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DELAWARE;

OR

THE RUINED FAMILY.

EDINBURGH

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DELAWARE;

OR

THE RUINED FAMILY.

A TALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

EDINBURGH:

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DELAWARE;

OR,

THE RUINED FAMILY.

>CHAPTER I.

I do most sincerely believe, that the very best way to get all the characters of this book out of their manifold difficulties, would be, to end the work at the close of the second volume, and leave the world to settle it, as it liked. However, as the great object is, to make known the truth, and as the chances are infinite, that no single individual of the millions who intend to read this book, would, by the utmost exertion of their imagination, discover what the truth is, it may be necessary to go on, and explain what has become of some at least of the characters which have slipped off the stage Heaven knows where--especially as they have each much to do, and to suffer, before they "sleep the sleep that knows no waking."

The great advantage of autobiography is, that a man never troubles his head about other people's affairs, but goes on with his own tale till he has done with it; whereas the unfortunate wretch who undertakes to tell the history of a number of other people, has no better a life of it than a whipper-in, and is obliged to be continually trotting up and down, flogging up his straggling characters to a pace with the rest. The reader, too, may get his brains most tremendously puzzled in the mean time. But what can be done? If people will not write their own stories, other people must write them for them, and the work must go on as best it may. Under these circumstances, we must request the gentle reader to bring back his mind, or his eyes, to the end of the fourth chapter of the last volume, since which precise point we have neglected entirely the history of Henry Beauchamp. However, amends shall immediately be made to that gentleman, and he shall have the whole of this volume to himself.

Let it be remembered, then, that he set out from the dwelling of the miser at Ryebury, promising that punctilious person to return, and sign at once the more formal and regular documents, for which the necessary stamps were still to be procured from Emberton--that he passed William Delaware on his road, concealing himself from him as he did so; and the reader, if he be so pleased, may dip his hand into the wallet of imagination, and take out his own particular little scheme, for leaving the money with which Beauchamp was burdened, in the chamber of--Blanche Delaware's brother.

Those three last words may seem periphrastic; but if the reader thinks they are so, he makes a mistake; for at that moment, it was not in the least as Captain William Delaware, a Master and Commander in his Majesty's Navy, nor as the son of Sir Sidney Delaware of Emberton, Baronet, nor in any other quality, shape, or capacity of any kind whatsoever, that Henry Beauchamp regarded him; but solely and wholly in relation to Blanche Delaware--or, in short, as the brother of her he loved. When he avoided him, it was because she had rejected his--Beauchamp's offered hand; when he placed the money on the table at Emberton, it was, that the clouds which had so long obscured the sunshine of her days, might be scattered for ever; and Henry Beauchamp could no more think of William Delaware, without the connecting link that bound him to his sister, than one can think of the planetary system without the sun.

When it was all done, however; and, having regained the shade of the park trees, Henry Beauchamp was strolling on, slow and sad, towards Ryebury, he bethought him of what was next to be done, as a consequence of the very things that were just accomplished. Let it be remarked that this was the first time he had thought of what was to follow; for the hurry and confusion of the whole day, which had just passed over his head, had left him no time for reflection, even had he been inclined to indulge in it; and the bitter disappointment he had suffered, had given him no great taste for thought of any kind. All he had calculated, was the best means of arriving at his immediate object; and farther than that, he had satisfied himself with the grand conscience-salve for all mad enterprises--"He dared to say, all would go right!"

Now, however, when he began to consider the matter, it presented more difficulties than he had before perceived. He was quite romantic enough and wealthy enough to have given the money to his cousins, with pleasure in the gift, and without inconvenience from the consequences; but, from the delicacy of feeling natural to his own heart, he perfectly understood that neither Sir Sidney Delaware, nor any of his family, would be willing to receive such a sum from any one as a donation--especially from him, circumstanced as he was in regard to Miss Delaware. Disgusted and wearied with the delays and shuffling of the miser, and suspecting that his worthy uncle, Lord Ashborough, might have some share in producing the impediments, he had determined to put it out of the power of any one to prevent the payment, and consequently had acted as we have seen; but, now that he had done so, he found that it would be in no degree easy to give the matter the air of an ordinary transaction.

People who have met with few difficulties in their undertakings, soon teach themselves to trust the execution of anything they themselves find troublesome, to others, and look upon their carrying it through easily as a matter of course; and as Beauchamp, though not in general given to *insouciance*, was just then in a state of mental irritation and impatience, which rendered long reflection of any kind irksome to him, he determined to throw the burden of the business upon the shoulders of the miser. "I will tell him," he thought, "to write a note to William Delaware, the first thing to-morrow, informing him that he has sent the money by a friend to-night, and is ready

to execute the legal documents in regard to the whole transaction." Having so far made his arrangements in his own mind, he walked on slowly, beginning to feel somewhat weary with his day's exertion; and, as he did so--every other subject which could force his thoughts from the most painful object they could choose, being lost for the time--memory naturally led him back to dream of Blanche Delaware, and her strange and unaccountable conduct towards himself. That he loved her as deeply and as sincerely as man could love woman, he now felt but too painfully; but, notwithstanding good Mrs. Wilson's sentimental anticipations of his antique Roman impatience of existence, Beauchamp was the last man on earth to drown himself under any circumstances whatever. Not that he did not feel that the gloss and splendour was, to him, gone from the earth for ever--not that he did not feel that his love would endure to his last hour, mingling the poison drop of disappointment through all the cup of life--not that wounded pride, and broken hopes, and rebuked self-confidence, and all that can embitter man's feelings, were not poured like gall and wormwood into his heart--but, somehow, he had acquired a strange notion, that to lay hands upon one's own life was not only immoral and unchristian, but was also cowardly and stupid--the act of a madman, a lout, or a barbarian. He had never been one of those men that particularly value life; and certainly he felt that, at the present moment, if any one had been inclined to take it from him, it was a sort of commodity he could part with without great regret. Yet, at the same time, even in that case, he would probably have defended it as a matter of course; and, as to throwing it away by his voluntary act, such a thing never entered his mind.

His thoughts, however, in regard to Blanche Delaware were, as we have said, bitter enough. He loved her deeply--with a first, pure, steadfast, and yet passionate affection. His heart--so long guarded--had poured out upon her all its stored enthusiasm and repressed tenderness; and in the full and confident belief that his attachment was returned, hope had seduced him into every one of those waking visions which are so bright to dream and so agonizing to lose. He had certainly believed that he was loved in return; and the dissolution of that belief was the most painful part of all. Yet Beauchamp was both too proud and too just to suppose that he had been trifled with; or to imagine that a woman, on whom he could have so fixed his heart, would have been guilty of such petty coquetry. He rather chose to blame his own vanity; to admit that Blanche Delaware had been perhaps a little thoughtless; but that he had been far too confident.

Thus thinking, he walked on towards Ryebury, deviating slightly from the way, in order that he might not meet William Delaware on his return, and mingling vague, wild schemes for the future, with the bitter memories and regrets of the past. He would visit Greece he thought--perhaps cross over the narrow strait, and wander through Syria and Judea, or penetrate into Armenia, and pause for a while amongst the tribes, whose patriarchal habits have been so beautifully depicted by Morier's entertaining pen, or even travel forward into India itself, and watch the slow customs of Europe forcing their way amidst the immemorial habits of the Hindoo. He would do anything, in short, for amusement--and forgetfulness.

When he at length approached the door of Mr. Tims's house, the moon had sunk considerably, though she had still some hours to shine; and, pouring her beams from the side, with the slightest possible angle of declination towards the back of the house, her light fell full upon the two steps that led up to the door, without lighting the door itself. Beauchamp thought he heard a noise in the passage as he approached; but with his usual indifference, certainly not decreased either by fatigue or grief, he walked on with the same slow pace in which he had before been proceeding, and was just in the act of laying his hand upon the bell, when the door was suddenly and somewhat unexpectedly thrown open. The faint outline of three men standing in the dim darkness of the passage, was all that Beauchamp could perceive; but the moonlight poured full upon his own figure as he stood alone upon the steps. So unlooked-for a sight in the house of Mr. Tims caused him to pause in some surprise; and he had no time to recover from it; for before he could ask any question, or form any conjecture, he received a violent blow from some heavy instrument on the head, which instantly felled him to the ground, completely stunned and motionless.

How long he continued in that state, Beauchamp could hardly tell; but when he again recovered his consciousness, he found himself lying extended upon some planks, with a stiff and numb sensation over all his limbs, a violent headach, and extreme pain in his ankle, while a rippling sound and buoyant undulating motion seemed to show that he was in a boat upon the water. For the first moment he could not verify this supposition by sight, as he seemed to have been cast carelessly into the boat, and his hat was driven so far over his brows as to prevent him from seeing anything around.

Before he was well aware of what he was doing, he started up, pushing back the covering from his eyes; but, as he did so, his unsteady footing in the boat, together with the violent pain in his ankle, made him lose his balance, and very nearly fall over into the sea, which received his hat as he fell, and bore it far away in a moment.

With an involuntary groan from the pain he suffered, Beauchamp relapsed into his former position; but the single instant he had been able to stand up, had shown him sufficient to make him comprehend in a great degree his immediate situation. The moon, he had remarked, just about to dip below the horizon, was pouring a long, long line of yellow light over the waves that, rippling away in the far perspective, seemed like living things of gold, dancing joyfully in the beams, while over all the rest of the expanse, was to be seen nothing else but the dark mass of agitated waters heaving up and down with a dull but solemn sound. He had just caught a glimpse, too, of a faint line of high coast stretching away to the north-west, and consequently

catching upon its most prominent points the beams of the setting moon, while all the rest remained in dim gray shadow. Such had been the more distant objects that Beauchamp had beheld. Those more immediately around him, were the small open boat in which he was borne along, and four figures that it contained. Of these--one of which was that of a woman--two appeared to be death sick, and the other two sat close beside each other in silence at the stern of the boat. One was steering, the other gazing fixedly over the side upon the flashing waters; but the movement of Beauchamp instantly called the eyes of both, though neither made any observation even when he fell back again upon the planks. After he had lain there for a moment or two more, however, the one who was unoccupied whispered something to the steersman. The other made no reply, and the whisper was repeated. The steersman then broke forth with a fearful oath, adding, "If you offer to touch a hair of his head, I will heave you overboard, and send you to hell an hour before your time!"

His companion muttered something which Beauchamp did not hear, and the sailor again replied in the same angry tone, "Come, come, rouse out none of your slack-jaw at me, or blast me if I do not show you who commands here. You have got your way with me once to-night to my own damnation, but you shall not do it again!"

Here the matter dropped, and all was silent but the ripple of the waters. Half an hour more elapsed without a word being spoken; and though Beauchamp felt very giddy and confused, he endeavoured to think over the circumstances in which he was placed, and form some plan for his demeanour towards those by whom he was surrounded.

Although he had very few facts to lead him to such a conclusion, yet something more than a suspicion of the truth crossed his mind. The peculiar whistling he had heard, both in going to and coming from Ryebury, joined with the appearance of the three men in the passage of the miser's house at that time of night--the assault upon himself, and his situation at the very moment, all made him conclude that a bold and extensive robbery had been committed, and that he had been carried away from an apprehension that he might give the alarm, and lead to the detection of the robbers.

He suspected also that it might be a matter of doubt in the bosom of the man who sat by the steersman, whether it would not be best to dispose of such an evidence against them, as he himself might prove, by throwing him into the sea; and the answer of the other showed him that, at all events, there was one of the party averse to such a mode of proceeding.

From all this he concluded, that as he himself could offer little or no resistance to whatever his companions chose to do with him, it would be much better to keep himself as quiet as possible, and to take no apparent notice of anything that was passing around him. Whether such might have been his determination, had he felt well, and in the full use of all his limbs, may be doubtful; but the aching of his head was intense and stupifying, and from the sensation which he experienced in his ankle, he felt sure that one at least of the bones had been dislocated in throwing him into the boat. These sort of little corporalities are apt to make a man excessively quiescent; and Beauchamp, though in general not liking particularly to be treated as a portmanteau, at least without asking the reason why; being now convinced, that however much he might express his volition, he could do no more towards executing it than a trunk itself, determined wisely to keep silence also, and not even to move, any more than the pain he suffered impelled him to do, for the mere sake of changing his position.

His companions remained silent for near an hour, and the only words which then broke the stillness, were spoken by the steersman, who seemed to be the only seaman of the party. "If she be not under the lee of Jerry's Knocker, we must run for old Willy Small's, that's all. We are sure enough with him, and to-morrow we can get another boat, and so across."

The other made no reply, and very likely did not understand clearly what his companion meant. Beauchamp, however, who had in his youth frequented that part of the country; and, as the reader may have perceived, had forgotten but little of the localities, instantly remembered that a long promontory, jutting out from the rest of the coast, and having a calm sheltered bay to the eastward, bore throughout the country the name of Jerry's Knocker; and he was led to conclude, from the rest of the sentence, that the respectable people into whose hands he had fallen, were looking out for some smuggling vessel to carry them to France.

It very speedily became evident, that whatever they were seeking was not to be found. The sea began soon to run high off the headland, and shortly after grew far calmer than before, leading Beauchamp to imagine--though he could see nothing around--that they had doubled the point; but the words, "She's weighed, by ---," at once showed that the vessel was gone; and the steersman, who had been anxiously looking out, resumed his seat, and brought his boat a point nearer to the wind.

In about half an hour afterwards, the pitching of the boat ceased almost entirely, and it was clear she was entering smooth water; while a warning to be quiet, given somewhat sharply by the steersman to one of the sea-sick personages, who was now inclined to speak, showed that they were approaching some spot where other ears might be on the watch. The thought passed through Beauchamp's mind to try the strength of his lungs; and, had he been sure that there was any one within hearing, it is more than probable he would have done so, as he felt not a little cramped and uncomfortable on the planks of the boat. However, not being sure that any one

would or could come to his aid if he were to hollow till he grew hoarse, and that the attempt might only procure him a speedy passage into the sea, he adhered to his former plan, and, in a moment after, with a gentle rush and a slight shock, the boat touched the land.

"Run up to yonder light," said the steersman, in a low voice, "tell the old man that I am here, and bid him come down and lend a hand."

"Why don't you go yourself?" asked the other, in the same whispered tone. "He doesn't know any of us."

"Because I do not choose," answered the other; and the person to whom he spoke at once obeyed. Ere two minutes had elapsed, a considerable addition was made to their party, and the steersman himself, now springing ashore, held a low consultation with those who joined them. The other man and the woman, whom Beauchamp had observed, were next taken out of the boat, and in a moment after a stout old man jumped in, and stirred him by the shoulder. "Come, master!" he said, "you must get out, and come along with us--though you seem to take things vastly quietly."

"I suppose it is the best thing I can do," replied Beauchamp. "But if you want me out, you must carry me out, my good fellow, for they have lamed me, and I cannot stand."

"That's a bad job!" replied the other, speaking in a rough but kindly tone. "Wat will be sorry for that, for they did not intend to hurt you, I can tell you."

"Perhaps not," said Beauchamp; "though knocking me down and stunning me on the spot, were not very unlikely to hurt me."

"Ay, but if a man will poke his nose into what he has no business with, master," replied the other, "he must take what he gets."

"Very true!" answered Beauchamp dryly, though somewhat surprised at the fellow's coolness. "Very true, indeed! But it was purely accidental on my part. I had not the slightest intention of intruding upon the gentlemen in the pursuit of their avocations. But, as I said before, if you mean me to get out of this boat--and I am heartily tired of it--you must carry me; for I can only stand upon one leg, and the ground is somewhat uneven."

"True enough, true enough!" answered the man. "Here, Bill, lend us a hand to lift the lad out of the boat. They have broke his leg amongst them. It will teach you, master, to keep out of the way when there is anything to be run upon the coast. Always sheer off when you see what's going on. But we will get it spliced for you, never fear. Here, Bill, I say!"

A youth of about seventeen or eighteen now came up and helped his father, as it proved the old man was, to lift the stranger on shore. Beauchamp then, with the assistance of the elder personage, made his way from the little sandy cove into which the boat had been run, to a lonely house, standing high up upon the bank, with two boats drawn up nearly to the door, and about a square yard of cabbage-garden at the back. The old smuggler, for such he evidently was, led his unwilling guest in, and was about to conduct him into a room, the door of which opened at a right angle with that which entered from the shore. Various signs and symbols, however, within the chamber, made the man pause ere he went in; and at length he exclaimed, as he still stood in the entrance--"Well, well! But give us a candle, though! How the devil can one see up the stairs? It's as dark as Davy's locker!"

Beauchamp made as much use of his eyes as possible; but it was in vain that he did so, for the persons that the room contained were concealed from his sight by the half-closed door; and all that he could distinguish was part of the common interior of a fisherman's kitchen--a large chest, a deal table, a wide fireplace, and two shelves covered with clean blue-edged plates and porringers, together with a vial bottle, half full of ink, and having a pen stuck in the top of it, pendent by a bit of string from the corner of one of the shelves.

A moment after, a clean, little, well-salted fisherman's wife, emerged from behind the door, with a brazen candlestick and three inches of lighted candle in her hand; and Beauchamp, conducted up stairs with no inconsiderable agony, was ushered into a small bedroom, (of which there appeared to be four, by the way,) which, amidst all its faults and deficiencies, was at least clean.

As they went up the stairs, and for a moment after they entered the room, the eyes of the smuggler continued to run over his guest's apparel and face with a look of surprise, and even anxiety, which increased at every glance; and when he had done, there was a change in his whole demeanor which might have made Beauchamp smile at any other time, or under any other circumstances. He now, however, threw himself down in a chair, exhausted with the pain his exertion had caused him, and was about to demand that a surgeon should be sent for, when the old man, setting down the candle on the table, told him with a tone of respectful civility, that he would return in a moment, and left him.

"Lock the door!" shouted a voice from below, as the smuggler quitted the room. The door accordingly was locked; and Beauchamp, left alone, before he proceeded to think over his present situation, according to his usual deliberate custom, set to work to get his boot off, and

see what was really the state of his ankle.

His leg, however, was so much swelled, that all ordinary efforts were vain, although he never committed that piece of exuberant impolicy, the wearing a tight boot. As soon as he discovered this to be the case, he took his penknife from his pocket, and at once relieved his foot and leg from their leathern prison. He was then about to proceed in his examination, when steps coming from below interrupted him; but another door was opened, and in a moment after he heard the voice of the old smuggler, and that of the man who had steered the boat, conversing together somewhat eagerly. At first, as usual, there was a guard upon their tongues, and all that reached his ear was a sort of hum; but soon the caution wore away; they spoke loud, and Beauchamp, without the desire or the capability of moving from the chair in which he had first sat down, heard distinctly the greater part of all that past.

"Well, well, Wat!" said the voice of the old man, "D--me, if I'm a man to leave a poor boy at a pinch! We must just get the cutter run down; but she cannot be here you know till to-morrow night any how,--It must be a bad job though, that makes you so wild to get to France, my boy."

"A bad job enough! A bad job enough!" answered a voice that Beauchamp now remembered full well. "But mark ye, William Small, when ye hear it all told--Mark ye, I say! I had nothing to do with the worst part of it. Those two fellows below have cheated me, and made a wretch of me. D--me, if I would not rather have gone up to the main chains and gone pitch over, head foremost, into the Bay of Biscay--But they did it, not I--mind that!"

"I'd bet a puncheon they've killed the officer," replied the other.

"Don't ask any questions, Willy Small!" replied his companion; "Don't ask any questions--It is safer for us all!"

"Why, that's true enough!" replied the smuggler, "That's true enough! No, no! I'll not ask nor guess either, and then I know nothing about it, but that you and t'others wanted the cutter to go a pleasuring; and I'll take the lowest price you see too, Watty, so they can't bring me in as art and part for the run goods. But what is to be done with the young man in the next room? Why, Wat, he seems a gentleman--I say!"

"Ay! he is a gentleman every inch of him," answered the other; "and such a one as one seldom sees--I would not have harm happen to him for the world--Why, you must just keep him for a day or two, till we are gone and safe, and then let him go. But I say, when you lock the door to-night upon him, keep you the key yourself, mind you. Those fellows below, have an ill-will to him; and if it had not been for me, they would have hove him overboard this blessed night--upon my soul they would!"

"D--n their eyes and limbs!" exclaimed the other, "I should like to see them touch him in my house. If I would not tie them together, like a couple of hogsheads, and sink them out of water-mark. But as to locking the door, Wat, there is no use of that at all, bless ye. He can't stir an inch. Why, you've broken his leg amongst you!"

The reply of the other, though sufficiently blasphemous--and we must here apologize to the more scrupulous reader for admitting into the dialogues just past, so many profane expletives, which we would not perhaps have done, having no delight in such matter ourselves, had not the love of truth and accuracy prevailed--The reply of the other, then, though sufficiently blasphemous, showed that he was bitterly grieved for the accident which had happened to Beauchamp; and a long conversation ensued in regard to the necessity of sending for a surgeon.

That, however, they both agreed would "blow the whole business"--to use their own expression--and humanity as usual gave way to apprehension. Old Willy Small, as the smuggler was denominated, declared that he was a goodish hand himself at splicing a broken limb, and that he and his wife would look to it, till the other party were safe off to France. This seemed to quiet the conscience of the other upon that particular; and, after concerting some farther plans for facilitating all the preparations for their journey, they returned to their comrades below.

The effect of this conversation upon the mind of Henry Beauchamp, was not certainly to produce any very agreeable sensations. He began to apprehend that a worse crime than simple robbery had been committed at the house of the unhappy miser; and though, in one point of view, he felt little anxiety on his own account--seeing evidently that he would not want assistance at his need, if anything were attempted against him--yet he could not help shuddering at his proximity to a gang of murderers; and contemplated, with no great pleasure, the surgical offices to be performed upon his own leg by a smuggler and an old woman. An evil, however, is seldom without its good; and though, certainly, had it been left to his own choice, he might have found a more agreeable way of diverting his thoughts from all the painful subjects that previously occupied them; yet true it most assuredly is, that corporeal uncomfot, pain, and apprehension, did very materially lessen---No! not his love for Blanche Delaware; but the first bitter feeling of the disappointment which her conduct had occasioned.

If it were not so strange to say, and if we could by any means discover the process by which the mind could arrive at such a result, we should declare, that, in the midst of all these dangers, troubles, and uncomfots of a different kind, Beauchamp had found a new store of hope. How, or

why, who can tell? but either his hope was like the limbs of the skeleton in the Fantocini, which, after being all disjointed, are suddenly pulled together again by strings that no one can see; or else it was like a fire of dry wood, which, when it has appeared for some time quite extinguished, will pour out a small white flame, when nobody is expecting any such thing, and soon be as bright again as ever. At all events, he had left Emberton that very morning without a spark of hope apparently left; and after going through as much as would have contented him with adventures for the whole of his life, he could not help thinking that there was something very strange and unaccountable in Blanche Delaware's whole conduct, and that, if he could but get the key, all might still go well. Nevertheless, he was not left long to cogitate upon anything; for, in a minute or two, the smuggler and the smuggler's wife walked in, in the character of surgeon and assistant; and, after some awkward explanations of their purpose, demanded to look at the gentleman's leg, to see if they could help him. As he knew that it was predetermined not to send for a surgeon, Beauchamp, who was not disposed to make people look foolish unnecessarily, did not, as he once intended, propose that expedient.

"You may look at my leg as much as you like, my good people," he said; "but I have not the slightest intention of letting you do anything to it, unless what you propose agrees with my own opinion." This being settled, the woman knelt down, and the man held the candle, and the stocking being withdrawn, an examination and mumbled consultation of some length took place.

"It's not broken, sir, do you see!" said the old man, looking up. "It's only the small bone put out, do you see!"

"I see nothing at all, my good fellow," replied Beauchamp, "except that it is very painful; and, of course, the more you pinch it the worse it is."

The man then assured him that, if he would let him try, he would put it in in a minute; and, after a laborious explanation, Beauchamp consented. The old man pulled his foot as if he would have pulled it off: the old woman squeezed his ankle as if she would have broken it through the middle; but at length, with a sudden snap, the bone started back into its place, and the patient found instant relief. Every attempt to stand, however, was still quite out of the question; and Beauchamp, giving himself entirely up into the hands of such skilful chirurgeons, suffered his ankle to be bandaged up with clothes steeped in vinegar and brandy, and himself to be carried to bed, where the smuggler assured him he ought to lie for at least four days, in order to perfect his recovery. When all was completed, and his host and hostess were retiring, Beauchamp listened for a moment, and heard the key of the door turned with greater satisfaction than he had imagined the fact of being locked into his own room would ever afford him.

CHAPTER II.

Now, Henry Burrel was a great deal too sincere a man, even in his commune with himself, to endeavour by any means to cheat himself into the belief that he was a hero. In short, he had quite sufficient real enthusiasm in his disposition, and quite sufficient contempt for those who affected it without having any, to make him very jealous of letting the portion he did possess appear openly, even before his own eyes; and, in order to correct such propensities, he had got up, as we have shown before, a system of apathetic indifference to every thing that did not affect himself, which, though sometimes run away with by his zeal or his affections, contrived generally to bridle feelings that would otherwise have been somewhat headstrong.

Left alone in a little bed, in a little room in a smuggler's cottage, on the loneliest part of the sea-shore--locked in without being able to set a foot to the ground--without a light----and with a confounded smell of fish pervading the whole atmosphere--his first impulse, as all these minor miseries tickled his imagination one after the other, was to laugh heartily. But the impression lasted but a moment; and, when he thought of the more remote, but more dreadful, circumstances connected by an inseparable link with his temporary situation--the murder of a helpless old man, which he doubted not had been committed--the fearful moral offence which three of his fellow-creatures had perpetrated; and the miserable fate of a youth, in whom he had taken considerable interest--for he had recognized, as we have before hinted, the voice of poor Wat Harrison--when he thought of all these circumstances, his heart smote him for the moment of levity in which he had indulged; and poured out the full tide of its generous and kindly feelings to wash away the fault of that one instant.

He now revolved the matter more seriously; and, as he did so, of course his own situation came again soberly under consideration. That situation was evidently anything but pleasant, for no man could be expected to find his pillow very soft when it was shaken by the hands of a gang of murderers. But Beauchamp was constitutionally a brave man. His impulses were not those of

fear; and, though he had a very considerable share of imagination, yet when he wanted to frighten himself about anything, he had to think of it seriously, and call up all the dangers one by one. Now, in the present instance, there were so many unpleasant and perilous points in his position, which he could neither divert nor avoid, that, after a short reflection, he found it would be best and wisest not to think of the danger at all; and, when he had so settled the matter, he found no great difficulty in forgetting it altogether, although with a degree of feverish restlessness he turned and returned in his mind the conversation which he had heard in the adjoining room.

It was evident that Walter Harrison had not told the whole truth to the old man who had given them shelter; and whether it was the smuggler's previous conclusions that had led him to believe the crime, from the consequences of which the young sailor was flying, had been committed in an endeavour to defraud the revenue, or whether by a direct falsehood on the lad's own part, Beauchamp naturally deduced from every thing which he had discovered, that Willy Small, as they called him, would be the first to shrink from the perpetrators of the deeper offence which had really been offered to the laws of God and man. This was, at least, some consolation; and although Beauchamp still felt a sensation of awe and horror when he reflected calmly on the whole transactions of that night, yet his feelings were more like those of one who reads a horrid tale of crime and sorrow in the newspapers, than those of one around whose very person the circumstances had been transacted, and who was in some degree a party to the whole.

Nevertheless, he could not go to sleep over it, with the easy carelessness of one of those daily devourers of manufactured horrors, who join to patronize the periodical press with the devout idolaters of agitation, and who, like men fed upon deviled gizzards, find that nothing on earth has enough cayenne. Whether it was busy thoughts, or a broken head, or an ancle that had been dislocated, that kept him awake, I cannot tell; but he lay in feverish and uneasy restlessness long after all was quiet in the house, and even the murderers had retired--I had almost said--to sleep.

Towards morning, however, exhaustion overcame all, and he slept long and profoundly. How long indeed he did not know, for he had forgot to wind up his watch; but, at all events, he woke refreshed and calm, his headach gone, and the pain of his hurt ancle so much relieved, that he fancied he could do anything, and at once sprang out of bed. He instantly found his mistake; for the moment he attempted to set that foot to the ground, he reeled, and would have fallen but for his hold of the bedstead; and, on examining more closely, he found his leg enormously swelled, and bidding fair, as the smuggler had predicted, to confine him to the house for more than one day. Notwithstanding this discovery, he determined to make his way to the window before any one interrupted him, in order to examine the *local*, and what was passing without; and by means of the table and the chairs he contrived to effect this purpose.

The scene that presented itself, was one that may be met with about once every three miles along the greater part of the southern and eastern coasts of England--a small sandy bay opening out into the wide blue sea, with two or three high cliffs on either hand, and nothing more. In the present instance, however, an object struck the eyes of Henry Beauchamp, which was not without its peculiar interest. It was a small low-rigged cutter, just making her way out to sea, with a full steady wind, and a press of sail. He looked up to the sky; and as far as he could judge, from the position of the sun, concluded that one or two hours must have passed since noon. At the same time, there was no sound of voices below; a lad was seen mending one of the boats on the shore; and a man, in whom he easily distinguished the old smuggler, was standing on the nearest bank, with a glass to his eye, either watching the progress of the cutter, or examining a vessel that could just be seen hull down in the offing. All seemed to imply, that those who had brought him thither had effected their escape from England; and after gazing out for a moment he returned to his bedside, and proceeded to dress himself as well as he could. The gentleman who threaded the Dædalion labyrinth, and slew Mrs. Pasesphae's illegitimate son at the end of it, had not half such a piece of work of it, as Henry Beauchamp had, to get into his clothes. It is wonderful how much more use one makes of one's foot even in dressing oneself, than one knows anything about; and what would have come of it in the present instance, can hardly be divined, had it not so happened that, after Beauchamp had struggled with innumerable difficulties for nearly half an hour, the old smuggler presented himself as a somewhat rude valet-de-chambre, and saved his guest from martyrdom.

The old man, in his quality of surgeon, blamed Beauchamp highly for getting up at all; and, pointing out the swelled state of his ancle, declared that he would only let him remain up, on condition that he would keep it raised upon a chair during the rest of the day.

Beauchamp was perhaps a little irritable with the contention he had just gone through with various parts of his apparel; and consequently, seating himself calmly on the nearest chair, he informed the old man, in a cool determined tone, that it was his intention immediately to proceed to Dorchester, which, as far as he could calculate, was the nearest large town. He was met by the smuggler, however, in a way that he did not expect, and this, of course, gave a sudden change to the current of his feelings. Instead of telling him that he could not go, or that he should not go, or any of those things which would have rendered him more determined than ever, the old man replied in a civil tone:--"Well, sir, you can do as you like; but I don't see how you can manage it to-night, for it is now near four--Dorchester's twenty miles off; and even were I to send for a shay, it can't come down within two mile of this place--cause there is no road."

"Past four is it?" cried Beauchamp. "I must have slept sound."

"I dare say you were tired enough, sir," replied the old man; "but it is past four, indeed--and, as I was saying, Dorchester is twenty miles, and the next town is ten. You are very welcome to your bed, sir; and I think you had a great deal better stay till you can walk a bit."

Beauchamp mused; for his situation was certainly a very unpleasant one. He knew it to be his duty to give immediate information of what had occurred to himself, to those persons who might investigate the matter thoroughly, and discover whether a greater offence had not been committed. At the same time, he felt the impossibility of walking two miles, if his life had been at stake; while he did not think it would be either wise or safe to intrust to a man of so doubtful a character as this Willy Small, even his suspicions in regard to persons, with one of whom, at least, the smuggler was on terms of friendship. It was impossible to say what the fear of being implicated in such a transaction, as Beauchamp believed to have taken place, might cause him to do, if he found that he had in his power the only person who could prove his connexion with the culprits. At the same time, the man's tone was perfectly civil, and even kind; and as soon as Beauchamp found that no opposition was intended to the exercise of his free-will, he of course dropped the more peremptory manner he had assumed, and determined to try milder means instead, though he well knew that no measures would have proved successful, had the smuggler made up his mind to risk after consequences, in order to gain the present object.

"If these places be so far by land," he said, at length, "is it not possible that I can get a boat to carry me to the next town on the coast?--I see two lying there upon the beach; and I will pay well for one, if it can be procured."

"Why, sir, for the matter of that," answered the smuggler, "one of the boats has not been seaworthy these three months, and the other unfortunately got badly damaged this morning in taking those fellows and the woman to the cutter.--They would not wait till high water, and seemed in a devil of a hurry to get aboard; and how my boy managed it, or whether the old un had a hand in it, I don't know, but they had all near been swamped, and the boat can't be reckoned on, d'ye see!"

Beauchamp's lip curled, as he thought that he perceived a determination to oppose his departure by fair means, if not by force; but the smuggler instantly caught it, and interpreting it aright, replied with a glowing cheek and a look of candour, that went farther to convince his hearer than all the oratory or bullying in the world would have done.

