage I hold on 'The Home,' but as they pay the interest regularly, five per cent, I would n't do it if I knew things were going on reasonably well with them; send me a line about what is doing regarding the 'claim,' and it will guide me.”

While Major M'Cormick awaited the answer to his postscript, which to him—as to a lady—was the important part of his letter, a short note arrived at 'The Home' from Mr. Withering, enclosing a letter he had just received from Major Stapylton. Withering's communication was in answer to one from Barrington, and ran thus:—

“Dear B.,—All things considered, I believe you are right in not receiving General Conyers at this moment. It would probably, as you suspect, enable calumnious people to say that you could make your resentments play second when they came in the way of your interests. If matters go on well, as I have every hope they will, you can make the *amende* to him more satisfactorily and more gracefully hereafter. Buxton has at length consented to bring the case before the House; of course it will not go to a division, nor, if it did, could it be carried; but the discussion will excite interest, the Press will take it up, and after a few regretful and half-civil expressions from the Ministry, the India Board will see the necessity of an arrangement.

“It is somewhat unfortunate and *mal à propos* that Stapylton should at this moment have got into an angry collision with young Conyers. I have not followed the case closely, but, as usual in such things, they seem each of them in the wrong,—the young sub wanting to make his generous sympathy supply the place of military obedience, and the old officer enforcing discipline at the cost of very harsh language. I learn this morning that Conyers has sold out, intending to demand a personal satisfaction. You will see by S.'s letter that he scarcely alludes to this part of the transaction at all. S. feels very painfully the attacks of the Press, and sees, perhaps, more forcibly than I should in his place, the necessity of an exchange. Read attentively the portion I have underlined.”

It is to this alone I have to direct my readers' attention, the first two sides of the letter being entirely filled with details about the “claim”:—

“'The newspapers have kept me before you for some days back, much more, I doubt not, to their readers' amusement than to my own gratification. I could, if I pleased, have told these slanderers that I did not charge

a crowd of women and children,—that I did not cut down an elderly man at his own door-sill,—that I did not use language “offensive and unbecoming” to one of my officers, for his having remonstrated in the name of humanity against the cruelty of my orders. In a word, I might have shown the contemptible scribblers that I knew how to temper duty with discretion, as I shall know how, when the occasion offers, to make the punishment of a calumniator a terror to his colleagues. However, there is a very absurd story going about of a fellow whose insolence I certainly *did* reply to with the flat of my sabre, and whom I should be but too happy to punish legally, if he could be apprehended. That he made his escape after being captured, and that I connived at or assisted in it,—I forget which,—you have probably heard. In fact, there is nothing too incredible to say of me for the moment; and what is worse, I begin to suspect that the Home Secretary, having rather burned his fingers in the business, will not be very sorry to make an Admiral Byng of a Major of Hussars. For each and all these reasons I mean to exchange, and, if possible, into a regiment in India. This will, of course, take some time; meanwhile, I have asked for and obtained some months' leave. You will be surprised at my troubling you with so much of purely personal matters, but they are the necessary preface to what I now come. You are aware of the letter I wrote some time back to Mr. Barrington, and the request it preferred. If the reply I received was not discouraging, neither was it conclusive. The ordinary commonplaces as to the shortness of our acquaintance, the want of sufficient knowledge of each other's tastes, characters, &c, were duly dwelt upon; but I could not at the end say, was I an accepted or a rejected suitor. Now that the critical moment of my life draws nigh,—for such I feel the present emergency,—an act of confidence in me would have more than double value. Can you tell me that this is the sentiment felt towards me, or am I to learn that the yells of a rabble have drowned the voices of my friends? In plain words, will Miss Josephine Barrington accept my offer? Will she intrust her happiness to my keeping, and change the darkest shadow that ever lowered over my life into a gleam of unspeakable brightness? You have given me too many proofs of a friendly disposition towards me, not to make me feel that you are the best fitted to bring this negotiation to a good issue. If I do not mistake you much, you look with favor on my suit and wish it success. I am ashamed to say how deeply my hopes have jeopardized my future happiness, but I tell you frankly life has no such prize to my ambition, nor, in fact, any such alternative of despair before me.'

“Now, my dear Barrington,” continued Withering's letter, “there is a great deal in this that I like, and something with which I am not so much pleased. If, however, I am not the Major's advocate to the extent he asks, or expects me, it is because I feel that to be unjustly dealt with is a stronger claim on *your* heart than that of any other man I ever met with, and the real danger here would be that you should suffer that feeling to predominate over all others. Consult your granddaughter's interests, if you can, independently of this; reflect well if the plan be one likely to promise her happiness. Take your sensible, clear-headed sister into your counsels; but, above all, ascertain Josephine's own sentiments, and do nothing in direct opposition to them.”

“There, Dinah,” said Barrington, placing the letter in her hands, “this is as much to your address as to mine. Read it over carefully, and you'll find me in the garden when you have done.”

Miss Barrington laid down her great roll of worsted work, and began her task without a word. She had not proceeded very far, however, when Josephine entered in search of a book. “I beg pardon, aunt, if I derange you.”

“We say disturb, or inconvenience, in English, Miss Barrington. What is it you are looking for?”

“The 'Legend of Montrose,' aunt. I am so much amused by that Major Dalgetty that I can think of nothing but him.”

“Umph!” muttered the old lady. “It was of a character not altogether dissimilar I was thinking myself at that moment. Sit down here, child, and let me talk to you. This letter that I hold here, Josephine, concerns you.”

“Me, aunt—concerns *me?* And who on earth could have written a letter in which I am interested?”

“You shall hear it.” She coughed only once or twice, and then went on: “It's a proposal of marriage,—no less. That gallant soldier who left us so lately has fallen in love with you,—so he says, and of course he knows best. He seems fully aware that, being older than you, and graver in temperament, his offer must come heralded with certain expressions almost apologetic; but he deals with the matter skillfully, and tells us that being well off as regards fortune, of good blood, and with fair prospects before him, he does not wish to regard his suit as hopeless. Your grandfather was minded to learn how you might feel disposed to accept his addresses by observing your demeanor, by watching what emotion mention of him might occasion, by seeing how far you felt interested in his good or ill repute. I did not agree with him. I am never for the long road when there is a short one, and therefore I mean to let you hear his letter. This is what he writes.” While Miss Dinah read the extract which the reader has just seen, she never noticed, or, if noticed, never attended to, the agitation in her niece's manner, or seemed to remark that from a deep-crimson at first her cheeks grew pale as death, and her lips-tremulous. “There, child,” said Miss Dinah, as she finished—“there are his own words; very ardent words, but withal respectful. What do you think of them,—of them and of him?”

Josephine hung down her head, and with her hands firmly clasped together, she sat for a few moments so motionless that she seemed scarcely to breathe.

“Would you like to think over this before you speak of it, Josephine? Would you like to take this letter to your room and ponder over it alone?” No answer came but a low, half-subdued sigh.

“If you do not wish to make a confidante of me, Josephine, I am sorry for it, but not offended.”

“No, no, aunt, it is not that,” burst she in; “it is to *you* and you alone, I wish to speak, and I will be as candid as yourself. I am not surprised at the contents of this letter. I mean, I was in a measure prepared for them.”

“That is to say, child, that he paid you certain attentions?”

She nodded assent.

“And how did you receive them? Did you let him understand that you were not indifferent to him,—that his addresses were agreeable to you?”

Another, but shorter, nod replied to this question.

“I must confess,” said the old lady, bridling up, “all this amazes me greatly. Why, child, it is but the other

day you met each other for the first time. How, when, and where you found time for such relations as you speak of, I cannot imagine. Do you mean to tell me, Josephine, that you ever talked alone together?”

“Constantly, aunt!”

“Constantly!”

“Yes, aunt. We talked a great deal together.”

“But how, child,—where?”

“Here, aunt, as we used to stroll together every morning through the wood or in the garden; then as we went on the river or to the waterfall.”

“I can comprehend nothing of all this, Josephine. I know you mean to deal openly with me; so say at once, how did this intimacy begin?”

“I can scarcely say how, aunt, because I believe we drifted into it. We used to talk a great deal of ourselves, and at length we grew to talk of each other,—of our likings and dislikings, our tastes and our tempers. And these did not always agree!”

“Indeed!”

“No, aunt,” said she, with a heavy sigh. “We quarrelled very often; and once,—I shall not easily forget it,—once seriously.”

“What was it about?”

“It was about India, aunt; and he was in the wrong, and had to own it afterwards and ask pardon.”

“He must know much more of that country than you, child. How came it that you presumed to set up your opinion against his?”

“The presumption was his,” said she, haughtily. “He spoke of *his* father's position as something the same as *my* father's. He talked of him as a Rajah!”

“I did not know that he spoke of his father,” said Miss Dinah, thoughtfully.

“Oh, he spoke much of him. He told me, amongst other things, how he had been a dear friend of papa's; that as young men they lived together like brothers, and never were separate till the fortune of life divided them.”

“What is all this I am listening to? Of whom are you telling me, Josephine?”

“Of Fred, Aunt Dinah; of Fred, of course.”

“Do you mean young Conyers, child?”

“Yes. How could I mean any other?”

“Ta, ta, ta!” said the old lady, drumming with her heel on the floor and her fingers on the table. “It has all turned out as I said it would! Peter, Peter, will you never be taught wisdom? Listen to me, child!” said she, turning almost sternly towards Josephine. “We have been at cross-purposes with each other all this time. This letter which I have just read for you—” She stopped suddenly as she reached thus far, and after a second's pause, said, “Wait for me here; I will be back presently. I have a word to say to your grandfather.”

Leaving poor Josephine in a state of trepidation and bewilderment,—ashamed at the confession she had just made, and trembling with a vague sense of some danger that impended over her,—Miss Dinah hurried away to the garden.

“Here's a new sort of worm got into the celery, Dinah,” said he, as she came up, “and a most destructive fellow he is. He looks like a mere ruffling of the leaf, and you 'd never suspect him.”

“It is your peculiarity never to suspect anything, brother Peter, even after you have had warning of peril. Do you remember my telling you, when we were up the Rhine, what would come of that intimacy between Conyers and Josephine?”

“I think I do,” said he, making what seemed an effort of memory.

“And can you recall the indolent slipshod answer you made me about it? But of course you cannot. It was an old-maid's apprehensions, and you forgot the whole thing. Well, Peter, I was right and you were wrong.”

“Not the first time that the double event has come off so!” said he, smiling.

“You are too fond of that cloak of humility, Peter Barrington. The plea of Guilty never saved any one from transportation!” Waiting a moment to recover her breath after this burst of passion, she went on: “After I had read that letter you gave me, I spoke to Josephine; I told her in a few words how it referred to her, and frankly asked her what she thought of it. She was very candid and very open, and, I must say, also very collected and composed. Young ladies of the present day possess that inestimable advantage over their predecessors. Their emotions do not overpower them.” This was the second time of “blowing off the steam,” and she had to wait a moment to rally. “She told me, frankly, that she was not unprepared for such an offer; that tender passages had already been exchanged between them. The usual tomfoolery, I conclude,—that supreme effort of selfishness people call love,—in a word, Peter, she was in no wise disinclined to the proposal; the only misfortune was, she believed it came from young Conyers.”

Barrington would have laughed, and laughed heartily, if he dared. As it was, the effort to restrain himself sent the blood to his head, and made his eyes run over.

“You may well blush, Peter Barrington,” said she, shaking her finger at him. “It's all your own doing.”

“And when you undeceived her, Dinah, what did she say?”

“I have not done so yet; but my impression is that so susceptible a young lady should find no great difficulty in transferring her affections. For the present I mean to limit myself to declaring that this offer is not from Conyers; if she has curiosity to know the writer, she shall learn it. I always had my doubts about these convents Bread and water diet makes more epicures than abstinents!”

CHAPTER X. INTERCHANGED CONFESSIONS

Miss Barrington, with Josephine at one side and Polly Dill on the other, sat at work in her little room that opened on the garden. Each was engaged in some peculiar task, and each seemed bent upon her labor in that preoccupied way which would imply that the cares of needlework make no mean call upon human faculties. A close observer would, however, have remarked that though Miss Barrington stitched vigorously away at the background for a fierce tiger with measly spots over him, Polly seemed oftener to contemplate than continue her handiwork; while Josephine's looks strayed constantly from the delicate tracery she was following, to the garden, where the roses blended with the jasmine, and the drooping honeysuckles hung listlessly over the boughs of the apple-tree.

“If your work wearies you, Fifine,” said Miss Dinah, “you had better read for us.”

“Oh no, not at all, aunt; I like it immensely. I was only wondering why one should devise such impossible foliage, when we have the real thing before us, in all its grace and beauty.”

“Humph!” said the old lady; “the sight of a real tiger would not put me out of countenance with my own.”

“It certainly ought not, ma'am,” said Polly; while she added, in a faint whisper, “for there is assuredly no rivalry in the case.”

“Perhaps Miss Dill is not too absorbed in her study of nature, as applied to needlework, to read out the newspaper.”

“I will do it with pleasure, ma'am. Where shall I begin?”

“Deaths and marriages first, of course, child. Then fashion and varieties; take the accidents afterwards, and close with anything remarkable in politics, or any disastrous occurrence in high life.”

Polly obeyed to the letter; once only straying into an animated account of a run with the Springfield fox-hounds, where three riders out of a large field came in at the death; when Miss Dinah stopped her abruptly, saying, “I don't care for the obituary of a fox, young lady. Go on with something else.”

“Will you have the recent tragedy at Ring's End, ma'am?”

“I know it by heart Is there nothing new in the fashions,—how are bonnets worn? What's the latest sleeve? What's the color in vogue?”

“A delicate blue, ma'am; a little off the sky, and on the hyacinth.”

“Very becoming to fair people,” said Miss Dinah, with a shake of her blond ringlets.

“'The Prince's Hussars!' Would you like to hear about *them*, ma'am?”

“By all means.”

“It's a very short paragraph. 'The internal troubles of this unhappy regiment would seem to be never ending. We last week informed our readers that a young subaltern of the corps, the son of one of our most distinguished generals, had thrown up his commission and repaired to the Continent, to enable him to demand a personal satisfaction from his commanding officer, and we now learn that the Major in question is precluded from accepting the gage of battle by something stronger than military etiquette.'”

“Read it again, child; that vile newspaper slang always puzzles me.”

Polly recited the passage in a clear and distinct voice.

“What do you understand by it, Polly?”

“I take it to mean nothing, madam. One of those stirring pieces of intelligence which excites curiosity, and are no more expected to be explained than a bad riddle.”

“It cannot surely be that he shelters himself under his position towards us? That I conclude is hardly possible!”

Though Miss Barrington said this as a reflection, she addressed herself almost directly to Josephine.

“As far as I am concerned, aunt,” answered Josephine, promptly, “the Major may fight the monster of the Drachenfels to-morrow, if he wishes it.”

“Oh, here is another mystery apparently on the same subject. 'The Lascar, Lal-Adeen, whom our readers will remember as having figured in a police-court a few days back, and was remanded till the condition of his wound—a severe sabre-cut on the scalp—should permit his further examination, and on the same night made his escape from the hospital, has once again, and very unexpectedly, turned up at Boulogne-sur-Mer. His arrival in this country—some say voluntarily, others under a warrant issued for his apprehension—will probably take place to-day or to-morrow, and, if report speak truly, be followed by some of the most singular confessions which the public has heard for a long time back.' 'The Post' contradicts the statement, and declares 'no such person has ever been examined before the magistrate, if he even have any existence at all.'”

“And what interest has all this for us?” asked Miss Dinah, sharply.

“You do not forget, ma'am, that this is the same man Major Stapylton was said to have wounded; and whose escape scandal hinted he had connived at, and who now 'does not exist.'”

“I declare Miss Dill, I remember no such thing; but it appears to me that Major Stapylton occupies a very considerable space in your own thoughts.”

“I fancy Polly likes him, aunt,” said Josephine, with a slight smile.

“Well, I will own he interests me; there is about him a mysterious something that says, 'I have more in my head and on my heart than you think of, and more, perhaps, than you could carry if the burden were yours.'”

“A galley-slave might say the same, Miss Dill.”

“No doubt of it, ma'am; and if there be men who mix in the great world, and dine at grand houses, with something of the galley-slave on their conscience, they assuredly impress us with an amount of fear that is half a homage. One dreads them as he does a tiger, but the terror is mingled with admiration.”

“This is nonsense, young lady, and baneful nonsense, too, begotten of French novels and a sickly sentimentality. I hope Fifine despises it as heartily as I do.” The passionate wrath which she displayed extended to the materials of her work-basket, and while rolls of worsted were upset here, needles were thrown there; and at last, pushing her embroidery-frame rudely away, she arose and left the room.

“Dearest Polly, how could you be so indiscreet! You know, far better than I do, how little patience she has with a paradox.”

“My sweet Fifine,” said the other, in a low whisper, “I was dying to get rid of her, and I knew there was only one way of effecting it. You may remark that whenever she gets into a rage, she rushes out into the flower-garden, and walks round and round till she's ready to drop. There she is already; you may gauge her anger by the number of her revolutions in a minute.”

“But why did you wish her away, Polly?”

“I'll tell you why; that is, there is a charming French word for what I mean, the verb 'agacer,' all untranslatable as it is. Now there are moments when a person working in the same room—reading, writing, looking out of the window—becomes an insupportable infliction. You reason, and say, 'How absurd, how childish, how ungenerous,' and so forth. It won't do; for as you look round he is there still, and by his mere presence keeps up the ferment in your thoughts. You fancy, at last, that he stands between you and your inner self, a witness that won't let your own conscience whisper to you, and you come in the end to hate him. Your dear aunt was on the high-road to this goal, when I bethought me of my expedient! And now we are all alone, dearest, make me a confession.”

“What is it?”

“You do not like Major Stapylton?”

“No.”

“And you do like somebody else?”

“Perhaps,” said she, slowly, and dividing the syllables as she spoke them.

“That being the case, and seeing, as you do, that your aunt is entirely of your own mind, at least as to the man you do not care for, why don't you declare as much frankly to your grandfather, and break off the negotiation at once?”

“Just because that dear old grandpapa asked me not to be precipitate, not to be rash. He did not tell me that I must love Major Stapylton, or must marry him; but he said, 'If you only knew, Fifine, what a change in our fortune would come of a change in *your* feelings; if you could but imagine, child, how the whole journey of life might be rendered easier, all because you took the right-hand road instead of the left; if you could guess these things, and what might follow them—'” She stopped.

“Well, go on.”

“No. I have said all that he said; he kissed my cheek as he got thus far, and hurried away from the room.”

“And you, like a sweet, obedient child, hastened away to yours; wrote a farewell, a heart-broken farewell, to Fred Conyers; and solemnly swore to your own conscience you 'd marry a man you disliked. These are the sort of sacrifices the world has a high admiration for; but do you know, Fifine, the world limps a little in its morality sometimes, and is not one-half the fine creature it thinks itself. For instance, in the midst of all its enthusiasm for you, it has forgotten that in accepting for your husband a man you do not love, you are doing a dishonesty; and that, besides this, you really love another. It is what the French call the aggravating circumstance.”

“I mean to do nothing of the kind!” broke in Fifine, boldly. “Your lecture does not address itself to *me*.”

“Do not be angry, Fifine,” said the other, calmly.

“It is rather too hard to be rebuked for the faults one might have, but has not committed. It's like saying how wet you 'd have been had you fallen into that pool!”

“Well, it also means, don't fall into the pool!”

“Do you know, Polly,” said Josephine, archly, “I have a sort of suspicion that you don't dislike this Major yourself! Am I right?”

“I'm not say you were altogether wrong; that is, he interests me, or, rather, he puzzles me, and it piques my ingenuity to read him, just as it would to make out a cipher to which I had only one-half the key.”

“Such a feeling as that would never inspire a tender interest, at least, with *me*.”

“Nor did I say it was, Fifine. I have read in some book of my father's how certain physicians inoculated themselves with plague, the better to note the phenomena, and trace the course; and I own I can understand their zeal, and I 'd risk something to decipher this man.”

“This may be very nice in medicine, Polly, but very bad in morals! At all events, don't catch the plague for the sake of saving *me?*”

“Oh! I assure you any step I take shall be done in the interests of science solely; not but that I have a small debt to acquit towards the gallant Major.”

“You have! What can it possibly be?”

“Well, it was this wise,” said she, with a half-sigh. “We met at a country-house here, and he paid me certain attentions, made me compliments on my riding, which I knew to be good, and my singing, which was just tolerable; said the usual things which mean nothing, and a few of those more serious ones which are supposed to be more significant; and then he asked my father's leave to come and visit him, and actually fixed a day and an hour. And we, poor people, all delighted with the flattery of such high notice, and thinking of the effect upon our neighbors so splendid a visitor would produce, made the most magnificent preparations to receive him,—papa in a black satin waistcoat, mamma in her lilac ribbons. I myself,—having put the roof on a pigeon-pie, and given the last finishing touch to a pagoda of ruby jelly,—I, in a charming figured muslin and a blush rose in my hair, awaited the hour of attack! And, after all, he never came. No, Fifine, never came! He forgot us, or he changed his mind, or something else turned up that he liked better; or—which is just as likely

as any of the three—he thought it would be a charming piece of impertinence to pass off on such small folk, who presumed to fancy themselves company for him. At all events, Fifine, we saw him no more. He went his way somewhere, and we were left lamenting.”

“And you really liked him, Polly?”

“No, of the two, I disliked him; but I wished very much that he might like *me!* I saw him very overbearing and very insolent to those who were certainly his equals, assuming a most offensive superiority everywhere and to any one, and I thought what an awful humiliation it would be if so great a personage were to be snubbed by the doctor's daughter. I wanted to give a lesson which could only be severe if it came from one humble as myself; but he defeated me, Fifine, and I am still his debtor! If I did not like him before, you may believe that I hate him now; and I came off here this morning, in hot haste, for no other purpose than to set you against him, and induce you to regard him as I do.”

“There was little need,” said Fifine, calmly; “but here comes my aunt back again. Make your submission quickly, Polly, or it will be too late to expect mercy.”

“I 'll do better,” said Polly, rising. “I 'll let my trial go on in my absence;” and with this she stepped out of the window as Miss Barrington entered by the door.

CHAPTER XI. STAPYLTON'S VISIT AT “THE HOME”

So secretly had Barrington managed, that he negotiated the loan of five hundred pounds on a mortgage of the cottage without ever letting his sister hear of it; and when she heard on a particular day that her brother expected Mr. Kinshela, the attorney, from Kilkenny, on business, she made the occasion the pretext of a visit to Dr. Dill, taking Josephine with her, to pass the day there.

