ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT? — VOLUME 03

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton
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BOOK III

CHAPTER I

> Certes, the lizard is a shy and timorous creature. He runs into chinks and crannies if you come too near to him, and sheds his very tail for fear, if you catch it by the tip. He has not his being in good society: no one cages him, no one pets. He is an idle vagrant. But when he steals through the green herbage, and basks unmolested in the sun, he crowds perhaps as much enjoyment into one summer hour as a parrot, however pampered and erudite, spreads over a whole drawing-room life spent in saying "How dye do" and "Pretty Poll."

ON that dull and sombre summer morning in which the grandfather and grandchild departed from the friendly roof of Mr. Merle, very dull and very sombre were the thoughts of little Sophy. She walked slowly behind the gray cripple, who had need

to lean so heavily on his staff, and her eye had not even a smile for the golden buttercups that glittered on dewy meads alongside the barren road.

Thus had they proceeded apart and silent till they had passed the second milestone. There, Waife, rousing from his own reveries, which were perhaps yet more dreary than those of the dejected child, halted abruptly, passed his hand once or twice rapidly over his forehead, and, turning round to Sophy, looked into her face with great kindness as she came slowly to his side.

"You are sad, little one?" said he.

"Very sad, Grandy."

"And displeased with me? Yes, displeased that I have taken you suddenly away from the pretty young gentleman, who was so kind to you, without encouraging the chance that you were to meet with him again."

"It was not like you, Grandy," answered Sophy; and her underlip slightly pouted, while the big tears swelled to her eye.

"True," said the vagabond; "anything resembling commonsense is not like me. But don't you think that I did what I felt was best for you? Must I not have some good cause for it, whenever I have the heart deliberately to vex you?"

Sophy took his hand and pressed it, but she could not trust herself to speak, for she felt that at such effort she would have burst out into hearty crying. Then Waife proceeded to utter many of those wise sayings, old as the hills, and as high above our sorrows as hills are from the valley in which we walk. He said

how foolish it was to unsettle the mind by preposterous fancies and impossible hopes. The pretty young gentleman could never be anything to her, nor she to the pretty young gentleman. It might be very well for the pretty young gentleman to promise to correspond with her, but as soon as he returned to his friends he would have other things to think of, and she would soon be forgotten; while she, on the contrary, would be thinking of him, and the Thames and the butterflies, and find hard life still more irksome. Of all this, and much more, in the general way of consolers who set out on the principle that grief is a matter of logic, did Gentleman Waife deliver himself with a vigour of ratiocination which admitted of no reply, and conveyed not a particle of comfort. And feeling this, that great actor—not that he was acting then-suddenly stopped, clasped the child in his arms, and murmured in broken accents,—"But if I see you thus cast down, I shall have no strength left to hobble on through the world; and the sooner I lie down, and the dust is shovelled over me, why, the better for you; for it seems that Heaven sends you friends, and I tear you from them."

And then Sophy fairly gave way to her sobs: she twined her little arms round the old man's neck convulsively, kissed his rough face with imploring pathetic fondness, and forced out through her tears, "Don't talk so! I've been ungrateful and wicked. I don't care for any one but my own dear, dear Grandy."

After this little scene, they both composed themselves, and felt much lighter of heart. They pursued their journey, no

longer apart, but side by side, and the old man leaning, though very lightly, on the child's arm. But there was no immediate reaction from gloom to gayety. Waife began talking in softened undertones, and vaguely, of his own past afflictions; and partial as was the reference, how vast did the old man's sorrows seem beside the child's regrets; and yet he commented on them as if rather in pitying her state than grieving for his own.

"Ah, at your age, my darling, I had not your troubles and hardships. I had not to trudge these dusty roads on foot with a broken-down good-for- nothing scatterling; I trod rich carpets, and slept under silken curtains. I took the air in gay carriages,—I such a scapegrace; and you, little child, you so good! All gone, all melted away from me, and not able now to be sure that you will have a crust of bread this day week."

"Oh, yes! I shall have bread, and you too, Grandy," cried Sophy, with cheerful voice. "It was you who taught me to pray to God, and said that in all your troubles God had been good to you: and He has been so good to me since I prayed to Him; for I have no dreadful Mrs. Crane to beat me now, and say things more hard to bear than beating; and you have taken me to yourself. How I prayed for that! And I take care of you too, Grandy,—don't I? I prayed for that too; and as to carriages," added Sophy, with superb air, "I don't care if I am never in a carriage as long as I live; and you know I have been in a van, which is bigger than a carriage, and I didn't like that at all. But how came people to behave so ill to you, Grandy?"

"I never said people behaved ill to me, Sophy."

"Did not they take away the carpets and silk curtains, and all the fine things you had as a little boy?"

"I don't know," replied Waife, with a puzzled look, "that people actually took them away; but they melted away.

"However, I had much still to be thankful for: I was so strong, and had such high spirits, Sophy, and found people not behaving ill to me,—quite the contrary, so kind. I found no Crane (she monster) as you did, my little angel. Such prospects before me, if I had walked straight towards them! But I followed my own fancy, which led me zigzag; and now that I would stray back into the high road, you see before you a man whom a Justice of the Peace could send to the treadmill for presuming to live without a livelihood."

SOPHY.—"Not without a livelihood!—the what did you call it?— independent income,—that is, the Three Pounds, Grandy?"

WAIFE (admiringly).—"Sensible child. That is true. Yes, Heaven is very good to me still. Ah! what signifies fortune? How happy I was with my dear Lizzy, and yet no two persons could live more from hand to mouth."

SOPHY (rather jealously).—"tizzy?"

WAIFE (with moistened eyes, and looking down).—"My wife. She was only spared to me two years: such sunny years! And how grateful I ought to be that she did not live longer. She was saved—such—such—such shame and misery!" A long pause.

Waife resumed, with a rush from memory, as if plucking

himself from the claws of a harpy,—"What's the good of looking back? A man's gone self is a dead thing. It is not I—now tramping this road, with you to lean upon—whom I see, when I would turn to look behind on that which I once was: it is another being, defunct and buried; and when I say to myself, 'that being did so and so,' it is like reading an epitaph on a tombstone. So, at last, solitary and hopeless, I came back to my own land; and I found you,—a blessing greater than I had ever dared to count on. And how was I to maintain you, and take you from that long-nosed alligator called Crane, and put you in womanly gentle hands; for I never thought then of subjecting you to all you have since undergone with me,—I who did not know one useful thing in life by which a man can turn a penny. And then, as I was all alone in a village ale-house, on my way back from- it does not signify from what, or from whence, but I was disappointed and despairing, Providence mercifully threw in my way—Mr. Rugge, and ordained me to be of great service to that ruffian, and that ruffian of great use to me."

Sorfiy.—"Ah, how was that?"

WAIFE.—"It was fair time in the village wherein I stopped, and Rugge's principal actor was taken off by delirium tremens, which is Latin for a disease common to men who eat little and drink much. Rugge came into the alehouse bemoaning his loss. A bright thought struck me. Once in my day I had been used to acting. I offered to try my chance on Mr. Rugge's stage: he caught at me, I at him. I succeeded: we came to terms, and my little

Sophy was thus taken from that ringleted crocodile, and placed with Christian females who wore caps and read their Bible. Is not Heaven good to us, Sophy; and to me too—me, such a scamp?"

"And you did all that,—suffered all that for my sake?"

"Suffered, but I liked it. And, besides, I must have done something; and there were reasons—in short, I was quite happy; no, not actually happy, but comfortable and merry. Providence gives thick hides to animals that must exist in cold climates; and to the man whom it reserves for sorrow, Providence gives a coarse, jovial temper. Then, when by a mercy I was saved from what I most disliked and dreaded, and never would have thought of but that I fancied it might be a help to you,—I mean the London stage,—and had that bad accident on the railway, how did it end? Oh! in saving you" (and Waife closed his eyes and shuddered), "in saving your destiny from what might be much worse for you, body and soul, than the worst that has happened to you with me. And so we have been thrown together; and so you have supported me; and so, when we could exist without Mr. Rugge, Providence got rid of him for us. And so we are now walking along the high road; and through yonder trees you can catch a peep of the roof under which we are about to rest for a while; and there you will learn what I have done with the Three Pounds!"

"It is not the Spotted Boy, Grandy?"

"No," said Waife, sighing; "the Spotted Boy is a handsome income; but let us only trust in Providence, and I should not

wonder if our new acquisition proved a monstrous—"

"Monstrous!"

"Piece of good fortune."

CHAPTER II

The investment revealed.

Gentleman Waife passed through a turnstile, down a narrow lane, and reached a solitary cottage. He knocked at the door; an old peasant woman opened it, and dropped him a civil courtesy. "Indeed, sir, I am glad you are come. I 'se most afeared he be dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Waife. "Oh, Sophy, if he should be dead!"

"Who?"

Waife did not heed the question. "What makes you think him dead?" said he, fumbling in his pockets, from which he at last produced a key. "You have not been disobeying my strict orders, and tampering with the door?"

"Lor' love ye, no, sir. But he made such a noise at fust—awful! And now he's as still as a corpse. And I did peep through the keyhole, and he was stretched stark."

"Hunger, perhaps," said the Comedian; "'t is his way when he has been kept fasting much over his usual hours. Follow me, Sophy." He put aside the woman, entered the sanded kitchen, ascended a stair that led from it; and Sophy following, stopped at a door and listened: not a sound. Timidly he unlocked the portals and crept in, when, suddenly such a rush,—such a spring, and a mass of something vehement yet soft, dingy yet whitish, whirled

past the actor, and came pounce against Sophy, who therewith uttered a shriek. "Stop him, stop him, for heaven's sake," cried Waife. "Shut the door below,—seize him." Downstairs, however, went the mass, and downstairs after it hobbled Waife, returning in a few moments with the recaptured and mysterious fugitive. "There," he cried triumphantly to Sophy, who, standing against the wall with her face buried in her frock, long refused to look up,—"there,—tame as a lamb, and knows me. See!" he seated himself on the floor, and Sophy, hesitatingly opening her eyes, beheld gravely gazing at her from under a profusion of shaggy locks an enormous—

CHAPTER III

Denoumente!
POODLE!

CHAPTER IV

Zoology in connection with history.

"Walk to that young lady, sir,—walk, I say." The poodle slowly rose on his hind legs, and, with an aspect inexpressibly solemn, advanced towards Sophy, who hastily receded into the room in which the creature had been confined.

"Make a bow—no—a bow, sir; that is right: you can shake hands another time. Run down, Sophy, and ask for his dinner."

"Yes; that I will;" and Sophy flew down the stairs.

The dog, still on his hind legs, stood in the centre of the floor dignified, but evidently expectant.

"That will do; lie down and die. Die this moment, sir." The dog stretched himself out, closed his eyes, and to all appearance gave up the ghost. "A most splendid investment," said Waife, with enthusiasm; "and upon the whole, clog cheap. Ho! you are not to bring up his dinner; it is not you who are to make friends with the dog; it is my little girl; send her up; Sophy, Sophy!"