"Well, well! I see what it is," he said. "You think that I want to keep you, while those fellows sheer off clear. But they are gone, and that's done; and sorry am I that I ever saw their faces, for I've a notion that there's somewhat worse at bottom than I thought for. But never mind that. Your honour's a gentleman, at least such I take you to be; and d--me if I have a hand in stopping your going wherever you like. If you like to get under weigh to-night, why, I say nothing; and I will even send the boy Bill over to --- for horses and a shay, though I think you had better stay here, a devil of a deal; and as for the boat, you may hop down and look at her yourself, and you will see that it will be this time to-morrow before all's right again. So your honour may just do as you like--I say nothing, do you see?"

"You have said enough to make me believe you an honest man," replied Beauchamp; "and if what I suspect of your late inmates be true, you may find my testimony in your favour no slight matter.--What they have done," he added, seeing the old man's curiosity awakened, "I can only suspect, as you do yourself. All I know, of my own personal knowledge, is that, as I was accidentally coming upon them unawares, they thought fit to knock me down, and brought me hither; but I should certainly think you would find it most safe and most creditable to go immediately to the next magistrate and give information."

"No, no, no!" cried the smuggler--"No, by ---, I won't peach; and, besides, I know nothing about them!"

"I am well aware, my good friend," replied Beauchamp, "that you have been deceived; for I will tell you fairly that I heard unwillingly all that past between you and the young sailor, in the next room, last night. Take my word for it, however, that there has been no smuggling in the business."

The man started, but Beauchamp went on. "Smuggling had nothing to do with it; but as I know that your ideas of honour are very different from mine, I shall not of course press you to inform against men, whose crime you do not fully know, and whose guilt I myself could not clearly prove. Nevertheless, I must do my duty, and, well or ill, I must make my way to Dorchester to-morrow, in executing which purpose, I am sure you will aid me."

"That I will, sir! That I will!" answered the old man. "I will leave Bill to mend the boat, and I will set out for --- by daylight, and you shall have a shay down at the red stile by two o'clock at farthest. No! No! I will never peach against a poor lad who trusted me; but somehow, what your honour has said, has made me feel a little queerish--I should like to know the truth of the business vastly--I don't like these jobs, that I don't--anything in the way of business I don't mind--but I don't--no I don't like these jobs at all!"

It was very evident, from the changed and anxious countenance which the old smuggler now presented, that what he said was very true; and though he could talk with the utmost coolness of

killing a king's officer in a smuggling brawl, yet the vague and doubtful nature of the transactions into which he had been unwittingly entrapped, filled him with anxious apprehensions.

"Well, well, my good friend!" replied Beauchamp, whose object was not to alarm him too much on his own account, "At all events you have nothing to do with it, and I can bear witness to the conversation which took place between you and the young sailor last night, and which would at any time establish your ignorance of the whole facts."

"Thank your honour! Thank your honour!" cried the old man with evident heartfelt satisfaction. "Your honour's a gentleman--that you are; and I am sure that I would do anything your honour tells me--that's to say, I wouldn't like to peach, d'ye see--but anything else."

"All that can be required of you," replied Beauchamp, "is not to obstruct the course of justice; and, therefore, I shall trust to you to set out as early as possible to-morrow, to get me some conveyance; and farther, should you be called upon hereafter to give evidence in this business, take my advice, and tell the whole truth boldly and straightforwardly; for depend upon it, to tell a falsehood or to prevaricate, is the most dishonourable thing a man can do, whether his station be high or low."

"That it is sir, surely--that it is!" replied the smuggler; "and I will tell the truth when I am asked. But that is different, your honour knows, from going and telling without any one asking me."

"Certainly it is," said Beauchamp; "and I do not ask you to do more than tell it when it is asked--But now, my good sir, can I get dinner, or breakfast as it is to me; for I begin to feel that I have not eaten any thing for several hours?"

"Now, that's what I call being d--d stupid!" cried Willy Small, much to Beauchamp's surprise, who at first concluded that the smuggler's censure was addressed to him. "If my old woman did not send me up on purpose to tell your honour that she had done you three mackerel, and that, with a rasher of pickled pork, and some fried"--

"Good God!" cried Beauchamp, "I trust that she does not intend me to eat three mackerel, pickled pork, and fried anything!--But never mind--let me see them, by all means. I will eat what I can; and she must excuse me the rest."

Beauchamp's dinner was accordingly placed before him; and with his usual perversity of disposition, it must be acknowledged that, in a smuggler's cottage, with a lame leg, and disappointed in love, he ate a better dinner of mackerel in October, salted pork, and fried eggs, than he had done since he left the Grand St. Bernard. There's a hero! Ulysses was nothing to him, though dressed in a dishclout! The hero of the Odyssey did sit down with twenty fellows who were making love to his own wife, and supped heartily upon the "entrails, fat, enriched with blood," by which Homer undoubtedly meant black puddings.

When he had concluded--as Beauchamp could, when he liked it, cast off his reserve, mingle freely with all classes, and examine nature wherever he found it--he declared that, as the evening was somewhat chilly, he would come down and spend the rest of it by the kitchen fire; and, getting to the bottom of the stairs the best way he could, by the help of the old man and his son, he soon rendered himself familiar with the whole family, winning their love, while he made them more and more inclined to declare, that he was really a gentleman.

Nor did the time pass unpleasantly to himself. He had got a notion, in direct opposition to generally received opinions, that nature was to be found only in the highest and in the lowest classes--more especially indeed in the highest, because the persons of which it is constituted have little inducement to conceal their feelings or thoughts, and certainly no wish to affect the manners of any other cast. Nature, however, as modified by the education of the lower classes, was more interesting to him, from being less frequently before his eyes; and, though he certainly liked the nature of his own rank best, yet he was not sorry occasionally to observe the other a little nearer. Thus the time wore imperceptibly away; and the more tranquil passing of the night was only interrupted by the smuggler's son showing his father a powder-flask, which, he said, one of the gentlemen had dropped upon the beach that morning. Beauchamp took it carelessly in his hand, and returned it without observation; but a single glance had shown him that it was one which, from some fault in its construction, he had given to his servant, Harding, a few days before. The sight, though it but confirmed former suspicions, threw him into a fit of musing for several minutes; but he shook it off as fast as possible, and soon resumed the easy tone in which he had been previously conversing.

The next morning he woke earlier than the day before; but he found from the smuggler's son, that the old man, true to his word, had already set out to procure a post-chaise for him from the nearest town. Many an hour passed by, however, without his return, and it was again nearly four o'clock ere Beauchamp, whose sole amusement had been looking out upon the ever varying sea, beheld him walking sturdily along over the high grounds to the west. He was soon down the little path, and into the house; but Beauchamp remarked that he paused not below, as he naturally might have done, to speak with his wife; but, on the contrary, with a hurried pace proceeded straight up stairs, and entered the stranger's room at once. He was far too much agitated to think of ceremonies; and, leaning on the table without taking off his hat, he stood before Beauchamp,

pale, trembling, and out of breath, for several moments before he could utter a word.

"Oh, your honour!" he cried at length. "Oh, your honour! I hope to God you will stand my friend--for this is a horrible business I have got into, and, without help, I shall sink--that's certain!"

"What is the matter? What has happened?" demanded Beauchamp, eagerly; but then, seeing the fearful state of agitation which shook the whole of the old man's powerful frame, he added, "Calm yourself! Calm yourself, Small! You have done nothing that I know of that can injure you! Let me hear what it is alarms you!"

"Thank you, sir, for that!" replied the smuggler, catching at Beauchamp's consolation. "Thank you for that! If you stand by me, I dare say I shall do--but what is it that alarms me? you ask. Why, what should it be? Why, when I went into the town of ----, what should I see but a number of people standing round the town-hall---just at a particular spot like; and something misgave me, so I went up, and there I saw stuck up against the wall a large sheet of paper, and at the top was printed, *Five Hundred Pounds Reward*; and then, when I looked below, I saw, in bigger letters still, *Murder!* At first I could not see any more, my brain turned round so; but when I could read on, I saw in the *Blagard*, as the people called it, how those infernal villains who were here the night afore last had murdered a poor old helpless man at a place they call Ryebury--It did not just say it was them indeed, but I am sure it was--Oh, I am quite sure it was them!"

The last declaration of his conviction was made more faintly, as if he entertained some slight hope that Beauchamp would contradict him; but, on the contrary, that gentleman replied, "I am afraid it was, indeed; for it was at that very place, Ryebury, and at the door of that old man's house, that they met me, and stunned me by a blow on the head.--But what more did the placard say?"

"Oh, it mentioned a Captain Somebody," replied the smuggler. "I forget the name. It was a Frenchified name, however. It was that black-looking ---- with the whiskers, I'll bet a puncheon!"

"Was it Harding?" demanded Beauchamp, fixing his eyes upon him eagerly, to catch his answer from his look, even before he had time to utter it.

"No, no, no!" answered the smuggler. "It was not Harding. It was some Frenchified name; and then there came some person or persons unknown. But now your honour will stand by me, I am sure--for if the justices find out that I helped them off the coast, they will make me out as having a hand in it; and I am sure that if I had known what they had been doing, I would sooner have scuttled the cutter and sent them all to the bottom, if I had gone down with them myself."

"I really believe you would," replied Beauchamp; "and I do not think that--with the evidence which I can give, and which I will give in your favour, should anything be brought against you--there is the slightest cause for your entertaining any apprehension."

"Thank you, sir! Thank you for that!" replied the smuggler. "That will make me easy, and now I'll go and tell the old woman."

"But stay, stay, my good friend!" cried Beauchamp. "Is the post-chaise"----

"Lord-a'-mercy, now!" cried the man, before his guest could finish the sentence, at the same time pulling off his hat, and throwing it down upon the ground with a despairing sort of fling. "Lord-a'-mercy, now, if I did not forget all about it! This murder has turned my brain, I do think--for I never went into a house or shed in the whole place, but set off home as hard as I could go, to ask if your honour would stand by me."

"Humph!" said Beauchamp. "This is pleasant."

CHAPTER III.

"Well," thought Beauchamp, "I certainly did calculate upon being at Dorchester to-night, as firmly as if I had never read the Rambler. Oh, Seged, Seged, emperor of Ethiopia! But never mind! to-morrow, at all events, nothing shall stop me; and by that time this leg of mine will be nearly well; so that some advantage at least will be gained by the disappointment."

The following morning the son, instead of the father, was accordingly despatched to the post-town of ----, to order down a chaise immediately to the nearest point of the high-road; and he was, moreover, directed to take advantage of the conveyance, to return so far upon his way, in order

to give Beauchamp notice of its arrival. This precaution was not unnecessary, for the boy was a lout, who might very probably have suffered the chaise to go on without him; but having taken these measures, Beauchamp very confidently expected to hear that his vehicle was in waiting, at or about the hour of two.

His lameness had by this time so far worn off, that he could move from place to place with tolerable ease; and he spent the morning principally on the sea-shore, partly in thoughts which were all the busier from the forced inactivity of his body, partly in removing any remaining traces of apprehension from the mind of the old smuggler, who continued working leisurely and lazily at his boat, the damage done to which had evidently been considerable. A little before two o'clock, Beauchamp settled his accounts with his hostess; and all charges being left to his own liberality, and his purse being luckily and miraculously still in his pocket, he presented the worthy dame with a sum so much above either her expectations, or the value of her mackerel and pickled pork, as, in the first place, to make her turn red with surprise and satisfaction, and then run out to tell her husband what the stranger had given them. Two o'clock, however, passed, and old Billy Small began to regret that he had sent young Billy Small, instead of going himself. Three o'clock passed, and Beauchamp joined most sincerely in the regret, especially when he heard the old man exclaim, in the tone of a discovery, "I'd bet a puncheon, now, that Bill has gone and got drunk at the 'lection. I forgot this was the first day of the 'lection for the borough, or I would ha' gone myself to a certainty. He's drunk, no doubt!"

The father, however, did the son injustice; for towards half-past three, the good youth appeared lumbering over the hill, and entered the cottage, wiping his brow, indeed, but with a sober pace. In answer to Beauchamp's enquiries--which were made with more eager haste than he generally indulged in--the young man replied, that all the horses in the town, and for many miles round it, were engaged in the 'lection, so that not one was to be got for love or money.

Now, Beauchamp found himself so strongly inclined to be cross, that--instead of either sending all elections to that distinguished personage who has gained more by them and their consequences than any one else--I mean the devil--or vituperating the post-horses, or any of the other things concerned, as some persons would have done when put out of temper by similar mischances--he acted, of course, in a way of his own, and laughed outright, merely exclaiming, "Well, I must buy a shirt of you, Small, if you will sell me one; for at present I certainly do not come within the old beau's definition of a gentleman!"

As Beauchamp now determined to send no more to a town in which the election of a fit and proper person to represent his Majesty's lieges in Parliament was going on, his next questions related to the boat, or rather to the boats. The smaller of the two, old Small assured him, though it served well enough to catch mackerel in the little sheltered bay before the house, would never do to go any distance; but he promised Beauchamp that the other boat should be ready to carry him to the next coast town by three o'clock on the following day.

Beauchamp, from what he had seen in the morning, imagined that the old man's promise might very well be fulfilled; but he little knew what mending an old boat is. Father and son set to work upon it at once, and went on as long as they could see; and, when the young stranger rose next morning, he found them already occupied in the same manner. His ankle being now greatly better, though not well, he walked out to watch their proceedings; and, sitting beside them, and occasionally giving some slight assistance, he saw hour after hour of the fourth day since his arrival wear away, in performing what he had imagined would have been completed in half the time; till at length, while several small things still remained to be done, he beheld the purple mingling with the blue in the sky, and telling that the daystar was going down to the dark pavilion of his rest. "Oh! Seged, Seged, emperor of Ethiopia!" cried Beauchamp, as he returned into the cottage, "I will this night, at all events, resolve upon doing nothing at all to-morrow, in order to see whether fate will for once disappoint me the right way!"

The morrow, however, dawned bright and clear--the boat was at length ready and launched; and Beauchamp--shaved as usual with the smuggler's one universal razor, and covered with the best specimen of his check-shirts--gladly stepped into the yawl, and saw her pushed off from the land by the united efforts of father and son, both of whom accompanied him on his voyage.

The boat was clinker-built, somewhat broad over the beam, and in all respects the very reverse of a long, thin, shadowy thing that was lying high and dry a little farther up the beach, looking both in form and colour just like the shell of a razor-fish.

Old Willy Small, however, shook his head at mention of that craft, saying, "No, no! The preventive had knocked up all that stuff." So that Beauchamp, well content to get off at all, was obliged to rest satisfied with the slow and sure means of progression which the yawl afforded, though, the wind being light and rather baffling, it appeared very plainly that they were not destined to reach their port much before nightfall.

To increase the tediousness of a day's voyage in an open boat, to a man who had the utmost abhorrence of every sort of water-carriage, the fine morning waxed more and more dim; and first a drizzle, and then a deluge, continued to pour from the sky during the whole of the rest of the day. It was five o'clock before they reached the small town, whose white houses, ranged along with their large goggling windows directly opposite the sea, like a score or two of unsophisticated girls, with white frocks and large black eyes, ranged along the side of a country

ball-room, afforded a most welcome sight to the eyes of the weary voyager.

The custom-house officers satisfied themselves with wonderful ease that there was nothing in the boat which they could count as lawful prey, though the appearance of their well-known acquaintance, Willy Small, excited many a shrewd suspicion; and they looked after Beauchamp, as he was borne off to the inn, with the same prying glance with which the merchants, in the Arabian Nights, might be supposed to have examined the pieces of beef brought up by the eagles from the valley of diamonds. At the inn the dripping traveller, who limped along, leaning on the shoulder of the old smuggler, was examined with scarcely less attention, as soon as it was ascertained that he had no baggage; but, somehow, there was--to use a most fearful periphrasis--an air of, right to respect, and of, the habit of being obeyed, which instantly commanded obedience and attention.

Old Billy Small was immediately rewarded and dismissed; and, with many thanks, he hustled rapidly away, like a hunted hippopotamus, to his own element again; perhaps purposing, as he passed by the quay, to have some short conversation, concerning various professional matters, with some of the sailors of a ship which was lying in the harbour, and about to sail for Cherbourg the next morning.

When he was alone, Beauchamp thanked God--not with the empty idleness of tongue with which those words are so often spoken, but truly, sincerely, and from his heart--for his escape from dangers which he had not suffered himself to estimate fully, till they were over. He then rang, and desired the landlord to be called, feeling heated and weary, and having taken it into his head, that the long period which had elapsed since he had enjoyed anything like gentlemanly neatness of person, was the cause of the dry and thirsty feeling that he experienced.

The landlord appeared and answered his enquiries concerning warm baths, and various other matters which would occupy too much room to enumerate, eyeing him curiously to the end, when he added--"Beg pardon, sir--beg pardon! but is not your name Major Beauchamp?"

"It was some time ago," replied Mr. Beauchamp; "but I have quitted the service, and am now plain Mr. Beauchamp, if you please--but who are you, my good friend?"

"Beg your pardon, sir, for the liberty," replied the landlord; "but I am Frank, the waiter at ----'s Hotel, in St. James's Street--that is to say, I was, sir; but this being my native place, and having got together a little money, and having married, and--you see, sir, I came to set up in a small way for myself."

"Well, I am glad to see you, Frank, and hope you prosper," replied Beauchamp. "Have you many people in your house?"

"No, sir, no! answered the man, with a somewhat grave shake of the head. Not many; the season's over indeed--only an old gentleman and his daughter, and an old lady who seems like the housekeeper; but they are very dismal-like, and do not do so much in the way of our business."

"They might be rueful enough, if they had been kept as I have been for the last five days," replied Beauchamp, "at a little cottage on the sea-shore, with a dislocated ankle, and neither clothes, assistance, nor the means of procuring any. But see about the things I mentioned, Frank, and send the things; and if these warm baths are not far, I will try to walk to them, in the mean time."

"Next door but one, sir! Next door but one!" replied the landlord. "Lord, sir, you walk very lame! Stay, sir, I will get my hat, and help you there;" and accordingly, leaning on the arm of the quondam waiter, Beauchamp made his way to the warm baths, feeling that there was some truth in the old Greek epigram, which describes them as amongst the luxuries without which life were not worth possessing.

Returning to the inn, where his family and fortune, by this time fully known, made the whole house ready to perform *Cow Tow* he dined with that sort of moderation which a man feels inclined to practise, when he finds himself extremely feverish, and when every sort of wine, from cool claret to hot sherry, seems like molten lead, within ten minutes after it is swallowed. Immediately after dinner, all the necessary changes of raiment, which he had been so long without, and which could never be so rapidly supplied as at a seaport town, were brought in one by one, by the officious care of the landlord; and, on discovering that the first coach for London set off on the following morning at ten o'clock, he made that fact a good excuse to himself for yielding to the lassitude he felt, and going to bed at nine.

The night past in heated tossing to and fro; and short fitful intervals of sleep, too dreamful and agitated to be called repose. From one of those brief snatches of slumber, he was awakened early the next morning, by some one knocking at the door of the room next to his own, and exclaiming in a loud tone, "Seven o'clock, sir, is the luggage ready?"

Beauchamp certainly wished the luggage and the man who demanded it, at the bottom of the sea together, and tried to go to sleep again; but after rolling from side to side for half an hour, he found that it was in vain. All the infamous noises which announce that some frightful people, in the neighbouring chambers of the same inn, are going to set out upon voyage or journey, at an awfully early hour, were complicated around Beauchamp's unfortunate head; and at length, after

the trampling of sailors and porters in the passage had ceased, he heard some one again knock at a door, on the opposite side of the passage, and say, "My love, I must go down to see the luggage passed and put on board; but make haste and be ready, for the ship will sail directly. I will send up and let you know when to come down."

Beauchamp started out of bed, and hurried on his clothes as fast as possible, for the voice was that of Sir Sidney Delaware; but his lameness still retarded him, and every time he took a quick step, his ankle gave way beneath him, and caused him intolerable pain; so that, just as he was tying his cravat, the voice of old Mrs. Williams, the housekeeper, was heard along the passage.

"Miss Blanche! Miss Blanche!" she cried, "Make haste, pray make haste! Your papa says all is ready, and the ship is just going to sail."

Beauchamp pulled on his coat as best he might, and threw open his door; nor was he a moment too soon, for Blanche Delaware was already walking along the passage. She was paler far, but as beautiful as ever, and not the less so that the tears were swimming in her eyes at the thought of quitting her own dear fair native land--perhaps for ever.

"Good God, Miss Delaware!" cried Beauchamp, "What is the meaning of this?"

"Mr. Burrel!" exclaimed Blanche faintly, while the blood mounted quick into her cheek, and then again left it pale as ashes. "Oh, Mr. Burrel, where have you been? Your presence might perhaps have saved us all!"

"How, how?" cried Beauchamp, "You sent me from you, yourself. Had it not been for your own word, I would never, never have left you!"

"Do not--do not say it!" cried Blanche, while the tears streamed over her cheeks, "Do not say it, or I shall never forgive myself--I never have, indeed.--You only could have saved us--and oh, Henry Beauchamp, I am sure you would have done so!"

Beauchamp started to hear his real name from his fair cousin's lips; but Blanche went on rapidly and eagerly. "But it seems all strange to you. Have you not heard of my poor brother? Have you not heard what has happened?"

"I have heard nothing!" replied Beauchamp. "I have been detained for several days, ill and wretched, in a spot where I heard nothing."

"Oh!" cried Blanche, wringing her hands, "they have accused him of crimes he never committed, and blasted his name, and broken his heart--and if-if--Henry Beauchamp"----

"Is not the lady coming?" cried a voice from below. "The ship's getting under weigh, ma'am. You'll be left behind if you don't mind."

"Indeed, Miss Blanche, you must come," cried Mrs. Williams, who had hitherto discreetly remained at the other end of the corridor, when she saw who it was detained her young mistress. "You must come, indeed!"

"I will--I will!" said Blanche, and, dropping her voice, she added--while for one moment she raised her beautiful eyes to Beauchamp's face, and the warm blood mounted again into her cheek--"Henry Beauchamp--my dear cousin--it is most likely the last time we shall ever meet--but if ever you loved me--if you would have poor Blanche Delaware bless and pray for you to her last hour--use your whole strength and mind to clear my poor brother's name and character--God bless you, God bless you!" and she ran on, down the stairs.

Beauchamp paused for a moment in utter bewilderment, then, darting into his room, seized his hat, and followed with all the speed he could employ. That, however, was but little. The harbour was not far, it is true; but ere he could reach the narrow pier, from which the passengers had been embarked, the ship bound to Cherbourg had shot out to sea, and with a strong and favourable wind, was making its way towards the coast of France.

Beauchamp gazed after her in vain; for nothing but the faint indistinct forms of the many people that crowded the deck, could now be discovered; and with feelings as bitter and painful as ever man felt, he turned away and went back to the inn.

CHAPTER IV.

On entering the sitting-room which had been appropriated to him, Beauchamp cast himself back in a chair, and, for a moment, reflected on the extraordinary interview he had just gone through. But a new discomfort now assailed him, and he felt a degree of confusion of thought, and even indistinctness of memory, that pained and alarmed him. Could the blow he had received on the head, he asked himself, the consequences of which he had entirely neglected--could it have injured his brain? Nevertheless, his personal feelings occupied him but for an instant, and were only permitted to cut across his thoughts of Blanche Delaware, and interrupt the ideas which his conversation with her had called up, when the dizzy mistiness of his brain prevented him from pursuing clearly any defined train of thinking.

Should he engage a boat, he asked himself, and follow Sir Sidney to Cherbourg, in search of farther explanations--perhaps, I might say, in search of farther hopes; for with all the confused and painful feelings that his brief interview with Blanche Delaware had excited; there had also been left behind a sweet consoling hope, that after all he was beloved, and that time might yet make her his own.

He paused upon that idea, which, like a gleam of sunshine upon the dark and struggling waters of the sea, gave one bright spot for the mind's eye to rest upon, in the midst of the doubts and anxieties that whirled around him. Should he follow her, he thought, and enquire what was meant by her allusion to her brother; or should he stay and do what he conceived to be his duty, in bringing to justice, as far as he could effect it, the men who had committed the crime at Ryebury. "I will see what has been already discovered," he said at length, "and then act as I find necessary."

In consequence of this resolution, he rang the bell, and demanded the newspapers of the last two or three days; but for some minutes after they were brought, he could scarcely read the matter they contained, so fearfully did the letters dance before his sight, when he attempted to fix his eyes upon the page. He succeeded at length in gathering the contents; and, it may be unnecessary to say, that when he did so, he found sufficient, at once to determine his conduct. The whole account of what had taken place at Emberton was now before him; and with feelings, that it is impossible to describe, he perceived that the very means he had taken to remove the difficulties of Sir Sidney Delaware and his family, had, on the contrary, accumulated upon them a load of evils and distresses which his utmost apprehensions could never have anticipated.

Summoning the waiter once more, he ordered breakfast, and a place to be secured for him in the London coach. All was done according to his desire, with prompt activity; and by a quarter after ten, Henry Beauchamp was on his way to London, in the inside of a hot stage-coach, crammed full of humanity; while his own feelings consisted of a compound of intense mental anxiety, and all those horrible corporeal sensations which precede a violent attack of fever. His hands and his head burned like living coals; his feet were as cold as ice, and a faint sort of chilly shiverings thrilled over all his frame, alternating with a degree of heat that became sometimes intolerable.

He endured all this, with firm determination, for six mortal hours; but at length he found that nature would bear no more, and that he must stop. At Hartford Bridge, then, where his name and station in society were well known, from his having often spent a night in that most pleasant of all country inns--the White Lion--he desired the coachman to put him down, and entered the house. His appearance was so altered, that the old waiter did not recognize him for a moment; but the moment that he did so, he declared, upon his word then, that Major Beauchamp must be ill, in which assertion Beauchamp found strong reason within his own bosom to coincide.

The result therefore was, that, before the sixth day after he had been carried from Emberton was completely over, Henry Beauchamp was in bed, with an apothecary gently compressing his wrist on one side, and a waiter holding the candle on the other. After innumerable questions, to all of which the young gentleman answered like a lamb--which showed how ill he was--the apothecary declared him in a state of fever, and bled him considerably. By this depletion, he certainly felt relieved for the time, and the next morning was not at all worse than he had been the day before. Nevertheless, he was troubled with no inclination to rise; and the landlord asked anxiously of the man of medicine whether he conceived his patient to be in any danger, as he was aware that the gentleman had relations of high rank in London, whom he might wish to write to, if he knew himself in precarious circumstances.

Such a question, though so frequently put, remains still one of tremendous difficulty to the professors of the healing art, inasmuch as, on the one hand, they never can like, by acknowledging that there is great danger, to run the risk of other advice being called in, and yet, they neither choose to lose the credit which may accrue from curing a bad case, nor to incur the blame that will attach to them if their patient dies without their having admitted his peril. However, as vanity and covetousness are, generally speaking, stronger passions than apprehension, the followers of Esculapius usually seem to prefer running all risks, rather than have their cases interfered with by another practitioner. In the present instance, it occurred that the apothecary was really in the right, when he informed the worthy landlord, that, although his guest had certainly a sharp fever upon him, yet he did not see any present danger.

Thus passed over the day. No one was written to; and, before night, Beauchamp was not in a state to write to any one himself, having become completely delirious. The apothecary grew a little frightened; but as the landlord did not know the precise address of Beauchamp's friends,

and as the patient could not give it himself, there was no remedy but patience and perseverance.

The delirium continued with but little interval for two days; but as the medical man was really a person of skill, his patient's constitution excellent, and the fever not very malignant in its nature, favourable symptoms began to show themselves sooner than could have been expected, and at the end of five days more the young gentleman was pronounced convalescent.

Though for some time he felt himself very weak, and incapable of much mental exertion; yet, from the moment the delirium left him, Henry Beauchamp found his thoughts much clearer and more exact than they had been since the day of his leaving Emberton; and, as he considered the various events which had taken place, a number of circumstances which the reader's mind may easily recall without minute recapitulation, led him to suspect that his uncle's lawyer, if not his uncle himself, had increased, if not created, many of those difficulties which, combined with accidental occurrences, had overwhelmed Sir Sidney Delaware and his family in ruin and in sorrow.

He was unwilling indeed to admit, to his own mind, that Lord Ashborough would descend to any thing mean or dishonourable, even to effect the very honourable purpose of revenge, which, when formalized by the rules of the monomachia, justifies murder; and therefore may surely equally well justify robbery, or fraud, or petty larceny, or any other peccadillo. But, at the same time, Beauchamp could not shut out the conviction, that the ruin of Sir Sidney Delaware and his family, by whatever means effected, would be in no degree disagreeable to the noble earl. In fact, he had seen more deeply into his uncle's character and into his uncle's heart, than Lord Ashborough knew; and though his discoveries were rendered less harsh by the natural affection of kindred, yet they had certainly not tended to increase that affection in any extraordinary degree.

However, all his reflections terminated in an uncertainty as to the past conduct of his uncle and his uncle's lawyer, which made him resolve to investigate the whole matter farther before he acted; for though he was unchangeably resolved that justice to William Delaware should be done, yet he was anxious, of course, that it should be rendered with as little obloquy to his own relation as possible. "Thank God, he has made his escape!" he thought; "and the earl, too, must have left London soon after I quitted it myself, so that he cannot be at all acquainted with my share in this unfortunate business at Ryebury. I will therefore remain quietly where I am till I can proceed to London, and then investigate every circumstance before I fix upon any farther plans. Of course, I shall easily discover the residence of Sir Sidney Delaware in France; and, when I have cleared his son's fair fame, may meet them all, with better hopes and brighter prospects."

Such were some of the reflections and resolutions of Henry Beauchamp, as he was recovering from the fever which had detained him at Hartford Bridge; and though he certainly indulged in a great many other reflections, and formed a great many more resolutions, yet they were all conceived in the same strain, and tended to the same effect. As day by day, however, he began to acquire strength, and saw that at the end of two or three more whirls of the great humming-top, he would be able to set out for London, a new difficulty pressed upon him of somewhat a novel nature. He had an inn bill to pay, which could not be small--he had an apothecary's bill to pay also, which must be still larger, and sick-nurses, &c., came at the end to swell the amount. Ten sovereigns was all that remained in his purse; and had Beauchamp been aware that, in the opinion of all his friends and relations, he was actually dead and buried under water, if not under ground, he might have been still more puzzled how to proceed than he was, in his state of blessed ignorance regarding all these facts.

His resource, in the present instance, was to indite a letter to his worthy friend and agent Mr. Wilkinson, informing him, in a few words, that he had been ill at Hartford Bridge, and would thank him to send him down, either by post or coach, a sufficient sum to pay his temporary expenses.

This epistle reached Mr. Wilkinson just as he was drawing up a general statement of the money matters of the late Henry Beauchamp, Esq., formerly of his Majesty's --- Regiment of Dragoons; and the letter of the living Mr. Beauchamp, of course, put a sudden stop to the affairs of the dead one. The handwriting, however, although certainly bearing a great resemblance to that of his client, was, as Mr. Wilkinson observed, more like a copy of his hand than his hand itself; and the illness which had produced this difference, had also produced a brevity and carelessness of style, in which Henry Beauchamp was not accustomed to indulge. The consequence of all this was, that Mr. Wilkinson, calculating that Hartford Bridge was only thirty miles from London, and that two or three guineas was better lost than two or three hundreds, put himself at once into the coach which was to have conveyed the money; and in a few hours he was sitting beside the identical Henry Beauchamp, who had left London about two months before, and was assisting him most conscientiously to despatch the first meat meal he had been allowed to taste since his recovery.

As may well be supposed, this interview was destined to enlighten Beauchamp greatly as to many events which had taken place; and, after having laughed at his own death more heartily than a merrier matter might have occasioned, the invalid entered into explanations with his lawyer, which in turn gave him a new but sad insight into the occurrences of the last three weeks.

"I am afraid, sir," said Mr. Wilkinson--"I am afraid, sir, there has been very foul play! This Mr. Tims--who, between you and me, bears so bad a character in the profession, that it is a very general wonder how your noble relative continues to employ him--has, since your death--God bless me!--I mean, since your supposed decease--has, I say, presented the very note for ten thousand pounds, (which you say you gave to the murdered man at Ryebury,) as payment of the sum owed to your account by his client, your uncle; and yet, though this, and the vouchers which he must have found concerning the fifteen thousand pounds sent before, cannot have failed to show him that the money tendered by Captain Delaware was advanced by you, yet he is, I understand, pursuing the business against that unfortunate young gentleman with greater virulence than ever. I heard only yesterday that his name had been struck out of the Navy List."

"God forbid!" cried Beauchamp--"God forbid! But does the rascal keep both the twenty-five thousand pounds paid, and the ten thousand which my uncle should have transferred to my account?"

"Not only that," answered the lawyer; "but contending that, as the money had been stolen, it did not constitute a legal discharge of Lord Ashborough's claim upon Sir Sidney Delaware, he has plunged the whole business into Chancery--has, at the same time, started a point which can only be decided by a common law court; and as he has all the most obsolete and vexatious decisions at his fingers' ends, would undoubtedly have kept the business embroiled for years, had you not suddenly started up to prove that the payment was legal, and therefore the whole difficulty at an end."