Barrington was therefore free to receive his lawyer at his ease, and confer with him alone. Not that he cared much for his company; he felt towards the attorney pretty much as an ardent soldier feels to a non-combatant, the commissary, or the paymaster. Had he been a barrister, indeed, old Peter would have welcomed him with the zest of true companionship; he would have ransacked his memory for anecdotes, and prepared for the meeting as for an encounter of sharp wits. Now it is no part of my task to present Mr. Kinshela more than passingly to my reader, and I will merely say that he was a shrewd, commonplace man, whose practice rarely introduced him to the higher classes of his county, and who recognized Barrington, even in his decline, as a person of some consideration.

They had dined well, and sat over their wine in the little dining-room over the river, a favorite spot of Barrington's when he wished to be confidential, for it was apart from the rest of the cottage, and removed from all intrusion.

“So, you won't tell me, Kinshela, who lent us this money?” said the old man, as he passed the decanter across the table.

“It is not that I won't, sir, but I can't. It was in answer to an advertisement I inserted in the 'Times,' that I got an application from Granger and Wood to supply particulars; and I must say there was no unnecessary security on their part. It was as speedily settled a transaction as I ever conducted, and I believe in my heart we might have had a thousand pounds on it just as easily as five hundred.”

“As well as it is, Kinshela. When the day of repayment comes round, I'll perhaps find it heavy enough;” and he sighed deeply as he spoke.

“Who knows, sir? There never was a time that capital expended on land was more remunerative than the present.”

Now, Mr. Kinshela well knew that the destination of the money they spoke of was not in this direction, and that it had as little to say to subsoil drainage or top dressing as to the conversion of the heathen; but he was angling for a confidence, and he did not see how to attain it.

Barrington smiled before he answered,—one of those sad, melancholy smiles which reveal a sorrow a man is not able to suppress,—and then he said, “I 'm afraid, Kinshela, I 'll not test the problem this time.”

“It will be better employed, perhaps, sir. You mean, probably, to take your granddaughter up to the drawing-room at the Castle?”

“I never so much as thought of it, Joe Kinshela; the fact is, that money is going where I have sent many a hundred before it,—in law! I have had a long, wearisome, costly suit, that has well-nigh beggared me; and of that sum you raised for me I don't expect to have a shilling by this day week.”

“I heard something about that, sir,” said the other, cautiously.

“And what was it you heard?”

“Nothing, of course, worth repeating; nothing from any one that knew the matter himself; just the gossip that goes about, and no more.”

“Well, let us hear the gossip that goes about, and I'll promise to tell you if it's true.”

“Well, indeed,” said Kinshela, drawing a long breath, “they say that your claim is against the India Board.”

Barring ton nodded.

“And that it is a matter little short of a million is in dispute.”

He nodded again twice.

“And they say, too,—of course, on very insufficient knowledge,—that if you would have abated your demands once on a time, you might readily have got a hundred thousand pounds, or even more.”

“That's not impossible,” muttered Barrington.

“But that, now—” he stammered for an instant, and then stopped.

“But now? Go on.”

“Sure, sir, they can know nothing about it; it's just idle talk, and no more.”

“Go on, and tell me what they say *now*,” said Barrington, with a strong force on the last word.

“They say you 'll be beaten, sir,” said he, with an effort.

“And do they say why, Kinshela?”

“Yes, sir; they say you won't take advice; and no matter what Mr. Withering counsels, or is settled in consultation, you go your own way and won't mind them; and that you have been heard to declare you 'll have all, or nothing.”

“They give me more credit than I deserve, Kinshela. It is, perhaps, what I ought to have said, for I have often *thought it*. But in return for all the kind interest my neighbors take about me, let them know that matters look better for us than they once did. Perhaps,” added he, with a laugh,—“perhaps I have overcome my obstinacy, or perhaps my opponents have yielded to it. At all events, Joe, I believe I see land at last, and it was a long 'lookout' and many a fog-bank I mistook for it.”

“And what makes you think now you'll win?” said the other, growing bolder by the confidence reposed in him.

Barrington half started at the presumption of the question; but he suddenly remembered how it was he himself who had invited the discussion, so he said calmly,—

“My hope is not without a foundation. I expect by the mail to-night a friend who may be able to tell me that I have won, or as good as won.”

Kinshela was dying to ask who the friend was, but even his curiosity had its prudential limits; so he merely took out his watch, and, looking at it, remarked that the mail would pass in about twenty minutes or so.

“By the way, I must n't forget to send a servant to wait on the roadside;” and he rang the bell and said, “Let Darby go up to the road and take Major Stapylton's luggage when he arrives.”

“Is that the Major Stapylton is going to be broke for the doings at Manchester, sir?” asked Kinshela.

“He is the same Major Stapylton that a rascally press is now libelling and calumniating,” said Barrington, hotly. “As to being broke, I don't believe that we have come yet to that pass in England that the discipline of our army is administered by every scribbler in a newspaper.”

“I humbly crave your pardon, sir, if I have said the slightest thing to offend; but I only meant to ask, was he the officer they were making such a fuss about?” “He is an officer of the highest distinction, and a wellborn gentleman to boot,—two admirable reasons for the assaults of a contemptible party. Look you, Kinshela; you and I are neither of us very young or inexperienced men, but I would ask you, have we learned any wiser lesson from our intercourse with life than to withhold our judgment on the case of one who rejects the sentence of a mob, and appeals to the verdict of his equals?”

“But if he cut the people down in cold blood,—if it be true that he laid open that poor black fellow's cheek from the temple to the chin—”

“If he did no such thing,” broke in Barrington; “that is to say, if there is no evidence whatever that he did so, what will your legal mind say then, Joe Kinshela?”

“Just this, sir. I'd say—what all the newspapers are saying—that he got the man out of the way,—bribed and sent him off.”

“Why not hint that he murdered him, and buried him within the precincts of the jail? I declare I wonder at your moderation.”

“I am sure, sir, that if I suspected he was an old friend of yours—”

“Nothing of the kind,—a friend of very short standing; but what has that to say to it? Is he less entitled to fair play whether he knew me or not?”

“All I know of the case is from the newspapers; and as I scarcely see one word in his favor, I take it there is not much to be said in his defence.”

“Well, if my ears don't deceive me, that was the guard's horn I heard then. The man himself will be here in five minutes or so. You shall conduct the prosecution, Kinshela, and I 'll be judge between you.”

“Heaven forbid, sir; on no account whatever!” said Kinshela, trembling all over. “I'm sure, Mr. Barrington, you couldn't think of repeating what I said to you in confidence—”

“No, no, Kinshela. You shall do it yourself; and it's only fair to tell you that he is a right clever fellow, and fully equal to the task of defending himself.” Peter arose as he spoke, and walked out upon the lawn, affectedly to meet his coming guest, but in reality to cover a laugh that was half smothering him, so comical was the misery expressed in the attorney's face, and so ludicrous was his look of terror.

Of course I need not say that it never occurred to Barrington to realize his threat, which he merely uttered in the spirit of that quizzing habit that was familiar to him. “Yes, Kinshela,” cried he, “here he comes. I recognize his voice already;” and Barrington now walked forward to welcome his friend.

It was not till after some minutes of conversation, and when the light fell strongly on Stapylton's features, that Barrington saw how changed a few weeks of care had made him. He looked at the least ten years older than before. His eyes had lost their bold and daring expression, too, and were deep sunk, and almost furtive in their glance.

“You are tired, I fear,” said Barrington, as the other moved his hand across his forehead, and, with a slight sigh, sank down upon a sofa.

“Less tired than worried,—harassed,” said he, faintly. “Just as at a gaming-table a man may lose more in half an hour's high play than years of hard labor could acquire, there are times of life when we dissipate more strength and vigor than we ever regain. I have had rough usage since I saw you last,” said he, with a very

sickly smile. “How are the ladies,—well, I hope?”

“Perfectly well. They have gone to pass the day with a neighbor, and will be home presently. By the way, I left a friend here a few moments ago. What can have become of him?” and he rang the bell hastily. “Where's Mr. Kinshela, Darby?”

“Gone to bed, sir. He said he 'd a murthering headache, and hoped your honor would excuse him.”

Though Barrington laughed heartily at this message, Stapylton never asked the reason, but sat immersed in thought and unmindful of all around him.

“I half suspect you ought to follow his good example, Major,” said Peter. “A mug of mulled claret for a nightcap, and a good sleep, will set you all right.”

“It will take more than that to do it,” said the Major, sadly. Then suddenly rising, and pacing the room with quick, impatient steps, he said, “What could have induced you to let them bring your claim before the House? They are going to do so, ain't they?”

“Yes. Tom Withering says that nothing will be so effectual, and I thought you agreed with him.”

“Never. Nothing of the kind. I said, threaten it; insist that if they continue the opposition, that you will,—that you must do so; but I never was the fool to imagine that it could really be a wise step. What 's the fate of all such motions? I ask you. There's a speech—sometimes an able one—setting forth a long catalogue of unmerited injuries and long suffering. There's a claim made out that none can find a flaw in, and a story that, if Parliament was given to softness, might move men almost to tears, and at the end of it up rises a Minister to say how deeply he sympathizes with the calamity of the case, but that this house is, after all, not the fitting locality for a discussion which is essentially a question of law, and that, even if it were, and if all the allegations were established,—a point to which he by no means gave adhesion,—there was really no available fund at the disposal of the Crown to make reparation for such losses. Have you not seen this, or something like this, scores of times? Can you tell me of one that succeeded?”

“A case of such wrong as this cannot go without reparation,” said Peter, with emotion. “The whole country will demand it.”

“The country will do no such thing. If it were a question of penalty or punishment,—yes! the country would demand it. Fine, imprison, transport, hang him! are easy words to utter, and cheap ones; but pay him, reinstate him, reward him! have a very different sound and significance. They figure in the budget, and are formidable on the hustings. Depend on it, Mr. Barrington, the step will be a false one.”

“It has been my fate never to have got the same advice for two weeks together since the day I entered on this weary suit,” said Barrington, with a peevishness not natural to him.

“I may as well tell you the whole truth at once,” said Stapylton. “The Board have gone back of all their good intentions towards us; some recent arrivals from India, it is said, have kindled again the old fire of opposition, and we are to be met by a resistance bold and uncompromising. They are prepared to deny everything we assert; in fact, they have resolved to sweep all the pieces off the board and begin the whole game again, and all because you have taken this unfortunate course of appeal to Parliament.”

“Have you told Withering this?”

“Yes; I have talked the matter over for nearly four hours with him. Like a lawyer, he was most eager to know from what source came the new evidence so damaging to us. I could only guess at this.”

“And your guess was—”

“I scarcely like to own to you that I take a less favorable view of mankind than you do, who know it better; but in this case my suspicion attaches to a man who was once your son's dearest friend, but grew to be afterwards his deadliest enemy.”

“I will not have this said, Major Stapylton. I know whom you mean, and I don't believe a word of it.”

Stapylton simply shrugged his shoulders, and continued to pace the room without speaking, while Barrington went on muttering, half aloud: “No, no, impossible; quite impossible. These things are not in nature. I don't credit them.”

“You like to think very well of the world, sir!” said the Major, with a faint scorn, so faint as scarcely to color his words.

“Think very badly of it, and you 'll soon come down to the level you assign it,” said Peter, boldly.

“I 'm afraid I 'm not in the humor just now to give it my best suffrages. You 've seen, I doubt not, something of the treatment I have met with from the Press for the last few weeks; not very generous usage,—not very just. Well! what will you say when I tell you that I have been refused an inquiry into my conduct at Manchester; that the Government is of opinion that such an investigation might at the moment be prejudicial to the public peace, without any counterbalancing advantage on the score of a personal vindication; that they do not deem the time favorable for the calm and unbiassed judgment of the country; in one short word, sir, they 'd rather ruin a Major of Hussars than risk a Cabinet. I am to exchange into any corps or any service I can; and they are to tide over these troubles on the assumption of having degraded me.”

“I hope you wrong them,—I do hope you wrong them!” cried Barrington, passionately.

“You shall see if I do,” said he, taking several letters from his pocket, and searching for one in particular. “Yes, here it is. This is from Aldridge, the private secretary of the Commander-in-chief. It is very brief, and strictly secret:—

“'Dear S.,—The “Chief” does not like your scrape at all. You did rather too much, or too little,—a fatal mistake dealing with a mob. You must consent—there's no help for it—to be badly used, and an injured man. If you don't like the half-pay list,—which would, in my mind, be the best step,—there 's the Seventeenth ordered to Baroda, and Maidstone refuses to go. This, or the Second West India, are the only things open. Above all, don't show fight; don't rally a party round you, for there is not a man in England whose influence is sufficiently great to stand between you and the public. A conple of years' patience and a hot climate will set all right, and reinstate you everywhere. Come over here at once and I 'll do my best for you.

“'Yours ever,

“'St. George Aldridge.'

“This is a friend's letter,” said Stapylton, with a sneer; “and he has no better counsel to give me than to plead guilty, and ask for a mitigated punishment.”

Harrington was silenced; he would not by any expression of indignation add to the great anger of the other, and he said nothing. At last he said, “I wish from my heart—I wish I could be of any service to you.”

“You are the only man living who can,” was the prompt answer.

“How so—in what way? Let me hear.”

“When I addressed a certain letter to you some time back, I was in a position both of fortune and prospect to take at least something from the presumption of my offer. Now, though my fortune remains, my future is more than clouded, and if I ask you to look favorably on my cause now, it is to your generosity I must appeal; I am, in fact, asking you to stand by a fallen man.”

This speech, uttered in a voice slightly shaken by agitation, went to Barrington's heart. There was not a sentiment in his nature so certain to respond to a call upon it as this one of sympathy with the beaten man; the weaker side was always certain of his adherence. With a nice tact Stapylton said no more, but, pushing open the window, walked out upon the smooth sward, on which a faint moonlight flickered. He had shot his bolt, and saw it as it quivered in his victim's flesh. Barrington was after him in an instant, and, drawing an arm within his he said in a low voice, “You may count upon me.”

Stapylton wrung his hand warmly, without speaking. After walking for a few moments, side by side, he said: “I must be frank with you, Mr. Barrington. I have little time and no taste for circumlocution; I cannot conceal from myself that I am no favorite with your sister. I was not as eager as I ought to have been to cultivate her good opinion; I was a little piqued at what I thought mere injustices on her part,—small ones, to be sure, but they wounded me, and with a temper that always revolted against a wrong, I resented them, and I fear me, in doing so, I jeopardized her esteem. If she is as generous as her brother, she will not remember these to me in my day of defeat. Women, however, have their own ideas of mercy, as they have of everything, and she may not choose to regard me as you have done.”

“I suspect you are wrong about this,” said Harrington, breaking in.

“Well, I wish I may be; at all events, I must put the feeling to the test at once, for I have formed my plan, and mean to begin it immediately.”

“And what is it?”

“Very few words will tell it. I intend to go on half-pay, or sell out if that be refused me; set out for India by the next mail, and, with what energy remains to me, vindicate your son's claim. I have qualifications that will make me better than a better man. I am well versed in Hindostanee, and a fair Persian scholar; I have a wide acquaintance with natives of every rank, and I know how and where to look for information. It is not my disposition to feel over-sanguine, but I would stake all I possess on my success, for I see exactly the flaws in the chain, and I know where to go to repair them. You have witnessed with what ardor I adopted the suit before; but you cannot estimate the zeal with which I throw myself into it now—*now* that, like George Barring-ton himself, I am a man wronged, outraged, and insulted.” For a few seconds be seemed overcome by passion and unable to continue; then he went on: “If your granddaughter will accept me, it is my intention to settle on her all I possess. Our marriage can be private, and she shall be free to accompany me or to remain here, as she likes.”

“But how can all this be done so hurriedly? You talk of starting at once.”

“I must, if I would save your son's cause. The India Board are sending out their emissaries to Calcutta, and I must anticipate them—if I cannot do more, by gaining them over to us on the voyage out. It is a case for energy and activity, and I want to employ both.”

“The time is very short for all this,” said Barrington, again.

“So it is, sir, and so are the few seconds which may rescue a man from drowning! It is in the crisis of my fate that I ask you to stand by me.”

“But have you any reason to believe that my granddaughter will hear you favorably? You are almost strangers to each other?”

“If she will not give me the legal right to make her my heir, I mean to usurp the privilege. I have already been with a lawyer for that purpose. My dear sir,” added he, passionately, “I want to break with the past forever! When the world sets up its howl against a man, the odds are too great! To stand and defy it he must succumb or retreat. Now, I mean to retire, but with the honors of war, mark you.”

“My sister will never consent to it,” muttered Barrington.

“Will you? Have I the assurance of *your* support?”

“I can scarcely venture to say 'yes,' and yet I can't bear to say 'no' to you!”

“This is less than I looked for from you,” said Stapylton, mournfully.

“I know Dinah so well. I know how hopeless it would be to ask her concurrence to this plan.”

“She may not take the generous view of it; but there is a worldly one worth considering,” said Stapylton, bitterly.

“Then, sir, if you count on *that*, I would not give a copper half-penny for your chance of success!” cried Barrington, passionately.

“You have quite misconceived me; you have wronged me altogether,” broke in Stapylton, in a tone of apology; for he saw the mistake he had made, and hastened to repair it. “My meaning was this—”

“So much the better. I'm glad I misunderstood you. But here come the ladies. Let us go and meet them.”

“One word,—only one word. Will you befriend me?”

“I will do all that I can,—that is, all that I ought,” said Barrington, as he led him away, and re-entered the cottage.

“I will not meet them to-night,” said Stapylton, hurriedly. “I am nervous and agitated. I will say good-night now.”

This was the second time within a few days that Stapylton had shown an unwillingness to confront Miss Barrington, and Peter thought over it long and anxiously. “What can he mean by it?” said he, to himself. “Why should he be so frank and outspoken with me, and so reserved with her? What can Dinah know of him? What can she suspect, that is not known to me? It is true they never did like each other,—never 'hit it off' together; but that is scarcely *his* fault. My excellent sister throws away little love on strangers, and opens every fresh acquaintance with a very fortifying prejudice against the newly presented. However it happens,” muttered he, with a sigh, “*she* is not often wrong, and *I* am very seldom right;” and, with this reflection, he turned once again to resume his walk in the garden.

CHAPTER XII. A DOCTOR AND HIS PATIENT

Stapylton did not make his appearance at breakfast; he sent down a message that he had passed a feverish night, and begged that Dr. Dill might be sent for. Though Barrington made two attempts to see his guest, the quietness of the room on each occasion implied that he was asleep, and, fearing to disturb him, he went downstairs again on tiptoe.

“This is what the persecution has done, Dinah,” said he. “They have brought that stout-hearted fellow so low that he may be the victim of a fever to-morrow.”

“Nonsense, Peter. Men of courage don't fall sick because the newspapers calumniate them. They have other things on their minds than such puny attacks.”

“So he may, likely enough, too. He is bent heart and soul on what I told you last night, and I 'm not surprised if he never closed his eyes thinking of it.”

“Neither did I!” said she, curtly, and left the room.

The doctor was not long in arriving, and, after a word or two with Barrington, hastened to the patient's room.

“Are we alone?” asked Stapylton, cutting short the bland speech with which Dill was making his approaches. “Draw that curtain a bit, and take a good look at me. Are my eyes bloodshot? Are the pupils dilated? I had a bad sunstroke once; see if there be any signs of congestion about me.”

“No, I see none. A little flushed; your pulse, too, is accelerated, and the heart's action is labored—”

“Never mind the heart; if the head be well, it will take care of it. Reach me that pocket-book; I want to acquit one debt to you before I incur another. No humbug between us;” and he pressed some notes into the other's palm as he spoke. “Let us understand each other fully, and at once. I 'm not very ill; but I want *you*.”

“And I am at your orders.”

“Faithfully,—loyally?”

“Faithfully,—loyally!” repeated the other after him.

"You've read the papers lately,—you've seen these attacks on me?"

"Yes."

"Well, what do they say and think here—I mean in this house—about them? How do they discuss them? Remember, I want candor and frankness; no humbug. I'll not stand humbug."

"The women are against you."

"Both of them?"

"Both."

"How comes that?—on what grounds?"

"The papers accused you of cruelty; they affirmed that there was no cause for the measures of severity you adopted; and they argued—"

"Don't bore me with all that balderdash. I asked you how was it that these women assumed I was in the wrong?"

"And I was about to tell you, if you had not interrupted me."

"That is, they believed what they read in the newspapers?"

"Yes."

"And, of course, swallowed that fine story about the Hindoo fellow that I first cut down, and afterwards bribed to make his escape from the hospital?"

"I suspect they half believed it."

"Or rather, believed half of it, the cutting down part! Can you tell me physiologically,—for I think it comes into that category,—why it is that women not otherwise ill-natured, in nine cases out of ten take the worst alternative as the credible one? But never mind that. They condemn me. Is n't it so?"

"Yes; and while old Barrington insists—"

"Who cares what he insists? Such advocacy as his only provokes attack, and invites persecution. I 'd rather have no such allies!"

"I believe you are right."

"I want fellows like yourself, doctor,—sly, cautious, subtle fellows,—accustomed to stealing strong medicines into the system in small doses; putting the patient, as you call it in your slang, 'under the influence' of this, that, and t'other,—eh?"

Dill smiled blandly at the compliment to his art, and Stapylton went on:—

"Not that I have time just now for this sort of chronic treatment. I need a heroic remedy, doctor. I 'm in love."

"Indeed!" said Dill, with an accent nicely balanced between interest and incredulity.

"Yes, and I want to marry!

“Miss Barrington?”

“The granddaughter. There is no need, I hope, to make the distinction, for I don't wish to be thought insane. Now you have the case. What 's your prescription?”

“Propose for her!”

“So I have, but they hesitate. The old man is not unfavorable; he is, perhaps, more: he is, in a measure, friendly; but what avails such advocacy? I want another guess sort of aid,—a clever man; or, what is better still, a clever woman, to befriend me.”

He waited some seconds for a reply, but Dill did not speak; so he went on: “A clever woman, to take a woman's view of the case, balancing this against that, never ignoring an obstacle, but inquiring what there may be to compensate for it Do you know such a one, doctor?”

“Perhaps I may; but I have my doubts about securing her services.”

“Even with a retainer?”

“Even with a retainer. You see, Major,”—here Dill dropped his voice to a most confidential whisper,—“my daughter Polly,—for I know we both have her in mind,—Polly is a strange sort of girl, and very hard to understand; for while, if the case were her own, she 'd no more think of romance than she would of giving ten guineas for a dress, if she was advising another whose position and prospects were higher than hers, it's the romantic part of it she'd lay all the stress on.”

“From which I gather that my suit will not stand this test!” said Stapylton, with a peculiar smile. “Eh, is n't that your meaning?”

“You are certainly some years older than the lady,” said Dill, blandly.

“Not old enough to be, as the world would surely say, 'her father,' but fully old enough to give license for sarcasm.”