"She be fritted, sir," said the woman, holding a plate of canine comestibles; "but lauk, sir, bent he really dead?"

"Sophy, Sophy"

"Please let me stay here, Grandy," said Sophy's voice from the foot of the stairs.

"Nonsense! it is sixteen hours since he has had a morsel to

eat. And he will never bite the hand that feeds him now. Come up, I say."

Sophy slowly reascended, and Waife summoning the poodle to life, insisted upon the child's feeding him. And indeed, when that act of charity was performed, the dog evinced his gratitude by a series of unsophisticated bounds and waggings of the tail, which gradually removed Sophy's apprehensions, and laid the foundation for that intimate friendship which is the natural relation between child and dog.

"And how did you come by him?" asked Sophy; "and is this really the—the INVESTMENT?"

"Shut the door carefully, but see first that the woman is not listening. Lie down, sir, there, at the feet of the young lady. Good dog! How did I come by him? I will tell you. The first day we arrived at the village which we have just left I went into the tobacconist's. While I was buying my ounce of canaster that dog entered the shop. In his mouth was a sixpence wrapped in paper. He lifted himself on his hind legs, and laid his missive on the counter. The shopwoman—you know her, Mrs. Traill—unfolded the paper and read the order. 'Clever dog that, sir,' said she. 'To fetch and carry?' said I, indifferently. 'More than that, sir; you shall see. The order is for two penn'orth of snuff. The dog knows he is to take back fourpence. I will give him a penny short.' So she took the sixpence and gave the dog threepence out of it. The dog shook his head and looked gravely into her face. 'That's all you'll get,' said she. The dog shook his head again, and tapped his

paw once on the counter, as much as to say, 'I'm not to be done: a penny more, if you please.' 'If you'll not take that, you shall have nothing,' said Mrs. Traill, and she took back the threepence."

"Dear! and what did the dog do then,—snarl or bite?" "Not so; he knew he was in his rights, and did not lower himself by showing bad temper. The dog looked quietly round, saw a basket which contained two or three pounds of candles lying in a corner for the shop boy to take to some customer; took up the basket in his mouth, and turned tail, as much as to say, 'Tit for tat then.' He understood, you see, what is called 'the law of reprisals.' 'Come back this moment,' cried Mrs. Traill. The dog walked out of the shop; then she ran after him, and counted the fourpence before him, on which he dropped the basket, picked up the right change, and went off demurely. 'To whom does that poodle belong?' said I. 'To a poor drunken man,' said Mrs. Traill; 'I wish it was in better hands.' 'So do I, ma'am,' answered I; 'did he teach it?' 'No, it was taught by his brother, who was an old soldier, and died in his house two weeks ago. It knows a great many tricks, and is quite young. It might make a fortune as a show, sir.' So I was thinking. I inquired the owner's address, called on him, and found him disposed to sell the dog. But he asked L3, a sum that seemed out of the question then. Still I kept the dog in my eye; called every day to make friends with it, and ascertain its capacities. And at last, thanks to you, Sophy, I bought the dog; and what is more, as soon as I had two golden sovereigns to show, I got him for that sum, and we have still L1. left (besides small savings from

our lost salaries) to go to the completion of his education, and the advertisement of his merits. I kept this a secret from Merle,—from all. I would not even let the drunken owner know where I took the dog to yesterday. I brought him here, where, I learned in the village, there were two rooms to let, locked him up, and my story is told."

"But why keep it such a secret?"

"Because I don't want Rugge to trace us. He might do one a mischief; because I have a grand project of genteel position and high prices for the exhibition of that dog. And why should it be known where we come from, or what we were? And because, if the owner knew where to find the dog, he might decoy it back from us. Luckily he had not made the dog so fond of him but what, unless it be decoyed, it will accustom itself to us. And now I propose that we should stay a week or so here, and devote ourselves exclusively to developing the native powers of this gifted creature. Get out the dominos."

"What is his name?"

"Ha! that is the first consideration. What shall be his name?"

"Has he not one already?"

"Yes,—trivial and unattractive,—Mop! In private life it might pass.

But in public life—give a dog a bad name and hang him. Mop, indeed!"

Therewith Mop, considering himself appealed to, rose and stretched himself.

"Right," said Gentleman Waife; "stretch yourself—you decidedly require it."

CHAPTER V

Mop becomes a personage.—Much thought is bestowed on the verbal dignities, without which a personage would become a mop.—The importance of names is apparent in all history.—If Augustus had called himself king, Rome would have risen against him as a Tarquin; so he remained a simple equestrian, and modestly called himself Imperator. —Mop chooses his own title in a most mysterious manner, and ceases to be Mop.

"The first noticeable defect in your name of Mop," said Gentleman Waife, "is, as you yourself denote, the want of elongation. Monosyllables are not imposing, and in striking compositions their meaning is elevated by periphrasis; that is to say, Sophy, that what before was a short truth, an elegant author elaborates into a long stretch."

"Certainly," said Sophy, thoughtfully; "I don't think the name of Mop would draw! Still he is very like a mop."

"For that reason the name degrades him the more, and lowers him from an intellectual phenomenon to a physical attribute, which is vulgar. I hope that that dog will enable us to rise in the scale of being. For whereas we in acting could only command a threepenny audience—reserved seats a shilling—he may aspire to half-crowns and dress-boxes; that is, if we can hit on a name which inspires respect. Now, although the dog is big, it is not

by his size that he is to become famous, or we might call him Hercules or Goliath; neither is it by his beauty, or Adonis would not be unsuitable. It is by his superior sagacity and wisdom. And there I am puzzled to find his prototype amongst mortals; for, perhaps, it may be my ignorance of history—"

"You ignorant, indeed, Grandfather!"

"But considering the innumerable millions who have lived on the earth, it is astonishing how few I can call to mind who have left behind them a proverbial renown for wisdom. There is, indeed, Solomon, but he fell off at the last; and as he belongs to sacred history, we must not take a liberty with his name. Who is there very, very wise, besides Solomon? Think, Sophy,—Profane History."

Sophy (after a musing pause).—"Puss in Boots."

"Well, he was wise; but then he was not human; he was a cat. Ha!

Socrates. Shall we call him Socrates, Socrates, Socrates?"

SOPHY.—"Socrates, Socrates!" Mop yawned.

WAIFE.—"He don't take to Socrates,—prosy!"

SOPHY.—"Ah, Mr. Merle's book about the Brazen Head, Friar Bacon! He must have been very wise."

WAIFE.—"Not bad; mysterious, but not recondite; historical, yet familiar. What does Mop say to it? Friar, Friar, Friar Bacon, sir, —Friar!"

SOPHY (coaxingly).—"Friar!"

Mop, evidently conceiving that appeal is made to some other

personage, canine or human, not present, rouses up, walks to the door, smells at the chink, returns, shakes his head, and rests on his haunches, eying his two friends superciliously.

SOPHY.—"He does not take to that name."

WAIFE.—"He has his reasons for it; and indeed there are many worthy persons who disapprove of anything that savours of magical practices. Mop intimates that on entering public life one should beware of offending the respectable prejudices of a class."

Mr. Waife then, once more resorting to the recesses of scholastic memory, plucked therefrom, somewhat by the head and shoulders, sundry names reverenced in a by-gone age. He thought of the seven wise men of Greece, but could only recall the nomenclature of two out of the—even,—a sad proof of the distinction between collegiate fame and popular renown. He called Thales; he called Bion. Mop made no response. "Wonderful intelligence!" said Waife; "he knows that Thales and Bion would not draw!—obsolete."

Mop was equally mute to Aristotle. He pricked up his cars at Plato, perhaps because the sound was not wholly dissimilar from that of Ponto, —a name of which he might have had vague reminiscences. The Romans not having cultivated an original philosophy, though they contrived to produce great men without it, Waife passed by that perished people. He crossed to China, and tried Confucius. Mop had evidently never heard of him.

"I am at the end of my list, so far as the wise men are concerned," said Waife, wiping his forehead. "If Mop were to

distinguish himself by valour, one would find heroes by the dozen,—Achilles, and Hector, and Julius Caesar, and Pompey, and Bonaparte, and Alexander the Great, and the Duke of Marlborough. Or, if he wrote poetry, we could fit him to a hair. But wise men certainly are scarce, and when one has hit on a wise man's name it is so little known to the vulgar that it would carry no more weight with it than Spot or Toby. But necessarily some name the dog must have, and take to sympathetically."

Sophy meanwhile had extracted the dominos from Waife's bundle, and with the dominos an alphabet and a multiplication-table in printed capitals. As the Comedian's one eye rested upon the last, he exclaimed, "But after all, Mop's great strength will probably be in arithmetic, and the science of numbers is the root of all wisdom. Besides, every man, high and low, wants to make a fortune, and associations connected with addition and multiplication are always pleasing. Who, then, is the sage at computation most universally known? Unquestionably Cocker! He must take to that, Cocker, Cocker" (commandingly),—"C-o-c-k-e-r" (with persuasive sweetness).

Mop looked puzzled; he put his head first on one side, then on the other.

SOPHY (with mellifluous endearment).—"Cocker, good Cocker; Cocker dear!"

BOTH.—"Cocker, Cocker, Cocker!"

Excited and bewildered, Mop put up his head, and gave vent to his perplexities in a long and lugubrious howl, to which certainly

none who heard it could have desired addition or multiplication.

"Stop this instant, sir,—stop; I shoot you! You are dead,—down!" Waife adjusted his staff to his shoulder gun-wise; and at the word of command, "Down," Mop was on his side, stiff and lifeless. "Still," said Waife, "a name connected with profound calculation would be the most appropriate; for instance, Sir Isaac —"

Before the. Comedian could get out the word Newton, Mop had sprung to his four feet, and, with wagging tail and wriggling back, evinced a sense of beatified recognition.

"Astounding!" said Waife, rather awed. "Can it be the name? Impossible. Sir Isaac, Sir Isaac!"

"Bow-wow!" answered Mop, joyously.

"If there be any truth in the doctrine of metempsychosis," faltered Gentleman Waife, "if the great Newton could have transmigrated into that incomparable animal! Newton, Newton!" To that name Mop made no obeisance, but, evidently still restless, walked round the room, smelling at every corner, and turning to look back with inquisitive earnestness at his new master.

"He does not seem to catch at the name of Newton," said Waife, trying it thrice again, and vainly, "and yet he seems extremely well versed in the principle of gravity. Sir Isaac!" The dog bounded towards him, put his paws on his shoulder, and licked his face. "Just cut out those figures carefully, my dear, and see if we can get him to tell us how much twice ten are—I mean

by addressing him as Sir Isaac."

Sophy cut the figures from the multiplication table, and arranged them, at Waife's instruction, in a circle on the floor. "Now, Sir Isaac." Mop lifted a paw, and walked deliberately round the letters. "Now, Sir Isaac, how much are ten times two?" Mop deliberately made his survey and calculation, and, pausing at twenty, stooped, and took the letters in his mouth.