"And if I had not started up," said Burrel, "and William Delaware had been taken, I suppose one of the most gallant officers in his Majesty's service, and one of the most generous-spirited gentlemen in England, would have been hanged for a crime he never committed."

"Why, I am sorry to say, that it is very probable he might have been so dealt with," answered Mr. Wilkinson.

"Then, immortal honour to Robert Peel!" said Beauchamp, "for having begun a reformation in laws, which, though far superior to those of any other nation in the world, are yet so imperfect, as to risk such a loud-tongued iniquity; and may he have life and power granted to him to correct all their evils without diminishing their efficiency. But you speak, my dear sir, of my starting up. Now, do you know, I have a great mind not to start up for some time yet; and to give this rogue, Tims, time enough to show himself in his true colours. As I am dead, and the mourning bought, and all those whose hearts would break upon my account are broken-hearted already, I do not see why I should announce my resuscitation in the newspapers till I have obtained not only the proofs--which, indeed, I can furnish myself--of William Delaware's complete innocence; but the proofs also of the guilt of those who really did commit the murder; and which, with a little of your good advice, I doubt not easily to acquire. In the mean time, if I am not mistaken, good Mr. Tims, counting upon my death, will plunge deeper and deeper into the quagmire of deceit and villainy through which he is now struggling, and we shall have an opportunity of at once exposing him, and opening my uncle's eyes to his knavery."

Mr. Wilkinson shook his head with a dry "hum!" at the last sentence which Beauchamp spoke; but the other part of his young client's proposal he approved very much, saying, "Certainly, certainly! The plan is a good one; and we must never show our adversary our cards, as Mr. Pleydel is made to observe, by the only great romance-writer that the world has produced since Cervantes, and Le Sage, and Fielding. But you forget, Mr. Beauchamp, that I do not fully know what information you possess. Your lawyer must be your confessor, my dear sir, if you would have his advice of any avail."

Beauchamp in reply recounted all that had happened to him since he left Emberton on the morning before the murder--the fact of his servant Harding overtaking him at Dr. Wilton's rectory--his own return to Ryebury--his first and second visit to the miser--his compulsory voyage with the murderers--and his stay at the house of the smuggler--all in short that had occurred, with the exception of a brief interview in the corridor of the inn at ----, which he thought proper to leave untold.

Mr. Wilkinson rubbed his hands at each pause, and, in the end, declared that nothing was more plain than the facts, and nothing would be more easy than the proof. "The man Harding," he said, "whom you think you recognized in the boat with this Walter Harrison, has never returned to your house in London; and therefore we may conclude from the fact of the powder-flask, and from your recognition, that he it really was who committed the murder, with the other two and the maid-servant, as accessories. Information must be obtained from this man Small, in regard to the port at which his cutter landed them in France; and once having gained that, we have nothing to do but set a Bow Street officer on the track, and he will follow it like a bloodhound. I entertain as strange doubts in regard to this Mr. Peter Tims as you do; and believe, from some memoranda on the back of your note of hand, that he knows fully, at this moment, that Captain Delaware never had anything to do with the murder of his uncle. Such a man well deserves to be punished; and if you like to lie *incog*, for a week or so, we will watch his proceedings; but you must not take it ill, my dear sir, if I say, that we must be careful not to implicate any one whom we might not like to inculcate."

Beauchamp's cheek flushed a good deal, but he replied calmly, "I understand you, Mr.

Wilkinson; but I am sure there is no fear of that. However, my own intention is to go at once to France--I shall certainly endeavour to see my sister first; for if any one on earth grieves for me indeed, it is poor Maria. But, as I said, I shall certainly go to France, and may help in tracing these villains myself."

"But, my dear sir," said Mr. Wilkinson, "you must pause a few days. I will write to the local magistrates, and gain a clear view of all they have discovered in the neighbourhood. We must have this man Small examined; and I do not well see how we can proceed without your presence in England--Suppose, for instance, Captain Delaware should be taken and brought to trial."

"Why, of course, I will stay a few days," replied Beauchamp musing; "and, before I go, I will make a formal deposition on oath before a magistrate, which I suppose I must do, in order to induce him to grant me an officer to seek the culprits in France."

"There is an officer in Paris already, I believe," replied Mr. Wilkinson; "but at all events, we must get full information ere we proceed. Believe me my dear sir, the man that meddles with law, either criminal or civil, without obtaining a clear knowledge of every circumstance before he takes a single step, is very likely, indeed, to burn his fingers."

"It is a dangerous thing to touch, I know full well," replied Beauchamp, with a smile, "and God forbid that I should have more to do with it than necessary. I will therefore come to London, where, I suppose, that there is not a mortal being left by this time but you gentlemen of the law, and I may very well pass my time *incog* at an hotel."

"Nay, indeed, you are mistaken as to the paucity of better people than lawyers in London," replied Mr. Wilkinson. "Your noble uncle is himself in town, and your sister. The latter I have had the honour of seeing, and found her equally in despair about yourself and Captain Delaware."

"Indeed!" said Beauchamp, smiling at a small twinkling of fun that danced for a moment in Mr. Wilkinson's eyes, as he mentioned Miss Beauchamp's anxiety in regard to William Delaware. "Indeed! and does Maria show herself so greatly distressed about this accusation against her cousin?"

"So much so," replied Mr. Wilkinson, "that she would insist upon employing me in gathering evidence for his defence, which, by the way, is the cause of my knowing so much about the case. Not only that; but understanding apparently that there is no such stimulus to a lawyer's exertions as money, she made me take notes for two hundred pounds to meet the expenses."

"She is very generous, indeed," answered Beauchamp; "but pray, did she show any inclination to ascertain my existence?"

"Oh yes, most eagerly!" replied Mr. Wilkinson. "Come, come, my dear sir, you must not think that interest in the cousin made her forget the brother. On the contrary, although she says that she knows you too well to believe that you would drown yourself--yet"----

"What! did they make it out that I had drowned myself?" cried Beauchamp. "You did not tell me that before, Mr. Wilkinson!"

"Why, I thought it might hurt your feelings, and only said it now incautiously," replied the lawyer; "but so indeed it is. They made it out that you had drowned yourself in the sea near Emberton."

"They made a very great mistake, then," said Beauchamp, biting his lip. "You need not tell me the causes assigned for the rash act as the newspapers term such things. I can divine them all, as it suited each person to put them. The ladies, of course, said it was for love, and the men said debt or gambling. No, no, I shall never commit suicide. I laughed so heartily once at a philosopher at Geneva, who determined to commit suicide in a fit of the spleen, that I am sure I could not do it, even if I felt inclined. He went down to drown himself in the lake, and, as it was a rainy day, he carefully took his umbrella. When he came to the side of the water, however, and began to put down the umbrella, the absurdity of the whole affair of a man drowning himself with an umbrella in his hand, suddenly tickled his fancy to such a degree, that he burst into a fit of laughter, and turned upon his heel. Meeting him with the tears in his eyes, I soon joined in his merriment when I heard the story; and the very idea of suicide is connected with such ludicrous ideas, in my mind, that it makes me laugh even to think of it--But you were saying that my uncle was in town; how does he console himself for my irreparable loss?"

"I have not seen his lordship," answered Mr. Wilkinson; "but every one agrees that he has felt your supposed death more bitterly than any event that ever occurred to him through life. Miss Beauchamp will never give credit to the story of your death; but Lord Ashborough, I understand, believes it firmly, and of course, I need not tell you, that he is surrounded already by hundreds of sycophants, eager to share in the immense wealth which is now, as they believe, without a direct heir. Under such circumstances, would it not be better to give his lordship intimation of your existence, as he may perhaps alter his will, and life is precarious?"

"Not I!" answered Beauchamp. "Not I! The hereditary estates go with the title, and I shall take no step whatever to secure anything else. In fact, I believe that I have contradicted my uncle more frequently than my sense of respect would have otherwise permitted me to do, simply

because he has two or three hundred thousand pounds to leave, and I do not choose to be thought a sycophant. I should have been a very dutiful nephew, indeed, if it had not been for that money; the more especially, as I know that my good uncle values it so highly himself, that he cannot help thinking I must value it highly too."

"At all events," said Mr. Wilkinson, who saw that his client was becoming rather fatigued, and, perhaps, the more unmanageable from that circumstance. "At all events, Mr. Beauchamp, before you set out once more, like the Knight of La Mancha, upon a new sally in search of such perilous adventures, you must give me fuller powers to act for you, and fuller instructions, too, as to how I am to act; for good Mr. Tims has already been hinting at *winding up the affairs of the late Henry Beauchamp, Esquire*, as he phrases it."

"Indeed!" said Beauchamp. "Indeed! Well, I do believe that if there were an act for hanging rogues, it would ultimately save a vast waste of hemp upon thieves, and leave honest men in the world after all. But I must now let you seek repose; and we will talk more of these matters tomorrow morning, when, if my Galen will suffer me, I will accompany you to London; for the last ten days I have been like poor Erminia:--

'Cibo non prende già che de suoi mali
Solo si pasce, e sol di pianto ha sete?'

But I think I have made amends for one evening, at least."

CHAPTER V.

Now Mr. Wilkinson, though a very pleasant gentlemanly man--slightly inclined to be facetious, but never yielding to that vein farther than a subdued--one might almost say, internal--smile, at the odd things, and the absurd things, and the wicked things of this world--was quite in the wrong in taking it into his head that Maria Beauchamp was in love with Captain William Delaware. In truth, she was not; though certainly never were there circumstances more likely to make her become so. She had only got as far at present as being interested in the young sailor's fate in the highest degree; perfectly convinced, that he was innocent and injured--thinking him certainly a very handsome youth--and granting that he was, with all his simplicity, one of the most agreeable men she had ever seen. The reader may ask if all this, then, was not love? No, no, no! It was not! There were bricks, and mortar, and trowels, and hods; but it was not the tower of Babel--What I mean is, that there were all the materials for love, but they wanted putting together.

In Lord Ashborough's house, however, with all these prepossessions in William Delaware's favour, she heard nothing coupled with his name but pompous censure, or flat and pointless sneers; and she dared not say a word in his favour. Now this, as it furnished her with a motive for not only thinking of him from morning till night, but furnished her also with a legitimate cause for connecting in the sweet, unanswering privacy of her own bosom, all those manifold arguments in his favour, which she could have put forth in society, had she not been afraid of their being controverted, caused imagination, and zeal, and generous enthusiasm, to labour hard to build up the said bricks and mortar into the firm and regular structure which Mr. Wilkinson, in his over-hasty conclusions, imagined to be already built.

However all that may be, it is certain that few people had been more completely wretched--and she was not a person to be so, without seeming so too--than Maria Beauchamp, since the business at Ryebury had taken place, and she yielded to a degree of gloom and despondency, which Lord Ashborough had never before seen her display under any circumstances. As she never mingled in the conversation regarding William Delaware, the earl imagined that anxiety and suspense, in regard to the fate of her brother, were the causes of her gloom; and--with the very natural consideration which people generally display, who, however much grieved they may feel for a time, love to get over the memory of their dead relations as fast as may be--the noble earl took every means of removing her state of doubt as fast as possible, by assuring her, on all occasions, that unquestionably her brother was dead.

Suddenly a change came over Miss Beauchamp's whole demeanour. Though she admitted that it was very possible her brother might be dead, yet she resumed her usual tone of spirits; and instead of being silent in regard to Captain Delaware, she repelled with contempt the idea of his guilt whenever it was mentioned, declaring that she felt as much confidence in his innocence of the murder, as she did in her own. All this surprised Lord Ashborough. The first, indeed, he accounted for pleasantly enough to himself, declaring that Maria's mind had now recovered its elasticity, having been relieved from suspense, by the firm conviction which he had taken care to

impress upon it, that her brother was dead. He lauded at the same time, be it remarked, his own wisdom in the course he had pursued, blaming severely those ill-judging friends, who, in such cases, suffer hope to linger on till it wears itself out. He even ventured on a simile, saying, that it was like torturing a drowning man, by holding out straws to him.

In regard to Miss Beauchamp's extraordinary perversity in defending the murderer, he declared that he was more puzzled; and one day, after having remonstrated severely, he related the fact to the worthy Mr. Peter Tims. That excellent person, however, only decided that it was a lady's caprice; and with this solution of the enigma, his lordship was forced to rest satisfied.

In the meanwhile, Henry Beauchamp did the most uninteresting thing in the whole world, namely, he travelled from Calais to Paris; for, with the exception of Sterne, who carried his own world about with him in his post-chaise--and a strange mixed world of beauty and deformity it was--I know no one who has been able to make anything of the journey between those two towns, either one way or the other--except, indeed, the Duke of Guise, in 1558, who made Calais a French town of it.

Henry Beauchamp's journey was somewhat Quixotic certainly; but the whole details of his sally serve lamentably to show how the science of knight-errantry has declined since the occultation of the star of La Mancha. For a squire he had a Bow Street officer, backed by letters missive from the Foreign Secretary, and seated upon the rumble of a dark-green armless chariot, beside a fierce-looking mastiff of a courier, whom Beauchamp had engaged upon somewhat surer grounds than those on which Master Harding had been received into his service. Dapple and Rozinante were converted into four French stallions, of all sorts and sizes; and instead of mistaking inns for castles, one might have concluded that the young Englishman mistook them for prisons, so strenuously did he avoid them by travelling night and day.

As Mr. Wilkinson had stated, an officer had been previously sent to Paris in pursuit of Captain Delaware; and although it had not been judged expedient, notwithstanding the information given by Mr. Beauchamp, to recall him from that search, yet he was directed vigorously to co-operate with the person now sent to arrest Harding and his accomplices. Beauchamp, in his inexperience of such matters, had thought it might be better to follow the culprits by the port at which they had landed in France, and which had been clearly ascertained from Willy Small, the smuggler, and his eldest son, who had acted as master of the cutter that took them over. The officer shook the wise head, however, and said, "No, no! Let us go to Paris first, sir; for that's a place which is sure to draw all rogues to it, first or last--as a saucer of honey in a shop window catches the flies. We get at all the passports there, too; and, beside, the mayors and folks in the country places wouldn't dare to back us in seizing the men without a government order, and a *John Darm* as they call them. When we have searched Paris, let us set off for Cherbourg, and meet them in the face."

To this reasoning Beauchamp of course yielded; and although some difficulties occurred on the part of the French government, they were speedily removed--the passport-office was examined--some of the most active agents of the French police were employed--and such information finally obtained, as the Bow Street officer thought likely to lead to the discovery of the whole party, either at Cherbourg or at Caen. Thither, then, Beauchamp and his attendants of various kinds, now increased in number to four, turned their steps, making the most minute enquiries at every point which offered the least chance of affording information concerning the culprits. Beauchamp, at the same time, pursued another search, anticipating, with no small eagerness, a meeting with Miss Delaware and her father, who, he concluded, must journey by slow stages, on account of the baronet's health. Strange, however, to say, that he, and the Bow Street officer, and the French agent of police, were all equally disappointed. Beauchamp found nobody that he sought; and his companions, though they laid hands upon the three personages whose passports and description had excited suspicion, were surprised and mortified to find that they bore not the slightest resemblance to those who had carried Mr. Beauchamp off from Ryebury.

On minute enquiry amongst the fishermen of the village where the culprits were said to have landed, the house was at length discovered in which they had first lodged; and the *albergiste* at once declared, that, understanding the English language, he had heard them announce their intention of proceeding to Havre, in order to embark on board some American trader.

No time was to be lost under such circumstances, as ships were sailing every day for some transatlantic port or another; and the horses having been again put to the two carriages, which now formed the cortege, away went Beauchamp and his train for Havre. From Cherbourg to Havre, running through one half of the peninsula of Cotentin, is a long, though not uninteresting journey, to one who has nothing else to think of. But Beauchamp was in haste to get on. French postilions are notoriously slow, and Norman postilions notoriously slower. The steam-boat was gone when the party arrived at Honfleur; and, in short, every thing that nature and art could do to stop them on their way, was done to perfection. At length, when they did reach Havre, they found that one vessel had sailed for America the preceding day, full of emigrants of all descriptions, and that two others had departed about four days earlier, each of which, to believe the accounts given of them, must have been a perfect Noah's Ark.

Beauchamp and the officers lost heart, and even the courier, whose trade being to run, could not be supposed to object to *battre la campagne* in this manner, began to look rueful, under the

apprehension that, if no farther clue could be gained, his occupation would soon be gone. After every inn had been inspected, every consul consulted, every shipping-office examined, Beauchamp determined once more to return to Paris, and thither he accordingly came by the way of Rouen, followed by the posse, who found it not at all disagreeable to eat, and drink, and sleep at his expense, and be paid for the trouble thereof over and above.

New researches were immediately commenced; and never did fat-faced Gibbon bend his rotund cheeks over the pages of infidelity, ancient or modern, from Arius to Hobbes, with more eagerness to filch or find an objection or a fault in the blessed faith, whose beginning and end is glory to God in the highest, and peace and goodwill towards men, than did all parties pursue their object of discovering the guilty, in order, principally, it must be confessed, to exculpate the innocent. But the search seemed perfectly in vain; and the only conclusion to which any one could come was, that the murderers had really effected their escape to America. After nibbling at various surmises and reports for some time, the officer who had accompanied Beauchamp declared himself foiled, and took his leave. He who had been sent in quest of Captain Delaware had abandoned the pursuit for some time; and Beauchamp was thus left alone to proceed with such enquiries as he might still have sufficient perseverance to make.

These enquiries, it must be confessed, related principally to Sir Sidney and Miss Delaware, but here as many difficulties awaited him as he had met with in the other search; and he was just on the point of giving up the matter in despair, and returning to London to surprise his mourning friends, when a circumstance occurred, which, without throwing the slightest ray of light upon the course which Blanche and her father had taken, served, at all events, to induce Beauchamp to remain in Paris for several days longer than he had intended.

The hotel in which he lodged, at the corner of the Rue de la Paix, unlike most hotels in Paris, had but one staircase; and Beauchamp, who walked up and down this staircase as seldom as possible, had rarely the misfortune of meeting many people upon it. The last day but one, however, of his intended stay, he encountered a lady walking leisurely up; and, as each moved a little on one side, to suffer the other to pass, by a sort of semi-rotation of each upon the axis, their faces came opposite to one another, and Beauchamp recognised Mrs. Darlington while she paid him the same compliment.

"Good gracious, Mr. Burrel!" she exclaimed, much more surprised than was at all proper. "Or Mr. Beauchamp, am I to call you? for people tell me, that the Mr. Burrel I had the pleasure of knowing, was known to others under the name of Beauchamp. But under whatever name you choose, I am most happy to see you; for all your good friends in England told me you were dead."

"They have done me too much honour in every respect, my dear madam," replied Beauchamp. "Those the gods love, you know, die young. But though I must plead guilty to having deceived you, by calling myself names far different from my own; yet believe me, when I assure you that I had no hand in my own death. That was entirely arranged by my friends and relations--though I doubt not, when I go back to England, the public prosecutor will think fit to arraign me for *felo-de-se* with as much justice as the coroner's jury returned a verdict of murder against poor William Delaware."

"Ah, that was a terrible business!" replied Mrs. Darlington. "A terrible business, indeed, poor young man! and I should like to talk it over with you, Mr. Beauchamp--but I dare say that was your carriage waiting, and I will not keep you now; but if you will return at half-past six, and dine with me and the Abbé de ----, who is as deaf as a pug-dog, I will tell you a curious circumstance which has occurred to me since I came here--not about the Delawares, indeed, poor people, but about something that happened just at the same time."

Now every thing that happened at that time was more or less a matter of interest to Henry Beauchamp; and therefore he willingly agreed to dine and hear, according to invitation. A few minutes after the appointed time, he was in the saloon of Madame Darlington's apartments, where he found that lady, with a worthy ex-emigré Abbé--the very sort of man who could dine with a widow lady of any age without scandal.

Beauchamp fully understood the *beinseance* of never being curious about anything, and therefore he listened to all Mrs. Darlington's reasons for being in Paris--how London was of course out of the question in October--how the house she had hired near Emberton had turned out as damp as a fen, and smelt of a wet dog from the garret to the kitchen--how Paris always afforded variety, &c.--without showing the slightest inclination to enquire into the occurrence she had mentioned in the morning. Dinner was announced, and was as *recherche* in France as if it had been at Emberton; but not a word took place concerning *the occurrence* Mrs. Darlington spending all the leisure moments in marvelling that Mr. Beauchamp and herself could have remained in the same house for four days without discovering their proximity. After dinner, Beauchamp's *beinseance* began to get tired, and probably would have broken down entirely, had he not fortunately happened to take up a very beautiful eyeglass, set with emeralds, in the French fashion, which lay upon the table in the saloon.

"Oh dear, that puts me in mind, Mr. Beauchamp!" cried Mrs. Darlington. "It is strange enough; I have twice bought that eyeglass in this very town. Once two days, and once eighteen months, ago. That is the very thing I wished to tell you about. You remember when you did me the favour of dining with me at Emberton; my house was burned down"-----

"Var shocken, indeed!" cried the Abbé, who piqued himself upon speaking English. "Terrible shocken great!"

"Well," continued Mrs. Darlington, "that very evening, I left that eyeglass upon the table in the drawing-room; and you remember, I dare say, that I lost all my plate and jewels--indeed, the loss of various things was incalculable--but, however, that glass was amongst the rest; and as it was a sort of pet, I went into a shop the other day to see if I could find anything like it. Well, the jeweller finding out I was English--though how he did so, I am sure I do not know, for I believe I speak French tolerably"----

"Oh, var excellent much!" said the Abbé, who was listening with his most acute ear, bent subserviently to Mrs. Darlington's story. "As one Frenchwomen."

Mrs. Darlington smiled, nodded, and went on. "Well, the man found out that I was an Englishwoman by the carriage, I suppose; and would talk nothing but English all the time, though, he spoke it badly enough. On my describing what I wanted, he said that he had got the very thing; fresh arrived from England three days before. I told him that what I wanted was French; he declared that I must be mistaken, and produced my own eyeglass, with I. D., 'Isabella Darlington' ('What pretty name!' cried the Abbé) on the medallion. I bought it, as you see, and the jeweller assured me that he had purchased it three days before from an English gentleman with black hair and large whiskers."

"Although the description is very exact," answered Beauchamp, smiling, "I can assure you, my dear madam, that I was not the thief--but as it has long struck me that there has been something very mysterious indeed in the whole business of the fire at your house, I should like much to know the name of the jeweller; and if you will favour me with it, will delay my departure for a day or two, in order to make farther enquiries."

Mrs. Darlington thanked Beauchamp warmly for the interest he took in the matter; and the address being given and put down, the young Englishman declared he would go that night and take the first steps towards investigating the business fully. Accordingly taking his leave, he sauntered out into the Place Vendome, and thence into one of the principal streets in the neighbourhood of the Tuileries, where, entering the shop of the jeweller, he bought some trifling article, as a fair excuse for indulging in that sort of gossip which he thought most likely to elicit some facts.

The Frenchman was exactly the sort of person with whom one would desire to gossip. He was even more urbane than the editor of the Gentleman's Magazine, fond of a little conversation on any subject--love, war, or politics--with those who came to buy his nick-nacks, and had his small fund of wit, of sentiment, and of anecdotism--not more of either than would have lain conveniently in a vinaigrette, yet quite sufficient to give piquancy to his vivacious nothings. Beauchamp soon led him to the subject of Mrs. Darlington's eyeglass; but he quitted it in a moment, declaring that it was a droll occurrence, but nothing to what had happened since.

He always had Galignani's Messenger on his counter, he said, to amuse the English gentlemen who dealt with him; and the other night, as he was sitting alone, a *beau jeune homme* who had been there once before, came in to offer him some other article for sale. "While I was examining what the stranger brought," continued the jeweller, "the young Englishman took up the newspaper, and then suddenly laid it down, but after a moment or two, he took it up again; and then I saw that he had just lighted upon the horrible murder, that has been lately committed in your country by a Captain in the Navy. Well, sir, when I looked in his face, he had turned as pale as a table-cloth, and was so agitated that I should have thought he was the assassin himself, had he not been too young to be a Captain in your Navy. He read it out every word, however, though I could clearly see that he was very much disturbed, and I am sure that he was some relation either of the man who was killed, or of the murderer."

"How old was he?" demanded Beauchamp, remembering the extreme youthfulness of Captain Delaware's appearance.

"Oh, he could not be twenty!" answered the jeweller. "He was very fair too, with fine light hair, tall, and well-made too--Do you think it could be the assassin, Monsieur?"

"Certainly not!" replied Beauchamp, who, though morally convinced that it was Captain Delaware whom the jeweller had seen, was still more convinced that he had nothing to do with the murder. "The man who committed this crime is quite a different person; I know the gentleman who has been here, as you describe, and I wish much to see him. Have you any idea of his address?"

"None whatever, sir!" replied the jeweller, "but I dare say he will be here again soon; for I bought the bijoux he had to sell, and he said that he had more, and would return."

"Well, it is of no great consequence," replied Beauchamp, assuming as much indifference as possible; "but in case he does come, be so good as to tell him that Mr. Henry Burrel is at the Hotel de ---, Rue de la Paix; and would be very glad to see him. Tell him also, that, I shall be at home and *alone* on every evening during the week, from the hour of seven till the hour of ten."

The jeweller promised to deliver the message punctually; and, to guard against all mistakes,

Beauchamp put down in writing his assumed name, and the number of his apartments in the hotel. He then--to do full justice to Mrs. Darlington's business--tried to bring the jeweller back to the story of the eyeglass; but it was all in vain. The man was like one of those birds whose correct ornithological name I do not know, but which boys call water-wagtails, and which go hopping from stone to stone, pausing lightly balanced on each for a moment, and then springing on to another, without ever returning to the same. It was in vain Beauchamp tried to elicit any farther information; he skipped on from subject to subject, and nothing farther could be made of him.

Tired of the endeavour, the young Englishman at length rose and returned to his hotel, bidding the man send the trinkets he had bought. He there reported his ill success to Mrs. Darlington; and taking measures to guard against intrusion at the hour he had promised to be alone on the following nights, he waited anxiously for Captain Delaware's coming, with that degree of uncertainty--as to whether the young officer would ever revisit the jeweller, and whether he would come even if he did receive the message,--which Beauchamp could not endure with that feeling, or rather assumption, of indifference, with which he sometimes cheated himself.

From seven till ten on the two following nights, he paced his little saloon with a degree of anxiety which he had hardly ever felt before. Every step upon the stairs caught his ear--every voice in the anteroom, where he had placed his own servant on guard, made him pause and listen; but it was all in vain; and on both nights he heard ten, and even eleven, strike before he abandoned the consolatory reflection that clocks might differ, and that the object of his expectation might still appear.

As he now felt certain, however, that William Delaware was in the same city with himself, he resolved to wait on in Paris; and, if the message he had left proved vain, to endeavour once more to discover his dwelling by other means.

CHAPTER VI.

Henry Beauchamp was, beyond all doubt, by nature an impatient man; but, for the first five-and-twenty years of his life, his impatience had found so little in his state or situation whereon to work, that it had gone lame for want of exercise. Nature--notwithstanding Locke--had given him a store of noble feelings, and education had added thereto a store of good principles; and, with all this to guard him against evil desires, he had found little in the world to wish for that his fortune or influence had not enabled him to obtain with ease: thus he was only now beginning to find matters whereon to exercise the virtue of patience.

On the third day after his visit to the jeweller's, he began to find that his stock was nearly exhausted, and likewise to contemplate paying another visit to the shop where he had first obtained this clue, as he hoped it would prove, for discovering the residence of William Delaware. Indeed, he would have pursued that course at once, had he not feared that his anxiety on the subject might excite suspicion, and cause some annoyance to the object of his search. This reflection, though it did not keep him from going near the jeweller's house more than once in the course of the day, did prevent him from venturing into it.

His equanimity, however, was gone; and, whether it arose from his late attack of fever, or from the air of Paris in the first days of November, or from disappointment and vexation, I cannot tell; but certain it is, he viewed every thing in the darkest side, and began to revolve the prospect of losing Blanche Delaware for ever, just at the moment that he had found new hopes of having her heart in his favour.

The consolatory process of dining did nothing for him; and, as seven o'clock chimed on the third day, the whole array of dinner was removed, the courier stationed as before in the anteroom, with strict orders given to admit no one but the person described, and, as soon as he was admitted, to retire, and leave his master and the stranger alone. Eight o'clock came, Beauchamp ordered coffee, and took a book; but, though he gazed with an involuntary smile upon the grotesque drawings stitched into the *Roi de Boheme* no word could be read of the letterpress. He tried the eloquent nonsense of Chateaubriand, but it was as unpalatable as the satirical nonsense of Nodier; and, casting away the books, he gave the matter up in despair, abandoning himself to the contemplation of the pictures in the wood fire.

At length the door of the anteroom was heard to open, and the voice of some one speaking to the courier reached Beauchamp's ear; but the door shut again, the intruder descended the stairs, and all was silent once more. The moment after, however, the same sounds were repeated; the door of the saloon also was thrown wide by the servant, who uttered, at the same time, the

pleasant words of, "Here is the gentleman you expected, sir!"

Beauchamp started up as the visiter entered; but what was his surprise to see--not the features of Captain Delaware--but those of Walter Harrison, or Sailor Wat, as he had been called at Emberton, and who was certainly too nearly connected with one part at least of his long and hitherto unsuccessful search, to be beheld without emotion. Beauchamp and the young sailor gazed at each other for a moment without speaking; and even the courier--doubtful, from the astonishment evident in his master's countenance, whether he had admitted the right person--stood at the door for a moment, and stared at them both in turn.

He soon received a sign, however, to depart; and, closing the door, he left Beauchamp and the sailor alone.

"This is a strange visit, certainly!" said Beauchamp, flinging himself into a chair, and gazing in some perplexity upon the countenance of Wat Harrison, which was pale, worn, and haggard, in a frightful degree. "This is a strange visit enough, certainly!"

"You have sought me, Mr. Burrel," said the young sailor, in a tone of calm determination; "and now you seem surprised to see me! What is the meaning of this?"

"I have certainly sought you, sir," said Beauchamp, not yet having caught the right end of the clue; "but, most assuredly, I little thought you would present yourself uncompelled--Are you aware that this visit is dangerous to you?"

"Not a whit!" said Wat Harrison, boldly; "and I do not care a d--n if it were;--but I say, not a whit! You are not a man, sir, to ask me here in order to betray me. I knew that well enough before I came."

Beauchamp now, for the first time, perceived the mistake. The young sailor, well dressed, and offering the external appearance of a gentleman, had gained that appellation from the jeweller, the mind of whose hearer, already filled with the idea of Captain Delaware, had at once become impressed with the notion that the person described, was no other than that officer. The height and the fair complexion had aided the rest of the circumstances; and Beauchamp now found that he had invited the visit of one of the murderers of the unhappy miser of Ryebury, in such a manner as to preclude him from taking advantage of his coming, to cause his apprehension. He hesitated, indeed, for he felt that perhaps the duty of bringing the culprit to justice should be paramount; but the word honour, so often falsely construed, was so even with Beauchamp, and he could not bring himself to do that which his conscience told him he ought to do. Although the contest between reason and prejudice was severe, yet he was not long in forming his determination; and rising again, after a moment's thought, he said, "Young man, your coming here has originated in a mistake. From the description given by the person who sent you, I thought he spoke of Captain Delaware, when he really alluded to yourself; but as the mistake was mine, not yours, I will not take advantage of it to give you up to justice. Nevertheless, remember that I am not ignorant of your crime; and that although I suffer you to depart from this house, and will give you time to seek your place of concealment, yet I hold myself bound to give notice to the Parisian police--who have orders from the government to aid in arresting you and your accomplices--that you are within the walls of Paris, and that, therefore, if you escape it is their fault."

"It will not be so easy to arrest me, Mr. Burrel," answered the young man, in the same calm tone in which he had spoken before. "It will not be so easy to arrest me, unless I like it myself--So you sent for me by mistake? Well, I had hoped that there was one man on earth that knew how to work me properly--But no matter--no matter! And you took me for Captain Delaware, did you?--God bless him, wherever he is, for a noble gentleman and a gallant officer!--So, they tell me they have accused him of the murder--and made him fly his country, and that he is to be dismissed his Majesty's service"--and as he spoke, the calm tone was lost, and he was evidently working himself up to a pitch of excessive fury--"And if he is taken he is to be tried," he continued--"and there is already a coroner's verdict against him--and that he will be hanged to a certainty--and that his good name is already blasted for ever--and that poor Miss Blanche will weep her heart out for him--and poor old Sir Sidney will die of grief for his son's fate--and all for a crime that he did not commit--and, d--n your eyes, do you think I am going to stand all that? No, never, by ----! Weren't they kind to me when never a soul was kind to me in all the world? and didn't they stand by me, when every soul abandoned me? And am I going to see them all go to ruin and to misery, because I myself and that black villain have brought damnation upon my own head; No, no, never you think that! Why, it was bad enough before--and every time I thought upon their going and murdering the poor old man, while I kept watch in the passage, I was ready to go and give myself up, and beg them to hang me out of the way, that I might think no more of it--but now--now that I find all that it has done besides, d--me if I would not hang forty such fellows as that, rather than that the captain should come to ill by it!"