“Then, as she will be a great fortune—”

“Not a sixpence,—she'll not have sixpence, doctor. That bubble has burst at last, and can never be blown again. The whole claim has been rejected, refused, thrown out, and there 's an end of it. It amuses the old man to sit on the wreck and fancy he can repair the shattered timbers and make them seaworthy; and, for the time he is likely to last, it is only kindness to leave him to his delusion; but he is ruined,—ruined beyond recall, and as I have told you, the girl will have nothing.”

“Do they know this,—has Barrington heard it?”

“Yes, I broke it to him last night, but I don't think he fully realized the tidings; he has certain reserves—certain little conceits of his own—which are to supply him with a sort of hope; but let us talk of something more practical. How can we secure Miss Dill's services?”

“A few days ago, the easiest way would have been to offer to befriend her brother, but this morning brings us news that this is not needed,—he is coming home.”

“How so?”

“It is a great event in its way; at least, it may be for Tom. It seems there was a collision at sea, somewhere near the Cape, between the ship 'St. Helen's,' that carried out General Hunter and his staff, and the 'Regulus,' with the Forty-ninth on board. It was at night, and a terrible sea on at the time. In the shock the 'St. Helen's' took fire; and as the two ships were inextricably locked together, the danger was common to each. While the boats were being lowered and manned,—for it was soon seen the vessel could not be saved,—a cry was raised that the fire was gaining on the fore-hold, and would soon reach the magazine. The woful news spread at once, and many jumped overboard in their terror. Just then Tom heard that there was a means of drowning the powder by opening a certain sluice, and, without waiting for more, he clambered across into the sinking vessel, made his way through smoke and fire, gained the spot, and succeeded, just as the very ladder itself had caught the flames. How he got back he cannot tell, for the vessel foundered in a few minutes, and he was so burned—face, cheek, and one shoulder—that he was unconscious of everything; and even when the account came, was still in bed, and not able to see.”

“He was a wild sort of lad, was he not,—a scamp, in short?”

“No, not exactly that; idle—careless—kept bad company at times.”

“These are the fellows who do this kind of thing once in their lives,—mark you, never twice. They never have more than one shot in their locker, but it will suffice in this case.”

Though the worthy doctor was very far from enthusiastic about his son's gallantry, there was a degree of coolness in the Major's estimate of it that almost shocked him; and he sat staring steadily at the stern bronzed face, and the hard lineaments of the man, and wondering of what strange stuff such natures were fashioned.

“It's quite clear, then, that for Master Tom we can do nothing half so good as chance has done for him,” said Stapylton, after a short interval.

“Chance and himself too,” added the doctor.

Stapylton made no answer, but, covering his eyes with his hand, lay deep in thought.

“If you only had the Attorney-General, Mr. Withering, on your side,” said Dill. “There is no man has the same influence over this family.”

“It is not what *you* call influence I want, my good sir. It is a far more subtle and more delicate agent. I require the sort of aid, in fact, which your daughter could supply, if she would. An appointment awaits me in India, but I must occupy it at once. I have no time for a long courtship. I 'm just as hurried as that boy of yours was when he swamped the powder-magazine. It's a skirmish where I can't wait for the heavy artillery, but must do my best with the light field-guns,—do you understand me?”

Dill nodded, and Stapylton resumed: “The thing can be done just by the very road that you have pronounced impossible,—that is, by the romantic side of it,—making it a case of violent love at first sight, the passion of a man past the heyday of youth, but yet young enough to feel a most ardent affection. I am,

besides," said he, laughing with a strange blending of levity and sarcasm, "a sort of Brummagem hero; have been wounded, led assaults, and that kind of thing, to a degree that puffery can take the benefit of. And, last of all, doctor, I am rich enough to satisfy greater ambitions than ought to live under such a roof as this. Do you see the part your daughter can take in this drama?"

"Perhaps I do."

"And could you induce her to accept it?"

"I'm not very certain,—I'd be slow to pledge myself to it."

"Certainly," said Stapylton, mockingly; "the passing glimpses we bachelors obtain of the working of that vaunted institution, The Family, fail to impress us with all its imputed excellence; you are, it seems to me, just as powerless within your own doors as I am regarding what goes on in a neighbor's house. I take it, however, that it can't be helped. Children, like colonies, are only governable when helpless."

"I suspect you are wrong, sir; at least, I fancy I have as much of the sort of influence you speak of as others; but still, I think, here, in this particular case, you would yourself be your best ambassador, if you were strong enough to come down with me in the boat to-day."

"Of course I am!" cried Stapylton, starting up to a sitting posture; "and what then?"

"You would be better in my house than this," said Dill, mysteriously.

"Speak out, and speak clearly, doctor; I have very little the matter with me, and am in no want of change of air. What I need is the assistance of one dexterous enough to advocate my plans with persons and in places to which I have no access. Your daughter is just such a one,—will she do it?"

"We can ask her."

"Well, how will you explain my absence to these people here? What will you say for my not appearing at breakfast, and yet being able to take an airing with you?"

"I will put it on hygienic grounds," said Dill, smiling acutely. "My profession has a number of sanctuaries the profane vulgar can never enter. I 'll just step down now and ask Barrington to lend me his boat, and I 'll throw out a dark hint that I 'd like to manage a consultation on your case without alarming you, for which purpose I 'd ask Dr. Tobin to be at my house, when we arrive there, by mere accident, so that a conference would follow as a matter of course."

"Very wily,—very subtle all this, doctor. Do you know, I 'm half frightened at the thought of trusting myself to such a master of intrigue and mystification."

"Have no fears; I reserve all my craft for my clients." And with this he left the room, but only for a few minutes; for he met Barrington on the stairs, and speedily obtained permission to take his boat to Inistioge, having first pledged himself to come back with Stapylton to dinner.

"We shall see, we shall see," muttered Stapylton to himself. "Your daughter must decide where I am to dine today."

By the way—that is, as they glided along the bright river—Dill tried to prepare Stapylton for the task before him, by sundry hints as to Polly's temper and disposition, with warnings against this, and cautions about that. "Above all," said he, "don't try to overreach her."

"Perfect frankness—candor itself—is my device. Won't that do?"

"You must first see will she believe it," said the doctor, slyly; and for the remainder of the way there was a silence between them.

CHAPTER XIII. CROSS-PURPOSES

"Where 's Miss Polly?" said Dill, hastily, as he passed his threshold.

"She's making the confusion of roses in the kitchen, sir," said the maid, whose chemistry had been a neglected study.

"Tell her that I have come back, and that there is a gentleman along with me," said he, imperiously, as he led the way into his study. "I have brought you into this den of mine, Major, because I would just say one word more by way of caution before you see Polly. You may imagine, from the small range of her intercourse with the world, and her village life, that her acuteness will not go very far; don't be too sure of that,—don't reckon too much on her want of experience."

"I suppose I have encountered as sharp wits as hers before this time o' day," replied he, half peevishly; and then, with an air of better temper, added, "I have no secrets to hide, no mystery to cloak. If I want her alliance, she shall herself dictate the terms that shall requite it."

The doctor shook his head dubiously, but was silent.

"I half suspect, my good doctor," said Stapylton, laughing, "that your charming daughter is a little, a very little, of a domestic despot; you are all afraid of her; never very sure of what she will say or do or think on any given circumstances, and nervously alive to the risk of her displeasure."

"There is something in what you say," remarked Dill, with a sigh; "but it was always my mistake to bring up my children with too much liberty of action. From the time they were so high"—and he held his hand out about a yard above the floor—"they were their own masters."

Just as the words had fallen from him, a little chubby, shock-headed fellow, about five years old, burst into the room, which he believed unoccupied, and then, suddenly seeing his papa, set up a howl of terror that

made the house ring.

“What is it, Jimmy,—what is it, my poor man?” said Polly, rushing with tucked-up sleeves to the spot; and, catching him up in her arms, she kissed him affectionately.

“Will you take him away?—will you take him out of that?” hissed out Dill between his teeth. “Don't you see Major Stapylton here?”

“Oh, Major Stapylton will excuse a toilette that was never intended for his presence.”

“I will certainly say there could not be a more becoming one, nor a more charming tableau to display it in!”

“There, Jimmy,” said she, laughing; “you must have some bread and jam for getting me such a nice compliment.”

And she bore away the still sobbing urchin, who, burying his head in her bosom, could never summon courage to meet his father's eye.

“What a spacious garden you appear to have here!” said Stapylton, who saw all the importance of a diversion to the conversation.

“It is a very much neglected one,” said Dill, pathetically. “My poor dear boy Tom used to take care of it when he was here; he had a perfect passion for flowers.”

Whether that Tom was associated in the Major's mind with some other very different tastes or not, Stapylton smiled slightly, and after a moment said, “If you permit me, I 'll take a stroll through your garden, and think over what we have been talking of.”

“Make yourself at home in every respect,” said Dill. “I have a few professional calls to make in the village, but we 'll meet at luncheon.”

“He's in the garden, Polly,” said Dill, as he passed his daughter on the stairs; “he came over here this morning to have a talk with you.”

“Indeed, sir!”

“Yes; he has got it into his head that you can be of service to him.”

“It is not impossible, sir; I think I might.”

“I'm glad to bear it, Polly; I'm delighted to see you take a good sensible view of things. I need not tell you he's a knowing one.”

“No, sir. But, as I have heard you card-players say, 'he shows his hand.'”

“So he does, Polly; but I have known fellows do that just to mislead the adversary.”

“Sorry adversaries that could be taken in so easily.” And with a saucy toss of her head she passed on, scarcely noticing the warning gesture of her father's finger as she went.

When she had found her work-basket and supplied herself with the means of occupying her fingers for an hour or so, she repaired to the garden and took her seat under a large elm, around whose massive trunk a mossy bench ran, divided by rustic-work into a series of separate places.

“What a churlish idea it was to erect these barricades, Miss Dill!” said Stapylton as he seated himself at her side; “how unpicturesque and how prudish!”

“It was a simple notion of my brother Tom's,” said she, smiling, “who thought people would not be less agreeable by being reminded that they had a place of their own, and ought not to invade that of their neighbor.”

“What an unsocial thought!”

“Poor Tom! A strange reproach to make against *you*,” said she, laughing out.

“By the way, has n't he turned out a hero,—saved a ship and all she carried from the flames,—and all at the hazard of his own life?”

“He has done a very gallant thing; and, what's more, I 'll venture to say there is not a man who saw it thinks so little of it as himself.”

“I suppose that every brave man has more or less of that feeling.”

“I'm glad to learn this fact from such good authority,” said she, with a slight bend of the head.

“A prettily turned compliment, Miss Dill. Are you habitually given to flattery?”

“No? I rather think not. I believe the world is pleased to call me more candid than courteous.”

“Will you let me take you at the world's estimate,—that is, will you do me the inestimable favor to bestow a little of this same candor upon *me?*”

“Willingly. What is to be the subject of it?”

“The subject is a very humble one,—myself!”

“How can I possibly adjudicate on such a theme?”

“Better than you think for, perhaps!” And for a moment he appeared awkward and ill at ease. “Miss Dill,” said he, after a pause, “fortune has been using me roughly of late; and, like all men who deem themselves hardly treated, I fly at once to any quarter where I fancy I have found a more kindly disposition towards me. Am I indulging a self-delusion in believing that such sentiments are yours?”

Polly Dill, with her own keen tact, had guessed what was the real object of Stapylton's visit. She had even read in her father's manner how he himself was a shareholder in the scheme, and she had made up her mind for a great frankness on each side; but now, seeing the diplomatic mys-teriousness with which the Major opened his attack, that love of mischievous drollery which entered into her nature suggested a very different line. She determined, in fact, to seem to accept the Major's speech as the preliminary to an offer of his hand. She therefore merely turned her head slightly, and in a low voice said, “Continue!”

“I have not deceived myself, then,” said he, with more warmth of manner. “I have secured one kind heart in my interest?”

“You must own,” said she, with a half-coquettish look of pique, “that you scarcely deserve it.”

“How,—in what way?” asked he, in astonishment.

“What a very short memory you are blessed with! Must I, then, remind you of a certain evening at Cobham? Must I recall what I thought at the time very particular, as they certainly were very pleasant, attentions on your part? Must I, also, bring to mind a certain promised visit from you, the day and hour all named by yourself,—a visit which never came off? And after all this, Major, are you not really a bold man to come down and take up your negotiation where you dropped it? Is there not in this a strong conviction of the greatness of Major Stapylton and the littleness of the doctor's daughter?”

Stapylton was struck dumb. When a general sees that what he meant as a feint has been converted into a real attack, the situation is often imminent; but what comparison in difficulty is there between that mistake and that of him who assails what he never desired to conquer? How he inwardly cursed the stupidity with which he had opened his negotiation!

“I perceive,” said she, triumphing over his confusion, “that your calmer judgment does not reassure you. You feel that there is a certain levity in this conduct not quite excusable! Own it frankly, and at once!”

“I will own, if you like, that I was never in a situation of greater embarrassment!”

“Shall I tell you why?”

“You couldn't; it would be totally impossible.”

“I will try, however, if you permit me. You do! Then here goes. You no more intended anything to come of your little flirtation at Cobham than you now do of a more serious blunder. You never came here this morning to make your court to *me*, You are much pained at the awkwardness of a situation so naturally wounding to me, and for the life of you, you cannot imagine what escape there is out of such a difficulty.”

“You are wonderfully clever, Miss Dill,” said he; and there was an honest admiration in his look that gave the words a full significance.

“No,” said she, “but I am wonderfully good-natured. I forgive you what is the hardest thing in the world to forgive!”

“Oh! if you would but be my friend,” cried he, warmly.

“What a want of tact there was in that speech, Major Stapylton!” said she, with a laugh; “but perhaps you wanted to reverse the line of our dear little poet, who tells of some one 'that came but for Friendship, and took away Love'!”

“How cruel you are in all this mockery of me!”

“Does not the charge of cruelty come rather ill from *you?—you*, who can afford to sport with the affections of poor village maidens. From the time of that 'Major bold of Halifax' the song tells of, I never heard your equal.”

“Could you prevail upon yourself to be serious for a few minutes?” said he, gravely.

“I think not,—at least not just now; but why should I make the attempt?”

“Because I would wish your aid in a serious contingency,—a matter in which I am deeply interested, and which involves probably my future happiness.”

“Ah, Major! is it possible that you are going to trifle with my feelings once more?”

“My dear Miss Dill, must I plead once more for a little mercy?”

“No, don't do any such thing; it would seem ungenerous to refuse, and yet I could not accord it.”

“Fairly beaten,” said he, with a sigh; “there is no help for it. You are the victor!”

“How did you leave our friends at 'The Home'?” said she, with an easy indifference in her tone.

“All well, perfectly well; that is to say, I believe so, for I only saw my host himself.”

“What a pleasant house; how well they understand receiving their friends!”

“It is so peaceful and so quiet!” said he, with an effort to seem at ease.

“And the garden is charming!”

“And all this is perfectly intolerable,” said he, rising, and speaking in a voice thick with suppressed anger. “I never came here to play a part in a vaudeville! Your father led me to believe, Miss Dill, that you might not be indisposed to lend me your favoring aid in a suit which I am interested in. He told me I should at least find you frank and outspoken; that if you felt inclined to assist me, you'd never enhance the service by a seeming doubt or hesitation—”

“And if I should not feel so inclined, what did he then give you to expect?”

“That you'd say so!”

“So I do, then, clearly and distinctly tell you, if my counsels offer a bar to your wishes, they are all enlisted against you.”

“This is the acme of candor. You can only equal it by saying how I could have incurred your disfavor.”

“There is nothing of disfavor in the matter. I think you charming. You are a hero,—very clever, very fascinating, very accomplished; but I believe it would be a great mistake for Fifine to marry you. Your tempers have that sort of resemblance that leave no reliefs in their mutual play. You are each of you hot and hasty, and a little imperious; and if she were not very much in love, and consequently disposed to think a great deal of you and very little of herself, these traits that I speak of would work ill. But if every one of them were otherwise, there would still be one obstacle worse than all!”

“And that is—”

“Can you not guess what I mean, Major Stapylton? You do not, surely, want confidences from me that are more than candor!”

“Do I understand you aright?” said he, growing red and pale by turns, as passion worked within him; “do I apprehend you correctly? These people here are credulous enough to be influenced by the shadowy slanders of the newspapers, and they listen to the half-muttered accusations of a hireling press?”

“They do say very awkward things in the daily press, certainly,” said she, dryly; “and your friends marvel at the silence with which you treat them.”

“Then I *have* divined your meaning,” said he. “It is by these cowardly assailants I am supposed to be vanquished. I suspect, however, that Colonel Barrington himself was, once on a time, indulged with the same sort of flattery. They said that he had usurped a sovereignty, falsified documents, purloined jewels of immense value. I don't know what they did not charge him with. And what do they say of me? That I exhibited great severity—cruelty, if you will—towards a mob in a state of rebellion; that I reprimanded a very silly subaltern for a misplaced act of humanity. That I have been cashiered, too, they assert, in face of the 'Gazette,' which announces my appointment to an unattached majority. In a word, the enormity of the falsehood has never stayed their hand, and they write of me whatever their unthinking malevolence can suggest to them. You have, perhaps, seen some of these paragraphs?”

“Like every one else, I have read them occasionally; not very attentively, indeed. But, in truth, I'm not a reader of newspapers. Here, for instance, is this morning's as it came from Dublin, still unopened;” and she handed it as she spoke.

“Let us see if I be still honored with their notice,” said he, unfolding the paper, and running his eyes hastily over it. “Debate on the Sugar Bill—Prison Reforms—China—Reinforcements for Canada—Mail Service to the Colonies—Bankruptcy Court. Oh, here we have it—here it is!” and he crushed the paper while he folded down one part of it. “Shall I read it for you? The heading is very tempting: 'Late Military Scandal.—A very curious report is now going through our West-end Clubs, and especially such as are the resort of military officers. It is to the purport that a certain Field-officer of Cavalry—whose conduct has been the subject of severe strictures from the Press—will speedily be called to answer for a much graver offence than the transgression of regimental discipline. The story which has reached us is a very strange one, and we should call it incredible, if we were not informed, on author-ity, that one of our most distinguished Indian generals has declared himself fully satisfied of its truth in every particular.' Can you fancy anything worse than that, Miss Dill? An unknown somebody is alleged to be convinced of an unknown something that attaches to me; for, of course, I am designated as the 'Field-officer of Cavalry,' and the public is graciously pleased to hold me in abhorrence till I have found out my calumniator and refuted him!”

“It seems very hard. Who do you suspect is the Indian General alluded to?”

“Tell me, first of all,—does he exist?” “And this, too, you will not reply to, nor notice?” “Not, certainly, through such a channel as it reaches me. If the slanderer will stand forth and avow himself, I may know how to deal with him. But what has led us into this digression? I am sure it is as little to your taste as to mine. I have failed in my mission, and if I were able to justify every act of my life, what would it avail me? You have pronounced against me; at least, you will not take my brief.”

“What if I were retained by the other side?” said she, smiling.

“I never suspected that there was another side,” said he, with an air of extreme indifference. “Who is my formidable rival?”

“I might have told you if I saw you were really anxious on the subject.”

“It would be but hypocrisy in me to pretend it. If, for example, Major McCormick—”

“Oh, that is too bad!” cried Polly, interrupting. “This would mean an impertinence to Miss Barrington.”

“How pleasant we must have been! Almost five o'clock, and I scarcely thought it could be three!” said he, with an affected languor.

“'Time's foot is not heard when he treads upon flowers,'” said she, smiling.

“Where shall I find your father, Miss Dill? I want to tell him what a charming creature his daughter is, and how wretched I feel at not being able to win her favor.”

“Pray don't; or he might fall into my own mistake, and imagine that you wanted a lease of it for life.”

“Still cruel, still inexorable!” said he, with a mockery of affliction in his tone. “Will you say all the proper things—the regrets, and such like—I feel at not meeting him again; and if he has asked me to dinner—which I really forget—will you make the fitting apology?”

“And what is it, in the present case?”

“I 'm not exactly sure whether I am engaged to dine elsewhere, or too ill to dine at all.”

“Why not say it is the despair at being rejected renders you unequal to the effort? I mean, of course, by myself, Major Stapylton.”

“I have no objection; say so, if you like,” said he, with an insulting indifference. “Good-day, Miss Dill. This is the way to the road, I believe;” and, with a low bow, very deferential but very distant, he turned away to leave the garden. He had not, however, gone many paces, when he stopped and seemed to ponder. He looked up at the sky, singularly clear and cloudless as it was, without a breath of wind in the air; he gazed around him on every side, as if in search of an object he wanted; and then, taking out his purse, he drew forth a shilling and examined it. “Yes,” muttered he, “Chance has been my only counsellor for many a year, and the only one that never takes a bribe! And yet, is it not taking to the raft before the ship has foundered? True; but shall I be sure of the raft if I wait for the shipwreck? She is intensely crafty. She has that sort of head that loves a hard knot to unravel! Here goes! Let Destiny take all the consequences!” and as he flung up the piece of money in the air, he cried, “Head!” It was some minutes ere he could discover where it had fallen, amongst the close leaves of a border of strawberries. He bent down to look, and exclaimed, “Head! she has won!” Just as he arose from his stooping attitude he perceived that Polly was engaged in the adjoining walk, making a bouquet of roses. He sprang across the space, and stood beside her.

“I thought you had been a mile off by this time, at least,” said she, calmly.

“So I meant, and so I intended; but just as I parted from you, a thought struck me—one of those thoughts which come from no process of reasoning or reflection, but seem impelled by a force out of our own natures—that I would come back and tell you something that was passing in my mind. Can you guess it?”

“No; except it be that you are sorry for having trifled so unfeelingly with my hopes, and have come back to

make the best reparation in your power, asking me to forgive and accept you."

"You have guessed aright; it was for that I returned."

"What a clever guess I made! Confess I am very ready-witted!"

"You are; and it is to engage those ready wits in my behalf that I am now before you."

"'At my feet,' sir, is the appropriate expression. I wonder how a gentleman so suited to be the hero of a story could forget the language of the novel."

"I want you to be serious," said he, almost sternly.

"And why should that provoke seriousness from *me* which only costs *you* levity?"

"Levity!—where is the levity?"

"Is it not this instant that you flung a shilling in the air, and cried out, as you looked on it, 'She has won'? Is it not that you asked Chance to decide for you what most men are led to by their affections, or at least their interests; and if so, is levity not the name for this?"

"True in part, but not in whole; for I felt it was *I* who had won when 'head' came uppermost."

"And yet you have lost."

"How so! You refuse me?"

"I forgive your astonishment. It is really strange, but I do refuse you."

"But why? Are you piqued with me for anything that occurred this morning? Have I offended you by anything that dropped from me in that conversation? Tell me frankly, that I may, if in my power, rectify it."

"No; I rather felt flattered at the notion of being consulted. I thought it a great tribute to my clear-headedness and my tact."

