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by Charles Hooton**

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**COLIN CLINK.**

**By Charles Hooton**

**IN THREE VOLUMES. VOL. I.**

**LONDON:**

**RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.**

**1841**

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*Original Size*

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## CHAPTER I.

*Affords a capital illustration of the way of the world. For, whereas knaves and fools not unusually take precedence of better men, so this chapter, though placed at the head of a long regiment, is yet inferior to any one that comes after.*

THE famous John Bunyan, or Bunion,—for the true orthography of this renowned name is much doubted amongst the learned of the present age,—has laid it down as an axiom in that most glorious of all Progresses, the Pilgrim's Progress, that "He that is down, needs fear no fall." And who, in good truth, will undertake to dispute the good pilgrim's remark? Since nothing can be more clear to an eye as philosophic as was that of Mr. Bunyan, that if a man be seated on the ground, he most certainly is not in much danger of slipping through his chair; or that, being already at the bottom of the water, he "needs fear no fall" from the yard-arm.

On this assurance, I take courage for Colin Clink. Down in the world with respect to its goods, down in society, down in the estimation of his own father and mother, and down in that which our modern political ragamuffins are pleased to term the "accident" of birth, he assuredly had not the least occasion for a single instant to trouble his mind with fears of falling any lower.

From the very earliest, therefore, he had, and could have, but one prospect before him, and that was, the prospect of rising above his first condition. To be sure, like Bruce's spider, he afterwards fell sometimes; but then he reflected that rising and falling, like standing up and sitting down, constitute a portion of the lot of every man's life.

It is currently related amongst the good folks of the country-side wherein our hero first saw the light, that while three or four officious neighbourly women were stealing noiselessly about the room, attending to the wants of the sick woman, and while the accoucheur of the parish was inly congratulating himself on having introduced his round five-thousandth child to the troublesome pleasures of this world, young Colin turned from the arms of the nurse who held him, and, as though even then conscious of the obligation conferred upon him by his admission to the stage of life, stretched out his hand towards the astonished surgeon, and in a very audible voice exclaimed, "Thank you, doctor—thank you!"

I do not vouch for the truth of this anecdote; but this I do say,—whether or not he had anything to be thankful for will be seen, much as he himself saw it, during the course of this his own true history.

That he was lucky in opening his eyes, even though in an humble cottage, amidst the scenes that nature spread around him, is certain enough. To be born poor as the spirit of poverty herself, is sufficiently bad; but far worse is it to be thus born in the bottom of some noisome alley of a vast town, where a single ray of sunlight never falls, nor a glimpse of the sky itself is ever caught, beyond what may be afforded by that small dusky section of it which seems to lie like a dirty ceiling on the chimney-tops, and even then cannot be seen, unless (to speak like a geometrician) by raising the face to a horizontal position and the eyes perpendicularly. Fresh air, fields, rivers, clouds, and sunshine, redeem half the miseries of want, and make a happy joyful being of him who, in any other sense, cannot call one single atom of the world his own.

Colin Clink was a native of the village of Bramleigh, about twenty miles west of that city of law and divinity, of sermons and proctors' parchment, the silent city of York.

Some time previous to his birth, his mother had taken a fancy, suggested, very probably, by the powerful pleading of a weak pocket, or, with equal probability, by something else to the full as argumentative, to reside in a small cottage, (as rural landowners are in the habit of terming such residences, though they are known to everybody else as hovels,) altogether by herself; if I except a little girl, of some five or six years of age, who accompanied her in the capacity of embryo housemaid, gruel-maker, and, when strong enough, of nurse to the expected "little stranger."

For the discharge of the more important and pressing duties incident to her situation, she depended upon one or two of those permanently unemployed old crones, usually to be found in country places, who pass the greater portion of their time in "preserving" themselves, like red herrings or hung beef, over the idle smoke of their own scanty fires, and who, as they are always waiting chances, may be had by asking for at any moment. Their minimum of wages depended upon a small sum of money derived by Mistress Clink, the

mother of our hero, from a source which, as she then followed no particular employment, we are compelled to pronounce obscure.

The sagacious reader may perhaps, in the height of his wisdom, marvel how so young a child as one of five or six years of age should be introduced to his notice in the capacity above-mentioned; but the practice is common enough, and may be accounted for, in the way of cause and effect, upon the most modern philosophical principles. Thus:—Great states require great taxes to support them; great taxes produce political extravagance; political extravagance enforces domestic economy; and domestic economy in the lowest class, where misery would seem almost rudely to sever the most endearing ties, now-a-days, demands that every pair of hands, however small, shall labour for the milk that supports them; and every little heart, however light, shall be filled with the pale cares and yearning anxieties which naturally belong only to mature age.

Of such as these was Mistress Clink's diminutive housemaid, Fanny Woodruff.

Brought up amidst hardships from the first day of her existence, through the agency either of the rod, the heavier stick, or of keener hunger, during at least twelve hours out of every twenty-four that passed over her head; she presented, at five years of age, the miniature picture, painted in white and yellow,—for all the carnation had fled from Nature's palette when she drew this mere sketch of incipient woman,—she presented, I repeat, the miniature picture, not of what childhood is, a bright and joyful outburst of fresh life into a new world of strange attractive things—not of that restless inquiring existence, curious after every created object, and happy amidst them all; but of a little, pale, solemn thing, looking as though it had suddenly fallen, heart-checked, upon a world of evil—as though its eyes had looked only upon discouragement, and its hands been stretched in love, only to be repulsed with indifference or with hatred. The picture of a little baby soul, prematurely forced upon the grown-up anxieties of the world, and made almost a woman in demeanour, before she knew half the attractive actions of a child.

Notwithstanding all this, and in spite of the unnatural care-worn expression of her little melancholy countenance, Fanny's features retained something of that indefinite quality commonly termed "interesting." Two black eyes, which showed nothing but black between the lids, looked openly but fearfully from beneath the arched browless bones of the forehead, and, with an irrepressible questioning in the face of the spectator, seemed ever to be asking doubtfully, whether there was or was not such a creature as a friend in the world; but her sunken cheeks and wasted arms belied the happy age of childhood, and spoke only of hard usage and oft-continued suffering.

On the eventful day that gave young Master Colin Clink to the world, and about twelve hours previous to the time at which he *should have made* his actual appearance, Mistress Clink, his mother, was lying upon a bed in an inner ground-floor room of her cottage, think-ing—if the troubled and confused ideas that filled her brain might be termed thinking—upon her coming trials; while little Fanny, taking temporary advantage of the illness of her mistress, and relaxing, in a moment of happy forgetfulness, again into a child, was sitting upon the ground near the door, and noiselessly amusing herself by weighing in a halfpenny pair of tin scales the sand which had been strown upon the floor by way of carpet, when the abrupt entrance of some one at the outer door, though unheard by the sick woman amidst her half-dreaming reveries, so startled the little offender on the ground, that, in her haste to scramble on to her feet, and recover all the solemn proprieties and demure looks which, in a returning moment of infantile nature, had been cast aside, she upset the last imaginary pound of sand-made sugar that had been heaped up on a stool beside her, and at the same time chanced to strike her head against the under side of the little round table which stood at hand, whereby a bottle of physic was tossed uninjured on to the bed, and a spoon precipitated to the floor. Her countenance instantly changed to an expression which told that the crime was of too black a dye to be forgiven. But patience without tears, and endurance without complaint, were also as visible; virtues which hard necessity had instilled into her bosom long before.

Ill as Mistress Clink may readily be presumed to have been, she started half up in bed, leaning with her elbow upon the pillow, her countenance, pale and ghastly with sickness, rendered still more pale and horrible with anger, and gasping for words, which even then came faint in sound though strong in bitterness, she began to rate the child vehemently for her accidental disaster.

In another instant a female servant of the squire of the parish stood by the bedside.

Mistress Clink fell back upon the pillow, while her face for a moment blushed scarlet, and then became again as white as ashes.

"*Don't* rate the poor child, if you please, ma'am," said the woman. "Poor thing! it's only a bag of bones at best."

"Oh, I'm ill!" sighed Mistress Clink.

"Ay, dear! you *do* look ill," responded the woman. "I 'll run and fetch the doctor; but, if you please, ma'am, master has sent this little basket of things for you."

"What things?" asked the sick woman, slightly rallying, and in an eager voice.

"Linen, ma'am," observed the servant, at the same time opening the lid of the basket.

"How very good of him!" whispered Fanny.

"Yes, child," replied the serving woman; "he's always very kind to poor women."

The invalid was aroused; she almost raised herself again upon her hand.

"Very kind, is he? Yes, yes—say so, say so. But"—and she hesitated, and passed her hand across her forehead, as though mentally striving to recall her flitting senses—"Take 'em back—away with 'em—tell him—Oh! I'm ill, I'm ill!"





*Original Size*

She fell back insensible. The old woman and Fanny screamed first, and then ran for the surgeon. Within a very brief period Master Colin Clink appeared before the world, some half a day or so earlier than, to the best of my belief, nature originally intended he should. But it is the peculiar faculty of violent tempers to precipitate events, and realize prospective troubles before their time.

As the reader will subsequently be called upon to make a more close acquaintance with the professional gentleman now introduced to notice, it may not be improper briefly to observe, that, amongst many other recommendations to the notice and favour of the public, the doctor offered himself as a guardian to "persons of unsound mind," with, of course, the kindest and best mode of treatment that could possibly be adopted. In plain words, he kept a "retreat," or private madhouse, for the especial and peculiar accommodation of those eager young gentlemen who may, perchance, find it more agreeable to shut up their elderly relations in a lunatic's cell, than to wait until death shall have relieved them of the antique burthen. The doctor's establishment was one of the worst of a bad kind; and, as we shall eventually see, he was in the regular practice of making a very curious application of it.

We may now conclude the chapter.

While Doctor Rowel was preparing for his departure, he chanced, in the course of some casual chat with one of the old gossips present, to ask where the sick woman's husband was at this interesting moment of his life; but, unluckily for his curiosity, all the old women were immediately seized with a momentary deafness, which totally prevented them from hearing his question, though it was twice repeated. He then asked how it came about that the Squire had sent such a pretty basket of baby-linen to Mistress Clink? But their ears were equally impervious to the sound of that inquiry as to the other; thus proving to a demonstration, that while there are some matters which certain ingenious people imagine they thoroughly understand even from the slightest hints and innuendoes, which is precisely the case with the good reader himself at this moment, (so far as our present story is concerned,) there are other matters that, put them into whatever language you will, can never be rendered at all comprehensible to discreet grown-up people.

Nevertheless, the doctor did not depart unenlightened. Though the women were deaf and ignorant, a little child was present who seemed to know all about it. Finding that nobody else answered the great gentleman, little Fanny screwed her courage up to the speaking point, and looking the doctor earnestly in the face, said, "If you please, sir, the lady that brought the basket said it was because the squire is always so very kind to poor women."

The doctor burst into a laugh, though what for nobody present could imagine, as all the old women, and the child too, looked grave enough in all conscience.

## CHAPTER II.

*Involves a doubtful affair still deeper in doubt, through the attempts made to clear it up; and at the same time finds Colin Clink a reputable father, in a quarter the least expected.*

SHORTLY after the maid-servant had returned to Kiddal, (a name by which Squire Lupton's family-house had been known for centuries,) and explained to her master, as in duty bound, how she found Mistress Clink, and how she left the linen, and how, likewise, another boy had been added to the common stock of mortals, that benevolent and considerate gentleman assumed a particularly grave aspect; and then, for the especial edification and future guidance of the damsel before him, he began to "improve" the event which had just taken place in the village, and to express his deep regret that the common orders of people were so very inconsiderate as to rush headlong, as it were, upon the increase of families which, after all, they could not support without entailing a portion of the burthen upon the rich and humane, who, strictly speaking, ought to have no hand whatever in the business. His peroration consisted of some excellent advice to the girl herself, (equally applicable to everybody else in similar situations,) not by any means to think of marrying either the gardener or the gamekeeper, until she knew herself capable of maintaining a very large family, without palming any of them upon either generous individuals or on the parish. She could not do better than keep the case of Mistress Clink continually before her eyes, as a standing warning of the evil effects of being in too great a hurry. The girl retired to her kitchen filled with great ideas of her master's goodness, and strengthened in her determination to disbelieve every word of the various slanders afloat throughout the lower part of the house, and through the village at large, which turned the squire's kindness to mere merchandise, by attributing it to interested motives.

That same evening, as the squire sat alone by lamplight taking a glass of wine in his library, he was observed by the servant who had carried in the decanter to be in a humour not the most sprightly and frolicsome imaginable; and so he told the maid who had been lectured in the afternoon, at the same time going so far as to say, that he thought if master was more prudent sometimes than some folks said he was, it might be that he would not have occasion to be melancholy so often. The maid replied, that she knew all about it; and if the squire was melancholy, it was because some people in the world were so very wicked as to run head-first on to families, and then go for to come on the first people in the parish to maintain them. It was his own supernumerary goodness that got imposed on by deceitful and resolute women, who went about having children, because they knew that the squire was father to the whole parish, and would not let little innocents starve, let them belong to whomsoever they might.

John was about rising to reply to this able defence when the library bell rang, and called him up stairs instead. The squire wanted to see his steward immediately, but the steward was just then getting his dinner; and therefore—as the dinner of a steward, in a great house with an easy master, is not, as Richard Oastler well knows, a matter of very easy despatch—he sent word that he was at that moment very deeply engaged in digesting his accounts, but would wait upon his master as soon as possible. In the mean time, the kitchen was converted into a debating room by John and the maid; but as the same subject was very shortly afterwards much better discussed in the second chamber, we will repair thither and ascertain what passed.

"Come in, Longstaff," cried the squire, in reply to a tap at the door which announced the presence of the steward, and in another second that worthy approached the table.

"Dined, Longstaff?—take a glass of wine? Sit down, sit down. I've a little matter on hand, Longstaff, that requires to be rather nicely managed, and I know of no man so likely to do it well as you are, Longstaff, eh?"

"You flatter me, sir—" began Mr. Longstaff: but the squire interrupted him.

"No, no, Longstaff, no,—I flatter no man. Plain speaking is a jewel; but I know I can depend upon you for a little assistance when it is needed, better than upon any other man that ever entered my service."

"You flatter—" again began the steward, but a second time was interrupted by his master.

"No, no Longstaff, no, no,—truth's no flattery, as everybody knows; and no man need be afraid or ashamed of speaking truth before the best face in all Christendom."

Mr. Longstaff mistook this last observation, and interpreted it as a compliment to his own beauty; he therefore felt himself bound to repeat his previously intended observation, and accordingly began, "You flat—" but for the third time was prevented giving utterance to it, through the interruption of Squire Lupton.

"I'll tell you what, Longstaff,—the thing is here. A little secrecy and a little manoeuvring are just what's required. If you can *Talleyrand* it a little,—you understand me?"

And the squire eked out his meaning with a certain jerk upwards of the head more significant than words, but which when dimly translated into English, seemed to mean as much as the mysterious popular phrase, "that's your ticket." He then drank a bumper, and, pushing the bottle to Longstaff, waited in seeming anxiety half a minute before he filled again.

"Well, Longstaff, magistrate as I am, and bound, of course, to carry the law, while it is law, into execution, I must say this,—and I speak from my own observation and experience, as you well know,—while the members of the British Legislature allow that clause of the forty-third of Elizabeth to remain upon the statute-books, they do not do their duty as legislators either to man, woman, or child."

A loud thump on the table, accompanied with corresponding emphasis of speech, made the word *child* sound a great deal bigger than either man or woman. The squire then went on,—"Look at the effect of it, Longstaff. Any man,—I myself,—you,—any of us, or all of us,—are liable at any time to have fathered upon us a thing, a brat,—any tinkers whelp that ever was bred, very likely in Cumberland or Cornwall, or a thousand miles off,—though, in point of fact, you or I had no more acquaintance with that child's mother—no, no more than we had with Donna Maria! Now mark, Longstaff. You know I've been something of a teaser in the course of my time to people of that sort. I've made them pay for their whistle, as Franklin says, pretty smartly. Well, what is the consequence?—what ensues? Why, just this. After I've ferreted out some of the worst of them, and put them, as I thought, upon better manners,—the very next time anything of the kind happens again, they lay their heads together, and have the audacious impudence,—the rascality, as I may call it,—the—the—the



abominable—However, I should say, to—to go before the overseers of the parish, and persist in swearing every child, without exception, every one, girl and boy,—to *me*. Now, Longstaff, I dare say you have heard reports of this kind in the course of your acquaintance with one person or another, though I never mentioned a word about it before. Don't you think it a shame, a disgrace to the Parliament of Elizabeth that passed that law, that all county magistrates were not personally and especially *excepted* from the operation of that clause?—and that it was not rendered a misdemeanour, punishable by imprisonment or the stocks, for any woman, no matter what her degree, to swear a child to any county magistrate? Such a provision, Longstaff, would have effectually secured individuals like me against the malice of convicted persons, and prevented the possibility of such statements being circulated, as are now quite as common in the parish as rain and sunshine.”

“Certainly, sir,” replied Longstaff, acquiescingly; “but then, sir, might it not have operated, in the case of some individuals of the magistracy, as a sort of warrant of impunity to—”

“Impunity!” exclaimed the squire. “I mean to assert and to maintain it, that if Queen Bess had been a man, as she ought to have been, women would never have had it in their power to swear with impunity one half,—no, nor one-tenth part of that that they are now swearing every hour of their lives. Why, look ye,—here again to-day,—this very morning, that young woman Clink is laid up of another; and, as sure as there's head and tail to a shilling, so sure am I that, unless something be done beforehand to find a father somewhere or other for the young cub, it 'll be laid at *my* door, along with all the rest. But I 'm resolved this time to put a stop to it; and, as a man's word goes for nothing, though he be magistrate or anything else, we 'll try for once if we cannot fix the saddle on the right horse some other way.”

The complying Mr. Longstaff willingly lent himself to the squire's designs; and, after some farther conversation of a similar character to that above given, it was agreed that the steward, acting as Squire Lupton's agent, should make use of all the means and appliances within his power, in order to ward off the expected declaration by Mistress Clink, and to induce her to avow before the overseers the real father of our hero Colin.

Accordingly, as soon as the condition of that good lady would allow of a visit from Mr. Longstaff, he waited upon her, stuffed with persuasions to the very throat; and, after an hour and a half's exhortation, coupled with a round number of slices of that pleasant root, commonly called “the root of all evil,” he succeeded, to his great joy and satisfaction, in extorting from her a solemn promise to confer the honour of her son's parentage upon any man in the parish rather than upon Squire Lupton.

As a moral-minded historian, I must confess this whole transaction to be most nefarious, regard it in whatever light we may.

Longstaff was delighted with the success of his negotiation, and, reflecting that there is nothing like striking while the iron is hot, he would not be satisfied unless Mistress Clink agreed there and then to go with him to Skinwell the overseer, to make her declaration respecting Colin's father.

On the road to that functionary's office, Longstaff employed himself in suggesting to the excellent woman by his side the names of several individuals, with whom secretly he was upon very ill terms, as fit and proper persons from amongst whom to select a parent, chuckling with renewed glee every now and then as the thought came afresh over his mind of taking revenge upon some one or other of his enemies, through the medium of two and sixpence or three shillings per week. Mistress Clink replied to his suggestions by assuring him that she would endeavour to satisfy him in that particular to his heart's content.

Skin well, besides being overseer of the parish during the year of which we are writing, was by profession a lawyer; and, in order to obtain a living in so small a field, was in the regular practice of getting up petty squabbles in a friendly way, and merely for the sake of obtaining justice to all parties, between his neighbours and acquaintances. A clothes-line across a yard, a stopped-up drain, or the question whether a certain ditch belonged to the right or to the left land owner, would afford him food for a fortnight; and while he laboured most assiduously in order to involve two parties in litigation, he contrived so ingeniously to gloss over his own conduct with the varnish of “favour to none, justice to all,” as invariably to come off without offending either.

On entering Skinwell's office, Longstaff and the lady found that worthy at work on one side of a double desk, face to face, though divided by a miniature railing along the top, with a poor miserable-looking stripling of a clerk, not unlike, both in shape and colour, to a bricklayer's lath.

Skinwell looked vacantly up at Mrs. Clink, recognised the steward by a nod, and then went on with his work. In the mean time Mrs. C. sat down on a three-legged-stool, placed there for the accommodation of weary clients, behind a high partition of boards, which divided the room, and inclosed, as in a sheep-pen, the man of law and his slave.

At one end of the mantel-shelf stood a second-hand brown japanned tin box, divided into three compartments, and respectively lettered, “Delivery,—Received,—Post.” But there appeared not to be anything to deliver, nor to receive, nor to send to the post; for each division was as empty as a pauper's stomach. The remaining portion of the shelf was occupied by some few fat octavos bound in dry-looking unornamental calf; while over the fireplace hung the Yorkshire Almanack for the year but one preceding, Skinwell's business not being usually in a sufficiently flourishing condition to allow of the luxury of a clean almanack every twelve months; and even the one which already served to enlighten his office had been purchased at half price when two months old.

“*Do* take a seat, Mr. Longstaff!” exclaimed the legal adviser of the village, as he raised his head, and, in apparent astonishment, beheld that gentleman still upon his feet, though without reflecting, it would seem, that his request could be much more easily made than complied with, there being not a single accommodation for the weary in his whole office, with the exception of the two high stools occupied respectively by himself and his clerk, and the low one of which Mrs. Clink had already taken possession. Longstaff, however, was soon enabled very kindly to compromise the matter; for while hunting about with his eyes in quest of a supporter of the description mentioned, he beheld in the far corner by the fireplace a few breadths of deal-plank fixed on tressels, by way of table, and partially covered with sundry sheets of calf-skin,



interspersed with stumps of long-used pens, and crowned with a most business-like, formidable-looking pounce-box. To this quarter he accordingly repaired, and having placed one thigh across the corner of the make-shift table, while he stood plump upright on the other leg, began very seriously to stare into the fire.

Some minutes of profound silence ensued.

The ghostly clerk stopped short in his half-idle labour, as though hesitating what to do, and then made this learned inquiry of his employer, "Pray, sir, should this parchment be cut?"

"Certainly it should," replied the latter testily. "Don't you see it's an indenture?—and an indenture is *not* an indenture, and of no force, until it is cut."

The novice accordingly, at a very accelerated speed, proceeded to cut it. Shortly afterwards he again had to trouble his master.

"Should I say 'before said' or 'above said?'"

"Above, certainly," replied the sage. "'Before said' means the first thing that ever was written in the world,—before anything else that has ever been written since. Write 'above,' to be sure."

The clerk wrote "above" accordingly, while Longstaff and the lady looked up in admiration of Mr. Skinwells acuteness, and Skin well himself looked boldly into the steward's face, with all the brass of a knowing one triumphant in his knowledge.

It will be remembered by the reader, that on the occasion of the birth of our hero Colin, Dr. Rowel expressed to those about him some curiosity respecting the little fellow's father.

Happily, then, for the doctor's satisfaction, he chanced to enter Skinwell's office upon private business just as the above brief conversation had terminated, and before that examination of Mrs. Clink had commenced, in which a father was legally to be given him. The doctor, then, was upon the point of being gratified from the very best authority.

Having now concluded the writing with which he had been engaged, the joint lawyer and overseer of the parish called to the woman Clink, and bade her stand up and look at him; and, in order to afford her every facility for doing so to the best advantage, he planted both his elbows firmly upon the desk, rested his chin upon both his hands, which stood up against his cheeks in such a manner as to convey to a casual spectator the idea that he was particularly solicitous about a pair of red scanty whiskers, like moles, which grew beneath, and then fixed his eyes in that particular place above the wooden horizon that inclosed him, in which the disc of Mrs. Clink's head now began slowly to appear. As she came gradually and modestly up, she met first the gaze of the lawyer, then of his clerk, then of Dr. Rowel, and then of Mr. Longstaff; so that by the time she was fully risen, four men's faces confronted her at once, and with such familiar earnestness, that, though not apt to be particularly tender-hearted in others' cases, she burst into tears at her own.

"Ay, ay, doctor," sneeringly remarked Skinwell to that worthy professional, "this is just it. They can always cry when it is too late, instead of crying out at the proper time." Then looking fiercely in the downcast countenance of the yet feeble culprit before him, he thus continued his discourse. "Come, come, woman, we can't have any blubbering here—it won't do. Hold your head up; for you can't be ashamed of seeing a man, I should think." The surgeon, the steward, the clerk, and the brutal wit himself smiled.

"Come, up with it, and let us look at you."

Colin's mother sobbed louder, and, instead of complying with this gratuitously insolent request, buried her face so much lower in the folds of the shawl that covered her neck, and hung down upon her bosom, as to present to the gaze of the inquiring overseer almost a full-moon view of the crown of her bonnet.

"Hum!" growled Skinwell; "like all the rest—not a look to be got at them. Well, now, listen to me, my good woman. You know what you 're brought here for?"

A long-drawn snuffle from the other side of the partition, which sounded very much like what musicians term a shake, seemed to confess too deeply the painful fact.

Mr. Longstaff's merriment was here evinced by a single explosion of the breath, which would have done much better to blow a lamp out with than to convince any body that he was pleased. The surgeon did not change countenance, while the clerk made three or four discursive flourishes with his pen on the blotting-paper before him, as much as to say he would take the propriety of laughing into further consideration. Mr. Skinwell then continued.

"Now, now, woman,—*do* attend to me. It is impossible that my valuable time can be wasted in this manner. Who is that child's father?"

"Yes, yes," echoed Mr. Longstaff, tapping the poor woman in joyful expectation upon the shoulder; "just say the word, and have done with it."

Every eye was fixed on Mrs. Clink. After a brief pause, during which the tears yet remaining in her eyes were hastily dried up with the corner of her shawl, she raised her head with a feeling of confidence scarcely to be expected, and directing her eyes through the little palisades which stopped the wooden partition full at Mr. Skinwell, she said, in a voice sufficiently loud to be heard by all present,—

"If you please, sir, it is Mr. Longstaff, the steward."

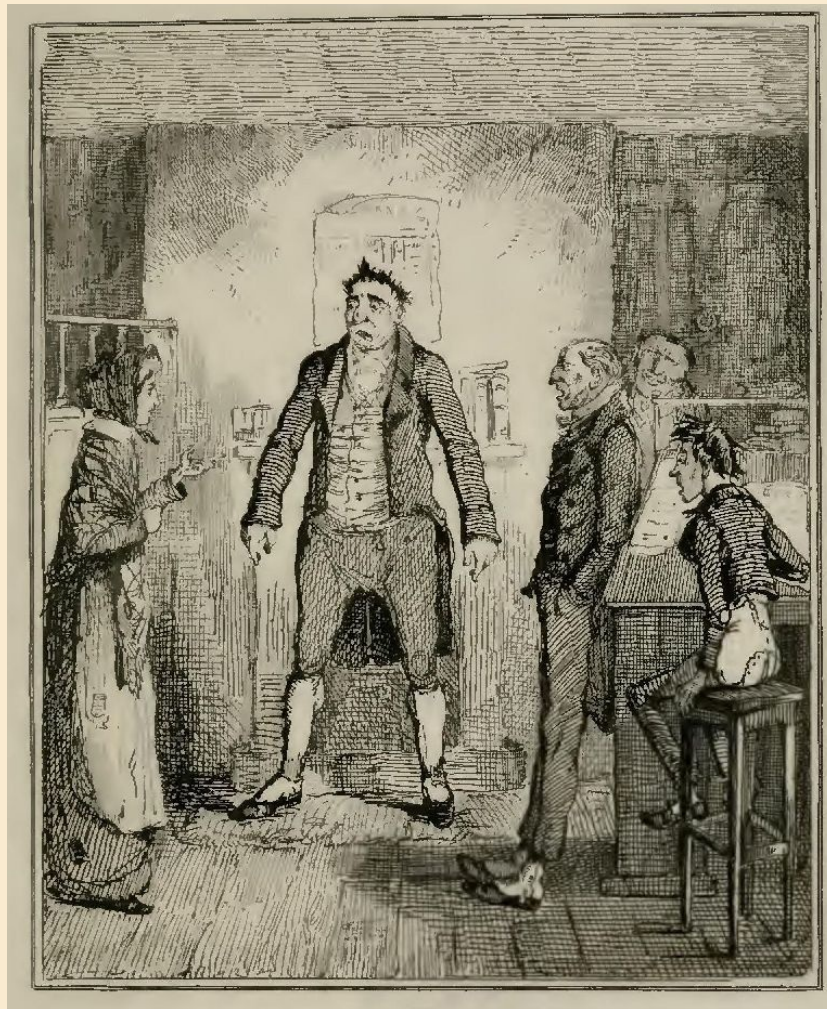
The office was amazed; while Mr. Longstaff himself started up in an attitude of mute astonishment, which Chantrey himself could scarcely have represented.

"Longstaff, the steward!" ejaculated Skin-well.

"Impossible!" observed Dr. Rowel.

"It's false!" muttered the clerk.

"It *is* false!" repeated the accused man in a faint voice. "Why, gentlemen,—a man with a wife and family,—in my situation;—it's monstrous and diabolical. If I could pull your tongue across your teeth," he continued, turning to Colin's mother, and shaking his fist in her face, "I'd cure it and hang it up, as an eternal example to such arrant liars. You *know* I'm as innocent as a March lamb,—you do, you deceitful woman!"



*Original Size*

Mrs. Clink, however, persisted in her statement, and avowed her readiness to take her oath upon the fact; so that Mr. Longstaff was obliged to submit with the best or the worst grace he might.

This small scrap of experience fully convinced him, however, that Squire Lupton's views upon the subject of the forty-third of Elizabeth, which he had formerly opposed, were not only perfectly correct in themselves, but that they ought to have been extended much further, and that the exemption of which the squire had spoken, ought to have embraced not only county magistrates, but their stewards also.

How the matter really was, the reader may decide for himself upon the following evidence, which is the best I have to offer him:—that Mr. Longstaff regularly paid the charge of three shillings per week towards the maintenance of that life which I am now writing, and that he failed not to account for it in the squire's books, under the mysterious, though very ministerial, title of "secret service money."