"It is not natural," cried Sophy, much alarmed. "It must be wicked, and I'd rather have nothing to do with it, please."

"Silly child! He was but obeying my sign. He had been taught that trick already under the name of Mop. The only strange thing is, that he should do it also under the name of Sir Isaac, and much more cheerfully too. However, whether he has been the great Newton or not, a live dog is better than a dead lion. But it is clear that, in acknowledging the name of Sir Isaac, he does not encourage us to take that of Newton; and he is right: for it might be thought unbecoming to apply to an animal, however extraordinary, who by the severity of fortune is compelled to exhibit his talents for a small pecuniary reward, the family name of so great a philosopher. Sir Isaac, after all, is a vague appellation; any dog has a right to be Sir Isaac—Newton may be left conjectural. Let us see if we can add to our arithmetical information. Look at me, Sir Isaac." Sir Isaac looked and grinned affectionately; and under that title learned a new combination with a facility that might have relieved Sophy's mind of all superstitious belief that the philosopher was

resuscitated in the dog, had she known that in life that great master of calculations the most abstruse could not accurately cast up a simple sum in addition. Nothing brought him to the end of his majestic tether like dot and carry one. Notable type of our human incompleteness, where men might deem our studies had made us most complete! Notable type, too, of that grandest order of all human genius which seems to arrive at results by intuition, which a child might pose by a row of figures on a slate, while it is solving the laws that link the stars to infinity! But /revenons a nos moutons/, what was the astral attraction that incontestably bound the reminiscences of Mop to the cognominal distinction of Sir Isaac? I had prepared a very erudite and subtle treatise upon this query, enlivened by quotations from the ancient Mystics, —such as Iamblicus and Proclus,—as well as by a copious reference to the doctrine of the more modern Spiritualists, from Sir Kenelm Digby and Swedenborg, to Monsieur Cahagnet and Judge Edwards. It was to be called Inquiry into the Law of Affinities, by Philomopsos: when, unluckily for my treatise, I arrived at the knowledge of a fact which, though it did not render the treatise less curious, knocked on the head the theory upon which it was based. The baptismal name of the old soldier, Mop's first proprietor and earliest preceptor, was Isaac; and his master being called in the homely household by that Christian name, the sound had entered into Mop's youngest and most endeared associations. His canine affections had done much towards ripening his scholastic education. "Where is Isaac?"

"Call Isaac!" "Fetch Isaac his hat," etc. Stilled was that name when the old soldier died; but when heard again, Mop's heart was moved, and in missing the old master, he felt more at home with the new. As for the title, "Sir," it was a mere expletive in his ears. Such was the fact, and such the deduction to be drawn from it. Not that it will satisfy every one. I know that philosophers who deny all that they have not witnessed, and refuse to witness what they resolve to deny, will reject the story in toto; and will prove, by reference to their own dogs, that a dog never recognizes the name of his master,—never yet could be taught arithmetic. I know also that there are Mystics who will prefer to believe that Mop was in direct spiritual communication with unseen Isaacs, or in a state of clairvoyance, or under the influence of the odic fluid. But did we ever yet find in human reason a question with only one side to it? Is not truth a polygon? Have not sages arisen in our day to deny even the principle of gravity, for which we bad been so long contentedly taking the word of the great Sir Isaac? It is that blessed spirit of controversy which keeps the world going; and it is that which, perhaps, explains why Mr. Waife, when his memory was fairly put to it, could remember, out of the history of the myriads who have occupied our planet from the date of Adam to that in which I now write, so very few men whom the world will agree to call wise, and out of that very few so scant a percentage with names sufficiently known to make them more popularly significant of pre-eminent sagacity than if they had been called—Mops.

CHAPTER VI

The vagrant having got his dog, proceeds to hunt fortune with it, leaving behind him a trap to catch rats.—What the trap does catch is "just like his luck."

Sir Isaac, to designate him by his new name, improved much upon acquaintance. He was still in the ductile season of youth, and took to learning as an amusement to himself. His last master, a stupid sot, had not gained his affections; and perhaps even the old soldier, though gratefully remembered and mourned, had not stolen into his innermost heart, as Waife and Sophy gently contrived to do. In short, in a very few days he became perfectly accustomed and extremely attached to them. When Waife had ascertained the extent of his accomplishments, and added somewhat to their range in matters which cost no great trouble, he applied himself to the task of composing a little drama which might bring them all into more interesting play, and in which though Sophy and himself were performers the dog had the premier role. And as soon as this was done, and the dog's performances thus ranged into methodical order and sequence, he resolved to set off to a considerable town at some distance, and to which Mr. Rugge was no visitor.

His bill at the cottage made but slight inroad into his pecuniary resources; for in the intervals of leisure from his instructions to Sir Isaac, Waife had performed various little services to the

lone widow with whom they lodged, which Mrs. Saunders (such was her name) insisted upon regarding as money's worth. He had repaired and regulated to a minute an old clock which had taken no note of time for the last three years; he had mended all the broken crockery by some cement of his own invention, and for which she got him the materials. And here his ingenuity was remarkable, for when there was only a fragment to be found of a cup and a fragment or two of a saucer, he united them both into some pretty form, which, if not useful, at all events looked well on a shelf. He bound, in smart showy papers, sundry tattered old books which had belonged to his landlady's defunct husband, a Scotch gardener, and which she displayed on a side table, under the japan tea-tray. More than all, he was of service to her in her vocation; for Mrs. Saunders eked out a small pension—which she derived from the affectionate providence of her Scotch husband, in insuring his life in her favour—by the rearing and sale of poultry; and Waife saved her the expense of a carpenter by the construction of a new coop, elevated above the reach of the rats, who had hitherto made sad ravage amongst the chickens; while he confided to her certain secrets in the improvement of breed and the cheaper processes of fattening, which excited her gratitude no less than her wonder. "The fact is," said Gentleman Waife, "that my life has known makeshifts. Once, in a foreign country, I kept poultry, upon the principle that the poultry should keep me."

Strange it was to notice such versatility of invention, such

readiness of resource, such familiarity with divers nooks and crannies in the practical experience of life, in a man now so hard put to it for a livelihood. There are persons, however, who might have a good stock of talent, if they did not turn it all into small change. And you, reader, know as well as I do, that when a sovereign or a shilling is once broken into, the change scatters and dispends itself in a way quite unaccountable. Still coppers are useful in household bills; and when Waife was really at a pinch, somehow or other, by hook or by crook, he scraped together intellectual halfpence enough to pay his way.

Mrs. Saunders grew quite fond of her lodgers. Waife she regarded as a prodigy of genius; Sophy was the prettiest and best of children. Sir Isaac, she took for granted, was worthy of his owners. But the Comedian did not confide to her his dog's learning, nor the use to which he designed to put it. And in still greater precaution, when he took his leave, he extracted from Mrs. Saunders a solemn promise that she would set no one on his track in case of impertinent inquiries.

"You see before you," said he, "a man who has enemies, such as rats are to your chickens: chickens despise rats when raised, as yours are now, above the reach of claws and teeth. Some day or other I may so raise a coop for that little one: I am too old for coops. Meanwhile, if a rat comes sneaking here after us, send it off the wrong way, with a flea in its ear."

Mrs. Saunders promised, between tears and laughter; blessed Waife, kissed Sophy, patted Sir Isaac, and stood long at her

threshold watching the three, as the early sun lit their forms receding in the narrow green lane,—dewdrops sparkling on the hedgerows, and the skylark springing upward from the young corn.

Then she slowly turned indoors, and her home seemed very solitary. We can accustom ourselves to loneliness, but we should beware of infringing the custom. Once admit two or three faces seated at your hearthside, or gazing out from your windows on the laughing sun, and when they are gone, they carry off the glow from your grate and the sunbeam from your panes. Poor Mrs. Saunders! in vain she sought to rouse herself, to put the rooms to rights, to attend to the chickens to distract her thoughts. The one-eyed cripple, the little girl, the shaggy-faced dog, still haunted her; and when at noon she dined all alone off the remnants of the last night's social supper, the very click of the renovated clock seemed to say, "Gone, gone;" and muttering, "Ah! gone," she reclined back on her chair, and indulged herself in a good womanlike cry. From this luxury she was startled by a knock at the door. "Could they have come back?" No; the door opened, and a genteel young man, in a black coat and white neckcloth, stepped in.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am—your name 's Saunders—sell poultry?"

"At your service, sir. Spring chickens?" Poor people, whatever their grief, must sell their chickens, if they have any to sell.

"Thank you, ma'am; not at this moment. The fact is, that I call

to make some inquiries Have not you lodgers here?"

Lodgers! at that word the expanding soul of Mrs. Saunders reclosed hermetically; the last warning of Waife revibrated in her ears this white neckclothed gentleman, was he not a rat?

"No, sir, I ha'n't no lodgers."

"But you have had some lately, eh? a crippled elderly man and a little girl."

"Don't know anything about them; leastways," said Mrs. Saunders, suddenly remembering that she was told less to deny facts than to send inquirers upon wrong directions," leastways, at this blessed time. Pray, sir, what makes you ask?"

"Why, I was instructed to come down to ———, and find out where this person, one William Waife, had gone. Arrived yesterday, ma'am. All I could hear is, that a person answering to his description left the place several days ago, and had been seen by a boy, who was tending sheep, to come down the lane to your house, and you were supposed to have lodgers (you take lodgers sometimes, I think, ma'am), because you had been buying some trifling articles of food not in your usual way of custom. Circumstantial evidence, ma'am: you can have no motive to conceal the truth."

"I should think not indeed, sir," retorted Mrs. Saunders, whom the ominous words "circumstantial evidence" set doubly on her guard. "I did see a gentleman such as you mention, and a pretty young lady, about ten days agone, or so, and they did lodge here a night or two, but they are gone to—"

"Yes, ma'am,—gone where?"

"Lunnon."

"Really—very likely. By the train or on foot?"

"On foot, I s'pose."

"Thank you, ma'am. If you should see them again, or hear where they are, oblige me by conveying this card to Mr. Waife. My employer, ma'am, Mr. Gotobed, Craven Street, Strand,—eminent solicitor. He has something of importance to communciate to Mr. Waife."

"Yes, sir,—a lawyer; I understand." And as of all ratlike animals in the world Mrs. Saunders had the ignorance to deem a lawyer was the most emphatically devouring, she congratulated herself with her whole heart on the white lies she had told in favour of the intended victims.

The black-coated gentleman having thus obeyed his instructions and attained his object, nodded, went his way, and regained the fly which he had left at the turnstile. "Back to the inn," cried he, "quick: I must be in time for the three o'clock train to London."

And thus terminated the result of the great barrister's first instructions to his eminent solicitor to discover a lame man and a little girl. No inquiry, on the whole, could have been more skilfully conducted. Mr. Gotobed sends his head clerk; the head clerk employs the policeman of the village; gets upon the right track; comes to the right house; and is altogether in the wrong,—in a manner highly creditable to his researches.