From this confused speech, which Beauchamp listened to with eager attention, though certainly not without some surprise, he learned all that the judicious reader has already discovered, of what was passing in the mind of poor Walter Harrison. He saw, in short, that remorse had done its work; and that the fact of the crime in which he had taken part, having brought down such misfortunes on the family who had been his benefactors, had carried remorse to its natural climax of despair. It was evident, too, that his remorse was of that purer kind which

is kindred to repentance, and that, at all events, he contemplated atonement; and Beauchamp felt confident that, by proper management, full and satisfactory evidence might now be procured of the facts necessary to exculpate William Delaware completely. He saw, however, at the same time, that the spirit with which he had to deal, wild, wayward, and violent, would require most skilful treatment to bring it to the point he had in view.

"You are heated!" he said, "Walter Harrison; but if I understand you right, there is still a hope, through your means, of saving William Delaware from all the evils that you have brought upon him."

"Hear me, sir--hear me!" replied the young sailor, "Only tell me what is necessary to save him; and if you bid me hang a slipknot to the yard-arm, then put my neck in it, and cast myself off, I'll do it."

"I take you at your word," said Beauchamp. "There is but one way to clear him--but one way to restore him to that clear and honourable character which he always maintained in life, notwithstanding poverty."

"Ay, there it is! There it is!" cried the young man; "clear and honourable, and yet poor--as poor for his rank as I was for mine--ay, and I might have had a clear and honourable name, too--but never mind--never mind--it is all coming to an end soon!" And casting himself down in a chair, he pressed his hands over his eyes.

"You lose your self-command, Walter," said Beauchamp. "Be calm, and let us speak over this business rationally."

"Calm! Calm!" cried the young sailor, starting up. "How the devil would you have me calm, when you are speaking of things that are burning in my heart like coals of fire? How can I be calm?"

"You came here," said Beauchamp, somewhat sternly, "with a fixed determination, I suppose, of some kind--either intending to do right or to do wrong--to make the only reparation that you can for the crimes you have committed, by delivering your benefactor from the consequences of your errors--or boldly to deny what you have committed. If you intend to do right, the first noble and generous determination that you have formed for long, should teach you to execute your purpose with the calmness and fortitude of a man."

"You say true, sir--you say true!" replied the youth, in a tone of deep melancholy. "You always say true; and if I had attended to what you told me when you brought me home from the fire that night, I should not have felt as I do now--but there is no use of talking of that--I did come here with the intention of doing right; and I will do right, if you will tell me how. What I want to do, is to clear the captain of every thing, and make it so plain that he never had any hand in the bad business, that even those old devils at Emberton shall have nothing to say. You were going to tell me the way when I stopped you. Now, I will stick at nothing, either on my own account, or that of others--for as to that accursed ruffian who entrapped me into the business, I have had many a black thought, when he sneers at me because I am sorry, to finish him myself."

"Your only way, then, to make the reparation you propose," replied Beauchamp, "is to give such information as may lead to the apprehension and conviction of the men who actually committed the murder--for, from what you have said, I am led to believe that you had no absolute share in the deed itself."

"No, no! None, none!" cried the young man, rapidly. "I did not know they were going to do it--they had promised me, with the most solemn oaths, not to hurt a hair of his head, and I knew nothing of it till it was all over."

"Well, then," answered Beauchamp, "if that be the case, you will not only be enabled to make, as I said before, the only reparation in your power for the ill you have done, but you will entirely clear Captain Delaware, and yet run no danger yourself; for in his Majesty's proclamation on the subject, I find that a free pardon is promised to any one of the parties--with the exception of the actual murderers--who will bring his accomplices to justice. So that your life is safe."

"I care nothing about my life!" cried the young man, relapsing into impetuosity. "What the devil, do you think I am going to turn a pitiful king's evidence, and make a bargain for my own neck, while I am hanging my fellows. No, no! I will tell all that I know--I will go along with them, and be tried with them, and hanged with them too, for that matter--I care not--if I am alive on the execution day. But I will make no bargains about my life--none--none--my days are numbered, Mr. Burrel!" He added more calmly, "My days are numbered; and the last may come when it will--I will shake hands with it when it does. There is only one bargain I will make, and that I know you will grant me; for you were one of the few that were kind--It is about my poor mother I am talking. She has had sorrows enough, sir, and she shall only have one more for me; so, when I am dead, I hope you will promise to take care of her, and let her have enough--if the job do not kill her, which likely it may too; and that is the worst of it all; but, however, I have made up my mind, do you see, and so you must promise me, that she shall have the old cottage and forty pounds a-year to live on; and if nobody else gives it, you must."

"Most willingly will I do it, upon my honour," replied Beauchamp.

"That is enough, sir! Quite enough!" continued the young sailor. "You and I, Mr. Burrel, are quits in some things--you saved my life once; and I can tell you, that if it had not been for me on that horrible night, you would either have been left, with your throat cut at the door of the house, or have gone overboard, and to the bottom, as we sailed along."

"I imagined that such was the case," answered Beauchamp; "and all these things tell so much in your favour, that I cannot understand how you could suffer yourself to be led into such a crime, as that which you have committed."

"I tell you, sir, I had nothing to do with it," cried the young man. "If I had been present, they should not have hurt a hair of his head--They knew that well enough, and therefore they left me below to keep watch. As to the robbery, that I did consent to; and that was bad enough too--but then, that Harding had the tongue of the devil himself, to persuade one. He got round me when I was ill--He taught me to believe that all riches ought to be in common, and that no man should be wealthy, while another man was poor; and then he told me, that to take the money which the old miser made no use of, and left rotting in his chests, could be no harm--and then he harped upon my mother's poverty and misery, and made things ten times worse than they were; so at length I consented, on condition that he would promise not to hurt the old man. Well, even then, when he came down all bloody, and I saw too well that they had killed him, I do think that I should have either shot him for deceiving me, or should have gone and given him up, as he deserved; but I saw that he felt what he had done himself, and there was something so awful about him just at that moment, that I do not well know why or how, but he got the mastery of me, and I did what he liked, till it came to killing you, which the woman wanted us to do, as you lay stunned at the door. Then my spirit got up again, and I was master of them all till we came over here. But now he has forgotten all that he seemed to feel then--that Harding I mean--and he talks about it quietly, and sneers and laughs, and looks coolly at me, while he is speaking of things that would make one's blood run cold--and he persuades himself that it is all right."

The strong excitement under which the young sailor laboured, afforded Beauchamp every means of drawing from him the whole details of the murder, and the events that followed; and he found that the crime at least, as far as robbery went, had been concerted long before it was perpetrated. The moment for executing their plan, had always been postponed by Harding himself, who had assured his accomplices, that a large sum of money, which he knew was to be paid into the miser's hands, had not yet been received; and Beauchamp easily divined that the murderer had alluded to the sum he himself had drawn for, through the instrumentality of the unhappy money-lender. So completely organized had been the whole design, that a French cutter, engaged by young Harrison, had actually lain upon the coast for several days, in order to carry the three culprits to Havre, whence they were instantly to embark for America. The master of the vessel, however, tired of waiting, had at length left the coast on the very night that the murder was committed; and the only means of escape that the four accomplices found, when they reached the beach, was the boat which the young sailor had provided with money furnished by Harding, for the purpose of conveying them from the shore to the ship, without the necessity of making signals, which might have betrayed them. The woman had, indeed, nearly brought the coast guard upon them, by accidentally falling into the sea as they embarked, and screaming for help; but nevertheless, they got her into the boat, and pushed off before any one came up. On their arrival in France, the young man added, they had taken, under Harding's direction, those measures of precaution which had baffled Beauchamp and the officers in their pursuit, and had at length arrived in Paris, where he, who might be considered as their leader, had boasted that he could lie concealed if all the police of France and England were set upon his track. Here he proposed to sell a variety of different articles of jewellery and plate, which he and his companion had contrived to bring with them, and then to take ship for the land of Columbus, as they originally had proposed. Harding, the young sailor said, had soon lost all appearance of that remorse which he had felt at first; but he described him at the same time as living in a state of reckless debauchery and excitement, from which Beauchamp argued that the never-dying worm was still tremendously alive within his bosom. He drank deep, Walter Harrison added, without getting drunk. The woman whom he had brought with him, and had before seduced, he treated with contempt and cruelty. He gamed also continually, in the lower and more brutal resorts of Parisian blacklegs and madmen; and, gratifying every passion to excess, it was evident that he was striving to drown the voice of remorse in a tide of gross and eager licentiousness.

"It is a fearful picture," said Beauchamp. "But now tell me, how and when we can bring this atrocious villain to punishment. You, my poor young man, he has misled and betrayed; and I do not even know that his crime towards you is not of a deeper die than that which he committed on the person of the wretched old man at Ryebury. He could but kill the body of the one"----

"Ay, and of the other," interrupted the young sailor, "he has condemned the immortal soul!"

"I hope not! I hope not!" said Beauchamp. "Life is still before you, if you choose to live; and I know of no circumstances in which life is so inestimably valuable to man, as when he has been greatly criminal; for every year that he remains here may, if he will, be filled with the golden moments of repentance. But once more, how can we apprehend this villain?"

"Ay, he is a villain!" answered the young sailor; "if ever there lived one, he is the man;" and he was proceeding again to stray from the subject, when Beauchamp recalled him to it, and mentioned the necessity there would be of applying to the French police; but at the very idea the other started wild away.

"No, no, no!" he cried, "that will not do. He's a brave man, though he be a ruffian; and he shall never say that I took odds against him, because I was afraid of him one to one."

"Then, how do you propose to act?" demanded Beauchamp, in some astonishment. "This man must be taken, and brought to punishment, if you would keep your word with me, and clear the character of William Delaware."

The young man mused sullenly for several minutes, merely muttering, "He shall--he shall be taken. Hark you, Mr. Burrel," he said at length, looking up boldly and steadfastly, "you are a brave man. I have seen you do brave things. Now, there is this Harding and another; and here are you and I--that is two to two, and fair play. If you choose to go with me to-morrow night, I will take you to where those two are alone; and if we do not take them, and tie them hand and foot, it is our fault; but d--me if I take odds against them!"

The proposal was certainly as strange a one as ever was made, and as unpleasant a one as could have been addressed, to Henry Beauchamp. I have said before that he was naturally fearless; and, consequently, did not see one half of the dangers in anything proposed that most other people would have done; but, at the same time, he had not the slightest inclination to run himself into scrapes of any kind, without necessity; and he could not help perceiving that the business was at once a perilous one, and one which might be much better performed without his interference. In the next place, he did not think the occupation particularly dignified or becoming; and thirdly, he did not at all like the eclat it would produce, and felt most exquisitely annoyed at the very idea of the romantic interest of the story, as it would figure in all the newspapers, and be told in all the coteries. It was quite enough, he thought, to have been made to drown himself for the amusement of the public; and certainly something too much, to be obliged to apprehend two murderers, *vi et armis* without any cause or necessity whatever.

"Well, sir! Will you do it?" demanded the young sailor, seeing that he paused upon his proposal.

"Why, I think not," answered Beauchamp.

"D--me, then!"--cried the other; but Beauchamp interrupted him in that commanding tone which no one knew better how to assume.

"Hush, sir! Hush!" he said. "You forget yourself, and who you are speaking to. Call not down in words those curses, which I trust that your present and your future actions may avert, however much the past may have merited them. In regard to your proposal--in the first place, I am not a thief-taker; and consequently the task does not become me. In the next place, by the plan you suggest, the great object I have in view is likely to be defeated--I mean the bringing these men to justice, in order to clear Captain Delaware. Suppose, for instance, that by any accident we should be overpowered by them, we lose his only hope; and even if we overpower them, having no legal authority to do so, any one who happens to be near, may give them such aid and assistance as will enable them to escape, and foil us entirely."

"I will tell you what, sir," said the young man sullenly, "I'll go some length, but I will not go all. To prevent them getting away anyhow, you may put the police round the house if you like--but only you and I shall go in upon them; for I will not take odds against them anyhow; and if you are afraid to go, why"----

"I am not afraid to do anything, sir!" replied Beauchamp. "And though it is not at all necessary, and though perhaps it may be foolish of me to do it--yet, rather than lose any evidence in favour of Captain Delaware, I will do what you propose; that is to say, I will go in with you alone, in order to master these two men, if we can; but it shall be on condition that the agents of the police be stationed round the house, in such a manner as to prevent their escape, whether we succeed or fail."

"That is what I say," replied the young sailor. "Let us have a bout with them, two to two fairly; and then if they kill us, why, there will be still men round the house to take them."

"I had forgot," answered Beauchamp, "that, as you say, we may be both killed in this business; and if you should be killed, pray, what evidence is there to convict either of these men? If you really intend to do what you have promised, it will behove you to make a full and complete declaration of the whole facts, and sign them before two or three persons, previous to entering upon this undertaking."

Walter Harrison paused and thought, and Beauchamp urged him strongly to take the precaution he proposed; but he did not succeed, "No," said the young sailor at length; "No! I will put it all down in my own handwriting, which can be well enough proved by the ship's books, and I will sign it with my name, and I'll give it to you to-morrow night; but I'll not go it all over again before any one else, till I tell it all for the last time--There, don't say any more; for I won't do it--I don't like this police business either; but I suppose it must be done--So, now I will go. You will find me, to-morrow night at ten o'clock, opposite that jeweller's shop. I will not fail you, upon my honour;" and so saying, he walked towards the door. Ere he reached it, however, he again turned, and coming nearer, he said, "Mr. Burrel, I trust to your honour, that when you have got me there with the police, you will not let them go into the house with us--mind, two to two is fair play. He

shall never say, that I brought odds against him!"

"I have given you my word," said Beauchamp, "and I will certainly keep it."

"Well then, good-night, sir," replied the young man, and opening the door, he passed out into the anteroom; but ere he had taken two steps beyond the threshold, he again returned to bid Beauchamp bring his pistols with him. "He always has his in his pockets," he said; "so it would be unfair that you should be without."

"I will take care to come prepared," replied Beauchamp, and his visiter once more left the room. He paused a moment in the anteroom, and hesitated as if he had something more to say, but the instant after he quited the apartments, and was heard descending the stairs with a rapid step.

CHAPTER VII.

"Well!" thought Beauchamp, when the young sailor was gone. "Well, this is a stupid business enough; and I certainly shall not particularly like being shot for this young rascal's whim; but it cannot be helped, and my will being made, it is not so troublesome as it might otherwise have proved. At all events, dear Blanche, I am periling somewhat to fulfil your request, and clear your brother's name and character."

It is wonderful how much this last thought reconciled Henry Beauchamp to an undertaking which he had before looked upon as absurd, and in some sort degrading. Such little collateral associations are strange conjurers; and as Beauchamp thought over the whole matter, and mingled up the idea of Blanche Delaware with every particular which he had before considered in the abstract only, his expedition became bright and chivalrous, and he lay down to sleep, anxious for the coming morning.

The first eight hours after Beauchamp rose, on the following day, were devoted to securing the assistance of the French police, in the undertaking in which he was about to engage; and although this time may appear long, yet every moment of it was employed in removing the many difficulties which, with wise precaution, the French Government threw in the way of the arrest of aliens, for crimes committed in a different country.

The previous proceedings, although they had smoothed the way, had not entirely removed all obstacles; and the young Englishman, though backed by the influence of the whole of the English diplomatic agents at Paris, found the time barely sufficient to accomplish the necessary arrangements.

The dull official forms must, of course, have no place here; and it is only necessary to say, that, after the necessary orders were given, the French officers of police shrugged up their shoulders at the plan which Beauchamp was obliged to propose, in conformity with his engagement to Walter Harrison, declared that Monsieur was perfectly welcome to take the first brunt of the business upon himself, and promised to meet him at the rendezvous a little before the time which the young sailor had named.

All this being at length settled, Beauchamp returned to his hotel, dined, loaded his pistols, took one glass of wine less than usual, for fear of embarrassing his hand, and then sat waiting impatiently for the appointed hour. By the time it arrived, the sky had got out of humour, and it was raining furiously; but still there were a great many Parisians afoot, all pattering along under their pink umbrellas, as merry as crickets; and many a tender salutation did Beauchamp receive, in his way to the house of the jeweller.

He reached the street a few minutes before the time; but the police were at their post, and he found that six powerful men were in readiness to back his exertions. Walter Harrison, however, had not appeared, and a quarter of an hour elapsed without any sign of his keeping the appointment he had made. The chief of the French police hinted broadly, that beyond doubt he had deceived the English gentleman; and Beauchamp himself began to suspect that the young culprit had repented of his promise.

Before another minute had elapsed, however, the tall athletic form of the widow's son was seen coming quickly along on the other side of the street, and Beauchamp instantly crossed over and spoke to him.

"All is right, sir," said the sailor. "They are both at home, and are even now engaged in pigeoning a young greenhorn, whom they have inveigled to play with them. If they do not get his

money that way, I should not wonder if they cut his throat--so, come along, and let us make haste."

"I am ready," said Beauchamp; "but you promised to write down"----

"Ay, ay! there it is," said the young man, putting a paper into his hand. "Give it to one of those fellows who are of the police, I suppose--but make haste, and come along; for if they do not get the poor lad's money by fair means, they will by foul. I heard them talk about throwing something into the Seine, and getting a sack ready--and I do not like such words from such folks"----

"Nor I!" replied Beauchamp, "Nor I! You walk on, and we will follow;" and, crossing over to the other party, he gave the paper he had received to the commissary who headed them, and then followed as fast as possible upon the steps of the young sailor. Walter Harrison advanced rapidly; and, passing up one of the short streets that lead from the Rue de Rivoli into the Rue St. Honorè, he turned to the right in the latter, and then made his way to one of the smaller streets in the neighbourhood of the Rue St. Anne. At length he stopped; and, pointing forward to a house of respectable size and appearance, "That is the house," he said; "if these fellows halt in the passage, they are sure not to lose their game, for there is no back entrance."

Beauchamp explained to the leader of the party the words of the young sailor; and they now drew near the house in a body, keeping profound silence. The men were then carefully stationed round the door; and Beauchamp, with one pistol in his hand, and the other thrust into his bosom between his coat and waistcoat, followed his guide into the house, the door of which, as is frequent in Paris, stood open as a common entrance to all the different floors.

It were in vain to say that Beauchamp felt no sort of anxiety. The very excitement of the whole business made his heart beat with a quicker pulse than usual; and he listened eagerly as they ascended the stairs for any sound that might announce their proximity to the chamber of the murderers. He was not long kept in expectation. At the first door they reached, after passing the *entresol* the young sailor paused, and rang the bell twice.

As soon as ever he had done so, he whispered to Beauchamp, "I will take this one, whoever it is that opens the door. You run on, and secure the other in the room beyond--I will follow in a minute."

Almost as he spoke, the door was thrown open, and the coarse face of Tony Smithson, the man who had gone down with him in the stage-coach to Emberton, was exposed to Beauchamp's sight. He had a light in his hand, and the moment he saw that there were two men on the stairs, he would have started back, and retreated; but the young sailor sprang upon him at once, grappled with him tight, and in an instant both rolled together on the floor of the little anteroom. Beauchamp rushed forward to a door which was standing a-jar on the other side of the chamber, and whence there issued forth an intolerable smell of brandy-punch, together with the sounds of laughter. He reached it in a moment, but not before the noise of the struggle without, had caught the ears of the tenants of the room; for when Beauchamp flung wide the door, he found the murderer Harding, already, with a pistol in each hand, retreating into one corner of the room, from a table covered with bottles, glasses, and bowls, cards, dice, and markers; while the unfortunate wretch, whom we have already seen as the dirty maid of the old miser at Ryebury, now tricked out in all the gay smartness of Parisian costume, stood by the table, with sudden terror and agony in her countenance. The moment her eyes rested on Beauchamp's face, she saw that her fate was sealed, and with a loud scream, she fell, fainting, by the table. Harding, however, with scowling determination in his brow, placed his back in the corner, and pointed the pistol he held directly towards his former master.

Beauchamp paused, and levelled his own weapon at the villain's head, exclaiming sternly, but coolly, "Throw down your arms, sir! You know, I never miss my aim!"

Harding paused for a moment, slightly dropping the point of his pistol; and Beauchamp, as they stood face to face, at the distance of half a dozen yards, could see the corners of his mouth draw gradually down, into a sort of sneering smile. The next instant he replied, "I know you never miss your aim; I do--and therefore, this is the best use I can make of my bullet," and he rapidly turned the pistol towards his own head.

Beauchamp heard the lock click as the murderer raised the weapon, and seeing that the clear exculpation of William Delaware, which would be gained by the trial of the real culprit, might be lost by the act about to be committed, he brought the muzzle of his own pistol slightly round, and pulled the trigger. The report rang through the room, and the arm that Harding was raising against his own life, fell powerless by his side. A slight cry of pain escaped from his lips at the same moment, but the fury that the wound stirred up, flashed forth from his eyes; and, with the other pistol in his left hand, he rushed forward upon Beauchamp, coolly calculating, even at that terrible moment, that from the unsteadiness of his left hand, he could not revenge himself as he wished, unless he brought the mouth of the weapon close to his adversary. Beauchamp, eager to take him alive, closed with him instantly; the young sailor, hearing the report of fire-arms, left the other ruffian but half tied, and rushing into the room, endeavoured to wrench the pistol from Harding's hand, as he strove with the strength of despair and hatred to bring the muzzle close to Beauchamp's head. At the very moment that he seized it, the murderer had in a degree succeeded in taking his aim, and was in the act of pulling the trigger. The flash and report

instantly followed, and the ball, cutting along Beauchamp's cheek, laid the cheekbone bare, but passed through the hair on his temple, without doing him farther injury. Walter Harrison, however, at the same moment relaxed his hold, started back; and, catching at one of the chairs with a reeling stagger, sunk down into it, while a torrent of blood spouted forth from his right breast, a little below the collar. Beauchamp, too, heated by the struggle, seized the murderer by the neck, and, with a full exertion of his strength, which was not inconsiderable, dashed him prostrate on the floor, then set his foot upon his chest, and, drawing the pistol from his bosom, commanded him to be still, if he would escape without another wound.

Such was the situation of all parties, when three of the French police, warned by the report of fire-arms that a severe contest was going on above, and thinking they had waited quite long enough, rushed up the stairs, and entered the apartments. The first that they found was the man whom Walter Harrison had left, and who was now calmly untying himself, and about to decamp. He, however, was soon better secured, and committed to the charge of the officers below, while the others advanced into the room beyond, and found the young sailor bleeding profusely, while Beauchamp with some difficulty kept his prisoner to the ground, as Harding, aware of the fate that ultimately awaited him, strove, by means of struggles and imprecations, to make his former master shoot him on the spot.

The moment, however, that he beheld the officers of justice, he became perfectly quiet; and it surprised even Beauchamp to see how easily he relapsed into that calm cold taciturnity which he had formerly displayed. The first care of every one was the young sailor, for whom a surgeon was immediately procured; and, after some difficulty, the bleeding was stopped. The unhappy woman, who had fainted, was then recalled to life, and the wound in the chief culprit's arm was dressed. A proces-verbal of all the events was then taken and attested, for the purpose of being transmitted to England, and the three prisoners were removed, though not without a warning from Beauchamp, that it would be necessary to withhold every thing from Harding which might enable him to commit suicide.

"Diantre, Monsieur!" cried the commissary, who was a small wit in his way. "You are going to hang him when he gets to England; why should you care if he saves you the trouble by hanging himself here?"

"Simply, sir," replied Beauchamp, who, though he could treat great events with indifference, had a sovereign aversion to jesting upon serious subjects. "Simply, because it may be necessary to exculpate the innocent, as well as punish the guilty."

There now only remained Beauchamp, two police-officers, who kept possession of the apartments, the surgeon, and the young sailor. The latter was immediately removed to the bedroom he had occupied since his arrival in Paris, and there, by Beauchamp's directions, the surgeon agreed to sit up with him all night.

The lad had never uttered a word since he had received his wound, although Smithson had poured forth a torrent of abuse upon him, which the murderer's situation rendered at least excusable. When he saw Beauchamp's anxiety for his comfort and welfare, however, he said, in a faint voice, "You are very kind, sir; you always were kind--and I am glad I got the shot--that I am; for, do you see, if I had not turned the pistol my way, it would have gone through your head. So that is some comfort, though it would need a many good actions to make up for all the bad ones I have done. But, however, don't trouble yourself about me; for I shan't die just yet--I am sure of that. All my work is not done yet. I sha'n't live long when it is done, even if they do not hang me when I get to England."

"As I assured you before," replied Beauchamp, "there is no chance whatever of such a thing; and I trust you are beginning to think too properly of your own situation, to dream of attempting your life."

"Oh, no! I was not thinking of that," replied the young man. "I one time thought that I should be glad almost that they did hang me, just to show those d---d rascals that I had not turned king's evidence against them with any thought of myself. But I think differently, now I have got this shot. But, mind, I do not make any bargain. I will go over as a prisoner, and they shall do with me as they like--I'll not flinch--No, no, I'll not flinch!"

Here the surgeon, who did not understand a word that was said, and of course did not like the conversation, laid his hand upon Beauchamp's arm, and gently hinted that perfect quiet was absolutely necessary to any hope of the wounded man's recovery; and that gentleman accordingly left him, with a few kind and consolatory words. He then called the surgeon into one of the other rooms, and, making him dress the wound on his cheek, which had been hitherto neglected, he gave him a substantial earnest of after reward, explaining to him, that the life of the young man under his care, was of the most immense importance as a witness; and begging him, at the same time, to watch every turn which the injury he had received might take, in order that his dying declaration might be drawn up, if recovery were to be found impossible. He then left his address, and returned home; but although extremely fatigued, both by exertion and excitement, he did not lie down to rest till he had seen a courier despatched to London, bearing the news of the capture of Harding and his accomplices; and begging that, without a moment's delay, officers, properly authorized, might be sent over to convey the prisoners to England.

The messenger was ordered to spare no expense, and to lose no time; and he certainly performed his task with very great rapidity. In the meanwhile, the news of Beauchamp's adventure spread through Paris, as if it had been a country town; and, as it may well be supposed that the hotel in which he lodged was one of the first places in which the story developed itself, Mrs. Darlington received it at her toilet the next morning, and instantly wrote a billet to Mr. Beauchamp, beseeching him to let her see him as soon as he was up. This, folded in the newest fashion, and sealed with the newest seal, reached Beauchamp as he was concluding his breakfast; and, in order to quench the worthy lady's thirst, he at once walked down to her apartments.

Mrs. Darlington was as delighted as *bienseance* would permit her to be, at the sight of Henry Beauchamp, with a black patch on his cheek, which confirmed all the pretty story she had heard before he came; and her questions, though excessively small and quiet, were, like the little hairy savages that scaled Sinbad's ship, innumerable, and attacking him on all sides.

Beauchamp detailed the whole events; and, if he had been a little bored by the lady's interrogatories, the joy and satisfaction which Mrs. Darlington expressed on hearing that the exculpation of Captain Delaware could now be fully made out--the sincere personal gratification she seemed to feel, made up for all, and placed her high in his good graces. The assurance that, amongst the culprits, one at least of the personages who had set fire to her house was more than probably included, did not seem to interest her half so much as the proofs obtained of William Delaware's innocence; and she returned again and again to the subject, declaring, that nothing would be so delightful as to write to dear Blanche, and give her the whole details.

"Pray, are you in possession of her address?" demanded Beauchamp, assuming as indifferent a tone as it was possible for a man in his situation to affect.

"No, indeed!" replied Mrs. Darlington; "but she will write to me soon, of course."

Beauchamp was mortified; for he had caught at Mrs. Darlington's words at once, as if they gave the full assurance of discovering the abode of her he loved, without farther search or uncertainty. After musing for a moment, however, he said, "I hope, my dear madam, when you do write, you will offer my best compliments to Miss Delaware--who, I dare say you know, is my cousin--and tell her that I have endeavoured, as far as was in my power, to obey the commands with which she favoured me. As I doubt not that you will give her the details of all this story, you may assure her in the most positive manner, from me, that her brother's character will at once be cleared of every imputation, and that all who know him, will hail his return to England with the utmost joy."

Now Mrs. Darlington perceived, as plainly as woman could perceive, that Henry Beauchamp was in love with Blanche Delaware. She had long ago seen it would be so, and now she saw it was so; but yet, for one half of Europe, she would not have let Beauchamp understand that she saw anything of the kind. She had known so many excellent arrangements of the sort spoiled outright by some impolitic, good-natured, stupid friend, jesting upon the subject, or insinuating his mighty discoveries, before Cupid was bound hand and foot--which is never the case ere the matter has come to a declaration--that she answered in the most commonplace way it is possible to imagine--assured Beauchamp that she would give his message correctly--declared that she doubted not Blanche and her father would travel for a year or two; and then began to speak of the beautiful bonnet brought out by Madame ---, of the Fauxbourg St. Germain.

Beauchamp, though he would have seen through every turning of the good lady's tact, had any body else been concerned, was completely blinded in his own case--like all the rest of the world--and, after having given a scientific opinion upon the *brides de blonde* and the *bordures* he rose and took his leave, fully persuaded that Mrs. Darlington was as ignorant of his love for Blanche Delaware as he himself was of millinery.

CHAPTER VIII.

As rapidly as post-horses and postilions would permit, Beauchamp's courier returned from London, bringing with him the officers who had been in Paris already on the same business, both of whom paid the young gentleman a great many compliments on his skill and proficiency in their particular branch of science; but, as Beauchamp would very well have dispensed with such a flattering testimony of his abilities in thief-catching, we shall not give the somewhat circumlocutory praises of the officers at length.

By this time the operation of extracting the ball had been performed upon the young sailor;

and although there appeared no chance of his being able to bear a long journey for some time, yet he was already so far convalescent that no doubt was entertained of his ultimate recovery.

Harding, Smithson, and the woman, Sarah Ings, confined apart, had all already shown the difference of the characters in the different manner in which they had borne their situation. The woman wept continually, declaring with loud lamentations that she would tell all she knew, if they would but spare her life. Smithson alternately stormed and raved, or gave way to brutal jests and wild merriment. Harding remained calm, cool, and silent, quite disposed to philosophize upon his situation with any one who would philosophize with him, or to sneer at any who offered him one word of compassion or admonition; but, at the same time, a great deal too wary to utter a syllable that might endanger the slight hope of escape which still remained.

After a brief interview with Beauchamp, the officers, with very natural impatience, hastened to visit their prisoners; and R---, who held the principal post, immediately addressed Harding with a great deal of civility. "Oh, Mr. Harding," he said, "I am sorry to see you here!"

"You mistake, sir," said Harding. "I do not remember you at all."

"What! not when you were secretary to Mr.---, the banker who failed?" said the officer. "Poo! poo! that cock won't fight, Master Harding. Don't you remember going up with me to Mr. Tims's, at Clement's Inn; and how, after a great piece of work, he promised not only to drop proceedings against you, but to get you a good place into the bargain, if you would tell all about the embezzlement of the money; and a good place he did get you, I find--pity you didn't keep it when you had got it. Howsoever, that is no business of mine--but you must take part of a shay with me over to England, Master Harding; and I dare say we shall be very good friends on the road."

"Perhaps so!" replied the prisoner; and, after a few more words, the officers proceeded to visit the other male culprit. To him, however, their manner was totally different. "Ha! Tony, my lad!" cried the head officer; "How do you do this many a day? Why! how the devil were you such a soft chap as to get taken in for such a bad job as this--but you had nearly bilked us all, by jingo!"

"Oh, R---," he replied. "Oh, it is a bad job indeed! But I knew well enough that I was wellnigh up to my weight; and that d--d fellow, Harding, persuaded me, you see! But I say, R---, tell me, is that young Harrison like to die? Harding gave him a h--ll of a shot--and, d--n him, if he would die, if I would not take to talking, and plead the king's pardon, do you see!"

"No, no!" answered the officer. "No chance of his dying! No, no, Tony. It's all up with you! They must hang two of you; and if any one gets off, in course it will be the woman."

At this hopeless picture of his situation, the ruffian first swore and blasphemed for two or three minutes, and then, relapsing into the other extreme, cast himself down and wept like a child.

"Fie, fie, Tony!" cried the officer. "Die game, any how--why, I thought you were more varment than that comes to--a man must die somehow, you know--and you have had a long pull at it, my lad--besides, it's all nonsense when one knows that it must be so."

"Ay, that's the job!" said the prisoner. "If one could but think of some way of getting off"----

"Don't you fancy that," replied the officer. "Why, look ye now, Tony, if you could get off for this last job, I'll tell you as a friend, they'd hang you for that burning business; for they've got proof enough against you for that."