Possibly, however, Mr. Longstaff might economically consider the squire much more capable of paying it than he was himself. Nor, even in case it was so, would he have been the first steward in these latter days who, for his own use, has kindly condescended to borrow for a brief season his master's money.

### CHAPTER III.

*Describes the sufferings endured by Mr. Longstaff, in consequence of the diabolical proceedings against him recorded in the last chapter; and also hints at a cowardly piece of revenge which he and his wife planned, in the middle of the night, upon Mrs. Clink and Colin.*

**M**R. LONGSTAFF returned towards the old house of Kiddal vexed, mortified, and ashamed; and while he mentally vowed never again to undertake a piece of dirty work for the best man living, neither for bribe, nor place, nor the hope of favour, he also as firmly, and in a spirit much more to be depended upon, determined to pour, to the very last drop, the phials of his wrath upon the devoted head of Colin's mother. "If there be not power in a steward," thought he, "to harass such a poor, helpless, despicable thing as she is, where in the world is it to be found?—and if any steward knows how to do it better than I do, why, I 'll give him leave to eat me." With which bold and magnanimous reflection he bustled along the road, almost heedless of the straggling briars which every now and then caught hold of his face or his ankles, and

as though fully conscious only of the pleasing fact that each additional step brought him still a step nearer his revenge. Besides this, had the truth been fully known, his feelings of resentment against Mrs. Clink were in no small degree increased by the thoughts that crowded his brain touching the manner in which he should meet "the partner of his joys and woes," Mrs. Æneasina Macleay Longstaff: a lady, as some years of hard experience had taught him, who well merited the title of a woman of spirit, and with whom in his soul, though he scarcely dare allow himself to believe it, he anticipated no very pleasant encounter.

As for the squire, who naturally enough would wish to know how his steward had sped in the business, Mr. Longstaff did not feel much of the humour of eagerness to visit him, having already about as large a load on his stomach as he could conveniently carry, and being in his own mind fully persuaded that he really should not have a tithe of the requisite courage left to meet Mrs. Longstaff, if he ventured to encounter the jeers of the squire previously. With the view, then, of making the best of his way unobserved down to his own house, he left the high road, and exerted himself in a very unusual manner to leap half a score hedges and ditches which crossed the bird's-flight path he had taken, and ultimately stole privily down the side of the boundary-wall which inclosed the northern side of the plantations, intending to creep through a small private door, placed there for the convenience of the gamekeepers, which conducted to a path in the immediate direction of his own house. But, notwithstanding all his trouble, fortune again turned her wheel upon Mr. Longstaff; he fell into the very trap that he had taken so much trouble to avoid, and what—to a man already in a state of aggravation—was still worse, he fell into it solely because he had endeavoured to avoid it. Had he taken the common road, he would have arrived at home uninterrupted; as it was, scarcely had he reached within twenty yards of the little door when, to his great alarm, he heard the voice of the squire hailing him from some distance up the fields to the left hand. Mr. Longstaff pushed forwards with increased speed, and without taking more notice of his master's call than if he had not heard it; but before he could reach the gate of that which had now become as a fortress to him, Mr. Lupton again hallooed in a tone which even a deaf man could not, with any show of grace, have denied hearing something of. Longstaff accordingly stopped, and, on turning his head, beheld the squire on horseback beckoning to him with his hand. There was now no alternative; and in a few minutes the steward was by his side.

"Well, Longstaff," said he, as he carelessly twirled the lash of his whip upon its stock like a horizontal wheel, "how has it ended? I suppose you have given a son-and-heir to somebody or other?"

"It has turned out a deal worse job than I expected," dolefully observed the steward.

"Ah!—a bad job is it?"

"Very, sir, very!" sighed the unfortunate go-between.

"Why—what—wouldn't she be persuaded, Longstaff?"

"Oh, yes," replied the steward, with a deep curse on Mrs. Clink, "she took all I was authorised to give her —"

"And gave me the whelp in exchange, eh?" added the squire.

"No, sir, no,"—(he inly wished she had)"—worse than that, sir,—a great deal worse."

"Worse!" earnestly exclaimed Mr. Lupton; "that is impossible. Have *you* got him then?"

Mr. Longstaff cast his eyes to the ground, arranged the shoe-tie of his left foot with the toe of his right, and with a dolorous face, drawn nearly as long as his own name, faintly drawled out, "I have, sir!"

Mr. Lupton burst into a fit of laughter, which lasted two whole minutes, blew out his breath in a prolonged whistle, not unlike an autumn blast through an out-door key-hole, and then dashed away, cracking his whip and laughing as long as he could be heard.

"Dang the woman!" exclaimed the steward, as he began to move off the ground homewards, "I 'll kick her and her barn \* out of house and home to-night, or may I be——"

*\* A common Yorkshire corruption of the Scottish bairn.*

Somehow or other, however, he could not screw up sufficient courage to carry him immediately home, and, as it were, into the very jaws of Mrs. Æneasina Longstaff. He therefore crossed the corners of two other fields again, on to the high-road, and walked into the Cock and Bottle, the only inn in Bramleigh, with the intention of strengthening his shaken nerves with a respectable potation of brandy and water.

On entering, he thought the landlady—with whom he had always been upon the best of terms, not only because of his situation, but also of his excellent moral character,—looked more than usually distant with him. The landlord, too, cast an eye at him, as much as to say, "I hear, Mr. Longstaff, you have had something unpleasant this morning?" While the maid, who formerly used to smile very prettily whenever he appeared, actually brushed by him as he went down the passage, as though she thought he was a better man half a mile off than between two such walls. As he passed the kitchen-door, everybody within turned to look at him; and, when he got into the parlour, he beheld four of the village farmers round the table, all of whom were smiling, evidently at something very funny. Mr. Longstaff, by that peculiar instinct which usually attends men in suspicious circumstances, knew, as well as if he had been told, that it was at him. He could not endure the company, the house, the landlord and his wife, nor himself; and, therefore, he marched out again, and homeward, in a state, as may easily be supposed, of more extraordinary preparation for meeting his lady, than if he had thrice over fulfilled his intention of imbibing at the Cock and Bottle some two or three glasses of aqua vitæ. The truth was, he had by this time, like a bull with running about, grown very desperate; and, for the moment, he cared no more about the temper of Mrs. Æneasina Longstaff than he cared for the wind that blew around him.

And well was it for the steward that he did not. Everybody of experience knows that the worst news invariably flies the fastest: and, in the present case, the result of the examination in Mr. Skinwell's office, which has already been described, was made known to poor unhappy Mrs. Longstaff, through such a rapid chain of communication, as nearly equalled the transmission of a Government despatch by telegraph. By the time her husband arrived at home, then, she was, as a necessary consequence, not only filled with grief at the discovery that had been made, but also was more than filled,—she was absolutely overflowing—with feelings



of jealous rage against the faithless barbarian, with whom, as she then thought, the most perverse destiny had united her. Every moment of cessation in the paroxysms of her grief was mentally employed in preparing a very pretty rod in pickle for him: with Cleopatra, she could have whipped him with wire first, and stewed him in brine afterwards; or she could, with the highest satisfaction, have done any other thing which the imagination most fertile in painful inventions might have suggested.

All this latent indignation, however, Mr. Longstaff braved. He did not relish the undertaking, to be sure; but then, inly conscious of his own blamelessness, he concluded that, provided he could only get the first word with her, the storm might be blown aside. But, alas! he could not get the first word, although he had it on his lips as he entered the door. Mrs. Longstaff attacked him before he came in sight: and, in all probability, such an oratorical display of all the deprecatory figures of speech,—such disparagements, and condemnations, and denunciations; such hatreds, and despisings, and contempts, and upbraidings,—were never before, throughout the whole range of domestic disturbances, collected together within so brief a space of time. In fact, such an arrowy sleet of words was rained upon the unlucky steward, and so suddenly, that, without having been able to force in a single opposing syllable between them, he was at last compelled, after the royal example of some of our too closely besieged emperors and kings, to make good his retreat at the rear of the premises.

According to the good old custom in cases of this kind, it is highly probable that Mr. and Mrs. Longstaff would that night have done themselves the pleasure of retiring to rest in most peaceable dumb-show, if not, indeed, the additional felicity of sleeping in separate beds, out of the very praiseworthy desire of mutual revenge, had it not so fallen out, and naturally enough, considering what had happened,—that Mr. Longstaff, contrary to his usual habit, consoled himself as well as he was able, by staying away from home until very late in the evening: so late indeed, that, as Mrs. Longstaff cooled, she really began to entertain very serious fears whether she had not carried matters rather too far; and, perhaps,—for the thing did not to her half-repentant mind appear impossible, had driven her husband, in a moment of desperation, to make away with himself. Hour after hour passed on; and the time thus allowed her for better reflection was not altogether ill-spent. She began to consider the many chances there were of great exaggeration in the report that had been brought to her; the fondness of human kind in general to deal in atrocities, even though one half of them be self-invented; the great improbability of Mr. Longstaff's having really compromised his character in the manner which it was currently related he had; and, above all, the very possible contingency that, as in many other similar cases, open perjury had been committed. Under any circumstances she now felt conscious that she had too suddenly allowed her feelings of jealousy to run riot upon the doubtful evidence of a piece of scandal, probably originating in malice, as it certainly had been repeated with secret gratification.

These reflections had prepared her to hear in a proper spirit a quiet explanation of the whole transaction from the mouth of Mr. Longstaff himself; when, much to her private satisfaction, he returned home not long afterwards.

That gentleman had already commanded a candle to be brought him, and was about to steer off to his chamber without exchanging a word, when some casual observation, dropped in an unexpectedly kind tone by his good lady, arrested his progress, and induced him to sit down in a chair about the same spot where he chanced to be standing. By and by he edged round to the fire; and, shortly afterwards, at her especial suggestion, he consented—much to his inward gratification—to take a little supper. This led to a kind of tacitly understood reconciliation; so that, eventually, the same subject which had caused so much difference in the afternoon, was again introduced and discussed in a manner truly dove-like and amiable. Mrs. Longstaff felt perfectly satisfied with the explanation given by her husband, that he had undertaken the negotiation with Mrs. Clink solely to oblige the squire; and that that infamous woman had attributed her disaster to him merely out of a spirit of annoyance and revenge, for which he expressed himself perfectly unable to account.

But the steward's wife was gratified most to hear his threats of retaliation upon the little hero of our story and his mother. In these she joined with great cordiality, still farther urging him on to their immediate fulfilment, so that by the time he had taken his usual nightly allowance of punch, he found himself in particularly high condition, late as was the hour, for the instant execution of his cowardly and cruel enterprise.

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## CHAPTER IV.

*Mr. Longstaff gets fuddled, and revenges himself upon Mrs. Clink; together with some excellent discourse of his while in that pleasing condition. The mother of our hero partially discloses a secret which the reader has been anxious to know ever since he commenced this history.*

WHILE things were thus progressing elsewhere, the poor and destitute, though erring, creature, over whose head the rod of petty tyranny now hung so threateningly, had passed a solitary evening by the side of her small fire, unnoticed even by the neighbours humble as herself; for adversity, though it is said to make men friends, yet renders them selfish also, and leaves in their bosoms but few feelings of charity for others.

Little Fanny, transformed into a miniature washerwoman, and elevated on two or three lumps of Yorkshire stone to lengthen her out, had been employed since nightfall, by the hazy light of a candle scarcely thicker than her own little finger, in washing some few things for the baby; while young Colin himself, held up in his mother's arms, with his face pressed close to her bosom, was silently engaged in fulfilling, as Voltaire has it, one of the most abstruse laws of natural philosophy. Having at length resolved this problem perfectly to his



satisfaction, Master Colin betook himself, with the utmost complacency, to sleep, just as though his mother had had no trouble whatever in the world with him; or, as though Mr. Longstaff, the steward, had been fast asleep in bed, dreaming of felled timbers and unpaid arrears, and utterly regardless of Colin's existence, instead of preparing, as he was—untimely and heartlessly—to disturb that baby slumber, and to harass with additional pains and fears the bosom of one who had already found too abundantly that folly and vice mete out their own punishment.

The child had already been placed in the cradle, and little Fanny had taken her seat on a small stool in the chimney-corner, with her supper in her hand, consisting of a basin of milk and water, thickened with cold potatoes; while the mother sat before the fire, alternately knitting a ball of black worsted on the floor into a stocking, and giving the cradle an additional push, as the impetus it had previously received died away and left it again almost at rest. Everything was silent, save one or two of those quiet homely sounds, which fall on the ear with a sensation that appears to render even silence itself still more silent. The solitary ticking of an old caseless Dutch clock on the wall was interrupted only by the smothered rocking of the cradle, wherein lay the yet unconscious cause of all I have told, or may yet have to tell. As hand or foot was applied to keep it in motion, the little charge within was tossed alternately against each blanketed side of his wooden prison, and jolted into the utterance, every now and then, of some slight sound of complaint, which as regularly sunk again to nothing as the rocking was increased, and the mother's low voice cried—

“Hush, child! peace, peace! Sleep, barn, sleep!”

And then rounded off into a momentary chant of the old ditty, beginning,

*“There was an old woman, good lack! good lack!”*

But out of doors, as the rustic village had long ago been gone to rest, everything was as silent as though the country had been depopulated.

Fatigued by the long day's exertion, Fanny had fallen asleep, with half her supper uneaten in her lap; and Mistress Clink, unconsciously overtaken in a similar manner, had instinctively covered her face with her hand, and fallen into that imperfect state of rest in which realities and dreamy fictions are fused together like things perfectly akin,—when the sound of visionary tongues seemed to be about her.

“Go straight in,” said one. “Don't stand knocking.”

“Perhaps she's a-bed,” observed another.

“Then drag her out again, that 's all,” replied the same person that had first spoken; “I 've sworn to kick her and her young 'un into th' street to-night, and the devil's in it if I don't, dark as it is. It will not be the first time she's lay i' th' hedge-bottom till daylight, I 'll swear.”

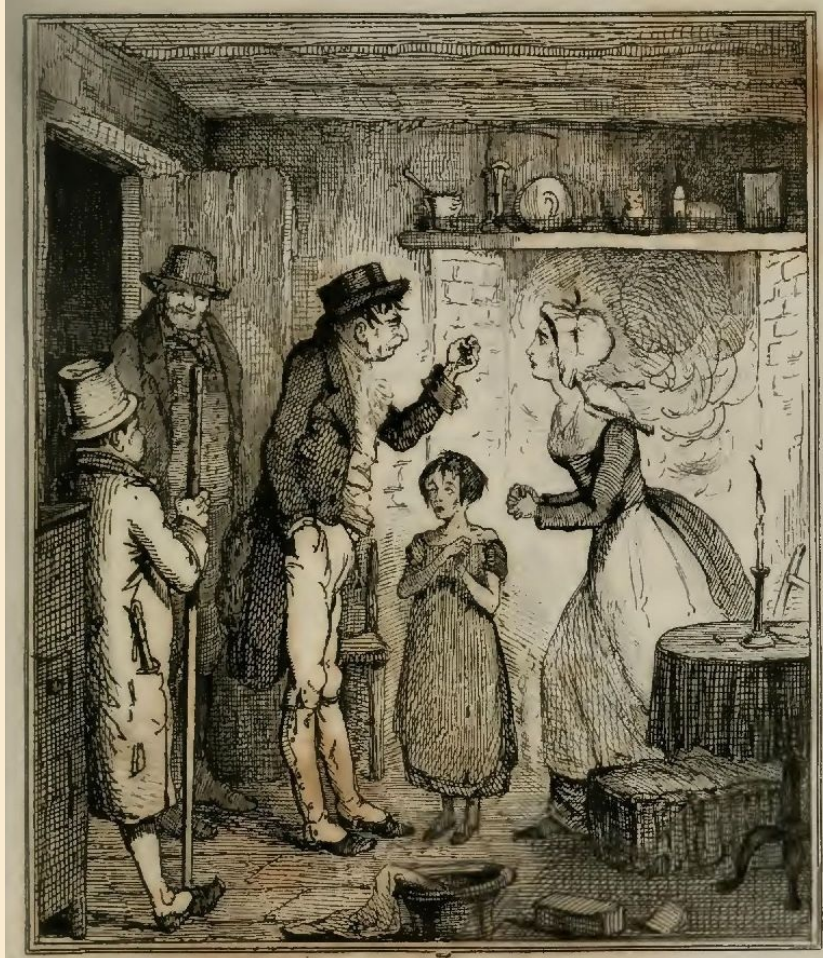
Mrs. Clink started up, terrified. The door was pushed violently open, and the village constable, an assistant, and Mr. Longstaff, the steward,—in a state of considerable mental elevation, arising from the combination of punch and revenge,—stood in the middle of the room.

“Now, missis!” bawled the steward, advancing, and clenching his fist before his own face, while he stared at her through a pair of leaden eyes, with much of the expression of an owl in the sun; “You see me, don't you? You see me, I say? Mark that. Did you expect me, I say, missis? No, no, I think not. You thought you were safe enough, but I've got you! I've got you, I tell you, as sure as a gun; and now I'm going to learn you how to put your whelps down i' th' parish books to my account; I am, my lady. I 'll teach you how to touch a steward again, you may 'pend on't!”

“Oh, sir!” began Mrs. Clink imploringly; but she was instantly stopped by Mr. Longstaff.

“Ay, ay,—you may *oh, sir!* as long as you like, but I'm not to be *oh sir'd*, that way. Do you know aught about rent?—rent, I say—rent?—last year?—t' other house?—d 'ye know you hav'n't paid it? or are you going to swear *that* to me, an' all?—'Cause if you are, I wish you may die in a ditch, and your baby under you! Now, look you, I'm going to show you a pretty trick;—about as pretty, missis, as you showed me this morning. What d 'ye think of that, now, for a change? How d 'ye like that, eh? I'm going to seize on you—”

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Original Size

No sooner did Mrs. Clink hear these words from the mouth of the intoxicated Mr. Longstaff, than she screamed, and fell on her knees; crying out in broken exclamations, "Oh, not to-night, sir—not to-night! Tomorrow, if you please, sir,—to-morrow—tomorrow!"

But, though joined in this petition by the tears of little Fanny, and the unintentional pleadings of Colin, who now began to scream lustily in his cradle, the steward disregarded all, until, finding prayers and entreaties vain, the voice of the woman sunk into suppressed sobbings, or was only heard to utter repeatedly,

"What *will* become of my poor baby!"

"Become of him?" exclaimed Longstaff, turning towards her as she yet remained on her knees on the ground. "Why,—take and throw him into th' horsepond, that's my advice. He 'll never be good for aught in this world but to hang on th' work'us, and pull money out of other people's pockets. Go on, Bill;—go on, my lad:—put 'em all down, stick and stone; and away with 'em all to-night. There sha'n't be a single thing of any sort left in this house for th' sun to shine on to-morrow morning."

The excitement produced by Mr. Longstaff's discourse upon his own stomach and brain had the effect of rendering him, in this brief period of time, apparently much more intoxicated than he was on first entering the cottage, and he now sunk heavily upon a chair, as though unable to remain upon his feet any longer.

"Have you put this chair down, Bill?" he asked, at the same time tapping with his fingers the back of that upon which he was sitting, by way of drawing attention to it.

The constable answered in the affirmative.

"That's right, my boy—that's right. And that clock, there, have you got him? Bless his old pendulum! we 'll stop his ticking very soon:—we 'll show him what o'clock it is,—won't we, missis?"

But this facetiousness passed unheeded by the poor woman to whom it was addressed, unless one look of reproachful scorn, which she cast in the stupid face of the steward, might be considered as an answer to it.

"Why, you 're looking quite pretty, tonight, *Miss Clink*," said Mr. Longstaff in a more subdued tone:—"I don't wonder—though he is married, and all that sort of thing,—I don't wonder at the squire, if he did patronise you a little."

The cheeks of our hero's mother blushed scarlet with indignation. She rose from the cradle-side, on which she had been sitting, and with an evident struggle to overcome the sobs that were rising in her throat, so as to enable her to speak distinctly, she stood up before the astonished steward, displaying a countenance and figure that would have graced many a far fairer place, and thus addressed him:—

"I'm a poor helpless woman, Mr. Longstaff, and you know it; but such men as you are always cowards. You may rob me of my few goods; you may destroy my home, though it is almost too poor to be worth the trouble; you may turn me out of my house, with that baby, without a roof to put my head under, because you may have power to do it, and no humanity left in you. But, I say, he is a mean contemptible man,—whether it be you, or any one else,—who can thus insult me, bad as I am. I can bear anything but that, and that I won't bear from any man. *Epecially*—" and she laid strong emphasis on her words, and pointed with her finger emphatically to the person she addressed:—"Epecially from such a man as you: for you know that if it had not been for

you and your wife—”

Longstaff began to lose his colour somewhat rapidly, and to look half a dozen degrees more sober.

“—Yes, I repeat it, you and your wife,—I should not have been the wretched creature that I am. And yet you seek to be revenged on me,—” she continued, growing more passionate as she proceeded, “you have *courage* enough to set your foot on such a hovel as this, because it shelters me, and crush it.”

It was clear beyond dispute, from Mr. Longstaff's manner, that he had drawn down upon himself a retort which he never intended—especially in the presence of two other persons. He leaned half over his chair-back, with his dull eyes fixed, though evidently in utter absence of mind, upon the ceiling; while a visible nervous quivering of his pale lips and nostrils evinced the working of inward emotions, to which his tongue either could not, or dared not, give utterance.

Meantime, Mrs. Clink had taken little Colin out of his cradle, and wrapped him warmly round with all the clothes it contained. She then led Fanny into the inner room, which was occupied as a bed-chamber.

“Come, Fanny,” said she; “if there be still less charity under a bare sky than under this stripped roof, we cannot do much worse. Put on all the clothes you have, child, for perhaps we may want them before morning.”

And then she proceeded to select from her scantily stored drawers such few trifles as she wished to retain; and afterwards, in accordance with her own injunction, dressed herself as if for a long night-journey.

“Come, lads,” at length remarked Mr. Longstaff, after a long silence, “hav'n't you done yet? You mustn't take any notice of this woman, mind;—she's had her liquor, and hardly knows what she's talking about.”

“Won't to-morrow do, sir, to finish off with?” asked the holder of the distress-war-rant: and at the same moment our hero's mother, with Colin in her arms, and Fanny by her side, passed out of the door-way of the inner room. Mr. Longstaff looked up, and, seeing them prepared for leaving the place, observed, in a tone very different to that in which he had before spoken, “We shall not remove anything now; so you may stay to-night, if you like.”

“No, sir,” replied Mrs. Clink; “your master's charity is quite enough: I want none of yours. But, before I go, let me tell you I know that Mr. Lupton has never sanctioned this; and I doubt your right to do what you are doing.”

Here again was something which appeared to throw another new light upon the steward's mind; for, in reality, his passion had not allowed him for a moment to consider what might be the squire's opinion about such an off-hand and barbarous proceeding. He began to feel some misgivings as to the legal consequences of his own act, and eventually even went so far as to request that Mrs. Clink would remain in the house until the morrow, when something more could be seen about it.

“No,” said she again, firmly, “whatever I may be now, I was not born to be blown about by every fool's breath that might come across me. Once done is not undone. Come, Fanny.”

In another minute, Mr. Longstaff, Bill the constable, and his assistant, were the only living creatures beneath that roof, which, an hour before, with all its poverty, seemed to offer as secure a home, as inviolable a hearth stone, as the castle of the best lordling in the kingdom.

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## CHAPTER V.

*Introduces to the reader two new characters of considerable importance, and describes a scene between them to which a very peculiar interest is attached.*

**A**MONGST all those who were most materially concerned in the circumstances detailed in the preceding chapters, I must now name one person who has hitherto only been once passingly alluded to in the most brief manner, but whose happiness was (if not more) at least as deeply involved in the events which had taken place as was that of any other individual whatever, not excepting even our hero's mother herself. That person—for Mr. Longstaff has already hinted that his master was married—was Squire Lupton's wife.

Should the acute reader's moral or religious sensibilities be shocked at the discovery of so much human depravity, as this avowal must necessarily uncurtain to him, it is to be hoped he will lay the blame thereof upon the right shoulders, and not rashly attack the compiler of this history, who does only as Josephus, Tacitus, and other great historians have done before him,—make use of the materials which other men's actions prepare ready to his hands, and with the good or evil of which he himself is no more chargeable, than is the obedient workman who mouldeth a vessel with clay of the quality which his master may please to put before him.

During a period of some weeks prior to the time at which our story commences, Mrs. Lupton had been upon a visit to the family of Mr. Shirley, a resident in York, with whom she was intimately acquainted previously to her marriage with the heir of Kiddal House. Owing, however, to circumstances of a family nature, with which she had early become acquainted after her destiny had been for ever united with that of Mr. Lupton, she had hitherto found it impossible to introduce to her own house, with any degree of pleasure to herself, even the dearest companions of her youth; and no one was more so, for they had known each other from girlhood, than Miss Mary Shirley, the only daughter of her esteemed friend. Like many others in similar circumstances, she long strove to hide her own unhappiness from the world; but, in doing so, had been too often compelled to violate the most cherished feelings of her bosom; and—when at home—had chosen to remain like a recluse in



her own house, when otherwise she would gladly have had some one with whom to commune when grief pressed heavily upon her; and he who had sworn to be all in all to her was in reality the cause, instead of the allayer, of her sorrows.

On the afternoon when those events took place which have been chronicled in the last chapter, Mrs. Lupton returned to Kiddal, accompanied, for the first time, by Miss Mary Shirley.

"Here we are at last," remarked the lady of the house, as they drove up to the gate, and the highly ornamented oaken gable-ends of the old hall became visible above the garden-walls. "I have not a very merry home to bring you to, my dear Mary, and I dare not promise how long you may like to stay with us; but I hope you will enjoy yourself as well as you can; and when that is over,—though I could wish to keep you with me till I die,—when the time comes that you can be happy here no longer, then, my dear, you must not consider me;—leave me again alone, for I shall not dare to ask you to sacrifice another hour on my poor account, in a place so infinitely below the happy little home we have left in yonder city."

"Nay," replied the young lady, endeavouring to hide some slight feelings of emotion, "you cannot forbode unhappiness here. In such a place as this, these antique rooms, these gardens, and with such a glorious landscape of farms and hamlets, as lies below this hill, farther almost than the eye can reach,—it is impossible to be otherwise than happy."

"Ay, and so *I* said," replied Mrs. Lupton, "when Walter first brought me here; and so *he* told me too, as we passed under this very gateway. But I have learned since then that such things have no pleasure in them, when those we love and with whom we live are not that to us which they ought to be." Miss Shirley remained silent, for she feared to prolong a conversation which, at its very commencement, seemed to recall to the mind of her friend such painful reminiscences.

On their introduction to the hall, Miss Shirley could not fail to remark the cold, unimpassioned, and formal manner in which Mr. Lupton received his lady; while towards herself he evinced so much affability and kindness, that the degradation of the wife was for the moment rendered still more striking and painful by the contrast. But, out of respect for the feelings of her friend, she affected not to notice it; although it was not without difficulty that she avoided betraying herself, when she observed Mrs. Lupton suddenly retire to another part of the room, because she was unable any longer to restrain the tears which now burst, in the bitterness of uncomplaining silence, from her eyes.

Perhaps no feelings of mortification could readily be imagined more acute than were those which arose from this slight incident in the bosom of a sensible, a sensitive, and, I may add, a beautiful woman, too,—for such Mrs. Lupton undoubtedly was. To be thus slighted when alone, she had already learned to bear; but to be so slighted, for the first time, and, as if by a studied refinement of contempt, before another individual, and that individual a woman, to whom extraordinary attentions were at the same moment paid, was indeed more than she could well endure; though pride, and the more worthy feeling of self-respect, would not allow her openly to confess it. But while the throb-bings of her bosom could scarcely be repressed from becoming audible, and the tears welled up in her large blue eyes until she could not see distinctly for the space of half a minute together, she yet stood at one of the high-pointed windows of the antique room, and affected to be beckoning to one of the gallant peacocks on the grass before her, as he stretched his brilliant neck towards the window, in anticipation of that food which from the same fair hand was seldom expected in vain.

In the mean time, seated at the farther end of the room, Mr. Lupton was endeavouring, though, after what had occurred it may be supposed, with but ill success, to engage the whole attention of the young lady who sat beside him. They had met some twelve months before at the house of her father, in York, during the time that he was paying his addresses to her friend, Miss Bernard, now his wife, and some short period before their ill-fated marriage.

After inquiring with great particularity after the health of her family and relatives, and expressing the very high pleasure he felt in having the daughter of one of his most esteemed friends an inmate of his house, the squire proceeded to descant in very agreeable language upon the particular beauties of the situation and neighbourhood of his house, and to enlarge upon the many pleasures which Miss Shirley might enjoy there during the ensuing summer,—a period over which, he fully trusted, she would do himself and Mrs. Lupton the honour and pleasure of her company.

"But shall we not ask Mrs. Lupton to join us?" remarked Miss Shirley. "It is unfair that we should have all this conversation to ourselves. I see she is at the window still;—though I remember the time, sir," she added, dropping her voice to a more sedate tone, and looking archly in his face, "when there would have been no occasion, while you were in the room, for any other person to have made such a request."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Lupton, "she is happy enough with those birds about her. She and they are old friends, and it is now some time since they saw each other. Shall I have the pleasure of conducting you over the gardens, Miss Shirley?"

"I thank you," replied she—"if Mrs. Lupton will accompany us."

"She cannot be better employed," rejoined the squire, "nor, very probably, more to her own satisfaction, than she is."

"But shall we not know that best on inquiry?" rejoined the young lady, as she rose from her seat, and, without farther parley, bounded across the room towards the object of their discourse.

A brief conversation, carried on in a subdued tone of voice, ensued, during which Miss Shirley took a seat by the window, and appeared to sink into a more pensive mood, as though the contagion of unhappiness had communicated itself to her from the unfortunate lady with whom she had been speaking. The proposed walk in the gardens was eventually declined; and shortly afterwards Mrs. Lupton and her friend retired to their private apartment.