"In London, of course: all people of that kind come back to London," said Mr. Gotobed. "Give me the heads in writing, that I may report to my distinguished client. Most satisfactory. That young man will push his way,—businesslike and methodical."

CHAPTER VII

The cloud has its silver lining.

Thus turning his back on the good fortune which he had so carefully cautioned Mrs. Saunders against favouring on his behalf, the vagrant was now on his way to the ancient municipal town of Gatesboro', which, being the nearest place of fitting opulence and population, Mr. Waife had resolved to honour with the debut of Sir Isaac as soon as he had appropriated to himself the services of that promising quadruped. He had consulted a map of the county before quitting Mr. Merle's roof, and ascertained that he could reach Gatesboro' by a short cut for foot- travellers along fields and lanes. He was always glad to avoid the high road: doubtless for such avoidance he had good reasons. But prudential reasons were in this instance supported by vagrant inclinations. High roads are for the prosperous. By-paths and ill-luck go together. But by-paths have their charm, and ill-luck its pleasant moments.

They passed then from the high road into a long succession of green pastures, through which a straight public path conducted them into one of those charming lanes never seen out of this bowery England,—a lane deep sunk amidst high banks with overhanging oaks, and quivering ash, gnarled wych-elm, vivid holly and shaggy brambles, with wild convolvulus and creeping

woodbine forcing sweet life through all. Sometimes the banks opened abruptly, leaving patches of green sward, and peeps through still sequestered gates, or over moss-grown pales, into the park or paddock of some rural thane. New villas or old manor-houses on lawny uplands, knitting, as it were, together England's feudal memories with England's freeborn hopes,—the old land with its young people; for England is so old, and the English are so young! And the gray cripple and the bright- haired child often paused, and gazed upon the demesnes and homes of owners whose lots were cast in such pleasant places. But there was no grudging envy in their gaze; perhaps because their life was too remote from those grand belongings. And therefore they could enjoy and possess every banquet of the eye. For at least the beauty of what we see is ours for the moment, on the simple condition that we do not covet the thing which gives to our eyes that beauty. As the measureless sky and the unnumbered stars are equally granted to king and to beggar; and in our wildest ambition we do not sigh for a monopoly of the empyrean, or the fee-simple of the planets: so the earth too, with all its fenced gardens and embattled walls, all its landmarks of stern property and churlish ownership, is ours too by right of eye. Ours to gaze on the fair possessions with such delight as the gaze can give; grudging to the unseen owner his other, and, it may be, more troubled rights, as little as we grudge an astral proprietor his acres of light in Capricorn. Benignant is the law that saith, "Thou shalt not covet."

When the sun was at the highest our wayfarers found a

shadowy nook for their rest and repast. Before them ran a shallow limpid trout-stream; on the other side its margin, low grassy meadows, a farmhouse in the distance, backed by a still grove, from which rose a still church tower and its still spire. Behind them, a close-shaven sloping lawn terminated the hedgerow of the lane; seen clearly above it, with parterres of flowers on the sward, drooping lilacs and laburnums farther back, and a pervading fragrance from the brief-lived and rich syringas. The cripple had climbed over a wooden rail that separated the lane from the rill, and seated himself under the shade of a fantastic hollow thorn-tree. Sophy, reclined beside him, was gathering some pale scentless violets from a mound which the brambles had guarded from the sun. The dog had descended to the waters to quench his thirst, but still stood knee-deep in the shallow stream, and appeared lost in philosophical contemplation of a swarm of minnows, which his immersion had disturbed, but which now made itself again visible on the farther side of the glassy brook, undulating round and round a tiny rocklet which interrupted the glide of the waves, and caused them to break into a low melodious murmur. "For these and all thy mercies, O Lord, make us thankful," said the victim of ill-luck, in the tritest words of a pious custom. But never, perhaps, at aldermanic feasts was the grace more sincerely said.

And then he untied the bundle, which the dog, who had hitherto carried it by the way, had now carefully deposited at his side. "As I live," ejaculated Waife, "Mrs. Saunders is a woman

in ten thousand. See, Sophy, not contented with the bread and cheese to which I bade her stint her beneficence, a whole chicken,—a little cake too for you, Sophy; she has not even forgotten the salt. Sophy, that woman deserves the handsomest token of our gratitude; and we will present her with a silver teapot the first moment we can afford it."

His spirits exhilarated by the unexpected good cheer, the Comedian gave way to his naturally blithe humour; and between every mouthful he rattled or rather drolled on, now infant-like, now sage-like. He cast out the rays of his liberal humour, careless where they fell,—on the child, on the dog, on the fishes that played beneath the wave, on the cricket that chirped amidst the grass; the woodpecker tapped the tree, and the cripple's merry voice answered it in bird-like mimicry. To this riot of genial babble there was a listener, of whom neither grandfather nor grandchild was aware. Concealed by thick brushwood a few paces farther on, a young angler, who might be five or six and twenty, had seated himself, just before the arrival of our vagrant to those banks and waters, for the purpose of changing an unsuccessful fly. At the sound of voices, perhaps suspecting an unlicensed rival, for that part of the stream was preserved,—he had suspended his task, and noiselessly put aside the clustering leaves to reconnoitre. The piety of Waife's simple grace seemed to surprise him pleasingly, for a sweet approving smile crossed his lips. He continued to look and to listen. He forgot the fly, and a trout sailed him by unheeded. But Sir Isaac,

having probably satisfied his speculative mind as to the natural attributes of minnows, now slowly reascended the bank, and after a brief halt and a sniff, walked majestically towards the hidden observer, looked at him with great solemnity, and uttered an inquisitive bark,—a bark not hostile, not menacing; purely and dryly interrogative. Thus detected, the angler rose; and Waife, whose attention was directed that way by the bark, saw him, called to Sir Isaac, and said politely, "There is no harm in my dog, sir."

The young man muttered some inaudible reply, and, lifting up his rod as in sign of his occupation or excuse for his vicinity, came out from the intervening foliage, and stepped quietly to Waife's side. Sir Isaac followed him, sniffed again, seemed satisfied; and seating himself on his haunches, fixed his attention upon the remains of the chicken which lay defenceless on the grass. The new comer was evidently of the rank of gentleman; his figure was slim and graceful, his face pale, meditative, refined. He would have impressed you at once with the idea of what he really was,—an Oxford scholar; and you would perhaps have guessed him designed for the ministry of the Church, if not actually in orders.

CHAPTER VIII

Mr. Waife excites the admiration, and benignly pities the infirmity, of an Oxford scholar.

"You are str-str-strangers?" said the Oxonian, after a violent exertion to express himself, caused by an impediment in his speech.

WAIFE.—"Yes, sir, travellers. I trust we are not trespassing: this is not private ground, I think?"

OXONIAN.—"And if-f-f-f—it were, my f-f-father would not war-n-n you off-ff—f."

"Is it your father's ground, then? Sir, I beg you a thousand pardons."

The apology was made in the Comedian's grandest style: it imposed greatly on the young scholar. Waife might have been a duke in disguise; but I will do the angler the justice to say that such discovery of rank would have impressed him little more in the vagrant's favour. It had been that impromptu "grace"—that thanksgiving which the scholar felt was for something more than the carnal food—which had first commanded his respect and wakened his interest. Then that innocent careless talk—part uttered to dog and child, part soliloquized, part thrown out to the ears of the lively teeming Nature—had touched a somewhat kindred chord in the angler's soul; for he was somewhat of a poet and much of a soliloquist, and could confer with Nature, nor

feel that impediment in speech which obstructed his intercourse with men. Having thus far indicated that oral defect in our new acquaintance, the reader will cheerfully excuse me for not enforcing it over much. Let it be among the things /subaudita/, as the sense of it gave to a gifted and aspiring nature, thwarted in the sublime career of Preacher, an exquisite mournful pain. And I no more like to raise a laugh at his infirmity behind his back, than I should before his pale, powerful, melancholy face; therefore I suppress the infirmity in giving the reply.

OXONIAN.—" On the other side the lane, where the garden slopes downward, is my father's house. This ground is his property certainly, but he puts it to its best use, in lending it to those who so piously acknowledge that Father from whom all good comes. Your child, I presume, sir?"

"My grandchild."

"She seems delicate: I hope you have not far to go?"

"Not very far, thank you, sir. But my little girl looks more delicate than she is. You are not tired, darling?"

"Oh, not at all!" There was no mistaking the looks of real love interchanged between the old man and the child; the scholar felt much interested and somewhat puzzled.

"Who and what could they be? so unlike foot wayfarers!" On the other hand, too, Waife took a liking to the courteous young man, and conceived a sincere pity for his physical affliction. But he did not for those reasons depart from the discreet caution he had prescribed to himself in seeking new fortunes and shunning

old perils, so he turned the subject.

"You are an angler, sir? I suppose the trout in the stream run small?"

"Not very: a little higher up I have caught them at four pounds weight."

WAIFE.—"There goes a fine fish yonder,—see! balancing himself between those weeds."

OXONIAN.—"Poor fellow, let him be safe to-day. After all, it is a cruel sport, and I should break myself of it. But it is strange that whatever our love for Nature we always seek some excuse for trusting ourselves alone to her. A gun, a rod, a sketch-book, a geologist's hammer, an entomologist's net, a something."

WAIFE.—"Is it not because all our ideas would run wild if not concentrated on a definite pursuit? Fortune and Nature are earnest females, though popular beauties; and they do not look upon coquettish triflers in the light of genuine wooers."

The Oxonian, who, in venting his previous remark, had thought it likely he should be above his listener's comprehension, looked surprised. What pursuits, too, had this one-eyed philosopher?

"You have a definite pursuit, sir?"

"I—alas! when a man moralizes, it is a sign that he has known error: it is because I have been a trifler that I rail against triflers. And talking of that, time flies, and we must be off and away."

Sophy re-tied the bundle. Sir Isaac, on whom, meanwhile, she had bestowed the remains of the chicken, jumped up and

described a circle.

"I wish you success in your pursuit, whatever it be," stuttered out the angler.

"And I no less heartily, sir, wish you success in yours."

"Mine! Success there is beyond my power."

"How, sir? Does it rest so much with others?"

"No, my failure is in myself. My career should be the Church, my pursuit the cure of souls, and—and—this pitiful infirmity! How can I speak the Divine Word—I—I—a stutterer!"

The young man did not pause for an answer, but plunged through the brushwood that bespread the banks of the rill, and his hurried path could be traced by the wave of the foliage through which he forced his way.

"We all have our burdens," said Gentleman Waife, as Sir Isaac took up the bundle and stalked on, placid and refreshed.

CHAPTER IX

The nomad, entering into civilized life, adopts its arts, shaves his poodle, and puts on a black coat.—Hints at the process by which a Cast-off exalts himself into a Take-in.