This last argument seemed completely to dispel all Mr. Anthony Smithson's objections to being hanged; and after two or three exhortations to those virtues that Bow Street officers expect from thieves, the two children of Mercury went on to visit the female prisoner. As, however, we have fully as great a disgust to scenes of low vice and misery as our readers can have, and only introduce them, where compelled to do so in accordance with truth, we shall leave the officers to conduct their prisoners to England, and proceed to notice the events which occurred to Henry Beauchamp, in whose favour we have already kept our promise, of giving up to him the greater part of this volume.

That gentleman then set off from Paris with all speed, as soon as he had seen the prisoners safely consigned to the Bow Street officers. He well knew, that such adventures as those in which he had lately been engaged, could not fail to find their way into the mouth of Rumour; and for many reasons he wished to reach London, ere that lady was ready to go trumpeting before him, like the man with the box on his back, who walks before Punch.

He succeeded tolerably well; so that the fact of Henry Beauchamp being living instead of dead, upon dry land instead of under the sea, was not known to above fifty thousand people when he arrived in London. Out of this number about a thousand had congratulated Lord Ashborough on the resuscitation of his nephew; but the noble lord had so impressed upon his mind that his nephew was dead, that he would not believe a word of the story, gravely saying, that he would give it implicit credence, as soon as he heard it from any one who would say, that they had seen Henry Beauchamp with their own eyes.

As none of those could be met with, and as the story could be traced to no authentic source,

Lord Ashborough held fast his conviction; and up to the hour of Beauchamp's arrival continued in the same belief.

It was late at night, or rather early in the morning, when Beauchamp did once more reach the capital; and as he imagined that he was not likely to find anything prepared for his accommodation in the house of a dead man, he directed the postboys to drive to a hotel, rather than his own dwelling. It was later the next morning when he rose, than he had purposed over night; but nevertheless, as soon as he was up, he set forth for Lord Ashborough's, and walked immediately into the drawing-room, where, although the earl himself had breakfasted and gone out, Beauchamp had soon the pleasure of holding his sister in his arms.

Although Maria Beauchamp was not in the least surprised to see him, as she had long before received convincing assurances of his safety; and though she was as light a hearted girl as ever danced through life, unconscious of its sorrows--yet when she first met her brother, after all the dangers he had encountered, the tears rose up in her eyes, from the more vivid impression which his presence produced upon her mind, of the loss she would have suffered, had the report of his death been true.

The conversation between Henry and Maria Beauchamp was long, and to them highly interesting; and had the world ever been known to forgive those who write dialogues between brothers and sisters, it should have been here transcribed for general edification. In the course of it, Maria made herself acquainted with a great many of the secrets of her brother's heart, and, in return, gave him a far more clear and minute insight into all the views and designs of Lord Ashborough and his worthy agent, Mr. Peter Tims, than Beauchamp had imagined so gay and careless a girl, could have been shrewd enough to obtain. From her quick-sightedness in all those particulars, however, in which the interests of William Delaware were concerned, Beauchamp concluded--a result, which his sister certainly neither wished nor anticipated--that the surmise of his good lawyer, Mr. Wilkinson, was not so far wrong as he had at first imagined; and he paused, musing with a smile over all the events that yet might be in the wheel of fortune.

The anatomy of a smile is sometimes a curious thing, and that which then played upon Beauchamp's lip was not without its several parts and divisions. In the first place, the idea of his gay, smart, and dashing sister, falling in love with a frank, straightforward, simple-hearted sailor, who had neither rank nor fortune to offer her, made him smile. In the next place, he felt the slightest possible shade of disappointment, at the idea of Maria Beauchamp not marrying the Marquis of this, or the Earl of that; and the very absurdity of such a feeling in *his* bosom, of all the bosoms in the world, made him smile at himself; and the two smiles blended together. The third part of the smile, and which was the purest part too, proceeded from many a sweet feeling and bland hope which rose up, when he suffered his mind's eye to gaze on into futurity, and thought of the varied sorts of happiness it might be in the power of him and his to bestow on a noble and generous race, weighed down by long misfortunes.

As soon as all these feelings had had their moment and were gone, and he had given his sister an account of his wondrous accidents by flood and field--Beauchamp wrote a brief note to his uncle, informing him of his return, and then

"Nil actum reputans si quid superesset agendum."

He set forth with all speed to his lawyer's chambers, in order to carry on the whole proceedings, in exculpation of William Delaware, as rapidly as possible.

In regard to his conversation with Mr. Wilkinson, it may be only necessary to notice, that Beauchamp found, that with prompt and judicious zeal, that gentleman, on discovering that some thoughts were really entertained at the Admiralty of inflicting a signal disgrace upon Captain Delaware for his evasion, had waited personally on the First Lord, and had laid before him that part of his client's deposition, which admitted, in the clearest manner, that the money had been placed by Beauchamp himself in the young officer's room; thus showing, that the chief circumstance of suspicion was taken from the evidence. He farther informed him that Beauchamp had discovered the real murderers, and was at that moment in pursuit of them; and he ended by beseeching him to pause ere he took any step in the proceedings which rumour declared to be in agitation.

He was met, in every respect, with frank and gentlemanly courtesy, and was assured that nothing could be more gratifying to his Majesty than to find just cause for suspending that expression of his indignation against any officer in his service, which the stern voice of justice could alone compel him to publish.

So far every thing was satisfactory. "And now," said Beauchamp, "all that remains to be done for the present, is to open the eyes of my uncle to the conduct of this base attorney of his."

"Spare us! Spare us! Mr. Beauchamp, I beg," said Mr. Wilkinson. "But, without attempting to defend attorneys, who, as a body, have got a bad name, not so much, I believe from having more rogues amongst them than are to be found in other professions, but from having greater opportunities of roguery, allow me to say that I am afraid you will find it a difficult thing to open your uncle's eyes."

"Why, why, my dear sir?" demanded Beauchamp. "We can prove the facts.--Tell me why?"

"Oh, for many reasons," answered Mr. Wilkinson musing, and perhaps not exactly liking to state the real basis of his opinion. "The fact is, it is like eating garlic, Mr. Beauchamp, or drinking spirits, or taking any other of those things which a man nauseates at first, but gets very fond of by degrees--when a person grows fond of a rogue, he gradually gets to like him beyond any one else, and soon finds he cannot do without him."

Burrel smiled, though there was a slight sort of mistiness about the conclusion of Mr. Wilkinson's illustration, which he did not exactly like. However, he pressed him no farther; and having learned that Lord Ashborough was carrying on a suit against Sir Sidney Delaware, in regard to the annuity, with somewhat sharper measures than the generality of the profession considered reputable, he obtained the bill for ten thousand pounds which Mr. Tims had presented in lieu of the money due from the earl, and then returned to his uncle's dwelling.

Lord Ashborough was now at home; and although Miss Beauchamp had broke the news of her brother's return, and added a number of reasons and apologies for his not having sooner communicated the fact of his safety, the earl was still both agitated and offended, and his reception of Beauchamp showed a strange mixture of pride, and irritation, and pleasure.

"And pray, Henry, may I ask--" he said, after their first salutations were over--"May I ask, I say--for your movements and their causes may both require the same diplomatic secrecy which you have of late so skilfully displayed--May I ask, I say, why you were pleased to conceal your existence from your nearest relations? Your sister has indeed already favoured me with so many reasons, that I confess I have become puzzled and bewildered by the number, and would fain hear your own motives from your own lips."

Beauchamp was not a man to make any excuse to any one, if he had not a true one ready at his hand. In the present instance, he thought it best to tell Lord Ashborough the simple truth, and then leave him to receive it as an excuse or not, as he might think best; taking care, at the same time, to word it with all due respect and kindness, in deference to the affection which he knew his uncle felt towards him.

"The fact is, my dear sir," he answered, "for the first fortnight or three weeks after you had fancied me drowned, I was not at all aware of such a report. I was first detained at a cottage with a dislocated ankle, and next ill of a fever at Hartford Bridge; and at the time I learned the rumour of my own death, I was under the absolute necessity of going to Paris, in order to pursue the miscreants who committed the horrid murder of which you have heard, at Ryebury. As I was the only person who could prove the facts against them, or lead to their apprehension, the rumour of my death I knew would throw them off their guard; and therefore it was necessary to leave it uncontradicted. Besides"----

"But surely," interrupted Lord Ashborough, who, though strongly inclined to enquire farther concerning the murderers, was resolved to press Beauchamp home in the first instance. "But surely you could have trusted to my discretion in the business.

"Undoubtedly, my lord!" replied Beauchamp; "and I need not tell you that, under any ordinary circumstances, you would have been the very first person to whom I should have communicated my situation, and whom I should have consulted in what I was undertaking."

Lord Ashborough bowed his head with a placable smile, and Beauchamp continued:--"But I could only have done so by writing to you, or by coming to see you. The latter, of course, was out of the question; for I was not willing to trust my secret to your host of servants, and to write was equally impossible, as there were circumstances to explain which could only be done personally."

"How so? Why so?" demanded the earl.

"That is what I was about to explain," answered Beauchamp. "The fact is, that the man of all others whose greatest interest it was to foil me in endeavouring to bring the murderers to justice--with the exception, of course, of the murderers themselves--is your confidential man of business and lawyer, Mr. Peter Tims."

Lord Ashborough started; for though this carried him back again to the subject of the murderers, it was not exactly in the way he best liked. "You are mistaken, Henry," he said; "quite mistaken! No man has been more anxious in thought, or more strenuous in exertion, than Mr. Tims, to bring the murderers of his uncle to justice--You forget their near relationship, and he is a great deal too--too--too"----

Lord Ashborough would fain have added "Too honest a man!" but the words stuck in his throat, and, as he paused, Beauchamp finished the sentence for him--"Too great a rogue, my lord, he most certainly is, ever to think of relationship where interest is concerned. I found that out some time ago, ere I took the step of removing my affairs from his hands, to those of Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson."

Lord Ashborough drew himself up, "I believe, sir," he said, "that I have not acquired the character in the world, of a man who is likely to employ a rogue, either from folly or knavery. But, as you have brought a serious accusation against my ordinary man of business, I shall of course

expect you to substantiate it fully."

"That I will do completely to your lordship's satisfaction," replied Beauchamp; "and indeed, I trust you will believe me, my dear uncle, when I assure you, that the certainty of this man having, by a gross misrepresentation of facts, involved you, in circumstances, which will be very painful to you when you learn all the details, is the great inducement which makes me accuse your agent at once to yourself, before I take such measures as must expose him to the world."

Beauchamp paused; but his intimate acquaintance with his uncle's character had given him a sort of intuitive insight into what was passing in his mind, and had revealed a great many secrets which, as his nephew, he would rather not have learned, but which of course he acted upon in his transactions with the noble earl. In the present instance, he clearly perceived that Lord Ashborough's vanity was getting irritable at the very idea of having been cheated, and that, at the same time, curiosity and anxiety were both striving hard to keep vanity down till they were satisfied; but that vanity being the strongest, was likely to have her own way. Under these circumstances. Beauchamp thought it would be best to throw in a little soothing matter to quiet the more restive animal of the three, and keep her from kicking. He therefore added, after a very brief pause, "I know, my lord, that the plans of this man, which could deceive even your sagacity, must have been very deeply and artfully laid; and unless"--he added, anxious not to assume superior wisdom--"and unless accident and his own imprudence had thrown into my hands the means of establishing his knavery beyond a doubt, I should not have ventured to make such a charge as I have brought against him. I know, however, that you are too candid not to yield to conviction; and my purpose is to request that you would call him to your presence, and suffer me to ask him a question or two before you."

"Of course, Henry," replied the earl. "I am not only willing, but anxious in the highest degree to give up my mind entirely to truth; for, besides the great personal interest which I have in the honesty of a man to whom I confide so much as to this Mr. Tims, the abstract love of severe and impartial justice also, requires that I should hear any evidence that can be brought in support of so grave a charge so boldly made. But tell me," he continued, feeling that there were particular points on which he would not particularly like to have his agent questioned in his presence; "tell me, do the questions you intend to put refer to any affairs of mine, or to affairs of your own?--for I know you have several times employed this Mr. Tims. If to mine, I must say, nay, most decidedly; for I can permit no one either to investigate or to interfere with business which I am competent to manage myself."

"My questions will refer entirely to business of my own, my lord," replied Beauchamp. "With yours I should never presume to meddle, though I feel perfectly convinced that you would not have proceeded at law against Sir Sidney Delaware for a sum that had been already paid to your agent, had you not been persuaded by an infamous villain that the money received did not constitute a legal payment, inasmuch as he affirmed that it was the fruits of a robbery."

Lord Ashborough turned a little pale; but he had canvassed the matter so often with Mr. Tims, and considered all the contingencies so accurately, that he was prepared at every point for defence. "Nay, Henry, nay," he said, assuming a benignant smile. "Nay; I see which way your prejudices lead you. The most connected evidence would not convince either yourself or your sister of that unhappy young man's guilt--but even taking the converse of the matter, and supposing that he has been accused erroneously, still you do great injustice to the poor little lawyer, who surely commits no great crime in believing a man to be guilty, against whom a coroner's jury, after calm investigation and mature deliberation, have given a verdict of wilful murder."

"In the first place, my lord," replied Beauchamp coolly, "in regard to William Delaware, as I know your lordship would be as much delighted to see his innocence clearly established as any one"----

"Oh, certainly, certainly!" interrupted the earl, with all the energy that a man adds to a falsehood in order to make it weigh as much as truth. "Certainly--let justice be done, and let the innocent be cleared!"

"Well, then," added Beauchamp, with the slightest possible touch of causticity in his manner. "You will be delighted to hear, that there remains not the slightest doubt of William Delaware's innocence. In the first place, I myself was encountered by the murderers at the very door of the dead man's house; was carried off by them after being knocked down and stunned; which facts I can distinctly prove against at least two of them. In the next place, I have the confession of one in my writing-desk; and, in the third place, three of them are by this time at Dover, on their way to trial. The fourth is in Paris, but in safe hands too, and will come over to give his testimony as king's evidence."

Lord Ashborough again turned pale; and while he declared that he trusted most sincerely it would prove as his nephew anticipated, he rang the bell, and, in an under tone, bade the servant bring him some of the drops to which we have before seen him apply.

Beauchamp's next sentences, however, were in some degree a relief, for they afforded a fair hope of being able to cast all the blame upon Mr. Tims, should it be rendered necessary by any after disclosures. "So much for that matter, my lord," added his nephew; "and of course I cannot

blame Mr. Tims for not divining all the evidence that might ultimately be collected to exculpate Captain Delaware. But what I intend to establish is, that at the very time that he, Mr. Tims, was retaining--under the pretence that the money was a part of his uncle's property--a sum which of right belonged to you, having been paid in redemption of the Emberton annuity--that at the very time he was urging you on, to proceed severely against a family which he taught you to believe was criminal--that while he was doing all this, he was perfectly well aware that the money did not belong to his uncle; that it had never been the fruits of robbery; and that I must have placed it in the chamber of Captain Delaware, as that gentleman himself asserted."

"If you can prove that, Henry," replied his uncle, "I will admit that I have been most grossly deceived, and will abandon the fellow for ever; but I should like to hear what evidence you can bring forward in corroboration of these assertions."

"You shall hear my lord to-morrow, if you will order him to be here after breakfast," replied Beauchamp. "You must confront the accused and the accuser, before you judge--and in the mean time, as I intend to dine with you, I will go and dress, for it is growing late."

CHAPTER IX.

The Earl of Ashborough was a good deal disturbed, as the reader who remembers all the transactions which had before occurred, may easily imagine. His nephew's return had certainly been a very joyful event; but it was not unaccompanied by many drawbacks. There was the probable overthrow of all his schemes against the Delawares, a considerable loss of money, which was painful to the noble earl just in proportion as his fortune was immense; and, last not least, there was a chance--a strong chance--of certain unpleasant imputations lighting on his character, and of certain disclosures being made in regard to his plans, which he would rather have died to avoid than live to see.

The hatred which had rooted itself so deeply in his heart against Sir Sidney Delaware, had lost none of its freshness--the spirit of revenge kindled long ago, and fed with a thousand slight circumstances through a long lapse of years, had lost none of its intensity; but still, for the time, the fear of shame and dishonour was paramount, and the earl cursed the day in which he had been tempted to risk one rash step in pursuit of vengeance.

He determined, however, to lay the whole blame upon Mr. Tims, and if Beauchamp could prove that the lawyer had reason to know that Captain Delaware was innocent, to affect vast indignation at his conduct; and to cast him off with all those signs of abhorrence and contempt which would exculpate himself in the eyes of the world from any participation in his evil designs. Of the pecuniary loss, too, which he was likely to suffer by the whole affair, he resolved to make the most, as a proof that he had been himself deceived and plundered; and by exclaiming loudly against the perfidy of his agent, to cast a dark shade of suspicion upon every assertion that Mr. Tims might make, as springing from the mere malice of a discharged agent. There was one subject of self-gratulation in Lord Ashborough's breast which was doubly sweet, as it flattered his ideas of his own wisdom, and afforded the best point in his situation, with regard to Mr. Tims. This was the fact of never having committed himself on paper, in regard to the family of Sir Sidney Delaware, or his purposes of revenge against them, and he resolved to make the most of that also.

After long consideration of all these particulars, he believed that he could luckily act towards his lawyer, exactly as if he himself had been perfectly pure and spotless in the whole transaction. He accordingly sent off a note to Mr. Tims, requesting his presence at eleven o'clock on the following day, having determined that, in the first instance, he would give the attorney every sort of gentlemanly support in his encounter with Beauchamp; but that, if he found Beauchamp's charge could be made good against the lawyer, he would instantly throw him off, dismiss him from his employment, and to treat him with proud and indignant contempt.

All these thoughts occupied him some time, and it was late before he entered the drawing-room, where his nephew and niece were already waiting; but the space thus employed had fully restored his equanimity, and the dinner passed over with a degree of cheerfulness and ease on his part, which Beauchamp had almost doubted that his uncle would be able to maintain. The evening was equally tranquil; his wandering nephew's adventures seemed to afford Lord Ashborough fully as much matter of interest and amusement as it did to Miss Beauchamp, and their party broke up late, after a pleasant and a tranquil night.

The next morning, the earl perhaps felt a little nervous; but he had that most blessed quality, which was very probably the subject of the Scotch pedlar's aspirations, when he added to his

prayers, "God send us a good conceit of ourselves;" and being very far from ever thinking that he could, by any chance, have acted grossly amiss, he soon recovered from his more serious apprehensions of the world's censure, though he admitted that occasionally mankind did put a misconstruction on the most virtuous conduct; but he trusted that his own character was too well established to permit of such a result.

With this proud consciousness--we cannot say of virtue--but at least, of an established reputation, which often does quite as well, the earl proceeded after breakfast to his library, accompanied by his nephew, and, ringing the bell, desired to know whether Mr. Tims had arrived. The servant replied in the negative; and, after having ordered the lawyer to be admitted when he did appear, he turned to Beauchamp, observing that the fellow had grown somewhat negligent of late, since he had succeeded to his uncle's fortune.

The earl had scarcely concluded his sentence, when Mr. Tims himself appeared at the door, bowing low, with habitual reverence for turkey carpets and ormolu, even before he was completely in the room. On seeing Beauchamp, which he did the very next moment--as that gentleman had placed himself at the bay-window, and turned round on hearing the door open--Mr. Tims had nearly fallen prostrate on the floor; and pale, pale, pale, did he become, with the exception of the red climax to his nose, which remained of its own ruby hue, while all around grew white. His impudence, however, which was a very phoenix, and was ever renewed from its own ashes, came instantly to his aid; and, advancing with a smile of simpering joy, he exclaimed, "Goodness, Mr. Beauchamp! I am surprised, sir, and delighted to see you. We all thought you drowned!"

"Of your surprise, Mr. Tims," replied Beauchamp, "I have no doubt; of your delight, I am not quite so sure; and as to my being drowned, I know every one believed it, and no one more thoroughly than yourself, Mr. Tims."

"I beg pardon, sir!--I beg pardon!--but you seem offended," said Mr. Tims, assuming the aspect of injured innocence. "I meant no offence, sir--My lord, have I said any thing offensive?"

"No, Mr. Tims! No!" replied Lord Ashborough, "Be so good as take a seat, sir; I am inclined to believe that my nephew misconceives you; but he will explain himself; for it is on his business I sent for you."

"Oh, is that the case!" exclaimed the lawyer, who began to feel somewhat perplexed at his situation. "If your lordship had let me know that such was your purpose, I might have come prepared."

"I acted, Mr. Tims, as I thought best," answered the peer coldly; "and I confess I do not see what need you could have for preparation."

"Why, I do think, sir, all things considered," replied the lawyer--"I do think your lordship might have given me intimation; as the business in which I am engaged on your lordship's account"----

"Has nothing on earth to do with my nephew, nor my nephew with it, Mr. Tims!" replied Lord Ashborough sternly. "We will keep to the point, sir, if you please. Henry, you said you had some questions to ask this person; you had better ask them."

"Person!" muttered Mr. Tims, fidgeting on his chair. "Person!" but he had soon more serious matter to think of; for Beauchamp, approaching the table, sat down at the side next the window, and taking out his pocket-book, spoke in a calm, mild tone, which had grown infinitely more moderate than at first, as he saw the terrible agitation under which the unhappy man laboured.

"Now, Mr. Tims," he said, "I neither want to puzzle you, nor to annoy you, by what I am going to ask; but there are certain matters on which you must give a full explanation, both for my satisfaction, and my uncle's"----

"No, no, Henry, pardon me!" interrupted the earl; "the business is yours alone--I am perfectly satisfied for my part--I have heard a charge, but no proof; and, consequently, I should be doing injustice to Mr. Tims were I to be dissatisfied."

"My lord, the business is certainly mine," replied Beauchamp, "but it is also yours to the extent of at least ten thousand pounds, if not more--but to the point. My first question is, Mr. Tims, how you came to detain, upon the pretence that it had been stolen from your uncle, the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds, paid by Sir Sidney Delaware to you, as Lord Ashborough's agent, when, at the time you detained it upon that pretext, you perfectly well knew that it had not been stolen, and that it had been put in Captain Delaware's room by me."

"But I never knew any such thing, sir!" replied Mr. Tims. "I believed, as every body else believed, that Captain Delaware, when he murdered my poor unhappy uncle, had stolen those notes; and permit me to say, sir," he added, assuming a slight touch of bluster--"permit me to say, I had better cause to believe such to be the case, than you have to accuse me of actions I should despise, sir. What reason had I to suppose you placed the money there?"

"Nay, nay, Mr. Tims," said Beauchamp calmly, "do not lose your temper; remember, sir, passion may throw you off your guard, and you will yet have occasion for all your wit in your

exculpation.--You ask what reason you had to suppose I placed the money in Captain Delaware's room; I will tell you, Mr. Tims. First, because, amongst your uncle's papers, you found an acquittance in my handwriting for the sum of fifteen thousand pounds, received by him on my account from Messrs. Steelyard and Wilkinson"----

"But, sir! But, sir!" cried Mr. Tims.

"Do not interrupt me, sir," said Beauchamp. "Next, I say, because you found a note of hand signed by me for the sum of ten thousand pounds, advanced to me by your uncle, and dated on the very day on which he was murdered, poor man!"

"But listen to me, Henry," said Lord Ashborough. "All this does not show that Mr. Tims knew that these several sums had been appropriated by you in the somewhat Quixotical manner that, as it proves, they were employed."

"It is, at least, a strong presumption that he might have known it if he had liked," replied Beauchamp, adding with a smile, "especially when he knew me to be of a Quixotical disposition, and when William Delaware himself pointed me out as the only person likely to have placed them there--but you must remember, also, that the sum was precisely the same, and that, knowing I had received it"----

"I must once more interrupt you, Mr. Beauchamp," said the lawyer, with a dignified air; "but you are, and have been assuming as facts what are not facts. I did not know that you had received that sum--I found no document--at least, I have as yet found no document, amongst my late uncle's papers, which refers to the sum of fifteen thousand pounds received on your account, and handed over to you in due course; and therefore, sir, the basis of your argument is erroneous, although--as my noble patron declares, with his usual candour and perspicuity--even were it all true--had I discovered, by the papers of which you speak, that my uncle had paid you the precise sum, still I had no proof that there was any connexion between that fact and the payment made to me at Emberton Park."

"There was a strong presumption at least, Mr. Tims," replied Beauchamp, who had listened with the utmost calmness; "and I certainly cannot prove that you have found the document referring to the fifteen thousand pounds, *as yet*. Allow me to compliment you on the introduction of those two words--I certainly cannot prove that you have found my acquittance to your uncle."

"Well then, Henry," said the earl, with a benign smile to Mr. Tims, "I think your evidence halts."

"Your pardon, my lord," replied Beauchamp, "I am only disposing of one part of the subject first--You may not have found it, Mr. Tims, *as yet*; but let me tell you, sir, that you must find it, or account to my solicitors for fifteen thousand pounds received by your late uncle on my account."

Mr. Tims turned very red; for he saw that he was nearer to the horns of that ugly beast, a dilemma, than he had imagined. Still, however, he thought that he had triumphantly opposed Beauchamp's charge, and therefore he replied, with a very tolerable degree of coolness, "I will search for the papers, sir, and of course act according to the best of my judgment afterwards."

"And in the mean time, Mr. Tims," continued Beauchamp, "we will speak of the ten thousand pounds which I received from your uncle, I think you acknowledge, or at least tacitly admit, that you found my note of hand for that amount amongst your uncle's papers--indeed, it was only extraordinary that you should overlook the acquittance, which was pinned to the note, and which you must have separated from it, before you got it stamped, and presented it to my solicitors, in payment of the sum of ten thousand pounds due to me by Lord Ashborough, as the balance of our guardianship account."

Mr. Tims's face grew red, and white, and yellow, and blue, by turns. Never was there such a prismatic complexion as Beauchamp's last speech produced.

Lord Ashborough watched them all, and then demanded, "Did you presume, sir, to stop money which I commissioned you to pay, in the way to which Mr. Beauchamp alludes?"

Mr. Tims was *aux abois*, and consequently he turned upon the weakest of his pursuers. "I did indeed, my lord," he said, in a significant tone--"I did it for the best, both in accordance with your lordship's views and interests, and my own poor judgment; and I am perfectly ready to explain my motives either to your lordship alone, or in the presence of your nephew."

Lord Ashborough changed colour also; and, bowing his head haughtily, he said, "That is unnecessary, Mr. Tims, We will speak of all that concerns myself hereafter."

"Oh, just as your lordship pleases!" said the lawyer--"I have nothing to conceal."

"I am glad to hear it," said Beauchamp, willing to spare his uncle any unpleasant discussion; "I am glad to hear it, sir; for now we come to the most inexplicable part of the whole transaction. I say inexplicable, because it is quite so to me, how a man of your sagacity could commit such an oversight as, at the very time he was accusing an innocent person of murder--at the very time he was retaining in his hands twenty-five thousand pounds unjustly, on the plea that they had been

stolen--at the very time he was carrying on two ruinous suits at law against an honourable man for money which had been already paid--I say, that it is inexplicable to me, how, at the very time he was doing all this, he should commit such an oversight as to present to my solicitors this note of hand, on the back of which is written, in my own writing, the numbers and dates of all the notes I received from his uncle, and which are the numbers and dates of the very notes that he was at that time attempting to show were stolen. Look at it, my lord, and read--'Numbers and dates of notes, received from Mr. Tims of Ryebury'--and conceive, how avarice must have taken hold of a man, ere he could commit such an egregious blunder. Why, Mr. Tims, could you not wait a few days--a week, a fortnight, even a month--to make sure that the fishes had me safe, before you presented this note? By heaven, I should have thought such a thing impossible, had I not often, or rather always seen, that, by what would seem a law of Providence, the most egregious rogues are always sure to leave some door open to detection."

Mr. Tims had remained as one struck dumb--not that he had overlooked the fact which Beauchamp now brought forward; for he had remarked it from the first, and knew that it might speak strongly against him; but the desire of retaining the ten thousand pounds, had blinded his eyes to one half of the consequences, and diminished his estimation of the other--had made him confidently believe that Beauchamp was really drowned, and that if he were not, he would never remember the memorandum he had made on the night which gave birth to so many events. The folly of his conduct, however, now appeared to him in the most forcible manner, and for the moment completely overpowered him. Quirks, quibbles, evasions, impudence itself, all deserted him, till, by the most fortunate chance in the world, Beauchamp pronounced the word rogue, which instantly called anger to his aid.

"Rogue, sir! Rogue!" he exclaimed, starting up, while the whiteness of consternation was succeeded in his countenance by the rubicundity of wrath, "Rogue, sir! The word is actionable! Did you call me a rogue?"

It was too much for human patience. "Yes, sir!" replied Beauchamp, "I did! and I do! I call you a rogue, because I have proved you one! I look upon you as a contemptible blackguard, as I have long done; and if you stare in my face with that air one moment more, I will kick you from that door into Grosvenor Square--and the passage is a long one!"

Mr. Tims instantly dropped his eyes to the ground, and Lord Ashborough interfered. "You are too warm, Henry!" he said, seeing evidently that Mr. Tims must be given up, and therefore that he might as well assume the character of the dignified unimpassioned judge. "You are too warm; but you have made out your charge most completely. Mr. Tims, you are no longer my solicitor. You must have known, sir, that this Captain Delaware, whatever faults he may have, and whatever crimes he may have committed, had not obtained the notes in question by robbing your uncle--you must have known it, sir--you could not help knowing it; and I conceive, that your having deceived me into taking a great many steps which might bring my character into disrepute, if it were not, thank God, pretty well established--I say, I conceive your having done so, to be more base and criminal than even the sort of frauds you have committed in regard to the different sums of money--which, depend upon it, shall be strictly investigated."

Loud insolence not having proved at all successful, Mr. Tims now resorted to dogged impudence. "Your lordship may find cause, upon a little reflection," he said, moving gradually towards the door, "to make your measures towards me somewhat more lenient than you propose. I should be sorry to injure your lordship's well *established character*; but, of course, if I am attacked, I must defend myself; and I will take care that my defence shall be public enough. There are two or three little transactions which your lordship will think over, and determine upon having laid open or not, as you please."

"Do you hear the fellow's insolence?" demanded the earl, turning with a half smile towards his nephew. "Mr. Tims," he added, "you are scarcely worthy of contempt. I fear no true statement of anything I have done; and I shall take care, if you make any false one, that you shall be severely punished. You have deceived me, sir, grossly; you have represented people to me as criminal who were really innocent; and you have laboured to stir up my indignation against them for your own base purposes. Do not answer me, sir, but quit the room and the house; and I shall take care that your accounts be called for, and examined by one who will look into them thoroughly."

Thus saying, the earl, with a proud and dignified wave of the hand, pointed to the door. Mr. Tims would fain have added a few words more; but Lord Ashborough waved him forth again; and there was also a cloud lowering upon Henry Beauchamp's brow, which boded no very pleasant results from farther insolence; so that, upon second thoughts, Mr. Tims judged it best to make his exit tranquilly. This he was suffered to do; and the door closed upon him for ever.

We must now for a time leave Henry Beauchamp and the Earl of Ashborough, and turn to the small neat country town of ----, in the jail of which place, Harding, Smithson, and Sarah Ings, were at length safely lodged, within a few days after Beauchamp's return to his native country. Walter Harrison, skilfully treated and carefully attended, was soon able to undertake the journey to England; and as the fixed determination he had shown to farther the ends of justice, at all risks, left no doubt of his sincerity, he was permitted to act without restraint, and proceeded steadily towards his destination--indeed more rapidly than his feeble state properly admitted. Presenting himself uncalled before the magistrates of the town, he informed them at once of his name, required them to receive his voluntary confession, and in consequence to commit him to prison. The first part of his demand was of course acceded to; but it was intimated to him that, in consequence of his firm and determined conduct, throughout at least the latter part of the dark business in which he had unfortunately been engaged, he would not be deprived of his liberty.

To the surprise of the magistrates, however, he replied that he knew nothing of their forms and manner of proceeding in these matters, but that he had made up his mind to the line of conduct he was to pursue. On no consideration whatever, he said, would he be king's evidence--a term for which he seemed to entertain the most extraordinary aversion. His confession, he said, was clear and ample, made without any promises of pardon or favour, demanded or given; he would therefore go to prison like the others, and be brought to trial like them; but as he was guilty, he would plead guilty in regard to the robbery, though not in regard to the murder. This he said was his firm determination, though he would be found ready at any time to give every sort of information that might be required to make out the case against his accomplices and himself.