"In yonder chapel," remarked the lady of the house, as they passed along towards the great oaken staircase, "lie buried all the family of the Luptons during the last three or four hundred years. When we walk out, you will see upon that projecting part of the great hall where the stained windows are, a long inscription, carved in stone, just under the parapet, with the date of 1503 upon it, asking the passer-by to pray for the



souls of Roger Lupton and of Sibylla his wife, whom God preserve! I hope," continued Mrs. Lupton, "they will never think of burying *me* in that chapel. Not that I dislike the place itself so much; but then, to think that I should lie there, and that my spirit might see the trailing silks that would pass above my face, and unhallowed dames stepping lightly in the place where an honest wife had been a burthen,—and to hear in the distance their revelry and their hollow laughter of a night! O Mary! I should get out of my coffin and knock against those stones till I frightened the very hearts out of them. I should haunt this house day and night, till not a woman dare inhabit it."

"Nay," ejaculated Miss Shirley, "you will frighten me, before all this happens, till I shall not sleep a wink. Let us go up stairs."

"But wherefore frighten *you*?" asked Mrs. Lupton,—“why, Mary, should you fear? You would not flaunt over me if I did lie there,—you would not sit in my chair, and simper at my husband:—I say it touches not you. I should not have your heels upon my face, whoever else might be there. Leave those to fear who have need;—but for you—no one can approach those pure lips till he has sealed his faith before the altar, and had Heaven's approval."

Mrs. Lupton's manner, as well as language, so alarmed the young lady, that she trembled violently, and burst into tears. Her friend, however, did not appear to observe it; for it was just at that time of the evening when, in such a place, the turn of darkness obliterates the individual features of things, and leaves only a shadowy phantom of their general appearance. She then resumed:

"And, not that alone. There is another reason why I would not be buried *there*." The sound of her foot upon the pavement made the gallery ring again. "Though I have been wed, it has not made me one of this family; and you have seen and known to-day that, though I am the poor lady of this house, I am still a stranger. In two months more that man will have quite forgotten me; and, if I remember myself to the end, why, I shall thank him, dear heart, I shall. But you are beautiful, Mary; and to paint such as you the memory is an excellent artist. I saw—oh! take care, my girl. There is bad in the best of men; the worst of them may make a woman's life not worth the keeping, within the ticking of five minutes. When *we* go out we will walk in the gardens together. Now we will go up stairs."

So saying, she clasped Miss Shirley by the wrist, much more forcibly than the occasion rendered needful, and hurried her, notwithstanding her fears, to her own dressing-room. When both had entered she closed the door, and locked it,—an action which, under present circumstances, threw her visitor into a state of agitation which she could scarcely conceal; though, while she strove to maintain an appearance of confident indifference, she took the precaution of placing herself so as to command the bell-rope in case—(for the horrible possibility did cross her mind)—it might be needful for her, though at the instant she knew not why, to summon assistance.

As I have before hinted, the first shadows of night had fallen on the surrounding lower grounds and valleys, and had already hidden the ill-lighted corridors and rooms on the eastern side of the hall in a kind of visible darkness, although a dull reflection of red light from the western sky still partially illumined the upper portion of the room in which the two ladies now were; sufficiently so, indeed, to enable them perfectly to distinguish each other; a circumstance which, however slight in itself, enabled Miss Shirley to keep up her courage much better than otherwise she would have been able to do.

Having, as before observed, turned the key in the lock, Mrs. Lupton walked on tip toe, as though afraid of being overheard, towards her visitor, and began to whisper to her, very cautiously, as follows:—

"I have brought you here, Mary, to tell you something that I have heard since we came back to-day. But, my dear, it has confused my mind till I forget what I am saying. You will forgive me, won't you?" Her companion begged her to defer it until another time, and not to trouble herself by trying to remember it; but Mrs. Lupton interrupted her with a hysterical laugh.

"The pain is not because I forget it, but because I can do nothing but remember it. I cannot get rid of it. It haunts me wherever I go; for, do you know, Mary, Walter Lupton grows worse and worse. I can never live under it; I know I cannot! And, as for beds, you and I will sleep in this next chamber, so that if there be women's feet in the night, we shall overhear it all. Now, keep awake, Mary, for sleep is of no use at all to me: and, besides that, she told me the baby was as like her master as snow to the clouds; so that what is to become of me I do not know.—I cannot tell, indeed!"

Here Mrs. Lupton wrung her hands, and wept bitterly.

Miss Shirley grew terrified at this incoherent discourse, and with an unconscious degree of earnestness begged her to go down stairs.

"Never heed,—never heed," said she, turning towards the table, and apparently forgetting her grief: "there will come an end. Days do not last for ever, nor nights either."

"Do not sigh so deeply," observed her companion. "I have heard say it wears the heart out, though that is idle."

"Nay,—nay," replied Mrs. Lupton, "the woman that first said that spoke fairly, for surely she had a bad husband. It wears mine out, truly; though not too soon for *him*. You know now that he cares nothing for me."

"But, let us hope it is not so," replied Miss Shirley, somewhat re-assured from the more sane discourse of her entertainer.

"And yet," continued Mrs. Lupton, as though unconscious of the last remark, "I have striven to commend myself to him as my best abilities would enable me. Mary, turn the glass to me. It is almost dark. How is this bodice? Is the unlaced shape of a country girl more handsome than the turn of this?"

"Oh, no—no—no!" answered the young lady, "nothing could be more handsome."

"Nay," protested Mrs. Lupton, "it is not what you think, or what I think; but with what eyes do the men see? Does it sit ungracefully on me?"

"Indeed, my dear, I heard my father say that one like you he never saw—"

"Do not tell me—do not tell me!" she exclaimed emphatically; "it is nothing to me, so that he who ought to

say everything says not one word that I please him."

And again she burst into a flood of hysterical tears.

"Come," at length observed Miss Shirley, "it is too dark to see any longer here. Look, the little lights are beginning to shine in the cottage-windows yonder; let us go below. I dare say those poor labourers are making themselves as happy by their firesides as little kings; and why should not we, who have a thousand times more to be happy with, endeavour to do at least as much?"

"Why not?" repeated Mrs. Lupton, "you ask why not?—Ay, why not, indeed? Let me see. Well, I do not know just now. This trouble keeps me from considering; or else I could answer you any questions in the world; for my education was excellent; and, ever since I was married, I have sat in the library, day and night, because Mr. Lupton did not speak to me. Now, Mary, you go down stairs, and take supper; but I shall stay here to watch; and, if that child comes here, if he should come to make me more ashamed, I will stamp my foot upon him, and crush him out: and then I will put him for the carrion-crows on the turret top!"

"But, you said before," observed Miss Shirley, "that you and I should always go together."

"Oh!—yes,—so I did; truly. I had forgotten that, too! My memory is good for nothing: an hour's lease of it is not worth a loose feather. To be sure, Mary, I will go down with you. There is danger in waiting for all of us; and if you should be harmed under my care, your father would never—never forgive me!"

So saying, she rose, and took her visitor by the hand; unlocked the door, and, resisting every proposal to call for a lamp, groped her way down stairs in utter darkness.

Although, as might naturally be expected, the alarm experienced by Miss Shirley under the circumstances above related was very great, far deeper was her grief on being thus unexpectedly made aware for the first time that some additional unanticipated cause of sorrow (communicated most probably to her friend in a very incautious manner by some forward ignorant menial of the house,) had had the appalling effect,—if for no long period, at least for the moment,—of impairing her senses to a very painful degree. What the real cause of that sorrow might be,—evident as it is to the reader who has accompanied me thus far,—Miss Shirley could not fully comprehend, from the broken exclamations and the incoherent discourse of Mrs. Lupton; though enough had been conveyed, even in that manner, to give her the right end of a thread, the substance of which, however, she was left to spin out from conjecture and imagination. She felt extremely irresolute, too, as to the course most proper to be adopted by herself; for, though she had left her home with the intention of staying at Kiddal during a period of at least some weeks, the impropriety of remaining under the circumstances that had taken place, impressed itself strongly upon her mind. It might be that Mr. Lupton would secretly regard her as a kind of familiar spy upon his conduct and actions; and as one who might possibly report to the world those passages of his life which he wished to be concealed from it. Or, in case these conjectures were utterly groundless, it yet remained to be decided how far her conduct might be considered prudent and becoming, if she continued to tarry at the residence of Mr. Lupton, while his wife,—for thus, very possibly, it might happen,—was confined to her chamber in consequence of either bodily or mental afflictions. These and similar considerations doubtfully occupied her mind during the whole evening; but at length the ties of friendship and of feminine pity prevailed over all objections. She felt it to be impossible to leave the once happy companion of her girlish days in such a fearful condition as this; and inwardly resolved, in case of Mrs. Lupton's increased indisposition, to request permission of the squire that she might be allowed to send for her mother from York to keep her company.

With these thoughts revolving in her mind much more rapidly than the time it has occupied the reader to become acquainted with them, Miss Shirley, followed by Mrs. Lupton, entered a side-room adjoining the great banquetting-hall, wainscotted from roof to ceiling with oak, now almost black with age, and amply filled throughout with ponderous antique furniture in corresponding taste. An old carved arm-chair, backed and cushioned with crimson velvet, stood on the farther side of the fire-place; and as it fitfully caught the glimmering of occasional momentary flames, stood out with peculiar distinctness, from the deep background of oaken panels, ample curtains, and dimly visible mirrors, beyond. On this seat—her favourite place—Mrs. Lupton threw herself; while Mary Shirley—as though anxious to evince still more attention to her in proportion as she failed to receive it from others,—seated herself, with her left arm laid upon the lap of her friend, on a low ottoman by her side.

As the lady of the mansion persisted in refusing that lamps should be brought, the apartment remained shrouded in that peculiarly illuminated gloom, which to some temperaments is the very beau idéal of all imaginable degrees of light; and which gives to even the most ordinary scenes all the fulness and rich beauty of a masterpiece from the hand of Rembrandt. The ladies had been seated, as I have described, scarcely longer than some few minutes, and had not yet exchanged a word with each other, when the door of the apartment slowly opened, and the squire himself entered. Fearful of the consequences of an interview, at this particular time, between that gentleman and his unhappy wife, Miss Shirley hastily rose as he entered, and, advancing towards him before he could open his lips to address them, requested in a whisper that he would not heed anything Mrs. Lupton might say, lest his replies should still farther excite her, as she certainly had not the proper command of her senses some short time ago; and the least irritation might, she dreaded, render her still worse. The squire expressed a great deal of astonishment and concern, though not, it is to be supposed, very deeply felt, as he took a seat somewhat in the darkness beyond the table.

"Who is that man?" asked Mrs. Lupton, in a voice just audible, as she bent down to Miss Shirley, in order to prevent her question being overheard.

"My dear, you know him well enough, though you cannot see him in this light—it is your husband, Mr. Lupton."

"No, no!" she exclaimed in a loud voice, and with a penetrating look at the indistinct figure beyond the table; "he cannot be come back again! I always feared what judgment he would come to, in spite of all my prayers for him; and to-night I saw a foul fiend carry his ghost away. You are not he, are you?"

"Be assured I am, indeed, dear wife," said the squire, rising from his chair, and advancing towards her; "you know me now. Give me your hand."

"If you be a gentleman, sir, leave me. The manners of this house have been corrupted so, that even

strangers come here to insult me. Send him out, Mary; call William. I won't have men coming here, as though we were all disciples in the same school."

Mr. Lupton began to act upon the hint previously given by his fair visitor, by leaving his seat, and retreating towards the door:—

"Yes, sir," continued his wife, "begone! for, as the sun shines in the daytime, and the moon by night, Mary, so I shall be to the end; and never wed again—never again,—never! Hark! I heard the rustling of a gown below that window. They are coming!" and she held up her hand in an attitude bidding silence, and listened. The dull roaring of the wind in the chimney-top, and the creak of the door-latch as Mr. Lupton closed it after him, were alone audible to the young lady whom she addressed.

"Stay!" continued Mrs. Lupton, "perhaps his mother is bringing him home."

Her voice was at that instant interrupted by the unequivocal and distinct cry of a babe, uttered apparently within very few yards of them.

"It is he!" shrieked the lady, as she strove by one energetic and convulsive spring to reach the window; but nature, overstrained so long, now failed her, and she fell like a stone, insensible, on the ground. Miss Shirley had started to her feet with terror, on hearing the first sound of that little living thing, which seemed to be close upon them in the room, or hidden behind the oaken panels of the wainscot: but before she could recover breath to raise an alarm, several of the domestics of the house rushed into the room; and seeing the situation of their mistress, raised her up, and by the direction of the squire, conveyed her up-stairs to her own apartment. While this was going on, others, at the bidding of Miss Shirley, examined both the room itself, and the outside of the premises; but as nothing could be seen, or even heard again, it was concluded either that the ladies had been deceived, or that the ghost of some buried ancestor had adopted this strange method of terrifying the present master of Kiddal into better morals. The logic, however, of this argument did not agree with Miss Shirley's conceptions; since, in that case, the squire, and not his lady, would have been the proper person for the ghost of his grandmother to appeal to.

The messenger who, meanwhile, had been despatched into the village of Bramleigh to summon Doctor Rowel to the assistance of his mistress, returned with another conjectural interpretation of the affair. He had passed on the road a pedlar woman, with a little girl by her side, and a child wrapped up in her arms: was it not possible that she had been lurking about the house for reasons best known to herself, until the crying of her child obliged her to decamp, through fear of being detected? The doctor declared it must have been so, as a matter of course; but the maids, who had other thoughts in their heads, resolved, for that night at least, to huddle themselves for reciprocal security all in one room together.

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## CHAPTER VI.

*Explains the last-recorded occurrence, and introduces Mistress Clink to an individual whom she little expected to see. Scene in a hedge alehouse, with a company of poachers. They are surprised by very unwelcome visitors. A terrible conflict ensues, and its consequences described.*

**A**T the time when Mrs. Clink, with little Fanny by her side, and Colin snugly wrapped up, like a field-mouse in its winter's nest, in her arms, was driven away from her humble home, as related in a previous chapter, and forced to seek a retreat for the night wherever chance or Providence might direct her, the hand of Bramleigh church clock pointed nigh upon eleven. By and by she heard the monotonous bell toll, with a startling sound, over the deserted fields and the sleeping village; while she, divided between the stern resolution of an unconquered spirit, and the yearnings of Nature to provide a pillow for the heads of the two helpless creatures who could call no other soul but her their friend, paced the road which led towards the highway from York to Leeds, in painful irresolution as to the course most proper to pursue. To solicit the charity of a night's protection from any of the villagers with whom she was acquainted, appeared at once almost hopeless in itself, and beneath the station which she had once held amongst them, when her word of praise or of blame would have been decisive with him who held the whole neighbourhood in a state almost approaching to serfdom. Those whom she had served had nothing more to expect from the same hand; and one half at least of the world's gratitude is paid, not so much in requital of past, as in anticipation of future and additional favours. Amongst such as had received nothing at her hands, she felt it would be a bootless task to solicit assistance in her present condition.

With her thoughts thus occupied, the distance over which she had passed seemed swallowed up; so that, somewhat to her surprise, an exclamation from the lips of little Fanny unexpectedly reminded her of the fact that they were now close upon the grounds adjoining the old hall of Kiddal. Its groups of ornamented stone chimneys, and its high-pointed roofs, stood black against the sky; while its lightless windows, and its homestead hushed in death-like silence, which not even the bark of a dog disturbed, appeared to present to her mind a gloomy, though a fitting, picture of the residence of such a tenant.

"Here, at least," thought she, "if I can find a barn open, or a bedding of dry straw to place under the wall between some of the huge buttresses of the house, we shall be secure from molestation; for should they even find us in the morning, the master will scarcely deny, even to me, the pitiable shelter of his walls for a creature that is indebted to him for its existence."

Thus thinking, she passed through the gateway adjoining the road, and thence on to the lawn and garden in front of the house, intending to make her way beyond the reach and hearing of the dogs, to a more remote and unfrequented portion of the out-buildings; but, as she passed the windows of the old wainscotted room

before-mentioned, the sound of voices within caught her ear. Was it not possible that the squire might be speaking in some way or other of her?

We are ever jealous of those who have done us wrong; and never more so, however little we may credit it, than when the sense of that wrong lies most keenly upon us. Colin was soundly asleep in her arms; she had nothing to fear. Leaving Fanny, therefore, under cover of a laurel-tree, she stepped lightly but rapidly up, and placed herself close by the window, about the same moment that, as previously described, Mr. Lupton had entered the room. Of the conversation that passed she could only catch occasional portions; and, in her endeavours to press still closer to the casement, young Master Colin got squeezed against the projecting moulding of the stone wall, in a manner which called forth that instantaneous expression of complaint and resentment, by which Mrs. Lupton and her friend had been so dreadfully alarmed. It was now no time for Mrs. Clink to stay any longer in concealment there; she accordingly smothered her baby's head in its clothes to stifle the sound; and having again taken the hand of little Fanny, made the best of her way over ditch and brier in the direction of the high road.

Beyond the boundary of Mr. Lupton's grounds she came upon a by-way, originally intended, (as the blackthorn hedges on either side denoted,) to be used as a kind of occupation lane, by the farmers who held the fields adjacent; but which, from the abundant grass, with which it was overgrown, save where, in the middle, a narrow path meandered, like a packthread along a strip of green cloth, was evidently but little used, except as a footway by the straggling bumpkins who so thinly populated that remote territory. Mrs. Clink remembered, from the local features of the place, that, at about a mile farther up this road, stood a small hedge alehouse, of no very brilliant repute to be sure, amongst those to whom such an accommodation was needless, but highly necessary and useful to a certain class of persons whose convenience was best attained in places beyond the immediate reach and inspection of all descriptions of local and legal authorities. It stood upon a piece of ground just beyond the domains of Squire Lupton, and, though generally known as the resort of many lawless characters, was maintained by the proprietor of the soil in pure spite to his neighbour, the squire, whom he hated with that cordial degree of hatred not uncommonly existing between great landed proprietors, and the jealous little freeholders who dwell upon their skirts. Towards this house, then, Mrs. Clink, in her extremity, bent her way; and after half an hour spent in stumbling over the irregularities of a primitive road, winding amongst a range of low hills, studded with thick plantations and close preserves for game, she arrived in sight of the anticipated haven. It was not, however, without some degree of fear, that, several times in the course of the journey, when she chanced to cast her eyes back upon the way she had passed, the shadowy figure of a human being, skulking along under cover of the hedgerows, and apparently dodging her footsteps, had appeared to her; though under an aspect so blended with the shadows of night as left it still doubtful whether or not the whole was a creation of imagination and imperfect vision.

A small desolate-looking hut, with a publican's sign over the door, put up more for pretence than use, now stood before her. At the same moment the figure she had seen shot rapidly forward up a ditch by the roadside, and disappeared behind the house.

As she approached, the sound of several boisterous voices reached her ear; and then the distinct words of part of an old song, which one of the company was singing:—

*"As I and my dogs went out one night,  
The moon and the stars did shine so bright,  
To catch a fat buck we thought we might,  
Fal de ral lu ra la!"*

A rushing blast of wind bore away a verse or two of the narrative; but, as she had by this time reached the door, she stood still a moment, while the singer went on—

*"He came all bleeding, and so lame,  
He was not able to follow the game,  
And sorry was I to see the same,  
Fal de ral lu ra la!"*

*"I 'll take my long staff in my han',  
And range the woods to find that man,  
And if that I do, his hide I 'll tan,  
Fal de ral lu ra la!"*

The singer stopped.

"Go on—go on!" cried several voices, "finish it, somehow; let's hear th' end on't!"

"Dang it!" exclaimed the singer, in a sort of good-natured passion, I don't remember it. This isn't the next verse, I know it isn't; but I 'll try.

*"!Next day we offer'd it for sale,  
Fal de ral lu ra li to la!  
Unto an old woman that did sell ale,  
Fal de ral lu ra la!"*

*"Next day we offer'd it for sale  
Unto an old woman that did sell ale,  
But she 'd liked to have put us all in gaol,  
Fal de ral lu ra la!"*

"There!" he exclaimed again, "I know no more if you 'd fee me to sing it, so good b'ye to that, and be dang'd to it! as th' saying goes." At the same time the sound of a huge pot, bounced upon the table, bore good evidence that the speaker had not allowed his elegant sentiment to pass without due honour.

Mrs. Clink scarcely felt heart enough to face such a company as this without some previous notice. She accordingly knocked at the door somewhat loudly, whereupon every voice suddenly became silent, and a scrambling sound ensued, as of the gathering up of weapons; or, as though the individuals within were



striving, upon the instant, to put themselves, from a state of disorder, into a condition fitted for the reception of any kind of company as might at such an hour chance to do them the honour of a visit.

"Who's there?" cried a sharp voice inside the door, which Colin's mother recognised as that of the landlady of the house. She applied her mouth near the keyhole, and replied, "It's only me, Mrs. Mallory—only Anne Clink. I want a bed to-night, if you can let me have one."

"A bed!" repeated Mrs. Mallory. "This time o' night, and a bed! Sure there's nobody else?"

Mrs. Clink satisfied the inquiries of the landlady in this particular, and gave her very full assurances that no treachery was intended; still farther giving her to understand that Longstaff, the steward, had turned her out of house and home, late as it was, not an hour before. The bolt was undrawn, and Mrs. Clink walked in. The first greeting she received was from a dogged-looking savage, in a thick old velveteen shooting-jacket, who sat directly opposite the door.

"It's well for you, missus, you aren't a gamekeeper, or I should have put a leaden pill in your head afore this." Saying which, he raised from his side a short gun that had been held in readiness, and put it up the sleeve of his coat,—to which its construction was especially adapted, for security.

"Yes; we tell no tales here," observed another: "a ditch in th' woods is longer than th' longest tongue that ever spoke."

"What, you think," added the first speaker, "a crack on th' scull, and two or three shovelfuls of dirt, soon stops a gabbler, do ye? Ay, by Go! you're right, lad, there; and so it does."

An uncouth laugh, which went nearly round the company, at once evinced their sense of the facetiousness of this remark, and showed the feeling of indifference with which nearly all present regarded a remedy for tale-telling of the kind here suggested; but, in the mean time, the individual whose appearance in the house had elicited these remarks, had been conducted, with her young charge, into a small inner room, where we will leave her conversing with Mrs. Mallory, or preparing for very needful rest, as the case may be. Scarcely, however, had she passed out of hearing, before some inquiry was made by the ruffian who had first spoken, and whose name, it may be observed, was David Shaw, as to the family and genealogy of old Jerry Clink, "Because," he observed, "this woman called herself a Clink; and, as Jerry will be here to-night, I thought they might be summut related."

The explanation given by another of the company in reply, went on to state that at the time when Jerry was doing well in business he had two daughters, whom he brought up like two ladies: "But I thought there would soon be an end of that," continued the speaker, "and so there was. The old man was getting on too fast by half; so that when his creditors came on him, and he'd all this finery to pay for, he found he'd been sailing in shallow water; and away he went off to prison. What became of the gals I don't know exactly; but, if my memory be right, one of 'em died; and t' other was obliged to take up with a place in a confectioner's shop. I don't know how true it is; but report said, after that, that Mrs. Longstaff here, the steward's wife at th' hall, persuaded her to go over as a sort of school-missis to her children; though, if that had been the case, she could not have been coming to such a house as this at twelve o'clock at night, and especially with two of th' children along wi' her. Thou mun be mistaken, David, i' th' name, I think."

"Am I?" said David sourly; "then I think not."

A signal-sound near the door, in imitation of the crowing of a pheasant, announced the arrival at this instant of old Jerry Clink. David drew the bolt without stay or question, and the individual named walked in. Below the middle height, and not remarkably elegant in shape, he still bore in his features and carriage some traces of the phantom of a long-vanished day of respectability. His habiliments, however, appeared, by their condition, cut, and colour, to have been gathered at various periods from as many corners of the empire, A huge snuff-coloured long coat, originally made for a man as big again as himself, and which stood round him like a sentry-box, matched very indifferently with a red plush waistcoat adorned with blue glass buttons, which scarcely kissed the band of his inexpressibles; while the latter, composed of broad-striped corduroy, not unlike the impression of a rake on a garden-path, hung upon his shrivelled legs in pleasing imitation of the hide of a rhinoceros. Blue worsted stockings, and quarter-boots laced tightly round his ankles with leathern thongs, completed the costume of the man.

Should the reader feel curious after a portrait of this gentleman, we refer him to a profile which he will find prefixed to Conyers Middleton's *Life of Cicero*, which bears no contemptible resemblance to Jerry, save that it lacks the heavy weight of animal faculties in the occipital region, which, in the head of our friend, seemed to toss the scale of humanities in front up into the air.

"Well, how are you to-night,—all on you together?" asked Jerry, in a tone of voice which Dr. Johnson himself might have envied, when he brow-beat the very worst of his opponents, at the same time assisting himself to about a drachm of snuff from a tin case drawn from his coat-pocket, the contents of which he applied to his nasal organ by the aid of a small ladle, turned out of a boar's tusk, much as a scavenger might shovel dust into a cart. A general answer having been returned that all were in good health.

"Well, well," replied Jerry, "then tak' care to keep so, and mark I clap that injunction on you. What the dickens should you go to make yourselves badly for! Here, stand away."

So saying, he pushed Mr. David Shaw on one side, and elbowed half a dozen more on the other, as he strode forward towards the fire with the sole but very important object of poking it. He then sat down upon a seat that had purposely been vacated for him near the fire, and inquired in the same surly tone, "What are you drinking?"

"Here's plenty of ale, Jerry," replied David.

"Now, now," objected Mr. Clink, "what are you going to insult me for? Talk of ale!—you know I've tasted none now these thirteen year, and shan't again, live as long as I will.—Mrs. Mallory, here, d 'ye hear! bring me a glass of gin; and then, David," giving that amiable character a good-humoured poke under the right ribs, "you can pay for it if you like."

"Can I?" asked the person thus addressed, when he was suddenly cut short by old Jerry.

"Nay, nay, now!—I shall appeal to the company,—I never asked you; so don't go to say I did. Can you insure

me four brace of birds and a few good tench by to-morrow morning? 'Cause if you think you can, the sooner you set about it, the sooner we shall get rid of you."

"Well, I 'll try, Jerry, if you want 'em particular."

"Particular or not particular, what's that to you? I give you an order, and that, you'll admit, is the full extent of your business. Have you been up to them woods close to the house since t'other night?" he inquired; and, on being answered in the negative, thus continued,—“Then go to-night; for I 've spread a report that 'll draw most of them that you have to fear down into the valley; and there's plenty of time for you to go, and to get home again before they find out the mistake.”

I need scarcely remind the reader that every part of this conversation which related to the sports of the field, was carried on in a tone of voice scarcely audible even half across the room, and also that the door had been effectually secured, and the candles removed, some minutes before the bell in Bramleigh tower struck twelve. For the accommodation, however, of those who might have business to transact abroad after that hour, there was a private outlet, known only to those in whom confidence could be placed, at the back of the premises. By this door Mr. Shaw now left, chanting, rather than singing, to himself as he left the room,

*"We 'll hunt his game  
Through field and brake;  
His ponds we 'll net,  
His fish we 'll take;  
His woods we 'll scour  
In nutting time;  
And his mushrooms gather  
At morning prime;  
Since Nature gave—deny't who can—  
These things in common to ev'ry man."*

"Ay, ay," remarked old Jerry, as the man departed, "if every man understood his trade as well as David does, there would be a good deal more sport by night, and less by light, than there is: but every dog to his varmint; he knows all the beasts of forest, beasts of chase, beasts and fowls of warren, and the laws of them, as well as the best sportsman in England that ever was, is, or will be."

"But I 'll tell thee what he don't know," remarked the same individual who, prior to Mr. Clink's appearance, had given a brief sketch of the last-named gentleman's previous career; "he don't know, any more nor some o' the rest of us, whether or no there's any relations of yours living up in this quarter?"

"Why, as to that," replied Jerry, "if he 'd wanted to be informed whether I had any relations here, and I had been in his company at the time, I could have stated this here. My youngest daughter Anne, was sent for by Mrs. Longstaff, wife to Squire Lupton's steward, considerably above twelve months ago, to eddicate her children, and, to the best of my knowledge, she's there yet. There is but one action of my life that gives me anything like satisfaction to reflect on, and that is, I spared neither expense nor trouble, when I had the means in my power, to fit my children for something better in the world than I myself was born to. And well it was I did so; or else, as things have come to this, and I'm not quite so rich as I once was, I can't say what might have become of them. What, wasn't it So-crates, the heathen philosopher, that considered learning the best portion a man could bestow on his children?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied the other, "what he considered; but if that's your daughter, and you don't know what's become of her, I can tell you she *isn't* at Mrs. Longstaff's now. Well, you may put your pipe down, and look at me as hard as you like, but it will not alter the truth. *I* believe she's under this roof, in that back-room there, with Mrs. Mallory, at this very minute."

"Confound it!" exclaimed Jerry, rising and striding towards the door of the room alluded to, "how is this? Foul play, my lads? By G! if there is—" and, before the sentence was finished, he had walked in and closed the door behind him. At that moment a faint shriek of surprise was heard within, and a cry of—"Oh, father, father!"

The reader will perhaps readily see through the secret of all this without my assistance. It may, nevertheless, not be without its use, if, by way of summing up, I briefly state, that during the time the mother of our hero was placed, as had been hinted in the previous conversation, in a shop in the great manufacturing town of Leeds, her appearance had attracted the attention of Mr. Lupton, when on his visits there in his magisterial capacity, and that he had ingeniously contrived, with the aid, counsel, and assistance of the complying Mr. Longstaff, to entice her thence by the offer of a far better situation, in the capacity of governess to the steward's children, than that of which she was already in the enjoyment. When the consequences of the fatal error into which she had been led became evident to herself, she instantly quitted Mr. Longstaff's house; and, by the consent of Mr. Lupton, retired to a cottage in the village. Here she maintained herself during some months by the small profits of needlework, sent to her regularly from the hall; and, in the vain hope of keeping secure the secret of her own bosom, she had purposely forbore to acquaint any one of her friends of the cause of the change which had taken place, or even of the change itself.