"Then tell me what it was."

"You really wish it?"

"I do."

"Insist upon it?"

"I insist upon it."

"Well, it was this. Seeing that you were intrusting your future fortune to chance, I thought that I would do the same, and so I tossed up whether, opportunity serving, I should accept you or a certain other, and the other won!"

"May I ask for the name of my fortunate rival?"

"I don't think it is very fair, perhaps not altogether delicate of you; and the more since he has not proposed, nor possibly ever may. But no matter, you shall hear his name. It was Major McCormick."

"McCormick! You mean this for an insult to me, Miss Dill?"

“Well, it certainly is open to that objection,” said she, with a very slight closure of her eyes, and a look of steady, resolute defiance.

“And in this way,” continued he, “to throw ridicule over the offer I have made you?”

“Scarcely that; the proposition was in itself too ridiculous to require any such aid from me.”

For a moment Stapylton lost his self-possession, and he turned on her with a look of savage malignity.

“An insult, and an intentional insult!” said he; “a bold thing to avow.”

“I don't think so, Major Stapylton. We have been playing a very rough game with each other, and it is not very wonderful if each of us should have to complain of hard treatment.”

“Could not so very clever a person as Miss Dill perceive that I was only jesting?” said he, with a cutting insolence in his tone.

“I assure you that I did not,” said she, calmly; “had I known or even suspected it was a jest, I never should have been angry. That the distinguished Major Stapylton should mock and quiz—or whatever be the name for it—the doctor's daughter, however questionable the good taste, was, after all, only a passing slight. The thought of asking her to marry him was different,—that was an outrage!”

“You shall pay for this one day, perhaps,” said he, biting his lip.

“No, Major Stapylton,” said she, laughing; “this is not a debt of honor; you can afford to ignore it.”

“I tell you again, you shall pay for it.”

“Till then, sir!” said she, with a courtesy; and without giving him time for another word, she turned and re-entered the house.

Scarcely had Stapylton gained the road when he was joined by McCormick. “Faith, you didn't get the best of that brush, anyhow,” said he, with a grin.

“What do you mean, sir?” replied Stapylton, savagely.

“I mean that I heard every word that passed between you, and I would n't have been standing in your shoes for a fifty-pound note.”

“How is your rheumatism this morning?” asked Stapylton, blandly.

“Pretty much as it always is,” croaked out the other.

“Be thankful to it, then; for if you were not a cripple, I 'd throw you into that river as sure as I stand here to say it.”

Major McCormick did not wait for a less merciful moment, but hobbled away from the spot with all the speed he could muster.

CHAPTER XIV. STORMS

When Stapylton stepped out of his boat and landed at “The Home,” the first person he saw was certainly the last in his wishes. It was Miss Dinah who stood at the jetty, as though awaiting him. Scarcely deigning to notice, beyond a faint smile of acquiescence, the somewhat bungling explanation he gave of his absence, she asked if he had met her brother.

“No,” said he. “I left the village a couple of hours ago; rather loitering, as I came along, to enjoy the river scenery.”

“He took the road, and in this way missed you,” said she, dryly.

“How unfortunate!—for me, I mean, of course. I own to you, Miss Barrington, wide as the difference between our ages, I never yet met any one so thoroughly companionable to me as your brother. To meet a man so consummately acquainted with the world, and yet not soured by his knowledge; to see the ripe wisdom of age blended with the generous warmth of youth; to find one whose experiences only make him more patient, more forgiving, more trustful—”

“Too trustful, Major Stapylton, far too trustful.” And her bold gray eyes were turned upon him as she spoke, with a significance that could not be mistaken.

“It is a noble feeling, madam,” said he, haughtily.

“It is a great misfortune to its possessor, sir.”

“Can we deem that misfortune, Miss Barrington, which enlarges the charity of our natures, and teaches us to be slow to think ill?”

Not paying the slightest attention to his question, she said,—

“My brother went in search of you, sir, to place in your hands some very urgent letters from the Horse Guards, and which a special messenger brought here this morning.”

“Truly kind of him. They relate, I have no doubt, to my Indian appointment. They told me I should have news by to-day or to-morrow.”

“He received a letter also for himself, sir, which he desired to show you.”

“About his lawsuit, of course? It is alike a pleasure and a duty to me to serve him in that affair.”

“It more nearly concerns yourself, sir,” said she, in the same cold, stern tone; “though it has certainly its bearing on the case you speak of.”

“More nearly concerns myself!” said he, repeating her words slowly. “I am about the worst guesser of a riddle in the world, Miss Barrington. Would you kindly relieve my curiosity? Is this letter a continuation of those cowardly attacks which, in the want of a worthier theme, the Press have amused themselves by making upon me? Is it possible that some enemy has had the malice to attack me through my friends?”

“The writer of the letter in question is a sufficient guarantee for its honor, Mr. Withering.”

“Mr. Withering!” repeated he, with a start, and then, as suddenly assuming an easy smile, added: “I am perfectly tranquil to find myself in such hands as Mr. Withering's. And what, pray, does *he* say of me?”

“Will you excuse me, Major Stapylton, if I do not enter upon a subject on which I am not merely very imperfectly informed, but on which so humble a judgment as mine would be valueless? My brother showed me the letter very hurriedly; I had but time to see to what it referred, and to be aware that it was his duty to let you see it at once,—if possible, indeed, before you were again under his roof.”

“What a grave significance your words have, Miss Barrington!” said he, with a cold smile. “They actually set me to think over all my faults and failings, and wonder for which of them I am now arraigned.”

“We do not profess to judge you, sir.”

By this time they had sauntered up to the little garden in front of the cottage, within the paling of which Josephine was busily engaged in training a japonica. She arose as she heard the voices, and in her accustomed tone wished Stapylton good-evening. “*She*, at least, has heard nothing of all this,” muttered he to himself, as he saluted her. He then opened the little wicket; and Miss Barrington passed in, acknowledging his attention by a short nod, as she walked hastily forward and entered the cottage. Instead of following her, Stapylton closed the wicket again, remaining on the outside, and leaning his arm on the upper rail.

“Why do you perform sentry? Are you not free to enter the fortress?” said Fifine.

“I half suspect not,” said he, in a low tone, and to hear which she was obliged to draw nigher to where he stood.

“What do you mean? I don't understand you!”

“No great wonder, for I don't understand myself. Your aunt has, however, in her own most mysterious way, given me to believe that somebody has written something about me to somebody else, and until I clear up what in all probability I shall never hear, that I had better keep to what the Scotch call the 'back o' the gate.'”

“This is quite unintelligible.”

“I hope it is, for it is almost unendurable. I am sorely afraid,” added he, after a minute, “that I am not so

patient as I ought to be under Miss Barrington's strictures. I am so much more in the habit of command than of obedience, that I may forget myself now and then. To *you*, however, I am ready to submit all my past life and conduct. By you I am willing to be judged. If these cruel calumnies which are going the round of the papers on me have lowered me in your estimation, my case is a lost one; but if, as I love to think, your woman's heart resents an injustice,—if, taking counsel of your courage and your generosity, you feel it is not the time to withdraw esteem when the dark hour of adversity looms over a man,—then, I care no more for these slanders than for the veriest trifles which cross one's every-day life. In one word,—your verdict is life or death to me."

"In that case," said she, with an effort to dispel the seriousness of his manner, "I must have time to consider my sentence."

"But that is exactly what you cannot have, Josephine," said he; and there was a certain earnestness in his voice and look, which made her hear him call her by her name without any sense of being off ended. "First relieve the suffering; there will be ample leisure to question the sufferer afterwards. The Good Samaritan wasted few words, and asked for no time. The noblest services are those of which the cost is never calculated. Your own heart can tell you: can you befriend me, and will you?"

"I do not know what it is you ask of me," said she, with a frank boldness which actually disconcerted him. "Tell me distinctly, what is it?"

"I will tell you," said he, taking her hand, but so gently, so respectfully withal, that she did not at first withdraw it,—"I will tell you. It is that you will share that fate on which fortune is now frowning; that you will add your own high-couraged heart to that of one who never knew a fear till now; that you will accept my lot in this the day of my reverse, and enable me to turn upon my pursuers and scatter them. To-morrow or next day will be too late. It is now, at this hour, that friends hold back, that one more than friend is needed. Can you be that, Josephine?"

"No!" said she, firmly. "If I read your meaning aright, I cannot."

"You cannot love me, Josephine," said he, in a voice of intense emotion; and though he waited some time for her to speak, she was silent. "It is true, then," said he, passionately, "the slanderers have done their work!"

"I know nothing of these calumnies. When my grandfather told me that they accused you falsely, and condemned you unfairly, I believed him. I am as ready as ever to say so. I do not understand your cause; but I believe you to be a true and gallant gentleman!"

"But yet, not one to love!" whispered he, faintly.

Again she was silent, and for some time he did not speak.

"A true and gallant gentleman!" said he, slowly repeating her own words; "and if so, is it an unsafe keeping to which to intrust your happiness? It is no graceful task to have oneself for a theme; but I cannot help it. I have no witnesses to call to character; a few brief lines in an army list, and some scars—old reminders of French sabres—are poor certificates, and yet I have no others."

There was something which touched her in the sadness of his tone as he said these words, and if she knew how, she would have spoken to him in kindliness. He mistook the struggle for a change of purpose, and with greater eagerness continued: "After all I am scarcely more alone in the world than you are! The dear friends who now surround you cannot be long spared, and what isolation will be your fate then! Think of this, and think, too, how, in assuring your own future, you rescue mine."

Very differently from his former speech did the present affect her; and her cheeks glowed and her eyes flashed as she said, "I have never intrusted my fate to your keeping, sir; and you may spare yourself all anxiety about it."

"You mistake me. You wrong me, Josephine—"

"You wrong yourself when you call me by my Christian name; and you arm me with distrust of one who would presume upon an interest he has not created."

"You refuse me, then?" said he, slowly and calmly.

"Once, and forever!"

"It may be that you are mistaken, Miss Barrington. It may be that this other affection, which you prefer to mine, is but the sickly sentiment of a foolish boy, whose life up to this has not given one single guarantee, nor shown one single trait of those which make 'true and gallant gentlemen.' But you have made your choice."

"I have," said she, with a low but firm voice.

"You acknowledge, then, that I was right," cried he, suddenly; "there is a prior attachment? Your heart is not your own to give?"

"And by what right do you presume to question me? Who are you, that dares to do this?"

"Who am I?" cried he, and for once his voice rose to the discordant ring of passion.

"Yes, that was my question," repeated she, firmly.

"So, then, you have had your lesson, young lady," said he; and the words came from him with a hissing sound, that indicated intense anger. "Who am I? You want my birth, my parentage, my bringing up! Had you no friend who could have asked this in your stead? Or were all those around you so bereft of courage that they deputed to a young girl what should have been the office of a man?"

Though the savage earnestness of his manner startled, it did not affright her; and it was with a cold quietness she said, "If you had known my father, Major Stapylton, I suspect you would not have accused his daughter of cowardice!"

"Was he so very terrible?" said he, with a smile that was half a sneer.

"He would have been, to a man like you."

"To a man like me,—a man like me! Do you know, young lady, that either your words are very idle words or very offensive ones?"

"And yet I have no wish to recall them, sir."

"It would be better you could find some one to sustain them. Unfortunately, however, you cannot ask that gallant gentleman we were just talking of; for it is only the other day, and after passing over to Calais to meet me, his friends pretend that there is some obstacle to our meeting. I owe my tailor or my bootmaker something; or I have not paid my subscription to a club; or I have left an unsettled bill ar Baden. I really forget the precise pretext; but it was one which to them seemed quite sufficient to balk me of a redress, and at the same time to shelter their friend."

"I will not believe one word of it, sir!"

"Well, we have at least arrived at a perfect frankness in our intercourse. May I ask you, young lady, which of your relatives has suggested your present course! Is it to your aunt or to your grandfather I must go for an explanation?"

"I suspect it is to me, Major Stapylton," said Barrington, as he came from behind Josephine. "It is to me you must address yourself. Fifine, my dear, your aunt is looking for you; go and tell her, too, that I am quite ready for tea, and you will find me here when it is ready. Major Stapylton and I will take a stroll along the river-side." Now this last was less an invitation than a sort of significant hint to Stapylton that his host had no intention to ask him to cross his threshold, at least for the present; and, indeed, as Barrington passed out and closed the wicket after him, he seemed as though closing the entrance forever.

With a manner far more assured thau his wont, Barrington said: "I have been in pursuit of you, Major Stapylton, since four o'clock. I missed you by having taken the road instead of the river; and am much grieved that the communication I have to make you should not take place anywhere rather than near my roof or within my own gates."

"I am to suppose from your words, sir, that what you are about to say can scarcely be said to a friend; and if so, cannot you hit upon a more convenient mode of making your communication?"

"I think not. I believe that I shall be dealing more fairly with you by saying what I have to say in person."

"Go on," said Stapylton, calmly, as the other paused.

"You are aware," continued Barrington, "that the chief obstacle to a settlement of the claims I have long preferred against the India Company has been a certain document which they possess, declaring that a large portion of the territory held by the Rajah of Luckerabad was not amenable to the laws that regulate succession, being what is called 'Lurkar-teea,'—conquered country,—over which, under no circumstances, could the Rajah exercise prospective rights. To this deed, for their better protection, the Company obtained the signature and seal of the Rajah himself, by means which, of course, we could never discover; but they held it, and always declared that no portion of my son's claim could extend to these lands. Now, as they denied that he could succeed to what are called the 'Turban lands,' meaning the right of sovereignty—being a British subject—on the one hand, and rejected his claim to these conquered countries on the other,—they excluded him altogether."

"My dear sir," said Stapylton, mildly, "I'm shocked to interrupt you, but I am forced to ask, what is the intimate bearing of all this upon me, or on your position towards me?"

"Have a little patience, sir, and suffer me to proceed. If it should turn out that this document—I mean that which bears the signature and seal of the Rajah—should be a forgery; if, I say, it could be shown that what the India Board have long relied on to sustain their case and corroborate their own view could be proved false, a great point would be gained towards the establishment of our claim."

"Doubtless," said Stapylton, with the half-peevish indifference of one listening against his will.

"Well, there is a good prospect of this," said Barring-ton, boldly. "Nay, more, it is a certainty."

"Mr. Barrington," said Stapylton, drawing himself haughtily up, "a few hours ago this history would have had a very great interest for me. My hopes pointed to a very close relationship with your family; the last hour has sufficed to dispel those hopes. Your granddaughter has rejected me so decidedly that I cannot presume to suppose a change in her opinion possible. Let me not then, obtain any share in your confidence to which I have no right whatever."

"What I am about to say will have more interest for you, sir," continued Barrington. "I am about to mention a name that you will recognize,—the Moonshee, Ali Gohur."

Stapylton started, and dropped the cigar he was smoking. To take out another and light it, however, sufficed to employ him, as he murmured between his teeth, "Go on."

"This man says—" continued Barrington.

"Said, perhaps, if you like," broke in Stapylton, "for he died some months ago."

"No; he is alive at this hour. He was on board the Indiaman that was run down by the transport. He was saved and carried on board the 'Regulus' by the intrepidity of young Dill. He is now recovering rapidly from the injuries he received, and at the date of the letter which I hold here, was able to be in daily communication with Colonel Hunter, who is the writer of this."

"I wish the gallant Colonel honester company. Are you aware, Mr. Barrington, that you are speaking of one of the greatest rascals of a country not famed for its integrity?"

"He lays no claim to such for the past; but he would seem desirous to make some reparation for a long course of iniquity."

"Charmed for his sake, and that of his well-wishers, if he have any. But, once again, sir, and at all the risk of appearing very impatient, what concern has all this for me?"

"A great deal, sir. The Moonshee declares that he has been for years back in close correspondence with a man we long since believed dead, and that this man was known to have communicated constantly with the law advisers of the India Board in a manner adverse to us, he being none other than the son of the notorious Sam Edwardes, whom he always addressed under cover to Captain Horace Stapylton, Prince's Hussars."

"This is—strange enough, when one thinks of the quarter it comes from—perfectly true. I came to know Edwardes when on my voyage home, invalided. He took immense trouble about me, nursed and tended me, and, in return, asked as a favor to have some letters he was expecting addressed to my care. I neither knew

who he was, nor cared. He got his letters, and I suppose read them; but of their contents, I, it is needless to say, know nothing. I am speaking of a dozen years ago, or, at least, eight or ten, for since that time I have never heard of either Edwardes or his friend.”

“He tells a different story. He asserts that to his letters, forwarded to the same address up to the period of last March, he regularly received replies; but at last finding that the writer was disposed to get rid of him, he obtained means to circulate a report of his death, and sailed for Europe to prefer his claims, whatever they be, in person.”

“And if every word of this were true, Mr. Barrington, which I don't suspect it is, how, in the name of common sense, does it concern me? I don't suppose I ever took my own letters at a post-office twice in my life. My servant, who has lived with me fourteen years, may, for aught I know, have been bribed to abstract these letters on their arrival; they would be easily recognized by the very superscription. This is one way the thing might have been done. There may have been fifty more, for aught I know or care.”

“But you don't deny that you knew Edwardes, and had a close intimacy with him?—a circumstance which you never revealed to Withering or myself.”

“It is not at all improbable I may have known half a dozen of that name. It is by no means an uncommon one, not to say that I have a singularly infelicitous memory for people's names. But for the last time, sir, I must protest against this conversation going any further. You have taken upon you, I would hope without intending it, the tone of a French *Juge d'Instruction* in the interrogation of a prisoner. You have questioned and cross-questioned me, asking how I can account for this, or explain that. Now, I am ready to concede a great deal to your position as my host, and to your years, but really I must entreat of you not to push my deference for these beyond the limits of the respect I owe myself. You very properly warned me at the opening of this conversation that it ought not to have the sanction of your roof-tree. I have only to beg that if it is to go any further, that it be conducted in such a shape as is usual between gentlemen who have an explanation to ask, or a satisfaction to demand.”

There was consummate craft in giving the discussion this turn. Stapylton well knew the nature of the man he was addressing, and that after the passing allusion to his character as a host, he only needed to hint at the possibility of a meeting to recall him to a degree of respect only short of deference for his opponent.

“I defer to you at once, Major Stapylton,” said the old man, with a bland courtesy, as he uncovered and bowed. “There was a time when I should scarcely have required the admonition you have given me.”

“I am glad to perceive that you understand me so readily,” said Stapylton, who could scarcely repress the joy he felt at the success of his diversion; “and that nothing may mar our future understanding, this is my address in London, where I shall wait your orders for a week.”

Though the stroke was shrewdly intended, and meant to throw upon Barrington all the onus of the provocation, the Major little suspected that it was the one solitary subject of which his opponent was a master. On the “duello” Barrington was an authority beyond appeal, and no subtlety, however well contrived, could embarrass or involve him.

“I have no satisfaction to claim at your hands, Major Stapylton,” said he, calmly. “My friend, Mr. Withering, when he sent me these letters, knew you were my guest, and he said, 'Read them to Major Stapylton. Let him know what is said of him, and who says it.'”

“And, perhaps, you ought to add, sir, who gives it the sanction of his belief,” broke in Stapylton, angrily. “You never took the trouble to recite these charges till they obtained your credence.”

“You have said nothing to disprove them,” said the old man, quickly.

“That is enough,—quite enough, sir; we understand each other perfectly. You allege certain things against me as injuries done you, and you wait for *me* to resent the imputation. I 'll not balk you, be assured of it. The address I have given you in London will enable you to communicate with me when you arrive there; for I presume this matter had better be settled in France or Holland.”

“I think so,” said Barrington, with the air of a man thoroughly at his ease.

“I need not say, Mr. Barrington, the regret it gives me that it was not one of my detractors himself, and not their dupe, that should occupy this place.”

“The dupe, sir, is very much at your service.”

“Till we meet again,” said Stapylton, raising his hat as he turned away. In his haste and the confusion of the moment, he took the path that led towards the cottage; nor did he discover his mistake till he heard Barrington's voice calling out to Darby,—

“Get the boat ready to take Major Stapylton to Inistioge.”

“You forget none of the precepts of hospitality,” said Stapylton, wheeling hastily around, and directing his steps towards the river.

Barrington looked after him as he went, and probably in his long and varied life, crossed with many a care and many troubles, he had never felt the pain of such severe self-reproach as in that moment. To see his guest, the man who had sat at his board and eaten his salt, going out into the dreary night without one hospitable effort to detain him, without a pledge to his health, without a warm shake of his hand, or one hearty wish for his return.

“Dear, dear!” muttered he, to himself, “what is the world come to! I thought I had no more experiences to learn of suffering; but here is a new one. Who would have thought to see the day that Peter Barrington would treat his guest this fashion?”

“Are you coming in to tea, grandpapa?” cried Josephine, from the garden.

“Here I am, my dear!”

“And your guest, Peter, what has become of him?” said Dinah.

“He had some very urgent business at Kilkenny; something that could not admit of delay, I opine.”

“But you have not let him go without his letters, surely. Here are all these formidable-looking despatches,

on his Majesty's service, on the chimney-piece.”

“How forgetful of me!” cried he, as, snatching them up, he hastened down to the river-side. The boat, however, had just gone; and although he shouted and called at the top of his voice, no answer came, and he turned back at last, vexed and disappointed.

“I shall have to start for Dublin to-morrow, Dinah,” said he, as he walked thoughtfully up and down the room. “I must have Withering's advice on these letters. There are very pressing matters to be thought of here, and I can take Major Stapylton's despatches with me. I am certain to hear of him somewhere.”

Miss Barrington turned her eyes full upon him, and watched him narrowly. She was a keen detector of motives, and she scanned her brother's face with no common keenness, and yet she could see nothing beyond the preoccupation she had often seen. There was no impatience, no anxiety. A shade more thoughtful, perhaps, and even that passed off, as he sat down to his tea, and asked Fifine what commissions she had for the capital.

“You will leave by the evening mail, I suppose?” said Miss Barrington.

“No, Dinah, night travelling wearies me. I will take the coach as it passes the gate to-morrow at five; this will bring me in time to catch Withering at his late dinner, and a pleasanter way to finish a day's travel no man need ask for.”

Nothing could be more easily spoken than these words, and Miss Dinah felt reassured by them, and left the room to give some orders about his journey.

“Fifine, darling,” said Barrington, after a pause, “do you like your life here?”

“Of course I do, grandpapa. How could I wish for one more happy?”

“But it is somewhat dull for one so young,—somewhat solitary for a fair, bright creature, who might reasonably enough care for pleasure and the world.”

“To me it is a round of gayety, grandpapa; so that I almost felt inclined yesterday to wish for some quiet davs with aunt and yourself,—some of those dreamy days like what we had in Germany.”

“I fear me much, darling, that I contribute but little to the pleasure. My head is so full of one care or another, I am but sorry company, Fifine.”

