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by Charles Hooton**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK COLIN CLINK, VOLUME 2 (OF 3) ***

COLIN CLINK.

By Charles Hooton, Esq.

In Three Volumes. Vol. II. (of III)

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1841.



Original Size

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CONTENTS

[CHAPTER I.](#)

[CHAPTER II.](#)

[CHAPTER III.](#)

[CHAPTER IV.](#)

[CHAPTER V.](#)

[CHAPTER VI.](#)

[CHAPTER VII.](#)

[CHAPTER VIII.](#)

[CHAPTER IX.](#)

[CHAPTER X.](#)

[CHAPTER XI.](#)

[CHAPTER XII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIV.](#)

[CHAPTER XV.](#)

[CHAPTER XVI.](#)

[CHAPTER XVII.](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIX.](#)

[CHAPTER XX.](#)

[CHAPTER XXI.](#)

[CHAPTER XXII.](#)

[CHAPTER XXIII.](#)

[CHAPTER XXIV.](#)

[CHAPTER XXV.](#)

[CHAPTER XXVI.](#)

[CHAPTER XXVII.](#)

CHAPTER I.

Displays Miss Sowersoft's character in a degree of perfection unparalleled on any previous exhibition.—Fanny's obstinacy incites Mrs. Clink to turn her adrift upon the world.

HAVING entered the room, Miss Sowersoft first peeped out to see that no listeners were in the neighbourhood, and then cautiously closed the door,—all the blood in her veins mustering up in red rebellion against poor Fanny, as she stared at that young woman through two dilated eyes, with something of the expression of a hand-grenade with a newly-lit fusee.

“Take a chair, Mrs. Clink,” said Miss Sowersoft, in a tone which denoted more than her ordinary attention to etiquette, as she still kept her eyes on Fanny, in order to make her feel her own insignificance the more keenly by the contrast; “do be seated;” and she drew up another chair for herself, while Fanny was left standing, as best became a servant—and a culprit. “Now, I am quite ready to begin.”

“Have it out of her at once—I would not stand on ceremony with anybody like her!”

“What is it, Fanny,” asked Mrs. Clink, “that the doctor has been talking to you about?”

“I cannot answer that,” replied Fanny. “I have promised to tell nobody, and I must keep my word.”

“There!—that's sufficient!” cried Miss Sowersoft, “that is plenty! You see what it is. She has *promised*, and will not explain it. I knew before, as well as if I had heard, how it would all be. She has compromised' herself, just as such a young face-proud hussy was sure to do. It is a wonder to me, Mrs. Clink, how you have contrived to keep her respectable so long.”

“I did not intend to talk to *you*, Miss Sowersoft,” replied, Fanny; “but I will tell you that I have always been too respectable for what you seem to think.”

“Answer me, Fanny,” interposed Mrs. Clink. “I am sure you will answer me.”

“I cannot, ma'am,” said Fanny.

“You positively will not, do you mean to say?”

“Indeed I cannot, because I have promised that I would not; but it is nothing of the least harm.”

“Oh, no!” exclaimed Miss Sowersoft, “not the least harm!—to be sure not!—oh, no! She is very innocent, no doubt.”

“If I discharge you from service unless you do tell me, what then?” asked her mistress.

“I cannot help it if you do,” said Fanny, as she burst into tears at the bare mention of quitting that place which had been as a home to her nearly all her life.

“Then I positively insist either that you do tell me all about it, or stay with me no longer than until you can suit yourself elsewhere. I do not wish to part with you,—far from it. You have been with me almost all your life, and I should not like to see the day when you turned your back upon my door for the last time; but I cannot have this silence and secrecy about such an affair as the present. I have known enough, and more

than enough, of the ruin and misery that may ensue, to allow of it in any young woman under my care. I cannot have it, Fanny, and will not have it; so you must make your choice."

Fanny cried bitterly, and with some difficulty made herself understood amidst so many sobs and sighs, as she protested that she dared not tell more than she had told; that, on her solemn word, it was not about anything that could in the least injure her.

"Well, I must say I give her credit for what she says," remarked Mrs. Clink, in an under tone, to Miss Sowersoft.

"Give her a birch rod!" exclaimed the latter lady. "I wonder how you can allow yourself to be so easily imposed upon! It is all her artfulness, and nothing else. She is as cunning as Satan, and as deep as the day is long, she is! Ask her what made the doctor say he would do something for her,—let her unriddle that, if she can."

Mrs. Clink accordingly continued the examination much in the manner already described, and with about the same success. Fanny resisted all inquiry as strenuously as at first, until at length Mrs. Clink gave her a formal warning to seek out for another situation, and to leave her present place as soon as she had found one. Fanny replied, that she would go begging rather than betray the trust reposed in her, as she believed that Providence would never let her starve for having done what was right.

"What a wicked wretch she is!" Miss Sowersoft exclaimed, when she had heard poor Fanny's expression of trust in a more just power than that which now condemned her; "I am sure her horrible wickedness turns me white to hear it."

This female tribunal having dissolved itself, Fanny was dismissed up stairs again, and the other two ladies remained below to discuss in private the question of Colin's removal home, until such time as his recovery might admit of his return to the labours of the farm.

It will be quite sufficient to state, as the result of their deliberations, that within eight-and-forty hours afterwards our hero, being somewhat recovered, was laid on a bed placed in a cart, and carried home; that Fanny attended him there during some brief space of time afterwards, until she procured another situation, and left Mrs. Clink's service at once and for ever; and that these changes, together with some others of very superior importance, which I shall proceed immediately to relate, brought about such a "new combination of parties" amongst the personages, great and small, who have figured in our pages, as cannot fail, when explained, to throw great light upon the yet dark and abstruse points of this veritable history.

CHAPTER II.

Diamond cut diamond; the two rogues. A gentleman resolves, without consent asked, to make Fanny his wife.

AFTER the time spoken of in the preceding chapter, a month of the fairest season of the year passed away, during which our hero, Colin, continued to improve in health and strength much more rapidly than he would, in all probability, have done had he remained at the delightful residence of Miss Sowersoft at Whinmoor.

The consciousness of being at home, whatever that home may be, is more to the invalid than a thousand advantages which might perhaps be enjoyed in a strange place. Fanny, meanwhile, continued to fulfil her accustomed duties, without receiving any information from Doctor Rowel, as to the nature of the services which he had promised to render in her favour.

Mrs. Clink's feelings of asperity against Fanny, for her obstinacy in refusing to make known the communications of the doctor, were now, however, so far worn away that she never spoke again of discharging her, and in fact would secretly have been pleased had she only expressed the slightest wish to remain. But, so far from this, Fanny resolved to leave her place at the earliest opportunity. While Colin remained at home she left the matter in abeyance; but when he returned to the farm, which he reluctantly did at the expiration of eight or ten weeks, she felt no longer the same inducement to stay as before; and accordingly sought, in compliance with her mistress's previous injunction, for another situation.

This was not long in presenting itself. An old woman, who had long managed the bachelor's household of Mr. Skinwell, the lawyer, happened about this time to die. A gap was left where she had stood; and, as though for the especial purpose of bringing about a discovery, which it was highly needful Fanny should make, she was destined to fill it.

While the villagers of Bramleigh were occupied in discussing the cause of the old housekeeper's death, Mrs. Clink and Fanny were surprised one evening with a visit from Mr. Skinwell. Still more were they amazed when he explained his business, namely, to induce Fanny to leave her present situation, and take that which the death of the old housekeeper had made vacant.

Although Skinwell represented his present visit as in great part the result of accident, he nevertheless, we may imagine, had certain very cogent reasons of his own for desiring to get Miss Fanny Woodruff into his house. In fact, certain matters had come to his knowledge professionally, concerning the said Fanny and her father.

It should be stated, that after Dr. Rowel had obtained the document from James Woodruff, a copy of which has already been given, he still continued in doubt as to the course he should pursue to make himself secure. Wise as his own plans had at first appeared, he so far distrusted them on farther consideration, as to consider

it needful to consult Mr. Skinwell professionally on the matter; but, as he knew the affair to be a very delicate one, he at first put it to that gentleman hypothetically. As Mr. Skinwell, however, happened to have his own private reasons for misunderstanding the doctor's hypothesis, he protested he could not comprehend the full merits of the case unless it were put in a more circumstantial manner. After a good deal of beating about the bush, Mr. Skinwell satisfied himself that the doctor referred to a case in which he was himself concerned, and he also contrived to ascertain the names of the parties, the amount of property at stake, and the relationship which subsisted between the unfortunate man now confined at Nabbfield, and Fanny Woodruff.

By a little quiet manoeuvring on his own part, Skinwell saw that he could not only protect the alleged lunatic and his daughter from the villany of Doctor Rowel, but serve himself at the same time.

"My opinion," said he, "is this. The contract of gift being clearly illegal, you had better put it into the fire; and, if the patient is now of sound mind, as you have intimated, you are bound to set him at liberty, and restore to him his estate. If, on the other hand, he is unfit to be at large, he and his daughter must be adequately maintained out of the profits of that estate. Your course is as clear as daylight."

But it was not clear to the doctor that—whatever the *law* of the case might be,—he could not contrive other means to effect the object he had in view; and so much he gave the lawyer to understand: at the same time insinuating, that if Mr. Skinwell would assist him in achieving that object, his reward should be in proportion to his service:—a proposal to which that legal gentleman returned a very grave rebuke.

"Long as you have known my character, Doctor, I am astonished and indignant that you should have made such a proposal to me. I give my legal opinion plainly and frankly; but that man very much mistakes me who imagines I will prostitute my professional character to a base service for the sake of hire. So far from it, sir, I do not hesitate to tell you now, before you leave my office, that, although this communication has been made to me in confidence, and professionally, I do not hold myself bound to keep faith, neither as a lawyer nor a man, in cases of swindling; and, that if your intentions towards these parties are of *such* a nature, I shall exert myself to the utmost of my ability in depriving you of your control over them, and restoring them to their rights."

Doctor Rowel stood confounded, mute, and pale. Who ever thought that Skinwell had so much virtue in him? The doctor felt that he was a fool for having gone so far. How best should he get out of the scrape? How avert the lawyer's threatened co-operation with Woodruff and his daughter Fanny? The doctor had not much time to think before he was obliged to speak. He recovered his tongue, and stammered out a kind of apologetical explanation; in which he endeavoured to do away with the impression made on Skinwell's mind as to the dishonesty of his intentions: but the fact had previously been too plainly avowed to be thus explained away.

The doctor and his legal adviser parted in mutual dudgeon, though with very opposite feelings; the former in rage at the defeat of his project, while upon the mind of the latter a faint hope dawned that he might win the hand of Fanny, and so secure the chance of inheriting the estate of Charnwood whenever her father might happen to die (as he doubtless would very soon), after it had been wrested by the tact of Mr. Skinwell himself from the hands of Doctor Rowel of Nabbfield.

Could Fanny and Mrs. Clink have been in the least aware of the motives which actuated Skinwell in making them so unusual a call, they would not have felt so much surprise; and the young woman would have given a prompt and decisive denial to his application. But Fanny saw only what seemed to her an offer of advancement, and a release from the thrall in which, to a certain extent, Mrs. Clink continued to hold her. She therefore hesitated not long in accepting the offer which Mr. Skinwell had made her; and finally consented to enter upon her new duties in about a week.

This engagement was fulfilled accordingly; and Fanny remained in the situation until a terrible event deprived her suddenly and for ever of her master. Several years, however, elapsed before this occurrence, during which nothing of consequence to our narrative took place.

CHAPTER III.

Which, though perfectly natural, contains matters that not the most ingenious person could foresee.

IN the bar of the little tavern at Bramleigh, Doctor Rowel was seated before a round table, on which stood a glass of cold sherry and water, with a thin biscuit on a little plate beside it.

Now, during the former part of his life, the doctor had not by any means been in the general habit of passing his time at such a place, and in such a manner. Latterly, however, fear had made him suspicious; and during the few years which I have said elapsed after his attempt to bribe the lawyer, and while Fanny remained in the house of this latter worthy, he had been haunted with certain undefinable terrors lest the lawyer should at some time or other discover anything relating to the subject on which they had so seriously differed, and on which he could not but feel that he lay very much at Mr. Skinwell's mercy. To be prepared for, and to counteract as far as he could, anything of this kind, Mr. Rowel had mingled somewhat more than hitherto had been his wont with the people of the village; although it was not until this identical evening that he had heard anything tending to involve his opponent, the lawyer, in the charge of having made use against him of the results of that professional and confidential communication between them already described. The information which had thus come to the doctor's knowledge was of a nature to decide, in his opinion, the existence of a plot on the part of Skinwell to discover the whole secret to Fanny Woodruff, and then, with her

concurrence, and in her name, to take proceedings for the liberation of her father, and the recovery of his property. Whether that information was true remains to be seen; though certain enough it is, that Mr. Skinwell had employed the intervening time in cultivating Fanny's friendship, and rendering himself as agreeable to her as any middle-aged bachelor can reasonably expect to be to a young maid.

Under these circumstances, the reflections which crowded on the mind of Rowel were bitterness itself, and the more bitter, because he stood indebted to no one save himself for being placed in his present position. In imagination he saw himself reduced to the lowest extremity, at which point he began to form resolutions for his own protection against such a dreaded end. He fancied, perhaps, the lawyer might fall sick before his plans were ripe, and that he himself might have to attend him. Would that he might die suddenly!—that a fever would take him off, or a plague seize him—or—yes—nobody questions a physician's medicine—if—nay, he dare not trust his bewildered brain to think it. He must be mad—worse than mad—to suffer such a thought to cross his mind—and yet it came again and again—it *would* come. He began to feel fearful of himself,—to doubt whether he could trust himself to do right rather than wrong, should misfortune place his opponent in his power. While Skinwell lived, the doctor himself held all he had upon the slender tenure of a dozen words, which might be spoken for the gain they would bring,—or be uttered recklessly in a moment of anger,—or might even drop out thoughtlessly, as one of those true things spoken in jest which they who hear never forget.

Doctor Rowel looked up, and beheld the village lawyer before him, taking a seat on the opposite side of the table. Rowel did not acknowledge his entrance nor his presence, until after a few minutes of dead silence, in which his face became as white as ashes with the secret emotions of his mind. He then abruptly, and with hurried speech, put this question to him, "Mr. Skinwell, I have heard something lately respecting you,—and now I wish to know what it is you intend to do about that business of mine?"

"Having already given my opinion, Doctor," replied Skinwell, "I have nothing more to say to you."

"But I have something to say to you," responded the physician. "I intend to know for what purpose you have had that girl in your house so long, before you and I part again."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Skinwell, sarcastically, though still somewhat flushed to find that his intentions had somehow become suspected; "then you are not the first man, Doctor, I can assure you, who has intended a great deal more than he could achieve. Do you imagine, because I am not quite *knave* enough for you, that I am quite fool enough to make myself accountable to you for what I choose to do?"

"I intend to know that," repeated Rowel, doggedly. "Do you mean to blow to the world what has been made known to you in strict confidence as a professional man? Because, if that is your principle, I tell you beforehand, and to your face, that you are a disgrace to your profession, and a d—d dishonourable scoundrel to boot."

"Just hand me three and fourpence," remarked Skinwell, with the most provoking coolness, "for informing you that by talking in that manner you are laying yourself open to a special action."

"Do you mean to act the villain?" demanded Rowel, with increased passion.

"Three and fourpence, Doctor," demanded Skinwell.

"Ay!—you 're a mean cold-blooded scoundrel," continued the doctor, still more enraged.

Skinwell was somewhat aroused by this abuse, and replied in a more biting temper, "Why, if you really want to know whether I intend to blow you to the world, as you call it, I answer—yes. I am resolved to expose your villany, and compel you to do justice in spite of yourself."

"Oh, very well!" cried the doctor, rising from his seat, and striding towards the door, "that is enough—say no more—that is all I want. Now I know my man. But I'll tell you what," and he turned half round in the doorway, and looked at his antagonist with the fierce malignity of a demon, "if physic can't beat law to the dogs at last, I 'll grant you free grace to drain me to my last penny." So saying, he hurried out of the house.

The words which the lawyer had uttered seemed, like an echo a hundred times repeated, to ring in Rowel's ears as a sound that would never die away. He hurried along the village street more by instinct than present knowledge, in the direction of the lawyer's house. On reaching it, he knocked at the door, which was opened by Fanny.

"Young woman," said he, "you remember what I told you when I first saw you at Whinmoor? You have not mentioned a word to any one? Then take care not to do so on any account. You are in danger. If Skinwell asks you anything, do not utter a word, or the design I had in view for you is ruined. If he tells you anything, do not believe him;—no matter what it is, tell him you do not believe it. He is a scoundrel,—an unmitigated villain,—and if you stay longer in this house you will be ruined. Trust none of his promises. He may pretend that he wants to marry you, but do not believe him; and if he says he knows something about you and your family, take no notice of it; for it will be done merely to get from you what I have told you to do. He may perhaps even go so far as to say he knows where your father is—"

"My father!" exclaimed Fanny. "Why, who knows my father?"

"I say he may *say* so," replied Rowel, "for he will say anything; but you must not believe him. The truth is, he has found out that I am doing something for you, and he is determined to stop it if he can. But do not let him talk to you. You must leave this house as early as possible. Be cautious, above all things. I will soon see you again." And the doctor walked away.

"What, under heaven," exclaimed Fanny, as she closed the door after him, "can the man mean? I am in danger,—and master wants to marry me,—and knows where my father is,—and I must leave here directly! What in the world am I to do? for there seems no end to trouble!"

And then, according to the regular female rule in cases of difficulty of this kind, she sat down and began to cry; and as she cried, she called to mind that Mr. Skinwell had, more particularly of late, showed himself unusually kind to her, and more so, indeed, than she ought to suffer.

Shortly afterwards Skinwell walked in. He had met Dr. Rowel in a part of the road which warranted some suspicion that the latter might have been up to his house, and accordingly he proceeded to question Fanny on the subject.

After an awkward attempt or two to evade his inquiries, she at length declared, that he came only upon some business which related merely to herself, and therefore she could not explain it.

"There is no occasion," replied he, "to explain it to me. I know it well enough. That man is a scoundrel, Fanny,—worse by ten times ten multiplied than anybody would imagine."

"The very thing," thought she, "that the doctor said of you."

"Since so much has come out as this," continued Skinwell, "and my plan is about ripe, I do not hesitate to say that that man has been the ruin of you and your family; and, but for him, you yourself would at this very time have been—there is no knowing—anything but what you are. Depend upon it, my dear, many a better man than Dr. Rowel has died in a hempen neckcloth."

The girl paid little regard to all this, for it was precisely the same as her friend the doctor had declared he *would* say; and yet she felt doubtful which of the two to believe,—or were they not alike dishonest?

Skinwell's profession had not left him so heedless an observer of human nature, as not to remark that, instead of his disclosures, as he conceived them to be, being received with astonishment and wonder, Fanny took comparatively little notice of them. However, he persevered,—“As you and the doctor are so intimate, then,” continued he, “of course he has told you something of your own history. Has he ever told you that you have a father living?”

Fanny stood mute.

“He never told you that?” the lawyer repeated.

“Oh no!” exclaimed Fanny; “but if I truly have a father, do tell me where he is, and I will do anything in the world for you!”

Now was the lawyer's time to make his proposals, which he did at some length, promising that, in case they were agreed to, he would tell her where her father was—he would liberate him from a dungeon worse than any prison, and recover for him and herself the property that was now unjustly withheld from them.

Fanny hung her head and blushed, and felt as though she could laugh or cry, or do both perhaps together; but she could not speak.

“Well,” continued Skinwell, “I know what you think,—it is natural enough. I admit that I am a little older than I was twenty years ago, and probably not quite so eyeable to look upon as when I paid more attention to personal appearances; but the time was when I had my day as well as others, and, in fact, was considered one of the best in Bramleigh.”

Since it is not what a man *has been*, but what he is, which is considered in these cases, we need not feel surprised that the lawyer's recommendation of himself failed to be considered a recommendation by her to whom it was addressed; and though the temptation offered was great enough, she calmly, yet firmly rejected any idea of agreeing to the terms proposed. Her refusal aroused the lawyer's indignation, and, for the time, converted the only man who could prove eminently useful to her as a friend into a bitter enemy. He vowed that her father's bones should rot on the floor where he lay, before he would open his lips to assist him; and, declaring that Fanny would live to repent her determination, he left the room.

CHAPTER IV.

Colin takes steps to extricate Fanny from her difficulties, but is interrupted by a fearful occurrence which threatens to make Doctor Rowel triumphant.

HAVING in some degree recovered from the terror inspired by Skinwell's denunciation, Fanny occupied herself in calling together all the fragments of information of which she had thus strangely been put in possession, and in endeavouring so to fit the broken pieces together as to make something like an intelligible whole. In this attempt she necessarily failed. The whole matter was a maze, a mystery,—a jargon of seeming truth and certain falsehood,—of things partly consistent and partly contradictory. In this state of uncertainty she determined to consult Colin upon the steps most advisable to be taken; for though he was now only about eighteen in actual years, yet his early mental development and his plain manly honesty entitled him to be considered upon an equality with many who were several years his seniors. A note was accordingly despatched by the first convenient carriage to Whinmoor, requesting Colin to pay a visit to Bramleigh at the earliest possible opportunity.

Such an opportunity very fortunately occurred within the ensuing week, and on a day which, by a lucky coincidence, Mr. Skinwell himself had chosen for a drive, on business, to the city of York. Ample opportunity was thus afforded the young people to discuss the subject of their meeting.

Troubled as Fanny had been in her own mind to devise what course to pursue under the seemingly difficult circumstances in which she was placed, she had no sooner related them to Colin, than that youth declared the steps proper to be taken were as clearly chalked out as the track of a plough along the fields.

“Leave it to me, and I will find it all out very soon. In the first place, I shall ask my mother whether *she* ever knew, anything of your father; for it is plain that she must know something of the place you came from. If that does not answer, I should then ask Mr. Skinwell and Dr. Rowel. The truth is all that would be required of them, and surely people cannot very well refuse to tell the truth in such a case as this. But let us try my mother first. Shall I go down to her now?”

To this proposition Fanny assented; and, while she remained behind in a state of anxious hope and expectation, Colin went onwards to Mrs. Clink's, for the purpose of obtaining the required information.

A dreary pause of an hour or more, which to Fanny's imagination appeared half a day, followed Colin's departure. "Now," thought she, after a little interval of time, "he has arrived there; now he is talking about it to his mother; and now, perhaps, she is telling him what she would never tell me, though I often asked her so particularly about it." And then, again, as time wore away, and one five minutes after another were scored on the side of that great eternity the Past, she thought he must be coming back; she mistook the footsteps of every passer-by for his, and every distant external sound as the wished-for herald of his approach. At length, as she began to grow heart-sick with anxiety, he came.

"Has she told you anything?" asked Fanny the moment she saw him.

"Not much," he replied, "and that of no great consequence."

"Ay, I feared it would be so! Then what is it, Colin?"

"She knows nothing whatever of your father, that is certain. She never did know him, nor your mother either."

Fanny sighed, and then asked timidly,

"Did she say anything about me, then?"

"Why, yes,—she did; though it is not of very pleasant hearing; and besides, it is not of any consequence, particularly—"

"But *do* tell me,—you must tell me!" exclaimed Fanny. "I do not care what it is; it cannot hurt me now."

"Well, then," returned Colin, "the truth is this—"

Fanny sat down in a chair; and as she gazed intently on Colin's features while he spoke, her bosom heaved and fell as though some sentence of punishment was being passed upon her.

"My mother," continued the youth, "has told me that she first had you when you were three or four years old, as near as she could guess. At that time she lived in a little yard near Park-lane in Leeds, with her sister, who died shortly afterwards. One dark night in the autumn, and almost about bed-time, she and her sister heard a stirring and talking amongst the neighbours in the yard, and the crying of a little child. They went out to see what was the matter, and found some women with candles in their hands round a little girl that was lost;—this child was you, Fanny. Though, how you had been lost, or how you came there, they could not tell. My mother says she asked you if you knew who brought you there, and you said something that they thought meant 'uncle brought me;' but they could not be certain about it; they made out, however, that your name was Fanny Woodruff, as you had been taught to speak that much plainer than anything else. As all the poor people in the yard had families of their own, except my mother and her sister, they took you in for that night; or, as they thought, until somebody should own you. Next morning the circumstance was made known in all the ways they could think of or afford to pay for; but day after day passed on, and week after week, and they were none the forwarder for their trouble, until at last it died away, and became certain, as proved to be the case, that she would have to keep you always. Some people, Fanny, wanted to persuade her to take you to the workhouse,"—Fanny burst into tears,— "but my mother had got used to you by that time, and would not do it. Besides, her sister died, and she wished her on her death-bed to keep you; 'for, perhaps, Anne,' said she to my mother, 'you may find it all out in the end.' My mother," added Colin, "says she believes that dying people very often speak like prophets. She resolved, therefore, to keep you from that time to this."

"And yet," added Fanny in a mingled feeling of jest and earnest, "there seems to be small chance of the prophecy coming true." Before Colin could reply, a noise without was heard of the tread of numerous feet, mingled with the sound of carriage wheels as they slowly advanced down the road, cracking and crushing the dry gravel. Then came a hurried rap at the door. Fanny flew to it, but it was already opened. A little crowd had gathered outside, and every face looked solemn and anxious. Some peeped down the passage, and others at the contents of a gig which had stopped before the house. She looked out. The shafts were snapped asunder; the harness broken; the horse, led by a farming man, was covered with foam and dust and mud. He bled at the mouth, and looked fierce and angry, though subdued. In the gig itself lay the body of her master the lawyer, insensible, and supported on the knee of a second farming man. Fanny ran into the house again, terrified at the sight, and summoned Colin, the lawyer's clerk, and an under servant girl, to his assistance. Shortly afterwards the body was carefully lifted out and carried up stairs. Before this, a man had been despatched to obtain the speedy assistance of the proprietor of the lunatic asylum at Nabbfield.

What an opportunity for Dr. Rowel was presented here to stifle Fanny's evidence for ever!

CHAPTER V.

Relates the triumph of the Doctor, and the manner in which he achieved it.—Lawyer Skinwell's death-bed, and what happened there.

THE evening was warm and fine; and the gentle slope, on the top of which Dr. Rowel's establishment stood, was coloured with the setting light of the sun; as, with the glass-doors, which opened from his drawing-room upon the lawn, thrown wide back to admit the scarcely stirring air,—the doctor himself sat near it and alone, in an attitude of thought, meditating mischief. A dash of vermilion-coloured light shot athwart the lower part of his person, while the upper portion was covered with that kind of illuminated shadow, that clear obscure, which, to the delicate perception of a painter, constitutes one of Nature's greatest beauties. But the thoughts and reflections in which the doctor indulged were deeply at variance with those which the scene before him, and the character of the hour, were calculated to suggest. It was not with

him—"how much do I now enjoy?" but the morose reflection—"how long shall I enjoy it?" His present happiness was swallowed up in the anticipation of possible coming evil.

"What matters it," thought he, "when tomorrow, perhaps, that treacherous villain may make everything known? Nay, how do I know he has not done so already? True, I have had him watched. I know everything he has done, and something that he has said; and this very day again he is gone to York. To-morrow I may wake to be arrested,—to have my house searched, and Woodruff set at liberty."

As the doctor then mused, the door opened, and a stranger was ushered in.

"Doctor," said he in a hurried tone, "lawyer Skinwell has just got thrown out of his gig, and is almost killed. He has been insensible ever since."

"Ah! Impossible!" exclaimed Rowel starting to his feet with surprise. "Are you sure, man?"

"It is quite true, sir," replied he, as though scarcely knowing what to make of the doctor's strange manner, the latter gentleman regarding him for a moment with an eye of unaccountable incredulity; for the idea had instantaneously flashed across his mind that he might be deceived by his own imagination, and that it was only the devil that was tempting him. A minute or two elapsed; when, recovering himself, he replied in a more subdued and professional tone, "I will be there immediately," on which the man disappeared.

"Now then," thought Rowel, "is the time! Had I asked for it,—designed it myself,—I could not have made it better. Thrown out, and *insensible*. He cannot, therefore, know anything of what I do. And as nobody else knows of our differences, nobody will think otherwise than that I am doing for the best. Who shall question my practice? Even if it be inquired into,—if it come to anything that way,—they may arraign my judgment, but can do nothing else."