So far as the events of the night I am describing were concerned, although Mrs. Mallory was perfectly well acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, and also with the fact that the leading man of the night-company who assembled during the season at her house was Miss Clink's father, she had sufficient reasons, in the wish to keep that unfortunate young woman's secret, to prevent her from discovering to him any portion of her knowledge. The same feeling had caused her also to conceal the fact from both father and daughter that accident,—or misfortune rather,—had now brought them together under the same roof.

After some time had elapsed, during which we may imagine the old man was made fully acquainted with the situation in which his daughter was placed, he re-entered the room where his companions were assembled.

"Lads!" said he, striking the table violently with his fist, while his lips quivered as with an ague, and his eyes rolled with an expression of unusual ferocity, "if I live to go to the gallows for it, old as I am, I 'll cool the

blood of that man up at yonder hall for what he 's done to me and mine! To go in there, and see that wench a mother before she is a wife,—her character gone for ever,—ruined,—lost!—why, I say, sink me to perdition this instant! if I don't redden his own hearthstone with his own blood, though I wait for it to the last day of my life. As sure as he sees the day, I'll make his children fatherless—I'll have my knife in him!"

"Stop! stop! Mr. Clink!" cried Mrs. Mallory, laying her hand upon his shoulder, "do cool yourself, and do not threaten so terribly."

"Threaten!" he exclaimed; "I say you are as bad as them; and it is high time somebody not only threatened, but did it.—What! isn't it enough that I am ruined as a tradesman for ever, and compelled to this beggarly night-work, in defiance of the laws, for the sake of a paltry existence, not worth holding from one day to another? Isn't this, I say, enough, but must our children be ruined, and shall we be degraded still lower besides? What!—we are *poor*, are we?—and it does not matter because a child is poor what becomes of her! Well, well, it may do for some of *you*,—it may mix with your dastardly spirits very well; but *I* am of a different metal, lads. I never passed by an injury unrevenged yet; and my memory has not yet got so bad as to let that man slip through it. There's some men I should never forgive, if I lived a thousand years, and some that I would lay my own life down to do five minutes' justice on; but, above them, there is one shall never slip me, though I go the world over after him!"

"Surrender! at the peril of your lives!" exclaimed a bluff coarse voice behind them, while, to the almost speechless astonishment and dismay of the company, the speaker advanced from a back doorway, discovering the person of a giant-looking fellow, considerably above six feet in height, clothed in a thick dress for the night air, armed with a long pistol in each hand, and guarded by a ferocious mastiff at his side.

"Down with the lights, and defend yourselves, lads!" cried Jerry: "we are betrayed!"

Almost before these words had passed his lips, half a dozen shots whizzed at the intruder, several of which lodged in Mrs. Mallory's bacon and hams, that hung from the ceiling of the room. One of the men on the far side of the table fell from the second shot of the head keeper of Kiddal, for he it was; while the dog he had brought with him attacked with the ferocity of a tiger old Jerry himself, who by this time had drawn a knife nearly nine inches long from his pocket, and stood prepared in the middle of the room for the reception of his four-footed antagonist. Meanwhile, five or six other keepers rushed into the room to aid their leader. Filled with smoke, as the place was, from the discharge of fire-arms, it became almost impossible to distinguish friends from foes. The lights were extinguished, the fire threw out only a dull red light upon the objects immediately contiguous to it, and the momentary glare of discharged guns and pistols alone enabled each party to distinguish, as by a lightning flash, the objects of their mutual enmity. At the same time the fierce howling of the dog, mingled with the terrific and thick-coming curses of old Jerry, as those two combatants rolled together upon the floor in fearful contention for the mastery, together with the shrieks of the two women on the stairs, made up a chorus too dismal almost for the region of purgatory itself.





In the midst of this, succour arrived for the invaded party in the person of no less a hero than Mr. David Shaw. In a state of exasperation amounting almost to frenzy, that individual rushed into the house, crying out as he impetuously advanced, "Where is she?—where is she?"—the idea that Mrs. Clink had purposely betrayed them being alone uppermost in his mind. Making his way, as if instinctively, towards the stairs, he beheld something like the figure of a woman standing three or four steps above him, for the light was not sufficient to discover more. A plunge with his right hand, which grasped a common pocket-knife, was the work of an instant, and the landlady of the house—for he had mistaken his object—fell with a dead weight under the blow. At the same instant the fingers of his right hand became fast bound, and the blood ran down his arm in a bubbling stream. Instead of doing the murder he intended, the knife blade had struck backwards, and closed tightly upon the holder, so that three of his fingers and the fleshy part of the thumb were gashed through to the bone. Regardless of this, he extricated his hand, cast the knife fiercely amongst the combatants, and fell to the attack in right good earnest.

Pope, if I recollect aright, very highly extols some of those similes which Perrault describes as similes with a long tail, introduced by the greatest of epic poets into his descriptions of the combats between the Trojans and the Greeks, In humble imitation, then, of Homer, let me proceed to say, that as a platoon of maggots on a cheese-plate contend with violent writhings of the body for superiority, as they overrun each other, and alternately gain the uppermost place, or roll ingloriously to the bottom in the ambitious strife for mastery;—so did the preservers and the destroyers of game in the parlour of the poacher's ken mingle together in deadly strife, amidst the fall of tables and the wreck of kegs.

Securely seated, after the struggles of an unequal war, old Jerry Clink might now, by the aid of some friendly candle, have been seen reposing himself between the legs of a round table, his countenance and hands so deeply besmeared with blood as to give him all the grimness of a red Indian squatting after the operation of scalping, the huge mastiff stretched before him, with its head bruised until its features were not discernible, and a gaping wound behind the left fore-leg, into which had been introduced the weapon that had let out his life; while around lay strewn in confusion the fragments and ribands of nearly every portion of dress that Mr. Clink had previously worn. Nothing was left of his large snuff-coloured coat, save the collar and a small portion of the upper ends of the arms; his red waistcoat lay in twenty pieces around; and his unmentionables hung about him like the shattered bark of some old tree, that has been doomed to experience the lacerating power of a lightning-stroke. Jerry could do no more. He saw David Shaw, after a desperate struggle, worthy of a more noble cavalier, subdued, and pinioned like a market-fowl across the back, without the power to make even an effort in his favour; while of the remaining portion of his men some had made their escape, and the rest, having exhausted their means of defence, were surrendering at discretion.

"Well, if I could I would not leave you, lads," thought Jerry, as he witnessed the defeat of his companions,—"I've stood by you in good, and I 'll stand by you in evil. Sooner than be guilty of a mean action like that, I'd do as the great Cato did, and fall upon my own pocket-knife. Here," he cried in a loud voice, addressing himself to the head gamekeeper, "here, you big brute! pick me up, will you? I'm going along with all the rest."

"I know that," responded the individual thus addressed, with an allusion to Mr. Clink's eyes, which would not have benefited them, if carried into effect, quite so materially as might a pinch of Grimston's snuff; "I'll take care of you soon enough, old chap, trust me for that."

So saying, he cast a cord round Jerry's body, binding his arms to his sides; an operation which the latter underwent with the most heroic fortitude and good will. Not so, however, with the next proceeding; for the gamekeeper, having by this time discovered the carcass of his murdered dog under the table, seized hold of the loose end of the rope with which Jerry was tied, and fell to belabouring him without mercy.

The remaining portion of his confederates being now secured in two bunches of three and four respectively, the whole were marched off under a strong escort of their conquerors, to a lock-up in the village, where they remained under guard all night; two or three hours of this time being expended in a hot dispute between Jerry and David Shaw, upon the point whether Mrs. Anne Clink did, or did not, wilfully and maliciously betray them into the hands of their enemies.

That individually she was innocent, the reader is fully aware; although, in reality, she still had been the unconscious cause of all the disasters that had occurred. No sooner had she left her house on this eventful night, as described at the conclusion of a preceding chapter, than Mr. Longstaff, being conscious that he had stretched his authority too far, appointed his assistant, the constable, to steal out, and trace her footsteps wherever she might go, until he found her in a resting-place for the night; since, by this precaution, the steward would be enabled, in case of need, to find her again at any moment he might think proper. The constable discharged his commission so well, that he carried back a great deal more than he went for; and not only reported the lodging which Mistress Clink had taken up, but also discovered that a number of poachers, as he believed, against whom he had long held a warrant granted for offences against the game-laws, were there and then assembled in mischievous cogitation, as he had actually seen one of them emerge from a pigsty at the back of the premises. To be able to detect the unfortunate woman whom he had deprived of a home, in the very act of patronising a house of poachers upon the squire's manor, was the very thing for Mr. Longstaff. He lost no time in informing the guardians of the woods what a pretty garrison might be taken by surprise; and they, in accordance with that information, and the direction of the constable, accordingly advanced to the attack with the success which has already been related.

The injury sustained by Mrs. Mallory when knocked down on the staircase was not very material; nor did she feel it half so much as the additional one inflicted on her by the magistrates, when she was, some short time after, called up and fined ten pounds for the share she had taken in this little business. Longstaff struggled hard to involve Mrs. Clink in the same difficulty, on the plea that she had aided and abetted Mrs. Mallory either in having game in her possession, or in eating it. He failed, however, to make out a case; and as the squire entirely disapproved of the step he had taken in breaking up Mrs. Clink's house, the steward had the additional mortification of hearing himself commanded not only to reinstate her therein, but also to make ample restitution for the loss and misery he had occasioned to her.

In conclusion of this chapter, and of the events recorded therein, I may briefly observe, that, early on the following morning, old Jerry Clink, and seven of his associates, were conveyed to the castle at York; and that,



after soliloquizing there during some weeks, they underwent their trial. Now, if any man can escape an infringement of the game-laws, especially if accompanied by violence, he can escape anything—in the items of burglary, manslaughter, and arson, he may be considered invulnerable. They all were found guilty: and, while some of the lesser offenders were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment at home, Mr. David Shaw and Jerry Clink were accommodated with a fourteen years' residence in New South Wales. This judgment served only to sharpen the fangs of Jerry's resentment; but as revenge is a commodity which like Thorn's Tally-Ho Sauce, may be warranted to keep in all climates with equal freshness, Jerry not only carried his resentment out with him, and preserved it while abroad, but likewise brought it back again, for the purpose of making use of it after his return to his own country.

## CHAPTER VII.

*Though short, would yet be found, could it be measured by time, nearly fifteen years long. Colin Clink's boyhood and character. A trap is laid for him by Mr. Longstaff, into which his mother lets him fall: with other matters highly essential to be told.*

HAD not the days of omens and prognostications in great part passed by at the enlightened period in which our story commences, it would inevitably have been prophesied that the child, by whose very birth the passions of jealousy and revenge had been so strongly excited, and which had gone far to cloud the mind of the lady of Kiddal House, was predestined to create no common stir when he became a man. In that little vessel, it would have been contended, was contained a large measure of latent importance; although, contrary to the most approved and authentic cases of this nature, neither mark, spot, mole, nor even pimple, was to be found upon him; no strawberry on his shoulder, no cherry on his neck, no fairy's signet on his breast, by which the Fates are sometimes so obliging as to signify to anxious mothers the future eminence of their sons, or to stamp their identity. But, in the absence of all or any of these, he was gifted with that which some people consider of almost as much importance amongst the elements of future greatness,—an amount of brain which would have rejoiced the late Dr. Spurzheim, and put sweetness into the face of Gall himself.

During the earlier years of his childhood, Master Colin did not display anything uncommon, if I except the extraordinary talent he developed in the consumption of all kinds of edible commodities, whereby, I firmly believe, he laid the foundation of that excellent figure in which he appeared after arriving at the age of manhood. Sometimes, when his mother was in a mood prospective and reflective, she would look upon him with grief, and almost wish him appetiteless; but Colin stared defiance in her face as he filled his mouth with potatoes, and drank up as much milk as would have served a fattening calf.

Reinstated in the habitation where Colin was born, his mother eventually established a little shop, containing nearly everything, in a small way, that the inhabitants of such a locality could require. A bag of flour, a tub of oatmeal, and half a barrel of red herrings, stood for show directly opposite the door. A couple of cheeses, and a keg of butter, adorned the diminutive counter. Candles, long and short, thick and thin, dangled from the ceiling; half a dozen long brushes and mops stood sentry in one corner; and in and about the window was displayed a varied collection of pipes, penny loaves, tobacco, battledores, squares of pictures twenty-four for a halfpenny, cotton-balls, whipcord, and red worsted nightcaps. In this varied storehouse, with poor pale little Fanny for his nurse, until he grew too big for her any longer to carry him, did our hero Colin live and thrive. After he had found his own legs, his nurse became his companion; and many a time, as he grew older,—pitying her hungry looks, and solemn-looking eyes,—has he stolen out with half his own meals in his pinafore, on purpose to give them unseen to her who, he thought, wanted them more than he. But in time the little shop was to be minded, and Fanny had grown up enough to attend to it. Colin missed his companion in the fields, and therefore he too stayed more at home; and never felt more happy than when,—his mother's daily lessons being ended,—he hurried into the shop, and found something that he could do to help Fanny in her service.

Possibly it might arise from the bitterness of her own reflections upon the evils and the misery resulting from the insincerity and deception so common amongst every class of society, that Mrs. Clink very early and emphatically impressed upon the mind of her boy the necessity of being, above all things, candid and truth-telling, regardless of whatever might be the consequences. Disadvantages, she knew, must accompany so unusual a style of behaviour; but then, she said to herself, "Let him but carry it out through life, and, if no other good come of it but this, it will far outbalance all the rest,—that, by him at least, no other young heart will be destroyed, as mine has been. No lasting misery will by him be entailed on the confiding and the helpless, under the promise of protection: no hope of the best earthly happiness be raised in a weak heart, only to be broken, amidst pain, and degradation, and self-reproach, that has no end except with life. If I can bring up but one such man, thus pure in heart and tongue, I shall die in the full consciousness that, whatever my own errors may have been, I have left behind me one in the world far better than any I have found there!"

And so Master Colin was tutored on all occasions to think as correctly as he could, and then to say what he thought, without fear, or hope of favour.

While Colin year after year thus continued to advance towards that period when he should finally peck his way through the shell of his childhood, and walk out unfledged into the world, his career did not pass unmarked by that ancient enemy of his mother, Longstaff, the steward. Wherever that worthy went, he was doomed, very frequently, to hear the name of young Master Clink alluded to in terms which, in the inner man of Mr. Longstaff, seemed to throw even the cleverest of his own little Longstaffs at home totally in the rear.

Colin was a daring fellow, or a good-hearted fellow, or a comical lad, who promised to turn out something more than common; while Master Chatham Bolinbroke Longstaff, and Miss Æneasina Laxton Longstaff, the most promising pair of the family, were no more talked about, save by himself, Mrs. Longstaff, and the servants, than they would have been had they never honoured society with their presence. The annoyance resulting to Mr. Longstaff from this comparison was rendered more bitter in consequence of the formerly alleged, but now universally disowned, relationship between himself and our hero. He could not endure that the very child whose mother had endeavoured to cast disgrace upon him, and whom he hated on that account with intense hatred, should thus not only, as it were, exalt poverty above riches, but overtop intellectually in their native village as fine a family as any Suffolk grazier could wish to see. Mr. Longstaff determined, at length, to use his utmost exertions in order to rid the village of him; and, the better to effect his object, he endeavoured, by descending to meannesses which would not have graced anybody half so well as himself, to worm himself again into the good opinion of Colin's mother, by pretending that the doctrine of forget and forgive was not only eminently Christian and pious in itself, but that also, if it were not to be continually acted upon, and practically carried out, the various members of society might have nothing else to do but to be at endless war with one another. Though he had at one time certainly regarded Mrs. Clink as a very great enemy, he yet wished to let by-gones be by-gones; and, as she had had such a misfortune, if he could be of any benefit to her in putting the boy out when he was old enough, he should not refuse his services. Now, although the spirit of Mrs. Clink only despised this man for his conduct from first to last, she yet reflected that the benefit of Colin was her highest consideration; and that any help which might be extended to her for him ought not to be refused, however much she might dislike the hand that gave it.

An opening accordingly appeared to the prophetic eye of Mr. Longstaff, not only for ridding the parish of one whose presence he could not tolerate, but also of accommodating him with a situation where he would have the satisfaction of reflecting that Colin would both sleep on thorns, and wake to pass his days in no garden of roses. He would lower his crest for him,—he would take the spirit out of him,—he would contrive to place him where he should learn on the wrong side of his mouth how to make himself the talk of a town, while the children of his superiors were passed by as though they had neither wealth, quality, nor talent to recommend them; and, in doing this, he should at the same time be paying with compound interest the debt he owed to Colin's mother.

Such were the steward's reflections, when he found that the bait he hung out had been taken by Mrs. Clink, and that he should, at the first convenient opportunity, have it wholly in his power to dispose of Master Colin Clink after the best fashion his laudable wish for vengeance might suggest.

How Mr. Longstaff planned and succeeded in his design, and what kind of people Master Colin got amongst, together with certain curious adventures which befel him in his new situation, will be related in the ensuing chapter, as it is imperative upon me to conclude the present with some reference to the proceedings of the parties whom we left in trouble at the old hall of Kiddal.

When Dr. Rowel had fully attended to the wants of his unfortunate patient, Miss Shirley seized the earliest opportunity to make an earnest inquiry of him as to Mrs. Lupton's state, and the probabilities of her speedy recovery.

"Oh, she will soon be better—much better!" encouragingly exclaimed the doctor. "A slight delirium of this kind is easily brought on by excitement; but it is only temporary. There is no organic disease whatever. We shall not have the least occasion to think of removing her to *my establishment*,—not the least. Mrs. Lupton is constitutionally very sensitive; but she is not a subject in any way predisposed to mental affliction. The course of my practice has led me to make perhaps a greater amount of observation on diseases of this peculiar description than could be found amongst all the other medical men in England put together. I do not hesitate at all to state that, because I *know it* to be the fact; and I have invariably remarked, that amongst the great majority of insane persons that have been under my care, and no practitioner could have had more, there is a peculiarity,—a difference,—an organic something or other, which,—I am as much convinced of as of my own existence,—might have been perceptible to a clever man at the period of their very earliest mental development, and which marked them out, if I may so say, to become at one period or other of their lives inmates of such establishments as this extensive one of mine at Nabbfield. But the good lady of this house has nothing whatever of that kind about her. I pronounce her to be one of the very last persons who could require, for permanent mental affections, the care, restraint, and assiduous attentions, only to be obtained in a retreat where the medical adviser is himself a permanent resident. The course of treatment I am adopting will soon bring her about again,—very soon. But I must beg you will be so kind as to take care that she is kept quiet, and—and prevent her as much as possible from conversing on painful or exciting subjects," concluded the doctor, smiling very sweetly as he looked into Miss Shirley's eyes and profoundly bowed her a good night.

"That fellow is a quack," thought Miss Shirley, as she returned to Mrs. Lupton's chamber. "There is, as he says, *an organic something* about *him* that renders him very repulsive to me; and, if nothing worse come of him than we have had to-night, it will be a great deal more than his appearance promises."

Thus thinking, she threw herself into an easy-chair by her friend's bedside, and remained watching her attentively through the night.

However much of a quack the doctor might be, his opinion respecting Mrs. Lupton's recovery proved to be correct. In the course of a few weeks she might have been seen, as formerly, for hours together, with slow steps, and a deep-seated expression of melancholy, pacing the gardens and woods of Kiddal, regardless almost of times and seasons. Though now perfectly recovered, her recent illness formed a very plausible pretext on which to found reasons for hastening her again away from her home; for that she was an unwelcome tenant there will readily be believed from the facts already related.

One day, after a private consultation with the squire, Dr. Rowel suddenly discovered that it would prove materially beneficial to the health of the lady of Kiddal were she to exchange for some time the dull monotonous life of the gloomy old hall, for the more gay and spirit-stirring society of some busy city. He therefore impressed upon her, as a condition absolutely indispensable to a perfectly restored tone of the mind, the necessity under which she lay of residing for a while in or about the metropolis. Mrs. Lupton soon mentioned the subject again to her friend Miss Shirley.

"It has been proposed to me," said she, "to leave this place, and reside a while in London. I know the reason well—I feel it in my heart bitterly. I have been here too long, Mary. My picture on the wall is quite enough—he does not want *me*; but it is of no use to complain: I shall be as happy there as I am here, or here as I should be there. The time that I spend here seems to me only like one long thought of the hour, whether it come soon or late, when all that I endure shall be at an end. The only thing I love here, Mary, is that sweet little churchyard,—it looks *so* peaceful! When I am away, my only wish is that of returning, though why I should wish to return appears strange. But I cannot help it,—I know not how it is; but while I am alive, Mary, it seems as though I must haunt what ought to be my place, whether I will or not. Welcome or unwelcome, loved or hated, I feel that I am still a wife."

Her unresisting spirit accordingly gave way to the proposed arrangement without a murmur, and, with the exception of one or two brief visits which she made during the summer season to her unhappy home, she remained, for the time of which I have spoken, living apart, as though formally separated from her husband, during a lengthened period of some years. Under these circumstances, her friend Miss Shirley continued almost constantly with her, diverting her mind as much as possible from the subject which poisoned the happiness of her whole life, and supporting her in sorrow, when to divert reflection was no longer possible.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

*Mr. Longstaff rides over to Snitterton Lodge to obtain Colin a situation.—Miss Maria Sowersoft and Mr. Samuel Palethorpe,—his future mistress and master,—described.*

**A**T the distance of some five or six miles from Bramleigh, and to the south-west of that village, lies an extensive tract of bare, treeless country, which some years ago was almost wholly uninclosed—if we except a small farm, the property of the Church—together with some few scattered patches, selected on account of their situation, and inclosed with low stone walls, in order to entitle them to the denomination of fields. Owing to the abundance of gorse, or whins, with which the uncultivated parts of this district were overgrown, it had obtained the characteristic name of "Whin-moor;" while, in order to cover the barrenness of the place, and to exalt it somewhat in the eyes of strangers, the old farm itself, to which I have alluded, was dignified with the title of Snitterton Lodge, the seat of Miss Maria Sower-soft, its present tenant.

Early one morning in the spring season, Mr. Longstaff mounted his horse in high glee, and jogged along the miry by-roads which led towards this abode, with the intention of consulting Miss Sowersoft upon a piece of business which to him was of the very greatest importance. He had ascertained on the preceding evening that Miss Sowersoft was in want of a farming-boy; one whom she could have cheap, and from some little distance. Indeed, from a combination of circumstances unfavourable to herself, she found some difficulty in getting suited from the immediate neighbourhood where she was known. If the boy happened to be without friends to interfere between him and his employer, all the better. Peace would thereby be much more certainly secured; besides that, it would be all the greater charity to employ such a boy in a place where, she well knew, he would never lack abundance of people to look after him, and to chastise him whenever he went wrong. In fact, Miss Maria herself regarded the situation as so eligible in the matters of little work, large feeding, and excellent moral tutorage, that she held the addition of wages to be almost unnecessary; and, therefore, very piously offered less than half the sum commonly given elsewhere.

Mr. Longstaff had been acquainted with Miss Sowersoft for some years, and had enjoyed various opportunities of becoming acquainted with her character. He knew very well, that if he had possessed the power to make a situation for Master Colin Clink exactly after the model of his own fancy, he could not have succeeded better in gratifying his own malice than he was likely to do by getting the boy placed under the care of the mistress of Snitterton Lodge.

Mr. Longstaff arrived at the place of his destination about two hours before noon; and, on entering the house, found Miss Sowersoft very busily engaged in frying veal cutlets for the delicate palate of a trencher-faced, red-clay complexioned fellow, who sat at his ease in a home-made stuffed chair by the fire, looking on, while the operation proceeded, with all the confidence and self-satisfaction of a master of the house. This worthy was the head farming-man, or director-general of the whole establishment, not excluding Miss Maria herself; for he exercised a very sovereign sway, not only over everything done, and over every person employed upon the premises, but also, it was generally believed, over the dreary region of Miss Sowersoft's heart. That he was a paragon of perfection, and well entitled to wield the sceptre of the homestead, there could be no doubt, since Miss Maria herself, who must be considered the best judge, most positively declared it.

In his youth this useful man had been christened Samuel; but time, which impairs cloud-capped towers, and crumbles palaces, had fretted away some portion of that stately name, and left to him only the fragmentary appellation of "Sammy."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Longstaff in surprise as he caught the sound of the frying-pan, and beheld a clean napkin spread half over the table, with one knife and fork, and a plateful of bread, laid upon it; "dinner at ten o'clock, Miss Sowersoft?"

"Oh, bless you, no!" replied the individual addressed, "it is only a bit of warm lunch I was just frizzling for Sammy. You see, he is out in these fields at six o'clock every morning, standing in the sharp cold winds till he is almost perished, and his appetite gets as keen as mustard. Really, I do say sometimes I wonder how he manages to be so well as he is: but then, you know, he is used to it, and I generally do him up a bit of something hot about nine or ten o'clock, that serves him pretty well till dinner-time." Then, handing up a dish



of cutlets sufficient for a small family, she continued,—“Now, Sammy, do try if you can manage this morsel while it is hot. Will you have ale, or a sup of warm gin-and-water?”

Palethorpe was in no hurry to inform her which of the two he should prefer; and therefore Miss Sowersoft remained in an attitude of expectation, watching his mouth, until it pleased him to express his decision in favour of gin-and-water.

While Mr. Palethorpe was intently engaged in putting the cutlets out of sight, Mr. Longstaff introduced the subject of his visit in a brief conversation with the mistress of the house. He gave the lady to understand that he had taken the trouble of riding over on purpose to name to her a boy, one Colin Clink, who, he believed, would just suit the situation she had vacant. He was now about fifteen years old, but as strong as an unbroke filly; he had sense enough to learn anything; had no friends, only one, in the shape of a helpless mother, so that Miss Sowersoft need not fear being crossed by anybody's meddling; and, at the same time, he thought that by a little dexterous management she might contrive to obtain him for an old song. For several reasons, which it would be needless to explain, he himself also strongly wished to see the boy comfortably settled in her house, as he felt convinced that it would prove highly advantageous to all the parties concerned. He concluded by recommending Miss Sowersoft to pay a visit to Bramleigh; when she could not only see the boy with her own eyes, but also make such statements to his mother as to her might at the time seem fit.

To this proposal Miss Maria eventually agreed; and this amiable pair parted on the understanding that she should be driven over by Mr. Palethorpe in the chaise-cart on the following day. Just as Mr. Longstaff was passing out at the door, he was invited in again to take a glass of wine; an appeal which he felt no great desire to resist, especially as it was immediately reached out and filled for him by the fair hand of the hostess herself.

“*You'll have one?*” asked she, as she placed a glass upon the table close under the nose of Mr. Palethorpe, “for I'm sure it can do you no harm such a day as this.”

“Why, thank 'ee, meesis,” replied he, filling it to the brim, “but I feel as if I'd had almost enough.”

“Stuff and nonsense about enough!” cried Miss Maria; “you are always feeling as if you had had enough, according to your account; though you eat and drink nothing at all, hardly, considering what you get through every day.”

Palethorpe looked particularly spiritual at this, as though he felt half persuaded that he did actually live like a seraph, and took off his wine at a gulp, satisfied, in the innocence of his own heart, that no reflections whatever could be made upon him by the steward after the verbal warrant thus given by his mistress, in corroboration of the extreme abstinence which he endured.

“Well, meesis,” continued Palethorpe, rising from his chair, stretching his arms, and opening his mouth as wide as the entrance to a hen-roost, “I 'll just go again a bit, and see how them men's getting on. They do nought but look about 'em when I arn't there.” And, so saying, he walked out with the cautious deliberation of a man just returning from a public dinner.

“A man like that,” said Miss Sowersoft, as she gazed after him with looks of admiration, “Mr. Longstaff, is a treasure on a farm; and I am sure we could never get our own out of this, do as we would, till he came and took the direction of it. He is such an excellent manager to be sure, and does understand all kinds of cattle so well. Why, his opinion is always consulted by everybody in the neighbourhood; but then, you know, if they buy, he gets a trifle for his judgment, and so that helps to make him up a little for his own purse. I could trust him with every penny I possess, I'm sure. He sells out and buys in everything we have; and I never yet lost a single farthing by anything he did. Why, you remember that pony of Dr. Rowel's; he knocked it to pieces with his hard riding, and one thing or another: well, Sammy bought that; and, by his good management of his knees, and a few innocent falsehoods, you know, just in the way of trade, he sold it again to a particular friend, at a price that more than doubled our money.”

The steward, weary of Mr. Palethorpe's praises, and despairing of an end to them, pulled out his watch, and observed that it was high time for him to be in his saddle again. On which Miss Sowersoft checked herself for the present, and, having renewed her promise to go to Bramleigh on the morrow, allowed Mr. Longstaff to depart.

With such a clever master, and eloquent mistress, Colin could scarcely fail to benefit most materially; and so he did,—though not exactly in the way intended,—for he learned while there a few experimental lessons in the art of living in the world, which lasted him during the whole subsequent period of his life; and which he finally bequeathed to me, in order to have them placed on record for the benefit of the reader.

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## CHAPTER IX.

*Enhances the reader's opinion of Mr. Palethorpe and Miss Sowersoft still higher and higher; and describes an interview which the latter had with Mr. Longstaff respecting our hero.*

THE benevolent Mr. Longstaff lost no time after his return home in acquainting Mrs. Clink with the great and innumerable advantages of the situation at Snitterton Lodge, which he had been endeavouring to procure for her son. Nor did he fail very strongly to impress upon her mind how necessary it would be, when Miss Sowersoft should arrive, for her to avoid stickling much about the terms on which Colin was to go; because, if by any mishap she should chance to offend that lady, and thus break off the negotiation, an opportunity would slip through her fingers, which, it was highly probable, no concatenation of fortunate circumstances would ever again throw in her way.