At twilight they stopped at a quiet inn within eight miles of Gatesboro'. Sophy, much tired, was glad to creep to bed. Waife sat up long after her; and, in preparation for the eventful morrow, washed and shaved Sir Isaac. You would not have known the dog again; he was dazzling. Not Ulysses, rejuvenated by Pallas Athene, could have been more changed for the better. His flanks revealed a skin most daintily mottled; his tail became leonine, with an imperial tuft; his mane fell in long curls like the beard of a Ninevite king; his boots were those of a courtier in the reign of Charles II.; his eyes looked forth in dark splendour from locks white as the driven snow. This feat performed, Waife slept the sleep of the righteous, and Sir Isaac, stretched on the floor beside the bed, licked his mottled flanks and shivered: "/il faut souffrir pour etre beau/." Much marvelling, Sophy the next morning beheld the dog; but, before she was up, Waife had paid the bill and was waiting for her on the road, impatient to start. He did not heed her exclamation, half compassionate, half admiring; he was absorbed in thought. Thus they proceeded slowly on till within two miles of the town, and then Waife turned aside, entered a wood, and there, with the aid of Sophy, put the dog upon a

deliberate rehearsal of the anticipated drama. The dog was not in good spirits, but he went through his part with mechanical accuracy, though slight enthusiasm.

"He is to be relied upon, in spite of his French origin," said Waife. "All national prejudice fades before the sense of a common interest. And we shall always find more genuine solidity of character in a French poodle than in an English mastiff, whenever a poodle is of use to us and the mastiff is not. But oh, waste of care! oh, sacrifice of time to empty names! oh, emblem of fashionable education! It never struck me before,—does it not, child though thou art, strike thee now,—by the necessities of our drama, this animal must be a French dog?"

"Well, Grandfather?"

"And we have given him an English name! Precious result of our own scholastic training, taught at preparatory academies precisely that which avails us naught when we are to face the world! What is to be done? Unlearn him his own cognomen,—teach him another name,—too late, too late. We cannot afford the delay."

"I don't see why he should be called any name at all. He observes your signs just as well without."

"If I had but discovered that at the beginning. Pity! Such a fine name too. Sir Isaac! /Vanitas vanitatum!/ What desire chiefly kindles the ambitious? To create a name, perhaps bequeath a title,—exalt into Sir Isaacs a progeny of slops! And, after all, it is possible (let us hope it in this instance) that a sensible

young dog may learn his letters and shoulder his musket just as well, though all the appellations by which humanity knows him be condensed into a pitiful monosyllable. Nevertheless (as you will find when you are older), people are obliged in practice to renounce for themselves the application of those rules which they philosophically prescribe for others. Thus, while I grant that a change of name for that dog is a question belonging to the policy of Ifs and Buts, commonly called the policy of Expediency, about which one may differ from others and one's own self every quarter of an hour, a change of name for me belongs to the policy of Must and Shall; namely the policy of Necessity, against which let no dog bark,—though I have known dogs howl at it! William Waife is no more: he is dead; he is buried; and even Juliet Araminta is the baseless fabric of a vision."

Sophy raised inquiringly her blue guileless eyes.

"You see before you a man who has used up the name of Waife, and who on entering the town of Gatesboro' becomes a sober, staid, and respectable personage, under the appellation of Chapman. You are Miss Chapman. Rugge and his Exhibition 'leave not a wrack behind.'"

Sophy smiled, and then sighed,—the smile for her grandfather's gay spirits; wherefore the sigh? Was it that some instinct in that fresh, loyal nature revolted from the thought of these aliases, which, if requisite for safety, were still akin to imposture? If so, poor child, she had much yet to set right with her conscience! All I can say is, that after she had smiled

she sighed. And more reasonably might a reader ask his author to subject a zephyr to the microscope than a female's sigh to analysis.

"Take the dog with you, my dear, back into the lane; I will join you in a few minutes. You are neatly dressed, and, if not, would look so. I, in this old coat, have the air of a pedler, so I will change it, and enter the town of Gatesboro' in the character of —a man whom you will soon see before you. Leave those things alone, de-Isaacized Sir Isaac! Follow your mistress,—go!"

Sophy left the wood, and walked on slowly towards the town, with her hand pensively resting on Sir Isaac's head. In less than ten minutes she was joined by Waife, attired in respectable black; his hat and shoes well brushed; a new green shade to his eye; and with his finest air of /Pere noble/. He was now in his favourite element. HE WAS ACTING: call it not imposture. Was Lord Chatham an impostor when he draped his flannels into the folds of the toga, and arranged the curls of his wig so as to add more sublime effect to the majesty of his brow and the terrors of its nod? And certainly, considering that Waife, after all, was but a professional vagabond, considering all the turns and shifts to which he has been put for bread and salt, the wonder is, not that he is full of stage tricks and small deceptions, but that he has contrived to retain at heart so much childish simplicity. When a man for a series of years has only had his wits to live by, I say not that he is necessarily a rogue,— he may be a good fellow; but you can scarcely expect his code of honour to be precisely

the same as Sir Philip Sidney's. Homer expresses through the lips of Achilles that sublime love of truth which even in those remote times was the becoming characteristic of a gentleman and a soldier. But then, Achilles is well off during his whole life, which, though distinguished, is short. On the other hand Ulysses, who is sorely put to it, kept out of his property in Ithaca, and, in short, living on his wits, is not the less befriended by the immaculate Pallas because his wisdom savours somewhat of stage trick and sharp practice. And as to convenient aliases and white fibs, where would have been the use of his wits, if Ulysses had disdained such arts, and been magnanimously munched up by Polyphemus? Having thus touched on the epic side of Mr. Waife's character with the clemency due to human nature, but with the caution required by the interests of society, permit him to resume a "duplex course," sanctioned by ancient precedent, but not commended to modern imitation.

Just as our travellers neared the town, the screech of a railway whistle resounded towards the right,—a long train rushed from the jaws of a tunnel and shot into the neighbouring station.

"How lucky!" exclaimed Waife; "make haste, my dear!"

Was he going to take the train? Pshaw! he was at his journey's end. He was going to mix with the throng that would soon stream through those white gates into the town; he was going to purloin the respectable appearance of a passenger by the train. And so well did he act the part of a bewildered stranger just vomited forth into unfamiliar places by one of those panting

steam monsters,—so artfully, amidst the busy competition of nudging elbows, over-bearing shoulders, and the impedimenta of carpet-bags, portmanteaus, babies in arms, and shin- assailing trucks, did he look round, consequentially, on the /qui vive/, turning his one eye, now on Sophy, now on Sir Isaac, and griping his bundle to his breast as if he suspected all his neighbours to be Thugs, condottieri, and swellmob,—that in an instant fly-men, omnibus drivers, cads, and porters marked him for their own. "Gatesboro' Arms," "Spread Eagle," "Royal Hotel," "Saracen's Head; very comfortable, centre of High Street, opposite the Town Hall,"—were shouted, bawled, whispered, or whined into his ear.

"Is there an honest porter?" asked the Comedian, piteously. An Irishman presented himself. "And is it meself can serve your honour?"—"Take this bundle, and walk on before me to the High Street."—"Could not I take the bundle, Grandfather? The man will charge so much," said the prudent Sophy. "Hush! you indeed!" said the Pere Noble, as if addressing an exiled Altesse royale,—"you take a bundle—Miss—Chapman!"

They soon gained the High Street. Waife examined the fronts of the various inns which they passed by with an eye accustomed to decipher the physiognomy of hostelries. The Saracen's Head pleased him, though its imposing size daunted Sophy. He arrested the steps of the porter, "Follow me close," and stepped across the open threshold into the bar. The landlady herself was there, portly and imposing, with an auburn toupet, a

silk gown, a cameo brooch, and an ample bosom.

"You have a private sitting-room, ma'am?" said the Comedian, lifting his hat. There are so many ways of lifting a hat,-for instance, the way for which Louis XIV. was so renowned. But the Comedian's way on the present occasion rather resembled that of the late Duke of B————, not quite royal, but as near to royalty as becomes a subject. He added, recovering his head,—"And on the first floor?" The landlady did not courtesy, but she bowed, emerged from the bar, and set foot on the broad stairs; then, looking back graciously, her eyes rested on Sir Isaac, who had stalked forth in advance and with expansive nostrils sniffed. She hesitated. "Your dog, sir! shall Boots take it round to the stables?"

"The stables, ma'am—the stables, my dear," turning to Sophy, with a smile more ducal than the previous bow; "what would they say at home if they heard that noble animal was consigned to-stables? Ma'am, my dog is my companion, and as much accustomed to drawing-rooms as I am myself." Still the landlady paused. The dog might be accustomed to drawing-rooms, but her drawing-room was not accustomed to dogs. She had just laid down a new carpet. And such are the strange and erratic affinities in nature, such are the incongruous concatenations in the cross-stitch of ideas, that there are associations between dogs and carpets, which, if wrongful to the owners of dogs, beget no unreasonable apprehensions in the proprietors of carpets. So there stood the landlady, and there stood the dog! and there they

might be standing to this day had not the Comedian dissolved the spell. "Take up my effects again," said he, turning to the porter; "doubtless they are more habituated to distinguish between dog and dog at the Royal Hotel."

The landlady was mollified in a moment. Nor was it only the rivalries that necessarily existed between the Saracen's Head and the Royal Hotel that had due weight with her. A gentleman who could not himself deign to carry even that small bundle must be indeed a gentleman! Had he come with a portmanteau —even with a carpet-bag—the porter's service would have been no evidence of rank; but accustomed as she was chiefly to gentlemen engaged in commercial pursuits, it was new to her experience, —a gentleman with effects so light, and hands so aristocratically helpless. Herein were equally betokened the two attributes of birth and wealth; namely, the habit of command and the disdain of shillings. A vague remembrance of the well-known story how a man and his dog had arrived at the Granby Hotel, at Harrowgate, and been sent away roomless to the other and less patrician establishment, because, while he had a dog, he had not a servant; when, five minutes after such dismissal, came carriages and lackeys and an imperious valet, asking for his grace the Duke of A————, who had walked on before with his dog, and who, oh, everlasting thought of remorse! had been sent away to bring the other establishment into fashion,—a vague reminiscence of that story, I say, flashed upon the landlady's mind, and she exclaimed, "I only thought, sir, you might prefer

the stables; of course, it is as you please. This way, sir. He is a fine animal, indeed, and seems mild."

"You may bring up the bundle, porter," quoth the Pere Noble. "Take my arm, my dear; these steps are very steep."

The landlady threw open the door of a handsome sitting-room,—her best: she pulled down the blinds to shut out the glare of the sun; then retreating to the threshold awaited further orders.

"Rest yourself, my dear," said the Actor, placing Sophy on a couch with that tender respect for sex and childhood which so specially belongs to the high-bred. "The room will do, ma'am. I will let you know later whether we shall require beds. As to dinner, I am not particular,— a cutlet, a chicken, what you please, at seven o'clock. Stay, I beg your pardon for detaining you, but where does the Mayor live?"

"His private residence is a mile out of the town, but his counting-house is just above the Town Hall,—to the right, sir."

"Name?"

"Mr. Hartopp!"