The doctor went immediately into his dispensary, dismissed his assistant upon some frivolous errand, and closed the door after him. Some minutes he remained compounding drugs with his own hand; after which he mounted his pony, which had been saddled in the mean time, and rode rapidly off to the lawyer's house.

"Send all these people out!" somewhat sharply exclaimed the doctor, as, in passing up stairs, he cast his eye upon the numerous assembly of "sympathisers," who had gathered in the passage and about the foot of the staircase. Fanny dismissed them, and then, accompanied by Colin, went up stairs into the room in which the unfortunate man had been laid upon a bed, and whither also Dr. Rowel had directed his steps.

In the first place, the lawyer was very copiously bled; after which the doctor administered a powder with his own hands, and gave instructions that, in the course of about an hour, if Mr. Skinwell appeared more recovered, another of a similar description should be given. He then very strictly charged Fanny not to allow any person to visit him, and to prevent him talking in case he should attempt to speak, as silence and quietness were highly essential to any patient in his condition. Promising that he should call again in the course of the night, the doctor then took his leave, though not until he had privately drawn Fanny aside, and fully satisfied himself that Mr. Skinwell had not discovered to her any material portion of that secret which he so greatly dreaded should come to her knowledge.

During several hours the unfortunate man continued much the same as before; but about midnight he rallied. There was nobody in the room except Fanny and the servant girl. Colin had taken his leave long before; and Skinwell's stripling clerk, who was introduced to the reader at the commencement of this story, and who had now grown up into a tame, spiritless, and crest-fallen man, was sitting below in the kitchen, seeking refuge from the whereases and aforesaid of the law in the pleasant pages of Joseph Andrews.

Mr. Skinwell, as I have said, rallied a little. He looked wildly about as though seeking for assurance of the locality of the place he was in, and then feebly beckoned Fanny to bring her ear near him.

"Who has been to me?" he whispered.

"Only Dr. Rowel, sir," answered Fanny assuringly.

"Then I am a dead man!" exclaimed the lawyer, bursting into a flood of tears. "Oh Heaven, forgive my sins as I forgive all those who have sinned against me!" And he forced his head into the pillow as though he would bury it out of sight. The foam gathered upon his blue lips, and his teeth snapped together with a sound that made the girl's blood turn.—"Oh, what has he given me? my breath is hotter than fire.—The flame eats my heart out!—water,—water!"

"No, no!" cried an eager voice behind; "'twill kill him!" and Dr. Rowel strode across the room. Fanny saw him, and his looks terrified her. The sedateness of the experienced physician, which no circumstance of this kind can generally disturb, was all gone. He breathed half-convulsively through his opened mouth and dilated nostrils; shining beads of water that momentarily glistened in the lamplight, stood upon his forehead; and several times successively, as he crossed the room, he passed his hand with instinctive energy over the sides of his temples, so as to cast the hair which clustered there backwards, as though his burning brain sought closer contact with the cool common air. He stood by the bedside. Skinwell rolled round his eyes, and strove to cry, "You 've poisoned me!" But the doctor rapidly closed his hand over the sick man's mouth, and drowned his failing voice.

Fanny stood petrified with horror; while the servant girl rushed screaming out of the room. The doctor still kept his open hand on Skinwell's mouth, while the dying man strove to set himself free by violent motions of the head and writhings of the body. A stifled call on the name of Fanny at length broke from his muffled lips.

"Go out! leave me!" fiercely cried Rowel to the horrified young woman; but she did not obey him.

"Fanny!" again escaped the lawyer's lips.

The sight, the voice, the desperate sense that came upon her all at once that Rowel was killing his patient, nerved her with more than woman's courage and ten times woman's ordinary strength. She rushed frantically to the opposite side of the bed from that on which the doctor stood, and violently seized his wrist.

"Away, woman!" he cried, suddenly turning all his efforts against her, in the endeavour to free his hands and strike her down. But she held him tightly. Curses upon her, whispered almost as from the inmost soul, but deadly and pregnant with hellish meaning, hissed through the doctor's teeth, which showed between his lips clenched like a workman's vice. Fanny prayed mentally for strength to hold him. As they struggled, the

sick man beneath them spoke.

"Fanny—your father——"

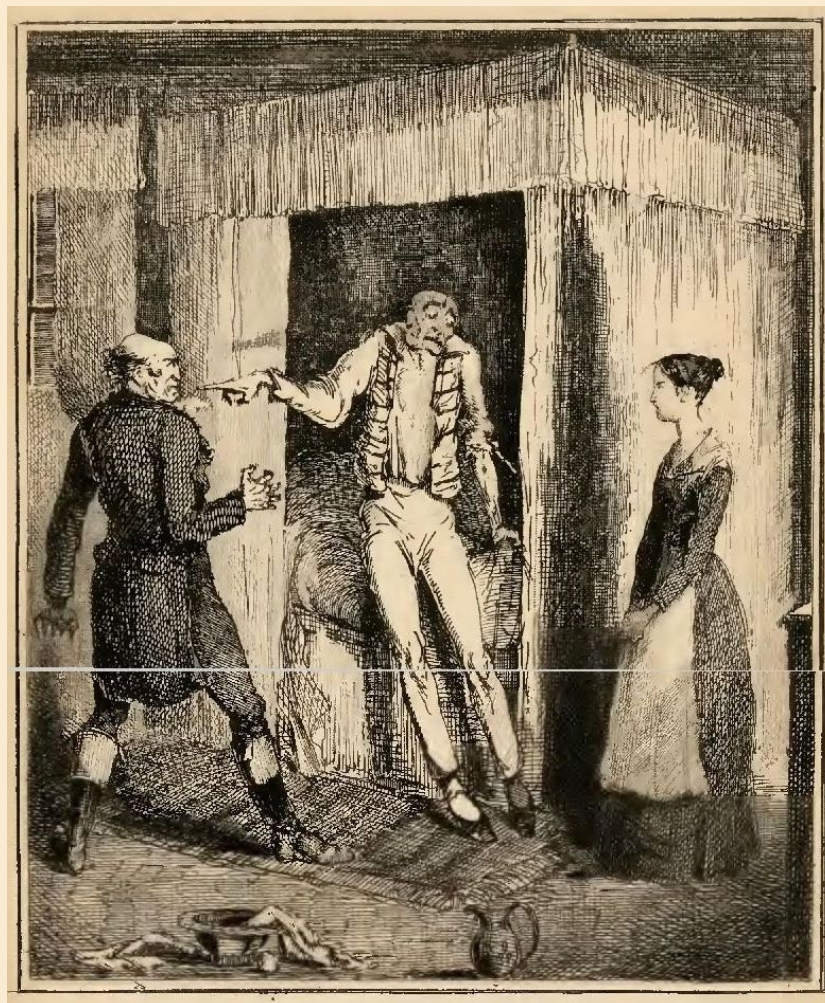
Rowel threw the whole weight of his body upon him to stop that tongue. He could not.

"Your father is in Rowel's—"

"It's a lie!—a lie!—a lie!" cried the doctor in rapid succession, to render the words inaudible.

Their struggle grew more desperate, and Fanny could not hold much longer: the unwonted muscles would not obey her will to gripe. They were overstrained, and growing useless. At the same time the doctor wrenched more furiously than ever. The dying man beneath him gurgled in the throat for breath, and tossed in muscular convulsions beneath the clothes. At last he got himself to the edge of the bed, and by a sudden and last violent effort, struck himself against the doctor so forcibly as to loosen him from the hands of Fanny, and throw him several paces from the bed. The lawyer threw himself upright, and with his dim half-dead eyes fixed on Fanny, and his finger turning to point at Rowel, he cried with his last breath, "In his madhouse!—his madhouse!" and sunk back to groan and die.

Fanny stood a moment, and then fell, like a stone, insensible to the ground.



Original Size

Presently the clerk and the maid-servant, were in the room. Doctor Rowel had just folded up the bed-clothes.

"Take that girl up," said he calmly; "she has fainted at this sight of death. Your master is gone, young man. I did not think, at first, he would see the night over. Give her some cold water; sprinkle her temples, and carry her to bed, and then send for somebody to lay this corpse out. Before morning it will be cold."

As the doctor said this he gathered up such of the powders as had not been administered, and put them in his pocket. At the same time Fanny was carried away, according to his directions, and placed on the bed in her own room. Thither Doctor Rowel followed, and employed himself in restoring her. When Fanny first opened her eyes and saw him bending over her, she shrieked and sunk again. Again she was recovered.

"Do leave me," said she. "Do go away, or I shall die."

"But I have something to say to you, my dear," observed the doctor, with an assumed sweetness of tone. "Now, quiet yourself, and endeavour to get over this agitation. You will never be better till you get calmer."

"Then pray leave me," again replied Fanny, "and I may then be quiet. Is master any better?"

"Yes—yes," the doctor answered; "but never mind him. You should not have interfered with *me*, Fanny. He was delirious,—outrageous. I was obliged to hold him down."

"He said something about my father," observed Fanny in a faint voice. "I heard him say it."

"Nothing—nothing, I assure you!" the doctor exclaimed. "He was delirious. Now, quiet yourself, and do not

talk any more tonight. Say nothing about it; and another day, when you are better, you shall convince yourself, for Mrs. Rowel shall take you all over my house—you shall see everybody in it—and I will prove to you that your father cannot be there. As I told you some time ago, I know something about you, and will take care to see you righted as far as I can; but then you must not listen to the wild nonsense of a man who did not know what he was talking about: it ruins everything.”

Fanny was silent; but she still beheld, as in a vivid picture, the corpse-like figure of the lawyer sitting up in bed, its glazed eyes upon her, and its finger pointing towards that man. She heard the rattle of its horny tongue as it articulated those last words, “In his madhouse!—*his* madhouse!” And she thought of the words of Colin's mother, which had been told to her only a few hours previously, that dying people always speak the truth. But, was he dying? “Is he dead?” asked she.

“My dear,” answered Rowel, “do not alarm yourself: but he *is* dead.”

“O God! what have I seen!” cried the affrighted young woman, as she hid her head beneath the bed-clothes, for a spirit seemed to pass before her when she heard those words,—it was that of her dead master!

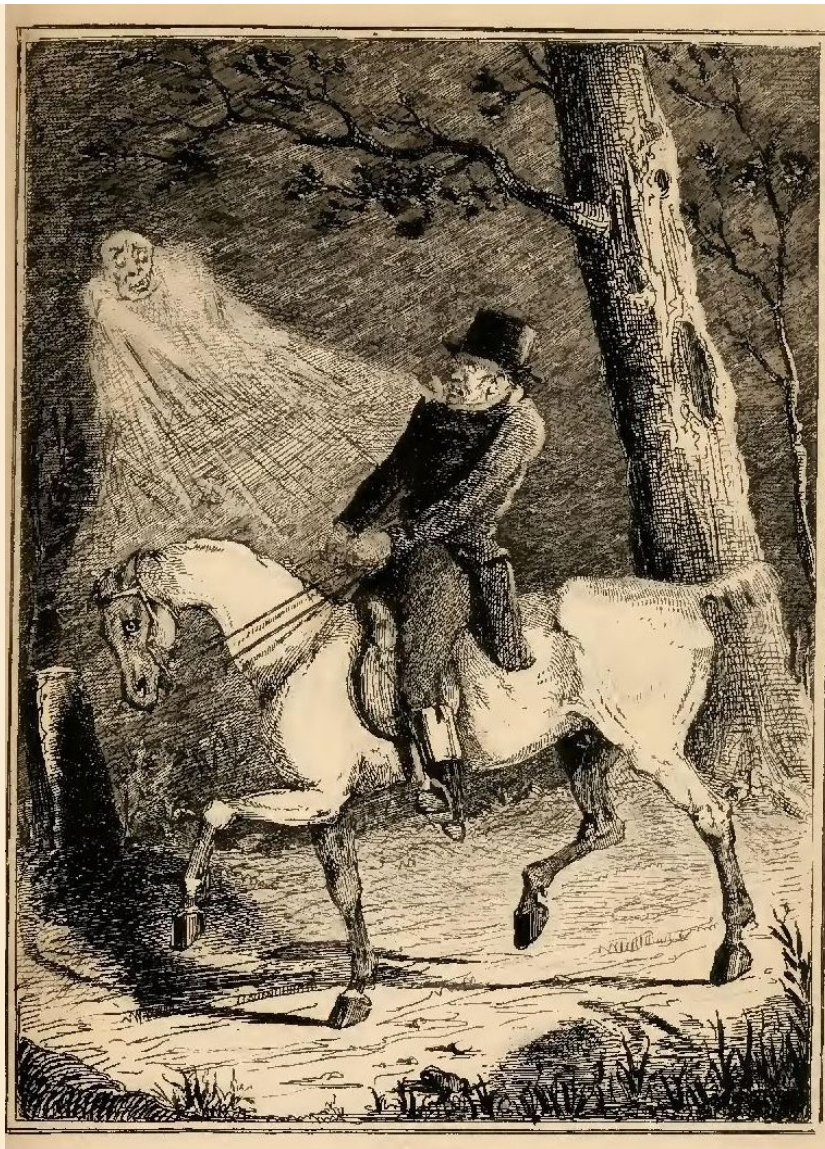
The doctor departed; but in that house there was no sleep that night.

CHAPTER VI.

The Doctor's reflections on his return.

HOW much safer am I now?” thought the doctor, as he pursued his way home in the dark, and reflected on all that had just transpired, and on the probable consequences of it. “To-morrow there will be a jury,—it cannot be avoided; and I shall be called to give evidence, and Fanny, who saw it all, will be called also. She suspects something, and may tell all until she raises suspicions in the minds of others. Would that she too were out of the way, and then—then I should be finally secure!”

But as he thus thought on another death, the dread of the last came strongly upon him; and his skin seemed to creep upon his bones. He fancied there was a body lying in the road, and several times he checked his horse to avoid trampling upon it, or turned him suddenly aside in order to pass it by.



Original Size

He could see the shadowy lineaments of the man he had murdered flickering about in the doubtful air, with the very folds of the bed-clothes which his own hand had gathered round it, pictured in misty but accurate lines, like an artist's first sketch emerging from a ground of dark and indistinct space. He grew anxious to get home. He wondered how it was that never in his life before had any sight so haunted him, and yet he had seen many worse agonies than that,—many. Yes; he had seen old sinners die,—stubborn and unrepentant to the last; he had seen them die, and make no sign of hope of Heaven's grace. And he had seen young maids die of very terror at the thought and name of death. Yet these were nothing. They were happiness itself to what he had witnessed that night. When he arrived at home, his wife remarked that he looked pale and ill.

"No, my dear," he replied, "I am very well indeed,—wonderfully well. I never felt better in my life. I can assure you, you are mistaken." He sat down to his supper; but as he tried to carve, his knife slipped, and he did not try it again. The face of the lawyer seemed to be over the table, dancing about in the broad beams of the candlelight.

"You tremble, Frank!" cried his wife; "your hand shakes. How did you leave Skinwell?"

"He is dead."

"Dead!"

"Yes,—he is gone. A concussion of the brain has taken him off. It was a terrible fall, indeed."

"But how sudden!" exclaimed she.

"People will die suddenly sometimes," replied the doctor; "and especially when pitched headlong out of a gig on a stony road. Now I think of it, let me tell you, my dear, that to-morrow perhaps, or on some early day, I shall want you to show a young woman down in the village here, all over the house. I wish her to see the patients. Do not ask any questions now; I have particular reasons for it. I only have to request of you very particularly, when she does come, to make no inquiries of her of any kind, nor to answer any questions she may put to you. It is of great importance to yourself as well as to me; and more so indeed than you can be aware of just now; so that it is unnecessary to insist further upon it."

The wife promised strict compliance with his injunctions, as it was no very unusual thing for her thus to be requested to take a blind part in the performance of some mystery or other in the establishment, of which no one knew the purpose save Dr. Rowel himself. By this combination of secrecy with his wife, and of apparent openness and candour towards Fanny, he trusted to convince the latter that the communication which the dying man had made respecting her father was false and utterly without foundation. In adopting this bold course, it is evident that the doctor laid himself open to the possibility at least of a discovery; yet it was

clearly the safest plan which, under the circumstances, he could adopt. The opinions which his wife entertained respecting the sanity of the unfortunate James Woodruff rendered it highly necessary, not only that the name and relationship of the visiter to whom he had promised an inspection of his house should be unknown to her, but also that no suspicion should be excited by any attempt on his part to prevent James Woodruff's being seen by Fanny along with all the other patients; since the very fact of one of them being purposely withheld would of itself give room for doubt; while, from an interview between them he had nothing to fear, since in his opinion it was a moral impossibility that either father or daughter should recognise the other.

CHAPTER VII.

A jury sits on the body of Skinwell. Colin advises Fanny Woodruff upon a subject of some importance.

A CORONER's jury was summoned to hold an inquest at the tavern at Bramleigh, on the body of Mr. Skinwell. The men composing this jury were such ignorant louts, that Doctor Rowel, on being called before them, soon succeeded in so far mystifying their perceptions, that they unanimously determined it to be quite useless to call any other witnesses than one or two of those who saw the accident. The coroner himself was an indolent and superficial person, and, under pretence of having other inquests to hold a few miles off, seemed anxious to hurry the present inquiry to a conclusion. Fanny remained outside during the deliberation, and, though it was once or twice suggested that her evidence might prove important, the Coroner peremptorily refused to listen to it, and especially as Doctor Rowel took the liberty of hinting that any statement which she might make could not prove of the least value after his own lucid and professional exposition of the state of the deceased on his being brought home. Accordingly, a verdict of "Accidental Death" was recorded; and Doctor Rowel returned to Nabbfield highly gratified in secret with the result of the inquiry.

But, as the success of guilt affords no pleasant matter for reflection, I will proceed to relate something concerning a better and more virtuous character.

The story of Lawyer Skinwell's death soon spread abroad, and reached the farm at Whinmoor in its progress. When Colin became acquainted with the facts, he necessarily concluded that Fanny would again be homeless, and that his advice and assistance might prove useful to her. He accordingly seized the first opportunity that presented itself for taking a walk to Bramleigh, which occurred about a week after the dreadful event just related. During that time Fanny had been wishing day and night to see him, but had been too much occupied amidst the circumstances which this unexpected change had brought about, to be enabled to do more than wish for his coming. Everything had, of course, been left in some confusion. Nor were there any known relations of her late master to whom application could be made to take his affairs under their management. Skinwell had come to the village, unknown, when a young man, and was generally understood to say that indeed, to the best of his knowledge and belief, he was the last of his family.

Under these circumstances both Fanny and the poor clerk would have felt somewhat embarrassed in what manner to proceed, had not Mr. Longstaff, the steward, and the landlord of the tavern, taken an early opportunity, after the lawyer's death, to call at the house, formally to announce to the poor clerk himself that they were legal witnesses to a will which the deceased had made some time ago in his favour; and which, after providing for all debts and expenses, left to him the residue and the business together. The document thus spoken of was soon found amongst his private papers; and, as nobody came forward to dispute and litigate over the poor man's corpse, as is usually the case when anybody has a small matter to leave behind him, the affairs of the household were soon placed in a way for being carried on as usual; and especially as Fanny consented to remain for the present with the lawyer's successor on the same terms as she had formerly agreed upon with him.

These arrangements had been made when Colin arrived; and therefore the difficulties in which he expected to find Fanny were entirely obviated. But there was another and a far more dreadful subject to engage his attention, which he could not possibly have anticipated, namely, the communication made by the dying man respecting her father, and the horrible scene which she had witnessed at the time that communication was made. Partly from a conscientious fear of doing any one an injustice, and partly from doubt whether, after all, the doctor really was or was not guilty, she had not hitherto mentioned the subject to any one, though it lay on her mind like a burden which would allow no rest until it was shaken off. If the lawyer had spoken truth, was it not unjust to his memory to make no use of what he had spoken? And if she really had a father living, and that father was confined in a madhouse, what could she think of herself were she not to make an effort for his deliverance?

On his arrival, Colin thought Fanny looked ill and anxious; and that she spoke less freely to him than heretofore. He felt surprised to hear her allude to Doctor Rowel in a manner so changed from that in which she had always spoken of him formerly. Then it was as a friend, a helper; one from whom, above all others living, she had the most to hope from, and to whom she ought to feel most grateful. But now she mentioned the very name with dread, and seemed to shudder whenever the recollection of his presence in that house came across her mind. All this raised Colin's curiosity, and stimulated his inquiries. Question after question did he put to her, until the vivid recollection of the scene that had passed, and the keener sense of her father's situation, which this conversation awakened, brought her again to tears, and amidst many sobs and interruptions she at last related to the horror-stricken youth the whole story of her late master's death-bed communication.

During the recital Colin turned pale as ashes; and when it was done, "I'm sure he murdered him!" he exclaimed, "and we shall find it all true about your father. Think as you like about it, but that doctor tried to stop his mouth only to prevent him telling you. Take him at his word, Fanny, and let him show you over his house."

Fanny made no reply. She scarcely heard his words, for in imagination she fancied herself before the little cell that held her father; she thought of him as a madman whom she dared not touch, and scarcely even look at; one who, though her own parent, had not sense enough left to talk even like a little child. And as she thus thought, the tears silently but rapidly rolled down her cheeks. She longed for the time to arrive, but dreaded the trial to which it might expose her.

Having arranged that they should meet again as early as possible after her visit to the madhouse, Colin took his farewell of Fanny; and, on quitting the house, proceeded immediately in the direction of the old hall of Kiddal, with the intention of carrying out another part of his plan.

CHAPTER VIII.

Colin seeks an interview with Squire Lupton. An unexpected adventure takes place, which raises him to the station of a hero, and promises great things to come.

WHEN Colin arrived at Kiddal Hall, Mr. Lupton was quietly reposing himself on a small couch placed near the widely-opened window of his drawing-room, and inhaling the fragrance of the great "wicked weed" from a long Turkish pipe, whose voluminous folds lay like a sleeping serpent on the ground beside him. At some distance from him, close to the door, and unperceived by the squire, stood an individual of short stature, dressed in a coat that reached nearly to his knees; inexpressibles that descended to the same point, blue worsted stockings, and laced-up boots. His hat was placed upon its crown on the floor beside him, as though the owner, in so disposing of it, meditated a stay of some duration.

"Is that Mr. Lupton?" demanded a gruff voice.

"Who the d—l is that?" exclaimed the squire, puffing the smoke away from his mouth, and looking eagerly in the direction whence the voice proceeded.

"Nay—nay, now!" was the reply he received, "it signifies nothing to you who *I* am, for if a man gets justice done him for his crimes, what can it matter to him whose hand does it?"

"How did you come in here, fellow?" again asked the squire.

"Never mind asking me how I got here," replied the little old man; "that is my business and not yours. I *am* here, and that is enough."

"But, what are you?—who are you?—for what purpose have you come here?"

"Well—well! if you ask me what I am, I can tell you; I am *a father*. And, if I were to tell you what you are, sir, I should say you are an unprincipled man, and unworthy of your station: a man that, because he has power in his hands, can insult poverty, and betray it to ruin, under the pretence of doing it a service. Does your recollection extend as far back as sixteen or eighteen years ago?"

Instead of answering this question, Mr. Lupton laid aside his pipe, rose from his seat, and advanced towards the little man in the middle of the room, extending his hand in an authoritative manner. "Come, come, fellow! go away. Save me the trouble of putting you out."

"*You put me out, sir!*" tauntingly replied his strange visiter; "it is more than you dare undertake to do if all your servants were about you; and, as it is, remember there is not one. Keep your hands off me, or I shall make you repent it. You have touched too much of my blood already; and now I have called for some of yours. Look to yourself. I'll be fair with you."

As he thus spoke he drew something from the pocket of his long coat, which Mr. Lupton thought, from the slight glance he caught of it in the twilight, to be a pistol. The sight nerved him to desperation, and suddenly he sprung forwards to strike or seize the man before him. But the latter was too expert; he slipped aside, and Mr. Lupton fell forwards with the impetus of his motion, almost to the ground. The cocking of the pistol and the opening of the room-door were heard at the same instant. Flash went the deadly powder, slightly illuminating the apartment, and showing a *third* party standing against the old man in the long coat, who had struck the pistol aside with his hand, and thus diverted what otherwise would have proved a deadly aim. That third person was Colin. He had reached the hall a minute or two before; and one of the servants who knew him, had conducted him up-stairs, under the belief that the squire was alone,—for the old man had obtained admittance secretly. While in the passage outside, however, they overheard the latter part of the conversation just related, which induced Colin to rush in, and thus was he instrumental in saving the life of his own father—though unknown to himself—from the deadly hand—equally unknown to him—of his own grandfather!

Jerry Clink had recently returned from New South Wales; and during all the years of his banishment had kept

*"The patient watch, the vigil long,
Of him who treasures up a wrong."*

No sooner did he find that the pistol had failed in its intended work, and that Mr. Lupton, who was a powerful man, was again upon his legs, than he dashed Colin furiously aside, and retreated towards the

window. The squire followed him, and was himself followed also by Colin and the servant. They endeavoured to pin the old man in a corner, but their first efforts did not succeed. He strove to rush between them, and to escape at the door. Lights now glanced along the passage, and on the staircase. Other servants were hurrying forwards, having been brought up by the report of fire-arms. Escape that way was now impossible. What could he do? There was the window—the only chance. Nobody so much as dreamed that he would go out there, for it was twenty feet or more from the ground. He approached it. The resolution and the action were one. In an instant his body darkened the open space as he leaped through, and he was gone! The spectators stood still some moments,—for into mere spectators did this daring and desperate leap transform them all. They then ran to the window. There lay a dark substance on the ground beneath,—it moved,—it got up. They watched it; and, in the height of their amazement, never thought of running out to seize it. Jerry looked up and laughed with derision in their faces as he hastened off. Some of them now ran down stairs in pursuit. It was deep twilight, and the desperado was speedily out of sight. He had crossed the lawn, and got into the woods. They followed with guns and staves, but Jerry Clink was safe.

“And what young man is this?” asked Mr. Lupton, as he turned to gaze at Colin, and by the lights which now shone in the apartment beheld a noble, open countenance, and a pair of bold, dark eyes, whose look brought a flush of heat up in the squire's face, and made him for a moment dream that he gazed into a mirror, so much were they the counterpart of his own. “Whoever you are,” pursued the squire, “I owe you much for this brave interposition. I am indebted to you, young man, perhaps for my life; certainly for sound bones and a whole skin. Sit down—sit down a moment. But stop; this will do at present.” And he drew out his purse containing nearly ten guineas, and tendered it to Colin, “Take this, until I can do something better for you.”

“No, sir, thank you,” replied the youth. “I do not want money; and if I did, I could not take it for only doing right. I came to speak to you, sir, about something else, if you will allow me.”

“Not take it!” exclaimed Mr. Lupton, in astonishment,—“then you were not born in Yorkshire, were you?”

“Yes, sir, I was,” answered he: “I was born and brought up in this village, though you do not know me.”

“Indeed! Why, I do not remember to have remarked you before. Who are you? What is your name?”

“Colin Clink, sir, is my name.”

The squire sat down and turned away his face, so that the lad could not see it, as he asked, in an altered and somewhat tremulous voice, if Mrs. Clink, that kept the shop, was his mother?

“Yes, sir,” replied Colin, “she is; but I never knew my father.”

Mr. Lupton was for some moments silent. He placed his elbow on the back of his chair, and his open hand over his eyes, as if to screen them. Something had touched his bosom suddenly; but the lad knew not what. At length, and evidently with some effort, though without changing his position in the least, Mr. Lupton said, “I cannot talk with you now, young man: that fellow has ruffled me. Take that purse, and come again some other time. I shall be from home nearly three weeks. Come again this day three weeks, and I shall have something of importance to talk to you about. Take particular notice, now, and be punctual. But what are you doing? and where do you live?”

Colin satisfied him on both these particulars. The squire continued, “Then come as I have appointed, and your situation shall be exchanged for a better. I will make your fortune: but I cannot talk now. Come again, my boy,—come again.”