Mrs. Clink's decision not being required before the following morning, she passed the night almost sleeplessly in considering the affair under every point of view that her anxious imagination could suggest. Colin himself, like most other boys, true to the earliest propensity of our nature, preferred a life passed in fields and woods, amongst horses, dogs, and cattle, to that of a dull shop behind a counter; or of any tedious and sickly mechanical trade. So far that was good. What he himself approved, he was most likely to succeed in; and with success in field-craft, he might eventually become a considerable farmer, or raise himself, like Mr. Longstaff, to the stewardship of some large estate. Visions, never to be realised, now rose in vivid distinctness before the mental eye of Mistress Clink. The far-off greatness of her son as a man of business passed in shining glory across the field of her telescope. But when again she reflected that every penny of his fortune remained to be gathered by his own fingers, the glass dropped from her eye,—all became again dark; the very speck of light she had so magnified, disappeared. But sleep came to wrap up all doubts; and she woke on the morrow, resolved that Colin should thus for the first time be launched upon the stream of life.

Early in the afternoon a horse stopped at Mrs. Clink's door, bearing upon his back a very well-fed, self-satisfied, easy-looking man, about forty years of age; and behind him, on a rusty pillion at least three generations old, a lady in black silk gown and bonnet, of no beautiful aspect, and who had passed apparently about eight-and-forty years in this sublunary world. Mistress Clink was at no loss to conjecture at once that in this couple she beheld the future master and mistress of her son Colin. Nor can it be said she was mistaken: the truth being that, after the departure of Mr. Longstaff from Snitterton Lodge on the preceding day, it had occurred to Miss Sowersoft that, instead of taking the chaise-cart, as had been intended, it would be far pleasanter to take the longest-backed horse on the premises, and ride on a pillion behind Palethorpe. In this manner, then, they reached Bramleigh.

While Mr. Palethorpe went down to the alehouse to put up his horse, and refresh himself with anything to be found there which he thought he could relish, Miss Sowersoft was conducted into the house by Fanny; and in a few minutes the desired interview between her and Mistress Clink took place.

Colin was soon after called in to be looked at.

"A nice boy!" observed Miss Sowersoft,—“a fine boy, indeed! Dear! how tall he is of his age! Come here, my boy,” and she drew him towards her, and fixed him between her knees while she stroked his hair over his forehead, and finished off with her hand at the tip of his nose. “And how should you like, my boy, to live with me, and ride on horses, and make hay, and gather up corn in harvest-time, and keep sheep and poultry, and live on all the fat of the land, as we do at Snitterton Lodge?”

“Very much,” replied Colin; “I should have some rare fun there.”

“Rare fun, would you?” repeated Miss Sowersoft, laughing. “Well, that is finely said. We shall see about that, my boy,—we shall see. Then you would like to go back with us, should you?”

“Oh, yes; I 'll go as soon as Fanny has finished my shirts, thank you.”

“And when you get there you will tell me how you like it, won't you?”

“Yes, ma'am,” continued Colin; “mother has taught me always to say what I think. I shall be sure to tell you exactly.”

“What a good mother!” exclaimed Miss Sowersoft.

“I like her better than anybody else in the world,” added Colin.

“What, better than me?” ironically demanded Miss Sowersoft.

“I don't like you at all, I tell you!” he replied, at the same time breaking from her hands; “for I don't know you; and, besides, you are not half so pretty as my mother, nor Fanny either.”

Miss Sowersoft blushed, and looked confused at this bit of truth—for a truth it was, which others would certainly have *thought*, but not have given utterance to.

“I will teach you your manners, young Impudence, when I get hold of you, or else there are no hazel-twigs in Snitterton plantation!” *thought* Miss Sowersoft, reversing Colin's system, and keeping that truth all to herself which she ought to have spoken.

“You will take care he is well fed?” remarked Mistress Clink, somewhat in a tone of interrogation, and as though anxious to divert her visitor's thoughts to some other topic.

“As to feeding,” replied Miss Maria, once more verging towards her favourite topic, “I can assure you, ma'am, that the most delicious dinner is set out every day on my table; with a fine, large, rich Yorkshire pudding, the size of one of those floor-stones, good enough, I am sure, for a duke to sit down to. If you were to see the quantities of things that I put into my oven for the men's dinner, you would be astonished. Great bowls full of stewed meat, puddings, pies, and, I am sure, roasted potatoes past counting. Look at Mr. Palethorpe. You saw him. He does no discredit to the farm, I think. And really he is such a clever, good, honest man! He is worth a Jew's eye on that farm, for I never in my life could get any man like him. Then, see what an excellent master he will be for this boy. In five or six years he would be fit to take the best situation that ever could be got for him, and do Sammy a deal of credit, too, for his teaching. And as to his being taken ill, or anything of that kind, we never think of such a thing with us. People often complain of having no appetite, but it requires all that we can do to keep their appetites down. A beautiful bracing air we have off the moor, worth every doctor in Yorkshire; and I really believe it cures more people that are ill than all of them put together.”

This discourse was not lost upon Mistress Clink. That lady looked upon the character of her visiter as a sort of essence of honesty, hospitality, and good-nature; and influenced by the feelings of the moment, she regarded Mr. Longstaff as really a friendly man, Miss Sowersoft as the best of women, and Colin the most fortunate of boys.

Under these circumstances it became no difficult matter for Miss Maria to settle the affair exactly to her own mind; and, under the pretence of instruction in his business, which was never to be given,—of abundance, which he never found,—and of good-nature, which was concentrated wholly upon one individual,—to persuade Mistress Clink to give the services of her boy on the consideration that, in addition to all his other advantages, he should receive twenty-five shillings for the first year, and five shillings additional per

year afterwards. This bargain being struck, it was agreed that Colin should be sent over at the earliest convenient time; and Miss Sowersoft took her leave.

In order to save the expense of any slight refreshment at the tavern, Miss Maria called upon her friend the steward, on the pretence of communicating to him the result of her visit. She found that worthy in his dining-room, with Master Chatham Bolinbroke Longstaff—whom he was attempting to drill in the art of oratory,—mounted upon the table, and addressing his father, who was the only individual in the room, as a highly respectable and very numerous audience.

While this was proceeding here, Miss Æneasina Longstaff, in an adjoining room, sat twanging the strings of a harp. On the other side her younger sister, Miss Magota, was spreading cakes of Reeve's water-colours upon sheets of Whatman's paper, and dignifying the combination with the title of drawings: while, above stairs, young Smackerton William Longstaff was acquiring the art of horsemanship on a steed of wood; and the younger Longstaffs were exercising with wooden swords, with a view to future eminence in the army; and, altogether, were making such disturbance in the house as rendered it a perfect Babel.

Into this noisy dwelling did Miss Sowersoft introduce herself; and, after having stood out with great pretended admiration Master Bolinbroke's lesson, eventually succeeded in obtaining a hearing from the too happy parent of all this rising greatness.

Mr. Longstaff congratulated her upon the agreement she had made, but advised her to be very strict with the boy Colin, or in a very short time she would find him a complete nuisance.

"If *you* do not make something of him, Miss Sowersoft," said he, "I am afraid he'll turn out one of that sort which a parish would much rather be without than see in it. He has some sense, as I told you yesterday, but that makes him all the more mischievous. Sense is well enough, Miss Sowersoft, where parents have discretion to turn it in the right channel, and direct it to proper ends; but I do conscientiously believe that when a little talent gets amongst poor people it plays the very deuce with them, unless it is directed by somebody who understands much better what is good for them than they can possibly know for themselves. If you do not hold a tight string over that boy Colin, he 'll get the upper hand of you, as sure as your head is on your shoulders."

"You are right—very right!" exclaimed Miss Maria. "I am sure, if you had actually known how he insulted me this morning to my face, though I was quite a stranger to him, you could not have said anything more true. It was lucky for him that Palethorpe did not hear it, or there would not have been a square inch of white skin left on his back by this time. His mother cannot be any great shakes, I should think, to let him go on so."

"His mother!" cried Longstaff; "pooh! pooh! Between you and me, Miss Sowersoft,—though it does not do to show everybody what colour you wear towards them,—there is not a person in the world—and I ought not to say it of a woman, but so it is,—there is not a single individual living that I hate more than I do that woman. She created more mischief in my family, and between Mrs. Longstaff and myself, some years ago, than time has been able altogether to repair. I cannot mention the circumstance more particularly, but you may suppose it was no ordinary thing, when I tell you, that though Mrs. Longstaff knows the charge to have been as false as a quicksand; though she has completely exonerated me from it, time after time, when we happened to talk the matter over; yet, if ever she gets the least out of temper, and I say a word to her, she slaps that charge in my face again, as though it were as fresh as yesterday, and as true as Baker's Chronicles."

"Ay, dear!" sighed Miss Maria, "I feared she was a bad one."

"She *is* a bad one," repeated Longstaff.

"And that lad is worse," added the lady.

"However, we'll cure him, Mr. Longstaff." Miss Maria Sowersoft laughed, and the steward laughed likewise as he added, that it would afford him very great pleasure indeed to hear of her success.

This matter being settled so much to their mutual satisfaction, Mr. Longstaff invited his visiter to join Mrs. Longstaff and her daughters, the Misses Laxton and Magota, over a plate of bread and butter, and a glass of port, which were always ready when the lessons of the morning were finished. This invitation, being the main end and scope of her visit, she accepted at once; and after a very comfortable refectation, rendered dull only by the absence of Palethorpe, she took her leave. Shortly afterwards Miss Maria might have been seen again upon her pillion; while her companion, mightily refreshed by the relishable drinks he had found at the tavern, trotted off his horse towards home at a round speed, for which everybody, save the landlady of the inn, who had kept his reckoning, was unable to account.

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## CHAPTER X.

*A parting scene between Colin and Fanny, with the promises they made to each other. Colin sets out for his new destination.*

SOMETHING closely akin to grief was visible in the little cottage at Bramleigh, even at daybreak, on that gloomy morning which had been fixed upon for Colin's departure. It was yet some hours before the time at which he should go; for his mother and Fanny had risen with the first dawn of light, in order to have everything for him in a state of preparation. Few words were exchanged between them as they went mechanically about their household work; but each looked serious, as though the day was bringing sorrow at its close: and now and then the lifting of Fanny's clean white apron to her eyes, or the sudden and unconscious fall of big tears upon her hands, as she kneeled to whiten the little hearthstone of the house,



betrayed the presence of feelings in her bosom which put a seal upon the tongue, and demanded the observance of silence to keep them pent within their trembling prison-place. The mother, whose heart was more strongly fortified with the hope of her boy's well-doing, felt not so deeply; though the uppermost thoughts in her mind were yet of him, and of this change. To-morrow he would be gone. How she should miss his open heart and voluble tongue, which were wont to make her forget all the miseries she had endured on his account! She would no longer have need to lay the nightly pillow for him; nor to call him in the morning again to another day of life and action. The house would seem desolate without him; and she and Fanny would have to learn how to be alone.

His little box of clothes was now carefully packed up; and amongst them Fanny laid a few trifling articles, all she could, which had been bought, unknown to any one, with the few shillings which had been hoarded up through a long season. These, she thought, might surprise him at some unexpected moment with the memory of home, and of those he had left there; when, perhaps, the treatment he might receive from others would render the memory of that home a welcome thing. A small phial of ink, three penny ready-made pens, and half a quire of letter-paper, formed part of Fanny's freightage: as she intended that, in case he could not return often enough on a visit to them of some few hours, he should at least write to tell them how he fared.

When she was about completing these arrangements Colin entered the room, in high spirits at the anticipated pleasures of his new mode of existence.

"Is it all ready, Fanny?" he asked; at the same time picking up one end of the cord by which the box was to be bound.

"Yes," she briefly replied; accompanying that single monosyllable with a sudden and convulsive catching of the breath, which told of an overladen bosom better than any language.

"Then I shall go very soon," coolly observed Colin,—“there is no good in stopping if everything is ready.”

"Nay, not yet," murmured Fanny, as she bowed down her head under the pretence of arranging something in the box, though, in reality, only to hide that grief which in any other manner she could no longer conceal. "We can't tell when we shall see you again. Do not go sooner than you can help, for the latest will be soon enough."

"What, are you crying?" asked Colin. "I did not mean to make you cry;" and he himself began to look unusually serious. "It is a good place, you know; and, if I get on well, perhaps when I am grown up I shall be able to keep a little house of my own; and then you, and my mother, and I, will live there, and be as comfortable as possible together. You shall be dairy-maid, while I ride about to see that the men do their work; and, as for my mother, she shall do as she likes."

Though not much consoled by this pleasing vision of future happiness, Fanny could not but smile at the earnestness with which Colin had depicted it. Indeed, he could not have offered this balm to her wounded spirit with greater sincerity had such a result as that alluded to been an inevitable and unavoidable consequence of his present engagement at Snitterton Lodge. But Fanny had still less faith in the prognostications of the little seer, in consequence of the opinion which she had secretly formed of the character of his mistress; notwithstanding the plausibility of her conversation. The natural expression of her countenance appeared to be that of clouded moroseness and grasping avarice; while a sort of equivocal crossing of the eyes, though only occasional, seemed to evince to those who could deeply read the human face divine, the existence of two distinct and opposite sentiments in her mind, to either of which she could, with equal show of truth, give utterance, as occasion might render necessary. Over all this, however, and, as it were, upon the surface, her life of traffic with the world seemed to have rendered it needful for her to assume a character which too often enabled her to impose upon the really honest and innocent; though it never left, even upon the most unsuspecting, any very deep feeling of confidence in her integrity. Such, at least, were the impressions which Miss Sowersoft's appearance produced upon the mind of Fanny; though the latter made no other use of them than that of taking some little precautions in order to be informed truly in what manner she and Colin might agree, which otherwise she would not have deemed at all needful.

"You will come over to see us every Sunday?" she asked.

"Yes, if they will let me," replied Colin.

"Let you!" But she suddenly checked herself. "And, if not, when they will not let you, you will be sure to write, Colin? Now promise me that. Or, if anything should be amiss,—if you should not like the place, for there is no telling till you have tried it; if it *should* so happen that they do not use you so well as they ought to do, send, if you cannot come, directly; and, if there is nobody else to help you that is better able,"—Fanny stood up, and clasped both his hands with deep energy between her own,—“I will stand by you as long as I live. I am not able to do much, but I can earn my living; and, if I work like a slave, you shall never want a farthing as long as I have one left for myself in the world! I have nursed you, Colin, when I was almost as little as yourself; and I feel the same to you as though your mother was mine too.”

While Colin, with tears in his eyes, promised implicit compliance with all that had been requested of him, he yet, with the candour and warm-hearted generosity peculiar to his character, declared that Fanny ought to despise him if ever he trusted to the labour of her hands for a single meal, No: he would save all his yearly wages, and bring them home for her and his mother; and in time he should be able to maintain them both by his own labour, without their having any need to struggle for themselves. As for the rest, if anybody ill-used him, he was strong enough to stand his own ground: or, if not, he knew of another way to save himself, which would do quite as well, or better.

"What other way? What do you mean?" asked Fanny very anxiously.

"Oh, nothing," said Colin; "only, if people do not treat us properly, we are not obliged to stay with them."

"But you must never think of running away," she replied, "and going you do not know where. Come back home if they ill-treat you, and you will always be safe with us."

Their morning meal being now prepared, the three sat down to it with an undefined feeling of sadness which no effort could shake off. Some little extra luxury was placed upon the table for Colin; and many times was he made to feel that—however unconsciously to themselves—both his mother and Fanny anticipated all

his slightest wants with unusual quickness; and waited upon him, and pressed him to his last ill-relished meal, with a degree of assiduity which rendered the sense of his parting with them doubly painful.

The hour for going at length arrived. At ten o'clock the village-carrier called for his little box; and at twelve Colin himself was to set out. The last half-hour was spent by his mother in giving him that impressive counsel which under such circumstances a mother best knows how to give; while Fanny stood by, weeping as she listened to it, and frequently sobbing aloud when some more striking observation, some more pointed moral truth, or apposite quotation from the sacred volume, escaped the mother's lips. Twelve o'clock struck. At a quarter past our hero was crossing the fields on the foot-road to Whinmoor; and at about three in the afternoon he arrived at the place of his future abode.

## CHAPTER XI.

*Describes the greeting which Colin received on his arrival at Snitterton Lodge; together with a very serious quarrel between him and Mr. Palethorpe; and its fearful results.*

**A**S Colin descended a gentle declivity, where the sterility of the moor seemed imperceptibly to break into and blend with the woods and the bright spring greenery of a more fertile tract of country, he came within sight of Miss Sowersoft's abode. Though dignified with the title of a seat, it was a small common farmhouse, containing only four rooms, a long dairy and kitchen, and detached outhouses behind. To increase its resemblance to a private residence, a piece of ground in front was laid out with grass and flower-beds. The ground was flanked on either extremity with gooseberry-bushes, potato-lands, broad-beans, and pea-rows; and, farther in the rear, so as to be more out of sight, cabbages, carrots, and onions. The natural situation of the place was excellent. Standing on the north side of a valley which, though not deep, yet caused it to be shut out from any distant prospect in consequence of the long slope of the hills, the little dwelling looked out over a homely but rural prospect of ploughed and grass land, and thick woods to the left; over which, when the light of the sun was upon it, might be seen the white top of a maypole which stood in the middle of the next village; and, still nearer, the fruitful boughs of an extensive orchard, now pink and white with bloom; while along the foot of the garden plunged a little boisterous and headlong rivulet, worn deep into the earth, which every summer storm lashed into a hectoring fury of some few days' duration, and, on the other hand, which every week of settled fair weather, calmed down into a gentle streamlet,—now gathering in transparent pools, where minnows shot athwart the sun-warmed water like darts of light; and then again stretching over fragments of stone, in mimic falls and rapids, which only required to be enlarged by the imagination of the listless wanderer, to surpass in picturesque beauty the course of the most celebrated rivers.





As Colin entered the garden-gate, he observed the industrious Mr. Palethorpe sitting against the western wall of the house,—the afternoon being warm and inviting,—smoking his pipe, and sipping the remains of a bottle of wine. With his legs thrown idly out, and his eyes nearly closed to keep out the sun, he appeared to be imbibing, in the most delicious dreamy listlessness, at once the pleasures of the weed and the grape, and those which could find their way to his inapprehensive soul from the vast speaking volume of glad nature which lay before him.

“So, you 're come, are you?” he muttered, without relieving his mouth of the pipe, as the boy drew near him.

“Yes, I am here at last,” replied Colin; adding very good-humouredly, “you seem to be enjoying yourself.”

“And what in th' devil's name is that to you?” he savagely exclaimed; “what business of yours is it what I'm doing?”

“I did not intend to offend you, I'm sure,” said Colin.

“You be dang'd!” replied Sammy. “You arn't mester here yet, mind you, if you are at home! I have heard a bit about you, my lad; and if you don't take care how you carry yourself, you 'll soon hear a little bit about me, and feel it an' all, more than we've agreed for at present. Get into th' house with you, and let meesis see you 're come.”

The blood rose in Colin's face; and tears, which he would have given half his life to suppress, welled up in his eyes at this brutal greeting, so different to that which he had expected, and to the feelings of happiness which a few minutes previously had thronged, like bees upon a flower, about his heart.

As he passed the wire-woven windows of the dairy at the back of the house, he observed a maid within busily employed, in the absence of Miss Sowersoft, in devouring by stealth a piece of cheese.

Colin knocked at the door; but before the maid could swallow her mouthful, and wipe the signs thereof from her lips, so as to fit herself to let him in, an ill-tempered voice, which he instantly recognised as that of Miss Sowersoft, bawled out, “Sally!—why don't you go to the door?”

“Yes, 'um!” bellowed Sally, in return, as she rushed to the place of entrance, and threw the door back.

“Is Miss Sowersoft at home?” asked the boy.

“Oh, it's you, is it?” cried his mistress from an inner room. “Come in, come in, and don't keep that door open half an hour, while I am in a perspiration enough to drown anybody!”

Colin passed through the kitchen into the apartment from which the voice had proceeded, and there beheld Miss Sowersoft, with a huge stack of newly-washed linen before her, rolling away at a mangle, which occupied nearly one side of the room.

“Why did n't your mother send you at a more convenient time?” continued Miss Sowersoft, looking askance at Colin, with her remotest eye cast crosswise upon him most malignantly. “If she had had as much to do as I have had, ever since she kept house of her own, she would have known pretty well before now that folks don't like to be interrupted in the middle of their day's work with new servants coming to their places. But I suppose she's had nothing to do but to pamper you all her life. I can't attend to you now;—you see I 'm up to my neck in business of one sort or another.”

So saying, she fell to turning the mangle again with increased velocity; so that, had our hero even felt inclined to make an answer, his voice would have been utterly drowned by the noise.

In the mean time Colin stood in the middle of the floor, doubtful what step to take next, whether into a chair or out of the house; but, in the lack of other employment, he pulled his cap into divers fanciful forms, which had never entered into the head of its manufacturer, until at length a temporary cessation of his mistress's labours, during which an exchange of linen was made in the mangle, enabled him to ask, with some chance of being heard, whether he could not begin to do something.

“I 'll tell you what to do,” replied Miss Maria, “when I 've done myself,—if I ever shall have done; for I am more like a galley-slave than anything else. Nobody need sit with their hands in their pockets here, if their will is as good as their work. Go out and look about you;—there 's plenty of stables and places to get acquainted with before you 'll know where to fetch a thing from, if you are sent for it. And, if Palethorpe has finished his pipe and bottle, tell him I want to know what time he would like to have his tea ready.”

Colin very gladly took Miss Sowersoft (who was more than usually sour, in consequence of the quantity of employment on her hands) at her word, and, without regarding her message to Palethorpe, with whom he had no desire to change another word at present, he hastened out of the house, and rambled alone about the fields and homestead until dusk.

Several times during this stroll did Colin consider and re-consider the propriety of walking home again without giving his situation any farther trial. That Snitterton was no paradise, and its inhabitants a nest of hornets, he already began to believe; though to quit it before a beginning had been made, however much of ill-promise stared him in the face, would but indifferently accord with the resolutions he had formed in the morning, to undergo any difficulties rather than fail in his determination eventually to do something, not for himself only, but for his mother and Fanny. The advice which the former had given him not twelve hours ago also came vividly to his recollection; the sense of its truth, which experience was even now increasing, materially sharpening its impression on his memory. It was not, however, without some doubts and struggles that he finally resolved to brave the worst,—to stand out until, if it should be so, he could stand out no longer.

Strengthened by these reflections, and relying on his own honesty of intention, our hero returned to the house just as all the labourers had gathered round the kitchen-grate, and were consuming their bread and cheese in the dim twilight. Amongst them was one old man, whose appearance proclaimed that his whole life had been spent in the hard toils of husbandry, but spent almost in vain, since it had provided him with nothing more than the continued means of subsistence, and left him, when worn-out nature loudly declared that his days of labour were past, no other resource but still to toil on, until his trembling hand should finally



obtain a cessation in that place which the Creator has appointed for all living. What little hair remained upon his head was long and white; and of the same hue also was his week's beard. But a quiet intelligent grey eye, which looked out with benevolence from under a white penthouse of eyebrow, seemed to repress any feelings of levity that otherwise might arise from his appearance, and to appeal, in the depth of its humanity, from the helplessness of that old wreck of manhood, to the strength of those who were now what once he was, for assistance and support.

"Ay, my boy!" said old George, as Colin entered, and a seat was made for him near the old man, "thou looks a bit different to me; though I knew the time when I was bonny as thou art."

As he raised the bread he was eating to his mouth, his hand trembled like a last withered leaf, which the next blast will sweep away for ever. There was so much natural kindness in the old man's tone, that instantaneously, and almost unconsciously, the comparison between Miss Sowersoft and her man Samuel, who had spoken to him in the afternoon, and poor old George, was forced upon Colin's mind. In reply to the old man's concluding remark, Colin observed, "Yes, sir, I dare say; but that is a long while ago now."

"Ay, ay, thou's right, boy,—it is a long while. I've seen more than I shall ever see again, and done more than I shall ever do again."

Mr. Palethorpe, who sat in the home-made easy-chair, while the old man occupied a fourlegged stool, burst into a laugh. "You 're right there, George," he retorted. "Though you never did much since I knowed you, you 'll take right good care you 'll not do as much again. Drat your idle old carcass! you don't earn half the bread you 're eating."

The old man looked up,—not angry, nor yet seeking for pity. "Well, perhaps not; but it is none the sweeter for that, I can assure you. If I can't work as I did once, it's no fault of mine. We can get no more out of a nut than its kernel; and there's nought much but the shell left of me now."

"Yes, yes," returned Palethorpe, "you don't like it, George, and you'll not do it. Dang your good-for-nothing old limbs! you 'll come to the work'us at last, I know you will!"

"Nay, I hope not," observed the old man, somewhat sorrowfully. "As I've lived out so long, I still hope, with God's blessing on my hands, though they can't do much, to manage to die out."

"Come, then," said Palethorpe, pushing a pair of hard clay-plastered quarter-boots from off his feet, "stir your lazy bones, and clean my boots once more before you put on th' parish livery."

The old man was accustomed to be thus insulted, and, because he dared not reply, to take insult in silence. He laid down the remaining portion of his bread and cheese, with the remark that he would finish it when he had cleaned the boots, and was about rising from his seat to step across the hearth to pick them up, as they lay tossed at random on the floor, when young Colin, whose heart had been almost bursting during this brief scene, put his hand upon the poor old creature's knee to stop him, and, at the same time starting to his own feet instead, exclaimed, "No, no!—It's a shame for such an old man as you.—Sit still, and I 'll do 'em."

"You shan't though, you whelp!" exclaimed Palethorpe, in great wrath, at the same time kicking out his right foot in order to prevent Colin from picking them up. The blow caught him in the face, and a gush of blood fell upon the hearthstone.

"I will, I tell you!" replied Colin vehemently, as he strove to wipe away the blood with his sleeve, and burst into tears.

"I'm d—d if you do!" said Palethorpe, rising from his chair with fixed determination.

"I 'll soon put you to rights, young busybody."

So saying, he laid a heavy grip with each iron hand on Colic's shoulders.

"Then if I don't, *he* shan't!" sobbed Colin.

"Shan't he?" said Palethorpe, swallowing the oath which was upon his lips, as though he felt that the object of it was beneath his contempt. "I 'll tell you what, young imp, if you don't march off to bed this minute, I 'll just take and rough-wash you in the horse-pond."

Miss Sowersoft smiled with satisfaction, both at Mr. Palethorpe's wit and at his display of valour.

"Do as you like about that," replied Colin: "I don't care for you, nor anybody like you. I didn't come here to be beaten by you!"

And another burst of tears, arising from vexation at his own helplessness, followed these words.

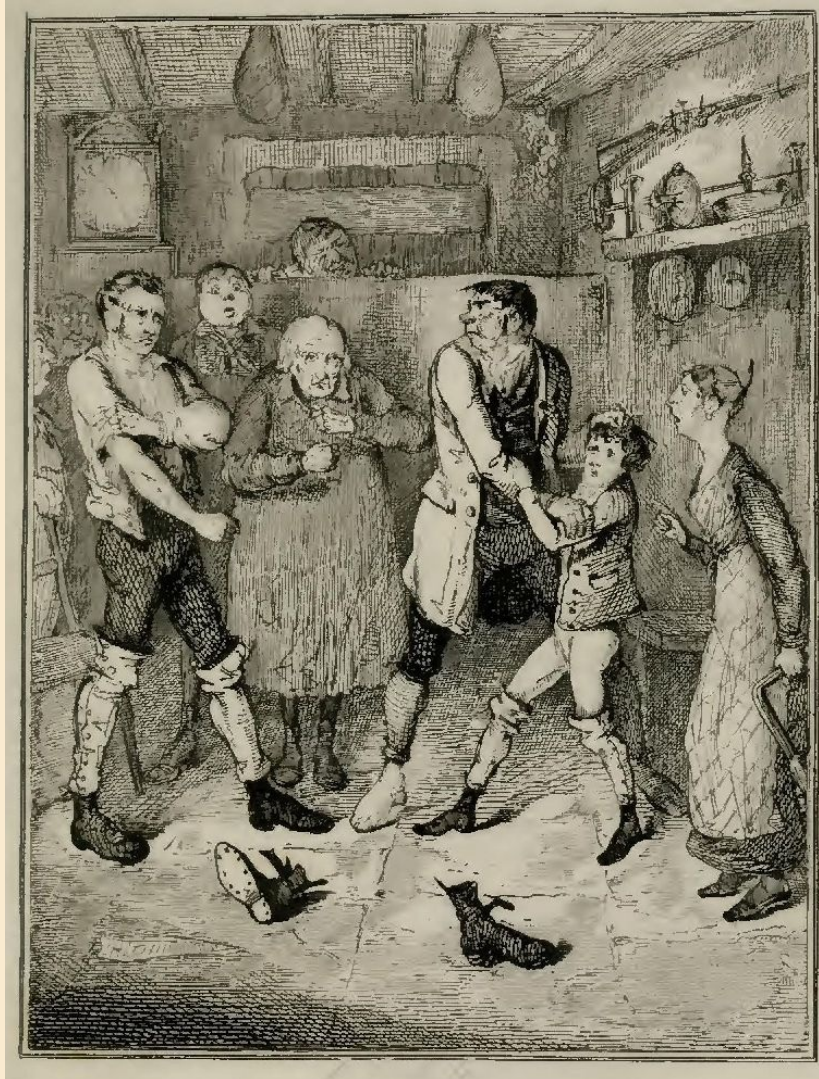
"You don't care for me, don't you?" savagely demanded Palethorpe. "Come, then, let's try if I can't make you."

He then lifted Colin by the arms from the floor, with the intention of carrying him out; but the farm-labourers, who had hitherto sat by in silence, though with rising feelings of indignation, now began to watch what was going on.

"You shan't hurt him any more," cried old George, "or else you shall kill me first!"

"Kill you first, you old fool!" contemptuously repeated Palethorpe. "Why, if you say another word, I 'll double your crooked old back clean up, and throw you and him an' all both into th' brook together!"

"Then I 'm danged if you: do, and that's all about it!" fiercely exclaimed another of the labourers, striking his clenched fist upon his thigh, and throwing the chair on which he sat some feet behind him, in his sudden effort to rise. "If you dare to touch old George," he added, with an oath, "I 'll knock you down, if I leave this service to-night for it."