As the jail delivery was to be held in a few days, the penance of imprisonment which he thus imposed on himself, was not great; but even the short period of confinement to which he thus voluntarily subjected himself, seemed greatly to affect his health and spirits. In vain the governor of the prison, under the idea that apprehensions in regard to his ultimate fate were prying upon his mind, assured him that the King's pardon, promised by proclamation to any but the actual murderers, secured him from all danger. He replied, that he feared nothing but his own thoughts; for that, since he had come back to the country and the county in which the terrible crime wherein he had participated had been perpetrated, a heavy cloud had seemed to come over him, which he could not shake off. His bold, daring, and impetuous manner, was now all gone, and in its place there appeared a deep silent sternness, somewhat impatient of contradiction, but determined rather than violent. The great loss of blood he had sustained, had rendered him as pale as ashes, and anxiety and suffering had bowed his powerful frame, and left him merely the shadow of what he formerly was. Some apprehensions, indeed, appeared to be entertained by those who watched, lest he should become so ill as to be unable to undergo the business of the trial; but in this they were deceived; and his strength, on the contrary, appeared greater, and his energies more alive, on the day before that appointed for the assizes.

At length the day arrived; and all the usual formalities having taken place, the heavy list of crimes was adverted to, and lamented by the judge; the grand jury was exhorted and sworn, and proceeded to its functions. As every one expected, the first bill brought before them, which was that against Captain William Delaware, for the murder of Mr. Tims at Ryebury, was at once thrown out. Not so, however, that against Harding and his accomplices, which, being found a true bill, was immediately proceeded on.

All our readers are most probably acquainted with the solemn array of a court of justice, though an interesting, always a painful scene. On the present occasion, of course, from the blackness of the crime committed, and the many extraordinary circumstances that accompanied and followed it, the excitement produced was great, and the court crowded in every part. The preliminaries having been gone through, the four prisoners were put to the bar, and a good deal of confusion ensued, from the endeavour of the various spectators to obtain a full view of the accused--the class of women who frequent criminal courts, struggling forward to see the culprits with more than masculine boldness.

Harding, who was beyond doubt a handsome man, first advanced to the bar. He was dressed with scrupulous care; and, with his neck wrapped in a thick black cravat, his double-breasted waistcoat buttoned up to his chin, and his dark frock-coat thrown back from his chest, he looked very much like the private secretary of a German prince. His cool and tranquil air, and easy carriage, might have been construed into the expression of conscious innocence, but for a slight, very slight sneer, that curled the corner of his lip, entirely different from the indignant expansion of the nostril, with which innocence sometimes meets a false accusation. He gazed for a single instant round the court, and then withdrew his eyes, while all the reporters scribbled rapidly in their note-books, preparing to make him a newspaper wonder, and hand him down to posterity as one of the heroes of the gallows. The next that came up was the well-known Tony Smithson, who, though he had confronted more than one court of justice on previous occasions, now, from the magnitude of the offence, and the certainty that his conviction would follow, had lost all self-command, and approached the bar, pale, trembling, and agitated. Next appeared Sarah Ings, with the most persevering of all human passions, vanity, still uppermost. Dressed forth in all the gay and vulgar smartness of the Rue de Vivienne and the Palais Royal, with a touch or two of rouge upon her cheeks to hide the ravages of apprehension, she presented herself before the court that was to try her, and the judge who might have to doom her to death, with a simpering

and coquetish smile, thinking fully as much of the impression of her charms and her finery upon the spectators, as of her awful situation and its probable result.

Last appeared Walter Harrison, with a bold, firm step, a bright red spot in each of his pale cheeks, and his eye sparkling from feverish excitement. He leaned his hand upon the bar, and after gazing rapidly and boldly round the court, fixed his eyes upon the clerk of the arraigns, as he proceeded to read the indictment.

That document was conceived in the usual tenor, and comprised all the various acts which the prisoners could or might have committed in the perpetration of their crime, with all the legal terms and expressions necessary to prevent dubiety.

Harding listened to every word with scrupulous attention; and it was observed that, at several of the counts in the indictment, which described the act that he had committed with much greater precision than he had expected, he set his teeth hard. On the question being put to each of the prisoners--"How say you, guilty or not guilty?"--the three first pleaded "not guilty," and what is termed put themselves upon their country, or in fact appealed to a jury. Walter Harrison, however, in a bold, firm voice, replied at once--"Guilty of the robbery, but not guilty of the murder;" and consequently it was found necessary to proceed on his trial also, upon several of the counts in the indictment.

The trial then went on; and as the reader is already aware of the greater part of the evidence that could be brought forward, it shall be but briefly recapitulated here. The footprints on the floor of the room where the murder had been committed, and the mark of the hand on the wall, were proved to correspond exactly with the feet of Harding and Smithson, and with the hand of the latter. The marks in the passage were also proved to have been caused by the feet of the young sailor; and evidence was given that Harding had paid the master of a cutter, hired to carry them to France, with one of the notes which could be traced to the possession of the miser of Ryebury a few days before his death. The *ci-devant* smuggler, Billy Small, swore positively to the persons of Harding, Smithson, Harrison, and the woman, and detailed fully the particulars of their arrival at his house, with a gentleman whose ankle was dislocated, and who had evidently received a severe contusion on the forehead. The Bow Street officers proved the state of the prisoners' apartments in Paris, the considerable sums of money there found, and a variety of minor facts, which all aggravated the suspicions against them; and as the principal witness, Henry Beauchamp, was at length called, in order to establish the fact of the prisoners having been on the very night of the murder at the house of Mr. Tims, and having thence proceeded direct to the cottage of the smuggler. As he entered the witness-box, the cheek of Harding turned a shade paler, but at the same time his eye flashed with an expression rather of rage, than fear. As his former master went on, however, he recovered his composure, and listened calmly, while Beauchamp clearly and distinctly detailed all the events, from his second visit to Mr. Tims's house, on the night of the murder, till he was delivered over to the care of the old smuggler and his family.

Throughout the trial, Harding had acted as his own counsel, and now he proceeded with an air of cool determined effrontery to cross-examine his former master, mingling skilfully those questions which might tend to exculpate himself with those which he thought would annoy the witness.

"Allow me to ask you, Mr. Beauchamp," he said, "whether, while I was in your service, you ever detected me in any act of dishonesty."

"To speak but candidly," replied Beauchamp, "I never did."

"Did I not on more than one occasion," proceeded Harding, "when your tradesmen endeavoured to cheat or overcharge you, point out to you the fact."

"You certainly did," replied his former master.

"So far, then, your evidence is favourable to me," continued the culprit. "Now, pray tell me, Mr. Beauchamp, what was your own errand at the house of Mr. Tims on the night in question--or rather, what became of you between the first and second calls which you made at his dwelling during that evening?" and he fixed his eye upon the witness's countenance with a degree of sneering triumph at the pain he imagined the question would cause him. But Beauchamp answered with the utmost coolness.

"I do not know," he said, "that any law would oblige me to reply to a demand which does not seem to bear upon the case; but, nevertheless, I have not the slightest objection to do so. I had, on the first visit I paid to the unhappy man who was afterwards murdered, received from him the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds, which I had promised to advance on mortgage on the estate of my cousin, Sir Sidney Delaware. From the house of Mr. Tims I went straight to Emberton Park; and, having discovered that Captain Delaware was absent from home, I took the liberty, as a relation and intimate friend, of entering his room, and leaving the money enveloped in a packet upon his dressing-table, proposing to give him intimation of the fact next morning."

"Was not that rather a hazardous action, sir?" demanded Harding with cool insolence--"especially when there were so many thieves abroad?"

"Not more so, it would seem," replied Beauchamp, "than to carry it in my pocket from Ryebury to Emberton when you were in my neighbourhood; but luckily it happened that you neither knew the one fact or the other."

Harding was silent for a moment, finding that sarcasms were edged tools, which he had better not employ against Beauchamp, who had full strength to turn them back upon himself, with that sort of cold calmness which made them a thousand times more stinging. The pause was so long, that Beauchamp at length asked, "Have you any other question to put to me?"

"Yes--several!" replied the prisoner. "Several--Why did you not give the money into the hands of Sir Sidney Delaware himself, when you found that his son was absent?"

"Because it was not my pleasure to do so," replied Beauchamp. "I must submit to the court, whether these questions are relevant."

The judge at once supported the witness's objection; and the prisoner being told that he must absolutely confine himself to the matter before the court, proceeded, "Pray, Mr. Beauchamp, was the moon shining at the time of your return to Ryebury?"

"It was shining brightly," replied Beauchamp.

"Then it was by the light of the moon that you recognised me amongst the persons coming out of the miser's house?" demanded the prisoner.

"I did not say that I recognised you in the slightest degree," replied his former master, "till I found myself in the boat upon the water."

"Then you positively did not recognise me at all at the miser's house?" said Harding, with a smile of triumph.

"I did not," answered Beauchamp; "as I said before, all I saw, on the opening of the door, were the forms of three men and a woman standing in the passage. As the moon was not shining directly on that side of the house, I could not distinguish their features so perfectly as to swear to any one of them; but the foremost of the men was exactly of your height and appearance, and I have already sworn, that I saw you in the boat after I recovered my recollection."

"Pray, what space of time do you think had elapsed," Harding next demanded, "between the time of your return to Ryebury, and your finding yourself in the boat?"

Beauchamp replied, that of course he could not exactly tell, but he imagined that it must have been more than an hour.

"If such was the case," said the prisoner, "then the moon, which you say was shining on the western side of the miser's house when you reached the door, must have set before you recovered your senses; and I should like to know, how, without any light on a dark night, and with your thoughts confused, as they must have been, after such a blow as you describe, you could recognise me so as to swear to my identity, when, by your own account, you could not stand up in the boat even for a moment."

"In the first place," answered Beauchamp, "the moon had not set, though she was setting, and her very position at the moment I did attempt to rise, showed me your features more distinctly than if she had been higher in the sky; for she shone at that moment under your hat. I was confused, certainly, and in that confusion I had very nearly called you by your name; but luckily I recollected in time the attack made upon my own person, and the extraordinary circumstances in which I was placed, or probably the consequences might have been fatal to me also."

"He should not have touched a hair of your head!" said Walter Harrison aloud, and the eyes of the whole court were instantly turned upon him; but the young man paused, and looked towards Harding, adding--"I do not want to interrupt him! Let him say his say, and then I will say mine."

Harding had turned very pale; but he added eagerly--"One more question, sir, and I have done. Was this momentary and imperfect glance which you obtained of the countenance of one of the men in the boat with you, all which led you to believe that I was that person?"

"Although that glance would have been quite sufficient to satisfy me," replied Beauchamp; "what I had learned from that glance was confirmed by the sound of your voice, and by the fact of your having dropped this powder-flask out of your pocket upon the beach, when embarking for France, which powder-flask, you must well remember my giving to you some days before, because it did not measure the right charge for my guns."

"I never saw it before in my life," replied Harding solemnly, and then ceased his interrogatories. The jury had listened to this cross-examination more attentively than to any other part of the evidence; and it was clear that the cool and collected manner in which the prisoner had sifted the testimony of his former master, had produced no small effect on several of the jurors. When Harding ceased, Walter Harrison turned to Beauchamp, and the eyes not only of the whole spectators, but of his fellow-prisoners were fixed upon him.

"Mr. Beauchamp," he said, "I am not going to do what they call cross-examine you; because I am sure you will tell the truth like a gentleman. But once, when we were talking about catching these fellows, you told me as much as that you had overheard what I said on that bad night to old Billy Small--Will you have the goodness to let those gentlemen up there know what it all was?"

Beauchamp detailed the whole; and having suffered a brief cross-examination on the part of the other prisoners, he was allowed to retire. The evidence now given, together with the declaration of Walter Harrison, closed the case for the crown, and the prisoners entered on their defence. Smithson, who knew too well the proceedings of a court of justice to believe that he could mend his condition by his own oratory, declined saying anything, except that he was innocent; to which he added all those ordinary but vehement asseverations, which render the bar of a court of justice an altar to impiety, whence falsehood and blasphemy reek continually up in the sight of Heaven. The woman appeared strongly inclined to speak in her own defence, but her words were drowned in an hysterical burst of sobbing; and Harding, with the young sailor, were left to address the court for themselves.

The speech of the first was as consummate a piece of special pleading, as ever was drawn up in ancient or modern days. On the evidence against himself, he commented with the utmost acuteness; and pointed out that there was no direct proof that he had ever been in the house of the unhappy man who had been murdered, except that afforded by the declaration of the young man, Walter Harrison, whose acknowledgement of participation in the crime, and evident desire to escape the punishment, by laying the whole of it upon other people, he trusted that the jury would remember and consider, before they attached any weight to his testimony. Mr. Beauchamp, he continued, had never seen him in the house, or near the house. At least, though he threw out a suspicion, yet he had not attempted to swear that he had beheld him there; and although William Small--an acknowledged smuggler--had declared that he came to his cottage in the boat with Mr. Beauchamp and the rest, yet he did not state whether he was there as a voluntary agent or as under compulsion. In regard to the footmarks in the house, he argued, that they could not be held as proving anything; for, in the number of men who might be supposed to commit such a crime as that, how many would be found with a foot of nearly the same size as his? Had his clothes been found bloody? he asked. Had any of the implements of robbery and housebreaking been found upon him? No! And the whole case against him, he contended, rested alone upon the very doubtful testimony of the young sailor, and the fact of his having paid the freight of the cutter with a note which had been in the possession of Mr. Tims.

He now paused for a moment; and, after having taken breath, and eyed the jury to see what effect his oratory had produced, he went on, in a solemn and serious manner:--"Gentlemen of the jury--having now commented upon the evidence against me, and stripped it of all those magnifying circumstances with which human malice is ever too prone to swell the charge against a person once suspected--having shown upon how slender a foundation rests the case in respect to myself--I will proceed to explain to you fully and honestly every circumstance that appears at all doubtful in my conduct, trusting that the confession of some errors which I deeply regret, will not prejudice you against me in the consideration of the present accusation. When I came down to Emberton with Mr. Beauchamp--against whom I do not pretend to say a word, although he was somewhat imaginative in his ways of acting and thinking--I had frequent occasion to go on his business to the house of the unhappy man who has been so cruelly murdered; and where I was always received with a degree of kindness, which certainly would never have prompted the base return which I am accused of having made. I there became acquainted with the young woman at the bar; an attachment grew up between us; and having--upon some speculative principles of general utility, which I now acknowledge to have been foolish and wrong--taken up a prejudice against marriage, I obtained her promise to elope with me without any ceremony of the church. In one service or another I had amassed a considerable sum, and her wages also were long in arrear. She with difficulty obtained payment from her master; and it was determined that we should go off together. Our plans, however, were hurried by Mr. Beauchamp's sudden departure from Emberton; and, hearing that there was a French vessel on the coast, we resolved to set off that ill-starred night. Just as I was about to proceed to Ryebury to meet her at the appointed hour, I found her in the streets of Emberton, whether she had been sent by her master to Lawyer Johnstone's for some stamps, and we were returning to Ryebury in order to procure her clothes, when we met three men dragging along Mr. Beauchamp, apparently dead. I did not well know what to do; and, in a scuffle with the men, I was of course overpowered. They treated me humanely, however, I must say, and told me that they neither wished to hurt me nor the gentleman they had got; and if I chose to go quietly along with them till they were safe in France, whither they were going, they would then set me at liberty; but they vowed with many imprecations, that they would not leave any one behind who could give information against them. I learned from this that they had committed some crime; but the impossibility of resistance, the desire of getting to France, and the hope of doing some good to my master, all induced me to yield quietly; and I accordingly got into the boat with them, and we went off. By the time we had reached the smuggler's cottage, however, I had learned enough to show me the horrid crime that had been committed; and, before I had been there quarter of an hour, this young man beside me, whom I have reason to believe was the principal actor in the Ryebury tragedy, whispered to me that I was in for it, as he termed it, and that, fair weather or foul, I must sail out the voyage with him and his companions. I asked him what he meant, and he then showed me that if I went back to London, or peached, as he called it, I should certainly be suspected as accessory to what had happened. I was overcome with the horror of my situation; and, on my remonstrating and begging him to allow me to depart, he threatened if I said another word to make it out so, that I

should appear the principal in the murder. My courage and my resolution failed; and, weakly consenting to go with them, I suffered myself to be led on blindly, and do what they liked. The freight of the ship even I was compelled to pay, which I did with a pound note that Sarah there, had received from her poor master the night before, and had given me to keep. After our arrival in France, I gave myself up to despair; my hopes and prospects seemed utterly ruined, and, to keep away thought, I gambled deeply. Fortune, however, favoured me, and I won large sums. Suddenly the news that Bow Street officers were pursuing us in Paris, added new anxieties to my mind, and often I thought to give myself up, and tell all I knew. The apprehension that I would do so, it seems, induced the other prisoner beside me, to be beforehand with me; and, on the night that I was taken, when I heard his voice without, and saw Mr. Beauchamp enter the room, I certainly made a desperate defence, having no hope of being able to establish my innocence against the conspiracy that was evidently got up to make me the scapegoat. This, gentlemen, is the plain, straightforward story of what really happened. You must all see that I have had no time to make up such a tale, as I knew not what evidence would be produced against me. There stands the only witness I could bring forward to prove the truth of my story; but she, included in the same false charge, is prevented from giving evidence in my favour.

"It is all true! It is all true!" cried the unhappy girl, weeping bitterly; and Harding proceeded, "I have little more to add, gentlemen. Mr. Beauchamp's evidence is generally correct, though he was mistaken in one or two particulars; but I trust that you will allow the good character that he has himself given me, to counterbalance the assertions that he has erroneously made. In conclusion, I have only to say, that my very heart and soul revolts at the thought of the crime with which I am charged; and although I have been culpable in some things, let me trust that my sins have been sufficiently punished already by their consequences, and that a jury of my countrymen will not incur the awful responsibility of condemning an innocent man for a crime that never entered his thoughts."

With a fine person and graceful action, Harding delivered this address with so much effect, that a murmur of approbation filled the court when he concluded; and it was evident that the opinion of the jury was strongly affected by what he had said.

The gentlemen of the bar, however, whispered together with a significant smile, and one then remarked to another--"He brought in the girl devilish neatly. The fellow must have some good in him for that."

"Poo!" replied the more experienced counsel to whom he spoke. "He could not have made up his own story without it."

The judge now repressed the noise in the court, and the young sailor came nearer to the bar to address the jury.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I can't make you a fine speech like this man Harding, who, I begin to think, is the devil himself; for none but the father of lies could have got up such a string of them, do ye see! I told the whole truth in my declaration before the magistrates; and as you all know well enough, if what he has said were true, and I had wanted to betray him to screen myself, I might have been king's evidence as the folks wanted me. My lord the judge knows that, and every one else; and so I should have saved my life to a certainty, and pocketed the reward. No--no! I had no such thought in my head, do you see; and now, gentlemen, I will tell you truly how it all happened. It makes little odds to me whether you hang me or not; for I shall not live three months if you don't; and death is just as bitter to-morrow as to-day--though I never feared him much, somehow. The thing is this, gentlemen. I have a poor mother, a widow, living at Emberton; and to see her next to starving always has been a sore heart to me. Well, there were only three people in all the world that ever were very kind to me. The first was my mother, who forgave me all my faults, and loved me notwithstanding all the sorrows I brought her. The next was Captain William Delaware, who, when I got into a scrape about poaching, and might have been sent to the hulks, took me aboard his own ship, treated me as kindly as possible, and sent me back with a better character than ever I had before. The next was Mr. Henry Beauchamp--though I always took his name to be Burrel. He saved my life at the risk of his own; had me doctored and tended; was kind to me and my mother; gave me advice and encouragement which would have been a blessing if I had remembered it, and promised me help if I behaved well. But I did not behave well; for that cursed villain, his servant, Harding there, did me more harm than all his master could say did me good. He was always at me about what he called the unequal distribution of property; and it was very natural to get from thinking that other folks had no right to their property, to thinking that one should take it from them the best way one could; and so it turned out. I have told all about the robbery in my declaration; but I never could tell, gentlemen, what a turn it gave me, when I found they had murdered the old man. Ay, when first they came down, with their hands all bloody: I shall never forget it, sleeping or waking. However, that I got over, though it was always like a red-hot coal lying at my heart; but then I thought, that sometime it would go out of my head; till one day I went into a shop in Paris, to sell some of the things for them, that they had stolen, when they set fire to the lady's house upon the hill, and there I took up an English newspaper, and I saw all about the murder. That was bad enough; but when I found out that a set of rogues and fools had laid the blame of what we had done, upon the noblest gentleman in all the country, who would not hurt a fly, if it were not when he is alongside an enemy;--when I saw that, and thought how it would break his gallant heart, and that of his good father, and poor Miss Blanche's too; and remembered what Captain Delaware had done for me, and what his father and Miss Blanche had done for my poor mother--why, gentlemen, I thought I

should have gone mad. Well, I believe I was mad; till, as good luck would have it, I found out Mr. Beauchamp, and told him all about it, and offered, if he would not take odds against the two fellows, but would go with me and face them singly--I offered, I say, to give them up, and myself too. Well, he told me of the king's proclamation, and promise of pardon, and all that; but I told him I would be tried too, like the rest; and away we went, and took them, though I got shot in the shoulder, and Mr. Beauchamp in the face. Now, gentlemen, you all know that I was left behind in Paris, and came over here of my own accord, and gave myself up without any one telling me; and so you may believe the rest of my story or not, as you like. All I want, is to clear Captain Delaware; for he is a noble gentleman, and a good officer, and a kind-hearted man--God bless him for ever!"

Harding had been really eloquent; for from the adaption of his story to the evidence produced immediately before, it was beyond doubt that he had poured forth his long address upon the spur of the occasion. Walter Harrison, however, was not eloquent; and, if there had been anything like eloquence in his speech, it was the eloquence of passionate sincerity. Still his tale produced the deep impression; Harding's alone the transient one. In the case of the latter, the jury and the spectators had felt that the account was plausible, and might be true; but; when Walter Harrison concluded his rough oration, there was not a man in all the court that doubted his assertions. There was a momentary pause, and then more than one person murmured, "Poor fellow!"

At length the judge summed up the evidence, with that clear, straightforward, noble impartiality, that dignified and equitable firmness, which is so universally characteristic of an English judge. He noticed Harding's defence, and gave him the full credit of every probability that existed in favour of the story he had told, but he noticed also the singular conduct of Walter Harrison, pointed out the minute resemblance between the declaration he had made in Paris, and that which he had made in England, and the harmony of the whole of it with both his conduct towards Beauchamp and the conversation he had held with the smuggler. Nevertheless, he said, there was a peculiar feature in the case which greatly affected it, and he begged the jury to give the prisoners the advantage of any doubt that might thence arise in their minds. This peculiar feature was, that Walter Harrison having refused to become king's evidence, the prisoners had not had an opportunity of cross-examining him, as they might have done to any other witness. At the same time, his declaration could not fail to have a considerable effect upon the minds of the jury in regard to the other prisoners, as well as to himself, and therefore it was to be received cautiously from the peculiarity adverted to.

The judge's exposition of the law, and his classification of the evidence adduced, was clear, judicious, and impartial; and, on dismissing the jury to deliberate, he called upon them, to cast away from their minds the remembrance of every thing but what they had heard in that court, and never to forget, that the duty they were then called upon to perform, involved the most awful responsibility which it is possible for a human being to undertake.

The eyes of each of the prisoners were fixed upon the jury-box while the judge addressed the jurors; and it was remarked, that at one particular point of the summing up, where the declaration of the young sailor, and his conduct throughout the whole transaction, were clearly stated, Harding turned extremely pale, and casting down his eyes, remained in deep thought.

In a very few minutes the jury re-appeared in court, and the foreman announced their verdict of guilty against Smithson, Harding, and his paramour; not guilty, in regard to the young sailor, except on the count referring to the robbery.

As the fatal words rang in her ear, the unhappy woman dropped down on the floor of the dock, as if she had been shot. Smithson alone muttered a few words in his peculiar slang, consigning the judge and jury to the place for which his own deeds qualified him much better. Harding remained profoundly silent; and heard not only the announcement of his condemnation, but the awful sentence that followed it, with calm but steadfast composure.

While sentence of death was passing on Harding, Smithson, and Sarah Ings, the head of a woman, dressed in deep mourning, pale, haggard, and agitated, but with the traces of former beauty shining through all, was seen gazing eagerly upon the judge; till at length he turned to Walter Harrison, and informed him that, at the suggestion of the king's counsel on the occasion, his sentence should be reserved for farther consideration. At those words a passionate flood of tears were seen to burst from the poor woman's eyes, which had been dry as the desert before; and she hurried eagerly from the court ere the crowd made their way towards the door.

There are some men so highly gifted with fine and generous feelings, that they feel a sort of sympathetic excitement in the trials and behaviour of murderers and highwaymen--prize the rope that hanged a noted criminal, and guard, as a relic, the implement with which some great crime was perpetrated. We own the narrowness of our own mind in these respects, and turn without reluctance for a time from the fierce and ruthless deeds of men in the last stage of human depravity, to scenes where the same passions, and perhaps the same vices, had to struggle with the bonds of education and circumstances, and were restrained to crooked and confined passages, by all the respects of rank, and station, and a well preserved name.

On the Saturday morning which succeeded the trial of Harding and his accomplices, the Earl of Ashborough sat waiting for his carriage, which was to be at his door at nine precisely, in order to whirl him and his niece down to one of his country seats, for the purpose of spending the Christmas holidays with true old English hospitality, as the newspapers term it, amidst his neighbours and tenants.

About three weeks had now elapsed since the return of his nephew and the dismissal of Mr. Tims, and agents had been appointed by the earl to examine into that worthy's accounts, in which they had hitherto made but small progress. The noble lord had in the meanwhile pursued his plan of speaking of his *ci-devant* lawyer, and treating him in every respect with calm and supreme contempt. But Mr. Tims had at the same time proceeded upon his plan also; and scarcely a daily or a weekly newspaper appeared--from that which instructs and bullies the statesman, to that which sets the pot-house in a roar--that did not contain some galling allusion to the Earl of Ashborough and his private affairs.

His lordship took no notice, but still the same attack went on; and though he spoke not a word upon the business to any one, yet it was evident that the annoyance he felt was sufficient seriously to affect his health. A physician's carriage was seen almost daily at his door; and in the end, it being discovered that the length of time he had spent that year in the dull and smoky atmosphere of London, had hurt his constitution, it was determined that he should set out for the country, and not return till his parliamentary duties absolutely compelled his attendance in the House of Peers. The carriage then was ordered, and his lordship, with his usual punctuality, was ready to the moment. The carriage, however, and his lordship's niece, were anything but ready to the moment; and the earl was sitting in attendance upon their will and pleasure, and in no very quiescent mood, when the loud clatter of a horse's feet beneath the windows, broke the silence; and in a moment after, a letter, brought by express from the little county town of ----, was put into his hand, together with another, bearing his address in the handwriting of Henry Beauchamp.

The first was signed by the sheriff of the county, and went to inform him that a man of the name of Harding, having been that day, at twenty minutes after three o'clock, condemned to death for the murder at Ryebury, had expressed an earnest wish to see his lordship, and had intimated that if he were so indulged, he would make disclosures of very great importance, and which, he believed, might even save his own life. These facts the sheriff had thought necessary to bring before his lordship, leaving him to judge whether it would be proper or not to comply with the desire of the prisoner. The letter from Beauchamp contained but a few lines, urging his uncle strongly to give immediate attention to the demand of the felon; and Lord Ashborough, in his first burst of angry impatience, threw both the epistles into the fire together.

Now, as Lord Ashborough was a man who seldom gave way to such unnecessary displays of vehemence, it was very easy to divine, from his violent demolition of the letters, that he would ultimately do what was required, whatever he might say to the contrary; for, had he not intended to go, there would not have been the slightest use of being angry about the matter.

"What could the fellow want with him?" he asked. "It was all nonsense! There could be no reason for his going down; nor could the rascal have any matter of import to relate!"

But the very fact that his lordship could by no means divine what Harding could want with him, served in the greatest degree to strengthen that principle, or passion, or folly--whichever curiosity may be termed by the learned--that now urged the earl to travel to the town of ----. By the time the carriage came up, he had got as far as to think, "Well, I suppose I must go!" and by the time Miss Beauchamp, be-cloaked and be-furred, entered the drawing-room, he had summoned resolution to say, "Had you and the carriage been ready at the time, Maria, I should have had a pleasant journey with you down to ----, instead of an unpleasant one by myself down to ----."

What convenient things blanks are!

He then explained to his niece the circumstances which called him in a different direction from that which he had proposed to follow, and left her the choice of taking the barouche and the old butler, and proceeding at once into the country, as they had intended at first, or of going with him in the chariot to the county town of ----.

"Oh, not I, my dear uncle, for the world!" cried Miss Beauchamp. "You surely do not expect me to go and dance at what they call the '*Size ball*'. No, indeed; I must be excused. The barouche, the old butler, and the country house for me; but remember, I shall expect your lordship to join me in two days, for the house is to be full of people, the newspapers tell me; and, of course, you cannot expect me to act the landlady of the inn, when the landlord is away."

Lord Ashborough, as a matter of form, scolded his gay niece for her pertness, although he knew her to be incorrigible; and then leaving her to make her own arrangements, which, to say sooth, she had never any great difficulty in doing, he got into the chariot, and rolled away in a very different direction from that in which he had previously intended to turn his steps.

There is nothing so dry and disgusting on earth as travelling on paper. It is a sort of algebraic locomotion, full of false positions and most uninteresting abbreviations; and therefore, instead of posting on by the side of the Earl of Ashborough, we shall take the liberty of getting into the chaise with him, and while he leans back with his eyes half shut, will gently unbutton the two top buttons of his waistcoat, where the lapel folds over the black handkerchief, and, drawing it back, peep in through the window the old Roman wished for, and ascertain what is doing in his lordship's breast.

There was once, in the days of Cheops, an Egyptian who had a remarkably fine poultry-yard, in which were all the fowls of all the feathers that Egypt ever saw. One day it so happened, that, walking by the side of the Nile, the Egyptian espied an egg, which he immediately took up, and putting in his breast he carried it home, and laid it carefully in the nest of a sitting hen. Twenty days after, on entering his poultry-yard, to his great surprise he found--nothing but feathers and a young crocodile, which instantly attacked him also. With great difficulty the Egyptian freed himself from the destroyer of his hens; and when he died, he directed, in his will, that, on the frontal bandage of his mummy, there should be written, both in the hieroglyphic and the vulgar character, "*Beware how you hatch a crocodile's egg in your poultry-yard!*" Cheops, when he heard it, laughed; but one day, when he was going to give way to his revenge, contrary to the best interests both of himself and his people--contrary to wisdom, and policy, and justice, and, good faith--he caught himself saying, "*Beware how you hatch a crocodile's egg in your poultry-yard;*" and ever after that, when he found a violent passion springing up in his breast, his instant address to his own heart was, "*Beware how you hatch a crocodile's egg in your poultry-yard!*"

Now, the Earl of Ashborough had lately discovered, that in pursuit of his right honourable revenge against Sir Sidney Delaware, he *had* hatched a crocodile's egg in his poultry-yard; and though he certainly repented having done so, in exact proportion to the consequent evil it had brought upon himself, he of course felt his hatred towards Sir Sidney Delaware, increased in the same degree. Lord Ashborough would not have given his right hand, or any thing the least like it, to have had full vengeance on the Delaware family, for he was a man that valued both his hands highly, and would not have parted with either of them; but whereas he would, a month or two before, have given a considerable portion of his golden stores, which were the next things to drops of his blood, he would now have given double the sum, to see the ruin of the race he hated. As he lay back, then, in the chariot, he thought over all the events, and could not help hoping that some circumstance might yet give him an opportunity of balancing the long account of those vexations and uncomfords which had fallen upon him, in, with, from, through, and by the affairs of Sir Sidney Delaware, and also of inflicting upon that gentleman and his family evils in a like proportion.

"At all events," he thought--and it was the most consolatory reflection that he had been able to find--"At all events, they have been forced to leave the country, and have most probably gone to America; so that all danger of such a degrading connexion being formed by Beauchamp, is now at an end. So far, therefore, my labour and anxiety has not been in vain, and I may flatter myself at least, that one great object has been gained, if not the whole."

There was another slight gleam of hope or expectation, flickering over the dying lamp of the earl's former designs. If one may use the term, it was a hopeless hope--the stout swimmer's last gasp--yet without it Lord Ashborough would probably never have attended to Harding's request. Hating all the Delaware race as he did, he had not been able to persuade himself fully that Captain Delaware was entirely innocent, notwithstanding the convincing proofs that Beauchamp had laid before him; and he now thought it possible--barely possible--that the murderer Harding might have something to say which would in some way inculpate William Delaware.

All these ideas rolled in the earl's mind like the morning clouds of spring--misty, and vague, and varying in shape and size, though still keeping one general character--till night came, and he fell asleep.

He awoke about eight o'clock, as the carriage stopped in the county town of ----, and looking out, saw the bright lamp over the ever-open glass-doors of the principal inn, and the waiters rushing forth to seize upon the inmate of the carriage and four. His lordship's agility not being what it had been, he entered the house of many tenants, with slow and dignified steps; and taking possession of the best apartments, demanded whether Mr. Beauchamp were still there. The waiter replied in the affirmative, and in a few minutes the greeting of the uncle and nephew had taken place. As neither had dined, and Beauchamp's dinner was just upon the table, the earl became his guest, while a servant was despatched to the prison, in order to notify his arrival, in compliance with the request of Harding.