Colin stood a few moments in silent suspense as to the course to be pursued. The unexpected event which had taken place had entirely defeated the purpose for which he had ventured to Kiddal Hall, while the squire's language half confounded him. Should he speak again? He dared not, except to express his thanks; retiring therefore from the room, he left the squire's purse untouched upon the table.

Colin reached Whinmoor shortly before ten o'clock.

When Mr. Lupton arose from his reverie, and strode across the room, his foot struck against the bullet that had been discharged from Jerry Clink's pistol. He looked up to the wall; and, though the blow which at the critical moment Colin had struck diverted it from himself, the squire saw, with a strange sensation, for which he could not account, that it had passed through the canvass, and near the bosom of his wife's picture.

CHAPTER IX.

Gives a description of Fanny's visit to the madhouse, and of her interview with her father.

AFTER the lapse of some few days, during which Mr. Lupton left the hall on his proposed brief journey, —(though not without first sending a messenger to Whinmoor with a small packet for Colin, which the latter found to contain fifteen guineas, and a repetition of the invitation to appear again at Kiddal on the day previously named,)—Fanny's arrangements for going over Doctor Rowel's establishment were completed; and according to appointment she set out one morning, early after breakfast, and reached Nabbfield about ten o'clock. As she approached the place her heart began to throb violently, and her hands to tremble as she placed them on her bosom, as if by that action to still the poor troubled thing within. She gazed at the building as though every single stone was a separate source of fear to her; at its melancholy windows as so many eyes, out of which madness and pain looked upon the pleasant world below. As she passed along the footpath outside the boundary wall she stopped, and listened. Instead of sounds of woe, which she expected to hear from within, the blackbird and the linnet in the plantations sounded their pleasant notes there the same as elsewhere. The great and gaudy dragon-fly darted along the sunny wall, and

little clouds of gnats flew in innumerable and ever-changing evolutions beneath the pendent branches of the young elms and sycamores by the roadside. When she saw the gateway she first lingered, and then stopped, to gather breath and resolution. She could not: she looked again, and then retraced her steps some yards, hoping to quiet herself, and grow more calm. She looked up at the sky: it was bright, and vast, and deep, with an intense blue, that seemed as unfathomable as eternity. She thought of her father, and then of another Father who alone could help her and sustain her in all trials. Fanny sunk down upon the bank, and clasped her hands together in silent and spontaneous prayer for assistance to meet the coming trial. She arose strengthened, calm, and assured.

As the keeper of the lodge-gate opened it to admit her, Fanny inquired, with evident signs of fear, whether the people whom she saw at some distance up the pathway, would do her any injury? These were several of the partially-recovered and harmless patients, who had been allowed to take exercise in the garden. Although Fanny's question was answered in the negative, and she was told not to be in the least afraid of them, she yet advanced up the pathway with a quick-beating heart, and a timorous step. As she approached them, several of the people held up their heads, and gazed half-vacantly at her.

Fanny hurried along with increased rapidity, and reached the doctor's house without interruption. She rung the bell, and stood a long time before anybody answered it, though she knew not it was more than a moment, so occupied was her mind with the thoughts of what was about to ensue. "If my father *be* here," thought she,—"if I *should* see him, and hear him say his name is the same as mine, what in the world shall I do? How shall I conduct myself? What shall I say to him?" and, as she thus thought the door opened, and Fanny was ushered into an elegantly-furnished room, such as she had not before seen, and at the same time into the presence of the doctor's wife.

As I have before stated that the visit had been previously arranged, Mrs. Rowel was of course prepared to conduct her almost immediately over the establishment. As she successively passed through open rooms in which the more harmless patients were assembled,—some laughing and playful, others desponding and weeping over again their troubles of former days,—and thence was conducted down gloomy ranges of cells, the dim light of which just served to show the fairest of God's creations writhing in foul struggle with the demon of madness,—or, yet more remotely, was taken to behold sights which humanity forbids me to describe, but which, once seen, can never be forgotten;—as all this, I repeat, passed before the affrighted eyes of Fanny, and brought up to her mind still more vividly the picture of her own father, it was with the greatest difficulty she could hide her emotion from those who accompanied her.

Fanny and the doctor's wife now proceeded together, and unaccompanied, down that winding passage which led to the yard where James Woodruff obtained all of daylight and air which he had enjoyed during many years. The door was opened to the dazzling light of Midsummer time, so that Fanny could scarcely see, after being so long in the dungeon-like places of that dreary mansion. But there stood the black old yew-tree, looking as if carved out of ebony, amidst the blaze of a mid-day sun, and under its deep hard shadow lay a man, motionless as might be the monumental effigy in some old church aisle; his eyes upon the bright space above him, and his hands fast bound across his breast. As the noise occasioned by the approach of Fanny and Mrs. Rowel reached his ear, he gently turned his head, and displayed to the gaze of Fanny a countenance pale and thoughtful, surrounded by a profusion of deep black hair, and brightened by a pair of eyes of the same hue, that looked like spots of jet set in a face of alabaster.

"And is he," remarked Fanny, as she turned towards her conductress, "is he as wild as those men we have seen in the cells?"

"The doctor," replied Mrs. Rowel, "says he is quite insane; though for myself I sometimes think he talks as properly and sensibly as you or I might do. But then Mr. Rowel says that no dependence is to be placed upon that, because people who are quite out of their senses will sometimes appear as reasonable in their conversation as any other person."

This declaration somewhat startled Fanny's faith in the virtue of common sense; and, as if seeking for an illustration of this strange doctrine in the person before her, she again turned to the yew-tree. She started. Those coal-black eyes were still upon her, fixed, and apparently full of some mysterious meaning. She dreaded lest the madman should be meditating wrong against her, and instinctively seized the arm of the doctor's wife.

"Do not be alarmed," observed the latter encouragingly; "he will do you no injury in the world. He looks more frightful than he is a great deal; his hair makes him look so: but he and I have had many conversations together. I will try if he will speak, and then you can hear how these mad people talk. James!" raising her voice, "how do you do to-day?"

He rolled round on his back, and by a sudden and peculiar action, which long captivity and experience alone could have rendered familiar to him, leapt instantaneously up without the assistance of his arms. Fanny shrunk convulsively within the door, in dread lest he should approach her.

"Stand still, my dear," remarked her companion; "there is not the least danger from him. Now, *do* be assured, and come forward."

Fanny obeyed with trembling, especially when she saw the man advance towards them with the intention, apparently, of addressing either her or her conductress. He spoke, however, in the first instance, to the latter.

"Good morning, good lady, and to your young companion. How bright and beautiful the day is! How does the world look beyond these walls? Beautiful, I dare say; glorious far beyond any thought of mine, for I have almost forgotten what robe the earth wears in summer time. Yet it is full of delight even on this arid sand, and between these burning walls. And so, young lady,"—and James Woodruff turned his dark eyes upon Fanny's countenance as he spoke in a more jesting, yet melancholy strain,—"you have come to look at me as a curiosity and a show?"

"Oh, no, sir!" exclaimed she in a hurried tone, and with her face deepening with blushes, "I—I—I am very glad to see you, sir."

"Are you?" exclaimed Woodruff earnestly. "Then Heaven bless that heart, and reward you with its choicest

gifts, for feeling glad to see such an unfortunate thing as I! Glad to see me! Why, that is more than any one has said these many years! Forgive me, young woman; but in your face I see over again the good angel that delivered Peter from his dungeon, and it is a blessing to my eyes to look upon one like you. I am not mad, young lady; indeed I am not. Nay, do not shrink. I would dash this head against the wall sooner than dream of injury to you. I had a wife once at your age: your youth brings her back again, till I could think she had come from heaven to plead for me! I have been here twenty winters,—I have given up all my land and money—everything but life—for liberty, and have still been basely deceived! Now do not, for the love of God, and of justice! do not doubt me. I am not mad. I never was. I was stolen from my home, and from my daughter—a child—a little child.”

Fanny's brain grew dizzy. She clung to her companion for support.

“Let us go, my dear,” said Mrs. Rowel. “You cannot bear it. James, why do you talk so?”

“I will not go!” cried Fanny eagerly, and struggling hard to rally herself “Tell me your name—your name!” added she, addressing the captive.

“Woodruff!” cried the poor prisoner.

Fanny's glazed eyes were fixed on him for an instant,—she sprung forwards with a shriek, and fell at full length on the ground, and as though dead, at his feet!

Mrs. Rowel and the unfortunate James Woodruff stood equally astonished. The latter attempted to raise Fanny: he could not—his arms were bound—and he laughed. But the next instant, as he requested the mistress of the mansion to do so, he stooped over the insensible body before him, and burst into a flood of tears.

“Who is she?” he demanded. “What soul of beauty is it?”

“I do not know, James,” replied the lady; “she is a stranger to me.”

“Would that I could touch her cheek with my finger!” said Woodruff. “She is good—good indeed!”

In the mean time Robson had answered the call of Mrs. Rowel, and come to her assistance.

“Carry her into the house. Or, stay, fetch water,” said she; “she had better be recovered here,” and Robson was accordingly despatched for a glass of water, with which he soon returned. It was applied to her lips, and partially sprinkled on her forehead.

After a time she began to recover; she opened her eyes, looked round, and spoke—“Where is he?”

“Here! I am here, young lady,” replied Woodruff, as he looked her earnestly in the face to fix her attention. “What of me?”

“My father!” exclaimed Fanny, as she again sunk into a state of insensibility.

“Father!” repeated Woodruff—“my father! I her father! She my daughter!” He strove to wrench his arms free to clasp her to his bosom, but again he could not.

“Take her away, Robson,” said Mrs. Rowel. “What does all this mean? Take her away!—take her away!”

And Fanny was carried back by the strong man to the room into which she had at first been introduced; while James Woodruff remained standing upon that spot, gazing on that ground where his child had laid, as though the great world contained in it no other place which, even to him, deserved for a moment to be looked upon.

CHAPTER X.

Is so very necessary between the ninth and eleventh that it could not possibly be dispensed with.

WHEN Fanny was sufficiently recovered, Mrs. Rowel questioned her very particularly upon the circumstances that had occurred, and exhibited a great deal of laudable curiosity to be fully enlightened touching the mystery that had been enacted before her. Fanny would fain have kept it to herself; but too much had already passed in the presence of the doctor's wife to render such a line of conduct altogether practicable. Nevertheless, it was not until a faithful promise of secrecy had been made on the part of Mrs. Rowel, that Fanny was induced to communicate to her so much of her story as was needful to render something like an intelligible whole. In this account she omitted any mention of the source from whence the information respecting her father had been obtained; and also forbore making the most distant allusion to the death of her late master, or to the part which she secretly believed the doctor had taken in that event.

The lady listened to her narrative with great astonishment, and when it was concluded, seized both her hands in an affectionate manner, and exclaimed, “Then, my dear, you are my niece:—the doctor is your own uncle, for your mother and he were brother and sister!”

This information, as may be readily supposed, astonished Fanny, though it did not affect her so much as the discovery of her father made just before. She thought of her own uncle being a murderer;—she regretted ever having mentioned the subject to Colin, and resolved never to allude to it again before any one. She dreaded the very thought that, bad as he was, her own uncle should owe to her his degradation, and an ignominious death on a public scaffold. The thought of all this she could not endure; and, in order to avert the possibility of danger from any unexpected quarter, she now begged of the doctor's wife to hide from her husband the fact that she *had* discovered her father in those cells, lest it might lead to a still worse danger, the bare possibility of which she dreaded to think upon. Mrs. Rowel not only promised to do all this,—a promise which

eventually she fulfilled,—but also gave Fanny the fullest assurance that she would exercise her utmost endeavours in the attempt to prevail upon her husband to set James Woodruff at liberty. For all this Fanny returned her most heartfelt thanks, and then took her leave.

For some time afterwards she could take no rest, no food, think of nothing in the world except her father. She felt eager to see Colin and inform him of what had occurred, but found it impossible to do so until some few days after, when she took the opportunity afforded by a Sunday afternoon to hasten over to Whinmoor.

As she passed down the fields, she felt fearful of again encountering Miss Sowersoft, and tried to plan several little ways for seeing Colin unknown to her. In the midst of her reveries she suddenly beheld old George sauntering along the hedge side, with his hands on his back, and a bit of hawthorn blossom stuck in the button-hole of his coat. To him Fanny applied; and as the old man most readily undertook to execute her wishes, she waited in the fields until he sent Colin out to meet her. Together, then, they slowly traversed the fields, while Fanny detailed her extraordinary story, and listened with additional wonder to that which the youth in turn related respecting his adventure at Kiddal Hall, and the great assistance which, in consequence, the squire had promised to afford him. This mightily revived Fanny's hopes; for in the person of Mr.

Lupton she fancied she now saw one who would aid in the liberation of her father.

But Colin somewhat clouded these fair visions, when, after some thought, he told her that as, in consequence of Mr. Lupton being from home so long, it would be impossible to communicate the matter to him, he would not wait until the time was passed, and leave her father in such a horrible place so much longer, but would try a plan of his own contrivance for effecting his liberation.

Having explained his scheme, and succeeded in quieting Fanny's distrust as to its execution, Colin bade her farewell, and promised to see her again in a few days.

CHAPTER XI.

Plot and counter-plot.—The difference between two sides of the same question curiously illustrated.

AS Mrs. Rowel very strictly kept her word with Fanny, and contrived to evade telling the doctor any portion of the discovery that had been made, that gentleman remained in the happy belief that his project to convince his niece of the deceased lawyer's falsehood had entirely succeeded. James Woodruff was therefore allowed to spend the day out of his cell, as usual.

Early one morning, shortly after the interview between himself and his daughter, already recorded, he was pacing mechanically up and down the yard, revolving in his agitated and confused mind the inexplicable doubts attending all that had recently occurred, when he was momentarily startled from his reverie by observing something white skim above the wall, make a seeming pause in the air, and then fall to the ground within his inclosure. Woodruff advanced towards it, and beheld a piece of paper folded up like a letter. He eagerly stooped to pick it up; but his arms were bound in that accursed ligature, which made him more helpless than a child. He threw himself wildly on the ground, and gathered it up with his mouth; still he had no hands to open it. He looked angrily round, but could not discover anything that might aid him. He placed it between his knees;—the attempt failed, and the little packet dropped again to the ground. Again he gathered it up, and rose to his feet; he placed it against the wall, and with tongue and lips contrived, after much trouble, to force it open. Again he sat on the ground, placed it on his knee, and read as follows:—

“The young woman who came to see you is your own daughter, Frances Woodruff. Be of good heart, as she is making all possible exertions to liberate you. In order to effect this, it is necessary that you contrive some pretext for staying out in your yard until ten o'clock at night, or later, on the third night after this. If you should not succeed, then try each night afterwards successively until you do succeed. You will then see a head over the north-east corner of the wall of the yard where the yew-tree stands, and opposite the thickest part of the east plantation. Wait in the corner beneath, and a rope-ladder will be let down, by which you can climb to the top and escape. This is written by your daughter's friend, Colin Clink, who will do his best to get you out; so do not be afraid of being betrayed.

“Fanny has seen this, and she prays God night and day that you will be able to agree to it. Do not be afraid, as Colin is sure to come (happen what may, short of death) at the time appointed. The third night, mind,—or any night after, at ten o'clock.”

Poor James could scarcely believe his eyes. He almost doubted at first whether he was not at length really growing insane, and whether the circumstances which he fancied had so recently occurred were not mental delusions, consequent on his burning desire to be at liberty. Could it indeed be possible that the glorious hour was so near at hand?—that his daughter was alive?—that he had seen her,—a beautiful young woman, like what his own wife was when first he took her to his home;—that she was aiding him once more to tread the earth *free*?—that he might again have a home,—be revenged on the man who so cruelly wronged him,—and, once more reinstated in his house at Charnwood, enjoy that greatest of all earthly blessings, a father's pride in the beauty, the virtue, and the heroism of his child?

These thoughts were almost more than he could bear, and he wept aloud, as he mentally offered up a prayer of gratitude to Heaven for all its goodness to him.

Afterwards, in order to prevent the possibility of any discovery, he tore up the letter into the most minute fragments with his teeth, and buried them in a hole which he made with his foot, near the trunk of the old yew-tree. Nevertheless he was not safe. There were enemies without, of whom he knew nothing, and treachery was at work to undermine Colin's project.

It was stated some few pages back that Fanny and Colin were sauntering in the fields on the old farm at Whinmoor, when the former related her discoveries at Nabbfield, and the latter explained to her the plan he had formed for assisting her father to escape. Now, at the time when he was earnestly engaged in doing this, Miss Sowersoft was standing behind an adjacent hedge, having stealthily crept there with her shoes off, in order to gratify a certain irrepressible curiosity to know what object Fanny could have in coming so far to see Colin, old George having announced her arrival. Although Colin frequently, and very fortunately, spoke in too low a voice for Miss Sowersoft to catch the meaning of the projected attempt, and also mentioned so few of the details of his plan, that she could scarcely make head or tail of it; yet so much reached her attentive ear as sufficed to form in her mind the ground-work of some very horrible suspicions of Colin's honesty. The great fertility of her genius in matters of this description soon enabled her to make out, from the broken discourse she had heard, that Colin was no better than a thief, and that he actually meditated committing a burglary upon the premises of Dr. Rowel some night in the course of the ensuing week; while Fanny was doing neither more nor less than aiding and abetting him in his nefarious attempt. But as her information was not of a sufficiently positive kind to justify her in acquainting the constable, and getting him immediately apprehended, she came to the conclusion that Dr. Rowel ought at least to be put upon his guard, in order that he might station proper watchmen in his neighbourhood to seize the culprit whenever he might make his appearance. This matter also afforded such an excellent opportunity for her to revenge herself upon Fanny for what she had formerly said before the doctor's face, on the occasion of Colin's illness, that she could not think by any means of allowing it to slip by. Accordingly, some time before the night arrived which Colin had appointed for his trial, Miss Sowersoft might have been seen marching with important step up the gardens before the doctor's establishment, with the intention of communicating to that gentleman in person some hints of the imminent danger that threatened his property.

On her introduction to him, she announced the object of her visit in the following manner. "It is a most unpleasant thing to me, Dr. Rowel, to have to call upon you on such a case of secrecy as the present. You are aware, doctor, that I have a boy about me over at the farm—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the doctor, "I know him well. Palethorpe, you mean?"

"Oh no, sir!—oh no!—not him—by no means. He is a middle-aged man, and a very honest one. No, no. I mean the boy that you attended a while ago—Colin Clink. That boy, sir, I am sorry to say, is as vicious and bad a character as ever crossed a threshold. I am sure, if he escapes the gallows at last, it will only be because he was born to be drowned. He has been hatching mischief of one sort or another every day since he came into the world, and now he has got to such a pitch—"

Here Miss Sowersoft bent her head towards the doctor, and whispered during the space of ten minutes, in so low a voice that nobody save the doctor himself could catch a word of what was said.

"You amaze me!" exclaimed the doctor.

"I assure you, doctor," she reiterated, "I believe every word I have said is as true as that you sit there."

The doctor thanked Miss Sowersoft for her information, assured her two or three times over that he would make the best use of it, and very politely ended the conference by wishing her good morning.

Never, I verily believe, did any mischief-maker feel a greater degree of self-satisfaction than did Miss Sowersoft, as she returned to Whinmoor. What revenge should she not take when Colin was caught in the very fact of house-breaking, and when Fanny would be immediately involved in the same crime! The thought was so inspiring, that she tripped along with a degree of briskness which would have induced any one who did not see her face to believe her at least twenty years the junior of herself.

CHAPTER XII.

Colin prepares for his undertaking, and exhibits great stubbornness of temper in withstanding many difficulties.

FROM the time at which James Woodruff had received the little packet, up to the eventful night when the attempt to extricate him from confinement was to be made, Colin had busily employed all his spare hours in manufacturing in secret such articles for his purpose as he conceived he should require. This he was the better enabled to do, from having accompanied Fanny on a visit of inspection to the place, when, by the top of the old yew-tree being visible above the high wall, she was enabled to point out to him the exact spot in which her father was confined, and where his attempt must necessarily be made.

On the afternoon preceding the appointed night, Colin asked for leave to go to Bramleigh on particular business; and at the same time stated, that, as it might detain him rather late, he should very probably have to remain there all night. Much to his surprise, Miss Sowersoft immediately granted his request with a more than ordinary grace; at the same time remarking very pleasantly, "that if his business there was but honest and good, she hoped he would succeed in it, as everybody ought to do; but if people went about unprincipled jobs of any kind, it was very right and just that the evil spirit they served should betray them in the end."

At any other time Colin might not have noticed these remarks; but, under present circumstances, they sunk deep into his mind. He feared that his design had, by some means or other, become, if not wholly known, at least suspected; and during the next half hour, instead of setting out, he sat down upon the step of the open house-door, considering what course he ought to pursue. The doubts which then arose in his mind were not so much the result of fear as of cautious forecast, touching the probable result of his enterprise. If by any means it had been found out, his wisest course would be to abandon it for the present, and either wait some

more favourable opportunity, or leave the whole matter in abeyance until his visit to the Hall, on the Squire's return, afforded him a chance of explaining the circumstances to that gentleman, and of gaining, if possible, his assistance. Yet, if he did so, what would Mr. Woodruff think? He would wait in horrible anxiety hour after hour, still depending upon the word of him, who said that nothing short of death should prevent his coming. These reflections decided the question. Colin rose up, and within ten minutes was some distance on his road.

Another circumstance disturbed him. Before leaving the house, he saw Mr. Palethorpe, with his best inexpressibles on, preparing himself apparently for a short journey; and, on Colin's putting the question to him, he observed, with a malicious grin, that *he* also was going to Bramleigh. The youth turned pale, and red, and pale again, as shame and fear alternately predominated, though he pursued his way with undiminished resolution, conscious that he had engaged in a good cause, and resolved rather to fail in it than to commit himself in falsehood, through the foolish dread of some undefined and perhaps imaginary danger.

Colin arrived at his mother's house about six o'clock in the evening, and, by previous appointment, met there with his friend Fanny. Together they put everything into a state of preparation; while Colin, as a precautionary measure, in case anything unfortunate should happen, obliged the young woman to take three guineas of the fifteen which Mr. Lupton had sent him, and the whole of which he had brought in his pocket, in case it should be required for the service of Mr. Woodruff when he had got out of the mad-house.

As hour after hour passed by, the young couple grew indescribably anxious and restless. Fanny dreaded that some unforeseen evil would befall Colin, and with tears in her eyes now begged him to give up the design, and wait until the Squire's return enabled them to do so much more securely. To this he replied in few words, that what he had promised to do he would do, happen what might.

"Then," said Fanny, "let us tell your mother all about it. I dare say she means the best for both of us, after all; and then, perhaps, she may think of something to help you in the attempt."

Mrs. Clink was accordingly informed, very much to her amazement, of the principal heads of this affair, so far as already known to the reader, and also of the business which, in consequence, Colin now had upon his hands. This last she considered highly chimerical and dangerous; she prophesied it would lead to nothing but trouble to himself; declared positively that twenty better methods could readily be devised; and concluded by assuring her son, that if he did not relinquish it at once and for ever, he would surely live to repent it before another week was over his head. Colin's reply again was, that no representations whatever could induce him to alter his purpose; and he began to get ready, and tie up his simple apparatus for climbing the wall.

At half-past nine o'clock he was ready to set out. Somehow, he knew not why, Colin felt that he must bid his mother and Fanny a more serious adieu than usual. His mother kissed him, and Fanny,—she, when in the shadow of the door, kissed him too, and asked a thousand blessings on his head. He promised, in case he succeeded, to be back with Mr. Woodruff in the course of an hour and a half; and, having again shaken hands with Fanny, he passed out into the street.

That hour and a half passed heavily by, during which Mrs. Clink and Fanny talked the matter over again, reflected, speculated, hoped, and feared. Colin did not come.

Eleven o'clock struck—he was not there; they looked out, but could see nothing; listened, but could hear nothing.

Twelve came—midnight—he did not return. Fanny could not be restrained by Mrs. Clink any longer, and she went up alone to the scene of his enterprise, trusting there at least to ascertain something. All was silent as the grave. One solitary light alone, as of some one retiring to quiet rest, was visible in the mad-house, and that was all. But while she stood, she heard a horseman enter the stony yard, as though he had come from the Whin-moor road. The light of a lantern glanced along the walls above, and then vanished in the stables. She hastened, terrified, back again—Colin was not there. The whole night passed—morning broke—the world grew light and gay—but he did not come again.

CHAPTER XIII.

Colin's attempt to liberate Fanny's father from the madhouse, with the adventures that befell him thereupon.

WHEN Colin had taken leave of his friends, and passed out of his mother's house, he found the night, as he thought, peculiarly adapted for his purpose. The air was dark and troubled, vexed with contending winds, which blew, as it seemed, now from one quarter of the heavens, and then again from its opposite, while drops of rain occasionally came on the blast, succeeded by momentary showers of hail. Though summer-time, the weather felt as though it had suddenly changed to that of March, so cold and ungenial was the blast.

He pursued his way for some distance along a dark lane, fenced high with thick hawthorn on each side, and traversed by deep ruts, here and there containing puddles of water, which reflected some little light as they caught the sky, and deceived him with the idea that something white was lying in his road. From this lane he crossed a stile and several fields, as offering the most direct route to the back part of the grounds around the doctor's house. When arrived there, he stopped outside the plantation, in order to assure himself that no person was about. Nothing living stirred at that hour. He forced his way through a thorny gap in the fence, and soon found himself at that north-east corner of the yard-wall which he had particularly specified. He now uncoiled his rope, and cautiously threw up that end of it to which a grappling-hook was attached. After a few efforts it caught firm hold, and, as the distant clock struck ten, he ascended to the top of the wall; though, as

he fancied this elevation would bring him in relief against the sky, he crouched as closely as possible, in order to avoid being seen, should it unluckily so chance that any individual of the establishment was about.

"Are you there?" asked Colin, in a low but earnest voice, as he peeped down into the yard.

"Yes," answered one from below, in a similar tone. "All right. Make haste!"

Colin's heart leaped within him for joy. Now was he well rewarded for all his pain and trouble:—to think that he had succeeded at last, notwithstanding all his mother's and Fanny's fears! Hastily he drew up the hempen ladder after him, and, sitting upon the top of the wall, fixed it on the other side, in order to enable James Woodruff to ascend.

"Put your feet in, and hold by the sides," said Colin, as he saw dimly that the figure was coming up.

"Yes, yes," replied he. "Stop there till I get safe to the top."

And in the next minute, when the body was half above the wall, Colin received a heavy blow on the head from a short bludgeon, accompanied by a fierce exclamation and an oath, that if he did not surrender that instant his brains should be blown out! Regardless of the height of the wall, he instantly dropped, and, though half stunned, and sprained in the leg besides, he endeavoured to make off. The fellow who, it was now evident, had been stationed in the yard on purpose to draw him into this trap,—poor Woodruff had been kept in his cell,—was afraid to risk his limbs or his neck by following Colin's example; but, instead of so doing, he began to bawl lustily for assistance. Colin heard two blunderbusses fired, and afterwards the crash of pursuers through the plantations behind him. Conscious that the injury he had received from the fall would prevent him from escaping them by flight, he raised himself up against a gate-post, with his arms close against his sides. In this situation he had the pleasure, two minutes afterwards, of both hearing and seeing a couple of stout fellows rush past within a yard of him, one of whom, by his voice and language, Colin recognised to be Mr. Palethorpe. Within a short period, having "lost scent," they returned, and lingered a few moments about the gate, as though irresolute which way to take. During this brief interval he plainly overheard the following conversation.

"Dang him, I wish we'd hit him! It would have saved us all this trouble."

"Ay, ay, and hit him I will," replied Palethorpe, "if I can once get sight of him. Meesis was quite right, you see, in what she overheard him say—a young vagabone! She told me afore I came out, if I *did* get a shot at him, to pepper him well; and so I will. If we kill him in trespass and burglary, I think the law will stand at our backs. Dang him!—we lost sound of him somewhere here about, and I should not wonder if he 's crept under some of these bushes. I'll fire in, and chance it."