“If you only knew how dull we are without you! How heavily the day drags on even with the occupations you take no share in; how we miss your steps on the stairs and your voice in the garden, and that merry laugh that sets ourselves a-laughing just by its own ring.”

“And you would miss me, then?” said he, as he pushed the hair from her temples, and stared steadfastly at her face,—“you would miss me?”

“It would only be half life without you,” cried she, passionately.

“So much the worse,—so much the worse!” muttered he; and he turned away, and drew his hand across his eyes. “This life of ours, Fifine, is a huge battle-field; and though the comrades fall fast around him, the brave soldier will fight on to the last.”

“You don't want a dress-coat, brother Peter, to dine with Withering, so I have just put up what will serve you for three days, or four, at furthest,” said Dinah, entering. “What will be the extent of your stay?”

“Let me have a black coat, Dinah; there 's no saying what great man may not ask for my company; and it might be a week before I get back again.”

“There's no necessity it should be anything of the kind, Peter; and with your habits an hotel life is scarcely an economy. Come, Fifine, get to bed, child. You'll have to be up at daybreak. Your grandpapa won't think his coffee drinkable, if it is not made by your hands.”

And with this remark, beautifully balanced between a reproof and a flattery, she proceeded to blow out the candles, which was her accustomed mode of sending her company to their rooms.

CHAPTER XV. THE OLD LEAVEN

Withering arrived at his own door just as Barrington drove up to it. “I knew my letter would bring you up to town, Barrington,” said he; “and I was so sure of it that I ordered a saddle of mutton for your dinner, and refused an invitation to the Chancellor's.”

“And quite right too. Iam far better company, Tom. Are we to be all alone?”

“All alone.”

“That was exactly what I wanted. Now, as I need a long evening with you, the sooner they serve the soup the better; and be sure you give your orders that nobody be admitted.”

If Mr. Withering's venerable butler, an official long versed in the mysteries of his office, were to have been questioned on the subject, it is not improbable he would have declared that he never assisted at a pleasanter tête-â tête than that day's dinner. They enjoyed their good dinner and their good wine like men who bring to the enjoyment a ripe experience of such pleasures, and they talked with the rare zest of good talkers and old friends.

“We are in favor with Nicholas,” said Withering, as the butler withdrew, and left them alone, “or he would never have given us that bottle of port. Do you mark, Barrington, it's the green seal that John Bushe begged so hard for one night, and all unsuccessfully.”

“It is rare stuff!” said Barrington, looking at it between him and the light.

“And it was that story of yours of the Kerry election that won it. The old fellow had to rush out of the room to have his laugh out.”

“Do you know, Tom,” said Barrington, as he sipped his wine, “I believe, in another generation, nobody will laugh at all. Since you and I were boys, the world has taken a very serious turn. Not that it is much wiser, or better, or more moral, or more cultivated, but it is graver. The old jollity would be now set down simply for vulgarity, and with many people a joke is only short of an insult.”

“Shall I tell you why, Peter? We got our reputation for wit, just as we made our name for manufacture, and there sprung up a mass of impostors in consequence,—fellows who made poor jokes and rotten calicoes, that so disgusted the world that people have gone to France for their fun, and to Germany for their furniture. That is, to my taking, the reason of all this social reaction.”

“Perhaps you are right, Tom. Old Joe Millers are not unlike cloth made out of devil's dust. One can't expect much wear out of either.”

“We must secure another bottle from that bin before Nicholas changes his mind,” said Withering, rising to ring the bell.

“No, Tom, not for me. I want all the calm and all the judgment I can muster, and don't ask me to take more wine. I have much to say to you.”

“Of course you have. I knew well that packet of letters would bring you up to town; but you have had scarcely time to read them.”

“Very hurriedly, I confess. They reached me yesterday afternoon; and when I had run my eyes hastily over them, I said, 'Stapylton must see this at once.' The man was my guest,—he was under my roof,—there could not be a question about how to deal with him. He was out, however, when the packet reached my hands; and while the pony was being harnessed, I took another look over that letter from Colonel Hunter. It shocked me, Tom, I confess; because there flashed upon me quite suddenly the recollection of the promptitude with which the India Board at home here were provided with an answer to each demand we made. It was not merely that when we advanced a step they met us; but we could scarcely meditate a move that they were not in activity to repel it.”

“I saw that, too, and was struck by it,” said Withering.

“True enough, Tom. I remember a remark of yours one day. 'These people,' said you, 'have our range so accurately, one would suspect they had stepped the ground.'” The lawyer smiled at the compliment to his acuteness, and the other went on: “As I read further, I thought Stapylton had been betrayed,—his correspondent in India had shown his letters. 'Our enemies,' said I, 'have seen our despatches, and are playing with our cards on the table.' No thought of distrust,—not a suspicion against his loyalty had ever crossed me till I met him. I came unexpectedly upon him, however, before the door, and there was a ring and resonance in his voice as I came up that startled me! Passion forgets to shut the door sometimes, and one can see in an angry mind what you never suspected in the calm one. I took him up at once, without suffering him to recover his composure, and read him a part of Hunter's letter. He was ready enough with his reply; he knew the Moonshee by reputation as a man of the worst character, but had suffered him to address certain letters under cover to him, as a convenience to the person they were meant for, and who was no other than the son of the notorious Sam Edwardes. 'Whom you have known all this while,' said I, 'without ever acknowledging to us?'

“'Whom I did know some years back,' replied he, 'but never thought of connecting with the name of Colonel Barrington's enemy.' All this was possible enough, Tom; besides, his manner was frank and open in the extreme. It was only at last, as I dwelt, what he deemed too pertinaciously, on this point, that he suddenly lost control of himself, and said, 'I will have no more of this'—or, 'This must go no further'—or some words to that effect.”

“Ha! the probe had touched the sore spot, eh?” cried Withering. “Go on!”

“'And if you desire further explanations from me, you must ask for them at the price men pay for inflicting unmerited insult.'”

“Cleverly turned, cleverly done,” said Withering; “but you were not to be deceived and drawn off by that feint, eh?”

“Feint or not, it succeeded, Tom. He made me feel that I had injured him; and as he would not accept of my excuses,—as, in fact, he did not give me time to make them—”

“He got you into a quarrel, is n't that the truth?” asked Withering, hotly.

“Come, come, Tom, be reasonable; he had perfect right on his side. There was what he felt as a very grave imputation upon him; that is, I had made a charge, and his explanation had not satisfied me,—or, at all events, I had not said I was satisfied,—and we each of us, I take it, were somewhat warmer than we need have been.”

“And you are going to meet him,—going to fight a duel?”

“Well, if I am, it will not be the first time.”

“And can you tell for what? Will you be able to make any man of common intelligence understand for what you are going out?”

“I hope so. I have the man in my eye. No, no, don't make a wry face, Tom. It's another old friend I was thinking of to help me through this affair, and I sincerely trust he will not be so hard to instruct as you imagine.”

“How old are you, Barrington?”

“Dinah says eighty-one; but I suspect she cheats me. I think I am eighty-three.”

“And is it at eighty-three that men fight duels?”

“' Not if they can help it, Tom, certainly. I have never been out since I shot Tom Connelly in the knee, which was a matter of forty years ago, and I had good hopes it was to be my last exploit of this kind. But what is to be done if a man tells you that your age is your protection; that if it had not been for your white hairs and your shaking ankles, that he 'd have resented your conduct or your words to him? Faith, I think it puts a fellow on his mettle to show that his heart is all right, though his hand may tremble.”

“I 'll not take any share in such a folly. I tell you, Barrington, the world for whom you are doing this will be the very first to scout its absurdity. Just remember for a moment we are not living in the old days before the Union, and we have not the right, if we had the power, to throw our age back into the barbarism it has escaped from.”

“Barbarism! The days of poor Yelverton, and Ponsonby, and Harry Grattan, and Parsons, and Ned Lysaght, barbarism! Ah! my dear Tom, I wish we had a few of such barbarians here now, and I 'd ask for another bottle or two of that port.”

“I'll not give it a milder word; and what's more, I'll not suffer you to tarnish a time-honored name by a folly which even a boy would be blamed for. My dear old friend, just grant me a little patience.”

“This is cool, certainly,” said Barrington, laughing. “You have said all manner of outrageous things to me for half an hour unopposed, and now you cry have patience.”

“Give me your honor now that this shall not go further.”

“I cannot, Tom,—I assure you, I cannot.”

“What do you mean by 'you cannot'?” cried Withering, angrily.

“I mean just what I said. If you had accepted a man's brief, Tom Withering, there is a professional etiquette which would prevent your giving it up and abandoning him; and so there are situations between men of the world which claim exactly as rigid an observance. I told Stapylton I would be at his orders, and I mean to keep my word.”

“Not if you had no right to pledge it; not if I can prove to you that this quarrel was a mere got-up altercation to turn you from an inquiry which this man dare not face.”

“This is too subtle for me, Withering,—far too subtle.”

“No such thing, Barrington; but I will make it plainer. How if the man you are going to meet had no right to the name he bears?”

“What do I care for his name?”

“Don't you care for the falsehood by which he has assumed one that is not his own?”

“I may be sorry that he is not more clean-handed; but I tell you again, Tom, they never indulged such punctilios in our young days, and I 'm too old to go to school again!”

“I declare, Barrington, you provoke me,” said the lawyer, rising, and pacing the room with hasty strides. “After years and years of weary toil, almost disheartened by defeat and failure, we at last see the outline of land; a few more days—or it may be hours—of perseverance may accomplish our task. Since I arose this morning I have learned more of our case, seen my way more clearly through matters which have long puzzled me, than the cost of years has taught me. I have passed four hours with one who would give his life to serve you, but whose name I was not at liberty to divulge, save in the last necessity, and the reasons for which reserve I heartily concur in; and now, by a rash and foolish altercation, you would jeopardy everything. Do you wonder if I lose temper?”

“You have got me into such a state of bewilderment, Tom, that I don't know what I am asked to agree to. But who is your friend,—is n't it a woman?”

“It is not a woman.”

“I'd have bet five pounds it was! When as sharp a fellow as you takes the wrong line of country, it's generally a woman is leading the way over the fences.”

“This time your clever theory is at fault.”

“Well, who is it? Out with him, Tom. I have not so many stanch friends in the world that I can afford to ignore them.”

“I will tell you his name on one condition.”

“I agree. What is the condition?”

“It is this: that when you hear it you will dismiss from your mind—though it be only for a brief space—all the prejudices that years may have heaped against him, and suffer me to show you that *you*, with all your belief in your own fairness, are not just; and with a firm conviction in your own generosity, might be more generous. There 's my condition!”

“Well, it must be owned I am going to pay pretty smartly for my information,” said Barrington, laughing. “And if you are about to preach to me, it will not be a 'charity' sermon; but, as I said before, I agree to everything.”

Withering stopped his walk and resumed it again. It was evident he had not satisfied himself how he should proceed, and he looked agitated and undecided. “Barrington,” said he, at last, “you have had about as many reverses in life as most men, and must have met with fully your share of ingratitude and its treatment. Do you feel, now, in looking back, that there are certain fellows you cannot forgive?”

“One or two, perhaps, push me harder than the rest; but if I have no gout flying about me, I don't think I bear them any malice.”

“Well, you have no gouty symptoms now, I take it?”

“Never felt better for the last twenty years.”

“That is as it should be; for I want to talk to you of a man who, in all our friendship, you have never mentioned to me, but whose name I know will open an old wound,—Ormsby Conyers.”

Barrington laid down the glass he was lifting to his lips, and covered his face with both his hands, nor for some moments did he speak a word. “Withering,” said he, and his voice trembled as he spoke, “even your friendship has scarcely the right to go this far. The injury the man you speak of did me meets me every morning as I open my eyes, and my first prayer each day is that I may forgive him, for every now and then, as my lone lot in life comes strongly before me, I have need to pray for this; but I have succeeded at last,—I have forgiven him from my heart; but, dear friend, let us not talk of what tears open wounds that bleed afresh at a

touch. I beseech you, let all that be a bygone.”

“That is more than I can do, Barrington; for it is not to me you must acknowledge you have forgiven this man,—you must tell it to himself.”

“That is not needed, Tom. Thousands of long miles separate us, and will in all likelihood separate us to the last. What does he want with my forgiveness, which is less a question between him and me than between me and my own heart?”

“And yet it is what he most desires on earth; he told me so within an hour!”

“Told you so,—and within an hour?”

“Yes, Barrington, he is here. Not in the house,” added he, hastily, for the suddenness of the announcement had startled the old man, and agitated him greatly. “Be calm, my dear friend,” said Withering, laying a hand on the other's shoulder. “He who is now come to claim your forgiveness has never injured you to the extent you believe. He asks it as the last tribute to one he loved only less than you loved him. He has told me everything; never sparing himself, nor seeking by any subtlety to excuse a particle of his conduct. Let me tell you that story as I heard it. It will be some solace to you to know that your noble-hearted son inspired a friendship which, after the long lapse of years, extracts such an atonement as one act of disloyalty to it could demand. This was Ormsby Conyers's one and only treason to the love that bound them. Listen to it!”

Barrington tried to speak, but could not; so he nodded an assent, and Withering continued. His story was that which the reader has already heard from the lips of Conyers himself, and the old lawyer told it well. If he did not attempt to extenuate the offence and wrong of Conyers, he showed the power and strength of an affection which could make one of the haughtiest of men come forward to accuse himself, and at every cost of humiliation vindicate the noble nature of his friend.

“And why not have avowed all this before?—why not have spared himself years of self-accusing, and me years of aggravated misery?” cried Barrington.

“He did make the attempt. He came to England about eighteen years ago, and his first care was to write to you. He asked to be allowed to see you, and sent you at the same time an admission that he had injured you, and was come to seek your forgiveness.”

“That's true, Tom; all strictly true. I remember all about it. His letter was such a one as an enemy might have used to crush him. My own temper at the time was not to be trusted too far; sorrow was making me cruel, and might make me vindictive; so I sent it back to him, and hinted it was safer in *his* hands than *mine*.”

“And he has never forgotten your generosity. He said, 'It was what well became the father of George Barrington. '”

“If he is here in this city, now, let me see him. Remember, Withering, when a man comes to my age his time is short. Cannot we go to him at once?”

“Not feeling certain of your coming up to town to-day, I had arranged with Conyers to start for 'The Home' tomorrow; we were to await the post hour, and, if no letter came from you, to leave at ten o'clock. I was to take him up at Elvidge's Hotel. What say you if I drive him down to Reynolds's? You stop there, I know.”

“With all my heart, Tom. I am fully as impatient as he can be to sign and seal our reconciliation. Indeed, I feel myself already less sinned against than sinning; and an act of forgiveness is only an exchange of prisoners between us. If you knew how young I feel again at all this, Withering,” said he, grasping his friend's hand. “What a happiness to know that poor George's memory is so revered that one who has failed towards him in fidelity should come to expiate the wrong thus openly! My fine noble-hearted boy deserved this tribute! And he told you how they loved each other; in what a brotherhood they lived; and what a glorious fellow George was? Did he tell you of his gentleness?—womanly softness it was, Tom. A careless observer might have said there was no stuff in him to make a soldier, and yet where was there his equal? You heard what he did at Naghapoor and Meerutan, where he held a mountain-pass with three squadrons against a whole army corps, and never owned to being wounded till he fell fainting from his horse on the retreat. Oh, let me not speak of these things, or my heart will burst I must leave you, old friend; this agitation will unfit me for much that is before me; let me go, I beseech you, and when you see me to-morrow, you 'll find I am all myself again.”

It was in silence they grasped each other's hand, and parted.

CHAPTER XVI. A HAPPY MEETING

Barrington scarcely closed his eyes that night after he had parted with Withering, so full was he of thinking over all he had heard. “It was,” as he repeated to himself over and over again, “'such glorious news' to hear that it was no long-laid plot, no dark treachery, had brought poor George to his grave, and that the trusted friend had not turned out a secret enemy. How prone we are,” thought he, “to suffer our suspicions to grow into convictions, just by the mere force of time. Conyers was neither better nor worse than scores of young fellows entering on life, undisciplined in self-restraint, and untutored by converse with the world; and in his sorrow and repentance he is far and away above most men. It was fine of him to come thus, and become his own accuser, rather than suffer a shade of reproach to rest upon the fame of his friend. And this reparation he would have made years ago, but for my impatience. It was I that would not listen,—would not admit it.

“I believe in my heart, then, this confession has a higher value for me than would the gain of our great suit. It is such a testimony to my brave boy as but one man living could offer. It is a declaration to the world that says, 'Here am I, high in station, covered with dignities and rich in rewards; yet there was a man whose fate has never interested you, over whose fall you never sorrowed; hundreds of times my superior.' What a reward is this for all my life of toil and struggle,—what a glorious victory, when the battle looked so doubtful! People

will see at last it is not an old man's phantasy; it is not the headlong affection of a father for his son has made me pursue this reparation for him here. There is a witness 'come to judgment,' who will tell them what George Barrington was; how noble as a man, how glorious as a soldier."

While the old man revelled in the happiness of these thoughts, so absorbed was he by them that he utterly forgot the immediate object which had occasioned his journey,—forgot Stapylton and the meeting, and all that had led to it. Thus passed the hours of the night; and as the day broke, he arose, impatient to actual feverishness for the coming interview. He tried by some occupation to fill up the time. He sat down to write to his sister an account of all Withering had told him, leaving the rest to be added after the meeting; but he found, as he read it over, that after the mention of George's name, nothing dropped from his pen but praises of him. It was all about his generosity, his open-heartedness, and his bravery. "This would seem downright extravagant," said he, as he crushed the paper in his hand, "till she hears it from the lips of Conyers himself." He began another letter, but somehow again he glided into the self-same channel.

"This will never do," said he; "there's nothing for it but a brisk walk." So saying he sallied out into the deserted streets, for few were about at that early hour. Barrington turned his steps towards the country, and soon gained one of those shady alleys which lead towards Finglas. It was a neighborhood he had once known well, and a favorite resort of those pleasant fellows who thought they compensated for a hard night at Daly's by sipping syllabub of a morning on a dewy meadow. He once had rented a little cottage there; a fancy of poor George's it was, that there were some trout in the stream beside it; and Barrington strolled along till he came to a little mound, from which he could see the place, sadly changed and dilapidated since he knew it. Instead of the rustic bridge that crossed the river, a single plank now spanned the stream, and in the disorder and neglect of all around, it was easy to see it had fallen to the lot of a peasant to live in it. As Barrington was about to turn away, he saw an old man—unmistakably a gentleman—ascending the hill, with a short telescope in his hand. As the path was a narrow one, he waited, therefore, for the other's arrival, before he began to descend himself. With a politeness which in his younger days Irish gentlemen derived from intercourse with France, Barring-ton touched his hat as he passed the stranger, and the other, as if encouraged by the show of courtesy, smiled as he returned the salute, and said,—

"Might I take the liberty to ask you if you are acquainted with this locality?"

"Few know it better, or, at least, knew it once," said Barrington.

"It was the classic ground of Ireland in days past," said the stranger. "I have heard that Swift lived here."

"Yes; but you cannot see his house from this. It was nearer to Santry, where you see that wood yonder. There was, however, a celebrity once inhabited that small cottage before us. It was the home of Parnell."

"Is that Parnell's cottage?" asked the stranger, with eagerness; "that ruined spot, yonder?"

"Yes. It was there he wrote some of his best poems. I knew the room well he lived in."

"How I would like to see it!" cried the other.

"You are an admirer of Parnell, then?" said Barrington, with a smile of courteous meaning.

"I will own to you, sir, it was less of Parnell I was thinking than of a dear friend who once talked to me of that cottage. He had lived there, and cherished the memory of that life when far away from it; and so well had he described every walk and path around it, each winding of the river, and every shady nook, that I had hoped to recognize it without a guide."

"Ah, it is sadly changed of late. Your friend had not probably seen it for some years?"

"Let me see. It was in a memorable year he told me he lived there,—when some great demonstration was made by the Irish volunteers, with the Bishop of Down at their head. The Bishop dined there on that day."

"The Earl of Bristol dined that day with me, there," said Barrington, pointing to the cottage.

"May I ask with whom I have the honor to speak, sir?" said the stranger, bowing.

"Was it George Barrington told you this?" said the old man, trembling with eagerness: "was it he who lived here? I may ask, sir, for I am his father!"

"And I am Ormsby Conyers," said the other; and his face became pale, and his knees trembled as he said it.

"Give me your hand, Conyers," cried Barrington,—"the hand that my dear boy has so often pressed in friendship. I know all that you were to each other, all that you would be to his memory."

"Can you forgive me?" said Conyers.

"I have, for many a year. I forgave you when I thought you had been his enemy. I now know you had only been your own to sacrifice such love, such affection as he bore you."

"I never loved him more than I have hated myself for my conduct towards him."

"Let us talk of George,—he loved us both," said Barrington, who still held Conyers by the hand. "It is a theme none but yourself can rival me in interest for."

It was not easy for Conyers to attain that calm which could enable him to answer the other's questions; but by degrees he grew to talk freely, assisted a good deal by the likeness of the old man to his son,—a resemblance in manner even as much as look,—and thus, before they reached town again, they had become like familiar friends.

Barrington could never hear enough of George; even of the incidents he had heard of by letter, he liked to listen to the details again, and to mark how all the traits of that dear boy had been appreciated by others.

"I must keep you my prisoner," said Barrington, as they gained the door of his hotel. "The thirst I have is not easily slaked; remember that for more than thirty years I have had none to talk to me of my boy! I know all about your appointment with Withering; he was to have brought you here this morning to see me, and my old friend will rejoice when he comes and finds us here together."

"He was certain you would come up to town," said Conyers, "when you got his letters. You would see at once that there were matters which should be promptly dealt with; and he said, 'Barrington will be my guest at dinner to-morrow.'"

"Eh?—how?—what was it all about? George has driven all else out of my head, and I declare to you that I

have not the very vaguest recollection of what Wither-ing's letters contained. Wait a moment; a light is breaking on me. I do remember something of it all now. To be sure! What a head I have! It was all about Stapylton. By the way, General, how you would have laughed had you heard the dressing Withering gave me last night, when I told him I was going to give Stapylton a meeting.”

“A hostile meeting?”

“Well, if you like to give it that new-fangled name, General, which I assure you was not in vogue when I was a young man. Withering rated me soundly for the notion, reminded me of my white hairs and such other disqualifications, and asked me indignantly, 'What the world would say when they came to hear of it?' 'What would the world say if they heard I declined it, Tom?' was my answer. Would they not exclaim, 'Here is one of that fire-eating school who are always rebuking us for our laxity in matters of honor; look at him and say, are these the principles of his sect?'”

Conyers shook his head dissentingly, and smiled.

“No, no!” said Barrington, replying to the other's look, “you are just of my own mind! A man who believes you to have injured him claims reparation as a matter of right. I could not say to Stapylton, 'I will not meet you!'”