As far as possible, Lord Ashborough never disturbed his appetite in the exercise of its functions, by any conversation which might become disagreeable; and consequently he abstained, with infinite forbearance, from touching upon the proceedings in regard to the Ryebury affair, till biscuits and wine stood upon the table by themselves. He then, however, asked his nephew how the events of the assizes had gone. Beauchamp, in reply, gave him a

succinct account of all that had taken place, without forgetting to mention that the bill against Captain Delaware had been thrown out by the grand jury with every mark of indignant rejection; and on seeing his uncle bite his lip, he added, "So, now, every shade of doubt and suspicion has been removed from the character of William Delaware; and I trust very soon to see him and his family return to England, and resume that station in society for which they were born, and in which your lordship's liberal conduct, in regard to the annuity, will enable them to move with greater ease."

Lord Ashborough turned rather pale; but he replied at once, "I trust not sir! I trust not!"

"And, pray, why not?" demanded Beauchamp, with more surprise at the frank avowal of such a wish, than at the existence thereof.

"I will tell you, Henry Beauchamp," replied the Earl; "I will tell you. It is on your account, I say, that I hope not. I have not chosen to speak to you, since your return, upon your previous conduct towards this family of Delawares, because I trusted that circumstance would have removed them for ever from our neighbourhood; but now, that there appears a possibility of their returning, I must tell you that I have never been ignorant, from the first, of your masquerading visit to the country; and I must farther say, that a report has reached me of your trifling with the old man's daughter--That you would ever dream of marrying the girl, of course I do not believe; but the very report is unpleasant, and might injure your views in a fitting alliance."

Beauchamp had a great deal of trouble to master the mixture of personal anger and indignation which his uncle's speech had created in his bosom, and to reduce his reply to terms of respect and moderation. He succeeded, however, in putting out a good deal of the fire, ere he answered, "My lord, as far as a kindred interest in my affairs and prospects goes, I feel that your zeal on the present occasion, must of course add to the gratitude and affection I entertain towards you, for a long train of kindnesses in the past; but you will pardon me, if I say that a certain line must be drawn between anxiety in regard to my welfare, and dictation in regard to my conduct--for beyond that line, I can permit no one to trespass."

Lord Ashborough turned very red, and he replied hastily, "all these are mere fine words, Mr. Beauchamp. What I wish to know simply is, do you or do you not intend to marry this girl?"

"That, my lord, is a question," replied Beauchamp, still bridling his anger, "which no man on earth has any right to ask me; and to it I shall give you no reply. But that you may not at all deceive yourself, let me add, that if you desire to know, whether I think Miss Delaware fitted by station and circumstances to become my wife, I will reply at once, that a man of much higher rank, and much greater fortune than myself, should think himself honoured could he obtain her hand."

"Enough, sir! Enough!" cried Lord Ashborough. "You have said quite enough--In regard to my right to question you, I slightly differ with you in opinion, in as much as my conduct will of course be regulated towards you by the answers you have made--and now, Henry Beauchamp, I have to tell you, that you will do of course as you like; but if these Delawares ever return to England--and may the sea swallow the scheming beggars ere they reach the shore--but if ever they should come, and you pursue your foolish conduct towards that girl, I leave every farthing which I can by any means alienate from the estates attached to the title, to the most distant connexion I have, rather than to yourself. Mark me, you throw away at least twenty thousand per annum; and, at the same time, I cast you off for ever, and will never see you more!"

"My lord," replied Beauchamp in a firm tone, "although you have yet shown me no right to ask the question you did ask, you have at least afforded me a good reason for answering it more pointedly than I have hitherto done; and therefore, that you may make any dispositions in regard to your property which you think fit without delay or uncertainty, I tell you plainly and positively, that if ever Miss Delaware does return to this country, I shall at once offer her my hand; that if she should not return immediately, I will seek her through every country in Europe for the same purpose! Now, my lord, having said this much, allow me to remind you, that I am not a man whom the loss even of twenty thousand pounds a-year, can awe into doing one single thing that he would not otherwise have done; nor leave one regret upon his mind for doing that which he thinks right. The loss of your lordship's affection and society cuts deeper, and will be painful under any circumstances; but I cannot help thinking, that on this point at least, you will see cause to change your determination."

"Never, sir! Never!" cried Lord Ashborough, whose passion had got into the white stage. "Never, while I live!" and ringing the bell violently, he threw open the door, and retired to his apartments. Beauchamp took two or three turns up and down the room; told his uncle's servant who appeared, that he would find him in his own room; and then sat down to contemplate all that had just occurred.

"At all events," he thought, after he had revolved the whole particulars for several minutes; "At all events, it is a very disagreeable business done and over. It must have come sooner or later; and however painful it may be, to give such deep offence to a person towards whom I have many debts of gratitude; yet, of course, this was a point upon which I could yield nothing. His lordship, I think, *will yield* something; and if he relent on the point of excommunication, he may enrich the first chimney-sweeper he meets, for aught I care!"

CHAPTER XII.

Lord Ashborough's servant found him pale and exhausted; for the first energy of anger had passed away, and the languor which it leaves behind had taken possession of a frame already weakened by an organic disease, the attacks of which had lately been more frequent and severe than they had ever proved before.

"Well!" said the earl, as the man entered. "Have you been to the prison?"

"I sent Johnstone, my lord," replied the valet. "I thought your lordship might want me."

"Well, well!" cried the earl impatiently. "What does Johnstone say?"

"The governor sends his respects, my lord," answered the valet; "and although it is past the hour, he will of course admit your lordship, especially as the man has asked several times, he says, whether you had arrived or not."

"Order the carriage!" said the earl; "but stay--Is it far to the prison?"

"Not two hundred yards," replied the servant; and Lord Ashborough declared he would walk thither. The valet, however, took the liberty of remonstrating, with that tender interest in his master's health which he thought might add two or three hundred pounds to the legacy he firmly expected to find in the earl's will. "I hope you will remember, my lord, that you are not well. Sir Henry said you were not to make any great exertion, or take too much exercise; and your lordship is looking very pale to-night."

"I dare say I do," answered the earl. "However, I must go. Give me my cloak, Peregrine; and call Johnstone to show me the way."

The valet, of course, made no farther opposition; and Lord Ashborough was soon on his way to the county jail, with a footman lighting him on--for the town was very dark--and with a most fervent wish in his heart that the felon he was going to see, might place it in his power to fix at least one damning spot of suspicion on the name of Delaware. The governor of the Ashborough, throughout the long passages and chilly courts of the county jail.

"We have given this man every convenience in our power," said the governor, as he led Lord Ashborough along towards the condemned cells, "because he seemed to be a person of superior mind; and he assured the sheriff so earnestly, that he had something to communicate to your lordship, which might probably influence his Majesty in regard to his fate, that it was thought indispensable to trouble your lordship on the occasion."

"Pray, has he seen Mr. Beauchamp since his condemnation?" demanded the earl.

"No, sir! nor has he expressed any wish to do so," answered the governor; "but the sheriff thought it best to consult that gentleman ere he troubled you. This is the cell, my lord. Here, Nixon, open the door. I will attend your lordship's return in the waiting-room; and the turnkey will be at the door when you wish to come out of the cell. Mr. Harding," he added, as the door was opened, "here is the Earl of Ashborough kindly come to see you. Stand away from the door, sirs," continued the governor to two of his satellites, "and leave the prisoner to speak with the earl at liberty."

The culprit rose as Lord Ashborough entered, looking somewhat annoyed, however, at the noise made by his fetters, as he did so, He was composed and calm as usual; but the hollow eye and sunken cheek, betrayed the secret of the heart within; and showed that his stoicism--as all stoicism probably ever has been--was all on the surface.

"Your lordship is very kind," he said, in a quiet tranquil tone, "to attend so promptly to my request."

"The information sent me by the sheriff," replied the earl, "made me hold it as a duty to come without loss of time. But, let me know, what have you to communicate to me?"

"I have first to make a request, my lord," answered Harding, who knew Lord Ashborough far better than Lord Ashborough knew himself, and therefore counted his expressions in regard to duty, &c., at exactly their true value. "When you have granted or denied my petition, I will tell you what I have farther to communicate."

"And pray, what may your petition be?" asked the earl. "I must not waste time in many words, sir--for it is short."

"No one should know that better than myself, my lord," replied the prisoner; "but my petition is simply, that you would personally apply to his Majesty for my pardon."

The earl was surprised; but not so much as might have been expected; for he anticipated some discovery which might give the culprit a claim to mercy. "Your request is a most extraordinary one, my good friend," he replied, "considering the evidence which has been brought against you. Nevertheless, I will do as you desire, if you will give me any excuse for doing so. In short, if you are not the real offender, and can point out who is--or if you only participated in the crime which another, more criminal than yourself, led you to, or committed with his own hand--and if you can give me any proof, or can lead in any way to the detection and punishment of the guilty, I shall feel myself justified in pleading strongly in your behalf."

"Sorry I am to say, my lord," answered Harding coolly, "that I can do none of all these things."

"Then, sir, in the name of every thing impudent," exclaimed the earl, angrily, "how come you to ask of me to plead for you to his Majesty?"

"I think I can show your lordship a strong reason for doing so," replied Harding, with a slight sneer curling his lip; "and I must then leave it to your lordship's ingenuity to discover some motive to assign to his Majesty for granting me his gracious pardon; although, let me remark, that you may well say the case is a very doubtful one; for certain I am, that not one of the twelve jurors who condemned me, did not lie down on his bed last night with a doubting heart, as to my guilt or innocence."

The earl listened with no slight degree of anger to the prisoner's cool and impudent harangue; but curiosity kept him silent, or at least taught him to conceal his contempt and indignation, till he had heard the circumstances to which the culprit alluded. "Well sir! well," he said, as Harding paused. "Pray, what are the extraordinary motives which you suppose will prove capable of inducing me to furnish his Majesty with reasons for pardoning a convicted felon? What is there, sir, that should tempt me to undertake such a task?"

"Simply, my lord, that scrupulous care for your lordship's reputation," Harding replied, "which you have displayed through life."

Lord Ashborough laughed aloud; but Harding maintained the same calm, and somewhat sneering aspect, as if he had made up his mind to every turn that his conference with the earl might take; and could not be turned aside from his direct object for a moment, by either scorn or anger.

"And pray, sir," demanded his noble visiter, when he had exhausted his scoffing laugh. "Pray, what has my reputation to do with your situation? Do you intend to accuse me, in your last dying speech and confession, of having committed the murder myself, or of having aided you to commit it?"

"Neither one nor the other, my lord," answered the prisoner; "but if I do make any confession at all, which will depend upon your lordship's conduct, I intend to state that the robbery was first suggested to me by the following letter, written to me by your lordship's lawyer on your account, in order to persuade me to delay or carry off a sum of money which my master was to receive through the hands of the old man at Ryebury."

Lord Ashborough turned deadly pale; and taking a step forward, while he advanced his hand towards the paper which Harding held, he exclaimed, "Let me see, sir--Let me see!"

"Your pardon, my lord!" said the prisoner, drawing back the paper. "One does not usually give such valuable documents out of one's own hand. I will read it to you, however;" and in a calm, sustained voice, he proceeded to treat the ears of Lord Ashborough, sentence by sentence, with the whole of that letter which had been formerly written to him by Mr. Peter Tims, in regard to the money which Beauchamp had expected from London, to pay off the annuity on Sir Sidney Delaware's estate. "Your lordship will see," continued the prisoner, "that such a letter was very well calculated to induce me to commit a robbery; you will see, also, that Mr. Tims uses your lordship as his authority throughout; and I look upon myself as extremely lucky in having always preserved this letter in the lining of my waistcoat; as it now gives me the hope that so highly respected and honourable a nobleman as yourself may interest himself in my favour."

Now, in Lord Ashborough's mind, there was a great portion of that very same principle which had led Beauchamp to make the most uncompromising declaration of his purposes towards Blanche Delaware, as soon as he found that his uncle held out a threat upon the subject. Or, as the matter would be explained in one word by the phrenologists--who, if they have discovered nothing else, have at least, by the clearness of their definitions and their classification of human passions, rendered great services to moral philosophy--Lord Ashborough had no small development of combativeness in his brain; and the very idea of being bullied by a felon into demanding the royal mercy for a murderer, without one plausible motive to allege, instantly armed him to resist, though at the same time he felt terribly the additional wound his character might receive from such a paper being published as that which Harding had read.

"You are mistaken, sir," he replied, sternly. "You are entirely mistaken in your anticipations. That letter was totally unauthorized by me; and the rascal who wrote it, for that and several similar acts, has been dismissed from my employment."

Harding heard him with the same cool smile, and then replied, "Your lordship's memory is short, I know; but luckily I can refresh it, for Mr. Tims has favoured me only last night with this authentic and original copy of the letter, containing numerous corrections and improvements in your lordship's own handwriting."

Lord Ashborough saw that the day was lost, and that his discarded agent had triumphed. He had not committed himself in regard to the Delawares, it is true; but he had committed himself hopelessly in regard to the very man who now stood before him, a convicted felon; and he felt that the reputation, of which he was proud just in proportion as he little deserved it, was gone for ever. He made no reply, however; but with a slight, and--as Harding fancied--scornful movement of the lip, he turned suddenly towards the door, struck it sharply with his hand, and exclaimed, "Open the door, turnkey! Open the door!"

It was instantly thrown wide to give him exit--but Lord Ashborough never went out! The one word, "Villain!" was all that he pronounced in the hearing of the turnkey; and he then fell forward at once, across the threshold of the door!

All was now confusion. Both jailers started forward to raise the nobleman, whom they believed to have tripped his foot in the doorway. Harding gave one longing look towards the open door and the embarrassed turnkeys; but then, turning his eyes to the fetters upon his own limbs, he sat down with a sigh of infinite compassion for himself, while the earl was raised, and the door locked.

"He has fainted, Mr. Jones?" said one of the jailers. "Here, take his feet, and help me to carry him along to the waiting-room."

"He looks deadly pale!" replied the other, stooping forward, and gazing in Lord Ashborough's face, while he aided to bear the earl onward through the passage. "He looks mighty like a dead man."

The consternation of the governor of the prison was excessive when he saw the state of the noble visiter; and, while physicians were sent for from every quarter, he himself pressed his hand upon the earl's wrist, and upon his heart; but no pulse made itself felt in return; and all the usual restoratives were applied in vain.

A moment or two after, the surgeon of the prison appeared; but, as soon as he beheld the countenance of him to whose aid he was called, he shook his head, declaring that he believed him to be dead. He attempted to bleed him, however; but by this time no blood was to be obtained, and two or three medical men from different parts of the town, arriving soon after, confirmed the opinion of the first. Nevertheless, various means were still resorted to in the hope of restoring animation, while messengers were despatched to the different inns to ascertain at which the earl had alighted, and to inform his relations and servants of what had occurred.

Henry Beauchamp was still musing over the fire when Lord Ashborough's valet opened the door, and with a face of grief and terror, extremely well compounded, exclaimed, "Sir, I am sorry to tell you that my lord has been taken very ill at the prison"----

Beauchamp started up, and took his hat, while the servant added, "Indeed, they seem to fear, sir, that he is dead!"

"Good God!" cried Beauchamp, as he rushed past the man--"Good God!" and, darting down stairs, he proceeded with rapid steps to the prison, into which, on giving his name, he was instantly admitted.

He found what had been Lord Ashborough extended on a table with a pillow under his head, and the surgeons still busy about the body; but one glance at his uncle's countenance showed him that the spirit had fled; and for a moment he gazed upon him without question or remark, while busy memory did her work, and gathered from the past every kind act of the dead, to build him up a monument in his nephew's heart.

"How did this happen, sir?" demanded Beauchamp at length, in a low tone, as if afraid of disturbing that deep sleep that had fallen upon his uncle.

The governor told all he knew, and Beauchamp anxiously requested that the prisoner, Harding, might be asked if he could assign any cause for the accident that had befallen the earl. One of the turnkeys was accordingly sent to his cell; and while he was absent, Beauchamp perceiving that the medical men were addressing all their means of restoration to the head, informed them that Lord Ashborough had been for some years subject to spasms of the heart.

"If that be the case then, sir," replied one of them, "we may abandon the attempt, as the earl is certainly dead."

"Nevertheless," replied Beauchamp, "leave no means untried, while there is even the most

remote hope."

The surgeon shook his head, but still made some more efforts; and the turnkey, returning almost immediately from the condemned cell, reported that the prisoner could only be brought to say, that the earl had fallen into a violent passion, and that he himself desired not to be farther troubled upon the subject.

After a pause of a few minutes more, the principal surgeon again addressed Beauchamp, saying, "As I imagine, sir, from your manner, that you are a near relation of the earl, I feel it my duty to tell you positively that he is no more; and that to continue all these efforts in your presence, would be but to harrow up your feelings for no purpose. All men must die, and this nobleman will never have to endure that pang again."

Beauchamp bowed his head, and, crossing his arms upon his bosom, remained for a few moments in silence. Then begging that one of the younger surgeons would remain with the body all night, and that the elder person who had addressed him would accompany him to the inn, he added a few words of course to the governor of the prison, and departed from the chamber of the dead.

CHAPTER XIII.

We generally, through life, write the actions of each of our friends and acquaintances on the two sides of one leaf in the book of memory, the good upon one side and the bad upon the other, so that it is scarcely possible to see both at once. With an amiable weakness, however, man most frequently suffers the death of any one he has known, to turn the leaf for ever, and reads the character of him that is no more, as if the good were alone recorded. Beauchamp's heart would not suffer him to do otherwise; and, after he had spoken with the surgeon in regard to several points of all the sad ceremonies that were to follow, he sat down in solitude, giving way to feelings that were far more bitter than he had anticipated. Even had he not felt his uncle's loss deeply, on the ground of personal regard, there was in his bosom another motive for regret, which would have pained him much.

He asked himself, whether the angry discussion which had taken place between himself and the earl, so shortly before the decease of the latter, might not have hastened that catastrophe; and although he was obliged to acknowledge, that--were the same circumstances to come over again--he could not, and would not act otherwise than he had done, yet he was deeply grieved that the disagreement should have taken place so immediately previous to the death of his uncle, and that they had parted from each other for ever, in anger and ill-will.

We shall pass over Beauchamp's grief, however, merely saying that he grieved sincerely. Nor shall we dwell upon the details of the funeral of the Earl of Ashborough--nor treat the reader to the full, true, and particular account of the execution of three criminals, against whom we have seen that a jury of their countrymen pronounced a just verdict, and to whom a judge had awarded a righteous punishment. Suffice it, that they died!

In regard to Harding alone, a few words must be said. To all appearance, he met his fate with the same determined coolness which he had shown through life; rendered, perhaps, a degree more stern and intense, from the awful situation in which he was placed. One circumstance, and one circumstance alone, seemed to show that the drop of better feeling, which almost every man has at the bottom of his heart, was not entirely polluted by the poisonous streams that flowed around it. On the night before his execution, after having obdurately rejected those religious consolations which were offered with persevering piety, by several zealous clergymen, he suddenly desired to speak with two magistrates; and then, in their presence, made a full and clear confession of all the particulars connected with the murder at Ryebury, confirming in every point the testimony of Walter Harrison. This he signed in the presence of the magistrates, and caused them to affix their names as witnesses; which being done, he added, "I have made this confession, gentlemen, because the act for which I am to die, has been attributed to a young gentleman who had nothing to do with it; and because--that gentleman, being well calculated to do service to himself, and his country, if every shade of imputation be removed from his character--I think the general considerations of utility require--Or rather," he said, breaking off abruptly the tirade in which he was about to indulge--"Or rather, I do it, because I have learned what mental, as well as bodily suffering is; and therefore would spare it to another, where there is no occasion for its infliction. So now, gentlemen, I have done with this world for ever, and I wish you good-night."

In the various accounts of the execution, which every one must have seen in the newspapers, a

number of contradictory statements appeared; some journals affirming that Harding had died, maintaining his innocence to the last; some, with more truth, that he had made a full confession. His statement, however, was immediately sent up to London, properly authenticated, together with the case of Walter Harrison, and both were laid before the Home Secretary, for the consideration of his Majesty. The necessary measures for issuing a free pardon to the young sailor were immediately taken; and when it was presented for signature, the great personage paused, for a moment, to ask some questions in regard to Captain Delaware, expressing considerable indignation that so grave a charge should have been brought against a distinguished officer, on such light grounds. "Had that officer not run off," he said--"a point of which it may be as well to take no notice--had he not run off, it might have been necessary to make him some compensation. But that was a great error--that was a great error, to flinch from trial--a brave man too--a very brave man!"

"Sir A---- B----, the judge who presided at the trial, sir," replied the secretary, "informs me, that it was lucky he did make his escape, alleging that he would have been hanged to a certainty, before evidence of his innocence could have been procured. So that your Majesty has, at all events, saved a good officer."

"Always a great gain, sir," replied the personage whom he addressed; "and if that was the case. Captain Delaware did very right. Always stay in the ship till the last moment; but don't go down with her, if you can help it."

With these observations the pardon was signed, and despatched to the county town where the young sailor was still confined. Being set at liberty, he immediately took his way on foot towards the village of Emberton, where so many of our scenes have been laid. It was by this time winter, and a hard frost rendered the road firm and dry, so that Walter Harrison, though greatly debilitated, walked on, better than might have been expected. Night, however, had fallen ere he reached Emberton; and glad he was that darkness hid him from the cold and abhorrent eyes he must otherwise have encountered in the streets. But what tongue could tell the many painful and thrilling memories that were awakened in his bosom by every spot, as he passed through his native town, and saw again all the scenes of youth and innocence--as he marked the various resorts of his boyish hours, and felt that a night, far darker than that through which he wandered, had fallen over his life for ever?

At the door of his mother's cottage garden he paused, and gazed wistfully over the house, with feelings that would scarcely let him enter the gate. There was a light, however, within; and his step over the gravel of the footpath had instantly caught the mother's unerring ear--the light moved--the door was thrown open--and the worn and weary lad, weighed down with sin, and sickness, and sorrow, was pressed in his mother's arms, and his cold cheek bathed in her tears!

It was long ere either could speak, and for nearly half an hour the young sailor sat gazing upon the fire, while thick recollections of all the past, held him dull and voiceless. All the time his mother stood by his side, and fixed her eyes upon him, tracing every line that remorse had written, and every hue that sickness had spread over his face; but at length she laid her hand upon his arm, and said, "Walter, my beloved boy, we must go hence. You must not stay in this hateful place, which has seen our ruin, our poverty, and our shame. We must go across the sea, and I will lead you to a place that you will like to see."

"You forget, mother! You forget!" said the youth, with a deep sigh; "People travel not without money; neither can they live without it in foreign countries more than here. I am sure you do not think that I am going to take the reward the people offered me, for giving up the murderers--No, no! I will not take a price for their blood!"

"I would not have you, Walter!" cried his mother eagerly. "I would not have you touch it with the tip of a finger, if they offered you a world of gold on such an account. But fear not, my boy, I have the means. Look here--what I received but yesterday--two hundred golden sovereigns and this kind letter; and this deed of annuity to you and me, for one hundred pounds a-year as long as either of us live, charged upon the estates of Mr. Henry Beauchamp."

"God bless him!" said the youth fervently. "God bless him!"

"God will bless him, my boy!" replied the widow. "God will bless him, and make him happy, I am sure; for if ever there was a friend to the friendless, it is Mr. Beauchamp. Only three days after the trial he sent me this;" and she put into her son's hands a letter, in which Henry Beauchamp explained to her that the young sailor, having been severely wounded in turning away a pistol which had been directed towards his head, he was not only bound but pleased to make him a return, which would place him above temptation from poverty.

Beauchamp, who hated that any one should feel he was conferring an obligation upon them, added many a reason to show that he was rather pleasing himself than loading them with benefits; and, as he read, the young sailor shook his head with the first smile that had curled his lip for many weeks. "Aye!" he said, "he is a noble gentleman as ever lived; but he need not have said so much to make us take the money, mother; for if there is any body in the world I could be proud to take it from, it is from Mr. Beauchamp; and I declare, mother, if I get over it all, I will try all my life long to do nothing but what is right--just to show him that I am grateful."

"It is far the best way that you can show it, Wat," replied his mother; "and oh, my boy, it is the only way that ever you can set your mother's heart at peace again!"

"Well, I will, mother! I will!" cried the lad grasping her hand; "and I am sure that Heaven will help me if I try--for since I have had this wound through my side, I have not felt half so wild and wilful as I used to do; and when I was in the prison of a night, I tried to pray many a time--and if it had not been for that, I don't think I should have got through the whole of that bad business steadily. So, I will try and do right; indeed I will!"

The tears streamed down his mother's cheeks; for the relief that Beauchamp's liberality had given her, was nothing to that which those words afforded, and the night passed over in peace. The next morning the news spread through Emberton that the widow's son had returned; and one or two of the ladies of that place, suddenly smitten with an interest in the widow's fate, called at the cottage they had never entered before, just to ask after her and her son. They carried no gossip back into the town with them, however; for the widow coldly, though civilly, replied that her son was not well, and dismissed them with a brief answer to more impertinent questions. Three days after that again, the fresh tidings fluttered on the air of Emberton, that Widow Harrison and her son had left the place, and had gone to France. Every one opened their eyes--every one conjectured--and then the nine day's wonder was over, and the whole affair was forgotten.

Only one person in the neighbourhood saw the young sailor after his return. This was Dr. Wilton, who, having delivered in person the packet which Beauchamp had sent to the widow, was now visited by both herself and her son ere their departure, with a request that he would convey to their benefactor the expression of their deepest gratitude. The worthy clergyman, on first hearing who it was that waited him in his library, had meditated an exhortation to the young sailor on his future conduct; but when he saw the worn and haggard look, and the evident traces of ruined health which his countenance displayed--all that was severe in the good man's oration died away, and it breathed nothing but hope and consolation.

"You say you are going to France," he added, "and I will give you two books to take with you, which, after your Bible, I should wish you to read attentively. They contain neither cant nor affectation," he added; "but they point out the best way for one who has been led astray to return unto right."

Both mother and son received the books with gratitude, and after having promised to let him know where they settled in France, they left the worthy clergyman in the act of muttering to himself, "He'll not live three months, poor unhappy lad!--There is consumption in his eyes and on his cheek!"

Scarcely were they gone; and scarcely was Dr. Wilton's comment upon the young sailor's appearance pronounced, when the rush of wheels was heard before his windows, and in a moment the servant announced Lord Ashborough. The doctor started up, bewildered; but as Beauchamp entered the room, dressed in deep mourning, the events that had lately taken place recurred to his old preceptor's mind; and shaking him by the hand, he exclaimed, "Welcome, my dear Harry, and let me pay my tribute to your new rank; though, to tell you the truth, when the servant announced the Earl of Ashborough, I scarcely knew who to expect. I had forgotten all about it, and have been calling you Mr. Beauchamp for this half hour, with two pensioners of yours--Widow Harrison and her son. But with me, I am afraid you will be Harry Beauchamp to the end of your days."

"Let me never be anything else, I beseech you, my dear sir," replied Beauchamp. "The poor widow and her son, too, know me by no other name; for the deed was drawn up before my poor uncle's death. But I must go and see them when I visit Emberton."

"You will hardly find them there," replied Dr. Wilton; "for apprehensions of the rude curiosity and brutal scorn of that most gossiping place, has driven them to seek an asylum on the continent. But tell me, Harry, what is the meaning of your looking so ill and so anxious?"

"In regard to my ill looks," answered Beauchamp, smiling, "you must remember, my dear sir, that, as I wrote to you, I have been seriously indisposed since we last met; and as to my anxious looks, I have certainly had many a subject both of care and anxiety, pressing heavily upon my mind. The sudden death of my uncle, and all the consequent trouble--both in examining his affairs, and in punishing a rascally agent, who endeavoured to throw the basest imputations upon the memory of his benefactor--have occupied more of my time and attention than was at all pleasant to me."

"I hope at least you have succeeded in doing justice upon the agent," replied Dr. Wilton; "I have seen something of the affair in the newspapers."

"I have not punished Mr. Tims quite so well as I could have wished," Beauchamp answered, "though he thinks the retribution more than severe. The fact is, I am afraid my uncle suffered him to make use of his name with too great freedom, and the lawyer has of course taken advantage of it, to screen himself at his patron's expense. Nevertheless, I compelled him to refund every thing that he had unjustly appropriated; but, although I believe we had proof sufficient of one or two direct frauds, to have had his name struck off the roll of attorneys with disgrace, and perhaps

might have punished him still farther, I have been obliged to compromise that matter, and suffer him to make his retirement from business a voluntary act."

A slight glow upon Henry Beauchamp's check, showed Dr. Wilton plainly that there had been parts in the conduct of the late Earl of Ashborough, which his nephew did not feel to have been quite justifiable; and therefore, turning the conversation from a topic which he saw was disagreeable in some of its details, he answered, "That the man was a rogue in grain, I have never had any doubt since all the business relating to the murder of his unhappy uncle, and the charge he preferred against poor William Delaware--But pray, Harry, can you tell me what has become of Sir Sidney and his family--You of course know?"

"Indeed, my dear sir, I do not," answered Beauchamp, "and one great reason of my coming down here was to ask you the very question that you have asked me. I have caused my solicitor in London to apply to the trustee of Captain and Miss Delaware, to ascertain their present residence. He replied, however, that he was as ignorant upon the subject as any one. The ten thousand pounds that they inherited from their mother, he had sold out he said at a moment's notice, and transmitted to Sir Sidney at Mrs. Darlington's, since which time he had heard nothing of their movements."

"Strange enough!" replied Dr. Wilton, "but we must make enquiries in the neighbourhood while you stay with me; and of course we shall find some one who knows their address--Some of the farmers, or Mr. Johnstone who used to collect Sir Sidney's rents, or some one."

"I am afraid it will be a more difficult matter than you anticipate," replied Beauchamp; "I sought them in vain when I was in France, though I knew that they must have landed at Cherbourg; but I found that as they had undoubtedly gone to join William Delaware himself, their route had been studiously concealed. Several weeks have now elapsed since the trial; and yet, though Captain Delaware's character stands as clear as ever it did, we have heard nothing of him."

Dr. Wilton did not now require to be told what was the chief cause of that expression of anxiety which he had remarked in Beauchamp's countenance; but he knew that to a lover, and an ardent one--which he felt sure his pupil would be wherever he did love--the subject of his hopes and fears could never become painful or tiresome when once it had been spoken of; and he therefore went on boldly to ask, whether Beauchamp had or had not discovered since, that he was right in thinking that Blanche's conduct, in rejecting his hand, had proceeded from some misapprehension.

"No indeed, my dear sir!" replied Beauchamp. "As I told you at the time, there could be no misapprehension in the business. Nor have I discovered anything since, on any subject which would lead me to think so. Indeed, I have but had the pleasure of meeting Miss Delaware once since I last saw you."

"Nay, nay! if you speak of her in such set and formal terms, poor girl," cried the clergyman with a gay smile, "I shall think that your lordship's new dignity has changed your views in regard to such an alliance. Is it so, my noble lord?"

Beauchamp laughed but faintly. "No, no!" he replied. "My views are the same. All I can hope is, that the new dignity you speak of may change hers--and yet," he added, "that would make it all worthless together."

"Take care, Harry! Take care!" cried Dr. Wilton, with a warning shake of the head. "Many a man has frittered away his happiness with just such sentences as that. But I will insure you, that your title will make no difference in the views of Blanche Delaware; so that, if you have no other recommendation than that, you may give yourself up to despair. But you young men are so impatient. Here you are fretting yourself to death, because you do not discover the residence of your ladye-love, as soon as you think fit to seek it."

"Indeed, my dear sir, you are quite mistaken," answered Beauchamp. "My chief desire is to see William Delaware and his father; and--showing them that every difficulty which surrounded them in life is now removed--to share in the happiness that such a change must occasion them--That is all, indeed!"

"Poo! my dear Harry! Nonsense!" cried his old preceptor. "I never saw a man yet, who could cheat his own understanding so completely as you sometimes do. You are just as anxious to see Blanche Delaware as ever man was to see the woman he loved best in the world. But we will find her, my dear boy! We will find her!"

Their search, however, in the neighbourhood of Emberton proved entirely in vain. Neither agent nor farmers knew anything of the track of Sir Sidney and Miss Delaware; and, at the end of a week, Beauchamp's last hope was reduced to the information possessed by Mrs. Darlington.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Maria!" said the Earl of Ashborough, addressing Miss Beauchamp on the morning after his return from Emberton, "what say you, dear sister, to a tour on the continent for six months or a year."

"Why, personally, I should have no objection, Henry," answered Miss Beauchamp; "but you forget, my dear brother, there are nine very respectable gentlemen, young and old, expiring for me at this present moment. Now, what would they do if I were to go abroad?"

"Expire for somebody else, I suppose," replied Beauchamp; "I cannot perceive any other event."