No sooner said than done. Off went the blunderbuss into the thick underwood, for the moment making the spot whereon they stood as light as day, and illuminating Colin's figure as brilliantly as though he had stood beneath the flaring light of a gas-burner. Luckily the two men stood with their backs towards him, or he must inevitably have been detected. The report over, they listened; but a few frightened birds, blindly flapping their wings amongst the trees, were all that could be heard. Palethorpe loaded again, and then made a proposal, which was agreed to by his companion, that they should take a circuit of the plantation, and then get on to the road.

The opportunity thus afforded to Colin was made the best use of by him, and he endeavoured to steal off in the direction of his mother's house. But, when he had cleared the plantation fence, he again heard his pursuers beating about in the road between him and that place, so that he deemed it most advisable to take the direction of Whinmoor. In that direction the coast seemed clear; and, accordingly, keeping closely under the darkness of the hedge-side, he set off at his best speed. For the period of three quarters of an hour or more he pursued his way unobstructed; and as at the expiration of that time he had reached the Leeds and York highway, about a mile beyond which the old farm was situated, he began to congratulate himself upon his escape. Here he slackened his pace in order to recover breath and strength, both of which were well-nigh exhausted by his previous exertion.

As he rose to the top of a gentle hill, which the highway crossed, the sound of a horse's hoofs upon the hard road, though at a considerable distance, struck his ear. It came from the direction in which he had come, and seemed to be getting nearer. Was it any one pursuing him? His fears told him it must be so. Instead, therefore, of pursuing the road any farther, he leapt the fence, and hurried by a shorter cut over the fields in the direction of Miss Sowersoft's house. As he advanced the gusty wind again and again brought along with it the sound of violent galloping. It was gaining rapidly upon him; but he was now nearer the house, and the horseman, if destined to the same place, would, he knew, be obliged to keep the beaten road, which would take him nearly a mile farther than that which Colin himself had taken. As he crept quietly into the farm-yard he perceived a light in one of the lofts. The door was open, and a waggon stood beneath. Abel and old George were loading it with hay, for the purpose of sending it during the night to York; in order to be in that city sufficiently early on the following morning. There was no time to lose; and to stay at the farm to be taken prisoner would be quite as bad as though he had allowed himself to be taken at first. He therefore walked boldly up, and briefly told them that while he was at Bramleigh a plot had been laid by Palethorpe to entrap him; that he had threatened to shoot him if he could catch him; that it was with the greatest difficulty he had escaped; and that even now he believed they had sent some one on horseback to pursue him.

All this being to their own knowledge pretty characteristic of the aforesaid Palethorpe, they did not hesitate in agreeing to Colin's proposal that he should get into the waggon, have the hay-trusses piled around and over him, so as not to exclude the air, and in this manner to convey him to York. In order to bind them the more strongly to their promises of strict silence and secrecy, Colin gave Abel one of his guineas, to be afterwards divided between the two. He then jumped into the waggon, and in a few minutes was very effectually put out of sight. In a few minutes afterwards a horseman dashed into the yard, and demanded of them whether Colin had come home. Abel denied that he was under any roof there; and, after undergoing a strong test of his powers of equivocation, contrived, very much to Colin's satisfaction, to persuade the pursuer to go home again.

Some time afterwards the horses were tackled on, the waggon began to move, and a tedious journey of more than six hours' duration brought them within the old walled city of York, at about seven o'clock in the

morning.

Having deposited his waggon in the marketplace, Abel now invited Colin, who had made his way out of the vehicle when some two miles off the city, to accompany him to a public-house. This request the lad complied with; and, while making his breakfast obtained ink and paper from the landlord, and wrote a short letter to his mother, and another to Fanny, explaining the circumstances which had led to his absence and flight, and promising to write again as soon as he had resolved in what place he should settle for the present, as he did not consider it safe to remain permanently, even at the distance he then was. These he gave in charge to Abel, who vowed to deliver them both safe and speedily. He then inquired of Colin whether he did not intend to go back again?

"Not till I know that everything is safe," replied the youth, "or else it would have been useless to come here."

"Then what do you intend to do? or where does 't mean going?" again asked the man.

"I am quite undecided yet," remarked Colin; "but I shall find out a place somewhere, depend upon it."

"Well, lad," said Abel, "if I could do aught for thee, I would; but I mean leaving our missis's myself as soon as I can. I 'll either list, or go to Lunnun very soon, for it's beggarly work here."

The thought struck Colin,—should *he* go to London? He had money, very luckily sufficient to keep him awhile; and, so far off, he would be safe enough. When there, as he dared not return to Bramleigh to pay his promised visit to Kiddal Hall, he could write to the Squire, and tell him what had happened, which would do quite as well; and doubtless enable him, with Mr. Lupton's assistance, not only very shortly to triumph over his persecutors, but give him sufficient power to effect successfully that great object, the attempt to achieve which had so unexpectedly led to his present unpleasant situation.

He finally took his leave of Abel in the market-place, and then rambled alone and thoughtfully about the town, until within an hour or two of mid-day.

CHAPTER XIV.

Country notions of London.—A night-journey to the Metropolis, and Colin's arrival there.

THE good people of the Great City possess but a slight idea of the light in which they and the modern Babylon are regarded by the remote and rustic natives of the provinces. Colin partook largely of the general sentiment respecting that wonderful place, and its, in many respects, scarcely less marvellous people. To him, in common with every other child of village or hamlet, however remote, the name of London had been familiar almost from the cradle. He knew not the time when he knew it first; and the idea presented by it was that of some great, undefined, and unknown place, which had no equal in the world, nor resemblance—(save in that it was composed of buildings and endless streets)—to anything he had ever seen. It was a vast spectre, without shape, and measureless, looming in the misty atmosphere of a doubtful mind, like the ideal pictures of cities and the wonderful palaces of gnomes and genii, after reading some marvellous Arabian tale. Then, with the rustic inhabitants of every remote place, anything uncommon or superior is always presumed to have come from London, and to say that it came thence, is at once to confer upon it a higher ideal value. Many a worthless trinket brought by some wandering pedlar is purchased, and afterwards miraculously preserved from juvenile spoliation amidst the wreck of all other toys, merely because it came from London. The very appearance in a village of an individual of more than usual gentility, startling the bumpkins with a "sight" on some fine summer's morning, is of itself taken as presumptive evidence that he very probably came from London. Any innovation or improvement in dress or manners is promptly and naturally supposed to have had its origin in London. London is the place, in short, where everything is great,—where everything of the best is made,—where all the first people of the world do congregate,—where it is very needful to look sharp about you lest your very eyes get picked out without your knowing it until they are gone,—where the most cunning thieves are always at your elbow,—where everything worth seeing is to be seen, and worth hearing to be heard,—where anybody may chance to succeed, though he could succeed nowhere else,—and where, finally, for some one or other or all of these causes, every man, woman, girl, and boy express a wish to go to before they die.

Thus is London generally regarded by the rural people of the provinces; and thus was it in degree that Colin thought, as he paced about the quiet streets of York. What to do when he should get there he did not know; but go somewhere he must. There was still room left for many more in London than himself. Accordingly he walked into a coach-office, and, after making some inquiries, took his place by a coach which, though it travelled an indirect route, had the advantage of being about to start in half an hour. That interval he employed in writing another letter home, expressive of the intention he had just formed, and stating that he should write again as soon as he arrived in London.

The public vehicle being now nearly ready, Colin climbed awkwardly up and took his seat; and, after all the important preparations incident to such an occasion had been duly made, an expert ostler ingeniously twitched off the horses' coverings as they were starting, and within a short time Colin was whirled away on this his first day of foreign travel.

Never having been on a public stage before, Colin felt delighted. The pleasant and rapid motion, and the continual change of scenery, almost made him wonder why those people who could afford it did not ride on the top of a public coach every day of their lives. Village, town, and then long spaces of cultivated fields, alternately came on the horizon, and were left behind; foot-passengers by the road-side appeared to him

almost at a standstill, and the speed of such irritable curs as barked and ran after the horses, little greater than that of a mole. Towards evening, however, these things lost much of their attraction, and he began to grow weary. With weariness came despondency, and he almost felt as though he was lost.

The sun went down somewhere in the direction of the home he had left last night. What were his mother and Fanny doing now? What doubt were they not in, and what misery enduring through his (to them) unaccountable absence! It was evident enough, too, that Palethorpe knew him,—and that his design had been found out. What evil reports would they not spread concerning him, to the dismay and shame of Fanny and his mother! Mr. Lupton, also, might hear them, and perhaps refuse to take any notice of his letters; though he himself, were he there, could explain all this to everybody's satisfaction. Tears both of sorrow and vexation swam in his eyes, and he wished it was but possible the coachman could drive him back again. Night came on, and at a great town (Leicester, I believe) two flaring lamps were put up, which cast upon the ground a sharp light on either side, as though they flew with a pair of fiery wings. Passers-by, tree-trunks, and mile-stones shot out of the darkness before, and into that behind, almost before they could be seen; while occasionally might be observed other bright rayless lights, glancing through the hedges, or staring boldly down the road before them, like the eyes of a monstrous dragon. Then came the rattle of another coach, a shout of recognition between the coachmen, a tip upwards of the whip, and all was dark again. The passengers were silent, and Colin grew doubly melancholy. The coachman now and then looked round at his fares, as much as to say he very much doubted whether he was driving a hearse or not; yet all sat as quiet as corpses. He asked "the box" if he were cold? The box said "No," and then turned up his coat-collar, and pretended to go to sleep. The coachman sung himself a song, and beat his whip-hand upon his left shoulder to keep the blood stirring. The guard shouted to him, and he shouted back again—"The bag of corn was to be left at So-and-so, and old Joe was to see and send that harness back in the morning."

Colin took no interest in all this, so he shut his eyes, and, after awhile, fell asleep. The horn blowing for a change of horses awoke him again. Again he went to sleep, and the same pleasing tune was played in his vexed ears, and on the same occasion, repeatedly during the night. When morning broke, he was chilled almost to death: his feet felt as though undergoing amputation: he could never have believed it was so cold in summer at any part of the twenty-four hours as he now found it. The night had been fine and dry, and daylight began with only a few thin clouds. He longed for a ray of the sun, and watched his increasing light with desire unfelt before. As he rose, however, the mists gathered, thicker and thicker as it grew lighter. Then they swept like a storm over the hills in front, and filled the valleys with a damp fog as thick as any in November. At two or three hours after sunrise, all was clear again; and he basked delightfully in the burning heat. They now began to pass droves of sheep, and herds of cattle, hundreds together, and often recurring, yet all bent the same way as themselves: they were going to London to be devoured. None seemed to come back again. They ascended a steep hill; and to the right Colin saw the longest-bodied church, with the shortest tower he had ever seen in his life: it was St. Alban's. Here a man of business, escaped from the metropolis the night before, and now fresh from sleep and breakfast, and with a "shining morning face," gave the coachman a familiar nod and word, and jumped up, to return to his ledger. The stable-boys looked at Colin, and regarding him as a "green 'un," winked at each other, and smiled. The coachman took no notice of him, as being considerably beneath his observation. But Colin, without troubling himself concerning other people's thoughts of him, looked at the long signs about posting at so much per mile, and at those which advertised Messrs. Mangel Wurzel and Co's Entire, and wondered what in the world they meant. Another hour or two passed, and the road seemed to our hero to be alive with all kinds of vehicles describable and nondescript. Dog-horses drawing lumbering old coaches, and dog-carts filled with country-baked bread, intermingled with spring vehicles, carrying soda-water, and carriers' carts laden with crockery, were jumbled together in all the glorious confusion and dust of a dry summer morning. Occasionally some butcher's boy, without his hat, would drive from amongst them, as though his very life depended on his speed, and shoot ahead, until, in character with all of his fraternity, he outstripped everybody, and, after the fashion of the good deities of the Heathen mythology, vanished in a cloud of his own raising.

The coach approached a high archway in the road. Through it Colin saw what he took to be a mass of horizontal cloud; and, peering above it in solitary grandeur, like one lone rock above a wilderness of ocean, the dome of a great cathedral. To the left, on descending the hill, stood what he took to be a palace; and still farther on, in Holloway and Islington, so many things of a totally new character presented themselves to him, that he scarcely believed himself in the same world as he was yesterday. The turnpikes, and the Angel Inn, the coaches and cabs, the rabble and noise, the screaming of hawkers, the causeways lined with apple-women and flower-girls, the running and scrambling of men carrying bundles of newspapers, as they bawled to the passengers of outward-bound stages, "*Times, sir!—Chronicle!—Morning Post!*" the swearing of coachmen, the thrashing of drovers, the barking of dogs, and the running of frightened sheep and over-goaded cattle, formed altogether such a Babel as made him for the time utterly forget himself.

"City, young man, or get down here?" demanded the coachman..

"Where are we?" asked Colin.

"Islington. Where are you going to?"

"London," replied Colin.

"I say, Jim," remarked the coachman to his friend the guard, "that 's a neatish cove now, isn't he, to come here?"

"Wot do I care, d—his eyes! Pick up that basket, and go on, without you mean to stop here all day!"

Whereupon the driver folded up his waybill, and elbowed his passage through a crowd of miserable, perishing, be-coated and be-capped night-travellers, who blocked up the causeway with trunks, carpet-bags, and hat-boxes. Their pallid visages and heavy eyes, indeed, conveyed to the spectator no indifferent idea of so many unfortunate ghosts just landed on the far side of the Styx.

"So you are for London, young 'un, are you?" asked the coachman, when again on his seat.

"Yes, sir," replied Colin, "and I suppose we are not far from it, now?"

"Jim!" shouted the coachman, as he leaned half round to catch a glimpse of the guard, "this chap wants to

know how far he is from London, if you can tell him!" And this humorous remark he rounded off with a weasing chuckle, that appeared to have its origin in a region far below the thick superstratum of coat and shawl with which the coachman himself was covered. He then deliberately eyed Colin from head to foot several times, with a look of great self-satisfaction, and again inquired,—“Wot did your mother send you from home for?”

“Nobody sent me,” said Colin; “I came of my own accord.”

“Wot, you 're going i' sarvis, then? or, have you come up to get made Lord Mayor?” Our hero had felt sufficiently his own loneliness before; but this last observation made him feel it doubly. He coloured deeply.

“Come, I didn't mean that,” said the driver,—“it was only a joke to raise your spirits. I don't want to spile your feelin's, young man.”

“I assure you, sir,” replied Colin, with emotion, “I have no place to go to, and I do not know a single soul in London. When I get off this coach, I shall not know where to turn, nor what to do!”

“Then wot did you come for?” inquired the coachman.

“To get a place,” said Colin.

“And you don't know where to put up?”

“No.”

“Humph! Well, m'happen I can tell you. How much money have you got?”

Colin satisfied the inquirer on this particular; and in return received the coachman's promise to direct him to a respectable house, at which he might put up until he had done one of two things, either obtained a situation or “got himself cleaned out.”

CHAPTER XV.

The “Yorkshire House.”—Its company.—And an adventure.

IN the course of some subsequent conversation, Colin's friend the coachman ascertained that his “green” passenger came from some place in the county of York, and instantaneously concluded, by a peculiar process of reasoning, that our hero ought of necessity to put up at a “Yorkshire House.” He forthwith recommended him to a tavern of some notoriety in the city, backing his recommendation with the assurance that, as he was but raw in London, it would be better for him to be amongst his own countrymen.

In the “Yorkshire House,” then, we will suppose him. His first business, after having refreshed himself, was to call for ink and paper, and indite an epistle to Squire Lupton, giving him not only an explicit statement of the cause of his precipitate retreat from Bram-leigh, and his consequent inability to attend at the Hall on the appointed day, but also detailing the horrible scene of the lawyer's confession respecting the situation of James Woodruff, which had led to his recent attempt, and compelled that retreat. This being done, and duly despatched, he hastily prepared himself, fevered and confused in brain as he was by the long night-journey, to take a turn in the streets. He longed, as every stranger does who first enters this mighty city, to wander among its endless maze of houses, and witness the vastness of its resources. He passed down one of the by-streets into Cheapside; wondered at the numbers of caravans and carts, the coaches and cabs, which blocked themselves to a temporary stand-still in the streets branching from either side; marvelled what all the vehicles that shot along could be employed for; where the contrary and cross currents of human beings could all possibly be setting in; or how the enormous evidences of almost inconceivable wealth, displayed on all sides, could ever have been thus accumulated. As he ruminated, the crowd every now and then half spun him round, now one way, now another, in the endeavour to pass or to outstrip him. Some belated clerk, hurrying to his duty, put a forcible but inoffensive hand upon his shoulder, and pushed him aside; the butcher's boy (and butchers' boys are *always* in a hurry) perhaps poked the projecting corner of his wooden tray or the shank of a leg of mutton into his ear; the baker drove a loaf into his ribs; the porter knocked his hat off with a box on his knot, accompanying the action with the polite expression of “By your leave;” the merchant pushed it into the gutter in order to avoid treading upon it, and the policeman, standing by the lamp-post, smiled as sedately as a wooden doll, whose lower jaw is pulled down with a string, and, when advice was useless, kindly told him to “take care of his hat.”

By the time he had passed through Fleet Street, and had returned along Oxford Street and Holborn, his head was in a whirl. In the course of a few short hours his senses had received more numerous and striking impressions than had been made upon them probably during the whole course of his previous life. London seemed to him a Babel, and himself one of those who were lost utterly in the confusion of tongues,—tongues not of men merely, but of iron and adamant, rattling together their horrible jargon, until his ears sounded and reverberated like two shells beside his head, and his brain became bewildered as if with (that which he had happily never yet experienced) a night's excess.

About seven o'clock in the evening he returned to his inn. Having placed himself quietly in a retired corner of the parlour of the “Yorkshire House,” and immediately beneath a sloping skylight extending the whole breadth of the room,—a position which very strongly suggested the idea that he was sitting under a cucumber frame,—Colin amused himself by making silent remarks upon the scene before him. Sundry very miscellaneous-looking personages formed the principal figures of the picture, and were relieved by numerous accessories of mutton-chops, biscuits, broiled kidneys, pints of stout, and glasses of gin-punch; the whole

being enveloped in an atmosphere of such dense smoke, as gave a very shadowy and mysterious character to every object seen through it.

"There's a fly on your nose, Mr. Prince," remarked a lean hungry-looking fellow; "a blue-bottle, sir, just on the end there."

The individual thus addressed was a sinister-looking man, who, it afterwards appeared was a native of Leeds, in which he had formerly carried on business, and contrived to scrape together a large fortune. In mercantile phraseology, he was a "thirty thousand pound man" and, though an ignorant and surly fellow, on account of his property he was looked up to by everybody as ignorant as himself. On hearing his friend Hobson's remark, Mr. Prince suddenly seized the end of his own nose, and grasped it in his hand, as he was in the regular habit of doing whenever the fly was mentioned, while with a very shallow assumption of facetiousness he replied, "Then I 've got him to-night, by Go!"

Every individual in the company who knew his business properly now forced a laugh at the great man's witty method of doing things, while Hobson replied, "I think not, Mr. Prince. He's too 'fly' for you again."

"Look in your hand, Mr. Prince," suggested a thick-headed fellow from the East-Riding, not unlike a bullock in top-boots. Mr. Prince thanked him for the hint; but declined adopting it, on the score that if he opened his hand he should lose him.

"Put him in Hobson's glass," said another.

"Well," replied Hobson, "as we all know Mr. Prince is very poor, I 'll give him sixpence if he will."

This hint at Mr. Prince's poverty was exceedingly relished both by the Prince himself and all the toadeaters about him. Its ingenuity seemed to delight them, as did also the reply made by the great man himself. "I doubt whether you ever had a sixpence to spare in your life."

Another mechanical laugh was here put in at Hobson's expense, which that gentleman not relishing quite so well as he would have done had the insinuation been made at the expense of any other person, he repelled it by challenging Mr. Prince to produce, there and then, as many sovereigns upon the table as any other man in the company. This touched Mr. Prince in a delicate place, and he growled out with a horrible oath, that he could buy Hobson and all his family up with only the simple interest of his capital. At the same time he put his hand in his breeches-pocket, and drew forth a broad-bellied greasy black pocket-book, which he slapped heavily on the table, as he swore there was more money in it than Hobson had ever even so much as seen together before. Hobson flatly denied it, and offered to bet glasses round that it did not contain twenty pounds more than his own.

"Done!" roared Mr. Prince, as his clenched fist fell on the table, with a weight which made all the pipes and glasses upon it dance a momentary hornpipe. A comparison of pocket-books was immediately instituted. Mr. Prince's was declared to contain one hundred and seventy bank-notes more than Hobson's, and Hobson was called upon for the grog. This being more than he expected, he endeavoured to evade the bet altogether, by insinuating that he should not believe Mr. Prince's notes were good, unless he looked at them himself. Several voices cried together "No, no!" and the rest vented their opinions in loud exclamations of "Shame, shame!—Too bad!" and the like.

Mr. Prince felt the indignity offered to his pocket-book most keenly. He looked unutterable things at Hobson, and bellowed loud enough to have been heard as far as Lad Lane, that he would not trust a single farthing of his money in the hands of such a needy, starving, penniless bankrupt as he was. Many of those present felt that this language was not exactly warrantable; but there were no cries of shame in favour of Mr. Hobson.

At this interesting period of the discussion, Colin's eyes chanced to be fixed very earnestly on the countenance of Mr. Prince, which that gentleman remarking, he forthwith turned suddenly on the young man with this abrupt demand:—

"What are *you* staring at, eh? Did you never see a man's face before?"

"Yes," very quietly replied Colin; "I have seen many *men's* faces before."

"What do you mean by that, eh?" cried Prince. "What does he mean?" addressing the company. "Come, come, young man, I 'll soon teach you how to know your betters." And he strode towards Colin, with the apparent intention of practically illustrating the system he maintained. The latter instantly rose on his feet to meet him. All eyes were now turned towards these two, while the squabble with Hobson appeared for the time to be wholly forgotten.

"Beg my pardon, sir!" bellowed Prince.

"I shall beg no man's pardon whom I have neither injured nor insulted," coolly answered Colin.

"I say, beg my pardon, sir!" repeated Prince. "Do you mean to take the law of me if I strike you? Say no, and I 'll knock you down."

"No!" replied Colin, "I shall appeal to no law except that of my own force. If you strike me, I shall probably strike you again, old as you are."

Smash went Mr. Prince's fist at Colin's face; but the latter parried the blow adroitly, and by a cool "counter" succeeded in pressing Mr. Prince's nose very much closer to his face than nature herself had intended it to be. Cries of "Shame!" again arose against Colin, and some attempts were made to seize and turn him out. These, however, were prevented by other portions of the company, who exclaimed loudly in favour of fair play, and against any interference. In the mean time Mr. Prince grew furious, and raised his stick to strike Colin with the determination of a butcher about to knock a bull on the head. The youth again parried the intended blow, and turned the weapon aside by receiving it in a slanting direction on his right arm. In order to close with him on the opposite side, Prince now jumped on the table; but this manouvre the young man avoided, and at the same instant a shower of broken glass fell upon him. Colin's enraged assailant's stick had gone through the lid of the "city cucumber-frame," and some half dozen fractured squares attested his powers of mischief. A loud laugh echoed from every part of the room, which put Mr. Prince in a perfect whirlwind of passion. He plunged at his young opponent as though he meditated crushing him by the mere weight of his body; but as the coolness of the latter enabled him to take advantage of the

slightest circumstance in his favour, he slipped aside at the critical moment, and his antagonist's head went with the power of a paviour's rammer against the wall. This terminated the fight. Mr. Prince lay on the floor, and groaned with pain and vexation, until he was picked up, and placed, almost as inanimate as a sack of potatoes, in his chair.

In an instant afterwards a gentleman, dressed in a dark-blue great-coat, and who, as Colin thought, was so very rich in that particular article of clothing as to lay himself under the necessity of having them numbered on the collar, made his appearance in the room; and at the instance of the landlord stepped forwards, and collared our hero, with the intention of conveying him to the station-house. Against this proceeding several friendly individuals protested, and joined vehemently in the opinions expressed by a stout young Welshman, who sat with a pipe in his mouth, that "Py cot! it was too bad to meddle with him instead of the old one." This timely interference saved Colin for the present, and the policeman was obliged to retire.

Deeply fatigued as our hero was from previous want of rest, he early retired to his apartment, and soon fell into a slumber of many hours' duration. On rising in the morning, what was his astonishment to find a roll of paper like bank-notes lying near him, for the presence of which he knew not how to account?

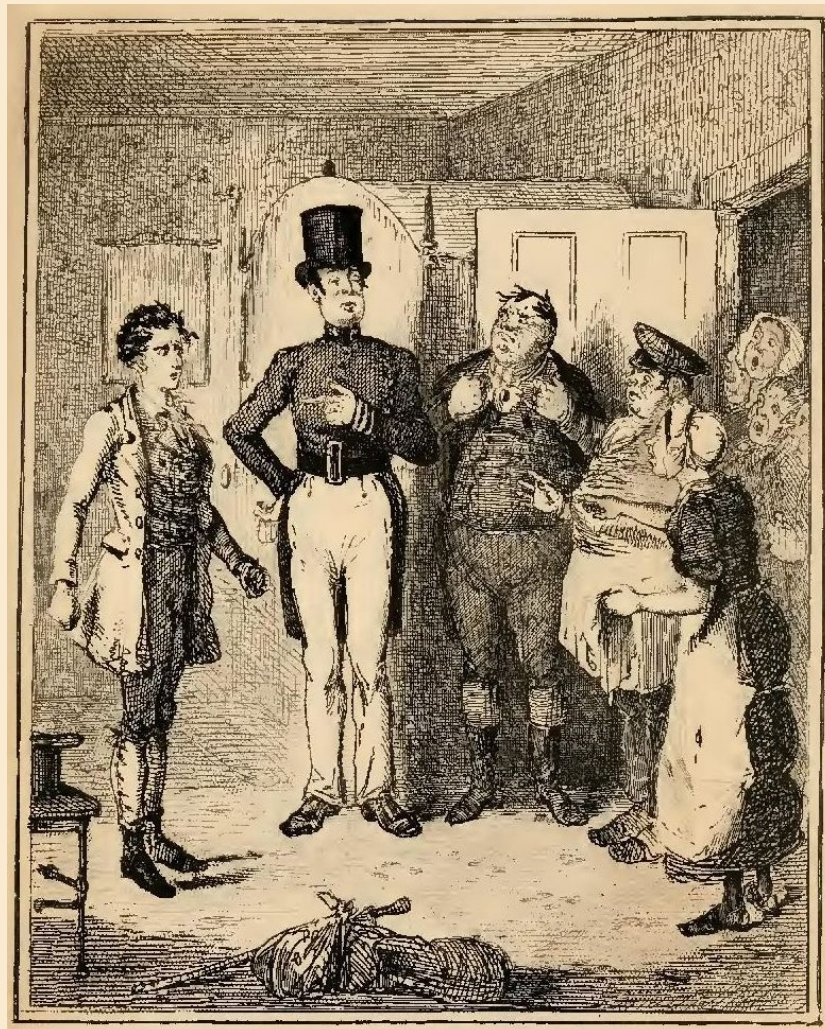
After some hesitation he dressed, and rang for the servant.

"That roll of paper," said he, when she appeared, "lay on my chair when I woke. It was not there last night, and it does not belong to me. How it came there I know not. The papers appear to be bank-notes. You had better take them to your master, and inquire whether any person in the house has lost them."

The girl looked surprised; but took them up, and followed his advice.

Very soon after Colin heard a hue and cry raised below-stairs; and after a few minutes, a rush of people towards his room.

"Is this him?" demanded a man, with a belt round his body, and a glazed rim on the edge of his hat-crown.



Original Size

"That's him!" replied the servant-girl. "He gave them to me."

"Come, young man, I want you," said the policeman, seizing Colin roughly. "Come along with me." And, in spite of all his entreaties and protestations, he was harried away. It appeared that Mr. Prince, who occupied a room on the same floor as his young antagonist, had identified the notes as his own, and declared that Colin must have robbed him.

After the lapse of a very short period, Colin stood before the grave magisterial authorities sitting at Guildhall, with Mr. Prince as his accuser. The charge having been heard, Colin replied to it with all the fearlessness, determination, and indignation, which the consciousness of innocence is sure to inspire. He related the occurrences of the previous evening, and concluded by expressing his firm belief that the money

had been placed upon his chair in order to bring him into trouble. When searched, ten sovereigns and some silver had been found upon him. He was asked to account for the possession of so much money? To this question he flatly refused to answer, as well as those bearing upon his own character and employment; who he was; where he came from; and what place he had left when he arrived at the Yorkshire House.