“I *did* say so, and that within a fortnight.”

“You said so, and under what provocation?”

“He grossly insulted my son, who was his subaltern; he outraged him by offensive language, and he dared even to impugn his personal courage. It was in one of those late riots where the military were called out; and my boy, intrusted with the duty of dispersing an assemblage, stopped to remonstrate where he might have charged, and actually relieved the misery he had his orders to have trampled under the feet of his squadron. Major Stapylton could have reprimanded, he might have court-martialled him; he had no right to attempt to dishonor him. My son left the service,—I made him leave on the spot,—and we went over to France to meet this man. I sent for Proctor to be my boy's friend, and my letter found him at Sir Gilbert Stapylton's, at Hollowcliffe. To explain his hurried departure, Proctor told what called him away. 'And will you suffer your friend to meet that adventurer,' said Sir Gilbert, 'who stole my nephew's name if he did not steal more?' To be brief, he told that this fellow had lived with Colonel Howard Stapylton, British Resident at Ghurtnapore, as a sort of humble private secretary. 'In the cholera that swept the district Howard died, and although his will, deposited at Calcutta, contained several legacies, the effects to redeem them were not to be discovered. Meanwhile this young fellow assumed the name of Stapylton, gave himself out for his heir, and even threatened to litigate some landed property in England with Howard's brother. An intimation that if he dared to put his menace in action a full inquiry into his conduct should be made, stopped him, and we heard no more of him,—at least, for a great many years. When an old Madras friend of Howard's who came down to spend his Christmas, said, “Who do you think I saw in town last week, but that young scamp Howard used to call his Kitmagar, and who goes by the name of Stapylton?” we were so indignant at first that we resolved on all manner of exposures; but learning that he had the reputation of a good officer, and had actually distinguished himself at Waterloo, we relented. Since that, other things have come to our knowledge to make us repent our lenity. In fact, he is an adventurer in its very worst sense, and has traded upon a certain amount of personal courage to cover a character of downright ignominy.' Proctor, on hearing all this, recalled me to England; and declared that he had traced enough to this man's charge to show he was one whom no gentleman could meet. It would appear that some recent discoveries had been made about him at the Horse Guards also; for when Proctor asked for a certain piece of information from one of his friends in office there, he heard, for answer, 'We hope to know that, and more, in a day or two.'”

“Do you know that I 'm sorry for it,—heartily sorry?” said Barrington. “The fellow had that stamp of manliness about him that would seem the pledge of a bold, straightforward nature.”

“I have a high value for courage, but it won't do everything.”

“More 's the pity, for it renders all that it aids of tenfold more worth.”

“And on the back of all this discovery comes Hunter's letter, which Withering has sent you, to show that this Stapylton has for years back been supplying the Indian Directors with materials to oppose your claims.”

“Nothing ever puzzled us so much as the way every weak point of our case was at once seized upon, and every doubt we ourselves entertained exaggerated into an impassable barrier. Withering long suspected that some secret enemy was at work within our own lines, and repeatedly said that we were sold. The difficulty is, why this man should once have been our enemy, and now should strive so eagerly to be not alone our friend, but one of us. You have heard he proposed for my granddaughter?”

“Fred suspected his intentions in that quarter, but we were not certain of them.”

“And it is time I should ask after your noble-hearted boy. How is he, and where?”

“He is here, at my hotel, impatiently waiting your permission to go down to 'The Home.' He has a question to ask there, whose answer will be his destiny.”

“Has Josephine turned another head then?” said Barring-ton, laughing.

“She has won a very honest heart; as true and as honorable a nature as ever lived,” said Conyers, with emotion. “Your granddaughter does not know, nor needs ever to know, the wrong I have done her father; and if you have forgiven me, you will not remember it against my boy.”

“But what do you yourself say to all this? You have never seen the girl?”

“Fred has.”

“You know nothing about her tastes, her temper, her bringing up.”

“Fred does.”

“Nor are you aware that the claim we have so long relied on is almost certain to be disallowed. I have scarcely a hope now remaining with regard to it.”

“I have more than I need; and if Fred will let me have a bungalow in his garden, I'll make it all over to him tomorrow.”

“It is then with your entire consent he would make this offer?”

“With my whole heart in it! I shall never feel I have repaired the injury I have done George Barrington till I have called his daughter my own.”

Old Barrington arose, and walked up and down with slow and measured steps. At last he halted directly in front of General Conyers, and said,—

“If you will do me one kindness, I will agree to everything. What am I saying? I agree already; and I would not make a bargain of my consent; but you will not refuse me a favor?”

“Ask me anything, and I promise it on the faith of a gentleman.”

“It is this, then; that you will stand by me in this affair of Stapylton's. I have gone too far for subtleties or niceties. It is no question of who was his father, or what was his own bringing up. I have told him I should be at his orders, and don't let me break my word.”

“If you choose me for your friend, Barrington, you must not dictate how I am to act for you.”

“That is quite true; you are perfectly correct there,” said the other, in some confusion.

“On that condition, then, that I am free to do for you what I would agree to in my own case, I accept the charge.”

“And there is to be no humbug of consideration for my age and my white hairs; none of that nonsense about a fellow with one leg in the grave. Mark you, Conyers, I will stand none of these; I have never taken a writ of ease not to serve on a jury, nor will I hear of one that exempts me from the rights of a gentleman.”

“I have got your full powers to treat, and you must trust me. Where are we to find Stapylton's friend?”

“He gave me an address which I never looked at. Here it is!” and he drew a card from his pocket.

“Captain Duff Brown, late Fifth Fusiliers, Holt's Hotel, Charing Cross.”

“Do you know him?” asked Barrington, as the other stood silently re-reading the address.

“Yes, thoroughly,” said he, with a dry significance. “The man who selects Duff Brown to act for him in an affair of honor must be in a sore strait. It is a sorry indorsement to character. He had to leave the service from the imputation of foul play in a duel himself; and I took an active part against him.”

“Will this make your position unpleasant to you,—would you rather not act for me?”

“Quite the reverse. It is more than ever necessary you should have some one who not only knows the men he is to deal with, but is known himself to them. It is a preliminary will save a world of trouble.”

“When can we set out?”

“To-night by the eight-o'clock packet, we can sail for Liverpool; but let us first of all despatch Fred to 'The Home.' The poor boy will be half dead with anxiety till he knows I have your permission.”

“I 'll accredit him with a letter to my sister; not that he needs it, for he is one of her prime favorites. And now for another point. Withering must be made believe that we are all off together for the country this evening. He is so opposed to this affair with Stapylton, that he is in a mood to do anything to prevent it.”

“Well thought of; and here comes the man himself in search of us.”

“I have been half over the town after you this morning, General,” said Withering, as he entered; “and your son, too, could make nothing of your absence. He is in the carriage at the door now, not knowing whether he ought to come up.”

“I 'll soon reassure him on that score,” said Barrington, as he left the room, and hastened downstairs with the step of one that defied the march of time.

CHAPTER XVII. MEET COMPANIONSHIP

In a very modest chamber of a house in one of the streets which lead from the Strand to the Thames, two persons sat at supper. It is no time for lengthened introductions, and I must present Captain Duff Brown very hurriedly to my reader, as he confronted his friend Stapylton at table. The Captain was a jovial-looking, full-whiskered, somewhat corpulent man, with a ready reply, a ready laugh, and a hand readier than either, whether the weapon wielded was a billiard-cue or a pistol.

The board before them was covered with oysters and oyster-shells, porter in its pewter, a square-shaped decanter of gin, and a bundle of cigars. The cloth was dirty, the knives unclean, and the candles ill-matched and of tallow; but the guests did not seem to have bestowed much attention to these demerits, but ate and drank like men who enjoyed their fare.

“The best country in Europe,—the best in the world,—I call England for a fellow who knows life,” cried the Captain. “There is nothing you cannot do; nothing you cannot have in it.”

“With eight thousand a year, perhaps,” said Stapylton, sarcastically.

“No need of anything like it. Does any man want a better supper than we have had to-night? What better could he have? And the whole cost not over five, or at most six shillings for the pair of us.”

“You may talk till you are hoarse, Duff, but I'll not stay in it When once I have settled these two or three matters I have told you of, I'll start for—I don't much care whither. I'll go to Persia, or perhaps to the Yankees.”

“*I* always keep America for the finish!” said the other. “It is to the rest of the world what the copper hell is to Crockford's,—the last refuge when one walks in broken boots and in low company. But tell me, what have you done to-day; where did you go after we parted?”

“I went to the Horse Guards, and saw Blanchard,—pompous old humbug that he is. I told him that I had

made up my mind to sell out; that I intended to take service in a foreign army,—he hates foreigners,—and begged he would expedite my affairs with his Royal Highness, as my arrangements could not admit of delay."

"And he told you that there was an official routine, out of which no officer need presume to expect his business could travel?"

"He told me no such thing. He flatly said, 'Your case is already before the Commander-in-Chief, Major Stapylton, and you may rely on it there will be no needless delay in dealing with it."

"That was a threat, I take it."

"Of course it was a threat; and I only said, 'It will be the first instance of the kind, then, in the department,' and left him."

"Where to, after that?"

"I next went to Gregory's, the magistrate of police. I wanted to see the informations the black fellow swore to; and as I knew a son of Gregory's in the Carbiniers, I thought I could manage it; but bad luck would have it that the old fellow should have in his hands some unsettled bills with my indorsements on them,—fact; Gregory and I used to do a little that way once,—and he almost got a fit when he heard my name."

"Tried back after that, eh?"

"Went on to Renshaw's and won fifty pounds at hazard, took Blake's odds on Diadem, and booked myself for a berth in the Boulogne steamer, which leaves at two this morning."

"You secured a passport for me, did n't you?"

"No. You'll have to come as my servant. The Embassy fellows were all strangers to me, and said they would not give a separate passport without seeing the bearer."

"All right. I don't dislike the second cabin, nor the ladies'-maids. What about the pistols?"

"They are yonder under the great-coat. Renshaw lent them. They are not very good, he says, and one of them hangs a little in the fire."

"They 'll be better than the old Irishman's, that's certain. You may swear that his tools were in use early in the last century."

"And himself, too; that's the worst of it all. I wish it was not a fellow that might be my grandfather."

"I don't know. I rather suspect, if I was given to compunctions, I'd have less of them for shaking down the rotten ripe fruit than the blossom."

"And he 's a fine old fellow, too," said Stapylton, half sadly.

"Why didn't you tell him to drop in this evening and have a little *écarté?*"

For a while Stapylton leaned his head on his hand moodily, and said nothing.

“Cheer up, man! Taste that Hollands. I never mixed better,” said Brown.

“I begin to regret now, Duff, that I did n't take your advice.”

“And run away with her?”

“Yes, it would have been the right course, after all!”

“I knew it. I always said it. I told you over and over again what would happen if you went to work in orderly fashion. They 'd at once say, 'Who are your people,—where are they,—what have they?' Now, let a man be as inventive as Daniel Defoe himself, there will always slip out some flaw or other about a name, or a date,—dates are the very devil! But when you have once carried her off, what can they do but compromise?”

“She would never have consented.”

“I 'd not have asked her. I 'd have given her the benefit of the customs of the land she lived in, and made it a regular abduction. Paddy somebody and Terence something else are always ready to risk their necks for a pint of whiskey and a breach of the laws.”

“I don't think I could have brought myself to it.”

“*I* could, I promise you.”

“And there 's an end of a man after such a thing.”

“Yes, if he fails. If he's overtaken and thrashed, I grant you he not only loses the game, but gets the cards in his face, besides. But why fail? Nobody fails when he wants to win,—when he determines to win. When I shot De Courcy at Asterabad—”

“Don't bring up that affair, at least, as one of precedent, Duff. I neither desire to be tried for a capital felony, nor to have committed one.”

“Capital fiddlesticks! As if men did not fight duels every day of the week; the difference between guilt and innocence being that one fellow's hand shook, and the other's was steady. De Courcy would have 'dropped' me, if I'd have Jet him.”

“And so *you* would have carried her off, Master Duff?” said Stapylton, slowly.

“Yes; if she had the pot of money you speak of, and no Lord Chancellor for a guardian. I 'd have made the thing sure at once.”

“The money she will and must have; so much is certain.”

“Then I 'd have made the remainder just as certain.”

“It is a vulgar crime, Duff; it would be very hard to stoop to it.”

“Fifty things are harder,—no cash, no credit are harder. The Fleet is harder. But what is that noise? Don't you hear a knock at the door? Yes, there's some one without who hasn't much patience.” So saying, he arose and walked to the door. As he opened it, he started back a little with surprise, for it was a police constable stood before him.

“Not you, Captain, not *you*, sir! it's another gentleman I want. I see him at the table there,—Major Stapylton.” By this time the man had entered the room and stood in front of the fire. “I have a warrant against you, Major,” said he, quietly. “Informations have been sworn before Mr. Colt that you intend to fight a duel, and you must appear at the office to-morrow, to enter into your bond, and to give securities to keep the peace.”

“Who swore the informations?” cried Brown.

“What have we to do with that?” said Stapylton, impatiently. “Isn't the world full of meddling old women? Who wants to know the names?”

“I 'll lay the odds it was old Conyers; the greatest humbug in that land of humbugs,—Bengal. It was he that insisted on my leaving the Fifth. Come, Sergeant, out with it. This was General Conyers's doing?”

“I'm sorry to be obliged to declare you in custody, Major,” said the policeman; “but if you like to come over to Mr. Colt's private residence, I 'm sure he 'd settle the matter this evening.”

“He'll do no such thing, by George!” cried Brown. “The sneaking dogs who have taken this shabby course shall be exposed in open court. We 'll have the names in full, and in every newspaper in England. Don't compromise the case, Stapylton; make them eat the mess they have cooked, to the last mouthful. We 'll show the world what the fighting Irishman and his gallant friend are made of. Major Stapylton is your prisoner, Sergeant?”

The man smiled slightly at the passionate energy of the speaker, and turned to Stapylton. “There 's no objection to your going to your lodgings, Major. You 'll be at the chief office by ten to-morrow.”

Stapylton nodded assent, and the other retired and closed the door.

“What do you say now?” cried Brown, triumphantly. “Did n't I tell you this? Did n't I say that when old Conyers heard my name, he 'd say, 'Oh, there 'll be no squaring this business'?”

“It's just as likely that he said, 'I 'll not confer with that man; he had to leave the service.'”

“More fool you, then, not to have had a more respectable friend. Had you there, Stapylton,—eh?”

“I acknowledge that. All I can say in extenuation is, that I hoped old Barrington, living so long out of the world, would have selected another old mummy like himself, who had never heard of Captain Duff Brown, nor his famous trial at Calcutta.”

“There's not a man in the kingdom has not heard of me. I 'm as well known as the first Duke in the land.”

“Don't boast of it, Duff; even notoriety is not always a cheap luxury.”

“Who knows but you may divide it with me to-morrow or next day?”

“What do you mean, sir?—what do you mean?” cried Stapylton, slapping the table with his clenched hand.

“Only what I said,—that Major Stapylton may furnish the town with a nine-days wonder, *vice* Captain Duff Brown, forgotten.”

Evidently ashamed of his wrath, Stapylton tried to laugh off the occasion of it, and said, “I suppose neither of us would take the matter much to heart.”

“I 'll not go to the office with you to-morrow, Stapylton,” added he, after a pause; “that old Sepoy General would certainly seize the opportunity to open some old scores that I'd as soon leave undisturbed.”

“All right, I think you are prudent there.”

“But I 'll be of use in another way. I 'll lay in wait for that fellow who reports for the 'Chronicle,' the only paper that cares for these things, and I 'll have him deep in the discussion of some devilled kidneys when your case is called on.”

“I fancy it does not matter what publicity it obtains.”

“Ah, I don't know that. Old Braddell, our major, used to say, 'Reputation, after forty, is like an old wall. If you begin to break a hole in it, you never know how much will come away.'”

“I tell you again, Duff, I'm past scandalizing; but have your way, if you will 'muzzle the ox,' and let us get away from this as soon as may be. I want a little rest after this excitement.”

“Well, I 'm pretty much in the same boot myself, though I don't exactly know where to go. France is dangerous. In Prussia there are two sentences recorded against me. I 'm condemned to eight years' hard labor in Wurtemberg, and pronounced dead in Austria for my share in that Venetian disturbance.”

“Don't tell me of these rascalities. Bad enough when a man is driven to them, but downright infamy to be proud of.”

“Have you never thought of going into the Church? I 've a notion you 'd be a stunning preacher.”

“Give up this bantering, Duff, and tell me how I shall get hold of young Conyers. I 'd rather put a ball in that fellow than be a Lieutenant-General. He has ever been my rock ahead. That silly coxcomb has done more to mar my destiny than scores of real enemies. To shoot him would be to throw a shell in the very midst of them.”

“I 'd rather loot him, if I had the choice; the old General has lots of money. Stapylton, scuttle the ship, if you like, but first let *me* land the cargo. Of all the vengeances a man can wreak on another the weakest is to kill him. For my part, I 'd cherish the fellow that injured me. I 'd set myself to study his tastes and learn his ambitions. I 'd watch over him and follow him, being, as it were, his dearest of all friends,—read backwards!”

“This is tiresome scoundrelism. I'll to bed,” said Stapylton, taking a candle from the table.

“Well, if you must shoot this fellow, wait till he's married; wait for the honeymoon.”

“There's some sense in that. I 'll go and sleep over it.”

CHAPTER XVIII. AUNT DOROTHEA.

“You must come down with me for one day, Tom, to see an old aunt of mine at Bournemouth,” said Hunter to young Dill. “I never omitted going to see her the first thing whenever I landed in England, and she 'll not forgive me if I were to do so now.”

“But why should I go, sir? My presence would only trouble the comfort of a family meeting.”

“Quite the reverse. She 'll be delighted to see you. It will be such a triumph to her, amongst all her neighbors, to have had a visit from the hero of the day,—the fellow that all the print-shops are full of. Why, man, you are worth five hundred pounds to me. I 'm not sure I might not say double as much.”

“In that case, sir, I 'm perfectly at your orders.”

And down they went, and arrived late on the day after this conversation at an old-fashioned manor-house, where Miss Dorothy Hunter had passed some sixty-odd years of her life. Though to Tom she seemed to bear a great resemblance to old Miss Barrington, there was really little likeness between them, beyond an inordinate pride of birth, and an intense estimation for the claims of family. Miss Hunter's essential characteristic was a passion for celebrities; a taste somewhat difficult to cultivate in a very remote and little visited locality. The result was that she consoled herself by portraits, or private letters, or autographs of her heroes, who ranged over every imaginable career in life, and of whom, by mere dint of iteration, she had grown to believe herself the intimate friend or correspondent.

No sooner had she learned that her nephew was to be accompanied by the gallant young soldier whose name was in every newspaper than she made what she deemed the most suitable preparations for his reception. Her bedroom was hung round with portraits of naval heroes, or pictures of sea-fights. Grim old admirals, telescope in hand, or with streaming hair, shouting out orders to board the enemy, were on every side; while, in the place of honor, over the fireplace, hung a vacant frame, destined one day to contain the hero of the hour, Tom Dill himself.

Never was a poor fellow in this world less suited to adulation of this sort. He was either overwhelmed with the flattery, or oppressed by a terror of what some sensible spectator—if such there were—would think of the absurd position in which he was forced to stand. And when he found himself obliged to inscribe his name in a long column of illustrious autographs, the sight of his own scarce legible characters filled up the measure of his shame.

“He writes like the great Turenne,” said Miss Dorothy; “he always wrote from above downwards, so that no other name than his own could figure on the page.”

“I got many a thrashing for it at school, ma'am,” said Tom, apologizing, “and so I gave up writing altogether.”

“Ah, yes! the men of action soon learn to despise the pen; they prefer to make history rather than record it.”

It was not easy for Hunter to steer his bashful friend through all the shoals and quicksands of such flattery; but, on the plea of his broken health and strength, he hurried him early to his bed, and returned to the fireside, where his aunt awaited him.

“He's charming, if he were only not so diffident. Why will he not be more confiding, more at his ease with me,—like Mungo Park, or Sir Sidney Smith?”

“After a while, so he will, aunt. You 'll see what a change there will be in him at our next visit All these flatteries he meets with are too much for him; but when we come down again, you 'll see him without these distracting influences. Then bear in mind his anxieties,—he has not yet seen his family; he is eager to be at home again. I carried him off here positively in spite of himself, and on the strict pledge of only for one day.”

“One day! And do you mean that you are to go tomorrow?”

“No help for it, aunt. Tom is to be at Windsor on Saturday. But for that, he would already have been on his way to Ireland.”

“Then there's no time to be lost. What can we do for him? He'snot rich?”

“Hasn't a shilling; but would reject the very shadow of such assistance.”

“Not if a step were purchased for him; without his knowledge, I mean.”

“It would be impossible that he should not know it.”

“But surely there is some way of doing it A handsome sum to commemorate his achievement might be subscribed. I would begin it with a thousand pounds.”

“He'd not accept it. I know him thoroughly. There's only one road to him through which he would not deem a favor a burden.”

“And what of that?”

“A kindness to his sister. I wish you saw her, aunt!”

“Is she like him?”

“Like him? Yes; but very much better-looking. She's singularly handsome, and such a girl! so straightforward and so downright It is a positive luxury to meet her after all the tiresome conventionalities of the every-day young lady.”

“Shall I ask her here?”

“Oh, if you would, aunt!—if you only would!”

“That you may fall in love with her, I suppose?”

“No, aunt, that is done already.”

“I think, sir, I might have been apprised of this attachment!” said she, bridling.

“I didn't know it myself, aunt, till I was close to the Cape. I thought it a mere fancy as we dropped down Channel; grew more thoughtful over it in the Bay of Biscay; began to believe it as we discovered St. Helena; and came back to England resolved to tell you the whole truth, and ask you, at least, to see her and know her.”

“So I will, then. I 'll write and invite her here.”

“You 're the best and kindest aunt in Christendom!” said he, rushing over and kissing her.

“I'm not going to let you read it, sir,” said she, with a smile. “If she show it to you, she may. Otherwise it is a matter between ourselves.”

“Be it entirely as you wish, aunt.”

“And if all this goes hopefully on,” said she, after a pause, “is Aunt Dorothea to be utterly forgotten? No more visits here,—no happy summer evenings,—no more merry Christmases?”

“Nay, aunt, I mean to be your neighbor. That cottage you have often offered me, near the rocks, I 'll not refuse it again,—that is, if you tempt me once more.”

“It is yours, and the farm along with it. Go to bed now, and leave me to write my note, which will require-some thought and reflection.”

“I know you 'll do it well. I know none who could equal you in such a task.”

“I 'll try and acquit myself with credit,” said she, as she sat down to the writing-desk.