"Henry! Henry!" cried his sister, "You are perfectly insulting. But to tell you the truth, I think it is the best thing you can do to travel to the south; for during the past month you have looked so like a gambler, or a member of the Lower House, or some of those people that sit up all night, and come home pale and thin in the morning, that I am ashamed to be seen with you. But seriously, I will go where you like, noble brother," she added, leaning her two hands half affectionately half maliciously on Beauchamp's arm, and looking up in his face; "I will go where you like, and help you to search for sweet Blanche Delaware, with all my eyes."

Beauchamp smiled, much less annoyed than his sister had expected; but gliding his arm round her waist, he held her tight, while he answered, "Will you, indeed, Maria? Well, then, as a reward for your disinterested kindness, I trust you may find William Delaware with his sister."

Maria Beauchamp turned as red as an infantry regiment, and struggling away from her brother's grasp, ran into her own room; where, strange to say, she wept like a child. But Beauchamp by his retort had, at all events, insured that not one teasing word upon the subject of Blanche Delaware, should pass his sister's lips; and as soon as he could arrange his affairs--which of course kept him three weeks longer than he had expected--with two carriages, as little baggage, and as few servants as his sister would suffer him to take, he was once more rolling away towards Dover.

Following the invariable rule of looking in, instead of looking out, we shall much prefer giving a sketch of what was passing in the heart of Henry Beauchamp, Earl of Ashborough, to depicting the beauties of the Canterbury road, or expatiating on the sublimities of Rochester and Chatham.

As Dr. Wilton had imagined, Beauchamp certainly was as impatient as human being could be, to see Blanche Delaware, and to make one more effort for happiness; but there were many points in Beauchamp's situation, and many feelings at Beauchamp's heart, which the good rector had not taken at all into account. Ever since he had parted with Blanche at the Prior's Fountain, he had been placed in the painful circumstances of a rejected lover, while just a sufficient degree of hope had been left to keep love alive, to render the feeling of disappointment perpetual, and to aggravate its bitterness by doubt. In seeking her he loved, therefore, he knew not what he was to expect; but as he was not one to be satisfied with anything less than love for love, he determined that he would not suffer his exertions in favour of William Delaware to be urged as any tie upon Miss Delaware's affection; but that he would have the clearest assurance that the heart was his, before he again asked the hand, which, in his eyes, would be worthless without it. He felt, indeed, that it would be difficult to press. Blanche upon the subject of her former rejection of his suit, and yet he perversely determined that the rejection ought to be explained before the suit could be renewed. These thoughts, however, and the many contending emotions with which they were connected, both agitated and depressed him; and the hopes which his short interview with Blanche at the inn, as well as several previous considerations had excited, waxed weak and faint as he crossed the Channel, and found he was approaching nearer to her dwelling.

In Paris, however, he was destined to meet another disappointment--slight, indeed, but calculated to increase the impatience that was growing upon him. He found, on enquiring at Mrs. Darlington's hotel, that she had left the French metropolis two days before for Italy; and, as the people of the house informed him that her departure had been somewhat sudden, he immediately settled it in his own mind that she had heard some tidings of the Delawares, and had proceeded at once to join them. Now, although when Beauchamp came to reflect upon this supposition, he found that it did not very well agree with the indifferent, comfort-loving, bonnet-and-cap sort of character of Mrs. Darlington, yet it was a favourite fancy, and he did not choose to give it up. He therefore intimated his wish that his sister would agree to pursue their way towards Italy without delay; and Miss Beauchamp--although she was really fatigued with a long journey over a road that can never have been mended since the days of *Klovigh*, as Chateaubriand calls the French king--acquiesced at once without farther question. She did it so sweetly and good humouredly, too, that it opened her brother's heart at once; and, sitting down beside her, he told her all his motives, and all his wishes, and all his hopes, in a way that defied her taking advantage of him even by a smile. In return, he gained a world of good advice, which, as it came from a woman, and related to a woman, Beauchamp wisely treasured up for service. With scarcely a day's interval, the whole party were once more upon the road; but, as the way or ways from Paris to

Geneva are each and all as well beaten by English travellers as that between London and Dover, we shall not pause to itinerarize even here. At only one small town on the road shall we take the liberty of stopping, inasmuch as an accidental circumstance induced Beauchamp to stay there longer than he had at first proposed. He had chosen the road by Dijon instead of that by Macon; and, after sleeping at Dole, set out early in the morning, in hopes of reaching Geneva that night. The first stage from Dole, if we remember right, is Mont sous Vaudrey. At all events, if it be not the first it is the second; and perhaps the reader and the guide-book will excuse us if we mistake. Here, however, Beauchamp changed horses at about half-past ten, and thence rattled on through that neat little village, entered a part of the forest of Rahon, and then, after winding on up and down the wavy hills at the foot of the Jura, reached the small village of Aumont, at the distance of about five or six miles from the relay. Without stopping there, however, the postilion trotted on, and, driving through the Crozanne, paused for a moment to let his horses pant, while Beauchamp and his sister gazed out upon a wide and very beautiful scene of hill and valley, lighted up by the soft sunshine of spring, with an occasional wreath of morning mist hanging upon the brows of the mountains.

"What town is that?" demanded Beauchamp speaking out of the window to the postilion. "There--before you--a little to the left, leaning its back against the hills, with two or three neat chateaux scattered on the slope."

"C'est Poligny, Monsieur!" replied the postilion; and, adding that they changed horses there, rode on.

As they approached the little town, the country became richly cultivated in vines and corn; and the aspect of the whole scene, backed by mountains and sparkling with a thousand streams, was gay and engaging.

"What a beautiful spot!" cried Miss Beauchamp. "I really think, Henry, when you marry, and turn me out of your house to die an old maid, I will buy yon gray chateau on the hill--looking something between a village church and a farm-house--and spend the rest of my days at Poligny."

"See it first on a rainy day, Maria!" replied her brother, whose increasing anxiety and impatience did not afford the brightest medium through which to view the world.

"Out, cynic!" cried his sister. "I will never see things on a rainy day when I can see them on a fine one; and now, tell me, whither are you going to whirl me at this violent rate? What particular spot of the earth's surface is the ultimate object of this journey, my lord? Or are we to go on rolling for ever?"

"Why, I think, my dear sister," replied Beauchamp musing; "I think it is not unlikely to end in Sicily--I have some reason to imagine"----

"Goodness!" exclaimed Miss Beauchamp, interrupting him, "that must surely be an English woman in the widow's dress."

"Hai, postilion! Arrettez! Arrettez donc!" was all the young earl's reply to his sister's observation; and the next moment, much to her surprise, he was out of the carriage, and speaking kindly to the woman whom she had noticed, and who had turned round to take a casual glance of the two gay carriages that came dashing up into the little quiet town of Poligny.

"Indeed! Is he so ill!" said Beauchamp gravely, as he listened to Widow Harrison's account of the journey she had lately taken, and her son's present situation. "I am really sorry to hear it--But you cannot have good medical advice here. It would be much better to get him on to Geneva."

"Oh, but indeed we have very good advice, sir!" answered the widow. "There is good Dr. Arnoux here, who was in England in the time of the war--an emigrant--and lodged for three years in our house in Emberton before our misfortunes. I have just been getting Walter's medicines while he is asleep."

"Well, Mrs. Harrison," replied Beauchamp, whose natural kindness of heart was not to be mastered even by impatience. "I will stay here at the inn to-day; and whenever you think that your son is likely to be awake, I will come down and see him. But you must point me out the house."

The poor woman replied that the young sailor was generally more drowsy in the morning, and seemed much better and more lively in the evening; and, with many unobtrusive but heartfelt thanks, she described to Beauchamp the way to her dwelling.

"Well, then, I will come down in the evening," answered Beauchamp, "and we will see whether we cannot devise some plan that may improve his health."

With this promise, he returned to the carriage; and, while it drove on to the auberge, satisfied his sister's curiosity in regard to the poor widow. "So now, Maria," he said, "you will have the day's rest you have been sighing for so long."

"Granted out of compassion to the widow," cried his sister; "but not out of pity for me, though my whole frame has been aching for the last three days, and my maid was very nearly expiring at

Dole."

Notwithstanding this complaint. Miss Beauchamp, after luncheon, showed herself quite willing to accompany her brother on an expedition in a *char à band* of the country, amongst the neighbouring hills; and as they descended the stairs of the auberge to enter their little vehicle, they heard another female tongue asking one of the servants, in provincial English, who was the owner of the two splendid carriages that stood before the house. The young earl smiled as he listened to his title, given with vast pomposity by his courier, remarking to his sister, that if his new rank was of no great use to himself, it was at least of some service to his servants. By the time they had reached the door, however, both the enquirer and respondent had made themselves invisible; and getting into the *char à band*, without any other attendance than the driver, the earl and his sister proceeded on their expedition. Of it we shall say nothing, but refer our readers to the indispensable Mrs. Marianna Starke. On their return, however, they found their dinner prepared; and after somewhat hastily concluding that meal, Beauchamp said he would leave his sister, and walk down to the widow's cottage. But Miss Beauchamp, whose heart was not always as light as it seemed, declared that she would accompany him, protesting that men were worth nothing upon a charitable errand.

It was a sweet bright evening in the end of March, with the sky, through which the sun was dipping down towards his rest, so rich and warm, that one might have taken it for the beginning of October, had it not been for the almanack, and for the tender green of the trees, and the flood of untaught melody that came pouring from every bush. The road led down to where there are two or three scattered houses of a better class--which they call *les maisons bourgeois*--built upon the slope of a little dell at the back of the town, between it and the rise of the mountains. In one of these, with the face looking through the valley of the Glantine to the open country beyond, was the house now occupied by the widow. It was easily found, and Beauchamp and his sister paused ere they entered, to gaze for a moment on the rich view, lying calm and purple under the evening sky, while the dark masses of hill on the other hand--rising up from a base of mingled wood and pasture, with the small chateau that Miss Beauchamp had so much admired, breaking the line of the trees--towered up in solemn majesty above the whole.

The door was open, and Beauchamp entering first, proceeded into one of the rooms, where he heard some one speaking. The widow and her son were sitting together near the window, and both rose (though the latter moved with difficulty) to receive their benefactor.

"Here is my sister come to see you, Mrs. Harrison," he said as he entered. "Sit down, Walter. I am sorry to hear that the journey has made you so ill, my poor fellow;" and taking a seat opposite to him--while Miss Beauchamp beckoned Mrs. Harrison out to the door, in order to leave her brother's conversation more at liberty--he gazed upon the sunk but hectic cheek of the young sailor, and the dazzling brightness of his feverish eye.

"It was not the journey, sir," replied the young man, with a shake of the head, mournful, but not discontented. "It was not the journey;" and then looking round to see that his mother was not there, he added--"I told you, sir, it would not last long, and I thank God for it; for I have never forgiven myself; and every hour that I linger on is a reproach to my heart. So now that I know mother will be cared for, and that I have shown my gratitude to you and to the captain, God bless him--and that I have learned to think better than I used--I don't care how soon it comes to an end. But, sir," he continued quickly, as if he had forgot to do so before, "I ought to thank you deeply for all your kindness; and especially, I am sure, for taking the trouble to come and see me to-night, when there are so many things you must have to do and talk about."

The young man's eyes gazed vacantly out upon the prospect as he spoke. "He wanders!" thought Beauchamp. "I have heard physicians say, that it is the sign of approaching death with consumptive people."

"Oh no!" he added aloud. "I have but little business of any kind to do; and indeed I should have been here before; but your mother said you were sleeping."

"I sleep more in the day than at night," replied the young man; "the cough keeps me awake. But I hope, Mr. Beauchamp," he continued, in the same abrupt manner--"I hope you will forgive me every thing I ever did or said amiss to you. Indeed, I am very sorry for every wrong thing that I have done through life; and hope God will forgive me."

"Your offences towards me," answered Beauchamp, "if there have been any, which I do not know, are easily forgiven; and in the Almighty we are sure of a more merciful judge than man can be. Mrs. Harrison," he said, wishing to change the subject, and hearing the door behind him open, "I should wish much to see this Dr. Arnoux whom you mentioned to me. Where does he live?"

As Beauchamp spoke, he turned round slowly in his chair in order to address the widow; but the words had scarcely passed his lips, when he started up. Looking in at the door, indeed, was the figure of his sister, with the poor widow behind her; but between him and them were two other figures; and darting forward with all his doubts, and apprehensions, and resolutions swallowed up in joy, Beauchamp clasped the hand of Blanche Delaware in his own, while his left was pressed almost as warmly by Captain Delaware.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "Blanche! William! Is it possible?"

"Yes, yes, indeed!" replied Captain Delaware. "Beauchamp, our friend, our benefactor, our guardian angel I may call you, we have met again at length!"

Blanche Delaware said not a word; and though her eyes sparkled with joy that would not be kept down, and her cheek glowed like crimson at the joy her eyes betrayed, she trembled like an aspen in the wind, and, sinking into a seat, a few sweet happy tears rolled over her fair face.

"Well," said Miss Beauchamp, advancing from the door, "I must acknowledge that this is hardly fair that I, who drew Mrs. Harrison out of the way when I heard who was coming, in order that this merry meeting should have none of its surprise anticipated, can find no one to welcome me! Blanche Delaware, my dear cousin," she added, taking Blanche's hand, and kissing her as a sister, "how have you been this many a-day? We have not met since we were no higher than that stool; but I have learned to love you, nevertheless. Have you quite forgotten Maria Beauchamp?"

Blanche wept outright.

"What then, Mr. Beauchamp, have you not seen Sir Sidney?" asked the widow's son, almost at the same moment. "It was very kind indeed of you to come and see me first."

As he spoke, a violent fit of coughing seized him; and Beauchamp, seeing that the excitement of all that was passing around was too much for him, proposed to depart at once, telling him that he would come early the next day, after having seen the physician. Miss Beauchamp, holding Blanche's hand kindly in her own, led her towards the door of the cottage, while their two brothers followed; and perhaps there was never a congregation of happier faces went forth into the world, than those which then stood looking over fair France from the borders of Switzerland.

Maria Beauchamp turned towards the town; but Blanche hesitated, and looked up to her brother.

William Delaware caught her glance immediately; and, straightforward as ever, came at once to the point. "The truth is, Beauchamp," he said, "it might be somewhat painful for us to go up to Poligny with you; for, this morning, we learned a circumstance from our old housekeeper, which, in fact, kept us from coming down to Widow Harrison's at an earlier hour--though, indeed, I should personally care nothing about it."

"But what is it? What has happened now?" demanded Beauchamp, in the eager and apprehensive tone of one who fears that the cup of happiness just offered to his lip may be snatched away before he can drink. "What, in fortune's name, has occurred next?"

"Nothing of any consequence," answered Captain Delaware. "Only we understand--and you, who know all that has past, will comprehend our feelings on the occasion--we understand that the Earl of Ashborough is here."

"He is indeed, I am sorry to say," replied Beauchamp, pointing to the deep mourning that he wore. "But let us forget, I entreat, that any one who has ever borne the title that I now bear, felt differently from myself towards the name of Delaware."

Blanche looked up to heaven, and her lips moved; but her cheek glowed eloquently again as Maria Beauchamp's hand clasped somewhat tighter upon her own, and she saw a smile, half sad half playful, shining on her fair cousin's lip.

Still the whole party paused in silence; for there was so much to be said that there was nothing said at all. Each heart was full of feelings that would have taken days to pour forth; and at length William Delaware proposed the wisest thing for all parties, that they should part for that time, as night was coming on, and meet again the next morning.

"You know," he said, "what delight my father will have in seeing you, Beauchamp; and, indeed, I feel as if we were wronging him, in anticipating any part of all that we have to talk to you about. Yonder is our residence," he added, pointing to the identical chateau that Miss Beauchamp had fixed upon in entering the town; "and I am sure I need not say that the sooner you come the greater will be the pleasure to us."

"I shall not be late," answered Beauchamp; "depend upon it, I shall not be late."

"But, Maria, you will come also," said Blanche, looking up in her cousin's face.

"Oh, certainly! dear Blanche," replied Miss Beauchamp; "as your brother can tell you, I am a very early person in my habits. You may expect to see me at six in the morning."

Captain Delaware smiled, and could have said something in reply; but as he began to divine, that, whatever might be the result, he should have more than one opportunity of seeing Maria Beauchamp again, he reserved his rejoinder, and after another lingering pause, they parted.

"Henry, I admire your taste," said Miss Beauchamp, as they walked back to the inn; "she is a beautiful sweet girl indeed, and will do very well to make a countess of."

"Hush, hush, Maria!" said her brother. "Spare your raillery yet for a while. There is much to be got over, before we come to such conclusions as that. The game is yet to be played, and I will give you leave to laugh if I win."

"You will be a sad bungler, my dear brother, if you lose such a game as that," replied Miss Beauchamp; "for you have all the cards in your own hands; but let us arrange our plans, Harry. At whatsoever hour you please to-morrow, you take some vile beast of a horse from the inn, and ride over by yourself. I will come to breakfast at my own time in the carriage. Nay, I will have my way this time at least; for I do not choose to have any lover in the carriage with me--except it were one of my own."

Beauchamp yielded, of course; for there were more cogent arguments in his own breast, in favour of his sister's plans, than any she thought fit to produce. He had now food enough for thought during the evening; but he did not forget to send for good Dr. Arnoux, from whom he received a confirmation of his worst apprehensions in regard to the widow's son. From that worthy man, also, he learned that it was at his suggestion that Captain Delaware, and Sir Sidney--who had been an old friend of his while he lived as an *émigré* at Emberton--had fixed their abode at Poligny, the retired situation of which, and its immediate proximity to both Switzerland and Germany, rendered it peculiarly advantageous under the circumstances in which they were placed for the time.

This conference ended, Beauchamp retired to bed, and obtained such sleep as lovers usually are supposed to gain while their fate is in suspense.

CHAPTER XV.

A horse was easily procured, and early on the following morning Beauchamp was on his way to the chateau inhabited by Sir Sidney Delaware and his family. The house was, like most French houses of the kind, furnished with a court in the front, large iron gates, and a wide woody enclosure called a park, stretching up the side of the hill, full of straight alleys and mathematical walks.

At the corner of the enclosure, Beauchamp looked at his watch, and to his surprise found that it still wanted nearly half an hour of eight.

"This is very foolish of me," thought he, as he rode along the park wall. "I shall find no one up, and they will all think me mad." But at that moment, as he looked over the low wall and up one of the long alleys, he caught a view of two persons crossing the farther extremity of it; and he was instantly satisfied that there were other wakeful people in the world as well as himself. "It is Blanche and her brother," he thought; and, riding up to the court, he flung his bridle to a boy who was standing there, and without farther enquiry hastened into the park. The wood was somewhat labyrinthine; but Beauchamp had observed the direction taken by the figures he had seen, and following one of the cross alleys, he soon entered that wherein he had beheld them, and in which he found that they were still walking slowly on, about a hundred yards before him, unconscious that there was any one in the park but themselves.

As Captain Delaware was speaking eagerly and loud, Beauchamp, to avoid overhearing his conversation with his sister, hastened forward, pronouncing his name, and was almost immediately by their side. He was greeted by both with evident pleasure; but upon Blanche's cheek, though it was much paler than it had been in England, there was still that flickering blush, on which we have already written a long discussion.

After their first meeting was over, and Beauchamp had explained that his sister would be there in about an hour, of course all three, as they took a step or two slowly forward, felt themselves rather awkward. But William Delaware was fond of cutting Gordian knots; and the next moment, after a silent smile as he glanced first at his cousin and then at Blanche, he abruptly let her arm slip from his own, and, looking gaily into Beauchamp's face, he said, "Here, Henry, give Blanche your arm, while I go to tell my father that you are here."

His sister looked at him almost reproachfully, and proposed that they should all return; but Captain Delaware stayed not to listen, and the next moment she stood alone with Henry Beauchamp, with her trembling hand laid upon her lover's arm. Heaven knows what they said, for I am sure I do not; but doubtless it was something very extraordinary, for, ere they had taken two steps forward, Beauchamp woke, and detected Blanche Delaware calling him, "My lord."

"My lord!" he repeated. "My lord! Is such the cold title by which I am alone to be called? Oh,

Blanche!"

Blanche found that she had got into a scrape; and as there was but one way of getting out of it in all the world, she took it at once. She paused, and though she was ready to sink where she stood, she raised her long eyelashes, and fixed her beautiful eyes upon her cousin's face for one single moment, with a glance that was worth all the Oriental love-letters that ever were composed--imploring, tender, full of gentleness and affection. It seemed to say, "Do not--do not overpower me--I am yours, heart, and soul, and mind--but my heart is so full, another word will break it."

Beauchamp read it all at once; and pressing her hand in both of his, he asked the very intelligible question, "Is it--is it mine, dear Blanche?"

"If you still wish it, Henry," she replied. "Can I refuse anything to the saviour of my brother's character, and the generous benefactor of our whole family?"

The spirit of perversity seized upon Beauchamp again in a moment; and he was not satisfied. "Nay, Blanche! Nay!" he said. "I must win a dearer assurance than that. I will not owe to gratitude--little as I have deserved it--what I would fain owe to love. No, no--I must have a dearer assurance, or I shall think that the same Blanche Delaware who accepts Henry Beauchamp in France, would again refuse Henry Burrel if--unbacked by some pitiful service--he again stood by the Prior's Fountain."

Beauchamp's exacting mood gave Blanche the advantage; and, by amusing her fancy even for a single instant, got the better of a part of her agitation. She smiled, and was half inclined to triumph, for she felt that she could if she liked; but love was the more powerful motive, and she only misused her advantage by that one playful smile, and a few words like it. "I no more refused him then," she replied, "because he was Henry Burrel, than I now accept him because he is Earl of Ashborough. Do you believe me, Henry?" she asked, after a pause.

"I do, indeed, dear Blanche," replied Beauchamp. "But you are smiling at me still; and indeed, indeed--if you could tell all the agony, and long, long days of misery which that rejection caused me, I am sure you would pity the feelings that your words produced."

"I did from the first, Henry--I did from the first!" replied Blanche, earnestly; "but you must believe me, Henry, when I tell you, that I suffered double what you did. Yes, yes!" she added, seeing him shake his head. "Yes, yes, I did, for I was crushing my own heart at the very time I was *obliged* to crush that of him--of him--Oh, Henry, you do not know what I felt!"

"Obliged!" cried Beauchamp, catching at the word. "Obliged! Did Sir Sidney then object?"

"Oh, no!" answered Blanche. "Nor would have objected. But it shall all be explained, Henry, if you can forgive me, and love me still, notwithstanding all the pain I have made you suffer."

"I have loved you ever, Blanche, with the most unabated affection," replied Beauchamp. "Nay, more, what between affection and what between vanity, I had fancied that there must be some latent cause for conduct that seemed inexplicable. I had endeavoured for some time so to frame my every word and action towards you, that you could not mistake them; and it was only because you permitted those attentions--because they did not seem to displease you"--(Blanche blushed deeply)--"because, in short, you did not repel them, that I dared to hope. I would not, I could not, believe that such a heart and such a mind as that of Blanche Delaware, would suffer me to go on so long unchecked, if she felt that the affection she must have seen, could not be returned."

"Indeed, indeed, I would not!" replied Blanche. "I do not pretend not to have seen what were your feelings towards me--and there is no use now of concealing what were my own," and, for a moment, her eyes again sought the ground. "The fact was, however," she added smiling, "that what happened afterwards was not because you were Mr. Burrel; but because I discovered you were Mr. Beauchamp."

"And was that name then so hateful to you?" asked her lover.

"No, no!" answered Blanche--"but I see I may as well tell you at once; for you will not cease to question me till I do. Do you remember the last day you ever came up to the park? Well, just after your arrival the post came in, and amongst other things were two letters to me--one from Mrs. Darlington--and another which made me run to my own room as soon as I had opened it. It was from your uncle, the late Lord Ashborough. I scarcely like to think of it even now. It told me who you really were, and in terms--oh, so bitter I--hinted that I must know it already, and must be using that knowledge for evil purposes. It then went on to state, that, however determined you might be in the foolish line of conduct you were pursuing, your relations would never forgive our union; and that if it took place, he, Lord Ashborough, would not only disown you as his relation, but would leave every acre of land which he could alienate, to the most distant relation he had, sooner than to you. The whole was wound up with the same denunciation against you, in case I ever revealed to you the fact of my having received that letter; and it ended with telling me, that now, knowing these facts, I might still *strive to force myself into your family if I would*---But I will show you the letter, Henry, and you shall judge for yourself whether I could do otherwise."

"He might indeed have alienated a large part of his property," replied Beauchamp; "but there

was still more than enough left. And did you think, Blanche, from what you knew of me even then, that I would not have preferred a cottage with you, to ten times the amount he could have taken away without you?"

"Henry Beauchamp in a cottage!" said Blanche smiling. "I am afraid that would have suited Blanche Delaware better. But remember, Henry, that I knew not what he could take from you; and, even if I had known, should I have had any right to accept--to permit such a sacrifice. Oh, no! and if it had broken my heart, I must have acted as I did act. But now, Henry, let us return home--we have walked on long, and papa will certainly think it strange that I have been thus left alone with you at all."

"He shall soon have a good reason, dear Blanche," replied her lover; "and I trust that we shall never--never part again."

Beauchamp found Sir Sidney Delaware more shaken by all he had undergone than he had anticipated; but the baronet's delight at seeing his young cousin, he declared, took twenty years from the load of age. "Your father, my dear Harry," he said, "was my school and college companion, and the constant friend of my heart. I thought, when first I saw you at Emberton, that your face, and voice, and manner, were all as familiar to me as household words. But why, Harry--why did you not tell me your real name--especially when you came plotting such a service as you afterwards rendered me?"

"Because, my dear sir," replied Beauchamp, "when I wrote to you, a few years before, you showed no disposition to receive me in my real character."

"That was because you refused my first invitation, just after your father's death," answered Sir Sidney.

"I never received it," replied the earl; "I never received it, upon my honour--but I am afraid, my dear sir, that there has been more than one juggle in the business, which we had better perhaps consign to oblivion altogether: and now, let me take advantage of your daughter's absence to make one request. You now know me, Sir Sidney--my principles, my mind, my heart, and my situation--can you trust Blanche's happiness to my care?--Will you give me her hand?"

Sir Sidney Delaware started up, "I have been blind to the last!" he cried. "I have been blind to the last! But think, Henry! remember what you are about! Take back your request; and, ere you make it again, call to mind your rank and prospects; and judge whether interest, or ambition, or the world's smile, may never hereafter induce you to regret that you have married a portionless girl, because she had a fair face and a gentle heart."

"Never! Sir Sidney," replied the earl. "It requires no thought. Interest, and ambition, and the world's smile, have never had any effect upon me yet, and never shall have while my faculties remain."

"Well, well," replied Sir Sidney, "I have not forgot that you do not 'worship any man for the money in his purse, nor bow low to the bottle of Lafitte upon his sideboard.' So, if your mind be really made up, you must ask Blanche herself; but by William's smiling, I fancy you have settled that matter between you already--If so, God's blessing and mine upon you both; and you shall have my consent on one sole condition, which is, that you will explain to me, clearly and distinctly, all the particulars of this business from beginning to end--for I confess I sometimes begin to think that my intellect is impaired, because I cannot get it clearly stated in my own head.--But stay, here are a number of questions which I have written down in pencil on the broad margin of my Seneca, intending to ask William. Will you undergo the catechism instead."

"Willingly!" answered Beauchamp; "and as I see Marla's carriage coming slowly up the hill from the town, we shall just have time, I dare say, to get through your questions, before she breaks in upon us with her gay pertness."

"She shall be most welcome," said Sir Sidney; and then, with spectacles on nose, and book in hand, he proceeded to read the interrogatories with which he had charged the margin of his Seneca, and thus Beauchamp was called upon to explain a great deal that the worthy reader, who has walked hand in hand along with him through the book, already understands full well.

"And now then, tell me," continued Sir Sidney, after he had despatched a great number of his questions; "how did you contrive to place the money so cleverly in William's room at Emberton, without any one seeing you?"

"The fact is, my dear sir," answered Beauchamp, "that I knew the house and all its passages, as well if not better than any of you. You must remember that a great part of my boyhood was spent there, and a thousand times, under my incognito name of Burrel, I had nearly betrayed my acquaintance with every room in the building. I had seen, in walking round the house, that the door of the well-vault, as it used to be called, was always open; and when I wanted to place the money in your son's room without being seen, I resolved to try the little staircase, up and down which I had often played at hide-and-seek. I thus made my way to the trapdoor, when, to my surprise and mortification, I found it nailed. As, however, it shook under my hand when I tried it, I resolved to make a strong effort to push it open, in which I succeeded, the nail either breaking or coming out, I did not stay to examine which. My hand, however, was torn in doing so; and

unfortunately a drop of blood fell upon one of the notes, as I folded them up in a sheet of paper I found upon the table. The packet I directed as well as I could by the moonlight, and I then put down the money and went away as fast as I could."

"That just brings me to my last question," said Sir Sidney, "and here is your sister driving into the court; so tell me why it was you did not rather give the money into my hands, or William's, or Blanche's, or any one's, rather than risk it in such a situation?"

Beauchamp laughed, and turning towards Miss Delaware, who was just then re-entering the room, he replied, "Really, Sir Sidney, I must refuse to plead--You must ask Blanche."

"Well then, you tell me, my love," continued the baronet, turning to his daughter, "What could your cousin's reason be, for putting the money, that has caused us so much anxiety, into William's room that night, rather than giving it to me or you, as it seems he knew that William was out?"

Beauchamp and Captain Delaware both smiled, and Blanche blushed deeply, but was silent.

"So, so!" said Sir Sidney. "Is it so?--Well, well, I stop my questions there--William, run out and welcome your fair cousin! Blanche, give me your hand--There, Henry, take her; and may she ever be to you as dear, as gentle, as good, and as beloved a wife, as her mother was to me."

There was but little more now to be explained; though Sir Sidney, in reward for the young earl's patience under cross-examination, took great pains to make him understand how his son, William, had found means, through their poor pensioner, Widow Harrison herself, to communicate to the family his safe arrival in France, and a plan for their meeting, which had been immediately adopted--how they had skilfully contrived, to conceal their route--and how their good old friend Arnoux, had prevailed upon them to pause at Poligny, instead of going on to Sicily, as they had at first intended.

From Widow Harrison, too, to whose faith and gratitude they could trust, and to whom alone their place of residence had been communicated, they had learned by letter many of Beauchamp's efforts in their favour, as well as their success and the ultimate result of the trial; but still, although they had heard so much, there was yet matter enough left to be told on both sides, to furnish forth many a story for the bright fireside.

Nothing more remains for the writer, to whom their own lips kindly furnished the materials for composing this book, than to add that a very few months afterwards, at the chapel of the British Ambassador at Paris, Henry Earl of Ashborough was married to Blanche, only daughter of Sir Sidney Delaware; and that the body of poor Walter Harrison sleeps by the side of the Lake of Geneva.

Nevertheless, it behoves us to record one serious dispute which took place between the young Earl of Ashborough and Sir Sidney Delaware, which was occasioned by the baronet insisting that his noble son-in-law, should take a mortgage upon the Emberton estate for the amount of the twenty-five thousand pounds, advanced by him to pay off the former annuity.

On the other hand, however, it appeared that the late earl had been, at the moment of his death, in the prosecution of a suit to prove that the annuity, had not been legally paid off. It was true, also, that Beauchamp had received the five-and-twenty thousand pounds back again from Mr. Tims, and that the annuity had been paid up to the very last day of the late earl's life. Beauchamp, therefore, contended that he had no right whatever to demand or accept any mortgage, as the money had returned to his own possession, and the annuity must be considered to have lapsed with the life of his uncle.

Sir Sidney would not see it in this point of view, and a great deal of good-humoured special pleading went on upon the subject between him and the earl. How it would all have ended, Heaven only knows, had not Maria Beauchamp, who had got safely over the critical epoch of her brother's marriage, and even held out for four months after, while he brought his fair bride to England, and made her look into an English court, for one moment--which was quite enough for both of them--had she not, I say, at the end of that time, broken the hearts of her nine London admirers, young and old, by giving her hand to William Delaware. She protested, indeed, that she only did it for convenience, as her brother and Blanche, with Sir Sidney, his son, and herself, were about to take a long rambling tour over one quarter of the world, and she could not, of course, go so many thousand miles with a young single man, without giving employment to the tongues of her acquaintances.

However that might be, to end the dispute about the twenty-five thousand pounds, the earl insisted upon adding it to his sister's fortune, which was already sufficient to clear off every incumbrance, and leave the family of Delaware more prosperous than it had been for nearly a century before.

We could go on a long time, and write another volume upon Blanche's happy looks, and tell how Beauchamp, contented in his love, weaned himself from many of his perversities and caprices, without losing the brighter and the nobler qualities of his character. Nor would adventures be wanting, nor the same light and idle nothings of which this book is already principally composed; but, unfortunately, having called the Work "THE RUINED FAMILY," we find ourselves bound to close it here, now that we can no longer apply that term to the house of

END OF VOLUME THIRD.

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