"Hartopp! Ah! to be sure! Hartopp. His political opinions, I think, are" (ventures at a guess) "enlightened?"

LANDLADY.—"Very much so, sir. Mr. Hartopp is highly respected."

WAIFE.—"The chief municipal officer of a town so thriving—fine shops and much plate glass—must march with the times. I think I have heard that Mr. Hartopp promotes the spread of intelligence and the propagation of knowledge."

LANDLADY (rather puzzled).—"I dare say, sir. The Mayor takes great interest in the Gatesboro' Athemeum and Literary Institute."

WAIFE.—"Exactly what I should have presumed from his character and station. I will detain you no longer, ma'am" (ducal bow). The landlady descended the stairs. Was her guest a candidate for the representation of the town at the next election? March with the times!—spread of intelligence! All candidates she ever knew had that way of expressing themselves,—"March" and "Spread." Not an address had parliamentary aspirant put forth to the freemen and electors of Gatesboro' but what "March" had been introduced by the candidate, and "Spread" been suggested by the committee. Still she thought that her guest, upon the whole, looked and bowed more like a member of the Upper House,—perhaps one of the amiable though occasionally prosy peers who devote the teeth of wisdom to the cracking of those very hard nuts, "How to educate the masses," "What to do with our criminals," and such like problems, upon which already have been broken so many jawbones tough as that with which Samson slew the Philistines.

"Oh, Grandfather!" sighed Sophy, "what are you about? We shall be ruined, you, too, who are so careful not to get into debt. And what have we left to pay the people here?"

"Sir Isaac! and THIS!" returned the Comedian, touching his forehead. "Do not alarm yourself: stay here and repose; and don't let Sir Isaac out of the room on any account!"

He took off his hat, brushed the nap carefully with his sleeve, replaced it on his head,—not jauntily aside, not like a jeune premier, but with equilateral brims, and in composed fashion, like a /pere noble/; then, making a sign to Sir Isaac to rest quiet, be passed to the door; there he halted, and turning towards Sophy, and, meeting her wistful eyes, his own eye moistened. "Ah!" he murmured, "Heaven grant I may succeed now, for if I do, then you shall indeed be a little lady!"

He was gone.

CHAPTER X

Showing with what success Gentleman Waife assumes the pleasing part of friend to the enlightenment of the age and the progress of the people.

On the landing-place, Waife encountered the Irish porter, who, having left the bundle in the drawing-room, was waiting patiently to be paid for his trouble.

The Comedian surveyed the good-humoured shrewd face, on every line of which was writ the golden maxim, "Take things asy." "I beg your pardon, my friend; I had almost forgotten you. Have you been long in this town?"

"Four years, and long life to your honour!"

"Do you know Mr. Hartopp, the Mayor?"

"Is it his worship the Mayor? Sure and it is the Mayor as has made a man o' Mike Callaghan."

The Comedian evinced urbane curiosity to learn the history of that process, and drew forth a grateful tale. Four summers ago Mike had resigned the "first gem of the sea" in order to assist in making hay for a Saxon taskmaster.

Mr. Hartopp, who farmed largely, had employed him in that rural occupation. Seized by a malignant fever, Mr. Hartopp had helped him through it, and naturally conceived a liking for the man he helped. Thus, as Mike became convalescent, instead of passing the poor man back to his own country, which at that time

gave little employment to the surplus of its agrarian population beyond an occasional shot at a parson,—an employment, though animated, not lucrative, he exercised Mike's returning strength upon a few light jobs in his warehouse; and finally, Mike marrying imprudently the daughter of a Gatesboro' operative, Mr. Hartopp set him up in life as a professional messenger and porter, patronized by the Corporation. The narrative made it evident that Mr. Hartopp was a kind and worthy man, and the Comedian's heart warmed towards him.

"An honour to our species, this Mr. Hartopp!" said Waife, striking his staff upon the floor; "I covet his acquaintance. Would he see you if you called at his counting-house?"

Mike replied in the affirmative with eager pride. "Mr. Hartopp would see him at once. Sure, did not the Mayor know that time was money? Mr. Hartopp was not a man to keep the poor waiting."

"Go down and stay outside the hall door; you shall take a note for me to the Mayor."

Waife then passed into the bar, and begged the favour of a sheet of note- paper. The landlady seated him at her own desk, and thus wrote the Comedian:

> "Mr. Chapman presents his compliments to the Mayor of Gatesboro', and requests the Honour of a very short interview. Mr. Chapman's deep interest in the permanent success of those literary institutes which are so distinguished a feature of this enlightened age, and

> Mr. Mayor's well-known zeal in the promotion of those invaluable societies, must be Mr. Chapman's excuse for the liberty he ventures to take in this request. Mr. C. may add that of late he has earnestly directed his attention to the best means of extracting new uses from those noble but undeveloped institutions.

"Saracens Head, &c."

This epistle, duly sealed and addressed, Waife delivered to the care of Mike Callaghan; and simultaneously he astounded that functionary with no less a gratuity than half a crown. Cutting short the fervent blessings which this generous donation naturally called forth, the Comedian said, with his happiest combination of suavity and loftiness, "And should the Mayor ask you what sort of person I am,—for I have not the honour to be known to him, and there are so many adventurers about, that he might reasonably expect me to be one, perhaps you can say that I don't look like a person he need be afraid to admit. You know a gentleman by sight! Bring back an answer as soon as may be; perhaps I sha'n't stay long in the town. You will find me in the High Street, looking at the shops."

The porter took to his legs, impatient to vent his overflowing heart upon the praises of this munificent stranger. A gentleman, indeed! Mike should think so! If Mike's good word with the Mayor was worth money, Gentleman Waife had put his half-crown out upon famous interest.

The Comedian strolled along the High Street, and stopped

before a stationer's shop, at the window of which was displayed a bill, entitled,

GATESBORO' ATHENIEUM
AND LITERARY INSTITUTE

LECTURE ON CONCHOLOGY

BY PROFESSOR LONG

Author of "Researches into the Natural

History of Limpets."

Waife entered the shop, and lifted his hat,—"Permit me, sir, to look at that hand-bill."

"Certainly, sir; but the lecture is over; you can see by the date: it came off last week. We allow the bills of previous proceedings at our Athenaeum to be exposed at the window till the new bills are prepared, —keeps the whole thing alive, sir."

"Conchology," said the Comedian, "is a subject which requires deep research, and on which a learned man may say much without fear of contradiction. But how far is Gatesboro' from the British Ocean?"

"I don't know exactly, sir,—a long way."

"Then, as shells are not familiar to the youthful remembrances of your fellow-townsmen, possibly the lecturer may have found an audience rather select than numerous."

"It was a very attentive audience, sir, and highly respectable: Miss Grieve's young ladies' (the genteelest seminary in the town) attended."

WAIFE.—"Highly creditable to the young ladies. But, pardon me, is your Athenaeum a Mechanics' institute?"

SHOPMAN.—"It was so called at first. But, somehow or other, the mere operatives fell off, and it was thought advisable to change the word 'Mechanics' into the word 'Literary.' Gatesboro' is not a manufacturing town, and the mechanics here do not realize the expectations of that taste for abstract science on which the originators of these societies founded their—"

WAIFE (insinuatingly interrupting).—"Their calculations of intellectual progress and their tables of pecuniary return. Few of these societies, I am told, are really self-supporting: I suppose Professor Long is!—and if he resides in Gatesboro', and writes on limpets, he is probably a man of independent fortune."

SHOPMAN.—"Why, sir, the professor was engaged from London,—five guineas and his travelling expenses. The funds

of the society could ill afford such outlay; but we have a most worthy mayor, who, assisted by his foreman, Mr. Williams, our treasurer, is, I may say, the life and soul of the institute."

"A literary man himself, your mayor?"

The shopman smiled. "Not much in that way, sir; but anything to enlighten the working classes. This is Professor Long's great work upon limpets, two vols. post octavo. The Mayor has just presented it to the library of the institute. I was cutting the leaves when you came in."

"Very prudent in you, sir. If limpets were but able to read printed character in the English tongue, this work would have more interest for them than the ablest investigations upon the political and social history of man. But," added the Comedian, shaking his head mournfully, "the human species is not testaceous; and what the history of man might be to a limpet, the history of limpets is to a man." So saying, Mr. Waife bought a sheet of cardboard and some gilt foil, relifted his hat, and walked out.

The shopman scratched his head thoughtfully; he glanced from his window at the form of the receding stranger, and mechanically resumed the task of cutting those leaves, which, had the volumes reached the shelves of the library uncut, would have so remained to the crack of doom.

Mike Callaghan now came in sight, striding fast; "Mr. Mayor sends his love—bother-o'-me—his respex; and will be happy to see your honour."

In three minutes more the Comedian was seated in a little parlour that adjoined Mr. Hartopp's counting-house,—Mr. Hartopp seated also, vis-a- vis. The Mayor had one of those countenances upon which good-nature throws a sunshine softer than Claude ever shed upon canvas. Josiah Hartopp had risen in life by little other art than that of quiet kindliness. As a boy at school, he had been ever ready to do a good turn to his school-fellows; and his school-fellows at last formed themselves into a kind of police, for the purpose of protecting Jos. Hartopp's pence and person from the fists and fingers of each other. He was evidently so anxious to please his master, not from fear of the rod, but the desire to spare that worthy man the pain of inflicting it, that he had more trouble taken with his education than was bestowed on the brightest intellect that school ever reared; and where other boys were roughly flogged, Jos. Hartopp was soothingly patted on the head, and told not to be cast down, but try again. The same even-handed justice returned the sugared chalice to his lips in his apprenticeship to an austere leather-seller, who, not bearing the thought to lose sight of so mild a face, raised him into partnership, and ultimately made him his son-in-law and residuary legatee. Then Mr. Hartopp yielded to the advice of friends who desired his exaltation, and from a leather-seller became a tanner. Hides themselves softened their asperity to that gentle dealer, and melted into golden fleeces. He became rich enough to hire a farm for health and recreation. He knew little of husbandry, but he won the heart of a bailiff

who might have reared a turnip from a deal table. Gradually the farm became his fee-simple, and the farmhouse expanded into a villa. Wealth and honours flowed in from a brimmed horn. The surliest man in the town would have been ashamed of saying a rude thing to Jos. Hartopp. If he spoke in public, though he hummed and hawed lamentably, no one was so respectfully listened to. As for the parliamentary representation of the town, he could have returned himself for one seat and Mike Callaghan for the other, had he been so disposed. But he was too full of the milk of humanity to admit into his veins a drop from the gall of party. He suffered others to legislate for his native land, and (except on one occasion when he had been persuaded to assist in canvassing, not indeed the electors of Gatesboro', but those of a distant town in which he possessed some influence, on behalf of a certain eminent orator) Jos. Hartopp was only visible in politics whenever Parliament was to be petitioned in favour of some humane measure, or against a tax that would have harassed the poor.