*Original Size*

"Ay,—what you an' all, Abel!" cried Palethorpe, somewhat paler in the cheeks than he was sixty seconds before. "Why, what will *you* do, lad?"

"What will *I* do?" said Abel, "Why, if you don't set that lad loose, you cowardly brute, and sit down in quietness, I'll thump you into a jelly in three minutes!—Dang you! everybody hates you, and I 'll tell you so now; for you are the biggest nuisance that ever set foot on a farm. Talk of that old man being idle!—why, what do you call yourself, you skulking vagabond? You never touch plough nor bill-hook once a-week, nor anything else that's worth a man's putting his hand to. Your business is to abuse everybody under you, and sneak after your missis's tail like a licked spaniel.—I wish I was your mester, instead of your being mine, I'd tickle your ears with a two-inch ash plant every morning, but I 'd make you do more in a day than you ever did in a week yet!"

A blow from Palethorpe's fist drove all the powers of oratory out of Abel, and caused him to stagger so suddenly backwards, that he would have fallen, had he not caught hold of the back of one of his comrades' chairs. All were now upon their feet; while Miss Sowersoft, who hitherto had sat petrified at the monstrous discourse of Abel, screamed out that whoever struck Palethorpe again should go out of the house that night. But as no one interfered farther in the quarrel, on the supposition that he was already pretty well matched, the penalty she had proclaimed amounted to nothing, since it did not deter the only man who at that moment was likely to commit anything so atrocious. Abel had no sooner recovered his balance than he made a furious lunge at the head farming-man, which that hero attempted but failed to parry. His antagonist, who, though less in weight, was yet tall and active, followed up his advantage; and, by a judicious and rapid application of his fists, he so far made good his former threat, as to give Miss Sowersoft's favourite two tremendous black eyes, and to plump his nose up to nearly double its original bulk and lustre, within sixty tickings of the clock. Miss Maria had now summoned the maid to her assistance, and between them they succeeded in protecting him from further vengeance. Nor did they find much difficulty in persuading that courageous man to sit down in his chair, and submit to a grand mopping with vinegar and hot water, which commenced as soon as active hostilities ceased, and did not conclude until nearly two hours afterwards.

Long before that time was expired, as no more comfort could be expected by the fireside that night, the rustics had moved quietly off to rest, taking poor Colin along with them, and directing him to occupy one small bed which stood in a room containing two, and informing him at the same time, not much to his satisfaction, that Palethorpe always slept in the other. Old George shook hands with Colin at the door, bidding him good night, and God bless him; and telling him not to care for what had happened, as Heaven would reward his goodness of heart at a time when, perhaps, being old and feeble, he might most want a friend to help him. As the old man said this, his voice failed, and Colin felt a warm tear drop upon his hand as it remained clasped in that of the speaker.

Colin rushed into his room, and in great distress, resulting from the memory of all he had left behind, and the dread of all that might meet him here, he fell on his knees by the bed-side.

That night the voices of two lonely women, praying for the welfare of a still more lonely child, and of a child asking for help in his loneliness, ascended to heaven. Their hearts were comforted.

## CHAPTER XII.

*Briefly details a slight love-skirmish between Sammy and Miss Sowersoft, which took place before Colin, while that youth was supposed to be asleep, and also illustrates the manner in which old maids sometimes endeavour to procure themselves husbands.—Colin's employment at the lodge.—He becomes involved in a dilemma, which threatens unheard-of consequences.*

**A**FTER Colin had spent some twenty minutes where we left him at the conclusion of the last chapter, he crept into bed. The room in which he lay being partly in the roof, admitted only of a very small window in the upright portion of the wall, and that was placed so close to the floor as to throw very little light into the apartment, except during a strong day or moon light.

The candle being extinguished, Colin could see nothing save a small square of dim light where the window was. Below stairs he could hear the muttering of voices, as Miss Sower-soft still endeavoured to restore the beauty of Mr. Palethorpe's countenance; and in the false floor over his head the sound of rats, who were at work in the roof, making noise sufficient over their labours to keep awake, during the whole night, any person less accustomed to that kind of nocturnal entertainment than the inhabitants of country-houses usually are. Colin could usually have slept soundly had all the rats in Christendom been let loose in a legion about him, but he could not sleep tonight. It was pitch-dark; he was in a strange place, with brutal employers, who disliked him only because he had offered to relieve a poor old man of some portion of his labours. Who knew—for such things had been heard of, and passionate men often take their revenge, regardless of consequences—who knew, as Mr. Palethorpe was to occupy the adjoining bed, that he might not take advantage of his sleep, and steal out in the night to murder him? He might do so, and then throw him down the brook, as he had threatened, or perhaps bury him deep in the garden, and say in the morning that he had run away.

With these, and similar imaginations, did Colin keep himself awake in a feverish state of terror during a space of time which to him seemed almost endless; for, however groundless and ridiculous such fears may be deemed by the stout-hearted reader who peruses this by broad daylight, he must be pleased to call to mind that poor Colin was neither of an age nor in a situation in which great account is commonly made of probabilities. The boy's fancies were at length interrupted by the appearance of something more real. A light shot through the chinks of the door, and run an ignisfatuus kind of chase round the walls and ceiling, as it advanced up stairs in the hands of the maid Sally. Shortly afterwards the door was gently pushed open; and while Colin's heart beat violently against the bars of its cage, and his breath came short and loud, like that of a sleeper in a troubled dream, he saw a huge warming-pan flaring through its twenty eyes with red-hot cinders, protruded through the opening, and at the other end of the handle Miss Sally herself. She placed her candle down in the passage, in order to avoid awakening Colin with its light, and then commenced warming Mr. Pale-thorpe's bed. By the time that operation was about finished, the feet of two other individuals creeping cautiously up were heard on the stairs. Then a voice whispered circumspectly, but earnestly, "Now, Sammy, make haste and get in while it is nice and hot, or else it will do you no good; and in a minute or two I 'll be up again with some warm posset, so that you can have it when you've lain down."

Palethorpe and Miss Sowersoft then entered, the latter having come up stairs with no other intention, apparently, than that of frustrating by her presence any design which Palethorpe might else have had of rewarding Sally for her trouble with a gentle salute upon the cheek. Having seen the maid safe out of the chamber, Miss Maria returned down stairs.

Colin now began to tremble in earnest; for he indistinctly heard Palethorpe muttering words of violence against every one of them without exception, and threatening to kick the house upside down before another day was over his head. By and by the cautious approach of his footsteps towards Colin's bed caused the boy to peep out through the merest chink between his eyelids, when he beheld the hideous face of the farming-man almost close to his own, with its huge swollen and blackened features fixed in an expression of deep malice upon him, and a ponderous clenched fist held threateningly near his face, as the horrible gazer muttered between his forcibly closed teeth, "I 'll pay you your wages for this, young man! I 'll reckon with you in a new fashion before long! You shall repent this night to the last end of your life, that shall you! I could split your skull now, if you were not asleep. But you may rest this time!"

Saying which, he retired to bed. Immediately afterwards Miss Sowersoft glided noiselessly in, with a huge basin of treacle-posset in one hand, and one of her own linen nightcaps, which she had been heating by the fire, in the other. This last-named article she at once proceeded to place on Mr. Palthorpe's head, and tie under his chin; because the long tabs with which it was supplied would cover his bruised face much better than any cap of his own. As Colin glanced from under the clothes he could scarcely forbear laughing, in spite of his fears, at the odd combination which, his mistress's Cupid suggested,—of a copper-coloured, black-bearded face, with the primly-starched, snowy frillings of a woman's nightcap.

"Is he asleep, Sammy?" asked Miss Maria in a low whisper.

"A deal faster than he deserves to be," replied that worthy.



"I will just step across, and see," observed the lady; and accordingly she trod lightly over the floor, in order to assure herself of that fact. Colin's closed eyes, his silence, and his quick full breathing, confirmed her in the pleasing delusion; and she returned to Palethorpe's bedside, and deposited herself in a chair with the remark that, under those circumstances, she would sit with him a few minutes. As she gazed with admiration on the uncouth countenance of Palethorpe, set, like a picture, in the white frame of her own cap, and watched him deliberately transfer spoonful after spoonful of the posset from the basin into the ill-shaped hole in his own face, she heaved a profound sigh, which seemed one moment to inflate her bosom like a balloon, and the next to collapse it again as closely as poor Cocking's parachute. Palethorpe went on with his posset.



[Original Size](#)

"Ay, dear!" she sighed again.

"What 's amiss, meesis?" asked Mr. Palethorpe, as soon as the emptied basin left him at liberty to speak.

"Nothing, Sammy,—nothing. Ay, dear! I'm quite well, as far as that goes," replied Miss Maria very despondingly.

"But you have summat not right, I'm sure," persisted he.

"Oh, it is of no matter!" she sighed again.

"But, what is it?" he a third time asked.

"It does not signify much," she again remarked; "it will be all the same a few years hence."

"You've tired yourself to death with that mangle, I suppose?" said Palethorpe.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed in a tone of voice which betrayed some slight offence at the vulgarity of his suggestion; "it is a very different sort of mangle to that. I am sure I am mangled enough by people's indifference."

"Why, as for that," replied Sammy, trying to exculpate himself from any charge of neglect, "you are meesis of the house, and don't want to be pressed to your meat and drink like a visiter."

"Meat and drink!" she exclaimed, as though indignant that such animal ideas should degrade the present elevation of her soul, "I care nothing about meat and drink, not I. You seem as if you could see nothing, though people make the plainest allusions that female propriety allows any woman to make."

Mr. Palethorpe looked astonished as he observed, "Well, I'm sure, meesis, you can't say that ever I made any allusions to female propriety."

"No,—that's it! there it is!" sighed Miss Sowersoft: "though you get all the fat of the land, and are treated more like a gentleman in the house than like what you are, you never make the least allusions."

Palethorpe protested that under those circumstances he ought to feel all the more ashamed of himself if he did make allusions, or else other people would think it very odd of him.

"Oh, then the truth's out at last, is it?" said Miss Sowersoft, "you have other people, have you? Ay, dear!" and she apparently fell a-crying. "It's impossible, then, for all the goodness in the world to make any

impression. Oh!"

Saying which she rose up, with her handkerchief to her eyes, and walked towards the door, muttering as she went, that since he seemed so very fond of other people, other people might feed him, as that was the last posset he would ever have from her hands. Mr. Palethorpe endeavoured several times to recall her; but Miss Sowersoft's new jealousy of other people had rendered her inexorable; and, in the course of a few more seconds her own chamber-door was heard to be violently closed and to be most resolutely bolted and locked behind her. Our worthy uttered a discontented groan, and composed himself to sleep; an example which Colin was enabled to follow some long time after, though not before his weariness had completely overpowered his fears of danger from the savage sharer of his dormitory.

While yet in the middle of his slumber, and busy with a dream of home, which placed him again in the bright warm sunshine by the step of his mother's door, Colin was suddenly startled by the dragging of every inch of bed-covering from off him, and the not very sparing application of a hand-whip about his body, while the voice of Palethorpe summoned him, under the courteous title of a lazy heavyheaded young rascal, to turn out, and get off to work. It was nearly broad day-light; and Colin obeyed the summons with considerable alacrity, though not without informing his driver at the same time, that there was no occasion for a whip to him, because a word would have done quite as well, if not better.

"Then you shall have both, to make sure, and plenty of them too," replied Mr. Palethorpe. "If long scores are ever to be cleared off, we should begin to pay 'em betimes; and I have a score chalked on for you that will want interest before it is discharged, I know. Mark, you will have this every morning regularly if you are not down stairs as the clock strikes six, neither sooner nor later. If you get up too soon, I shall lay on you just the same as if you got up too late,—for a right hour is a right hour, and six exactly is our time. I 'll make you feel where your mistake was, my boy, when you thought of coming mester here! There's last night's job I owe you for yet, and a good price you shall pay for it, or else I don't know how to reckon."

A blow on the right ear, and another on the left, immediately after, in order to keep his head in the middle, fell to Colin's lot at the conclusion of this harangue; and a push at the back of the neck which followed directly, enabled him to get out of the room somewhat more speedily than he would have done without that assistance. But to all this—though taken much in dudgeon—being mildness itself as compared with what might have been expected, Colin submitted in a sturdy mood, and without saying anything; though he did not forget to promise himself at some future day to adjust the balances between them.

In consequence of the lack-a-daisical turn which Miss Sowersoft's interview with Mr. Palethorpe had taken on the preceding night, that lady denied to the household the pleasure of her company at breakfast, as she could not meet the ungrateful farm-servant before company again until an explanation in private had taken place. Poor old George, all benignity, and looking like an elder of some by-gone age, seemed more than usually anxious to promote good feeling amongst his fellows, and to restore the harmony which had been destroyed the evening before, on his account. But Palethorpe was unforgiving, and Abel unrepentant: so that, whatever might be the disposition of others, those two characters at least regarded each other over the table much in the same manner as, it might be supposed, two of Mr. Wombwell's beasts, placed on opposite sides of his menagerie, would do when they address each other before a meal-time in that language of the eyes of which poets speak, and seem to intimate a very unequivocal desire to dine upon one another.

That day Master Colin took his first lesson in field-craft, by being set to gather stones from off the wheat-sown lands, before the blade was more than an inch or two out of the ground. His out-door labours were concluded at six in the evening; after which time, as the horses remained to be put up, he was drilled in the art of cleaning, bedding, harnessing, and managing those animals; and, after that was done, he was allowed, by way of amusement, to spend the remaining few hours before bed-time in setting rat-traps, or accompanying some one or other of the men in weasel-shooting along the banksides and hedges.

Some few days elapsed without a reconciliation having taken place between Palethorpe and his mistress; during which time our hero fared considerably better than otherwise he might have done; partly because Miss Sowersoft's attention was not now so completely engrossed as it had hitherto been by her favourite; and partly because that very pleasant personage himself, while unsupported by the smiles and attentions of his mistress, was by no means so formidable in his display of courage as otherwise he would have been. The prospect which had broken on Colin's mind on his first introduction to Snitterton began accordingly to brighten considerably. He liked his employment in the fields, as well as all that followed it, so well, that when on the ensuing Sunday he asked for leave to walk over to Bramleigh for the purpose of seeing his mother and Fanny, and was at once peremptorily denied, he felt that denial as no very great hardship; but soon made up his mind to spend the day as pleasantly as he could, and to write a letter to Fanny, detailing his thoughts and opinions, his likings and dis-likings, instead.

These resolves he eventually put into execution: and everything very probably might have gone on smoothly enough, had not a circumstance utterly unforeseen occurred, whereby he himself was brought into a second dilemma with his mistress and Palethorpe, still worse than the previous one; and whereby, also, the plain-spoken epistle which he had secretly indited for the private and especial perusal of his mother and Fanny, was in an evil hour thrown into the hands of the identical parties about whom, in its honest simplicity, it told so many truthful libels. But the shame of Miss Sowersoft was so deep, and the rage of Palethorpe so high, and the consequences of both to Colin so important, that I verily believe it will occupy nearly the whole of the next chapter to describe them.

*Demonstrates, in the case of Miss Sowersoft and Mr. Samuel Palethorpe, the folly of people being too curious about the truth, in matters better left in the dark. Colin is subjected to a strict examination, in which the judge, instead of the culprit, is convicted. Colin's punishment.*

**T**HAT period of the year having now arrived when the days were materially lengthened, as well as increased in warmth, Colin selected an hour or two one evening after his day's labour was over, for the purpose of writing that letter to his mother and Fanny which he had projected some short time before.

In order to do this, both by a good light and away from the probability of intrusion, he selected a little spot of ground, formed by an obtuse angle of the brook, at the bottom of the garden; though divided from it by a thick clump of holly, intermingled with hawthorn and wild brier. On this grassy knoll he sat down to his task; making a higher portion of its slope serve as a natural table to hold his ink and paper.

Those vespers which Nature herself offers up to her Creator amidst the magnificent cathedral columns of her own tall trees, the loud songs of the blackbird and the thrush, and the occasional shrill cry of the discontented pewee as it swept in tempestuous circles over the distant arable land, were loudly heard around him; while, some two or three yards below the spot where he sat, a ridge of large stones, placed across the rivulet for the greater convenience of crossing, partially held up the water, and caused an eternal popping murmur, as that portion which forced its escape between them, rushed with mimic velocity into the tiny gulf that lay some ten or twelve inches below. Colin felt elevated and happy. He could scarcely write many complainings there; although he had been so disappointed and ill-used on his arrival. At the same time he felt bound to tell the truth as far as it went, though not to represent himself as materially unhappy in consequence of the behaviour which had been adopted towards him. In this task, then, he proceeded, until the hundreds of bright twinkling leaves which at first glittered around him in the stray beams of sunlight, had all resolved themselves into one mass of broad shade; to this succeeded a red horizontal light upon the upper portions of the trees to the eastward, as though their tops were tipped with fire; which also rapidly faded, and left him, by the time he had about concluded his letter, scarcely able any longer to follow with his sight the course of his pen upon the paper.

Having wrapped his epistle awkwardly up, he placed it in his pocket, and was about to emerge from his rural study, when the leisurely tread of feet approaching down the garden-path, and the subdued sound of tongues which he too well knew, caused him to step back, and closer to the clumps of holly, in the hope of getting away unobserved when the individuals whom he wished to avoid had passed. They still continued to converse; and the first distinct words Colin heard were these:—

"I am sure, out of the many, very many excellent offers, I have had made me,—excellent offers they were,—I might have done so over and over again; but I never intended to be married. I always liked to be my own mistress and my own master. Besides that, it does entail so much trouble on people in one way or another. Really, when I look on that great family of my brother Ted, I am fit to fancy it is pulling him down to the ground; and I positively believe it would, if he did not take advantage of his situation in trade, and rap and wring every farthing out of everybody in any way that he possibly can, without being at all particular;—though they are sweet children, they are! Ay, but something must be risked, and something must be sacrificed in this world. I mean to say, that when people do get married, they must make up their minds to strike the best balance between them mutually that they are able. That is my candid opinion of things; and, when I look upon them in that light—when I think about them in that manner, and say to myself, there is this on this side, and nothing on that side, which should I take? I lose my resolution,—I don't know; I feel that, by a person to whom I had no objection in any other shape, I might perhaps be superinduced to do as others have done, and to make a sacrifice, for the sake of spending our lives in that kind of domestic combination which binds people together more than anything else ever can. I am weak on that point, I know; but then, the home affections, as Mr. Longstaff says, constitute a very worthy and amiable weakness."

Miss Sowersoft uttered this last sentence in such a peculiar tone of self-satisfied depreciation, as evidently proved that she considered herself a much more eligible subject, on account of that identical weakness which she had verbally condemned, than she would have been if wholly free from it.

"Well, meesis," replied Mr. Palethorpe, with considerate deliberation, "I should have no objection to our union, if it so happened that we were not doing very well as we are at present; and, while we are making a little money to put by every week, I think it is as well just now to let good alone. I should like—"

"Oh, you misunderstand me!" exclaimed Miss Sowersoft; "I did not make any allusions to you in particular. Oh, no! I have had very many most excellent offers, and could have them now for that matter; but then, you see, I was only just saying, as the thought came across my mind, that there is something to be said against being married, and something against keeping single. I remember the time when I could not bear the very thoughts of a man about me; but, somehow, as one gets older we see so much more of the world, and one's ideas change almost as much as one's bodies; really, I am as different as another woman to what I once was. Somehow, I don't know how, but so it happens—Ah!" shrieked Miss Sowersoft, interrupting herself in the demonstration of this very metaphysical and abstruse point in her discourse, "take hold of me, dear,—take hold of me! I've trod on a toad, I believe!"

At the same time she threw her arms up to Mr. Palethorpe for protection; and, very accidentally, of course, they chanced to alight round that worthy's neck. A round dozen of rough-bearded kisses, which even he, stoic as he was, could not refrain from bestowing upon her, in order to revive and restore her spirits, smacked loudly on the dusky air, and set poor little Colin a-laughing in spite of himself.

"Who the deuce is that!" earnestly whispered the farming-man. "There's somebody under the brook bank!" and, as he instantly disengaged Miss Sowersoft from his arms, he rushed round the holly-bushes, and caught fast hold of Colin, just as that unlucky lad was making a speedy retreat across the rivulet into the opposite orchard. "What! it is you, you young divel, is it?" exclaimed he in a fury, as he dragged the boy up the sloping bank, and bestowed upon him sundry kicks, scarcely inferior to those of a vicious horse, with his heavy, clench-nailed, quarter-boots. "You 're listening after your meesis, now, are you? Dang your meddling carcass! I 'll stop your ears for you!"

And bang went his ponderous fist on Colin's organs of Secretiveness and Acquisitiveness, until his head



sung again throughout, like a seething caldron.

"That's right!" cried Miss Sowersoft; "make him feel; drag him up; my face burns with shame at him; I'm as hot as a scarlet-fever, I am—a young scoundrel!"

And Colin was pulled up on to the level of the garden, more like a half-killed rat than a half-grown human being.

"We'll know how this is, meesis," said Mr. Palethorpe, when he had fairly landed his cargo. "I 'll see to the bottom of it before he goes into th' house. He sha'n't have a chance of being backed up in his impudence as he was t'other night."

"Take him into the thrashing-barn," advised Miss Sowersoft, "and we can have him there in private."

Colin now found breath to put in a protest against the bill of indictment which they were preferring against him.

"I was not listening," said he; "I was only writing a letter to my mother, I 'm sure!"

"What! at dark hour?" ejaculated Palethorpe with a laugh. "Come along, you young liar! you shan't escape that way." Accordingly he dragged the lad up the garden, and behind the house, into the spacious barn, of which Miss Sowersoft had spoken: and, while that innocent lady went to procure a lantern, her favourite held him tightly by the collar; save when, occasionally, to beguile the time until her return, he regaled him with a severe shake, and an additional curse or two upon his vagabond and mischievous carcass.

"Do you think he knows anything about it?" asked Miss Sowersoft aside to Palethorpe, as she entered the barn, and the dim light of her horn-lantern summoned to view the spectral appearances—rather than the distinct objects themselves—of various implements of husbandry, and of heaps of thrashed wheat and straw scattered around.

"Well, I don't know; but I should think not much," said he.

"I hope not," rejoined his mistress, "or it will get into everybody's mouth. But we will question him very closely; we 'll have it out of him by hook or by crook."

She then held a broken side of the lantern a little above Colin's face, in order to cast the better light upon it; and proceeded to question the culprit.

"Now, before I ask you a single question, promise to tell me the truth, and nothing but the truth. Now, mark; I shall know whether you speak the truth or not, so it will be of no use to try to deceive me. Tell me whether you heard me and Mr. Palethorpe talking in the garden; and whether you saw him pick me up so very kindly when I slipped down; and then tell me for what purpose you were standing behind those trees? No falsehoods, now. The truth, nothing else. Take care; because if you say anything untrue I shall know it directly; and then woe be to you for your trouble?"

"I always do tell truth," replied Colin, crying, "without being frightened into it that way. I'm sure I had only been writing a letter to my mother and Fanny; and I stood there because I did not want anybody to catch me."

"And why did not you want anybody to catch you?"

"Why, because I didn't," answered Colin.

"Because you didn't!" exclaimed Mr. Palethorpe, as he emerged from out the shadow of Miss Sowersoft's figure; "what answer is that, you sulky ill-looking whelp? Give meesis a proper answer, or I 'll send my fist in your face in a minnit!"

Miss Sowersoft put her hand on Palethorpe's arm to keep him back,—not so much to prevent him carrying his threat into execution, as because his interference seemed to imply a doubt of her own abilities in worming all she wanted to know out of the boy before her.

"But *why* didn't you?" she asked again, more emphatically.

"Because they might want to read my letter."

"Oh,—there's something in it not to be seen, is there?" continued the inquisitor, as her cheeks reddened with fears of she knew not what.

"It is all truth, every word of it!" contended Colin.

"Ay, ay, my lad, we must see about that. I cannot let you send a whole pack of falsehoods over to Bramleigh, and make as much mischief in my family as your mother made in Mr. Longstaff's. It is needful to look after your doings. Is the letter in your pocket?"

Having received an answer in the affirmative, she directed Palethorpe to search him for it; an operation which that amiable individual very soon concluded by drawing the desired document from his trowsers.

"Oh, this is it, is it?" said Miss Sowersoft, as she partly opened it to assure herself. "Well, well," folding it up again: "we'll read this by and by. Now, what did you hear us talking about? If you say anything shameful, now, and we shall know whether it is true or not directly that we hear it,—if you do not say something—a—. You know what Scripture tells you, always to speak well of your mistress and master. Be careful, now. What did we say?"

"Please, 'um," replied Colin, "you said, that when people get married they strike a balance between them; and that if one thing was on one side, and nothing on the other, you should lose your resolution, and make a sacrifice of the little you possess, whatever it is."

"Oh, you little wretch!" ejaculated Maria. "Go on with your lies, go on! and you *shall* have it on your shoulders when you have done. What else, you vile toad?"

Colin stood mute.

"What next, I say!" stormed the lady, with a furious stamp of the right foot.

"Why, then, mum," added Colin, "I heard Palethorpe kiss you."

"Kiss me!—kiss me, you young rascal!" and the face of Miss Sowersoft became as red as the gills of one of her own turkey-cocks at the discovery. "If you dare to say such a thing as that again, I 'll strip the very skin

off your back,—I will, you caitiff! Kiss *me*, indeed! A pretty tale to tell as ever I heard!”

“I'm sure it's true,” blubbered the boy; “for I heard it ever so many times.”

“Oh!” exclaimed the virtuous Miss Sowersoft, “so we have got it out of you at last. What!—your mother has set you to watch your mistress, has she? That's all her schooling, is it? But Mr. Palethorpe shall learn you to spy about this house,—He shall, you dog!”

That worthy was now about to pounce upon his victim, but was again arrested by his mistress.

“Stop! stop!—we have not done yet,” pulling the letter before mentioned from her bosom; “there is a pretty budget here, I 'll be bound to say. After such as this, we may expect anything. There is nothing too bad for him.”

While Palethorpe held the culprit fast by one hand, and the lantern in the other, he and Miss Sowersoft enjoyed the high gratification of perusing together the said letter which follows:—

*“Dear Mother and Fanny,*

*“As I promised to write if they would not let me come on Sunday, which they did not do, I take this opportunity after tea to tell you all about it. I like this house very well, and have caught fourteen rats with traps of my own setting, besides helping Abel to shoot forwards, which he fired at, and I looked on while. I can harness a horse and curry him down already. But when I first got here I did not think I should like it at all, as Palethorpe flew at me like a yard-dog because I spoke to him, and Miss Sowersoft was mangling, and as cross as patch. I did think of coming home again; but then I said to myself, 'Well, I'll lay a penny if I do, mother will send me back; so it will be of no use, and I shall have my walk for nothing.' I do not like mistress a bit. When she was at our house, she told you a pack of the biggest fibs in the world. I never beard of a bigger fibber than she is in my life; for all the good victuals she made such a bother about are made up for Palethorpe. He is like a master-pig in a sty, because he crunches up the best of everything. Mistress seems very fond of him, though; for after we had had a shindy the first night, and Palethorpe made my nose bleed, I went to bed, and saw her tie her nightcap on his head, and feed him with a posset. I could not help laughing, he looked such a fool. Then I heard her courting him as plain as sunshine; for she tries as hard as she can to get him to marry her; but I would not have her, if I were him, she is so very mean and pretending. But then he is a savage idle fellow himself: and as Abel said to him, said he, 'You never touch plough nor bill-hook once a-week,'—no more he does. Our mistress backs him up in it, and that is the reason. I shall come over as soon as I can, as I want to see you and Fanny very much indeed.*

*“Yours affectionately,*

*“Colin Clink.”*

At all events the murder was now out, and no mistake. The letter dropped from Miss Sowersoft's hand, and she almost fainted in Mr. Palethorpe's arms, as she faintly sighed, “Oh!—he 'll be the death of me!”

When Miss Sowersoft was somewhat recovered, Palethorpe turned in great wrath towards Colin, uttering a more fearful asseveration than I can repeat, that if he could make no better use than that of his eyes when he went to bed, he would knock them out of his head for him. Seizing the boy ferociously by the nape of the neck with one hand, and a portion of his clothes with the other, he lifted him from the ground, like a dog by head and tail, and carried him straight into the yard, dashing him violently into the horse-trough, very much to the satisfaction of the indignant Miss Sower-soft, who had suddenly recovered on beholding this spectacle, and followed her favourite with the lantern. While Palethorpe held him down in the trough, Miss Sowersoft proceeded with great alacrity to pump upon him very vigorously until her arms were tired.

The boy's cries soon brought several of the domestics of the establishment together. Sally rushed out of her kitchen inquiring what Colin had done to be ducked.

“Spying after the secrets of other people!” exclaimed the wrathful Mr. Palethorpe.

“Spying!” echoed the maid.

“Yes, spying!” added Miss Sowersoft, in corroboration of Palethorpe's statement. “We have caught him out, according to his own confession, in spying after the secrets of everybody about the premises, and sending it all in writing to his mother!”

“Ay! I'd souse him well!” observed Sally, who began to fear that some of her own secret interviews with Abel had very probably been registered in black and white, for the edification of the good people of Bramleigh.

“What has he been a-gate of?” asked Abel, who had come up just in time to catch the end of the above conversation.

“Oh, he's been watching you come into the dairy when I was there!” added Sally, accompanying her remark with a broad simper, and a sly blushing glance at Abel, which caused Abel to shuffle on his feet, and dangle his legs about, as though at a loss what to do with them.

“Then a sheep-washing will do him no harm for sheep's eyes,” rejoined Abel, rounding off his sharp-pointed wit with a broad laugh.

When the ducking was concluded, they drove him, bruised, drenched, and weeping, into the kitchen. Old George, who had been a distant and silent spectator of the scene, stood at the door as he entered.

“Ay, poor boy!” said he, pityingly, as the child passed by him, “they'd more need to nurse him by the fireside than half drown him this way. It's sad wages—sad wages, indeed, for a nest-babe like him! But they don't heed what I say. I'm an old man, and have no right to speak.”