In this dilemma an idea struck the subtle brain of Mr. Prince. He felt now perfectly secure of his victim. He owned the sovereigns also, and declared they were part of the money which had been abstracted during the night from his pocket-book. Here, however, he overstepped the mark. Colin instantly requested that the landlord of the inn might be called to witness that the money was in his possession at the time he arrived there, and many hours before it could even be pretended that he saw the individual who now stood forwards as his accuser. To this fact the landlord honestly bore testimony,—a piece of evidence which caused the face of Colin's accuser to assume the tint of a thundercloud with the sunshine on it—he looked black and white at the same time. Boots also declared that on going up-stairs to leave the gentlemen's boots at their doors, he saw some person come out of the young man's room, who certainly bore very little resemblance to the occupant of that room himself. After some further investigation Mr. Prince was accommodated with a reprimand from the bench, and the case was dismissed.

CHAPTER XVI.

Colin makes an acquaintance, and is put in a way of being introduced to his sister, a "public singer."

THE temptations of the Yorkshire House were not sufficiently great to induce Colin to remain in it after the conclusion of the foregoing adventure. Having returned to discharge his shot, he bade good b'ye to the place altogether, and again betook himself to the streets, with the double idea of looking about him, and of seeking out another home. In the course of the afternoon he contrived to pick up an acquaintance at a small public house where he called, in the person of a tall, thin young man, not unlike a pea-rod split half-way up: clad in a blue coat, partially out at elbows, and so short in the arms that his wrists and great red hands hung out full a quarter of a yard, like fly-flappers; while his trowsers,—an old-fashioned, striped, summer pair,—allowed his ankles to descend below them, in no contemptible imitation of a pair of stilts. His sallow countenance strongly resembled in shape a boy's humming-top. From certain conversations which Colin had with him, it appeared that this miserable being, whose name was Wintlebury, was but about two-and-twenty years of age, and had been brought up as assistant to a poor painter of window-blinds, scenes for licensed concert-taverns, and such like, then resident in some obscure back street near the Commercial Road. As his master was himself half-starved upon the productions of his genius, the lad—who came in but second—very naturally starved outright; and one night, in the mere desperation of hunger, fell upon some chops, which had been prepared for the family's supper, and devoured them. On the discovery of this atrocious act, he was turned out of the house at ten o'clock, and left to wander about the streets. His only friend was his sister, who sang and performed some minor parts at the threepenny tavern concerts, so numerous at the eastern end of the town; and whose finances, unfortunately, were not in a much better condition than his own. Sickness had ruined her; and she paid much more to keep herself alive, than her living ordinarily cost her: he therefore could not find in his heart to apply to her. That night he walked the streets, till, tired and worn out, he sat down about two o'clock on the steps of Guildhall, and fell asleep. Here he was apprehended and lodged in the watch-house; taken to the police-office the next day, and committed to prison for sleeping in the open air;—a sentence the term of which had expired but a short time before.

As Colin had yet a round sum left, and, as the day advanced, began to feel something like the want of a dinner, he adopted the advice of Wintlebury, and walked with him into one of those bow-windowed shops in which a display of greasy-looking hams, varnished pork-pies, and dry boiled-beef, is usually made; while a savoury steam ascends through the bars of the area-gate, as a sort of hint to the nose of the 'passer-by that in the region above he may make his dinner. Having regaled himself and his companion with an ample repast, Colin discharged the bill, and they wandered into the town. As neither of them knew where to put up at night, Wintlebury, advised Colin, for economy's sake, to look out for a private lodging; and recommended him to apply at the identical house where his own sister lodged; as he thought the mistress most probably would have one sort of room or another unoccupied.

To this proposal Colin consented. They walked in the direction of Shoreditch, and did not halt until they arrived at the door of a house in the Mile End Road.

"All right!" said Colin's companion,—*"there's a paper in the window."*

Just as Wintlebury had ceased to agitate the knocker, Colin—whose eyes were downwards—saw a dirty face popped close to the panes of the low kitchen window, with a pair of white eyes turned up to catch a glimpse of the applicants.

Mrs. Popple soon made her appearance; and having ascertained the object of the visit, proceeded to conduct them into the house. As the party ascended the stairs, Mrs. Popple informed Colin that he would find her upper room a most delightful retreat. He might there read his book in peace; or, if he were so disposed, might play his flute, violin, trombone, tambourine, or even drum, without fear of complaint from any of the other lodgers, who really agreed so well together, that it was almost like paradise itself to live in such a social community. The window of it also overlooked all the backs of the surrounding houses, while a skylight in front opened directly upon the heavens themselves. Colin replied, that he neither played on any musical instrument, nor did he particularly admire such heavens as he had hitherto seen over London. He did not think the attic was likely to suit him. As he threw a careless eye around, he observed a black stump-bedstead,

one decent chair, and three rush-bottomed ditto; while in one corner stood an old oak chest, made, probably, in the early days of George the First, and large enough almost to be converted, if occasion required, into a family burying-place. On the whitewashed walls were scratched with the artistical finger-nails of previous occupants various ill-proportioned figures.

Colin at length decided to become "the monarch of all he surveyed" for the space of one week. In the mean time Wintlebury had taken the opportunity of seeing his sister, and had received two free orders from her for a concert at the Condor Tavern that evening.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Peep at a Tavern Concert.—Colin falls in love, parts with his money, and gets into difficulties.

THE entrance to the "saloon" of the Tavern where the Concert was to be held lay through a dram-shop. As Colin and his companion passed the bar, the latter familiarly recognised several shabby-genteel and dissipated-looking young men, who stood there drinking gin-and-water, and talking exquisite nonsense to a pretty-faced toy-like bar-maid, whose principal recommendation with her master consisted in the skill with which she contrived to lure and detain at the bar all such simpletons as usually spent the greater portion of their spare time amidst such scenes. By the side of the passage, and near the door of the saloon, was pasted up a small paper, on which was the following announcement: "On Sundays, sixpence, value given."

The "value given" consisted of about a dozen spoonful of either gin or rum, with very hot water, to make it appear strong,—or of a pot of ale or stout, at the discretion of the customer.

Very much to Colin's astonishment,—as well it might be, considering that he had never before seen aught of the kind more extensive than a country inn,—he was suddenly ushered by his companion into a "saloon," containing about from three to five hundred persons, arranged on forms placed across the room, each form having before it a narrow raised ledge, not unlike those sometimes seen in the pews of churches, on which to lodge the respective pots, bottles, and glasses of the company. Down the avenues, which ran longitudinally, for the convenience of passage, certain individuals were calling shrimps, screwed up in conical white packages of one penny each; while the perfume, if such it could be called, from some scores of pipes and cigars, ascended in multitudinous little clouds above the heads of the company, and covered as with a filmy atmosphere the frescoed landscapes with which the walls above were bountifully decorated. At the remote end of the room appeared a stage and proscenium on a small scale, after the fashion of a Minor Theatre.

Shortly after Colin and his friend had taken their seats, a gentleman commenced playing an overture upon an instrument which had been highly admired there ever since its introduction, as it formed within itself a magnificent combination of organ, piano, clarionet, and bagpipe, and possessed besides the additional advantage of occasionally producing tones at its own will and pleasure to which those of no other instrument in the world might be compared, and of which no adequate conception can be formed, unless the reader has enjoyed the exquisite delight of hearing a "fantasia extempore" played on the hinges of some unoiled door, as it gradually, and in varying time, declined from a wide open position to the door-cheek.

As I have not the most distant intention of wearying either the reader or myself with a detailed description of the night's entertainment, I shall merely observe, that after the curtain drew up, a succession of songs, comic, patriotic, and sentimental, was introduced, and sung by various members of the professional company. Amongst these appeared one, on seeing whom Wintlebury exclaimed to his companion, "That's my sister!"

Colin looked. A beautiful-complexioned girl was on the stage,—bright-eyed, lively, and attractively attired in the showy costume of a theatrical Neapolitan maid. After a brief prelude on the famous Orchestræolophonagpipe, she sung, apparently not without effort, but with the most bewitching assumption of modesty telling its troubles to the moon, a song the burden of which ran "*Too many lovers will puzzle a maid!*"

"Encore!—encore!" enthusiastically cried a gentleman, who was sitting a few seats in advance, as he clapped his hands madly together, and tossed his legs at random under the seat before him, "admirable, bi'gar!—me quite consent vith dat. Too many *is* too much!"

"Hangcoor!" repeated a young sailor, considerably more than half-seas over, as he unconsciously recharged his pipe, as though he were ramming down the wadding of a gun, "hangcoor!—Go it agen, Bess, or whatever your name is. Hangcoor!"

This word, under a dozen different pronunciations, ran round the room, while Miss Harriet Wintlebury made a profound courtesy, and proceeded to repeat her song.

As Colin gazed, and gazed again, turned away his eyes, and as instantly fixed them upon the same beautiful object again, his bosom burned, and his cheeks grew flushed,—he felt as though in the presence of a being whom he could think scarcely inferior to the angels—at least, he had never in his life seen *woman* as she is before. For what were the simple beings under that name whom he had met in the out-of-the-way country nook he had so recently left? What was his late mistress, Miss Sowersoft?—what the maids on the farm?—what even Fanny herself?—mere plain, dull, plodding, lifeless creatures of the feminine gender, and nothing more. But this enchantress!—his heart leaped up, and in that one moment he felt more of the deep yearning of love than ever in the course of his whole life he had felt before.

"Let us go nearer," he whispered to his companion; and in the next minute they were forcing their way down one of the passages between the forms towards the other end of the room. Before they had succeeded

in obtaining a seat on the last form, close under the stage-lamps, Miss Harriet had concluded her melody, and retired amidst considerable applause. Until the period of her reappearance the time occupied by other performers seemed to Colin endless. Under other circumstances, the novelty and freshness of such an entertainment would have beguiled his attention deeply, and resolved hours into the seeming space of but a few minutes; but now the sense of pleasure derived from this source was rendered dull and pointless by comparison with that far keener delight, that tumultuous throng of hopeful passions, which had so suddenly and strangely taken possession of his bosom. At length she came again,—he started, astonished. Could it be the same? The clear bright complexion—(or what had seemed at the further end of the room to be so)—now looked opaque and earthy; the white was dead white, and the red as abruptly red as though St. Anthony had been busy with his pencil, patching those cheeks with fire; while the substratum of bone and flesh looked worn into a shape of anxious pain, that gave the lie direct and palpable to the colourable pretensions of the surface. And then the handsome bust, which at a distance seemed so beautiful, now appeared a most miserable artistical mockery of nature; and the fixed meaningless gaze,—the mouth formally extended in order to display the teeth,—the dead lack-lustre stare at the remote end of the room, calculated to produce an impression on the more distant portion of the audience,—all combined deeply and strongly to impress the horrible conviction on the mind, that this poor creature, in spite of all assumptions and decorations to the contrary, was a *very poor*, worn-out, deplorable creature indeed! It forced upon the spectator something like the idea of a death's head endeavouring to be merry,—a skull fitted with glass eyes, and covered with a thin painted mask of parchment, striving to laugh and look happy, in order to be consistent with the laughter and the happiness around it. Add to this the hollow faint voice,—(the mere echo of the sound it once had been,)—pumped up from lungs that seemed to have lost all power,—to have decayed until scarcely any portion remained,—and we shall feel impressed, as Colin was, with a fearful, almost a terrible, sense of the poor uses to which humanity is sometimes put, and of the deep wretchedness often existing among those whose occupation in life is to *look* gay, whatever they may feel.

In truth, consumption was feeding on her, seemingly deep and irremediable. Yet she struggled on: what else could she? Still she strove, still fulfilled her occupation every night, still sung, still tried to look merry, although her heart was all out of heart, and her bosom was filled with fear and anxiety from the dread sense of approaching death—too surely at hand—and she unprepared! Perhaps to come to her on that very stage,—perhaps *then!* And all this to gain a morsel of daily bread!

Although reflections of this nature crowded on Colin's mind in a heavy throng, as he gazed on the poor made-up form before him, still he could not entirely free himself from the impression which her appearance had previously produced upon him. That which was artificial, and affected to others, was not so to his perceptions, for his inexperience would not allow him to see it. The appearance of modesty was to him real modesty; of grace, was grace; of lightheartedness and joy, as real as though a single care had never entered that bosom since the day it first stemmed the rude tide of the world. And as for the rest,—just as with every other imperfection which may exist in the object of any lover's hopes—so was it with hers. Through familiarity they were soon overlooked; and, like the shadows on the moon, though they chequered, they did not extinguish the general light.

At the conclusion of the performance Mr. Wintlebury borrowed ten shillings of Colin,—promising to pay him again as soon as he could get into work,—and they parted for the evening. Our hero returned to his humble bed in Mrs. Popple's garret, to pass a restless night amidst strangely-mingled visions of tavern concerts and beautiful singing ladies.

As, in his present state of feeling, there was nothing which in his heart Colin so much desired as an opportunity of obliging his second-floor neighbour, Miss Wintlebury, it luckily happened that in the course of a very short time she failed not to afford him various opportunities of so doing, having in all probability been taught her cue by the brother. After some trifling requests, such as borrowing tea, &c., she at last ventured, though very reluctantly indeed, to ask the loan, just for three days, of four pounds fifteen, if he *could* possibly do her that great obligation, in order to satisfy the impudent demands of the apothecary, the tea-dealer, the baker, and the butcher, who severally and respectively had peremptorily cut off the supplies.

All these friendly applications Colin responded to with unparalleled promptitude, although the last one so very materially enlarged the hollow of his purse, that he began to marvel how he himself should contrive to clear his way as far as to the end of the next fortnight.

This position of affairs somewhat aroused him from the idle day-dream in which he had been indulging. It was time, high time, that he set about doing something to earn a subsistence; for, besides the amount he had thus expended in supplying the wants of others, he had also lessened his stock very rapidly by attending nightly at the concert-room to hear his mistress's voice, which he thought the finest in the world, and to rejoice over the popular applause with which she there seldom failed to be greeted. For, singular as it may appear, he had never yet met with her in their own house, nor exchanged a single word with her in private upon any occasion whatever. His personal introduction yet remained to be made.

Several subsequent days he spent in various futile endeavours to obtain employment. Some, who otherwise would have engaged him, wanted a character from his last place. He had none to give; and, therefore, was denied the opportunity of earning one. Others required a person partially acquainted with their business; and so his services could not be rendered available. Meantime he had not neglected to call once or twice at the Yorkshire House, and inquire whether any letter had arrived there directed for him. No. The Squire had not written in reply to the letter he had despatched from that place, and all hope of deriving assistance from that quarter seemed, of course, entirely banished. "Doubtless," thought he, "Mr. Lupton has heard some bad accounts of me, and has wholly given me up." In this conjecture our hero was, however, totally mistaken. Mr. Lupton had not yet returned from the excursion of a few weeks' duration, of which he spoke when Colin was at the Hall; and, consequently, had not seen the letter in question. Neither, had he done so, would his return have been of any avail in this particular instance; since it most unfortunately happened for Colin that on the day but one following the arrival of his epistle, it so fell out that Doctor Rowel was called to attend the Squire's housekeeper upon the attack of a sudden illness. On this occasion, while left in the drawing-room alone, the doctor's eye chanced to alight upon a number of unopened letters lying on the table, in readiness

for the owner of the mansion on his arrival; and amongst them he espied one, on the corner of which was written the name of "Colin Clink." He hastily took it up; stole a glance at its contents by shining it against the sun; and, finding it to contain certain very serious statements touching himself, he took a bold step at once, and, regardless of consequences, put it into the fire. Before the servant returned to conduct him up stairs, every vestige of the letter had totally disappeared. Thus had Doctor Rowel not only for the time being saved himself, but also obtained that knowledge of which he stood in much need,—the knowledge of Colin's place of retreat and particular address. Of these he instantly resolved to make the earliest possible use.

Disappointed in all his expectations, and defeated in every endeavour to obtain the means of making a livelihood, Colin returned to his little domicile, and on the spur of the moment wrote a very dolorous letter to his mother and Fanny, in which he set forth all his recent disasters, and the trouble he was now in, adding, that unless something or other to his advantage turned up very shortly he should scarcely know which way to turn himself for a living.

And yet, when he thought the matter more calmly over again, after the letter was despatched, and could not be recalled, he plucked up heart, and for another evening at least drove away care by retiring to the Condor Tavern, and taking his accustomed place within easy sight of the adorable Harriet Wintlebury.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Colin is pursued, and who his pursuer was.—A strange set-out, and a very pathetic parting.

DURING the time the transactions recently related were progressing, a strange hubbub had been raised at Whinmoor touching Colin's disappearance. Palethorpe waxed desperate, and Miss Sowersoft's temper curdled like an embryo cheese. Dire vengeance against him was threatened. York Castle and bread and water were the mildest things prescribed for him; although, in their opinion he well deserved a halter. Mrs. Clink and Fanny had been heartily abused by Palethorpe for having "backed him up in burglary, and afterwards connived at his running away from his work."

The fact was, this worthy felt doubly enraged because he had missed an excellent chance of having a shot at him, and now swore that, if ever he could lay hands upon him again, he would very nearly bray him into a pulp.

At this portentous period it was that Dr. Rowel made his appearance at the farm, (after his discovery of Colin's letter at Kiddal Hall,) and by all the arguments in his power raised the wrath of its inhabitants still higher against the young man, and even went so far as to promise, that as he was himself also an injured party, he had no objection to pay half Palethorpe's expenses, if he would go after the culprit to London,—whither, according to certain private information he had received, Colin had directed his flight. Palethorpe snapped at the offer as a hungry wolf might at a bone. He had long wished to see London, and a capital opportunity was here presented. He vowed that he would ferret out the lad before he came back again, though he should dive to the bottom of the Thames for him; and proposed to set out on the following day, to avoid farther loss of time.

This proposal being acceded to, nearly the whole night was expended by the attentive mistress in rigging him out for his journey. The chaise-cart was got ready early next morning to convey Palethorpe and his luggage to the coach-office at Leeds; and an old half-pint bottle filled with brandy and water, together with immense sandwiches, were secretly inveigled by Miss Sowersoft into his top-coat pocket.

Having duly inquired whether everything was ready, Mr. Palethorpe was called into the parlour by his mistress, who having shut the door, set her candle down on the table, (for it was not yet daylight,) and began to talk to him in a tone more than usually serious.

"You are going," said she, "a long journey,—a very long journey. I hope to heaven we shall see you safe back again. I'm sure I shall hardly sleep o'nights for knowing you are not in the house; but wherever you are, now do remember what I say, and take care of yourself. We don't know what different places are till we see 'em; and I'm sure I almost feel afraid—when it comes to this last minnit—" Here she tucked up the corner of her apron, and placed it in close proximity with the corner of her eye. "I raelly feel afraid of trusting you there by yourself."

Palethorpe was here about to explain at large his own capabilities for governing his own rampant self, had not Miss Sowersoft derived additional vigour from the attempted interruption, and proceeded:

"I know you are plenty old enough to keep out of harm's way,—that is certain; but then there are so many dangers that nobody can foresee, and temptations hung out beyond any single man's capacity to resist—I am afraid. I'm sure it would take a great load off of my mind if I was going along with you,—a very heavy load, indeed. Ay, dear!"

"Oh, never heed, meesis," replied Palethorpe; "I shall get back as safe and sound as a rotten pear. A rotten pear, says I!—no, I mean as sound as a roach—trust me for that. I ar'n't going a-gate of no temptations, that's flat. Bless me! I should think there's both ale enough, and opportunities for folks to get married enough, i' Yorkshire, without goin' all the road to Lunnun for 'em!"

"Well," replied his mistress, "you are very discretionary at home. I say nothing about that; but perhaps, you know, when you 're surrounded by so many things to distract your considerations, you *might*—a—a—. I'm sure I hardly know how to express myself fully; but all I mean to say is, that after all, you know,—and do as we will to the contrary, yet somehow, as I was going to say, men will be men sometimes, and women women!"

As Miss Sowersoft uttered this very sagacious remark, she began to sob rather hysterically, and seemingly

to demand the support of Mr. Palethorpe's arm. This he promptly offered; a few more words in a consolatory tone escaped his lips; the maid in the passage outside thought she heard a sound something like a kiss; and in another minute the head farming-man hurried desperately out. He was afraid of being too late at Leeds, and in his hurry to rush through the dairy to get into the chaise-cart which stood in the yard, he kicked over a pan of new milk, and plunged his other foot into a tub of hot hog-wash, both of which had just before been placed upon the ground by the said maid.

"Dang your stuff!" exclaimed he, dashing his foot against the overturned vessel; "what, in the devil's name, isn't there room enough in Yorkshire to set your things down, without cramming 'em under people's feet like that?"

The maid laughed in his face, and Miss Sowersoft called lovingly after him not to mind it; while Palethorpe leaped into the vehicle, and ordered Abel to drive as fast as he could into Briggate.

On the following day he opened his wondering eyes for the first time upon London.

CHAPTER XIX.

Curiously illustrates the old saying, that a man may "go farther to fare worse."

NO sooner had Mr. Palethorpe arrived, than following Dr. Rowel's directions, he marched off in a very business-like manner to the Yorkshire House, and inquired for Colin Clink. No such person was there; although one of the female servants told him she believed a young man of that name had made a short stay at the house some weeks ago, and had called once or twice since; but he had left long ago, and gone they knew not whither.

This information brought the pursuer to a dead stop. His scent was lost all at once; and as he had not made provision out of the wits of other people for any disappointment of this kind, while his own were very backward in coming to his assistance, he suddenly felt that all was over. Moreover he found London to be a very different place to what he had expected; and for a stranger to set about finding a lost man there, seemed worse even than hunting for a needle in a bottle of straw. Instead, therefore, of troubling himself just then any farther about the matter, he thought he would first sleep upon it, and in the mean time go about and see the sights. First he wended his way to the top of the Monument, having previously very carefully perused the inscription as its base. After that he ascended into the lantern of St. Paul's. He then travelled down to the Tower, and very narrowly escaped walking into the ditch just where there chanced to be a rail broken, while his eyes were turned up in curious scrutiny of the White Tower. He much longed to go in, but dared not, for fear of the soldiers, as he was not hitherto aware that it was guarded so stoutly by a military force. When he got back into St. Martins le Grand, and looked up at the Post Office clock, he was about to pull out his watch and compare dials, but, to his dismay, found that somebody had saved him the trouble by pulling it out before him. In his confusion he instinctively endeavoured to wipe his nose, but discovered that one of his best handkerchiefs was gone too. In this double dilemma he stared about him some minutes very oddly, and not a little to the amusement of certain cabmen, who stood hard by observing his motions with visages wide awake. He began to be afraid of remaining any longer in the street, and accordingly hurried back to the Yorkshire House, where he endeavoured to console himself under his losses by taking an extra quantity of Burton ale and gin-and-water.

These little bits of experience made him afterwards so very cautious, that whenever he walked out he was continually engaged in cramming his hands, first one and then the other, into his coat-pockets, then into his breeches, in order to be assured that his money was safe; for he held it as a maxim, that no man who knew what he was about would leave his cash in a box which anybody might unlock, at a public house where strangers were running in and out, and up and down stairs, all day long. He accordingly, for the greater safety, carried his whole stock about with him.

In this manner he wiled away nearly a week, waiting chances of meeting with Colin accidentally, and hoping that he might luckily call again at the Yorkshire House; in which case he had made provision for securing him, by leaving word that, if he *did* come, he was to be told that a very well-known acquaintance from the country had arrived, who wished to see him upon most particular business. But time passed on, his trap caught nothing, and, after eight or nine days' stay, he found himself no forwarder, save in the amount of wonderful things he had seen, and the quantity of money he had expended, than he was when he parted with Miss Sowersoft. Disastrous as all this was, it is not to be wondered at that his courage evaporated very rapidly, and, in fact, became so very nearly dried wholly up, that he made up his mind, after many efforts, to sneak back again into the country, invent the best tale he possibly could, in order to satisfy his "meesis" and the doctor, and sit down once again to his beer and bacon on the quiet farm, renouncing London, and every attempt to catch Colin Clink, at once and for ever.

Fortune, however, which, as we are told, ever watches over the brave, would not suffer him to go thus far, and undergo the fatigues and dangers of such a journey, merely to come to such an inglorious conclusion. And as Palethorpe manfully determined to have a good last night of it before he left town, and see for himself what life in London really was, the frail goddess took that favourable opportunity of adding a striking incident to the tailpiece of his chapter of accidents,—an incident which, as it brought him very unexpectedly into the presence of Colin, and otherwise is worthy of particular note, I shall give in a chapter by itself.

CHAPTER XX.

The singular meeting of Colin and Palethorpe.—A jolly night, and the results of it, with one of the most remarkable discoveries on record.

ON the last afternoon of his intended stay in town, Mr. Palethorpe rambled as far as Regent's Park, and into the Zoological Gardens, where he amused himself some time by tempting the bears with a bit of bun, without allowing them to get near enough to lay hold of it; a piece of dexterity on his own part which made him laugh heartily twenty times over; for the cleverness of it seemed to him excellent.



Original Size

When weary of that, he repaired to the monkey-cage, in anticipation of some excellent sport; but there he found many much more able fellows than himself; and, in endeavouring to outwit a great baboon with a walnut, got one of his ears nearly twinged off, highly to the delight of a whole company of boys who stood by, and whose laughter and jeers eventually caused him to beat a retreat out of the gardens.

Having taken a pretty accurate survey of the West End, he descended Regent Street in the evening, and about nine o'clock might have been seen wending his way with indecisive step down Coventry Street, from the Piccadilly end, with a considerable amount of Barclay and Perkins's stout in his head,—porter being such a rarity to him, that he thought it as well to make the best of it while he enjoyed the opportunity.

On the right hand side of Coventry Street he accidentally espied a fishmonger's shop. Palethorpe always enjoyed a good appetite for oysters whenever he could get them, and, as he had fixed his eyes upon a leaden tank full, he walked into the shop aforesaid, and requested the man to open him a lot. As fast as he opened them, Mr. Palethorpe swallowed them; while, as long as he continued to swallow, the man continued to open, keeping silent count of the number taken all the while, until in a loud voice he at last proclaimed a numerical amount of five dozen. Mr. Palethorpe then bid him desist, and, with great reluctance at the moment, paid the demand of a crown for his supper. Somehow, however, his stomach raised certain very cogent objections

against thus suddenly being converted into an oyster bed, and demanded the instant administration of a dram. This, however, he could not procure there, but was invited to walk into the room behind, where he might take wine at his leisure. Although Palethorpe did not much relish the notion, he did not feel in the best possible condition for quitting the shop and going elsewhere; and therefore, almost as a matter of necessity, adopted the waiter's suggestion. Pushing open a door, therefore, with an oval glass in it, he found himself all at once in one of the finest public apartments he had yet entered.

At first he felt almost doubtful whether he had not made a mistake, and walked into a chapel,—the gallery round the walls and the pew-like seats very strongly favouring the idea. This notion was, however, very soon put to the rout by an individual, whom he had mistaken for a pew-opener, approaching him with the polite inquiry, what wine would he please to take.

"Oh, ony'll do. One sort is just the same as another to me, for I know no difference," replied Palethorpe.

"Pint of sherry, perhaps, sir? Very well, sir." And before the Yorkshireman could find time to express either his acquiescence or his dissent, the waiter had disappeared to execute the order of his own suggestion.

When he returned, Palethorpe took the wine in silent dudgeon. Of course he had the appearance of an animal too remarkable not to attract attention anywhere in London, but especially so in the particular region where fortune had now condescended to cast him.

As far as he could discern anything of the matter, the company appeared of the highest respectability, if not, in fact, almost too good for him. But then, as everybody conducted themselves in the most free and easy manner possible, he was not long in making himself perfectly at home. The ladies, who were beautifully dressed, and decorated with various sorts of flowers, struck him with particular admiration. All that disagreeable crust of reserve, in which country people are so very prone to encase themselves, was here worn quite clean off; and he found no more trouble in entering into conversation with these ladies than he did at home in talking to his horses. Two of them politely invited themselves to his wine, and, without waiting permission, drank it off to his good health, and suggested to him to call for more. They playfully tweaked his nose, put his hat on their own heads, and invited him to partake of his own drink so very kindly and pressingly, that at last it would scarcely have been known whether they or he had in reality paid for it.