“And what is all this about,—a letter from Miss Dorothea to Polly,” said Tom, as they drove along the road back to town. “Surely they never met?”

“Never; but my aunt intends that they shall. She writes to ask your sister to come on a visit here.”

“But why not have told her the thing was impossible? You know us. You have seen the humble way we live, —how many a care it costs to keep up that little show of respectability that gets us sufferance in the world, and how one little attempt beyond this is quite out of our reach. Why not have told her frankly, sir, 'These people are not in our station'?”

“Just because I acknowledge no such distinction as you want to draw, my good fellow. If my aunt has asked your sister to come three hundred miles to see her, she has thought over her request with more foresight than you or I could have given it, take my word for it. When she means kindly, she plans thoughtfully. And now I will tell you what I never meant to have spoken of, that it was only last night she asked me how could she be of use to you?”

“To *me!*” said he, blushing, “and why to *me?*”

“Can you never be brought to see that you are a hero, Tom,—that all the world is talking of you just now, and people feel a pride in being even passingly mixed up with your name?”

“If they only knew how much I have to be ashamed of before I can begin to feel vain, they 'd not be so ready with their praise or their flattery.”

“I 'll talk over all that with your sister Polly,” said Hunter, gayly; for he saw the serious spirit that was gaining over the poor fellow.

“Do so, sir; and you'll soon see, if there's anything good or hopeful about me, where it comes from and who gave it.”

CHAPTER XIX. FROM GENERAL CONYERS TO HIS SON

Beddwys, N. Wales.

My dear Fred,—How happy I am that you are enjoying yourself; short of being with you, nothing could have given me greater pleasure than your letter. I like your portrait of the old lady, whose eccentricities are never inconsistent with some charming traits of disposition, and a nature eminently high-minded and honorable; but why not more about Josephine? She is surely oftener in your thoughts than your one brief paragraph would bespeak, and has her due share in making the cottage the delightful home you describe it to be. I entreat you to be more open and more explicit on this theme, for it may yet be many days before I can explore the matter for myself; since, instead of the brief absence I calculated on, we may, for aught I know, be detained here for some weeks.

It is clear to me, from your last, a note of mine from Liverpool to you must have miscarried. You ask me where you are to address me next, and what is the nature of the business which has called me away so suddenly? I gave you in that letter all the information that I was myself possessed of, and which, in three words, amounted to this: Old Barrington, having involved himself in a serious personal quarrel with Stapylton, felt, or believed, that he ought to give him a meeting. Seeing how useless all attempt at dissuasion proved, and greatly fearing what hands he might fall into, I agreed to be his friend on the occasion; trusting, besides, that by a little exercise of tact and temper, extreme measures might be avoided, and the affair arranged. You may well believe, without my insisting further upon it, that I felt very painfully how we should both figure before the world,—a man of eighty-three or four, accompanied to the ground by another of sixty-odd! I know well how, in the changed temper of the age, such acts are criticised, and acquiesce, besides, in the wiser spirit that now prevails. However, as I said before, if Barrington must go on, it were better he should do so under the guidance of a sincere friend than of one casually elevated to act as such, in a moment of emergency.

We left Dublin, by the mail-packet, on Wednesday; and after a rough passage of twenty-three hours, reached Liverpool too late to catch the evening coach. Thus detained, we only arrived here on Sunday night late. At my club I found a note from Stapylton, stating that he had daily called there to learn if we had come, but the boisterous state of the weather sufficiently explained our delay, and giving an address where he might be found, as well as that of “his friend.” Now, it so chanced that this friend was a very notorious person well known to me in India, where he had been tried for an unfair duel, and narrowly escaped—I should say unjustly escaped—being hanged. Though I had fully made up my mind not to be placed in any relations with such a man, I thought it would be as well that Barrington should know the character of his antagonist's friend from other sources, and so I invited an old Bengal companion of mine to dine with us the day after we arrived. Stamer was a judge of the criminal court, and tried Duff Brown, the man I speak of. As we sat over our wine together, we got upon this case, and Stamer declared that it was the only criminal cause in his whole life wherein he regretted the escape of the guilty party. “The fellow,” said he, “defended himself in a three hours' speech, ably and powerfully; but enunciated at times—as it were unconsciously—sentiments so abominable and so atrocious as to destroy the sympathy a part of his discourse excited. But somehow boldness has its fascination, and he was acquitted.”

Barrington's old-fashioned notions were not, however, to be shocked even by this narrative, and he whispered to me, “Unpleasant for *you*, Conyers. Wish it might have been otherwise, but it can't be helped.” We next turned to discuss Duff Brown's friend, and Stamer exclaimed, “Why, that's the man they have been making all this fuss about in India. He was, or he said he was, the adopted son of Howard Stapylton; but the family never believed the adoption, nor consented to receive him, and at this moment a Moonshee, who acted as Persian secretary to old Stapylton, has turned up with some curious disclosures, which, if true, would show that this young fellow held a very humble position in Stapylton's household, and never was in his confidence. This Moonshee was at Malta a few weeks ago, and may be, for aught I know, in England now.”

I asked and obtained Barrington's permission to tell how we were ourselves involved with this Major Stapylton, and he quickly declared that, while the man stood thus accused, there could be no thought of according him a satisfaction. The opinion was not the less stringent that Stamer was himself an Irishman and of a fighting family.

I am not very sure that we made Barrington a convert to our opinions, but we at least, as we separated for the night, left him doubtful and hesitating. I had not been in bed above an hour, when Mr. Withering awoke me. He had followed us from Dublin as soon as he learned our departure, and, going straight to a magistrate, swore informations against both Barrington and Stapylton. “My old friend will never forgive me, I know,” said he; “but if I had not done this, I should never have forgiven myself.” It was arranged between us that I was to mention the fact of such informations having been sworn, without stating by whom, to Barrington, and then persuade him to get privately away from town before a warrant could be served. I leave you to imagine that my task was not without its difficulties, but, before the day broke, I succeeded in inducing him to leave, and travelling by post without halt, we arrived at this quiet spot yesterday evening. Barrington, with all his good temper, is marvellously put out and irritable, saying, “This is not the way such things were done once;” and peevishly muttered, “I wonder what poor Harry Beamish or Guy Hutchinson would say to it all?” One thing is quite clear, we had got into a wasps' nest; Stapylton and his friend were both fellows that no honorable man would like to deal with, and we must wait with a little patience to find some safe road out of this troublesome

affair.

A letter came to B. from the India House the evening before we left town, but he handed it to me before he finished reading it, merely remarking, “The old story, 'Yours of the ninth or nineteenth has duly been received,' &c.” But I found that it contained a distinct admission that his claim was not ill-founded, and that some arrangement ought to be come to.

I now close my very lengthy epistle, promising, however, that as soon as I hear from town, either from Withering or Stamer, you shall have my news. We are, of course, close prisoners here for the present, for though the warrant would not extend to Ireland, Barrington's apprehensions of being “served” with such a writ at all would induce him to hide for six months to come.

I scarcely ask you to write to me here, not knowing our probable stay; but to-morrow may, perhaps, tell us something on this head. Till when, believe me,

Yours affectionately,

Ormsby Conters.

My most cordial greeting to Miss Barrington, and my love to her niece.

FROM PETER BARRINGTON TO HIS SISTER MISS DINAH BARRINGTON.

Long's Hotel, Bond Street.

My dear Dinah,—I hardly know how to tell you what has happened, or what is happening around me. I came over here to meet Major Stapylton, but find that there is no such person,—the man who calls himself so being a mere adventurer, who had taken the name, and, I believe, no small share of the goods, of its owner, got into the Bengal army, thence into our own service, and though not undistinguished for gallantry, seems to have led a life of ceaseless roguery and intrigue. He knew all about poor George's business, and was in correspondence with those we believe to be our friends in India, but who now turn out to be our inveterate enemies. This we have got at by the confession of one of those Oriental fellows they call Moonshees, who has revealed all their intercourse for years back, and even shown a document setting forth the number of rupees he was to receive when Stapylton had been married to Josephine. The Moonshee is very ill, and his examination can only be conducted at intervals; but he insists on a point of much importance to us, which is, that Stapylton induced him to tear out of the Rajah's Koran the page on which the adoption of George was written, and signed by the Meer himself. He received a large sum for this service, which, however, he evaded by a fraud, sending over to England not the real document itself, but a copy made by himself, and admirably counterfeited. It was the possession of this by Stapylton which enabled him to exercise a great control over our suit,—now averring that it was lost; now, under pledge of secrecy, submitting it to the inspection of some of the Indian authorities. Stapylton, in a word, saw himself in a position to establish our claim, whenever the time came that by making Josephine his wife, he could secure the fortune. This is all that we know up to this, but it is a great deal, and shows in what a maze of duplicity and treachery we have been involved for more than twenty years. The chief point, however, is that the real deed, written in the Meer's Koran, and torn out of it by the Moonshee, in his first impulse to forward it to Stapylton, is now extant, and the Koran itself is there to show the jagged margin of the torn-out leaf, and the corresponding page on the opposite side of the volume. Stapylton refuses to utter one word since the accusation against him has been made; and as the charges stand to falsifying documents, abstraction of funds, and other derelictions in India, he is now under a heavy bail to appear when called on.

The whole business has made me so nervous and excitable that I cannot close my eyes at night, and I feel feverish and restless all day. It is very shocking to think of a man one has never injured, never heard of, animated with a spirit so inimical as to pass years of life in working ill to us. He would appear to have devoted himself to the task of blackening poor George's character and defaming him. It would seem that Mr. Howard Stapylton was one of those who took an active part against George. Whether this young fellow caught the contagion of this antipathy, or helped to feed it, I cannot tell; but it is certain that all the stories of cruelty and oppression the India Board used to trump up to us came from this one source; and at the end of all he seeks to be one of a family he has striven for years to ruin and to crush! I am lost in my efforts to understand this, though Stamer and Withering assure me they can read the man like print. Indeed, they see inferences and motives in fifty things which convey nothing to me; and whenever I feel myself stopped by some impassable barrier, to *them* it is only a bridge that conducts to a fresh discovery.

The Stapyltons are all in arms now that another sportsman has winged the bird for them; and each day increases the number of accusations against this unfortunate fellow. It is true, dear Dinah, that our own prospects brighten through all this. I am constantly receiving civil messages and hopeful assurances; and even some of the directors have called to express sympathy and good wishes. But how chilled is the happiness that comes dashed with the misfortune of another! What a terrible deal it detracts from our joy to know that every throb of pleasure to ourselves has cost a pang of misery elsewhere! I wish this fellow could have gone his way, never minding us; or, if that could n't be, that he 'd have grown tired of persecuting those who had never harmed him, and given us up!

They are now assailing him on all sides. One has found that he forged a will; another that he falsified a signature; and a miserable creature—a native Indian, who happened to be in that Manchester riot the other day—has now been ferreted out to swear that Stapylton followed him through a suburb, down a lane, and into a brick-field, where he cut him down and left him for dead. There seems a great deal of venom and acrimony in all this; and though the man is unquestionably not my friend, and I see that this persecution continues, I find it very hard not to stand by him.

As for Withering, it has made the veteran ten years younger. He is up every morning at five, and I hear that he never goes to his room till long past midnight. These are the pastimes that to such men replace the sports of the field and the accidents of the chase. They have their vacillations of hope and fear, their moments of depression and of triumph in them; and they run a fellow-creature to earth with all the zest of a hard rider after a fox.

Tell my darling Fifine that I am longing to be at home again,—longing for the quiet roof, and the roses at the window, and the murmur of the river, and her own sweet voice better than them all. And what a deal of

happiness is in our power if we would only consent to enjoy it, without running after some imaginary good, some fancied blessing, which is to crown our wishes! If I could but only have guessed at the life of anxiety, doubt, and vacillation the pursuit of this claim would have cost me,—the twenty years of fever,—

I give you my word, Dinah, I 'd rather have earned my daily bread with a spade, or, when too old for that, taken to fishing for a livelihood.

But why do I complain of anything at this moment? When have I been so truly happy for many a long year? Conyers never leaves me,—he talks of George from morning to night. And I now see that with all my affection for that dear boy, I only half knew his noble nature, his fine and generous character. If you only heard of the benevolent things he has done; the poor fellows he has sent home to their families at his own cost; the sums he has transmitted to wives and widows of soldiers in England; the children whose care and support he has provided for! These were the real drains on that fortune that the world thought wasted and squandered in extravagance. And do you know, Dinah, there is a vein of intense egotism in my heart that I never so much as suspected! I found it out by chance,—it was in marking how far less I was touched by the highest and best traits of my poor boy than by the signs of love to myself! and when Conyers said, “He was always talking about you; he never did anything important without the question, 'How would “Dad” like this, I wonder? would “Dad” say “God speed” in this case?' And his first glass of wine every day was to the health of that dear old father over the seas.”

To you who loved him only a little less than myself, I have no shame in the confession of this weakness. I suppose Conyers, however, has hit upon it, for he harps on this theme continually, and, in sheer pride of heart, I feel ten years younger for it.

Here comes Withering to say, “Some more wonderful news;” but I have begged him to keep it till I have sealed this letter, which if it grows any longer, I 'll never have courage to send to you. A dozen kisses to Fifine I can, however, transmit without any increase to the postage. Give my love to young Conyers; tell him I am charmed with his father,—I never met any one so companionable to me, and I only long for the day when the same roof shall cover all of us.

Yours, my dearest sister, ever affectionately,

Peter Barrington.

FROM T. WITHERING, ESQ., TO MISS DINAH BARRINGTON, “THE HOME.”

Long's Hotel, Bond Street.

My dear Miss Barrington,—If your brother has deputed me to write to you, it is not that he is ill, but simply that the excitement caused by some late events here has so completely mastered him that he can neither sit quiet a moment, nor address him steadily to any task. Nor am I surprised it should be so. Old, weather-beaten sailor on the ocean of life as I am, I feel an amount of feverishness and anxiety I am half ashamed of. Truth is, my dear Miss Dinah, we lawyers get so much habituated to certain routine rogueries that we are almost shocked when we hear of a wickedness not designated by a statute. But I must not occupy your time with such speculations, the more since I have only a brief space to give to that report of proceedings to which I want your attention. And, first of all, I will entreat you to forgive me for all want of sequence or connection in what I may say, since events have grown so jumbled together in my mind, that it is perfectly impossible for me to be certain whether what I relate should come before or after some other recorded fact In a word, I mean to give you an outline of our discoveries, without showing the track of our voyage on the map, or even saying how we came by our knowledge.

You are aware, Barrington tells me, how Stapylton came by the name he bears. Aware that he was for some of his earlier years domesticated with old Howard Stapylton at Ghurtnapore, in some capacity between confidential valet and secretary,—a position that was at once one of subordination and trust,—it would now appear that a Moonshee, who had long served Colonel Barrington as Persian correspondent, came into Howard Stapylton's service in the same capacity: how introduced, or by whom, we know not. With this Moonshee, the young fellow I speak of became an intimate and close friend, and it is supposed obtained from him all that knowledge of your nephew's affairs which enabled him to see to what his claim pretended, and what were its prospects of success. It is now clear enough that he only regarded this knowledge at first as a means of obtaining favor from the Indian Government. It was, in fact, by ceding to them in detail certain documents, that he got his first commission in the Madras Fusiliers, and afterwards his promotion in the same regiment; and when, grown more ambitious, he determined to enter the King's service, the money for purchase came from the same source. Being, however, a fellow of extravagant habits, his demands grew at last to be deemed excessive and importunate; and though his debts had been paid three several times, he was again found involving himself as before, and again requiring assistance. This application was, however, resisted; and it was apparently on the strength of that refusal that he suddenly changed his tactics, turned his attention towards us, and bethought him that by forwarding your grandniece's claim,—if he could but win her affections in the mean while,—he would secure as a wife one of the richest heiresses in Europe. An examination of dates proves this, by showing that his last application to the Indian Board was only a few weeks before he exchanged into the regiment of Hussars he lately served with, and just then ordered to occupy Kilkenny. In one word, when it was no longer profitable to oppose Josephine's claim, he determined to support it and make it his own. The “Company,” however, fully assured that by the papers in their possession they could prove their own cause against Colonel Barrington, resisted all his menaces,—when, what does he do? It was what only a very daring and reckless fellow would ever have thought of,—one of those insolent feats of boldness that succeed by the very shock they create. He goes to the Secret Committee at the India House and says: “Of the eighteen documents I have given you, seven are false. I will not tell you which they are, but if you do not speedily compromise this claim and make a satisfactory settlement on Colonel Barrington's daughter, I'll denounce you, at all the peril it may be to myself.” At first they agree, then they hesitate, then they treat again, and so does the affair proceed, till suddenly—no one can guess why—they assume a tone of open defiance, and flatly declare they will hold no further intercourse with him, and even threaten with exposure any demand on his part.

This rejection of him came at a critical moment. It was just when the press had begun to comment on the

cruelty of his conduct at Peterloo, and when a sort of cry was got up through the country to have him dismissed from the service. We all saw, but never suspected, why he was so terribly cut up at this time. It was hard to believe that he could have taken mere newspaper censure so much to heart. We never guessed the real cause, never saw that he was driven to his last expedient, and obliged to prejudice all his hope of success by precipitancy. If he could not make Josephine his wife at once, on the very moment, all was lost. He made a bold effort at this. Who knows if he might not have succeeded but for you, as Josephine was very young, my old friend himself utterly unfit to cope with anything but open hostility? I say again, I 'd not have answered for the result if you had not been in command of the fortress. At all events, he failed; and in the failure lost his temper so far as to force a quarrel upon your brother. He failed, however; and no sooner was he down, than the world was atop of him: creditors, Jews, bill-discounters, and, last of all, the Stapyltons, who, so long as he bore their family name thousands of miles off, or associated it with deeds of gallantry, said nothing; now, that they saw it held up to attack and insult, came forward to declare that he never belonged to them, and at length appealed formally to the Horse Guards, to learn under what designation he had entered the service, and at what period taken the name he went by.

Stapylton's application for leave to sell out had just been sent in; and once more the newspapers set up the cry that this man should not be permitted to carry away to Aix and Baden the proceeds of a sale which belonged to his “creditors.” You know the world, and I need not tell you all the pleasant things it told this fellow, for men are pretty nigh as pitiless as crows to their wounded. I thought the complication had reached its limit, when I learned yesterday evening that Stapylton had been summoned before a police magistrate for a case of assault committed by him when in command of his regiment at Manchester. The case had evidently been got up by a political party, who, seeing the casual unpopularity of the man, determined to profit by it. The celebrated radical barrister, Hesketh, was engaged for the plaintiff.

When I arrived at the court, it was so full that it was with difficulty I got a passage to a seat behind the bench. There were crowds of fashionables present, the well-known men about town, and the idlers of the clubs, and a large sprinkling of military men, for the news of the case had got wind already.

Stapylton, dressed in black, and looking pale and worn, but still dignified and like a gentleman, had not a single friend with him. I own to you, I felt ashamed to be there, and was right glad when he did not recognize me.

Though the case opened by a declaration that this was no common assault case, wherein in a moment of passion a man had been betrayed into an excess, I knew the cant of my craft too well to lay any stress on such assertion, and received it as the ordinary exordium. As I listened, however, I was struck by hearing that the injured man was asserted to be one well known to Stapylton, with whom he had been for years in intimacy, and that the assault was in reality a deliberate attempt to kill, and not, as had been represented, a mere passing act of savage severity committed in hot blood. “My client,” said he, “will be brought before you; he is a Hindoo, but so long a resident of this country that he speaks our language fluently. You shall hear his story yourselves, and yourselves decide on its truthfulness. His wounds are, however, of so serious a nature that it will be advisable his statement should be a brief one.” As he said this, a dark-complexioned fellow, with a look half-frightened, half defiant, was carried forwards in a chair, and deposited, as he sat, on the table. He gave his name as Lai Adeen, his age as forty-eight, his birthplace Majamarha, near Agra. He came to this country twelve years ago, as servant to an officer who had died on the passage, and after many hardships in his endeavor to earn a livelihood, obtained employment at Manchester in the mill of Brandling and Bennett, where he was employed to sweep the corridors and the stairs; his wages were nine shillings a week. All this, and much more of the same kind, he told simply and collectedly. I tried to see Stapylton while this was going on, but a pillar of the gallery, against which he leaned, concealed him from my view.

I omit a great deal, not without its interest, but reserving it for another time, and come to his account of the night on which he was wounded. He said that as the cavalry marched on that morning into Manchester, he was struck by seeing at the head of the regiment one he had never set his eyes on for years, but whose features he knew too well to be deceived in.

“I tried to get near him, that he might recognize me,” said he; “but the crowd kept me back, and I could not. I thought, indeed, at one moment he had seen me, and knew me; but as he turned his head away, I supposed I was mistaken.

“It was on the following evening, when the riot broke out in Mill Street, that I saw him next. I was standing at the door of a chemist's shop when the cavalry rode by at a walk. There was a small body of them in front, at about forty or fifty paces, and who, finding a sort of barricade across the street, returned to the main body, where they seemed to be reporting this. A cry arose that the troops had been blocked up at the rear, and at the same instant a shower of stones came from the side-streets and the house-tops. Thinking to do him a service, I made my way towards him I knew, in order to tell him by what way he could make his escape; and jostled and pushed, and half ridden down, I laid my hand on his horse's shoulder to keep myself from falling. 'Stand back, you scoundrel!' said he, striking me with the hilt of his sword in the face. 'Don't you know me, master?' cried I, in terror. He bent down in his saddle till his face was almost close to mine, and then, reining his horse back to give him room for a blow, he aimed a desperate cut at me. I saw it coming, and threw myself down; but I rose the next instant and ran. The street was already so clear by this time, I got into Cleever's Alley, down Grange Street, up the lane that leads to the brick-fields, and at last into the fields themselves. I was just thinking I was safe, when I saw a horseman behind me. He saw me, and dashed at me. I fell upon my knees to ask mercy, and he gave me this;” and he pointed to the bandages which covered his forehead, stained as they were with clotted blood. “I fell on my face, and he tried to make his horse trample on me; but the beast would not, and he only touched me with his hoof as he sprang across me. He at last dismounted to see, perhaps, if I were dead; but a shout from some of the rioters warned him to mount again; and he rode away, and I lay there till morning. It is not true that I was in prison and escaped,—that I was taken to the hospital, and ran away from it. I was sheltered in one of the clay-huts of the brickmakers for several weeks, afraid to come abroad, for I knew that the Sahib was a great man and could take my life. It was only by the persuasions of others that I left my hiding-place and have come here to tell my story.”

On being questioned why this officer could possibly desire to injure him, what grudge one in such a station

could bear him, he owned he could not say; they had never been enemies, and, indeed, it was in the hope of a friendly recognition and assistance that he approached him in Mill Street.