Miss Sowersoft seized the earliest opportunity she could to place Colin's letter upon the fire, which she did with a spoonful of salt upon it, in order that its flames should be of the same colour as its contents.

In the mean time Colin had shuffled off his mortal coil of wet clothes, and in a moist skin gone silently off to bed. At supper-time old George carried him up the pint of warm ale which had been served out for himself. Colin accepted it, less because he relished it, than because he knew not how at that moment to refuse the hand by which it was offered; and within ten minutes afterwards, notwithstanding all his troubles, he fell into a sound state of repose.

## CHAPTER XIV.

*The benefits of being soused in a horse-trough.—Some farther specimens of Miss Sowersoft's moral excellence.—An unlooked-for discovery is partially made, which materially concerns Miss Fanny Woodruff and Dr. Rowel.*

ON the following morning Palethorpe arose, and finding Colin still asleep, was proceeding, whip in hand, to help him up according to custom, when, as he turned down the clothes that almost enveloped the child's head, the unusual appearance of his countenance arrested the man's attention as well as his hand. His veins were swollen with rapid bounding blood, and his heart thumped audibly in its place, and with doubly accelerated motion, as though eagerly hastening to beat out its appointed number of pulsations, and leave the little harassed life it contained again free from the pains and vexations of this lower world.

Something like remorse passed for a moment over the man's dark countenance as he gazed. What had they done to him?—what was amiss? He covered the boy carefully up again, and hastened down stairs to communicate the news to Miss Sowersoft.

"Oh,—it's all nonsense!" she exclaimed, on hearing all that Mr. Palethorpe had to say about it. "The lad's got a bit of a cold,—that's all. I 'll make him a basin of milk, with a little of that nice feverfew out of the garden boiled in it, and then if you wake him up, and let him take that, it will stick to his ribs, and do him an amazing deal of good."

But as there was no hurry about such a matter, Miss Sowersoft very leisurely took her own breakfast before she set about carrying her very charitable project into execution. When the milk, with some sprigs of feverfew boiled in it, was ready, Sally was sent up stairs with it. She found Colin awake, but weak and ill; and, much to her surprise, on presenting him with a lump of bread and the basin of milk, which more closely resembled a light green wash for stencilling walls, than any true Christian dish, he could neither touch nor bear the sight of either.

"La!" cried Sally, "why, I never heard anything like it, as neither to eat nor drink! Come, cram a bit down your throat with your finger, and see if it will not get you an appetite. Why, *I* can eat and drink very well, and why shouldn't you? Come, come, don't be soft, and refuse what Gor-amighty sends you, while it lies in your power to get it. I'm sure this milk is very nice, indeed."

In corroboration of her statement she took a sip. But Colin shook his head feebly and heavily, and declared it would do him no good. He could take nothing,—he wanted nothing, but to be left alone, that he might think and wish, and weep as he thought and wished that he were but once more at home, or that his mother or Fanny were but with him.

Shortly after Sally had returned below stairs, and communicated the astounding intelligence that Colin would take neither bit nor sup, Miss Sowersoft herself crept up stairs. She assured him he had plenty of colour in his face; that there could not be anything particularly amiss with him; advised him against putting on pretences of sickness, lest he should be struck with sickness in reality as a judgment on him, like the children that mocked the prophet Elijah, and were eaten up by bears; and concluded by insinuating, that if he were tickled with a whip-thong, he would in all probability be a great deal better directly.

"Send me home!" bitterly ejaculated Colin, bursting into tears. "Put me in a cart, and send me home!—I want to go home!—I must go home!—Mother!—Fanny!—Oh, come to me!—I shall die—I shall die!"

Miss Sowersoft felt rather alarmed; but reflecting that there was nothing like showing a little spirit and resolution when young folks took such whims as those into their heads, she severely taunted him with being home-sick and mother-sick; told him that neither she nor Fanny, if they were present, could do more for him than she could; and threatened that, if he did not leave off that hideous noise, which was disgraceful to a great lad of his age, she would tie a stocking round his mouth, and stop him that way. There being no great consolation in all this, it is not surprising that our hero made such slight application of it, that, for the matter of any difference it made in him, Miss Sowersoft might just as well have tied her stocking across her own mouth, or stuffed it in, which ever she might prefer, as have given utterance to it. She was therefore constrained to submit to the lad's own way, and to confess in her own mind that there really was something more amiss with him than at first she had believed.

By mid-day he had become a great deal worse; and in the afternoon, as his disorder still rapidly increased, Mr. Palethorpe was despatched on horseback to Bramleigh, for the purpose of consulting Dr. Rowel.

About six o'clock in the evening he returned home, bringing with him a packet of white powders in little blue papers, tied together much in the fashion of that little pyrotechnic engine of mischief usually denominated a cracker.

Certain fears which had by this time crept over the mind of Miss Sowersoft caused her to be more than usually charitable and eager in her inquiries after the doctor's opinion about Colin: but the answers she received were neither very conclusive nor very satisfactory. She was, in fact, obliged to seek for consolation, for the present, in the belief, which she struggled hard to impress firmly upon herself, that the boy's illness had arisen wholly in consequence of his sitting on the ground so late in the evening to write his letter; and that his subsequent sousing in the horse-trough had no connexion whatever with it; as he might very easily have fallen accidentally into a river instead, and received no more harm from it than he had from the aforesaid pumping.



Daring several subsequent days the boy continued in such a state as filled his mistress with continual apprehensions lest her house should eventually be troubled with his corpse. About his death, considering that event solely by itself, she cared very little; he might live or die, just as his constitution inclined him, for aught she would choose between the two; only, in case he should not survive, it would annoy her very much indeed to have all the trouble of getting another body's corpse prepared for the ground, without in all likelihood ever receiving from Mrs. Clink a single halfpenny in return for it. She mentioned her apprehensions to Mr. Palethorpe, who replied that it was all silly childishness to allow herself to be imposed on by her own good feelings, and that to talk about humanity would never do for folks so far north as they were. On this unquestioned authority Miss Sowersoft would inevitably have acted that very day, and removed our hero, at any risk, to Bramleigh, in order to give him a chance of dying comfortably at home, had not fortune so ordered it, that, while preparations were being made for taking him from a bed of fever into an open cart which stood ready in the yard, Dr. Rowel chanced to ride up, and at once put his veto upon their proceedings. Not that the doctor would by any means have purposely ridden half the distance for the sake of such a patient; but as chance not unfrequently favours those whom their own species despise, it happened that his professional assistance had that afternoon been required in the case of a wealthy old lady in the neighbourhood; and, as the doctor's humanity was not, at all events, so very short-legged as not to be able to carry him one quarter of a mile when it lay in his way, he took Snitterton Lodge in his circuit, for the sake of seeing Master Colin.

It will readily be supposed that during these few days, (as the boy had not made his appearance at home on the previous Sunday, according to conditional promise,) both his mother and Fanny had almost hourly been expecting to hear from him. Nor had various discussions on the cause of his silence been by any means omitted. Mrs. Clink attributed it to the fact of his having found everything so very pleasant at Snitterton Lodge, that he really had had neither time nor inclination to wean himself for a few short hours from the delights with which he was surrounded; but Fanny, whose mind had been dwelling ever since his departure upon the dismal forebodings with which Miss Sowersoft's appearance had filled it, expressed to Mrs. Clink her full belief that something had happened to Colin, or he would never have neglected either to come himself, or to write, as he had promised.

"I am sure," she continued, very pensively, "it has made me so uneasy all this last week, that I have dreamed about him almost every night. Something has happened to him, I am as certain as if I had seen it; for I can trust to Colin's word just as well as though he had taken his oath about it. However, I will walk over this afternoon and see; for I shall never rest until I know for a certainty."

"Walk, fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Mrs. Clink. "If you go over there in that suspicious manner, as though you fancied they had murdered him, it is a hundred to one but you will affront Miss Sowersoft, and get Colin turned out of a situation that may be the making of him. Stay where you are—do; and if you cannot make anything, do not mar it by interfering in a matter that you know nothing about. I have had trouble enough with him one way or another, without his being brought back on my hands, when he is as comfortable, I dare say, as he possibly can be."

Though the latter remark was evidently intended to apply to Fanny's supposed injudicious solicitude for Colin's welfare, the girl passed it by without observation. She hurried her day's work forwards, in order to gain the necessary time for making her projected visit; and at about the middle of the afternoon suddenly disappeared from the eyes of Mrs. Clink, without informing her previously touching her place of destination.

While Dr. Rowel was yet in attendance on Colin, Fanny arrived and introduced herself to Miss Sowersoft, as she was employing herself in picking the pips off a handful of cowslips which lay in her lap. On seeing Fanny thus unexpectedly, and under circumstances which she felt would require some very ingenious explanation or evasion, her countenance seemed to darken as though a positive shadow had been cast upon it. A struggle between her real feelings and her consciousness of the necessity to disguise them ensued; and in the course of a few brief seconds the darkness of her countenance passed away, and she affected to salute her unwelcome visitor with much cordiality.

In reply to Fanny's inquiry respecting Colin, Miss Sowersoft stated that he was improving very nicely under Mr. Palethorpe's tuition, although they had had some trouble to make him do as he was bid; that he had enjoyed the most extraordinary good health until a few days ago, when he took a little cold, which had made him rather poorly.

"There!—I was sure of it!" cried Fanny, interrupting her; "I said so to his mother before I came away. I knew there was something amiss, or he would have written to us before now. And how did he take such a cold, Miss Sowersoft?"

"Take cold!—why, you know there are a hundred different ways of taking cold, and it is impossible sometimes for even a person himself to say how he took it. I am sure Palethorpe gets tremendous colds sometimes, and how he gets them is a perfect miracle. But, on my word, cold is so insinuating, that really, as I say sometimes, there is not a part but it will find its way to at one time or another."

"Yes—but where is Colin now?—because I shall want to see him before I go back."

"Oh, he is somewhere about the house," replied Miss Sowersoft, with an unprecedented degree of effrontery; "but your seeing him is not of the least consequence. It cannot cure his cold; and as for anything else, it would very likely make him all the more discontented when you were gone again. If you take my advice, you would not see him, especially when I can tell you everything just the same as though you saw it yourself."

At this moment the foot of the doctor, as he groped his way down stairs, was overheard by the speaker. She started up instantly, and endeavoured to hurry Fanny out of the room before that professional gentleman should enter it; but her manoeuvre failed, and before Miss Sowersoft could caution him to be silent the doctor remarked, in a sufficiently loud tone to be heard distinctly by both, that unless the boy was taken great care of, there was little chance left of his recovery.

"What boy?" exclaimed Fanny, rushing forward. "What *is* he so ill as that? For God's sake let me see him!"

Concluding from the direction in which the doctor had come that Colin was somewhere in the regions

above, she flew rather than walked up stairs, without waiting for an invitation or a conductor, and soon threw her arms in an ecstasy of grief upon his neck.

"Oh, Colin! God has sent me on purpose to save you! *Do* be better, and you shall go home again very soon."

But Colin could only put up his pallid arms in an imploring action, and cry for very joy, as he gazed in the face of one of those only two who had occupied his day and night thoughts, and been the unconscious subjects of his unceasing and most anxious wishes.

The trouble of this first meeting being over, some more quiet conversation ensued; and, although almost too ill and weak to be allowed to talk, Colin persisted in stating briefly to the horror-stricken Fanny the kind of reception he had met with on his arrival, his treatment afterwards, the taking of his letter from him, and the brutal conduct which had caused his present illness. The girl stood silent, merely because she knew not what to think, what to believe, what to doubt; and was besides utterly lost for words to express properly her strangely mingled thoughts. It was almost impossible—incredible! Why could they do it? There was no cause for it—there *could* be no cause for it. Human nature, and especially human nature in the shape of woman, was incapable of anything so infamous. Yet Colin was sensible—he had told an intelligible tale; and, most true of all, there he lay, a mere vision of what he was so brief a time ago,—a warranty plain and palpable that grievous wrong had been endured. Her brain was absolutely bewildered—she looked like one hovering on the doubtful boundary between sense and insanity. She cast her eyes around for surety—on the bed—at *him*, A burst of tears, as of a spring that for the first time breaks its bounds, succeeded,—and then another and another, as she fell on her knees and buried her face in the clothes that covered him.

By and by, the doctor and Miss Sowersoft were present in the room with her. Fanny raised her head and beheld Colin's mistress attempting, in the presence of the doctor, to do the attentive, by adjusting the sheet about the boy's neck to keep off the external air.

"Do not touch him!" exclaimed Fanny, springing to her feet; "he shall have nothing from your hands!"

"Ay!" cried the doctor: "young woman, what now, what now?"

"What now? Sir, you may well say *what now!* I have heard all about it—Colin has told me all. Miss Sowersoft has nearly killed him, and now wants to show, because *you* are here, how kind and good she is!"

So saying, Fanny resolutely set about making the arrangement which Miss Sowersoft had contemplated with her own hands.

"Why—what—who is this young woman?" asked the doctor, somewhat astonished at the unexpected scene which had just passed before him.

"Nobody!" replied Miss Sowersoft; "she is only Mrs. Clink's servant, and a pert impudent hussy, too, as you have heard."

At the same time she looked in the doctor's face, and endeavoured to smile contemptuously, though it "came off" in such a manner as would inevitably have frightened anybody less accustomed than was Dr. Rowel to witness the agonies of the human countenance.

"Yes, sir," added Fanny, "I am only a servant; but I am a *woman*, whether servant or mistress. I nursed this lad when I was but six years old myself, and have taken care of him ever since. She shall not drown him, though she thinks she will!"

"*Me* drown him!" exclaimed Miss Sowersoft in feigned amazement.

"Yes," replied Fanny, "*you* drown him. If you had not half murdered him in that trough, he would never have been here now."

"*Do* let us go down stairs, doctor," observed Miss Sowersoft; "such rubbish as this is not worth hearing." And she made her way towards the door.

"Where is that letter?" cried Fanny eagerly, fearful lest the lady to whom she addressed herself should escape.

"Pshaw! nonsense! don't catechise me!" replied Miss Sowersoft, as she tripped down stairs; while the doctor, half in soliloquy and half addressing Miss Sowersoft, remarked, in allusion to Fanny, "She's a damsel of some spirit too!" Then addressing the girl herself, "Are you the little girl I saw at Mrs. Clink's when this boy was born?"

"Yes, sir, I am," answered Fanny, as her passion sunk almost to nothing, and she blushed to be so questioned.

"Ah, indeed!" cried Doctor Rowel. "Well, I should not have thought it. Why, you are quite a fine young woman now. Dear-a-me! I had quite lost sight of you. I could not have believed it. Humph!" And the doctor surveyed her fair proportions with something of astonishment, and a great deal of satisfaction. To think that from such a little pale, half-fed, unhappy thing of work and thought beyond her years as she then was, there should have sprung up the full-sized, the pretty featured, and naturally genteel-looking girl now before him! But then, he had not that benefit which the reader enjoys, of reflecting how worldly circumstances, how poverty and plenty, sway the tempers of mankind; and that, as Mistress Clink's circumstances improved, so had Fanny improved likewise; and from seven or eight years old upwards, Fanny had enjoyed a much more comfortable home than, on his first introduction to her, might reasonably have been expected.

Doctor Rowel resumed his conversation.

"And how came you to be put to service so very early? for you had not, if I remember rightly, either health or strength to recommend you."

Colin's eyes as he lay were fixed, as it might have been the eyes of a picture, on the doctor's countenance.

"I don't know, I'm sure, sir," replied Fanny: but after a few moments' hesitation, added, "I suppose it was because I had no friends."

"No friends!" the doctor repeated,—"*why*, where's your father and mother?"

"I never knew them, sir."

"Indeed! never knew them!"

"No, sir!" and Fanny sobbed at the very recollection of her childhood's helplessness.

"Humph!" ejaculated the doctor; "you scarcely seem to have been born for a servant. Where did Mrs. Clink find you?"

"I do not know, sir. She never told me."

"Ah!—oh! oh!—well! It's odd she never told you. So you do not know either who your father, or your mother, or your friends were?"

"No, sir,—I do not. But I remember——"

"Well,—go on,—you remember,—what do you remember? where did you come from? Do you know that?"

"I think, from Leeds, sir."

"Leeds!" exclaimed the doctor; "and what else do you remember?"

"I can remember, sir,—though I can but just remember it,—that my father was taken away from me once, and I never saw him again."

"And, what's your name?" continued the doctor in evident excitement.

"Fanny Woodruff," she replied.

The doctor's features became pale and rigid, and his eyes were fixed upon her almost immoveably.

"God bless my soul!" he slowly ejaculated, as he rose to leave the room; "she should have been lost, or dead!"

But he turned again when at the head of the stairs.

"Now, young woman,—if you can keep a secret,—tell nobody, not even your mistress, what has passed. Take no notice; and perhaps I may do something for you. But I thought we had seen the last of your face seventeen years ago!"

Fanny and Colin were left alone.

"He knows something about me!" was the first thought that arose in Fanny's mind. But she did not utter it, and only asked very softly, if Colin had heard what the doctor said.

"Yes," he replied, "and I shall never forget it."

"But, say nothing," added the girl: "he promised to do something for me. I wonder what it is!"

"So do I," added Colin; "something worth having, I dare say."

Thus they talked till evening. Colin said how much better he felt since she had been with him; and Fanny declared she would not leave him again for another day, until he was well; and, when he was well, then she would get him away from such unfeeling people, even though she had to go down on her knees to beg another situation for him elsewhere.

When, some little time afterwards, Fanny went down stairs, and informed the mistress of the house of her resolution to stay and attend on Colin until he was better, that amiable creature replied, "I think you won't then. We have not any room to spare. As if I was going to keep beds at liberty, to accommodate any truncheon that may think fit to cram herself into my house! We've plenty of work on our hands without having to wait on other people's servants. What do you say, Palethorpe?"

"Well, I don't know, meesis," replied Mr. Palethorpe; "it seems as if Mr. Rowel was understood to say he was very bad, and must be waited on pretty constantly."

"I'm sure *I* sha'n't wait on him neither constantly nor inconstantly!" very pertly exclaimed Miss Sowersoft; and certainly giving a very ingenious turn to her own views, as soon as she found which way her lover's needle pointed; "*I*'m not going to trot up and down stairs a thousand times a day for the sake of such a thing as a plough-lad. Them may wait on him that likes him, if he is to be waited on; but I'm positive *I* shan't, nor anybody else that belongs to me!"

This conclusion left, without another word, the field wholly open to Fanny; and as Miss Sowersoft, on concluding her speech, bounced off into the dairy, not another word was needed.

Whatever might be the views entertained by the lady of the house touching the treatment most proper for Colin, there still were individuals amongst that rude community whose feelings were of a somewhat more catholic kind than those of their mistress; so that Fanny found no difficulty in procuring a volunteer, in the person of Abel, to go over to Bramleigh for the purpose of informing Mistress Clink how affairs stood, and of bringing back such few needful articles as Fanny might require during her stay at the farm.

All that night she passed a sleepless watch by the side of Colin's bed, beguiling the hours not devoted to immediate attendance on him, partly by looking over the little books which had come from home in his box, but more by employing her mind in the creation of every possible description of fanciful supposition touching her own origin, her history, her parents, and the knowledge which the doctor appeared to have of her earliest life. What was it?—what could it be? and, what could he mean by enjoining her to mention nothing of all this to any second person? In her he had unexpectedly found one whom he had known a baby, and had believed to be dead, or lost in the vast crowds of poverty long ago. Had she been born to better things than surrounded her now? Had she been defrauded of her rights? And, did the doctor bid her be silent because he might have to employ stratagem in order to recover them again? Perhaps she was born—nay! she knew not what she was born; nor dare she trust herself to think, scarcely; though, certain it is that a visionary world of ladies and gentlemen, and fine things, and wealth to set Colin up in the world and to make his mother comfortable, and to exalt herself over all the petty enemies by whom they were now surrounded, passed in pleasant state before her prolific imagination: while, it is equally certain, that—blushing, though unseen and in secret, at the very consciousness—a prouder feeling sprung up in her bosom, and she began to feel as though she must be more genteel, and more particular, and less like a common servant, than she had hitherto been.

Such were the golden fancies, and the pretty resolves that crowded round her brain that night. Neither, as a honest chronicler of human nature, would I take upon me to assert that she did not once or twice during these reveries rise to contemplate her features in the glass, and to adjust her hair more fancifully, and wonder—if it should be so—what kind of looking lady she should make. Truly, it was a pretty face that met



her eyes in the mirror. As Colin woke up from a partial slumber, and raised his head slightly from the pillow, to ascertain what had become of his guardian, the reflection of her countenance as she was "looking the lady," chanced to catch his eye: and, though he smiled as he gently sunk down again, he thought that that face would never again pass from before him.

## CHAPTER XV.

*Fanny is deceived by the doctor.—A scene in Rowel's "Establishment for the Insane" at Nabbfield.*

**P**oor girl! What pains she takes—if not to "curse herself," at least to form that paradise out of the chaos of her own thoughts, which her supposed benefactor, the physician, never intended to realize. She was deceived, utterly and deeply deceived; and deceived, too, by the very means which the doctor had recommended to her apparently for the attainment of success. For, great as some of our modern diplomatists have incontestably been considered in their noble and polite art, I much question whether the man more capable of aspiring to higher honours in it than Doctor Rowel of Nabbfield, is not yet to be born.

As the doctor rode homewards, after his interview with Fanny, he several times over, and with inexpressible inward satisfaction, congratulated and complimented himself upon having achieved such a really fine stroke of policy at a very critical moment, as no other man living could, he verily believed, have at all equalled. Within the space of a few brief moments he had, to his infinite astonishment, discovered, in the person of a serving girl, one whom he himself had endeavoured, while she was yet an infant, to put out of the way; and upon whose father he had perpetrated one of the most atrocious of social crimes, for the sole purpose of obtaining the management of his property while he lived, and its absolute possession on his decease. He had ascertained that the girl retained some indistinct recollection of the forcible arrest and carrying away of her parent, of which he himself had been the instigator; and thus suddenly he found himself placed in a position which demanded both promptitude and ingenuity in order to secure his own safety and the permanency of all he held through this unjust tenure. Since any discovery by Fanny of what had passed between them would inevitably excite public question and inquiry, the very brilliant idea had instantaneously suggested itself to his mind that—as in the girl's continued silence alone lay his own hopes of security—no project could be conceived more likely to prove successful in obtaining and preserving that silence, than that of representing it as vital to her own dearest interest to keep the subject deeply locked for the present in her own bosom. This object, he flattered himself, he had already succeeded in achieving, without exciting in the mind of Fanny herself the least suspicion of his real and ultimate purpose. At the same time he inwardly resolved not to stop here, but to resort to every means in his power calculated still more deeply to bind the unsuspecting young woman to the preservation of that silence upon the subject, which, if once broken, might lead to the utter overthrow of a system which he had now maintained for many years.

Elated with the idea of his own uncommon cleverness, he cantered along the York road from the moor with corresponding briskness; turned down a green lane to the left, cleared several fences and a pair of gates in his progress, and reached within sight of his "Establishment for the Insane" at Nabbfield, as the last light of another unwished-for and unwelcome sun shot through the barred and grated windows of the house, and served dimly to show to the melancholy habitants of those cells the extent of their deprivations and their misery.

Far advanced as it was in the evening, the doctor had not yet dined; his professional duties, together with some other causes already explained, having detained him beyond his usual hour. Nevertheless, for reasons best known to himself, but which, it may be supposed, the events of the afternoon had operated in producing, the doctor had no sooner dismounted, and resigned his steed to the care of a groom, who appeared in waiting the instant that the clatter of his hoofs sounded on the stones of the yard, than, instead of retiring to that removed portion of the building, in which, for the purpose of being beyond reach of the cries of those who were kept in confinement, his own private apartments were situated, he demanded of one of the keepers the key of a particular cell. Having obtained it,—

"Shall I attend you, sir?" asked the man.

"No, Robson. James is harmless. I will see him into his cell myself to-night."

"He is in the patient's yard, sir," replied the keeper.

"Very well—very well. Wait outside; and, if I want assistance, I will call you."

The man retired, while Doctor Rowel proceeded down a long and ill-lighted passage, or corridor, in which were several angular turns and windings; and when nearly lost in the gloom of the place, he might have been heard to draw back a heavy bolt, and raise a spring-latch like an iron bar, which made fast the door that opened upon the yard, or piece of ground to which the keeper had alluded.

It was just at that brief but peculiar time at the turn of day and night, which every observer of Nature must occasionally have remarked, when the light of the western atmosphere, and that of a rayless moon high up the southern heaven, mingle together in subdued harmony, and produce a kind of illumination, issuing from no given spot, but pervading equally the whole atmosphere,—like that which we might imagine of a fairy's palace,—without any particular source, neither wholly of heaven nor of earth, but partaking partially of each.

The passage-door was thrown back, and the doctor stood upon its threshold. A yard some forty feet square, surrounded by a wall about six yards high, and floored with rolled gravel, like the path of a garden, was before him. Near the centre stood a dismal-looking yewtree, its trunk rugged, and indented with deep natural furrows, as though four or five shoots had sprung up together, and at last become matted into one; its black

lines of foliage, harmonizing in form with the long horizontal clouds of the north-west quarter, which now marked the close approach of night. Nothing else was to be seen. As the eye, however, became somewhat more accustomed to the peculiar dusky light which pervaded this place, the figure of a man standing against the tree-trunk became visible; with his arms tightly crossed upon his breast, and bound behind him as though they had almost grown into his sides; and his hair hanging long upon his shoulders, somewhat like that of a cavalier, or royalist, of the middle of the seventeenth century.

The doctor raised his voice, and called, in a lusty tone, "Woodruff!"

The patient returned no answer, nor did he move.

"James Woodruff!" again shouted the doctor.

A slight turn of the head, which as quickly resumed its previous attitude, was the only response made to the doctor's summons.

Finding that he could not call this strange individual to him, Doctor Rowel stepped across the yard, and advanced up to him.

"James," said he mildly, "it is time you were in your cell."

The man looked sternly in his face, and replied, "I have been there some thousands of times too often already."

"Never heed that," answered Rowel. "You *must* go to rest, you know."

"*Must* go—ay? Ah! and so I must. I am helpless. But, had I one hand free—only one hand—nay, with one finger and thumb, I would first put you to rest where you should never wake again! When am I to go free?"

"Will you go to your room?" said the doctor, without regarding his question.

"I ask again," cried the alleged madman, "as I have asked every day past counting, when am I to be loosed of this accursed place? How long is this to last?"

"Only until you are better," remarked, with deep dissimulation, this worthy member of the faculty.

"Better!" exclaimed Woodruff, with rising passion, as he tugged to loosen his arms from the jacket which bound him, though as ineffectually as a child might have tugged at the roots of an oak sapling. "I could curse you again and doubly for that word, but that I *have* cursed till language is weak as water, and words have no more meaning. I am sick of railing. Better! Till I am *better!* Thief!—liar!—villain!—for you are all these, and a thousand more,—I am well. You know it. Sound in mind and body,—only that these girths have crippled me before my time. How am I mad? I can think, reason, talk, argue,—hold memory of past life. I remember, villain! when you and your assassins seized me; stole my child from me; swore that I was mad; and brought me here, now seventeen years ago; and all in order that you might rob me of my property!—I remember that. Is that madness? I remember, before that, that I married your sister. Was it not so? I remember that she died, and left me a little pattern of herself, that called you uncle. Was not that so? Where is that child? What has become of her? Or are you a murderer besides? All this I remember: and I know now that I have power of will, and aptness to do all that man's mind is called to do. How, then, am I mad? Oh! for one hand free! One hand and arm. Only one! Give me that half chance to struggle with you. Let us end it so, if I am never to go free again. Take two to one; and if you kill me, you shall stand free of the scaffold; for I will swear with my last breath that you did it in self-defence. Do that. Let me have one grapple—a single gripe—and, if you can master me, why God forgive you!"

The doctor smiled, as in contempt of the impotent ravings and wild propositions of his brother-in-law; for such, it is almost needless to state, James Woodruff was. But the alleged maniac continued his discourse.

"Then, as you are such a rank, arrant coward, give me my whole liberty; let me go beyond this house, and I will never touch you. I will not ruffle a hair of your accursed head. Do that, and I will leave you to God for the reward of all you have done to me and mine. Set me free! Untie my limbs, and let me out this night! It is dark. Nobody can tell where I came from. Let me go, and I will never mention your name in complaint, nor lift a hand against you. Think, man,—do but think! To spend seventeen years of nights in that dungeon, and seventeen years of days on this speck of ground! To you who have been at liberty to walk, and breathe freely, and see God's creation, it may be idle; but I have seen nothing of seventeen springs but their light skies; nor of summers, but their heat and their strong shadows; nor of autumn, but the random leaves which the wind whirled over into this yard; nor of winter, but its snow and clouds. I want to be upon the green earth,—the grass,—amongst the fields. I want to see my wife's grave again!—some other human face than yours I—and—and—Man,—if you be man,—I want to find my daughter!"

He flung himself on the ground, and groaned as in utter despair.

The doctor was accustomed to witness these fits of frenzy, and therefore paid no farther attention now than consisted in an effort to raise the man again upon his feet, and a renewed solicitation to him to retire into his room.

"No," said he; "I have something to speak of yet. I have come to another determination. In my mind, villain! there has been seventeen years of rebellion against your wrong; and I have sworn, and have kept my oath till now, that you should never compel me to give up my rights, in virtue of my wife, to you. But time has outworn the iron of my soul: and seventeen years of this endurance cannot be set against all the wealth of the world. What is it to me? To dig the earth, and live on roots; but to be free with it; to go and come as I list; to be at liberty, body and limb! This would be paradise compared with the best palace that ever Mammon built in hell. Now, take these straps from off me, and set me free. Time is favourable. Take me into your house peaceably and quietly, and I will make over to you all I have, as a free gift. What you have stolen, you shall keep. Land, houses, gold, everything; I will not retain of them a grain of sand, a stone, or a sparkle of metal. But let me out! Let me see this prison behind me!"

"It would be the act of a lunatic, and of no effect," replied the doctor.