About midnight, and at the particular request of a young lady who was taking leave, Palethorpe was prevailed on to escort her home; a piece of politeness which he felt most competent to discharge by calling a cab, as his own legs had by this time in great part lost the faculty of carrying the superstructure of his body with that precise degree of perpendicularity which is commonly considered essential to personal comfort and safety.

From that moment up to the occurrence of the following incident, his history is wrapped in the most profound and mysterious darkness.

On this eventful night, the intended last night of all Mr. Palethorpe's experiences in the metropolis, as fortune would have it, Colin had treated himself with a sight of Vauxhall Gardens; and, as he remained to see the fireworks at the conclusion, he did not get away very early. Add to this the time necessarily occupied in taking refreshment, and walking all the way from the Gardens towards London Bridge, and we shall not expect to find him at the top of Newington Road, on his way home, earlier than between one and two in the morning. As our hero walked rapidly down Blackman Street, he observed a man, clothed in a short, square-lapped coat, of a broad country-cut, staggering along before him very much as though he meditated going head foremost at every object that presented itself on either side of the road. Occasionally he came to a full stop, and see-saw'd his body backwards and forwards, until the impetus gained one way either compelled him to recede a few paces, or plunged him again desperately forwards. Now he seized a lamp-post, as though it were some dear, newly-recognised friend; and then made a furious sally to reach some advanced point of the wall on the other hand. Altogether his motions were so whimsical "that Colin slackened his pace in order to keep behind, and thus enjoy the fun. The street was perfectly silent; not a soul besides themselves was about, and he had the farcical performer therefore altogether to himself. He did not enjoy the spectacle, however, very long. Scarcely had the man staggered a hundred yards farther before he went down on all fours; and, as he found himself incapable of rising again, he seemed by his actions, as though he finally submitted to fate, and made up his mind to nestle there for the remainder of the night. Since, however, Colin never was the lad to leave a fellow-creature helpless, without offering his assistance, he hastened forwards, and taking him by the shoulder, bade him get up and go home.

"Where's meesis?" demanded the sot. "I want a posset, and a posset I 'll have, or be dang'd to me!"

Colin immediately recognised the voice. Bursting into a loud laugh, he raised the prostrate man's face towards the light, and beheld the features of his old and inveterate enemy, Palethorpe. What in the world could have brought him to town? Although Colin more than half suspected the real occasion, he determined to ascertain the truth.

"And, where have you come from, my man?" demanded Colin.

"Come from!" repeated Sammy. "I'll tell you where I come from. I co—co—come from Whinmoor—Whinmoor, I say, in Yorkshire. Miss Zowerzoff's my meesis—and a very good meesis she is, I am happy to say. She knows me very well, and I know her. I wish she were here!"

"Well—well!" cried Colin; "but what have you come to London about?"

"Why, what do you think, now?" asked Palethorpe, with a peculiarly knowing look. "What *do* you think? Just guess. I'll bet a shilling you can't guess, if you guess all night. No—no; no man knows my bizziness but myself. My name's Palethorpe, and I know two of that. Can you tell me, do you know anybody named Colin Clink here i' Lunnun?"

"I do," said our hero. "I know him well."

"You do!" exclaimed Samuel, trying to start up and stare in his face, but sinking again in the effort; "then yo 're my man! Gis hold on your hand, my lad. Dang his carcass! I 'll kill him as sure as iver I touch him! I will—I tell you. I 'll kill him dead on th' spot."

"But you mean to catch him first," said Colin, "don't you?"

"What do you mean? Catch him! I mean to catch him! Be civil, my lad, or else I shall put a spur in *your* sides afore you go."

"You brute!" exclaimed Colin, seizing him by the collar on each side of his neck, and holding his head stiff up with his knuckles,—“look at me. I am Colin Clink. Now, you cowardly, drunken scoundrel, what have you not deserved at my hands?”

"Oh! what, you are he, are you?" gurgled

Mr. Palethorpe. "Just let me go a minnit, and I 'll show you!"

"Come, then!" said Colin, and he pulled the said Mr. Palethorpe to the edge of the causeway. In the next moment he deposited him in the middle of a large dam which had been made in the gutter close by for the convenience of some bricklayers, who were repairing an adjoining house, telling him to "sit there, and sober himself; and the next time he tried to catch Colin Clink, to thank his stars if he came off no worse." So saying, he left him to the enjoyment of his "new patent water-bed," and his meditations.

Near the Borough town-hall Colin met a policeman, whom he informed of the hapless condition of a poor drunken countryman some distance down the street, and requested him to go to his assistance. He then made off at the best speed he could, and soon baffled all pursuit amidst the intricate turnings of the city. True, he lost his way; still he reached his lodgings before four o'clock.

To return to Mr. Palethorpe. He had not yet seen even a tithe of his troubles. The sequel of this last adventure proved richer than all the rest. Between two and three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day he crept very stealthily into the parlour of his inn, as "down in the mouth" as a beaten dog. He called for writing materials, and addressed a strange scrawl to the Commercial Bank in Leeds, where it was known he had deposited about three hundred pounds. He afterwards retired to his bed-room, from which in a short time he issued with a bundle in his hand; and, after making certain confidential inquiries of the shoe-black, walked forth in the direction of Rosemary Lane. It seems pretty certain that John Boots directed him thither as one of the most eligible places in the City for the disposal of all sorts of worn-out or superfluous wearing-apparel, and one to which poor gentlemen in difficulties not unfrequently resorted. However that may be, the fact itself is positive, that on the evening of the second Saturday after his arrival, Mr. Palethorpe was seen in a very dejected mood, pacing along Rosemary Lane, towards Cable Street, with a bundle tied up in a blue and white cotton handkerchief, under his arm.

As his eyes wandered from one side of the street to the other, he observed, idling at doors, or along the footway, a generation of low, dark men, who, by the peculiar cut of their countenances might readily have been mistaken—especially by lamplight—for lineal and legitimate descendants of the old race of Grecian satyrs. Inhabiting places in which no other description of person could breathe, and carrying on their congenial trades in "Clo'—old clo'!" these people, with their families, live and thrive on the filth of all the other parts of the unapproachable city. Nothing comes amiss to them: the oldest garment has some profit in it, and the merest shred its fractional value. Their delight seems to be in a life amidst black bags, and the rags of every other portion of the great community; while the aspect of the region they inhabit—as if to keep all the rest from being put out of countenance—is desolate, dark, slimy, and enveloped in an atmosphere of eternal smoke. The very air seems pregnant with melancholy reminiscences of the faded glory of by-gone men, women, and times. The tarnished embroidery, the sooty red suits, the flabby old silks, the vamped-up hessians, what spectres do they not evoke as they dangle (ghostly mementos of departed greatness) beside the never-washed windows; or flap like an old arras, with every gust of wind against the besmeared and noxious walls! Where, perhaps, the legs of some gallant captain once found a local habitation, there the dirty Israelite now passing along feels ambitious to encase his own. The handkerchief of a bishop invites a "shopb'y's" nose; the last rejected beaver of the Lord Mayor awaits the acceptance of some rascally cranium, which the Lord Mayor would give half his dignity to "nab," and "pop in quod." Even some vanished great one's walking-stick, now sticks in the black corner of the Jew's shop, waiting to be once again shaken by the handle, even though it be but during a brief proud hour on Sunday, by the lad who yesterday hawked cedar pencils through the streets at a halfpenny a piece.

"Buy, sir?—buy?—buy?" Mr. Palethorpe replied in the negative to a man who thus addressed him, but volunteered to sell. He produced the contents of his handkerchief; and before ten minutes, more had elapsed his best blue coat with gilt buttons, and a second pair of corduroys, became the property of the Jew, at one-third less than their value. The reason of this strange proceeding was that during the preceding night's glorification the Yorkshireman had,—in some way totally incomprehensible to himself,—been eased of absolutely every farthing he possessed. He had, therefore, no alternative but to raise a little ready cash upon his clothes, until he could receive from the bank in Leeds, where he had deposited his scrapings, enough to set himself straight again and pay his passage home.

Several times had the sun rolled over the head of this side of the world after the scene above-described, when, one rainy evening, about dusk, as Miss Sowersoft was casting a weary and longing eye across the soddened fields which lay between Snitterton Lodge and the high road, to her inexpressible pleasure she beheld the well-known figure of Mr. Palethorpe making its way towards the house.

"Well, here you are again!" she exclaimed, as he flung down his top-coat, and demanded a jack to get his boots off. "How have you gone on? I see you hav'n't brought him with you, at all events."

Although Miss Sowersoft had made an inquiry the moment Mr. Palethorpe entered the house, she now refused to hear him talk until he had satisfied his appetite. This achievement occupied, of course, considerable time. He then, in the midst of an open-mouthed and anxious rural audience, consisting of every individual, man, maid, and boy, upon the farm, related—*not* his own adventures, but the imaginary adventures of some person very closely resembling himself, who never lived, and whose peregrinations had only existed in the very little world of his own brain.

His expedition had been most successful; for, although he had not exactly succeeded in discovering Colin's retreat,—a mishap attributable to the enormous extent of London, and not to his own want of sagacity,—yet he had astonished the natives there by such specimens of country talent as they were very little prepared for. He pulled out a new watch. "Look there," said he. "I got that through parting with the old 'un, and a better

than that niver went on wheels. I bought some handkerchers for about half-price, and see'd more of Lunnun in ten days than many folks that have been agate there all their lives."

"Then you went 'top o' th' Monument?" demanded old George.

"To be sure I did!" exclaimed Palethorpe, "and St. Paul's Cathedral as well."

"I hope you did not get dropped on, anyhow," remarked Miss Sowersoft, inquiringly; for she really burned to know whether any of the fears she had expressed at his setting out had been realised.

"No, dang it! not I," replied Palethorpe, in a misgiving tone, though with a great assumption of bravery. Yet upon that subject, somehow, he could not expatiate. He felt tongue-tied in spite of himself; and then, as if desirous of escaping any farther explanation touching what he had individually done or not done, he got up and went to the pocket of his great-coat, from which he drew a Sunday newspaper that he had purchased as the coach was starting, and presenting it to Miss Sowersoft—"Here," said he, "I've brought you th' latest news I could lay my hands on, just to let you see what sort of things they do i' th' big town. I hav'n't look'd at it myself yet, so you 've the first peep, meesis."

Miss Sowersoft took the newspaper very graciously, and opened it. Strange news indeed she very soon found there. While Palethorpe was yet maintaining all the dignity of a hero, and stuffing his audience with marvellous accounts of his own exploits, Miss Sowersoft's eye fell upon a report under the head of "Police Intelligence," entitled, "A Yorkshireman in London." She read it; but with such avidity and such a sombre expression of countenance, that the eyes of every one present were irresistibly attracted towards her, and even Mr. Palethorpe's efforts to speak passed almost unobserved. At length Miss Sower-soft uttered a loud hysterical shriek, and fell back in her chair.

Palethorpe instinctively snatched at the newspaper; but, as Abel had seized it before him, only a portion of it reached the fire, into which it was instantly hurled. The part remaining in the grasp of the farming-man contained the awful cause of Miss Sowersoft's calamity. A fight might have ensued for the possession of that fragment also, had not Abel dexterously slipped round the table before Palethorpe could reach him, and, snatching up a lighted lantern that stood on the dresser, escaped into a hayloft; where, having drawn the ladder up after him, he sat down on a truss, and, while Palethorpe bawled and threatened vainly from beneath, deliberately read as follows:—

"A Yorkshireman in London.—Yesterday a stupid-looking 'son of the soil' from Yorkshire, whose legs appeared to have been tied across a barrel during the previous part of his life, and who gave his name Samuel Palethorpe, was brought before their worships, charged by policeman G. 95, with having been found dead drunk in Blackman Street, Borough, between one and two o'clock that morning. When found he was sitting bolt-upright in a pool of lime-water about twelve inches deep, which had been made in the gutter by some bricklayer's labourers employed in mixing mortar near the spot. His hat was crushed into the form of a pancake, and was floating beside him; while he was calling in a stentorian voice for assistance. From the very deplorable statement he made, with tears in his eyes, it appeared that, after rambling about town the greater part of the previous day, in search of the 'lions' of London, during which time he had imbibed an immense quantity of heavy-wet, he repaired to a well-known house in the neighbourhood of the Haymarket, and regaled himself until midnight with wine and cigars. While there he picked up an acquaintance in the person of a 'lady,' (as he described her,) 'with a plum-coloured silk gown on, and one of the handsomest shawls he ever saw in his life.' As the 'lady' was very communicative, and was very polite, and told him that she wished to marry, he naturally concluded she might entertain no very deeply-rooted, objection to himself. In order, therefore, to make a beginning in his courtship, he eventually consented to accompany her home. He believed her to be what she appeared, 'a lady,' and was over-persuaded by the hope of marrying a good fortune. One of the magistrates here expressed his astonishment that any man arrived at the age of the prisoner, (he appeared nearly forty-five,) even though brought up in the veriest wild in England, could possibly be such a fool as the individual before him represented himself. Mr. Palethorpe replied that he had several times read of ladies falling in love with cavaliers, and he thought such a thing might happen to him as well as to anybody else. (Laughter.)

"And what happened afterwards?" asked the magistrate.

"Mr. Palethorpe.—'I don't know very well, for I'd a sup too much. I ar'n't used to drink sich strong wine: but we went over a bridge, I think, becous I remember seeing some lights dance about; but where we went to I know no more than this man here' (pointing to the policeman).

"How much money did you spend?"

"Whoy, unfortunately, I 've lost every farthing I had.'

"And how much had you about your person when you set out?"

"Please, sir, I had seven pounds in goold, and about twelve shillin's in shillin's, besides some ha'pence.'

"Do you think you've been robbed, or did you spend it on the lady?"

"I don't know, sir,—but it's all gone.'

"Well, as you seem to have paid pretty dearly for your pleasure, I shall not fine you this time, but I should advise you to take better care the next time you come to London.'

"The prisoner left the court very chop-fallen, while one of the spectators as he passed whistled in his ear the tune of

'When first in London I arrived, on a visit-on a visit!'"

Before Abel had perused half the above extract he was in ecstasies: and when he had done he cut it out of the paper with his pocket-knife, in order the easier to preserve it for future use. The story soon became known throughout the country side, as Abel made a point of reading it aloud at every public-house he called at, and on every occasion when the hero of it chanced to displease him.

The gist of the joke, however, seemed, in the general opinion, to consist in the fact that Mr. Palethorpe himself had unwittingly brought it all the way from London in his own pocket, for the edification and

amusement of the community. In fact, from that day until the end of his life, that worthy never heard the last of his expedition to London.

But, how did he settle matters with his mistress? That question may be solved when other events of greater importance have been described.

CHAPTER XXI.

Something strange on the staircase, with a needful reflection or two upon it.

BY this time Colin's resources had become so low that but thirteen shillings remained to him of all he had brought from home; and of that small sum about one-half would be due to his landlady in the course of a few days. Yet he continued his kindness towards the poor singer on the second floor, and only the day previously had exchanged his last sovereign on her account. The feelings with which her appearance had first inspired him he could not wholly shake off; although he had since become acquainted with various circumstances which pointed out to him imperatively the necessity of at once setting such a connexion aside, and forgetting even that it had ever existed. He half formed a resolution to do so; and, in order to carry it the better into effect, made up his mind to quit the house altogether—a step he could the more readily take now, as he had not hitherto so much as even seen Miss Wintlebury except on the stage; and she, on the other hand, could know no more of him than his ever-ready and unassuming kindness might have informed her of. These thoughts crowded his mind as he sat at breakfast, and during several hours subsequently presented themselves under every possible phase to his review. About twelve o'clock in the day, as he was descending the stairs to the street, his sight was crossed on the first landing he reached, by a kind of vision in a white dress, which flitted from Miss Wintlebury's chamber to her sitting-room. Its hair was tightly screwed up in bits of newspaper all over its head, very strongly resembling a clumsy piece of mosaic. Its face was of a horrible cream-colour, and as dry as the hide of a rhinoceros. Its eyes dim and glazy. Its neck and shoulders—with respect to the developement of tendons and sinews—not greatly unlike an anatomical preparation. This surprising appearance no sooner heard Colin's footsteps approaching than it skipped rapidly into the sitting-room, and without turning at the instant to close the door, sat hastily down at a small table, on which stood a black teapot, and one cup and saucer, as if with the intention of taking its breakfast.

Somewhat alarmed, Colin hastened down, and was very glad to find Mrs. Popple on her hands and knees at the door, applying pipeclay to the step. Of her he immediately inquired the nature of the apparition he had seen; and was most shocked indeed when he found by her reply, that he had actually mistaken Miss Wintlebury herself for her own ghost. Still the fact was scarcely credible. Surely it was not possible to patch up such a shadow, into the handsome figure which had first inspired him with love; and the recollection of whose seeming beauties still attended upon his imagination with the constancy of a shadow in the sun.

"Ah, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Popple; "but you ain't any conception what a poor creatur' she is. I can carry her about this house like a doll, she's so light and thin. She walks about more like a sperit than anything substantive—that she do. I often think of turning her out of house altogether, for I 'm afraid I shall never get my rent of her; but then, again, when I 'm going to do it, a sum mut seems to whisper to me, and say, 'Missis Popple—Missis Popple, let her alone a bit longer.' And that is the way we go on." Saying which, with a heavy sigh, she scrubbed away at the stones. Colin stood mute.

"She's dyin', sir, as fast she can," added the landlady. "I niver see an indiwidual in a more gallopin' consumption in my life. I expect noat no less than having her corpse thrown on my hands every week that goes over my head."

Could he altogether give up the poor creature of whom this was said? And yet, was it possible he could love her? Colin felt perplexed, puzzled. Like many other gentlemen, therefore, when placed in a similar predicament, he parted company with Mrs. Popple, without saying anything in reply, lest by speaking he should possibly chance—to say worse than nothing.

As the strange shock his feelings had sustained gradually wore off, his previously formed resolutions as gradually grew weaker. Irresistibly inclined to look on the best side only, he began to reason himself into the belief that the lady was not so bad as his own eyes, and Mrs. Popple's tongue, had represented. He had seen her, unluckily, under circumstances sufficiently disadvantageous to reduce to a very ordinary standard even one—as was not very unlikely of the greatest beauties living: and, as for his landlady's remarks, what did they amount to in fact? Since people always magnify what they talk about into a ten times more hideous affair than, according to the natural size of the subject, it would otherwise appear, just as our opticians exhibit monsters a foot lone on paper, which on closer inspection are found too insignificant in reality to be even visible to the unassisted eye. Perhaps Miss Wintle-bury might soon be recovered—soon grow strong again, and eventually be enabled to make a fortune by that voice which now scarcely found her in bread. Thoughts of this nature occupied his mind all day, and until his return home, at about six in the evening.

Shortly afterwards a circumstance occurred no less unexpected on his part than it will prove surprising to the reader; and which, as it finally settled the question of his love for the public singer, as well as another question of great importance to an individual in whom we have felt some concern during the previous part of this history, I shall lose no time in proceeding to relate.

CHAPTER XXII.

A most uncommon courtship, a bit of jealousy, and a very plain declaration.

NOT long had Colin been at home before a message was sent up by Miss Wintlebury, begging the favour of a few minutes' conversation with him as early as it might be convenient to himself. Poor Colin blushed to the eyes as he heard the request, and in a manner so hurried that he scarcely knew his own words, replied that he would wait upon her immediately. He took some time, nevertheless, in adapting and adjusting his dress to his own taste, which he now discovered had suddenly become very particular; but, at length, when he grew ashamed of hanging back any longer, he summoned a desperate resolution, and, like the leader of a forlorn hope, went on to his mistress's door as though on an expedition of life or death.

For the fourth time he found Miss Harriet's appearance changed; though this fourth appearance seemed the most true one. She was yet young, and had been handsome; just as a primrose cropped a week since, and dangling its head over the side of a jar has been handsome, but is so no longer. Her cheeks were slightly—very slightly painted; for custom is custom still, even by the coffin side. Her countenance was naturally intelligent, and had been improved in expression by indulgence in the love of literature. The proportions of her figure were comely enough, and such as would not have matched ill beside even so well-formed an one as was Colin's.

"I am afraid you will think me very bold, Mr. Clink," observed Miss Wintlebury, after the first forms of their meeting had been gone through; "but I wished to thank you personally for your exceeding kindness towards one who is a mere stranger to you. I feel it the more because, unfortunately for me, I have so rarely met with anything of the kind. I think my poor mother—and she has been gone these many years—was the only creature that ever loved me in this world!"

Here her voice grew tremulous, and her utterance half convulsive.

"I do not scruple to say so much now, because in the condition in which I am—I know I am—I am dying, and that is all about it;—in that condition, I say, no scruples prevent me uttering what otherwise I should be ashamed to own, because, with my feet almost in the grave, I feel secure against any imputations which else the world might bring against me. But, having almost done with the world, and feeling under no apprehension that anybody will look upon me in any other light than as a departing guest about to close the door upon her own back for ever, I am not ashamed to speak as a woman openly: for openly I must shortly speak before a far greater Being than any here."

Colin sat, with his eyes fixed on the ground, mute and motionless,—striving to divert his feelings by counting the pattern flowers on the carpet; but he could scarcely see them, his eyes were full. With difficulty he swallowed his grief as Miss Wintlebury continued, "To-night, now, I am unable to go through the exertion of pleasing those drunkards yonder, as usual. Nor is this the first warning I have had that the poor concert of my life is close upon its finale."

Accustomed as the young woman appeared to be to contemplate her own death within the little oratory of her own bosom, she yet displayed that feminine weakness of being unable to allude to it in words before another person without shedding tears.

"I hope, Miss," began Colin, but he could not get on,—“I hope, ma'am———”

"It is not for myself!" she exclaimed resolutely, and as though determined to outface those tears,—“no, not for myself. That is very little worth crying for, indeed.”

She smiled with a ghastly expression of selfcontempt, and continued, "It is, sir, because I have it not in my power to repay you for your kindness to me. I must die in the debt of a stranger, for all help is now going from my hands. These few dresses and trinkets——"

And as she sobbed out the words she placed her hand upon a small heap of theatrical robes and decorations which lay beside her.

"These are all—and a very poor all they are—I have to repay you with, besides a buckle that I have here upon my band, which my mother gave me; and that I wish you to take off and keep when I am dead: but I must have it till then. I cannot part with it before."

She paused, and gazed upon the trinket of which she spoke as though the thoughts it awakened congealed her into stone; for not a muscle of her countenance moved, and nothing showed she was alive save the rapid tears which dropped in painful noiselessness from her eyelashes to the ground.

"No, that is not quite all," she resumed, almost in a whisper; "there is a necklace that was given me at school one Midsummer holiday: you shall have that, too. And I should like you to give it—I know you will forgive me saying so, won't you? Give it—if she be not too proud—give it—if there be any one in the world you love, give it *her*; and ask her to wear it for my poor sake!"

Colin was unused to the great sorrows of the world; his nature would have its way; he could contain his heart no longer, and burst into an agonizing and audible fit of grief. When his words came he begged her to desist; he refused to take anything from her as a recompense for what he had done; and, in as encouraging a tone as he could assume, he bid her cheer up, and hope for the best. He said she might yet recover, and be happy, why not? *He* would be her friend for ever, if she would but pluck her heart up, and look on things more cheerfully.

And, as he said this,—he knew not how he did it, or why,—but he kissed her forehead passionately, and pressed her hand within his own, as though those fingers might never be unclenched again.

At that moment the room door was very unceremoniously opened, and two persons stood before him.

Mrs. Popple had entered first, leading forwards Fanny Woodruff!

"Colin!" exclaimed the latter in a tone of mingled astonishment and reproach, and at the same time retreating precipitately from the room, while Miss Wintlebury sharply reprov'd her landlady for this rudeness, and Mr. Clink himself as suddenly assumed much more of the natural aspect of a fool than any person would have believed his features at all capable of. At length he spoke; and, rushing out after Fanny, exclaimed, "You shall not go! I have done no wrong! Come back—come back!"

"Sir!" replied Fanny, with the determined voice of a highly-excited spirit, "I have not accused you of anything, and, therefore, you need not defend yourself. But, indeed, Colin, I never expected this!"

"What—what have I done?"

"Nothing, perhaps, that you have not a perfect right to do if you think proper; but, however, I will not be troubled about it—I will not!" She applied her handkerchief to her eyes. "I am sorry for having interrupted you; but, since you are so much better engaged than with me, I will never trouble you again as long as I live!"

"Will you hear me?" demanded Colin.

"It is of no use. I am satisfied. You have a right to do as you think proper."

"Of course I have, so long as I do right?"

"Right!"

"Yes, right. I have not injured you. I never told you I loved *you*—never!"

Those words startled Fanny as with the shock of an earthquake; shattering to fragments in one instant that visionary palace of Hope, which her heart had been occupied for years in rearing. She looked incredulously in his face, as though doubtful of his identity, and then burst into a flood of tears.

"True," she murmured, "you never did—never! I have betrayed myself. But here, sir," and she assumed as much firmness of manner as possible, while she held a small packet out for his acceptance. "Take this; for I came to give it you. It is all your mother and I—" Her breathing became heavy and convulsive. "We read your letter, and—Oh, save me! save me!" She fell insensible into the arms of Mrs. Popple, who instantly, at Colin's request, carried her into Miss Wintlebury's room, and placed her on the sofa.

The packet had fallen from her hand. It contained the three guineas which Colin had formerly given to her, besides two from his mother, and the whole amount of Fanny's own savings during the time she had been in service, making in all between eight and nine pounds.

Her unexpected appearance is readily explained. On perusing the melancholy news contained in that letter of Colin's, to which Fanny had alluded, she and his mother instantly formed the very natural conclusion that, bad as he had described his situation to be, he would endeavour to make the best of it to them; and that, therefore, to a positive certainty it was very much worse than his description would literally imply. A thousand imaginary dangers surrounding him, thronged upon their minds, which, they concluded, nothing short of a personal visit could modify or avert. Nothing less, indeed, could satisfy their feelings upon the subject; and hence it was agreed between them that, instead of writing to him, Fanny should undertake the journey, carrying with her all the money for his use which their joint efforts could procure.

The attentions of Mrs. Popple and Miss Wintlebury soon brought the young woman again to herself.

"Let me go!" said she. "I will return home to-night! I cannot stay here! I cannot bear it!"

"No, Fanny," observed Colin, "that you shall not. You have mistaken me much—very much; when, if you knew all, you would be the first in the world to applaud me for what I have done."

"I shall never be happy any more!" sighed Fanny almost inaudibly.

"I hope, young lady," said Miss Wintlebury, addressing her, "that *I* have not been any cause of unhappiness to you? Because if so, perhaps it will be some comfort to you to know that I cannot continue so long. Look at me. Surely this poor frame cannot have excited either man's love or woman's jealousy; for no one could be so weak as to dream of placing his happiness on such a broken reed, nor any one so foolish as to take alarm at a shadow, which a few days at most—perhaps a few hours—must remove for ever."

Fanny heard this discourse at first with indifference; but now she listened earnestly, and with evident surprise. Miss Wintlebury continued, "If—for so it almost seems—you foolishly imagine that I stand between that young gentleman and yourself, be assured you are deeply mistaken. Death, I too well know, has betrothed me; and I dare not, would not, accept another bridegroom. Now be at peace, and hear me but a moment longer. I know not who you are, though you and Mr. Clink are evidently acquainted; but if there be anything between you both,—if you love him, or he you,—all I say is, may Heaven bless you in it,—bless you! With one like him you could not fail to be blessed. A nobler, or a more generous and feeling creature never looked up to heaven."

Overcome both by her bodily weakness and her feelings the poor girl sat down, and covered her face with her hands as she sobbed bitterly. During some minutes not a word was uttered; nor until the last speaker again rose, and took Fanny's hand, and led her across the room towards Colin, who stood by the fire-place, looking as grave and immovable as though he were cast in lead.

"Come," said she, "forget me, and let me see you friends."