If anything went wrong with him in his business, the whole town combined to set it right for him. Was a child born to him, Gatesboro' rejoiced as a mother. Did measles or scarlatina afflict his neighbourhood, the first anxiety of Gatesboro' was for Mr. Hartopp's nursery. No one would have said Mrs. Hartopp's nursery; and when in such a department the man's name supersedes the woman's, can more be said in proof of the tenderness he excites? In short, Jos. Hartopp was a notable

instance of a truth not commonly recognized; namely, that affection is power, and that, if you do make it thoroughly and unequivocally clear that you love your neighbours, though it may not be quite so well as you love yourself,—still, cordially and disinterestedly, you will find your neighbours much better fellows than Mrs. Grundy gives them credit for,—but always provided that your talents be not such as to excite their envy, nor your opinions such as to offend their prejudices.

MR. HARTOPP.—"You take an interest, you say, in literary institutes, and have studied the subject?"

THE COMEDIAN.—"Of late, those institutes have occupied my thoughts as representing the readiest means of collecting liberal ideas into a profitable focus."

MR. HARTOPP.—"Certainly it is a great thing to bring classes together in friendly union."

THE COMEDIAN.—"For laudable objects."

MR. HARTOPP.—"To cultivate their understandings."

THE COMEDIAN.—"To warm their hearts."

MR. HARTOPP.—"To give them useful knowledge."

THE COMEDIAN.—"And pleasurable sensations."

MR. HARTOPP.—"In a word, to instruct them."

THE COMEDIAN.—"And to amuse."

"Eh!" said the Mayor,—"amuse!"

Now, every one about the person of this amiable man was on the constant guard to save him from the injurious effects of his own benevolence; and accordingly his foreman, hearing

that he was closeted with a stranger, took alarm, and entered on pretence of asking instructions about an order for hides, in reality, to glower upon the intruder, and keep his master's hands out of imprudent pockets.

Mr. Hartopp, who, though not brilliant, did not want for sense, and was a keener observer than was generally supposed, divined the kindly intentions of his assistant. "A gentleman interested in the Gatesboro' Athenaeum. My foreman, sir,—Mr. Williams, the treasurer of our institute. Take a chair, Williams."

"You said to amuse, Mr. Chapman, but—"

"You did not find Professor Long on conchology amusing."

"Why," said the Mayor, smiling blandly, "I myself am not a man of science, and therefore his lecture, though profound, was a little dry to me."

"Must it not have been still more dry to your workmen, Mr. Mayor?"

"They did not attend," said Williams. "Up-hill task we have to secure the Gatesboro' mechanics, when anything really solid is to be addressed to their understandings."

"Poor things, they are so tired at night," said the Mayor, compassionately; "but they wish to improve themselves, and they take books from the library."

"Novels," quoth the stern Williams: "it will be long before they take out that valuable 'History of Limpets."

"If a lecture were as amusing as a novel, would not they attend it?" asked the Comedian.

"I suppose they would," returned Mr. Williams. "But our object is to instruct; and instruction, sir—"

"Could be made amusing. If, for instance, the lecturer could produce a live shell-fish, and, by showing what kindness can do towards developing intellect and affection in beings without soul, —make man himself more kind to his fellow-man?"

Mr. Williams laughed grimly. "Well, sir!"

"This is what I should propose to do."

"With a shell-fish!" cried the Mayor.

"No, sir; with a creature of nobler attributes,—A DOG!"

The listeners stared at each other like dumb animals as Waife continued,- "By winning interest for the individuality of a gifted quadruped, I should gradually create interest in the natural history of its species. I should lead the audience on to listen to comparisons with other members of the great family which once associated with Adam. I should lay the foundation for an instructive course of natural history, and from vertebrated mammifers who knows but we might gradually arrive at the nervous system of the molluscous division, and produce a sensation by the production of a limpet?"

"Theoretical," said Mr. Williams.

"Practical, sir; since I take it for granted that the Athenaeum, at present, is rather a tax upon the richer subscribers, including Mr. Mayor."

"Nothing to speak of," said the mild Hartopp. Williams looked towards his master with unspeakable love, and groaned.

"Nothing indeed—oh!"

"These societies should be wholly self-supporting," said the Comedian, "and inflict no pecuniary loss upon Mr. Mayor."

"Certainly," said Williams, "that is the right principle. Mr. Mayor should be protected."

"And if I show you how to make these societies self-supporting—"

"We should be very much obliged to you."

"I propose, then, to give an exhibition at your rooms." Mr. Williams nudged the Mayor, and coughed, the Comedian not appearing to remark cough nor nudge.

"Of course gratuitously. I am not a professional lecturer, gentlemen."

Mr. Williams looked charmed to hear it.

"And when I have made my first effort successful, as I feel sure it will be, I will leave it to you, gentlemen, to continue my undertaking. But I cannot stay long here. If the day after to-morrow—"

"That is our ordinary soiree night," said the Mayor. "But you said a dog, sir,—dogs not admitted,-eh, Williams?"

MR. WILLIAMS.—"A mere by-law, which the subcommittee can suspend if necessary. But would not the introduction of a live animal be less dignified than—"

"A dead failure," put in the Comedian, gravely. The Mayor would have smiled, but he was afraid of doing so lest he might hurt the feelings of Mr. Williams, who did not seem to take the

joke.

"We are a purely intellectual body," said the latter gentleman, "and a dog—"

"A learned dog, I presume," observed the Mayor.

MR. WILLIAMS (nodding).—"Might form a dangerous precedent for the introduction of other quadrupeds. We might thus descend even to the level of a learned pig. We are not a menagerie, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Chapman," said the Mayor, urbanely.

"Enough," said the Comedian, rising with his grand air; "if I considered myself at liberty, gentlemen, to say who and what I am, you would be sure that I am not trifling with what I consider a very grave and important subject. As to suggesting anything derogatory to the dignity of science, and the eminent repute of the Gatesboro' Athenaeum, it would be idle to vindicate myself. These gray hairs are—"

He did not conclude that sentence, save by a slight wave of the hand.

The two burgesses bowed reverentially, and the Comedian went on,—

"But when you speak of precedent, Mr. Williams, allow me to refer you to precedents in point. Aristotle wrote to Alexander the Great for animals to exhibit to the Literary Institute of Athens. At the colleges in Egypt lectures were delivered on a dog called Anubis, as inferior, I boldly assert, to that dog which I have referred to, as an Egyptian College to a British Institute. The

ancient Etrurians, as is shown by the erudite Schweighduser in that passage—you understand Greek, I presume, Mr. Williams?"

Mr. Williams could not say he did.

THE COMEDIAN.—"Then I will not quote that passage in Schweighauser upon the Molossian dogs in general, and the dog of Alcibiades in particular. But it proves beyond a doubt, that, in every ancient literary institute, learned dogs were highly estimated; and there was even a philosophical Academy called the Cynic,—that is, Doggish, or Dog-school, of which Diogenes was the most eminent professor. He, you know, went about with a lantern looking for an honest man, and could not find one! Why? Because the Society of Dogs had raised his standard of human honesty to an impracticable height. But I weary you; otherwise I could lecture on in this way for the hour together, if you think the Gatesboro' operatives prefer erudition to amusement."

"A great scholar," whispered Mr. Williams.—Aloud: "and I've nothing to say against your precedents, sir. I think you have made out that part of the case. But, after all, a learned dog is not so very uncommon as to be in itself the striking attraction which you appear to suppose."

"It is not the mere learning of my dog of which I boast," replied the Comedian. "Dogs may be learned, and men too; but it is the way that learning is imparted, whether by dog or man, for the edification of the masses, in order, as Pope expresses himself, 'to raise the genius and to mend the heart' that alone adorns the possessor, exalts the species, interests the public, and commands

the respect of such judges as I see before me." The grand bow.

"Ah!" said Mr. Williams, hesitatingly, "sentiments that do honour to your head and heart; and if we could, in the first instance, just see the dog privately."

"'Nothing easier!" said the Comedian. "Will you do me the honour to meet him at tea this evening?"

"Rather will you not come and take tea at my house?" said the Mayor, with a shy glance towards Mr. Williams.

THE COMEDIAN.—"You are very kind; but my time is so occupied that I have long since made it a rule to decline all private invitations out of my own home. At my years, Mr. Mayor, one may be excused for taking leave of society and its forms; but you are comparatively young men. I presume on the authority of these gray hairs, and I shall expect you this evening, —say at nine o'clock." The Actor waved his hand graciously and withdrew.

"A scholar AND a gentleman," said Williams, emphatically. And the Mayor, thus authorized to allow vent to his kindly heart, added, "A humourist, and a pleasant one. Perhaps he is right, and our poor operatives would thank us more for a little innocent amusement than for those lectures, which they may be excused for thinking rather dull, since even you fell asleep when Professor Long got into the multilocular shell of the very first class of cephalous mollusca; and it is my belief that harmless laughter has a good moral effect upon the working class,—only don't spread it about that I said so, for we know excellent persons of a serious turn of mind whose opinions that sentiment might shock."

CHAPTER XI

HISTORICAL PROBLEM: "Is Gentleman Waife a swindler or a man of genius?" ANSWER: "Certainly a swindler, if he don't succeed."

Julius Caesar owed two millions when he risked the experiment of being general in Gaul. If Julius Caesar had not lived to cross the Rubicon and pay off his debts, what would his creditors have called Julius Caesar?

I need not say that Mr. Hartopp and his foreman came duly to tea, but the Comedian exhibited Sir Isaac's talents very sparingly,—just enough to excite admiration without sating curiosity. Sophy, whose pretty face and well-bred air were not unappreciated, was dismissed early to bed by a sign from her grandfather, and the Comedian then exerted his powers to entertain his visitors, so that even Sir Isaac was soon forgotten. Hard task, by writing, to convey a fair idea of this singular vagrant's pleasant vein. It was not so much what he said as the way of saying it, which gave to his desultory talk the charm of humour. He had certainly seen an immense deal of life somehow or other; and without appearing at the time to profit much by observation, without perhaps being himself conscious that he did profit, there was something in the very /enfantillage/ of his loosest prattle, by which, with a glance of the one lustrous eye and a twist of the mobile lip, he could convey the impression of

an original genius playing with this round world of ours— tossing it up, catching it again—easily as a child plays with its party-coloured ball. His mere book-knowledge was not much to boast of, though early in life he must have received a fair education. He had a smattering of the ancient classics, sufficient, perhaps, to startle the unlearned. If he had not read them, he had read about them; and at various odds and ends of his life he had picked up acquaintance with the popular standard modern writers. But literature with him was the smallest stripe in the party-coloured ball. Still it was astonishing how far and wide the Comedian could spread the sands of lore that the winds had drifted round the door of his playful, busy intellect. Where, for instance, could he ever have studied the nature and prospects of Mechanics' Institutes? and yet how well he seemed to understand them. Here, perhaps, his experience in one kind of audience helped him to the key to all miscellaneous assemblages. In fine, the man was an actor; and if he had thought fit to act the part of Professor Long himself, he would have done it to the life.