"How lunatic? To give that which is of no use to me for that which is dearer than life? Besides, I am sane—sound of mind."

"No," interrupted the doctor, "you are wrong on one question. Your disease consists in this very thing. You

fancy I keep you confined in order to hold your property myself."

"*Fancy* you do!" savagely exclaimed Woodruff, stamping the ground with rage; "this contradiction is enough to drive me mad. I *know* it! *You* know it. There is no fancy in the case. It is an excuse, a vile pretence, a lie of seventeen years' standing. It was a lie at first. Will you set me free?"

"It cannot be," said the doctor; "go to your room."

"It *shall* be!" replied Woodruff; "I will not go."

"Then I must call assistance," observed Rowel, as he attempted to approach the door at which he had entered.

"You shall not!" replied the patient, placing himself in front of the doctor, as though resolutely bent on preventing his approach to the door, although he had not the least use of his arms, which might have enabled him to effect his purpose.

"Stand aside, fool!" Rowel exclaimed, as he threw out his right arm in order to strike off the intruder. But Woodruff anticipated him; and, by a sudden and dexterous thrust of his foot in a horizontal line, knocked the doctor's legs from under him, and set him sprawling on the ground. Woodruff fell upon him instantly, in order to keep him down, and to stifle the loud cries of "Robson! Robson!" which were now issuing in rapid succession from the doctor's larynx. At the same time a tremendous struggle, rendered still more desperate by the doctor's fears, took place on the ground; during which the unhappy Woodruff strove so violently to disengage his hands from the ligatures of the waistcoat which bound him, that the blood gushed copiously from his mouth and nostrils. His efforts were not altogether unavailing. He partly disengaged one hand; and, with a degree of activity and energy only to be accounted for from the almost superhuman spirit which burned within him, and for which his antagonist, with all his advantages, was by no means an equal match, he succeeded in planting his forefinger and thumb, like the bite of a crocodile upon the doctor's throat.



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"Swear to let me free, or I 'll kill you!" he exclaimed.

"Yes,—y—e—s,—I sw—ear!" gurgled through the windpipe of Dr. Rowel as he kicked and plunged like a horse in a bog to shake off his foe. The light of a lamp flashed upon them, and Robson rushed into the yard.

"Let me out!" again demanded Woodruff.

"I will; I will!" replied the doctor.

Before Robson could interfere, the grasp upon his neck was loosed, and Woodruff stood quietly upon his feet. The doctor soon followed.



"Seize him, Robson!" said he; and, in an instant, before Woodruff was aware, the strong man had him grasped as in a vice.

"You swore to set me free!" cried the patient.

"Yes," replied the doctor, with a triumphant sneer, as he followed the keeper until he had pitched Woodruff into his room, and secured the entrance; "Yes," he repeated, staring maliciously at his prisoner through the little barred opening in the door,—*"yes, you shall be let out—of this cell into that yard again, when you have grown a little tamer!"*

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## CHAPTER XVI.

*Doctor Rowel argues very learnedly, in order to prove that not only his wife and himself, but the reader also, and all the world besides, may, for aught they know to the contrary, be stark mad.*

AS Dr. Rowel stepped briskly from the scene of his disaster on the way to his diningroom, he slackened his neckcloth considerably, and with his most critical finger felt very carefully on each side of his gullet, in order to ascertain whether those parts had sustained any material injury; and though he soon convinced himself that no organic disarrangement had resulted, he yet reflected, in the true spirit of an observant practitioner, that a fierce gripe by the throat is but an indifferent stomachic.

Whatever other injury was or was not clone, his appetite, at least, felt considerably reduced. Disasters like this, however, being common to every individual who has the care of insane persons, he determined to pass it by unnoticed, and to shake the very recollection of it from off his own mind as soon as possible.

Shortly afterwards the doctor sat down to a well-furnished table, in the place usually appropriated to that second-rate character, the *vice*, and directly opposite his wife, who, in the absence of other company than themselves, invariably took the chair. As he helped himself to the breast of a young turkey, which a week previously had stalked and gobbled with pride about his own yard, he remarked,—for his mind reverted to the trick he had put upon Fanny with great complacency,—that never, during the whole course of his experience, had he so cleverly handled a difficult affair as he had that day. The lady to whom he addressed himself might have considered, in the way of the profession, that he alluded to some case of amputation at the hip-joint, or other similar operation equally delicate, as she replied by begging him not to inform her of it that night, as she was already almost overcome with the nervous excitement consequent on the events of the afternoon.

"Indeed!" the doctor exclaimed, raising his eyes. "What has occurred? No patient dead, I hope?"

"Nothing of the kind," returned the lady; "only that James Woodruff has been talking again in such an extraordinary manner, that I feel quite faint even now with it. Do reach me that bottle, dear. Really, Rowel, I tell you again, that if he cannot be set at liberty very soon, I shall be compelled to keep out of the way altogether. I will confine myself to this end of the house, and never go within reach of him any more. What a horrible creature he is!"

"He has not injured you, has he?" the doctor again inquired, as he involuntarily run his fore-finger round the inner front of his neckerchief.

"Of course not—how could he? But then that long hair gives him such a frightful look, and at the same time, whenever he can catch a glimpse of me, he always begs and prays me to prevail on you to set him free. I am sure I wonder you keep him, even for my sake; and, besides that, the man seems sensible enough, and always has been, if I am to judge by his conversation."

"Ah!—what—again?" exclaimed her husband, interrupting her. "How many more times shall I have to repeat to you, that a madman, when under restraint, cannot, in some particular cases, be in the most remote degree depended upon, though his observations be apparently as intelligent and sane as yours or mine?"

"I remember you have said so," remarked Mrs. Rowel; "but it seems very singular."

"It may appear very singular in your opinion, my dear, because you are not expected to possess the same erudition and extensive knowledge that a professional man does in these things; though, with deference, my dear, common experience and observation might by this time have convinced you that my theory is perfectly correct. With these unhappy people you should believe neither your eyes nor your ears; for if you do, it is a hundred to one but that some of them, at one time or another, will persuade you that they are perfectly sane and well, when, were they to be freed from restraint, they would tear you in pieces the very next instant."

Mrs. Rowel looked somewhat disconcerted, and at a loss to meet her husband in a region so scientific that neither seeing nor hearing were of any use; though secretly she could not but wonder, if neither eyes nor ears were to be trusted, by what superior faculty, what divining-rod of intellect, a patient's madness was to be ascertained. Her doubts were not wholly overturned by the ploughshare of the doctor's logic, and therefore she very naturally, though with considerable show of diffidence, stuck pertinaciously to her old opinion.

Her husband felt vexed,—and especially as he wished to impose upon her understanding,—that with all his powers of speech, and his assumption of profound knowledge, he could not now, any more than hitherto, succeed in converting her to the faith which he himself pretended so devoutly to hold, that lunatics sometimes could not be known by their conversation, and that the individual James Woodruff, in particular, who was the subject of their conversation, was actually as mad as a March hare, notwithstanding the actions and appearances, undeviating and regular, which in his case so obstinately forced upon Mrs. Rowel the private conviction that he was quite as sound in intellect as any other subject within the King's dominions. Nevertheless the doctor stifled the feelings of petulant resentment which were rising in his bosom, and

satisfied himself simply by assuring his good, though somewhat perverse lady, that it was no very unusual thing for a certain description of lunatics to maintain their own sanity by arguments which, in any other case, would be considered very excellent; though, with experienced professional men, that very fact went farther in support of their derangement than almost any other that could be brought to bear.

"Whenever," continued the doctor, with some degree of warmth, "whenever I meet with a patient,—never mind whether he is under medical treatment or not,—a patient who endeavours by argument and proof to show me that he is *compos mentis*,—who seeks for evidence, as it were, in his own mind to substantiate the sanity of that very mind,—that is, a man who appeals for proof to the very thing to be itself proved,—who tests the mind by the mind,—when I meet with a patient of that description, it seems to imply a kind of doubt and distrust of his own intellect, and I set him down, in spite of what anybody can say to the contrary, as *non compos mentis*, and a proper subject on whom to issue a writ *ideota inquirendo vel examinando*."

"I cannot argue with you like that, Frank," observed the doctor's wife; "but do you mean to say that a man cannot himself tell whether he is mad,—and that nobody else, by what they see and hear, can tell either?"

"I do!" exclaimed Rowel. "I contend that numberless instances exist of latent mental derangement, which are totally unknown both to the insane themselves, and to those persons who are about them."

"Then how do *you* know it?" asked the lady.

"From the very nature of things, my dear," Mr. Rowel replied. "Time was when verdicts of *felo de se* were returned in cases of self-destruction; but now every twopenny shopkeeper is wise enough to know, that the very act of self-murder itself is evidence of mental derangement."

"But what has this to do with the question?" demanded Mrs. Rowel.

"It has this to do with it," continued her husband, "that neither you, nor I, nor anybody else, however wise we may think ourselves, can know for a certainty, positively and conclusively, whether we are mad or not."

"Then do you mean to say that *I* am mad?"

"I mean to say this, my dear, that for aught you know to the contrary, you may be."

"Come, that is foolish, Frank. But you do not think so, do you?"

"Think!—I think nothing about it," replied Rowel; "only, as you seem to believe that such a lunatic as James Woodruff is very much in his senses, it might be supposed you had a bit of a slate loose yourself."

"Oh, I am sure I have not!" tartly resumed the lady. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for saying such a thing."

"No, no!—I do not say any such thing, by any means. The case of Woodruff is certainly, in one sense, the most singular I ever knew, and to me, in my situation, a peculiarly painful one; but what then?—what can I do?"

"Why, you know, my dear," replied Mrs. Rowel, in a deprecatory tone of voice, "that you *do* manage his property, after all. The man is right enough as far as that goes?"

"Right enough, truly—I *do*. But how do I? Is not the trouble as great as the profit? I keep it altogether where it was for him,—prevent him from squandering it in his mad fits, as he was about to do at the time I caused him to be placed in confinement,—keep him out of harm's way,—clothe him,—feed him,—medicine,—attendance,—everything,—and not a single item put down against his estate for all this. What was I to do, do you suppose? Was it likely that I should stand quietly by, and see all that he had himself, and all that my sister Frances left him, go to rack and ruin, waste and destruction, as if it were of no more value than an old song?"

"But what was it that he was doing?" asked Mrs. Rowel; "for I am sure I could never find out."

"He was doing nothing actually," said the doctor. "But what should you have thought of me, if I had kept my hands in my pockets until the mischief was past before I attempted to interfere? It was what I foresaw he *intended* to do that caused me to step between. Was not he going to pull that good new house to pieces, for the sake of patching up the old one with its materials? The man must have been stark raving mad to have thought of such a thing, and everybody would have said so."

"I should not have said so," observed the lady; "though there is nothing wonderful about that, as you have told me that *I* may be mad too. But it was always my opinion that the old family house was worth ten of the other, if it had but the same fire-grates and chimney-pieces put in it."

"The fact is," replied he, "you were all mad together about that tumble-down crazy concern, merely because it *was* the old house; and I am very glad I put a stop to it when I did, and in the manner I did, though I think he knows better now, mad as he is at present. To tell you the truth, my dear," and the doctor lowered his voice to a more serious and impressive tone, "I do not think he cares much, or perhaps not anything at all, about it. His liberty seems to be the principal thing with him. Do you know, he offered this evening to make the whole property over to me as a free gift, if I would let him out."

"Did he indeed!" exclaimed the lady, as tears of pity swam in her eyes. "Poor fellow!—poor fellow!"

"Why, poor fellow? I didn't prompt him to say what he did. Besides, I would not take it. How dare I let him out? His gift would be good for nothing to me, being void at law. I cannot let him out. And even if I had ever dreamed of trying such a hazardous experiment, it would, under present circumstances, be impossible."

"But why *impossible*, Frank?" asked Mrs. Rowel.

Frank Rowel began to imagine, from the turn which his wife appeared inclined to take in this business, that the relation of his interview with Fanny, which had discovered to him so unexpectedly the person of James Woodruff's daughter, and his own niece, would not materially profit him in the eyes of that lady; and therefore, although he had at first intended to make it known to her, he for the present forbore, and contented himself by assuring her how exceedingly lucky it was that, for her own sake, she had some one about her whose knowledge was not so soon set aside, and whose feelings of compassion were not so easily excited as her own; or otherwise it would inevitably come about that a whole establishment of lunatics would some day or other, out of pure kindness, be let loose to run rampant over and affright the whole country-side.

"Then James is to remain there?" questioned the lady.

"I see no chance for him," was the reply; "everything is against him. He *must* be confined for life."

Mrs. Rowel sighed, looked at her husband, then at the decanter of sherry which stood on the table, then smiled significantly, and then added in a half-jesting tone, though with a very serious and fixed intention, "I 'll take a glass of wine with you, my dear."

And so she did, and several others after it.

In fact, though I abhor anything that might be supposed to touch on scandal, Mrs. Rowel liked sherry.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

*James Woodruff soliloquizes in his cell.—An unlooked-for offer of liberty is made him, and on what conditions.*

WHILE yet the last ominous and deceitful reply which Dr. Rowel had made to James Woodruff rung in his ear, as a sound incredible and impossible to have been heard, he threw himself on the loose straw which covered an iron bedstead that stood in a corner of his cell, and writhed in bodily and in mental agony, both from what he had just endured, and from the stinging reflections that, having once had his oppressor in his power, he should have so spared him, so confided in his promises, and been so treacherously deceived!

The consciousness of his own magnanimity, and implicit faith in his brother-in-law's solemn word and oath, aggravated the bitterness of these reflections, until the despair within him became worse to endure than all the horrors without. All hope of freedom had now finally departed. He had made the last and greatest sacrifice in his power to obtain it, and it had only been cast back in his face as worthless, because it would be considered as the act of a madman. He had implored, promised, threatened,—nay, he had put his very life in peril,—and all for what? for nothing. What more remained to do?—To wait the doubtful result of chance for an unforeseen and apparently impossible deliverance,—to waste away the last pulsations of a worse than worthless life in the protracted misery of that dungeon,—or to take heart in this extremity to do a deed that should at once shut the gates of hope and of fear in this world upon him for ever? Would it not be better to beat out his brains against the wall, and throw himself, uncalled, before his God, his wretchedness standing in extenuation of his crime, than thus to do and to suffer by hours, days, nights, and years, with no change that marked to-day from yesterday, or this year from the year that went before, nor any chance of change to distinguish the years to come from those that had already passed? In the same monotonous round of darkness passed in that cell, of pacing some few steps to his day-yard, of turnings and returnings within that limited space, and then of pacing back to pass hours of darkness in his cell again,—time seemed to stand still, or only to return at daylight, and work over again the same well-known revolution that it wrought when daylight last appeared.

Looking back beyond these dreary seventeen years, what had his mind to rest upon? Sorrow for his wife's premature death; solicitude, painful and unfathomably deep, for the babe she had left to his sole care; his struggle onwards solely on account of the little helpless thing that had no friend but him; and then the sudden, the unexpected, and horrible injustice of an avaricious brother-in-law, which had overwhelmed him as with an avalanche, deprived him of all he possessed, shut him up in a place of horrors, and, worst of all, put away that child, motherless and fatherless, to endure perhaps all that the lowest poverty endures, or to sink under it when she could endure no longer.

Before him, even under the best circumstances, what had he to look for, even if he were free? The world had nothing in it for him but that wife's burying-place, a house where her dear living picture should be, and was not, and a hearth of desolation for himself! Why had he pleaded so earnestly for liberty?—the liberty that had nothing to offer him even when obtained? Those two beings gone, why should he alone wish to remain? A bed of earth was, after all, the best place for him.

And yet—for the rebound of the spirits is often in proportion to their fall—it was possible, were he free, that he might find his daughter again. The doctor might be compelled to tell him how she had been disposed of in the first instance, and he might be able to trace her out. Occurrences less probable had come to pass before, and why not in this case also? He might find her, and in her—though grown a woman, whom he should not perhaps know again—one who would yet be like her mother Frances over again, a pride and joy to his house, and a consolation in the last years of his existence. But the vision faded when again and again the withering and insurmountable question recurred to him,—how could he get free? In the most direct course, the events of that evening had cut off all hope; in any other there lay none. It was true that visitors sometimes came to inspect the house, and mark the treatment of the patients. To tell them his tale, and ask their aid, was useless. Such had been before, and he had told them; but nobody believed him: they only looked on with wonder or fear, and went away pitying the painful nature of his delusions. Could he escape? He had, years ago, planned every conceivable mode of escape,—he had tried them, and had failed. He must remain there—it was his doom: he must still hear, as he had heard until he cared little for it, the solemn deadness of the night disturbed with shrieks that no sane mortal could have uttered; the untimely dancings of witless men, without joy in them; the bursts of horrid laughter from women's lips, without mirth; the singings of merry words, with a direful vivacity that filled the veins with a creeping terror more fearful than that of curses; and sometimes plaintive notes from the love-lost, whose eyes were sleepless, which might have made the heart burst with pity! He must still live amidst all this, and still shrink (as he did sometimes) into the closest corner of his pallet, and bless himself in the iron security of his cell, (which by daylight he abhorred,) from very dread of those imaginary horrors which the wild people about the building conjured up in the depth of Nature's



sleeping-time.

As these thoughts thronged thickly on James Woodruff's mind, he extended himself on his back along the couch of straw; and put up his hands, which were commonly loosed when in his cell, in an attitude of prayer upon his breast. But the contemplated words were momentarily arrested by the light tread of feet along the passage outside. A ray of moonlight from the high-up little window streamed almost perpendicularly down, and fell partly on his bed and partly on the floor, making an oblong figure of white thereon, distinct and sharp-edged, as though light and darkness had been severed as with a knife. A strong reflection from this spot was thrown upon the door, by the aid of which he beheld through the grating that looked into the dark passage a white hand clutching the little bars, and higher up the dim shadow of a face, that looked like that of a spirit. Woodruff rose up, and sat upon the cold edge of his iron bedstead.

"James!" whispered a voice through the grating, which he instantly recognised as that of the doctor's wife, "are you awake?"

"Would that I were not!" he replied; "for the oblivion of sleep is the only welcome thing to me here."

"My husband has written a paper for you,—will you sign it?"

"To set me free?" demanded Woodruff, as he started eagerly up at the very thought, and seemed to show by his signs how gladly he caught at the remotest possibility of deliverance, and how fearful he felt lest it should escape him.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the lady, hurriedly; "that is the object." And on receiving, on the part of Woodruff, a passionate assurance of compliance with the proposal, she hastened back as though for the purpose of fetching the paper alluded to.

It is needful here to explain, that after we had parted with the doctor and his wife at the dinner-table, as related in the preceding chapter, the conversation relating to James Woodruff, a portion of which has been chronicled for the reader's edification, was renewed; and as the doctor discussed his wine and shrivelled walnuts, and increased proportionably both in boldness of thought and fertility of invention, he considered over and over again the proposal that his brother-in-law had made to him for the conditional surrender of all his property. The idea took hold of him very strongly, and struck the deeper root in his bosom the longer he considered it. Charnwood was a snug little estate, to be sure. It had been in the family some generations, and great would be his regret that it should pass away by marriage, as it must, in the event of Woodruff's retaining possession. It was true he had told Fanny's father that his proffered gift of it would, under present circumstances, be considered as the act of a madman, and therefore invalid and illegal. But could no mode be adopted to obviate this difficulty? The doctor thought, and thought again; and at last came to the conclusion that he would disregard the illegality of the transaction altogether, provided he could induce James to make a solemn written declaration, binding himself in a moral sense, if in no other, that, on obtaining his liberty, he would not take any steps whatever to recover possession of the estate. A clever move, thought Rowel,—the man is conscientious fool enough to keep his word; and, as possession is nine parts the law, I shall be safe.

Full of this scheme, he sounded the opinion of his wife on the subject; and, although she had at first expressed pity for the condition of her brother-in-law, yet, when it came to the serious question which involved the possession of such a pleasant little estate as Charnwood, Mrs. Rowel began to reflect that, after all, people must look a little to their own interests in this world, or else they may allow everybody to step over their heads. As to being so over particular about how you get it, so that you do but get it, people were always ready to look up to you; and, if the truth were known, she dare say that some others she could mention who did possess property had obtained it in not a better manner, if so good. She could not, therefore, see any *very* great harm—and especially as Woodruff had offered it himself—in taking the property on those conditions; although she should certainly have liked it all the better, had there been any choice, if the transaction could have been managed with a greater show of equity.

The doctor felt quite pleased with the business-like turn of mind which his lady had developed; and, as nothing less than drawing up a paper to the effect explained would satisfy him, he proceeded at once to its accomplishment.

When Mrs. Rowel returned to the room in which Woodruff was confined, with the paper in one hand which her husband had written, and a small lamp in the other, followed closely by the doctor with ink and pen, the alleged lunatic again rose from his bed, and eagerly demanded the instrument which was to seal his redemption. While the little lamp was held up to the grating in the door, Woodruff took the paper and read as follows:—

*"Memorandum made this—day of ————,*

### **18—.**

*"Whereas I, James Woodruff, widower, formerly of Charnwood, in the county of ————, being at the time in sound and composed mind, do hereby promise to make over to Frank Rowel, M.D. of Nabbfield, in the said county, brother of my late wife, Frances, all and singular the lands, houses, barns, and all other property whatever, comprised in and on the estate known as the Charnwood farm, on the conditions now specified, viz. —that he, the said Frank Rowel, shall hold me free to come to, and go from, his establishment for the insane at Nabbfield in what manner and whenever I please, and shall also hold me wholly exempt from molestation from the date of this memorandum henceforward: now this is to certify that I, the said James Woodruff, hereby solemnly and faithfully pledge myself, without equivocation or mental reservation of any kind, that, on the conditions named on the part of the aforesaid Frank Rowel being fulfilled, I will never in any manner, by word or by deed, either of myself or through the instrumentality of others, take any steps whatever to recover possession of the said property, or of any portion of it, either in my own name or in that of my daughter, Frances Woodruff, spinster."*

The document dropped from his hands. "Then she is living!" exclaimed the father: "my daughter is alive!"

Doctor Rowel changed countenance, as though suddenly made aware that he had committed a slight mistake; but he put the best face he could upon it, by reluctantly assuring his prisoner that she was alive and

well.

"Thank Heaven for that!" cried Woodruff: "then take this bond away—I will not sign it! I would give away my own, were it a thousand times greater, for one more day of life at liberty; but I cannot rob her of her mother's dower. Let me rather rot here, and trust that a better fate than has befallen me may restore her to that which I can never enjoy. Away with it!—leave me!—And yet—"

Woodruff covered his eyes with his hand, and stood trembling in doubt and irresolution.

"And yet—and yet tell me where my daughter is, and I *will* sign it. Liberate me *now*—upon this spot, and at this time, and I will sign it."

The doctor demurred.

"Then to-morrow!—as soon as possible—before another night?"

Still the doctor would not promise exactly when he would liberate him. At length certain conditional terms were agreed to, and James Woodruff signed away all his own property, and that which should have been Fanny's inheritance, together.

Dr. Rowel knew that the memorandum he held, morally binding upon Woodruff to leave him in undisputed possession of Charnwood, was useless, except between himself and that unfortunate man. He put it safely away in his escrutoire for that night, and on the morrow looked it carefully over again, and still felt distrustful and in doubt. As Woodruff had given the promise under compulsion, would he not consider it no crime to disregard it the instant he felt himself secure beyond the walls? At all events, he would keep on the safe side, and detain him for the present, or until he could obtain more full satisfaction.

With this reflection, he gave orders that Woodruff was that day only to be removed into his accustomed yard; and mounting his horse, rode off in the direction of the farm at Whinmoor, as he felt desirous of seeing Fanny again.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

*A colloquy between Mrs. Clink and Miss Sowersoft, in which the latter proves herself a most able tactician, and gives a striking illustration of the difference between talking and doing.*

**B**EFORE Dr. Rowel had ridden two miles on his journey, another visiter had arrived at Miss Sowersoft's, in the person of Mrs. Clink. Astonished at the account she had received through Abel of the illness of her son, and vexed at the stay which Fanny made with the boy, she resolved to walk over and inquire into the affair in person.

Taking advantage of the first interview with her, the amiable Miss Sowersoft had done to the utmost of her power to qualify the evil impressions which she feared some mischievous tale-tellers might have raised in her mind with respect to the treatment that Colin had received. Without having actually witnessed it, she said it was impossible that any mother could credit the trouble taken with him, in order to render him fit for his situation, and enable him to go out into the world without being misled by that great fallacy, so common amongst the youth of both sexes, that they are born for nothing but enjoyment, and that everybody they meet with are their friends. To root out this fatal error at the very commencement had been her principal endeavour; and though she, of course, expected nothing less than that the boy himself would look upon her somewhat harshly,—for it was natural to juvenile minds to be easily offended,—yet she had persevered in her course conscientiously, and with the full assurance that, whatever the lad might think or say now, he would *thank* her in after years; and also, that either his own mother, or any other person of ripe experience, would see good reason to thank her also, for adopting a method of discipline so eminently calculated to impress upon his mind that truest of all truths, that the world was a hard place, and life a difficult journey to struggle through.

"The sooner young people are made acquainted with that fact," continued Miss Sowersoft, "the better it is for themselves."

"You are right there, Miss Sowersoft," replied Mrs. Clink; "for I am sure if we were but taught at first what the world *really is*, we should never go into it, as many of us do, only to be imposed upon, deceived, and ruined, through the false confidence in which we have been bred of everybody's good meaning, and uprightness, and integrity. It is precisely the line of conduct I have myself pursued in bringing Colin up from the cradle. I have impressed upon him above all things to tell the truth whenever it was necessary to speak, and to pay no regard whatever to consequences, be they good or evil."

"Yes, Mrs. Clink," replied Miss Sowersoft, slightly reddening, and peeping at the ends of her finger-nails, "yes,—that is very good to a certain extent; but then I think it might be carried too far. Children should be taught to discriminate a little between truth and downright impudence, as well as to keep their mouths shut about anything they may happen to overhear, whenever their masters or mistresses are talking in the confidentiality of privacy."

Mrs. Clink confessed herself ignorant of what Miss Sowersoft alluded to, but observed, that if she intended the remark to apply to Colin, she was confident he would never be guilty of so mean a thing as to listen to the private conversation of any two persons in the world.

"It is natural you should have a good opinion of him," replied Miss Sowersoft; "but should you believe your eyes if you had caught him at it?—oracular demonstration, as my brother Ted calls it."

"I should believe my eyes, certainly," said Mrs. Clink.

"Then we did catch him at it, and Mr. Palethorpe was much excited of course,—for he is very passionate indeed when he is once got up,—and he took him in his rage and dipped him in the horse-trough. Not that I justify his passion, or say that I admire his revenge,—nothing of the sort: but I must say, that if there is one thing more mean and contemptible than another, or that deserves to be more severely punished in children, it is that of listening behind hedges and doors, to know the very thing that people wish to keep particularly secret."

Colin's mother was about to reply, had not the sudden entrance of Dr. Rowel prevented her, and left Miss Sowersoft's philippic against listeners and listening in all its force and weight upon her mind.

Anxious to see the boy, Mrs. Clink followed the doctor up stairs, and found Fanny sitting by his bed-side, with a cup of lukewarm tea in her hand, waiting until he should wake. Having examined his patient, the doctor addressed Fanny to the effect that he wished to have a few minutes' conversation with her down stairs. Miss Sowersoft, on being made aware of the doctor's wish, ushered him and Fanny into an inner parlour, assuring them that they would be perfectly retired there, as no one could approach the door without her own knowledge.

"There is something vastly curious in this," said Miss Sowersoft to herself, as she carefully closed the door. "What can the doctor want with such an impudent minx?"

And so she remained, pursuing her dark cogitations through all the labyrinths of scandal, until Mrs. Clink had bidden our hero good-b'ye, and crept down stairs. On turning the corner of the wall, the first object she beheld was Miss Sowersoft, with her ear close to the keyhole of the inner parlour-door, apparently so deeply intent on what was going forward within, as to have almost closed her senses to anything without, for she did not perceive Mrs. Clink's approach until she stood within a yard or two of her.

"Ay, bless me!—are you here?" she exclaimed, as she drew herself up. "Why, you see, ma'am, there is no rule without an exception; and, notwithstanding what I was saying when Dr. Rowel came in, yet, Mrs. Clink, it was impossible for me to be aware how soon it might be needful for me to break my own rule. You know that servant of yours is a very likely person, Mrs. Clink, for any gentleman to joke with; and, though I do not mean to insinuate anything—I should be very sorry to do so, indeed; but still, doctor though he is—in fact, to tell you the truth,"—and Miss Sowersoft drew her auditor to the farther side of the room, and spoke in a whisper,—"it is highly fortunate I had the presence of mind to listen at the door; for I heard the doctor very emphatically impress on your servant the necessity of not letting even *you* yourself know anything about it, under any circumstances; and at the same time he promised her something,—presents, for aught we know,—and said he would do something for her. Now, Mrs. Clink, what could he mean by that?—I have my suspicions; and if I were in *your* place, I should *insist, positively insist*, on knowing all about it, or she should not live another day in my house."

Mrs. Clink stood amazed and confounded. She would have pledged her word that, if needful, Fanny would have resisted any offered insult to the death; but she knew not what to think after what she had just heard.

"I *will* insist on knowing it!" she exclaimed. "The girl is young and simple, and may be easily imposed upon by—"

"Hush, hush!" interposed Miss Sowersoft, "they are coming out!"

As they came out, Miss Sowersoft looked thunder at Fanny, and bade the doctor good morning with a peculiar stiltiness of expression, which implied, in her own opinion, a great deal more than anybody else could possibly have made of it.

"Have her down stairs directly!" continued the lady of the establishment, (for Fanny had gone up stairs,) as soon as Mr. Rowel had passed out of hearing. "A wicked hussy!—If she did not answer me everything straight forwards, I should know what to think of it, and what to do as well, that I should! But *you* can do as you like, Mrs. Clink."

Colin's mother called Fanny down stairs again, and took her, followed by Miss Sower-soft, into the same room in which she had so recently held her colloquy with her uncle the doctor.

## END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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