Suiting the action to the sentiment expressed, she placed Fanny's hand in Colin's. He gazed on her a moment, then clasped her in his arms, and kissed her a thousand times.

That night the three supped together, and were happy. And, as Fanny had not as yet taken any place of abode, she shared Miss Wintlebury's apartments; while Colin passed, amidst endless anxiety and excitement, an almost totally sleepless night.

Fanny did not choose to remain in town much longer than the occasion of her visit rendered absolutely essential; but during that time she related to Colin everything that could possibly interest him respecting the home he had left behind.

Amongst other matters of less importance, she surprised and astonished him with the information that, shortly after his own flight from Bramleigh, her father had been removed by Doctor Rowel from Nabbfield, and carried by night to a distant part of the country. But, as some particulars of this movement will require to be laid before the reader in the course of some subsequent chapter, I shall not trouble him with Fanny's

statement, or Mr. Clink's remarks in reply, here; merely observing that the latter earnestly impressed upon her the necessity, both on her father's account, and his own too, of her applying at Kiddal Hall, and informing Mr. Lupton of the whole circumstances of the transaction at as early a period as possible.

All this Fanny promised to perform immediately on her arrival at Bramleigh. But when the period of departure came she returned thither with a heavy heart. The declaration made by Colin that he had never loved her (for so she interpreted it) still weighed heavily upon her bosom; nor did his subsequent kindness of behaviour, although it pleased for the moment, tend to any permanent alleviation of her feelings of sorrow derived from that source. The difference between her visit to town and this departure seemed to her like that to one who goes out in sunshine, with a glad day before her, but returns under clouds, and with no prospect but that of darkness at night. While, perplexed as Colin had partially felt between what he thought to be his duty, and his inclination, he so far discovered—if not to his positive satisfaction,—at least the entire absence of anything like real regret at Fanny's departure. In the mortification and agony of spirit consequent on her discovery of that fact, Fanny determined resolutely to banish Colin from her mind in every shape, save as a friend, for ever.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The reader is courteously introduced into a bone and bottle shop, and made acquainted with Peter Veriquear and the family of the Veriquears. A night adventure.

IN a bye-lane leading out of Hare Street, which, as my readers must be informed, is situated about the middle of the parish of Bethnal Green, there resided a certain tradesman, one Peter Veriquear by name; into whose service, as a man of all work, our hero, Mr. Clink, may now be supposed to have entered. By the recommendation, vote, and interest of Mistress Popple, who had some acquaintance with the Veriquears, it was that he obtained this eligible situation; a situation which found him a sort of endless employment of one kind or other, day and night, at the rate of six shillings per week, bed and board included.

When Colin first applied about the place, Mr. Veriquear replied, "If you want a situation, young man, that is your business, and not mine. If I have a place to dispose of, I have; and if I hav'n't, why of course I hav'n't. That is my business, and not yours."

Colin hinted something about what Mrs. Popple had said.

"Well!" exclaimed Veriquear, "if Mrs. Popple told you so, she did. That is Mrs. Popple's business, and neither yours nor mine."

"Then I am mistaken, sir?"

"I did not say you were mistaken. But, if you think you are, that is your own business, and not mine."

"Then what, sir," asked Colin, somewhat puzzled, "am I to understand?"

"Why," replied Veriquear, "I shall say the same to you as I do to all young men,—understand your own business, if you have any, and, if you hav'n't, understand how to get one,—that is the next best thing."

"And that," rejoined our hero, "is exactly what I am desirous of doing."

"Well, if you are, you are; that is your own concern."

"You seem to be fond of joking," remarked Colin, as the blood mounted to his cheeks.

"No, sir," answered Veriquear, more sternly, "the man is not born that ever knew me joke in the whole course of my life. I have my own way, and that is no business of anybody's. Other people have theirs, and that is none of mine."

"But can you give me any employment, sir?"

"Well, I suppose young men must live somehow, though that is their own concern; and I must find 'em work if I can, though that is mine."

After some further conversation, in which Mr. Veriquear's character displayed itself much as above depicted, he arrived, through a very labyrinthine path, at the conclusion that Colin should be employed upon his establishment according to the terms previously stated.

Though Mr. Veriquear's premises stood nominally two stories high, and occupied a frontage some forty feet long, the roof scarcely reached to the chamber-windows of certain more modern erections on either side. The front wall,—a strange composition of timber, bricks, and plaster mingled together in very picturesque sort,—had in times gone by partially given way at the foundation, and now stood in an indescribably wry position. Having forcibly pulled the whole mass of tiling along with it, the ridge of the roof resembled the half-dislocated backbone of some fossil alligator, while a weather-beaten chimney, with great gaps between the bricks, which stood at one end, leaned sentimentally towards a dead gable, like Charlotte lamenting the sorrows of Werter. The windows, which were small and heavy, seemed to have been inserted according to the strictest laws of chance; for, exactly in those places where nobody would have expected them, there they were. By the side of the door Haunted some yards of filthy drapery, which flapped in the faces of the passers-by whenever they and a gust chanced to meet near the spot; and old bottles, secondhand ewers and basins, bits of rag, and various other descriptions of valuable "marine stores," decorated a window which might, without much injustice, have been supposed to be glazed with clarified cow's-horn. Above, a huge doll, clad in long-clothes of dirty dimity, and suspended to a projecting iron by the crown of the head, swung in the blast like the effigy of some criminal on a gibbet-post. At the edge of the causeway, which had never been paved, and directly opposite the entrance to Mr. Veriquear's establishment, was placed a board elevated on a

moveable pole, on which was painted, in attractive letters, "Wholesale and retail Rag, Bone, and Bottle Warehouse."

Into this miserable den Colin permanently introduced himself for the first time one night between eight and nine o'clock. Some portion of that evening he had spent with Miss Wintle-bury, and had taken his adieu of her and the habitation she was in together, only after he had prevailed upon her to accept one of three sovereigns which alone he had retained out of the larger sum brought for his use by Fanny.

It was dusk when he arrived at his new abode. There was no light in the shop, save what little found its way thither from the fading heavens, which now were scantily spotted with half-seen stars. Peter Veriquear stood solemnly against the door-post, staring into the gloom, and blowing through his teeth a doleful noise, compounded both of singing and whistling, but resembling neither, either in tone or loudness. Colin felt low-spirited, though he strove to seem joyful.

"It grows dark very fast, sir," said he, addressing Mr. Veriquear as he entered.

"Yes," replied that gentleman, "it does; but I can't help that. What Nature chooses to do is no business of ours."

"Certainly," rejoined Colin; "but I said so only because it is customary to express some kind of opinion."

"Well, that, of course, is your own concern; but, for my part, I never make it my business either to damn or praise the weather. Nature knows her own affairs, and manages them just the same without my meddling."

As Peter said this, he turned and led into the shop his new assistant. Groping his way along in the direction of a distant inner doorway, through which the dim remains of a fire were visible, Colin first jostled against a stand, which rattled with the concussion as though all the bottles in the United Kingdom had been jingled together; and then, in his endeavour to steer clearer on the contrary side, fell prostrate on to a prodigious heap of tailors' ends, strongly resembling in size a juvenile Primrose Hill.

"I think it's my business to get a light," observed Veriquear. "Stop where you are till I come again."

Colin wisely maintained his position, in accordance with the sensible advice given him, lest, by making another endeavour in the dark, he should fall foul of a stack of bones, and thus exchange for a less comfortable anchorage. In cases of this kind, he well knew that a soft bottom is the best.

When Peter returned with a candle, Colin obtained a dim vision of the objects about him. The place was so black, for want of whitewash, that its limits seemed almost indefinable every way, save overhead, and there the close proximity of his crown to the rafters reminded him that no less care would be required in humouring Mr. Veriquear's house than in pleasing its master; while the quality and amount of its contents almost led him to believe he had entered some grand national closet, in which was deposited all the unserviceable stuff, the scraps, odds and ends of the general community. The reason of this was, that Peter Veriquear dealt in almost everything he could turn a penny by, and, being somewhat large in his speculations, always had a vast mass of property in substance upon his premises. 4 As a new emigrant to the wilds of North America betakes himself to an accurate survey of his locality before he pitches his tent, and commences operations, so, wisely, did Peter Veriquear conduct Colin over the whole of his territory that night, in order that he thereby might become acquainted early with the wide field of his future labours, Through a dirty unpaired yard behind, he conducted him over various shed-like warehouses, stored with every imaginable description of rags, sorted and unsorted, with bottles of all degrees of bodily extension, from the slender pale-faced phial to the middle-sized "mixture" and the corpulent "stout;" and on the ground-floor, into a deathly region of bones, which made the moveless air smell grave-like, and stored the prompt imagination with as many spectres of slaughtered cattle and skeleton horses, as might garnish the magic circles of twenty German tales.

In a wide rambling loft, accessible through this place by a step-ladder, and open to the laths of the roof on which the tiles were hung. Colin observed a small bed and a chair or two, with a broken piece of looking-glass fixed on the wall with nails, in order, as it might appear from the deserted character of the place, that the tenant, if weary of being alone, might contemplate a representative of himself, in lack of better company.

"Is this room occupied?" asked Colin.

"When there is anybody in it,—as there ought to be every night," replied Veriquear. "It is my business to keep these premises safe, the same as it is other people's to rob them if they could."

"Why, surely, sir," objected Colin, with some slight astonishment, "nobody would think of stealing such things as there are here!"

"What is worth buying and selling is worth stealing. *I* should think so, if it were my affair to rob; just as *I* think it worth guarding, being my business to hinder robbery."

"Then, shall I sleep here?" demanded Colin.

"Well," responded Mr. Veriquear, "I suppose you will, if you can. You want sleep, like me, I dare say; but that you must manage yourself. *I* can't make you sleep,—so it's no concern of mine."

Our hero said nothing, but he thought the Fates could not have been in one of the most amiable of humours when they delivered him into the hands of Mr. Peter Veriquear.

Returning from this dim perambulation, the merchant led his assistant down a flight of brick steps into an underground kitchen, where a supper, consisting of a round mahogany-coloured cheese, which Colin mistook for a huge cricket-ball, three gaunt sticks of celery, and a brown loaf was placed upon a small round oak table, having one stem in the centre, and three crooked feet at the bottom, after the fashion of a washerwoman's Italian iron. The family of the Veriquears was here assembled. Mrs. Veriquear, a sharp-nosed pyroligneous-acid-looking woman, sat on a low chair by the fireside, nursing a baby; a child of eighteen months old slept close by her in a wicker basket, which served at once for cradle and coach-body, as occasion might require, it being ingeniously contrived to fit a frame-work on four wheels, which stood up stairs, and thus served to carry the children about on a Sunday; while two other youngsters were squabbling on the hearthstone about their respective titles to a threelegged stool; and another, the eldest, was penning most villanous pot-hooks on the back of a piece of butter-paper, under the casual but severe superintendence of his worthy mother. Farthest removed from the fire, as well as the candle-light, sat one who was *in* the family,

though not of it, a maiden of nineteen, Miss Aphra Marvel, a niece of Mr. Veriquear, who had been bequeathed to him by her father upon his death-bed, along with a small tenement worth about fifteen pounds a-year, the income from which was considered as a set-off against the cost of her board and bringing up. But could her departing parent have foreknown the great and multifarious services which his daughter was destined to perform in the family of his wife's brother, it is more than probable he would have acknowledged the propriety of charging fifteen pounds per annum as a compensation for her labour, rather than have left that sum in yearly requital of her cost. From twelve years of age to the present time, her duty it had been to make the fires, sweep the house, wash and nurse the babies, as they successively appeared upon the Veriquear stage of the world, wait on Mrs. Veriquear, prepare meals, make the beds, mend all the little masters' clothes, and, in short, do all and everything which could possibly require to be done; and yet she was regarded by her mistress and the children (whom she industriously instructed to that end) as an interloper, who was partly eating the bread out of their mouths every day, and consequently contributing to the eventual diminution of that stock which ought to be applied exclusively to the advancement of their own prospects in after-life.

When Colin entered, Miss Aphra cast her eyes momentarily up, and half blushed as she resumed her sewing. The children stared in wonder at him, as they might at the sudden appearance of a frog in the kitchen. The baby caught sight of him, and began to squeal like a sucking pig; while Mrs. Veriquear cast an ill-tempered eye upon him, as much as to say she wanted none of him there; and then shook her infant into an absolute scream with the exclamation,—“What are you crying at, you little fidget! *He's* not going to hurt you, I'll take care of that. Hush—hush—hush-sh-sh!” And away went the rocking-chair at a rate quite tantamount to the extreme urgency of the occasion.

When they sat down to supper, it was discovered that Master William had picked out the hearts of two sticks of celery, and extracted a plug three inches long, by way of taster, from the Dutch cheese. This being a case that imperatively demanded the application of summary punishment, Colin got nothing to eat until Mr. Veriquear had risen from the table, and applied a few inches of old cane to the lad's shoulders, which he did with this brief preparatory remark, “Now, my boy, as you have made it your business to pull that plug out, it becomes mine to try if I can't plug you.”

Master William howled like a jackal before he was touched; his younger brother Ned cried because Bill did; and Mrs. Veriquear stormed at her husband, because he could not thrash the lad without making noise enough over it to wake the very dead. Miss Marvel looked as solemn during this farce as though it had been a tragedy; while Colin squeezed his nose up in his handkerchief as forcibly as though a lobster had seized it between his nippers, in order to prevent Mrs. Veriquear seeing how irreverently his fancy was tickled at this exhibition of domestic enjoyments.

Uninviting as his dormitory over the warehouses had previously appeared, the character of the kitchen and its inhabitants seemed so much more so, that it was with comparative delight he heard the clock of Shoreditch church strike ten, as a signal for him to take possession of a tin lantern provided for the occasion. Accordingly, carrying a bunch of keys in his hand, wherewith to lock himself in, he strode across the yard to his solitary and comfortless chamber.

During the first few hours which had elapsed after Colin had retired to his ghostly-look-ing dormitory, it was in vain he tried to coax and persuade himself to sleep. That fantastical deity, Somnus, seemed determined to contradict his wishes; and therefore he lay with his eyes wide open, counting how many chinks he could see between the tiles over his head, and listening to the musical compliments which passed between some friendly tom and tabby cats, whose tails and backs were evidently elevated in a very picturesque manner outside the ridge above him.

It could not be far off one o'clock, when a very distinct sound, as of something stirring below stairs, reached his ears. Though by no means naturally timid, the young man's heart suddenly jumped as though taking a spring from a precipice. Possibly the noise might be occasioned by the rats taking advantage of this untimely hour of the night to make free with Mr. Veriquear's bones; or the cats outside were in pursuit of the aforesaid rats; or the wind was making itself merry somehow amongst the bottles; or the doors or the shutters were undergoing a process of agitation from the same cause. Whatever might originate the sound, however, it was now repeated more distinctly. There was evidently on the premises something alive as well as himself. Was it possible that he could have got into a wrong place, and that they meditated murdering him for the sake of his body? He thought of a pitch-plaster being suddenly stuck over his mouth by some unseen hand, as he lay there on his back in the dark. It was horrible, and the conceit aroused him to determination. He cautiously slipped out of bed, and, clad in nothing more than his stockings and shirt, groped his way blindly to the step-ladder, which he silently descended.

Having reached the floor of the room below, he for the first time bethought himself that he had no weapon of defence, not even a common stick. But the great bone-heap was hard by, and from such armoury he soon possessed himself with the thigh-bone of a horse, which he contrived, without material disturbance, to draw out from amongst a choice collection of other similar relics. Again the noise which had alarmed him was repeated, and carried conviction to Colin's mind that Mr. Veriquear's precautions against robbers were more needful than he had previously believed; for that there were thieves about the premises he now no more doubted than he doubted his own existence. Determined to resist the knaves, and, grasping his bony cudgel with uncommon fervour, he placed himself in an offensive attitude, and stood prepared for he knew not what.

Not the famous fighting gladiator of antiquity, nor yet the modest statue dubbed Achilles in Hyde Park, the admiration and delight of our astonished countrymen and women, looks more threatening and heroic than did Colin, as, clad in the simple but classic drapery of his under-garment, he brandished a tremendous bone, and defied his unseen foe.

At that moment the fragmentary skull of some old charger, which lay on the windowsill at the farther end of the warehouse, seemed to become partially and very mysteriously illuminated, while the shadowy form of a man standing hard by became also indistinctly visible amidst the gloom. Colin maintained his standing in breathless silence, with his eyes steadily fixed upon the figure.

In the course of a few moments it turned slowly round, and began to advance gravely towards him, but whether or not with any intention of accosting him either by word or blow, he could not yet divine. Shortly it reached within arm's length of him, and was about to address doubtless some very mysterious speech to his ear, when the thought flashed on the young man's mind like lightning that now or never was the time; so raising his drumstick of a bone, he took aim, and, before a single protest against his measure could be entered, nearly felled the intruder to the earth.

"Don't strike!—don't strike!" cried the individual thus unexpectedly attacked. "I'm Veriquear!—I'm Veriquear!"

"Certainly," thought Colin, "you *are* very queer indeed!"—for he instantly recognised the voice as that of his employer, "I'm very sorry—"

"All right!—quite right!" said Veriquear, drawing a dark-lantern from a pocket behind him, and throwing a *bundle* of rays like a bunch of carrots on the figure of his assistant. "It was decidedly your business to do as you have done; and I'm very much obliged to you—"

"You are very welcome," interrupted Colin.

"For if you had not made it your duty to defend the place, I should have turned you away at a minute's notice to-morrow morning. I have done this on purpose to try your courage a little; only I meant to catch you in bed, instead of where you are."

"But I regret having struck you," protested Colin.

"As to that," replied Peter, "that, you know, is *your* business; and if I like to run the risk of getting a beating, why, that, of course, is mine. Only I never yet had a man in my employ that I did not try in the same way; and many a one have I discharged because they would not turn again. It's no use having a dog that won't bark, and bite too, if he is wanted; so I always put them to the proof in the first instance."

His hearer did not particularly admire Mr. Veriquear's sagacious method of trying the mettle of his men; but, inasmuch as it had so far ingratiated him into the favour of his employer, he did not lament the occurrence of a *rencontre* which, though it had promised seriously at the outset, terminated so harmlessly. He accordingly betook himself again to his pallet, and slept out soundly the remainder of the night; while Mr. Veriquear departed by the same way he had come, highly gratified with the courage of Colin, and rejoicing in the hard blow that he had so ably bestowed upon his shoulders.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Sunday sight in London.—Colin meets with his best friend, and receives a heart-breaking epistle from Miss Wintlebury.

IT was not during the six days only, but on Sundays also, that Colin found employment at Peter Veriquear's. As regularly as the Sabbath came, he was converted into an animal of draught and burden, by being placed at the pole of that cradle-coach already alluded to, and engaged during stated hours in giving his employer's young family an airing amongst the delightful precincts of Hoxton New Town and the Hackney-road. On one of these occasions he very luckily, though accidentally, met with a gentleman whom he very much wished to see, and to whom, also, I shall have much pleasure in re-introducing the reader.

The day was uncommonly cold, considering the time of the year. Colin's face, as he breasted the blast, strongly resembled a raw carrot; while behind him sat four little red-and-blue looking animals, muffled up into no shape, and each "tiled" with an immense brimmed hat, which gave them altogether much the appearance of a basket of young flap-mushrooms.

"Don't cry, my dear!" said Colin, as he suddenly caught hold, and half twinged the cold button-like nose off the face of each in succession,— "Don't cry, dears,—and you shall have some pudding as soon as the baker has baked it. We shall soon be at home, Georgy. There, wrap your fingers up. See what a big dog that is!"

A tap on the shoulder with the end of a walking-cane interrupted his string of exclamations, and at the same moment a voice, which he had somewhere heard before, addressed him with—"And do not you remember whose dog he is?"

Colin turned hastily round, and beheld Squire Lupton standing on the edge of the curb-stone. If his cheeks were red before, they became scarlet now; for, though his occupation involved nothing censurable, he blushed deeply, and for the moment could not utter a word.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Lupton, as he gazed in admiration on the contents of the four-wheeled basket, "so young, and such a family as that? God bless my soul!—why, surely they are not all your own?"

Colin did the best he could to clear himself of such an awful responsibility, avowing that he had no participation whatever in the affair, beyond what his duty in drawing them about might be considered to involve. Of this, indeed, the Squire did not require any very powerful proof, as he had given utterance to the remark more as a piece of pleasantry, than with any idea that it would be considered as meant in earnest.

As the streets of London do not at any time offer any very peculiar facilities for private conversation, and especially upon such important matters as those which both the Squire and Colin felt it necessary to be discussed between them, a very brief colloquy was all that passed on the present occasion, though sufficiently long to inform Mr. Lupton how poor a situation the young man had been obliged to accept since his arrival in town, merely to find himself in the most common necessities of life. On the other hand, Colin ascertained

that the Squire's absence from Kiddal, just after his last singular interview with him there, was in consequence of a visit which he was under the necessity of making to the metropolis, and to which was entirely owing his very fortunate, but accidental, meeting with him at the present moment. Before they parted, Mr. Lupton charged him, on his return home, to give Mr. Veriquear immediate warning to quit his service the following week, or as early as possible, as he had another mode of life in view for him, which he hoped would tend much more materially to his comfort and future happiness.

In the mean time, he requested him to wait upon him the following evening at a certain hotel at the west end of the town which he named, and where they might discuss all necessary matters in quiet and at leisure.

When Colin informed his employer of his adventure, and the consequence to which it had led in rendering it necessary that he should quit his service,—“Very well,” said Veriquear, “if you wish to leave me, that is no business of mine. As you came, so you must go. I am sorry to part with you; though I don't know what business it is of mine to grieve about it. You have your objects in the world, and I have mine; so I suppose we must each go his own way about them. Only if you consider yourself right in leaving so suddenly, I shall make it my duty not to pay you this week's wages.” Colin protested that as circumstances had altered with him, he considered that a matter of very little consequence, and would willingly forego any demand which otherwise he might make upon him. Mr. Veriquear felt secretly gratified at the sacrifice his man thus frankly volunteered to make; and, by way of requital, told him not only that he might consider himself at liberty to depart on any day of the ensuing week that he pleased, but also added, “And if at any time it should so happen that I can be of any service to you, apply to me; but mind you, it must not be about other people's business. If it is any business of mine, I 'll meddle; but your business, you know, is your own. Other people's is theirs; and mine *is* mine, and nobody else's.”

Most probably Colin would that evening have called at Mrs. Popple's and communicated the agreeable intelligence, of which his head and heart were alike full, to poor Miss Wintlebury, had he not been arrested, just as he was on the point of setting out, by a small packet addressed to himself, which some unknown hand had left at the door, and within which, on opening, he found a trifling article or two of remembrance, and the following note:—

“My dear friend,

“It is with great satisfaction I sit down to write these few lines, informing you of the good news, that yesterday my father arrived from the country, bringing the intelligence that a comfortable small fortune had been left him by my uncle very unexpectedly, and that he has this day taken my brother and myself back again to our native place to pass the rest of our lives, and in hopes that thereby my own may be prolonged. But my poor dear father will be deceived! He knows not what anguish I have gone through, and he never shall know. Nevertheless, the country will be to me like a new heaven for the short time I am permitted to enjoy it; though the horrors of my past life will never cease to darken the scene.

“I can scarcely express the delight I feel in being enabled, through this reverse in our condition, to enclose a sum which, I trust, will leave me your debtor only in that gratitude which no payment can wipe away.

“The other trifles perhaps you may keep, if not too poor for acceptance; but as I know that our continued acquaintance could end only in deeper misery to us both, I deem it the only wise and proper course to withhold from you all knowledge of our future place of abode; and if you will in one thing more oblige me, never attempt to seek it out. I am bound speedily for another world, and must form no more ties with this.

“Heaven bless you and yours! And that you may be lastingly happy, as you deserve, will be the prayer, to the end of her days, of

“Harriet.”

A ten-pound note, a ring, and a brooch were enclosed.

Colin immediately repaired, on reading this, to his late lodgings, in hopes of seeing the writer before her departure; but he was too late. The contents of the letter were verified; and he could not obtain from the landlady the most remote information as to what part of the country she had retired.

CHAPTER XXV

Colin's interview with Squire Lupton, and what it led to—A bait to catch the Doctor.

ON reaching the hotel, according to appointment, Colin found Mr. Lupton seated in a private room upstairs, with a table neatly spread for two beside him, but as yet containing nothing beyond the requisite materials for handling that dinner, which was brought up at the Squire's summons very shortly after his arrival. During their repast the young man could not avoid being continually reminded with what kind familiarity he was treated by his wealthy entertainer,—a degree of familiarity which seemed the more unaccountable to him, perhaps, simply because all his previous ideas of the manners of the higher classes of society had been derived almost solely from casual observation of that high bearing and seeming austerity of feeling, which sometimes exists in their common intercourse with the rustic inhabitants of a country district.

To be sure, he had once rendered the Squire an essential service, by saving him from severe personal injury, if not possibly from a premature death; but that service he thought might be equally well rewarded without all this personal association with, and condescension to, one who possessed no qualifications save those which nature had given him, for admission into a kind of society of which, up to this time, he could not possibly know anything. But Mr. Lupton seemed to take pains even to render him easy in his new situation,—

to make him at home, as it were, and cause him to feel himself as essentially upon a level in all things with himself.

Though Colin could not account exactly for all this, it had its due effect upon him. By the time their meal was over, and at the Squire's most pressing solicitations he had imbibed various glasses of sherry during the repast, he found himself as much at liberty, both in limb and tongue, as though he had been seated in Miss Sowersoffs kitchen, with no higher company than herself and Palethorpe.

As Mr. Lupton evinced considerable anxiety to know what had brought him to London, and Colin himself on his part felt no less desirous to explain every circumstance connected not only with himself, but also those bearing upon the infamous conduct of Doctor Rowel, touching the affair of Lawyer Skinwell and James Woodruff, two long after-dinner hours scarcely sufficed for the detail of a narrative which, in all its particulars, caused in the mind of Mr. Lupton the utmost astonishment.

The freedom with which Colin expressed his own sentiments respecting the death of the lawyer, and the hand which he firmly believed Doctor Rowel had had in that event, somewhat raised the Squire's doubts of the young man's prudence, though at the same time it went far to convince him of the propriety, if not the absolute necessity, of placing the Doctor himself in some place of security, until a more full and searching investigation could be gone into. That he was open to a serious charge was evident; and, supported as that charge was by the corresponding conduct he had pursued with respect to James Woodruff, the Squire could come to no other conclusion than that it was his clear duty, both as a man and a magistrate, to have the Doctor apprehended as soon as possible.

While Colin related in quiet and unassuming language his own scarcely less than heroic attempt to set Woodruff at liberty, together with the disasters which had pursued him afterwards in consequence thereof, Mr. Lupton's countenance grew now grave, now expressive of admiration, and anon slightly and apparently involuntarily convulsed with emotions which he would not express, though he could not conceal. His lips quivered, and his eyes were occasionally forcibly closed, as though to force back the generous tears which were welling up from his bosom. In truth, the *father's* heart was touched. *He* felt where another man would not, and admired as the height of nobleness and magnanimity what other men might barely have commended merely as a good action, which anybody else would have done if placed in similar circumstances.

All this time, too, he kept supping his wine and cracking his walnuts, picking his almonds, and demolishing his dried fruit with a degree of unconscious industry, that could not but have proved highly interesting and edifying to any observing spectator.

When Colin had concluded, the Squire looked earnestly in his face during a few moments; he cast them to the ground again, and said nothing; he filled his glass, and Colin's too, but with an effort, for his hand slightly trembled as he did it; again he looked at him, and again his eyes were earthwards.

"My dear boy!" said he, but the words faltered on his lips,—“my dear boy! I am proud of you; but your presence makes me ashamed. I bitterly regret it—deeply and bitterly—and yet I ought not, when it has given me such a noble mind as this!”

He paused a moment, and then, as though with some sudden determination to shake off certain unwelcome and misplaced reflections, observed—“But, come,—drink your wine. I was not thinking much what I was talking about. Let us to business. I told you some time ago I should do something for you. What I have heard to-night has not lessened that determination. In the first place, have you left that vagabond place you were living in?”