Stapylton's defence was very brief, given in an off-hand, frank manner, which disposed many in his favor. He believed the fellow meant to attack him; he certainly caught hold of his bridle. It was not his intention to give him more than a passing blow; but the utterance of a Hindoo curse—an expression of gross outrage in the East—recalled prejudices long dormant, and he gave the rascal chase, and cut him over the head,—not a severe cut, and totally unaccompanied by the other details narrated.

“As for our former acquaintance I deny it altogether. I have seen thousands of his countrymen, and may have seen him; but, I repeat, I never knew him, nor can he presume to say he knew me!”

The Hindoo smiled a faint, sickly smile, made a gesture of deep humility, and asked if he might put a few questions to the “Sahib.”

“Were you in Naghapoor in the year of the floods?”

“Yes,” said Stapylton, firmly, but evidently with an effort to appear calm.

“In the service of the great Sahib, Howard Stapylton?”

“In his service? Certainly not. I lived with him as his friend, and became his adopted heir.''

“What office did you fill when you first came to the 'Residence'?”

“I assisted my friend in the duties of his government; I was a good Oriental scholar, and could write and speak a dialect he knew nothing of. But I submit to the court that this examination, prompted and suborned by others, has no other object than to insult me, by leading to disclosures of matters essentially private in their nature.”

“Let me ask but one question,” said the barrister. “What name did you bear before you took that of Stapylton?”

“I refuse to submit to this insolence,” said Stapylton, rising, angrily. “If the laws of the country only can lend themselves to assist the persecutions of a rascally Press, the sooner a man of honor seeks another land the better. Adjudicate on this case, sirs; I will not stoop to bandy words with these men.”

“I now, sir,” said Hesketh, opening his bag and taking out a roll of papers, “am here to demand a committal for forgery against the person before you, passing under the name of Horace Stapylton, but whose real designation is Samuel Scott Edwardes, son of Samuel Edwardes, a name notorious enough once.”

I cannot go on, my dear friend; the emotions that overpowered me at the time, and compelled me to leave the court, are again threatening me, and my brain reels at the recollection of a scene which, even to my fast-fading senses, was the most trying of my life.

To General Conyers I must refer you for what ensued after I left. I cannot even say who came home with me to the hotel, though I am aware I owed that kindness to some one. The face of that unhappy man is yet before me, and all the calm in which I have written up to this leaves me, as I think over one of the most terrible incidents of my life.

Your brother, shocked of course, bears up bravely, and hopes to write to you to-morrow.

One word of good cheer before I close this miserable record. The Indian directors have written to offer excellent terms—splendidly liberal terms, Conyers calls them, and I agree with him. We have had a very busy week of it here, but it will be well requited if all that I now anticipate be confirmed to us. Barrington begs you will tell your neighbors, the Dills, that Tom—I think that is the name—has just arrived at Southampton with General Hunter, and will be here to-morrow evening.

I have cut out a short passage from the newspaper to finish my narrative. I will send the full report, as published, to-morrow.

Your attached friend,

T. Withering.

“The chief police-office in Marlborough Street was yesterday the scene of a very shocking incident. The officer whose conduct at the head of his regiment in Manchester has of late called for the almost unanimous reprobation of the Press, was, while answering to a charge of aggravated assault, directly charged with forgery. Scarcely was the allegation made, than he drew a pistol from his pocket, and, placing the muzzle to his mouth, pulled the trigger. The direction of the weapon, however, was accidentally turned, and the ball, instead of proceeding upwards, passed through the lower jaw, fracturing the bone, and created a terrible wound. It is supposed that the large vessels are not injured, and that he may yet recover. All who witnessed the scene describe it as one of intense horror.

“The unhappy man was at once removed to the Middlesex Hospital. He has not uttered a word since the event; and when asked if there were any relatives or friends whom he wished might be sent for, merely shook his head negatively. It is said that when the result of the consultation held on him was announced to him as favorable, he seemed rather grieved than otherwise at the tidings.”

FROM PETER BARRINGTON TO DINAH, HIS SISTER.

My dear Dinah,—How glad am I to tell you that we leave this to-morrow, and a large party of us, too, all for “The Home.” Put young Conyers in my dressing-room, so that the large green bedroom can be free for the General, at least for one of the generals—for we have another here, Hunter, who will also be our guest. Then there will be Withering. As for myself, I can be stowed away anywhere. What happiness would there be to us all at such a meeting, if it were not for that poor wretch who lies in all his agony a few streets off, and who is never out of my thoughts. I went twice to the hospital to see him. The first time I lost courage, and came away. The second, I sent up my name, and asked if he would wish to see me. The only answer I got was my visiting-card torn in two! How hard it is for an injurer to forgive him he has injured! I have arranged with the Stapyltons, however, who instigated the charge of forgery, not to press it; at least, they are to take bail, and the bail will be forfeited, so I understand it; but Withering will explain all more clearly.

Our own affairs are all as bright and prosperous as our best wishes could desire. The Council have had all the evidence before them, and the Moonshee has produced his copy of the Koran, with the torn leaf fitting

into the jagged margin, and George is vindicated at last in everything. His loyalty, his disinterestedness, his honesty, all established. The ceremony of his marriage has been fully recognized; and General Conyers tells me that the lowest estimate of our claim is a little short of a quarter of a million sterling. He counsels me not to be exigent in my terms; if he knew me better, perhaps, he would not have deemed the advice so necessary.

What will Fifine say to all this wealth? Will she want to go back to India, and be a princess, and ride about on an elephant; or will she reconcile herself to such humble ways as ours? I am most eager to hear how she will take the tidings. Withering says it will not spoil her; that knowing nothing of life in its moneyed relations, she runs no risk of being carried away by any vulgar notions of her own importance through riches.

Conyers has never once hinted at his son's pretensions since Fifine has become an heiress; and I fancy—it may be only fancy—is a shade or so cool towards me, so that I have not referred to them. But what can I do? I cannot offer him my granddaughter, nor—if what you tell me be true, that they are always quarrelling—would the proposal be a great kindness to either.

Here is Tom Dill, too, and what a change! He is the image of Polly; and a fine, well-grown, straight-figured fellow, that looks you manfully in the face,—not the slouching, loutish, shamefaced creature you remember him. Hunter has had him gazetted to an Ensigncy in the 10th Foot, and he will, or I much mistake him, do honest credit to the recommendation. Hunter takes him about with him wherever he goes, telling all about the shipwreck and Tom's gallantry,—enough to turn the lad's head with vanity, but that he is a fine, simple-hearted creature, who thinks very little of himself or his achievement. He seems to have no other thought than what Polly, his sister, will say and think of him.

He also will be one of our party; that is if I can persuade him to make “The Home” his headquarters while our friends are with us. What a strong muster we shall be; and how we 'll astonish that old bin of Madeira, Dinah! By the way, I have been rather boastful about it to Conyers, and let some bottles have the sun on them for a couple of hours every day.

I should like to try my chance once more of seeing that poor fellow at the hospital, but Withering will not hear of it; he got positively ill-tempered at the bare mention of such a wish. Even Conyers says, “Better not,” with an air that may mean for the sick man's sake as much as my own.

A little more of this life of noise, confusion, and excitement would finish me. This city existence, with its incessant events and its never ending anxieties, is like walking in a high wind with the chimney-pots falling and crashing on every side of one,—while I am pitying the fellow whose skull is just cracked, I am forced to remember that my own is in danger. And yet there are people who like it; who tell you that out of London there is no living; that the country is a grave, aggravated by the consciousness that one is dead and buried there!

On Tuesday,—Wednesday, at farthest,—Dinah, look out for us. I do not believe there is that prize in the wheel that would tempt me again away from home! and till I reach it, believe, my dear Dinah,

Your loving brother,

Peter Barrington.

I have just seen Conyers. He met Sir Harvey Hethrington, the Home Secretary, this morning, and they got into a talk over our business, and H. said how cruelly I had been treated all this time back, and how unfairly poor George's memory was dealt with. “We want,” said he, “to show your friend our respect and our sympathy, and we have thought of submitting his name to the King for a Baronetcy. How do you think Mr. Barrington himself would take our project?” “I 'll find out,” said Conyers, as he told me of the conversation. “If they don't let me off, Conyers,” said I, “ask them to commute it to Knighthood, for the heralds' fees will be smaller; but I'll try, meanwhile, if I can't escape either.” So that now, Dinah, you may expect me on Saturday. I told you what a place this was; you are never sure what may befall you from one moment to another!

CHAPTER XX. THE END

Fortune had apparently ceased to persecute Peter Barrington.

The Minister did not press honors upon him, and he was free to wait for his companions, and in their company he returned to Ireland.

The news of his success—great as it was, magnified still more—had preceded him to his own country; and he was met, as all lucky men are met, and will be met to the end of time, by those who know the world and feelingly estimate that the truly profitable are the fortunate!

Not that he remarked how many had suddenly grown so cordial; what troops of passing acquaintances had become in a moment warm friends, well-wishing and affectionate. He never so much as suspected that “Luck” is a deity worshipped by thousands, who even in the remotest way are not to be benefited by it. He had always regarded the world as a far better thing than many moralists would allow it to be,—unsteady, wilful, capricious, if you like—but a well-intentioned, kindly minded world, that would at all times, where passion or prejudice stood aloof, infinitely rather do the generous thing than the cruel one.

Little wonder, then, if he journeyed in a sort of ovation! At every change of horses in each village they passed, there was sure to be some one who wanted to shake his hand. People hobbled out on crutches and quitted sick-beds to say how “glad they were;” mere acquaintances most of them, who felt a strange mysterious sort of self-consequence in fancying themselves for the moment the friends of Peter Barrington, the millionnaire! This is all very curious, but it is a fact,—a fact which I make no pretence to explain, however.

“And here comes the heartiest well-wisher of them all!” cried Barrington, as he saw his sister standing on the roadside, near the gate. With thoughtful delicacy, his companions lingered behind, while he went to meet and embraced her. “Was I not a true prophet, Dinah dear? Did I not often foretell this day to you?” said he, as he drew her arm, and led her along, forgetting all about his friends and companions.

“Have they paid the money, Peter?” said she, sharply.

“Of course they have not; such things are not settled like the fare of a hackney-coach. But our claim is acknowledged, and, fifty thousand times better, George Barrington's name absolved from every shadow of an imputation.”

“What is the amount they agree to give?”

“Upon my life, I don't know,—that is, I don't recollect, there were so many interviews and such discussions; but Withering can tell you everything. Withering knows it all. Without *him* and Conyers I don't know how I could have got on. If you had heard how he spoke of George at the Council! 'You talk of *my* services,' said he; 'they are no more fit to be compared with those of Colonel Barrington, than are *my* petty grievances with the gross wrongs that lie on *his* memory.' Withering was there; he heard the words, and described the effect of them as actually overwhelming.”

“And Withering believes the whole thing to be settled?”

“To be sure, he does! Why should he oppose his belief to that of the whole world? Why, my dear Dinah, it is not one, nor two, but some hundreds of people have come to wish me joy. They had a triumphal arch at Naas, with 'Welcome to Barrington' over it. At Carlow, Fishbourne came out with the corporation to offer me congratulations.”

She gave a hasty, impatient shake of the head, but repressed the sharp reply that almost trembled on her lips.

“By George!” cried he, “it does one's heart good to witness such a burst of generous sentiment. You 'd have thought some great national benefit had befallen, or that some one—his country's idol—had just reaped the recompense of his great services. They came flocking out of the towns as we whirled past, cheering lustily, and shouting, 'Barrington forever!'”

“I detest a mob!” said she, pursing up her lips.

“These were no mobs, Dinah; these were groups of honest fellows, with kind hearts and generous wishes.”

Another, but more decisive, toss of the head warned Peter that the discussion had gone far enough; indeed she almost said so, by asking abruptly, “What is to be done about the boy Conyers? He is madly in love with Josephine.”

“Marry her, I should say!”

“As a cure for the complaint, I suppose. But what if she will not have him? What if she declares that she 'd like to go back to the convent again,—that she hates the world, and is sorry she ever came out into it,—that she was happier with the sisters—”

“Has she said all this to you, sister?”

“Certainly not, Peter,” said Dinah, bridling up. “These were confidences imparted to the young man himself. It was he told me of them: he came to me last night in a state bordering on distraction. He was hesitating whether he would not throw himself into the river or go into a marching regiment.”

“This is only a laughing matter, then, Dinah?” said Peter, smiling.

“Nothing of the kind, brother! He did not put the alternatives so much in juxtaposition as I have; but they lay certainly in that manner on his thoughts. But when do your friends arrive? I thought they were to have come with you?”

“What a head I have, Dinah! They are all here; two carriages of them. I left them on the road when I rushed on to meet you. Oh, here they come! here they are!”

“My brother's good fortune, gentlemen, has made him seem to forget what adversity never did; but I believe you all know how welcome you are here? Your son, General Conyers, thought to meet you earlier, by taking boat down to the village, and the girls went with him. Your friend, Polly Dill, is one of them, General Hunter.”

Having thus, with one sweep of the scythe, cut down a little of all around her, she led the way towards the cottage, accepting the arm of General Conyers with an antiquated grace that sorely tried Hunter's good manners not to smile at.

“I know what you are looking at, what you are thinking of, Barrington,” said Withering, as he saw the other stand a moment gazing at the landscape on the opposite side of the river.

“I don't think you do, Tom,” said he, smiling.

“You were thinking of buying that mountain yonder. You were saying to yourself, 'I 'll be the owner of that beech wood before I'm a month older!'”

“Upon my life, you 're right! though I have n't the remotest notion of how you guessed it. The old fellow that owns it shall name his own terms to-morrow morning. Here come the girls, and they 've got Tom Dill with them. How the fellow rows! and Fifine is laughing away at Conyers's attempt to keep the boat straight. Look at Hunter, too; he 's off to meet them. Is he 'going in' for the great heiress prize, eh, Tom?” said he, with a knowing smile.

Though Hunter assisted the ladies to land with becoming gallantry, he did not offer his arm to Josephine, but dropped behind, where Tom Dill brought up the rear with his sister.

“We have no confidences that you may not listen to,” said Polly, as she saw that he hesitated as to joining them. “Tom, indeed, has been telling of yourself, and you may not care to hear your own praises.”

“If they come from *you*, I 'm all ears for them.”

“Isn't that pretty, Tom? Did you ever hear any one ask more candidly for—no, not flattery—what is it to be called?”

Tom, however, could not answer, for he had stopped to shake hands with Darby, whose “May I never!” had just arrested him.

“What an honest, fine-hearted fellow it is!” said Hunter, as they moved on, leaving Tom behind.

“But if *you* had n't found it out, who would have known, or who acknowledged it? *I* know—for he has told me—all you have been to him.”

“Pooh, pooh! nothing; less than nothing. He owes all that he is to himself. He is one of those fellows who, once they get into the right groove in life, are sure to go ahead. Not even *you* could make a doctor of him. Nature made him a soldier.”

Polly blushed slightly at the compliment to those teachings she believed a secret, and he went on,—

“What has the world been doing here since I left?”

“Pretty much what it did while you were here. It looked after its turnips and asparagus, took care of its young calves, fattened its chickens, grumbled at the dear-ness of everything, and wondered when Dr. Buck would preach a new sermon.”

“No deaths,—no marriages?”

“None. There was only one candidate for both, and he has done neither,—Major M'Cormick.”

“Confound that old fellow! I had forgotten him. Do you remember the last day I saw you here? We were in the garden, talking, as we believed, without witnesses. Well, *he* overheard us. He heard every word we said, and a good deal more that we did not say.”

“Yes; so he informed me, a few days after.”

“You don't mean to say that he had the impertinence—”

“The frankness, General,—the charming candor,—to tell me that I was a very clever girl, and not to be discouraged by one failure or two; that with time and perseverance—I think he said perseverance—some one was sure to take a fancy to me: he might not, perhaps, be handsome, possibly not very young; his temper, too, might chance to be more tart than was pleasant; in a word, he drew such a picture that I had to stop him short, and ask was he making me a proposal? He has never spoken to me since!”

“I feel as if I could break his neck,” muttered Hunter, below his breath; then added, “Do you remember that I asked leave to write to you once,—only once?”

“Yes, I remember it.”

“And you would not answer me. You shook your head, as though to say the permission would be of no service to me; that I might write, but, you understand, that it would only be to indulge in a delusion—”

“What an expressive shake of the head that meant all that!”

“Ah! there it is again; never serious, never grave! And now I want you to be both. Since I landed in England, I ran down for a day to Devonshire. I saw an old aunt of mine, who, besides being very rich, has retained no small share of the romance of her life. She always had a dash of hero-worship about her, and so I took down Tom with me to show her the gallant fellow whose name was in all the newspapers, and of whom all the world was talking. She was charmed with him,—with his honest, manly simplicity, his utter want of all affectation. She asked me ten times a day, 'Can I not be of service to him? Is there no step he wishes to purchase? Is there nothing we can do for him?' 'Nothing,' said I; 'he is quite equal to his own fortune.' 'He may have brothers,' said she. 'He has a sister,' said I,—'a sister who has made him all that he is, and it was to repay her love and affection that he has shown himself to be the gallant fellow we have seen him.' 'Tell her to come and see me.—that is,' said she, correcting herself, 'give her a letter I shall write, and persuade her, if you can, to oblige me by doing what I ask.' Here is the letter; don't say no till you have read it. Nay, don't shake your head so deploringly; things may be hard without being impossible. At all events, read her note carefully. It's a droll old hand, but clear as print.”

“I'll read it,” said she, looking at the letter; but the sorrowful tone revealed how hopelessly she regarded the task.

“Ask Tom about her; and make Tom tell you what she is like. By Jove! he has such an admiration for the old damsel, I was half afraid he meant to be my uncle.”

They reached the cottage laughing pleasantly over this conceit, and Polly hurried up to her room to read the letter. To her surprise, Josephine was there already, her eyes very red with crying, and her cheeks flushed and feverish-looking.

“My dearest Fifine, what is all this for, on the happiest day of your life?” said she, drawing her arm around her.

“It's all *your* fault,—all *your* doing,” said the other, averting her head, as she tried to disengage herself from the embrace.

“My fault,—my doing? What do you mean, dearest, what can I have done to deserve this?”

“You know very well what you have done. You knew all the time how it would turn out.”

Polly protested firmly that she could not imagine what was attributed to her, and only after a considerable time obtained the explanation of the charge. Indeed it was not at first easy to comprehend it, given, as it was, in the midst of tears, and broken at every word by sobs. The substance was this: that Fifine, in an attempted imitation of Polly's manner,—an effort to copy the coquetting which she fancied to be so captivating,—had ventured to trifle so far with young Conyers, that, after submitting to every alternative of hope and fear for weeks long, he at last gave way, and determined to leave the house, quit the country, and never meet her more. “It was to be like you I did it,” cried she, sobbing bitterly, “and see what it has led me to.”

“Well, dearest, be really like me for half an hour; that is, be very patient and very quiet. Sit down here, and don't leave this till I come back to you.”

Polly kissed her hot cheek as she spoke; and the other sat down where she was bade, with the half-obedient sulkiness of a naughty child.

“Tell young Mr. Conyers to come and speak to me. I shall be in the garden,” said she to his servant; and

before she had gone many paces he was beside her.

"Oh, Polly dearest! have you any hope for me?" cried he, in agony. "If you knew the misery I am enduring."

"Come and take a walk with me," said she, passing her arm within his. "I think you will like to hear what I have to tell you."

The revelation was not a very long one; and as they passed beneath the room where Josephine sat, Polly called out, "Come down here, Fifine, we are making a bouquet; try if you can find 'heart's-ease.'"

What a happy party met that day at dinner! All were in their best spirits, each contented with the other. "Have you read my aunt's note?" whispered Hunter to Polly, as they passed into the drawing-room.

"Yes. I showed it also to Miss Dinah. I asked her advice."

"And what did she say,—what did she advise?"

"She said she 'd think over it and tell me to-morrow."

"To-morrow! Why not now,—why not at once?" cried he, impatiently. "I 'll speak to her myself;" and he hurried to the little room where Miss Dinah was making tea.

It was not a very long interview; and Hunter returned, fond, radiant, and triumphant. "She's the cleverest old woman I ever met in my life," said he; "and the best, besides, after my Aunt Dorothy. She said that such an invitation as that was too cordial to be coldly declined; that it meant more—far more—than a politeness; that you ought to go, yes, by all means; and if there was any difficulty about the journey, or any awkwardness in travelling so far, why, there was an easy remedy for it, as well as for meeting my aunt a perfect stranger."

"And what was that?"

"To go as her niece, dearest Polly,—to be the wife of a man who loves you."

"Is it possible that you have so much to say to each other that you won't take tea?" cried Aunt Dinah; while she whispered to Withering, "I declare we shall never have a sociable moment till they're all married off, and learn to conduct themselves like reasonable creatures."

Is it not the best testimony we can give to happiness, that it is a thing to feel and not describe,—to be enjoyed, but not pictured? It is like a debt that I owe to my reader, to show him "The Home" as it was when blissful hearts were gathered under its roof; and yet, for the life of me, I cannot acquit myself of it. To say that there were old people with their memories of the past, and young ones with their hopes of the future; that there were bygones to sigh over, and vistas to gaze at, conveys but little of the kindliness by which heart opened to heart, and sorrow grew lighter by mutual endurance, and joys became brighter as they were imparted to another.

"So I find," said Barrington, as they sat at breakfast together, "that Josephine insists on going back to the convent, and Fred is resolved on an exchange into the Infantry, and is off for Canada immediately."

"Not a bit of it!" broke in Hunter, who remarked nothing of the roguish drollery of old Peter's eye, nor even suspected that the speech was made in mockery. "Master Fred is coming with me into Kilkenny this morning, for a visit to the Dean, or whatever he is, who dispenses those social handcuffs they call licenses."

"Why, they were quarrelling all the morning," repeated Harrington.

"So we were, sir, and so we mean to do for many a year," said Josephine; "and to keep us in countenance, I hear that General Hunter and Polly have determined to follow our example."

"What do I hear, Miss Dill?" said Miss Barrington, with an affected severity.

"I'm afraid, madam, it is true; there has been what my father calls 'a contagious endemic' here lately, and we have both caught it; but ours are mild cases, and we hope soon to recover."

"What's this I see here?" cried Fred, who, to conceal his shame, had taken up the newspaper. "Listen to this: 'The notorious Stapylton, *alias* Edwardes, whose case up to yesterday was reported all but hopeless, made his escape from the hospital, and has not since been heard of. It would appear that some of the officials had been bribed to assist his evasion, and a strict inquiry will be immediately set on foot into the affair.'"

"Do you think he has got over to France?" whispered Peter to Withering.

"Of course he has; the way was all open, and everything ready for him!"

"Then I am thoroughly happy!" cried Barrington, "and there's not even the shadow of a cloud over our present sunshine."

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BARRINGTON. VOLUME 2 (OF 2) ***

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