Colin replied, that he had informed Peter Veriquear of his intention to leave, and was at liberty to take his departure at any hour.

“Then leave to-morrow,” observed Mr. Lupton. “I will find you fitting apartments elsewhere. Do you like reading?”

“Much more,” replied the young man, “than my opportunities have enabled me to gratify.”

“I am glad to hear it. You shall have books, and fit yourself for better things than you seemed to be born to. But never mind that,—never mind that. And money? I suppose the bottle-merchant has not filled your pockets to the neck.”

Colin observed in answer, that he had ten pounds in his pocket, though not through the hands of Peter Veriquear. At the same time he related to the Squire in what manner he had come by it, and how Miss Wintlebury's conduct on this occasion had convinced him she was a most worthy and estimable young woman.

“Have nothing to do with a girl like that,” said Mr. Lupton. “I have seen similar things before now, and known many a man pay d—d expensively for a poor and frail commodity. No, my boy; take my advice, and think nothing more about her. She may be all very well, perhaps; but many others are better. I like charity; but the world renders it needful for people to hold their heads on their own level. As I shall make something of you, you must look higher. There is more in store for you than you can anticipate. I have no other than—Well, never mind. But the law knows me, my boy, as the last of my family; for, unluckily, my marriage has been like no marriage. Did you ever see Mrs. Lupton at Kiddal?”

“Never, that I am aware of,” answered Colin.

The Squire fell into a fit of musing, during which he beat his foot upon the ground abstractedly, as though all things present were momentarily forgotten.

“Well!” he again exclaimed, as if starting afresh to life, “there is that Doctor. We must catch him somehow. He is a scoundrel after all, I am afraid; though it seems a pity to hang the poor devil, too. I should like to lay hold of him without any trouble, and I 'll tell you how we will do it. I will write down to him in the course of a day or two, inviting him here on especial business. He will suspect nothing, and come up of course. You shall have an opportunity of meeting him face to face. We will hear what he has to say for himself, in contradiction of your statement; and if I find him guilty, means shall be provided beforehand, and kept in readiness to seize him.”

This excellent proposition, then, for entrapping the wily Doctor having been finally decided upon, with the

understanding that Colin should early be apprised of his arrival in town, in order to have an opportunity of reiterating his statement to that gentleman's face, he received a hearty shake of the hand from Mr. Lupton, and took his leave.

In accordance with the Squire's wishes, Colin took his leave the very next day of the Veri-quear family, and repaired to a comfortable suite of apartments in the neighbourhood of Bedford Square, which Mr. Lupton had engaged for him. Neither did that gentleman forget to despatch him to a tailor's, for the purpose of being, like an old vessel, thoroughly new-rigged.

Some few days afterwards, a note from the Squire informed him that Rowel had taken the bait, and would be at his hotel at seven in the evening.

Elated with the hope not only of now securing Woodruff's liberation, but also of getting the Doctor punished as he deserved, Colin set out at an early hour on his expedition, and arrived at the appointed place some twenty minutes before the time fixed for Rowel's appearance.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Doctor caught, and caged.—Woodruff's removal, and where to.

NOT long did they wait. Scarcely had the clock struck seven before the professional gentleman of whom they were in expectation was introduced into the room.

He addressed himself very familiarly to the Squire, but scarcely cast a look upon Colin, whom, "disguised as a gentleman," he did not seem to recollect, until such time as Mr. Lupton formally introduced him to the Doctor by name. Then, indeed, he started, and looked perplexed in what manner to regard the young man, whether as friend or foe.

"Happy to see you, Mr. Clink," said he. "I have been anxious to meet with you now for some time past. If I am not mistaken, you are the same gentleman who did me the honour to climb the wall of my premises by night, a while ago?"

"The very same, sir," replied Colin.

"Ah!—indeed! Well, that's plain, at all events. You hear that, Mr. Lupton?"

The Squire assumed an air of astonishment at the scene before him, in order to encourage the Doctor in what appeared likely to prove a somewhat ludicrous mistake. It was evident he fancied he had unexpectedly got Colin "on the hip," and was drawing from him a confession of his guilt before the very face of a witness and a magistrate; while the well-played expression of Mr. Lupton's countenance tended powerfully to confirm the notion.

"But, sir," said the Doctor, very blandly addressing the last-named gentleman, "you have business with me, which I will not interrupt. Only, as I have a serious charge to make against this young gentleman, and have most unexpectedly met with him here—"

"I beg by all means you will proceed," objected the Squire; "and be assured, if you have any charge to make against him, I shall most gladly hear it; for I have taken him into my confidence, in consequence of certain good qualities which seemed to be displayed in him. And if I am deceived—"

"Sir," said the Doctor, gravely, "I deeply fear you are. You know who he is, of course?"

"Why, sir, who is he?" demanded Mr. Lupton, with feigned amazement.

"Who is he, sir! I'll tell you, sir, who he is. That young man, sir,—he, sir,—he is neither more nor less, sir, than the son of a little huckster woman in your own village, sir. I know it for a fact; for I attended his mother myself."

"And what then, Doctor?"

"Besides that, Mr. Lupton, he is an incipient housebreaker. I charge him with having made a burglarious attempt on my premises at Nabbfield, for which he was obliged to fly the country; and you, sir, with all due deference, as a magistrate, will see the propriety of putting his person in a position of security."

"Then you feel convinced his intention was to rob you?" asked the Squire.

"Nay, sir," replied the Doctor, "the thing speaks for itself. A young man forms a plan to enter my premises: comes at ten o'clock at night,—a burglarious hour, according to law; climbs my outer wall by a rope-ladder—"

"It seems more like a love affair," interrupted the Squire.

"So I thought myself," answered Rowel, "at first; because I found some fragments of a letter, which had previously been thrown over the wall; but I could make nothing material of them."

"Have you those fragments by you?"

"I have a copy of them, which I kept in case of need," said the Doctor.

"Perhaps you will read it, Mr. Rowel, for my satisfaction," observed Mr. Lupton.

"Certainly," replied he; and drawing from his pocket-book a paper containing some scattered portions of the letter which Colin Clink had addressed to James Woodruff, and the torn fragments of which Rowel had detected after James had buried them in the earth, he handed it in the following shape to the Squire:—

"The young woman—is necessary—in your yard until ten o'clock at

*night.—If you should—try —until you do succeed—stand—
thickest—in the corner. Colin Clink—will do his best to get—
Fanny will be able—any night—at ten o'clock.”*

No sooner had Mr. Lupton perused this precious fragment than he pronounced the whole to have been unequivocally a love affair. There could be no doubt about the matter remaining in the mind of any commentator of ordinary sagacity who weighed well the general drift of the text in hand.

Rowel objected to this interpretation, and persisted in expressing his opinion that, the young man harboured no good motives; although, in fact, he felt secretly as assured of the real object of the attempt as was Colin himself.

“But perhaps,” said he, addressing Colin, “perhaps you will so far oblige Mr. Lupton as to explain what really were your motives on that occasion?”

“He need not be at that trouble,” observed Mr. Lupton, “or at least not until I have asked you, Doctor, a few questions which, I dare say, you can readily answer if you please.”

“Oh, yes; certainly, sir. Ask anything you think proper. I shall have great pleasure indeed in affording you every information in my power. And allow me to add, my good sir, how deeply I feel the honour you have done me in demanding my attendance, while you are surrounded by so much of the first talent, knowledge, and experience that the profession can boast of. I trust the case is not a very serious one. Allow me, sir.”

And the Doctor drew up his chair near that of Mr. Luptons, and solicitously extended his fingers in order to feel his pulse. The last-named gentleman pretended not to observe this invitation, as he remarked, in reply to the Doctor's concluding words.

“I am afraid, Mr. Rowel, the case *is* a very serious one indeed.”

“Indeed! Let us hope for the best. It is of no use to be down-hearted. Now, sir, explain the symptoms, if you please.”

“The first symptom, then,” replied the Squire, “is this:—that youth with whom you have been talking appears to have well founded reasons for believing, that for many years you have kept imprisoned in your house, as a lunatic, a man of perfectly sound mind, who never ought to have been there.”

The Doctor's countenance underwent a sudden change, as this remark came so unexpectedly upon him.

“Sir!” he exclaimed, “you are not serious?”

“I certainly am not joking,” replied Mr. Lupton.

“Then am I to believe it possible,” rejoined the Doctor, “that you, sir, can have *descended*, I may say, so far as to listen to the idle tales and ridiculous nonsense which such a boy as this may have picked up amongst the gossips and old women of a village, about matters of which they cannot possibly know anything? It surely, sir, cannot be needful for me to disabuse your mind of prejudices of this kind,—to inform you how the suspicions and conjectures of the ignorant and vulgar are apt to attach to any professional man, associated so peculiarly as I am with a very unfortunate class of patients.”

“I anticipate all you would say,” observed the Squire, “and sufficiently appreciate the force of your remarks. At the same time I should be glad to know whether you have or have not a patient named Woodruff confined on your premises?”

“Emphatically, then, sir,” replied the Doctor, “I HAVE NOT.”

“And never had?”

“That I will not say.”

“You have removed him?”

“There is no such individual in my care.”

“Is he at liberty?”

“I think, Mr. Lupton,” replied the Doctor, very smoothly, “you will allow that, without offence, I may decline, after what has been said, to give any farther explanation of a purely professional affair, for which I do not hold myself responsible, save as a matter of courtesy, to any man or any power in existence.”

“Sir,” replied the Squire, more seriously, “where any reason exists for even the slightest suspicion,—I do not say that wrong *has* been done, but that it *may* possibly exist,—I beg to state, that the responsibility you disclaim cannot be set aside, and, if need be, must absolutely make itself be felt; and that some suspicion I *do* entertain, it is needless to scruple at avowing.”

“Did I not feel assured,” answered Rowel, “from the many years during which I have enjoyed the honour of Mr. Lupton's acquaintance, that he can scarcely intend to offer me a deliberate insult, the course I ought to adopt—”

“Whatever course you may think proper to adopt,” interrupted the Squire, “will not alter mine. A very remarkable disclosure has been made to me respecting a patient in your keeping, as well as regarding the death of the late lawyer of Bramleigh.”

Those words startled and excited the Doctor in an extreme degree. They seemed to strike him as might a sudden sickness that turns the brain giddy; and starting from his chair, with his eyes fixed fiercely on Colin, he advanced towards him, exclaiming, “What other falsehoods, you villain, have you dared to utter concerning me or mine? If there be law, sir, in the land for such infamous slander, such base defamation as this, I 'll punish you for it, you rogue, though it cost me my very life! Have you dared to say that *I* had anything to do with Skinwell's death, sir?”

“I have said to Mr. Lupton, what I will say again,” replied Colin, “because I believe it to be true, and that is, that you helped to kill him.”

“It's a lie!—a lie!—a d—d lie! you slanderous vagabond!”

The Doctor would inevitably have committed a personal assault upon Colin of a very violent nature, had he not in the very midst of his rage been still restrained from so doing by certain prudential reasons, arising

from the evident strength and capability of the young man to turn again, and, in every human probability, convert the chastiser into the chastised. He therefore contented himself with fuming and fretting about the room as might some irritated cur, yet haunted with the spectre of a tin-pot appended to his tail. In the midst of this, the "very whirlwind of his passion," he snatched up his hat, as though unexpectedly seized with an idea of the propriety of taking his leave; but Mr. Lupton had kept an eye upon him.

"Not yet, sir, if you please," observed the Squire, interposing himself between the Doctor and the door. "I must perform an exceedingly unpleasant office; but nevertheless, Mr. Rowel, it has become my duty to tell you that, for the present, you are my prisoner."

"I deny it, sir!" exclaimed the Doctor. "I am no man's prisoner!"

"That we will soon ascertain," replied Mr. Lupton, as he rapped loudly on the table, while the Doctor used his best endeavours to force his way out.

Before he could resort to any violence in order to effect this object, the door was thrown back, and two servants of the law entered. A warrant, which Mr. Lupton had taken care to have prepared beforehand, was produced by one of them, and in the course of a very comfortable space of time the Doctor was placed in a coach, and driven on his way to certain particularly appropriate lodgings, which the country has provided for ladies and gentlemen who chance to have been so unlucky as to be inveigled into the commission of offences of a criminal nature.

The removal of James Woodruff from the Doctor's establishment at Nabbfield has been before briefly alluded to; while the declaration made by that worthy to Mr. Lupton that he had no such person confined on his premises, has borne evidence to the fact.

It was quite true. For, after the attempt which Colin had so unsuccessfully made to effect Mr. Woodruff's escape, Doctor Rowel became convinced—as the secret was out—that his troublesome charge would no longer be safe within the precincts of the asylum at Nabbfield. He therefore seized the earliest opportunity that the needful arrangements would permit, to convey him secretly by night from thence to the residence of the Doctor's own brother,—an old-fashioned brick mansion of very ample dimensions, which stood upon the borders of a heathy waste, which formerly constituted one of the finest portions of the old forest of Sherwood, in the northern part of Nottinghamshire.

It was even still studded with the dying remains of ancient oaks, which had sheltered many a bold archer in times gone by, but which now sufficed only to give additional dreariness to the solitary landscape, that stretched in picturesque undulations, but open as the ocean north and eastwards for many miles.

The removal, however, of James Woodruff from his previous confinement to this place had not been effected without Fanny's knowledge; and, for the possession of this fact, it is believed, she was indebted to the friendly agency of Mrs. Rowel. Not knowing in her present dilemma what other step to take, Fanny was no sooner made acquainted with the removal which Rowel contemplated, than she forthwith communicated it to her master, the young man who had succeeded to the business of the deceased Mr. Skinwell, one Sylvester by name; and a man who, though but a crest-fallen looking affair outside, had yet, when occasion needed, a pretty considerable amount of spirit at command within. No sooner was he informed of the particulars of the affair than he volunteered his immediate assistance. He and Fanny were fully prepared on the intended night of Woodruff's removal, quietly to follow the vehicle that contained him until it should arrive at its ultimate destination; after having ascertained which, they would be prepared to take the most prompt steps within their power to insure his restoration to his liberty, property, and friends. In accordance with this arrangement they had acted, and at a convenient distance had followed in a gig, and, as they thought, unobserved. On Sylvester's subsequently making application at the house already described, and to which he had seen the carriage containing Woodruff driven, he found Doctor Rowel there, who expressed great surprise at seeing him, and on being informed of the nature of his mission, at once frankly declared that Mr. Sylvester was totally mistaken. In proof whereof, and to establish his own innocence the more completely, he conducted him up-stairs into a chamber where lay a gentleman sick in bed, and who the Doctor averred, was the identical person he had brought in his carriage the night before, and whom he had thus removed to his brother's for the benefit of the purer air of the forest. Beyond this Sylvester saw nothing to warrant Fanny's suspicions; while the girl herself declared on seeing him that that man certainly was not the father of whom they were in search. In fact, so admirably had the Doctor managed matters, that Fanny began to think herself that she was labouring under some very strange mistake; more especially when, on the question being put to him, the sick man himself concurred in the statement made by the Doctor, and solemnly averred that he had, as previously stated, been brought from Nabbfield the preceding night. And so far he spoke the literal truth; for, in fact, the sick man was no other than Robson, the Doctor's assistant, fitted with a very consumptive and deranged-looking night-cap, a bedgown slipped over his shirt, and a big bottle of hot water at his heels to make him look like an invalid; while James Woodruff himself, very shortly after his arrival, had been again removed—in consequence of the Doctor's suspicions that he was followed—to another and a more secret place in the very heart of the waste, where, it was confidently trusted, he might be safely kept the remainder of his days, beyond the possibility of human discovery.

In consequence of the success of the Doctor's stratagem, Fanny and Mr. Sylvester returned disappointed and out of spirit to their home.

Such, in substance, was the brief story related by Fanny to Colin on the occasion of her visit to town; and which he had a few days before communicated to Mr. Lupton.

Whether the arrest of Doctor Rowel, when it became known amongst his friends, and to the brother, of whom we have above spoken, might not have precipitated some tragical conclusion or other of Woodruff's life,—is doubtful, perhaps highly probable; had not a singular and very mysterious communication concerning him been made to Colin, and from a quarter equally mysterious, some month or so after the occurrences above described.

CHAPTER XXVII.

London Bridge, and an unexpected scene upon it.

IT was about four o'clock—sometime before daylight—one morning, nearly a month after the events last described, that Mr. Lupton and Colin might have been seen wending their way along the chilly and silent streets, in the direction of London Bridge. Saving the deliberate footfalls of the night-watch, the far-heard rattle of some early carriage over the resounding pavement, or perhaps now and then the smothered asthmatical cough of some poor old creature or other turned out thus early, in cloak and covered chair, to sit with charcoal fire and coffee in the streets, there were no audible signs that any soul existed there besides themselves. London was asleep. This Goliath of earthly cities had lain itself down wearied, and for a time lost itself in forgetfulness of all the world. Its labours suspended, its pleasures wearied into pains, and laid all aside, its virtue dreaming innocently, its vice steeped painfully in the burning phlegm of disturbed stupor, like a half-dreamed hell; its happy, hopeful of the morrow; its miserable, dreading the approach of another sun. While itself, the carcass of the great city, lay stretched athwart the banks of the broad river, as, overpowered with the mighty labours which it had achieved within the last four and twenty hours, and unconsciously receiving strength from repose for that additional exertion, whose repetitions day by day, year by year, and age after age, no man can count to the end.

"Five o'clock exactly," said Colin, "is, I think, the time appointed, and on the city side of the bridge."

As he said this he drew from his pocket the communication to which allusion was made at the conclusion of the last chapter, and again perused it.

The reader must here be informed that the letter now in Colin's hands had been addressed to him in the first instance at Mr. Veriquear's, and thence had been forwarded to his present residence. It came from some anonymous correspondent, evidently residing not far from the place to which James Woodruff had been carried; but as its contents will perhaps better explain themselves than would any description of mine, I will give it:—

"Sir,—I am given to understand that you feel some interest in the fate of a Mr. James Woodruff. That man is now in my power, either to liberate or to detain for life, according as you may answer this favourably or unfavourably. You HAVE AN OBJECT TO CARRY OUT, SO have I. If you are prepared to serve me, I will put this Woodruff into your hands in return: if not, neither you nor his daughter may ever see him more. Meet me *alone* at the north end of London Bridge, at five o'clock on the morning of the —th, and I will explain particulars. At that time it will be as secret there as in a desert, and you will feel more secure. You will know me to be the writer of this when you see a man make a cross with his finger in the air."

This strange communication Colin had laid before Mr. Lupton; and the only probable conjecture they could form respecting it was, that it had been written by Doctor Rowel's brother, who,—having heard of the imprisonment of that gentleman,—had resorted to this expedient in the hope of compromising the matter by, as it were, exchanging prisoners, and perhaps stipulating for all farther proceedings against the Doctor being stayed. To be sure, there were objections to this interpretation, but, nevertheless, it seemed altogether the only plausible one they could hit upon.

However, as Mr. Lupton suspected that very possibly some treachery might be concealed under this uncommon garb, and that it was a plot on the part of the Doctor's friends to be revenged on Colin,—he himself determined to accompany him; but on their arrival near the place appointed to fall back, in order to avoid suspicion, though still keeping sufficiently near to distinguish a preconcerted signal which Colin was to give in case of need.

The bridge was now at hand. Over the parapet to the left, and considerably below them, long rows of lights, illuminating the walls and doorways of life-deserted warehouses, filled with merchandise from all parts of the world, pointed out the site of that thronged and noisy gully Thames Street. Before them, farther on, lost in mist, and yet lingering smoke, which gave to sky, buildings, and water, one common neutral colour, rose beyond the water one solitary tower, looming darker than all around it, but relieved still farther back by a flush of dull, mysterious light, which, though it showed nothing distinctly, yet emphatically marked the existence, to an undefined extent, of many an unseen mass of building like that by which they were immediately surrounded. And now they are on the bridge alone. It is not yet five. The sight is magnificent. Behold these two sides of a mighty city separated by a scarcely-seen gulf, on which streams of light, reflected from night-lamps afar off, ripple as though so many of the pillars of fire that lighted the Israelites of old were on the waves. Up the great stream, or down it,—the uprear-ing of men's hands,—house, church, and palace appear alike illimitable. All those mean and minor details, which confound the eye and distract the attention during daylight, are now swallowed up and resolved into one broad whole. The dense and unmeasured mass of building which meets the sight every way, seems resolved into a solid. Line on line and height on height extending away till lost utterly in the far obscurity of the void horizon. Without any great strain of the imagination this scene might be mistaken for a splendid dream of Tyre or Palmyra, or of Babylon on the Euphrates, great cities of old, whose giant memories loom in the mind as images that cannot be fully compassed from their very vastness. While under our feet flows the ghastly river, the dull, deceptive stream that has borne on its bosom the wealth of kingdoms; that has found in its bed a thousand last resting-places for human misery, when the link that bound unhappiness and life together became too galling to be any more endured; and that in its stormy wrath has swallowed happiness suddenly, when jollity forgot in its temporary delirium that boats are frail, and that but a slender plank, which a wave might founder, stood between itself and a deep grave.

As Colin cast a scrutinizing eye around, in the hope of meeting with his appointed and unknown

correspondent, the city clocks far and near, some together, and some after each other, chimed five. Almost with the last stroke of the bell footsteps were heard rising upon the city side of the bridge. A bricklayer's labourer, with a short pipe in his mouth, passed by; and then a woman,—if woman she could be called,—torn, dirty, and deplorable to look upon, staggering forwards under the influence of the last night's excesses: but neither made a sign. Behind them followed an old man, roughly clad in the costume of the poorer classes of the residents of our country villages, saving that a long coat supplied the place of smock-frock, while his nether extremities were finished off with quarter boots, tightly laced up to the ankles with leathern thongs.

An unaccountable feeling, which displayed itself in his flushed features, shot through Colin's veins as the first momentary sight of this man came across him. Had he seen him before? It almost seemed so; but when? where? on what occasion?

The old man hesitated a moment or two as he gazed on Colin, and then cast a searching glance around, in order to ascertain whether he was alone. The figure of Mr. Lupton was dimly visible at some distance. Colin leaned idly against the wall with his eyes fixed intently on the old man, who now again approached him. In another moment the sign was made—the cross in the air—and our hero advanced and accosted him.

"I believe, sir, you wish to speak to me: you sent a letter addressed to me a short time ago."

"Nay—nay, now!" replied the old man, "what occasion have you to tell *me* that? If I wrote you a letter I know it without your explanation; and your appearance here is a sufficient assurance to me that you have duly received it. Do you know who I am?"

"I do not," said Colin, "though it seems to me as though I had seen you before somewhere or other."

"Humph! well—well!" exclaimed the old man, "then you are now talking to old Jerry Clink, your own grandfather."

"Your name Clink!" ejaculated the young man, astonished, "and my grandfather!"

"Now, why ask me again? Hav'n't I just now answer'd 'em. And if you can't believe me the first time, I'm sure you won't on a repetition."

"But is it possible? I never knew I had a grandfather."

"Ay, ay, I see how it is," replied Jerry; "I'm a poor man, and you are apeing the gentleman. But I risked my life once to be revenged for you, only some busy meddler came across and baulked me. I'll do it yet though; and I want you to help me. The cause is yours as well as mine; for the injury is of a mother to you, though of a daughter to me: and the man who will not defend his mother's honour, or revenge her disgrace, ought to be cast into the bottomless pit for everlasting!"

Colin stood astonished at this speech. He scarcely knew what he said, but faltered out, "Who, sir, has dared to say anything to my mother's dishonour, or to bring her into any disgrace?"

The old man tapped him with serious significance on the shoulder as he replied, "Your father, my boy,—your father!"

"How!" exclaimed the young man in a tone of deep excitement: "who is he? for I never knew who was my father."

"You!" replied Jerry bitterly, "ought never to have been born!"

"What can you mean, man, by all this?" demanded Colin.

"I tell you," answered the old man, "your father is a villain, and you—you are—but never mind. Since you *are* born, and *are* alive, show that you are worthy to live by properly resenting your mother's everlasting injuries. *My* vengeance has been untiring, but it has not succeeded yet. Together we can do anything. True, the man must be called, as he is, your father. What then? The punishment of such fathers cannot come from better hands than their own sons. As they sow the wind, let them reap the whirlwind."

"What is it?" demanded Colin, interrupting him, "that you would propose to me?"

"See you," said the old man, drawing closer, "you are in love with a girl, named Fanny Woodruff. Nay, nay, do not interrupt me, I know better than you do. I tell you you love her, and can never marry any one else. Her father is confined as a madman. He is now in my power. I am his keeper. You want to liberate him, and rightly too. *He* has told me all about it, and I believe him. Now, let me see the spirit of a true man in you; take up your mother's cause, and never forgive till you are revenged, and he shall by me be set at liberty. Join hand and heart with me against the villain called your father."

"Who is he?" again demanded Colin.

"Lupton of Kiddal," answered Jerry.

"Mr. Lupton my father!"

"The same. I shot at him once."

"You?"

"I, with this same right hand."

"And I," added Colin, "prevented it, and saved you from the gallows."

The old man stood mute—confounded. His whole countenance changed with deadly fury, and in the next moment he rushed upon Colin with apparently the desperate intention of forcing him over the balustrades of the bridge.

A moment sufficed for his signal call, which brought Mr. Lupton instantly to the spot. The mutual recognition between Jerry and himself was but the process of a moment; and, while the latter strove all in his power to secure the former without violence, Jerry as desperately and madly aimed to bury in his bosom a long knife, which it was now discovered he held opened in his hand. The combined exertions of Mr. Lupton and Colin were, however, too much for him, and would eventually have achieved his capture, had not Jerry, with a degree of reckless desperation and agility, which struck both his assailants with momentary horror and astonishment, leaped the wall of the bridge on finding himself at the point of being taken, and casting his knife and coat from him, in an instant plunged headlong from about the centre of one of the arches into the Thames.

It was a wild leap, an insane flight into the arms of death. There was no splash in the water, but a dull, leaden sound came up, as when a heavy weight is plunged into a deep gulf. It was as if the water made no aperture, and threw up no spray; but gulfed him sullenly, as though such prey was not worth rejoicing over.

Father and son seemed petrified into mere statues; not more from what they had seen than—in the case of the latter, at least—he had heard from the lips of the suicide. For that a suicide he was who could doubt? Who might take that giddy leap, and live?

During a brief space they dared not even cast their eyes down the fearful height; the deed had paralysed them. But, as Colin's eyes were fixed intensely on the waves, a something living seemed to struggle through and across a ripple of light. Could it indeed be the old man? He dared not hope, and could say nothing.

Boats were subsequently got out, the river was traversed, and both banks were searched, in hopes of finding him; but all the efforts of the boatmen proved ineffectual.

The cause of Mr. Lupton's kindness was a secret to Colin no longer. But in how different a relative position did he seem to stand to that gentleman now to what he had done formerly; so recently, even, as one brief hour ago! Within that space what painful truths had passionately been cleared up to him; what difficulties and embarrassments thrown on almost every hand around his future conduct towards nearly every person with whom he was connected, and in whose fate his heart was most deeply interested! But the case of his old grandfather, so resolutely bent on spilling the blood of his own father, out of a stern principle of mistaken justice, seemed to him the worst. He foresaw that, unless it *had* so happened that Jerry was drowned,—an event which he scarcely knew whether to feel satisfied under, or to regret,—all his address would be required in the time to come to settle the hostility between that man and his father, without the bitter and ignominious consequence resulting, which would doom him to behold his mother's parent expiate upon a public scaffold his double crime of having twice deliberately attempted the assassination of Mr. Lupton. So deeply was he overwhelmed with the fearful transactions of the morning, that he begged the Squire to allow him a day or two's quiet and reflection before he undertook the duty of explaining to him what had passed between the old man and himself. But it was on one condition only that Mr. Lupton consented to acquiesce in this request. That condition was—to be then and there told who his assailant could possibly be. Colin hesitated awhile, but at length burst into tears as he uttered the words—"My mother's father!" The Squire turned pale as ashes when those words reached his ear, while a very sensible tremor shook his whole frame. He grasped Colin's hand, but said nothing. Those words called up something in each mind, which now made both dumb. They shook hands repeatedly, and parted.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK COLIN CLINK, VOLUME 2 (OF 3) ***

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