The two burghers had not spent so pleasant an evening for many years. As the clock struck twelve, the Mayor, whose gig had been in waiting a whole hour to take him to his villa, rose reluctantly to depart.

"And," said Williams, "the bills must be out to-morrow. What shall we advertise?"

"The simpler the better," said Waife; "only pray head the performance with the assurance that it is under the special

patronage of his worship the Mayor."

The Mayor felt his breast swell as if he had received some overwhelming personal obligation.

"Suppose it run thus," continued the Comedian, —"Illustrations from Domestic Life and Natural History, with LIVE examples: PART FIRST—THE DOG!"

"It will take," said the Mayor: "dogs are such popular animals!"

"Yes," said Williams; "and though for that very reason some might think that by the 'live example of a dog' we compromised the dignity of the Institute, still the importance of Natural History—"

"And," added the Comedian, "the sanctifying influences of domestic life—"

"May," concluded Mr. Williams, "carry off whatever may seem to the higher order of minds a too familiar attraction in the —dog!"

"I do not fear the result," said Waife, "provided the audience be sufficiently numerous; for that (which is an indispensable condition to a fair experiment) I issue hand-bills, only where distributed by the Mayor."

"Don't be too sanguine. I distributed bills on behalf of Professor Long, and the audience was not numerous. How ever, I will do my best. Is there nothing more in which I can be of use to you, Mr. Chapman?"

"Yes, later." Williams took alarm, and approached the

Mayor's breast- pocket protectingly. The Comedian withdrew him aside and whispered, "I intend to give the Mayor a little outline of the exhibition, and bring him into it, in order that his fellow-townsmen may signify their regard for him by a cheer; it will please his good heart, and be touching, you'll see—mum!" Williams shook the Comedian by the hand, relieved, affected, and confiding.

The visitors departed; and the Comedian lighted his hand-candlestick, whistled to Sir Isaac, and went to bed without one compunctious thought upon the growth of his bill and the deficit in his pockets. And yet it was true, as Sophy implied, that the Comedian had an honest horror of incurring debt. He generally thought twice before he risked owing even the most trifling bill; and when the bill came in, if it left him penniless, it was paid. And, now, what reckless extravagance! The best apartments! dinner, tea, in the first hotel of the town! half-a-crown to a porter! That lavish mode of life renewed with the dawning sun! not a care for the morrow; and I dare not conjecture how few the shillings in that purse. What aggravation, too, of guilt! Bills incurred without means under a borrowed name! I don't pretend to be a lawyer; but it looks to me very much like swindling. Yet the wretch sleeps. But are we sure that we are not shallow moralists? Do we carry into account the right of genius to draw bills upon the Future? Does not the most prudent general sometimes burn his ships? Does not the most upright merchant sometimes take credit on the chance of his ventures?

May not that peaceful slumberer be morally sure that he has that argosy afloat in his own head, which amply justifies his use of the "Saracen's"? If his plan should fail? He will tell you that is impossible! But if it should fail, you say. Listen; there runs a story-I don't vouch for its truth: I tell it as it was told to me—there runs a storv that in the late Russian war a certain naval veteran, renowned for professional daring and scientific invention, was examined before some great officials as to the chances of taking Cronstadt. "If you send me," said the admiral, "with so many ships of the line, and so many gunboats, Cronstadt of course will be taken." "But," said a prudent lord, "suppose it should not be taken?" "That is impossible: it must be taken!" "Yes," persisted my lord, "you think so, no doubt; but still, if it should not be taken,—what then?" "What then?—why, there's an end of the British fleet!" The great men took alarm, and that admiral was not sent. But they misconstrued the meaning of his answer. He meant not to imply any considerable danger to the British fleet. He meant to prove that one hypothesis was impossible by the suggestion of a counter-impossibility more self-evident. "It is impossible but what I shall take Cronstadt!" "But if you don't take it!" "It is impossible but what I shall take it; for if I don't take it, there's an end of the British fleet; and as it is impossible that there should be an end of the British fleet, it is impossible that I should not take Cronstadt!"—Q.E.D.

CHAPTER XII

In which everything depends on Sir Isaac's success in discovering the law of attraction.

On the appointed evening, at eight o'clock, the great room of the Gatesboro' Athenaeum was unusually well filled. Not only had the Mayor exerted himself to the utmost for that object, but the hand-bill itself promised a rare relief from the prosiness of abstract enlightenment and elevated knowledge. Moreover, the stranger himself had begun to excite speculation and curiosity. He was an amateur, not a cut-and-dry professor. The Mayor and Mr. Williams had both spread the report that there was more in him than appeared on the surface; prodigiously learned, but extremely agreeable, fine manners, too!—Who could he be? Was Chapman his real name? etc.

The Comedian had obtained permission to arrange the room beforehand. He had the raised portion of it for his stage, and he had been fortunate enough to find a green curtain to be drawn across it. From behind this screen he now emerged and bowed. The bow redoubled the first conventional applause. He then began a very short address,—extremely well delivered, as you may suppose, but rather in the conversational than the oratorical style. He said it was his object to exhibit the intelligence of that Universal Friend of Man, the Dog, in some manner appropriate, not only to its sagacious instincts, but to

its affectionate nature, and to convey thereby the moral that talents, however great, learning, however deep, were of no avail, unless rendered serviceable to Man. (Applause.) He must be pardoned then, if, in order to effect this object, he was compelled to borrow some harmless effects from the stage. In a word, his dog could represent to them the plot of a little drama. And he, though he could not say that he was altogether unaccustomed to public speaking (here a smile, modest, but august as that of some famous parliamentary orator who makes his first appearance at a vestry), still wholly new to its practice in the special part he had undertaken, would rely on their indulgence to efforts aspiring to no other merit than that of aiding the Hero of the Piece in a familiar illustration of those qualities in which dogs might give a lesson to humanity. Again he bowed, and retired behind the curtain. A pause of three minutes! the curtain drew up. Could that be the same Mr. Chapman whom the spectators beheld before them? Could three minutes suffice to change the sleek, respectable, prosperous-looking gentleman who had just addressed them into that image of threadbare poverty and hunger-pinched dejection? Little aid from theatrical costume: the clothes seemed the same, only to have grown wondrous aged and rusty. The face, the figure, the man,— these had undergone a transmutation beyond the art of the mere stage wardrobe, be it ever so amply stored, to effect. But for the patch over the eye, you could not have recognized Mr. Chapman. There was, indeed, about him, still, an air of dignity; but it was the dignity

of woe,— a dignity, too, not of an affable civilian, but of some veteran soldier. You could not mistake. Though not in uniform, the melancholy man must have been a warrior! The way the coat was buttoned across the chest, the black stock tightened round the throat, the shoulders thrown back in the disciplined habit of a life, though the head bent forward in the despondency of an eventful crisis,—all spoke the decayed but not ignoble hero of a hundred fields.

There was something foreign, too, about the veteran's air. Mr. Chapman had looked so thoroughly English: that tragical and meagre personage looked so unequivocally French.

Not a word had the Comedian yet said; and yet all this had the first sight of him conveyed to the audience. There was an amazed murmur, then breathless stillness; the story rapidly unfolded itself, partly by words, much more by look and ac tion. There sat a soldier who had fought under Napoleon at Marengo and Austerlitz, gone through the snows of Muscovy, escaped the fires of Waterloo,—the soldier of the Empire! Wondrous ideal of a wondrous time! and nowhere winning more respect and awe than in that land of the old English foe, in which with slight knowledge of the Beautiful in Art, there is so reverent a sympathy for all that is grand in Man! There sat the soldier, penniless and friendless, there, scarcely seen, reclined his grandchild, weak and slowly dying for the want of food; and all that the soldier possesses wherewith to buy bread for the day, is his cross of the Legion of Honour. It was given to him by the hand of the Emperor: must

he pawn or sell it? Out on the pomp of decoration which we have substituted for the voice of passionate nature on our fallen stage! Scenes so faithful to the shaft of a column,— dresses by which an antiquary can define a date to a year! Is delusion there? Is it thus we are snatched from Thebes to Athens? No; place a really fine actor on a deal board, and for Thebes and Athens you may hang up a blanket! Why, that very cross which the old soldier holds —away from his sight—in that tremulous hand, is but patched up from the foil and cardboard bought at the stationer's shop. You might see it was nothing more, if you tried to see. Did a soul present think of such minute investigation? Not one. In the actor's hand that trumpery became at once the glorious thing by which Napoleon had planted the sentiment of knightly heroism in the men whom Danton would have launched upon earth ruthless and bestial, as galley-slaves that had burst their chain.

The badge, wrought from foil and cardboard, took life and soul: it begot an interest, inspired a pathos, as much as if it had been made—oh! not of gold and gems, but of flesh and blood. And the simple broken words that the veteran addressed to it! The scenes, the fields, the hopes, the glories it conjured up! And now to be wrenched away,—sold to supply Man's humblest, meanest wants,—sold—the last symbol of such a past! It was indeed "/propter vitam vivendi perdere causas/." He would have starved rather,—but the child? And then the child rose up and came into play. She would not suffer such a sacrifice,—she was not hungry,—she was not weak; and when her voice failed her,

she looked up into that iron face and smiled,—nothing but a smile. Outcame the pocket-handkerchiefs! The soldier seizes the cross, and turns away. It shall be sold! As he opens the door, a dog enters gravely,—licks his hand, approaches the table, raises itself on its hind legs, surveys the table dolefully, shakes its head, whines, comes to its master, pulls him by the skirt, looks into his face inquisitively.

What does all this mean? It soon comes out, and very naturally. The dog belonged to an old fellow-soldier, who had gone to the Isle of France to claim his share in the inheritance of a brother who had settled and died there, and who, meanwhile, had confided it to the care of our veteran, who was then in comparatively easy circumstances, since ruined by the failure and fraud of a banker to whom he had intrusted his all; and his small pension, including the yearly sum to which his cross entitled him, had been forestalled and mortgaged to pay the petty debts which, relying on his dividend from the banker, he had innocently incurred. The dog's owner had been gone for months; his return might be daily expected. Meanwhile the dog was at the hearth, but the wolf at the door. Now, this sagacious animal had been taught to perform the duties of messenger and major-domo. At stated intervals he applied to his master for sous, and brought back the supplies which the sous purchased. He now, as usual, came to the table for the accustomed coin—the last sou was gone,—the dog's occupation was at an end. But could not the dog be sold? Impossible: it was the property of another,—a

sacred deposit; one would be as bad as the fraudulent banker if one could apply to one's own necessities the property one holds in trust. These little biographical particulars came out in that sort of bitter and pathetic humour which a study of Shakspeare, or the experience of actual life, had taught the Comedian to be a natural relief to an intense sorrow. The dog meanwhile aided the narrative by his by-play. Still intent upon the sous, he thrust his nose into his master's pockets; he appealed touchingly to the child, and finally put back his head and vented his emotion in a lugubrious and elegiacal howl. Suddenly there is heard without the sound of a showman's tin trumpet! Whether the actor had got some obliging person to perform on that instrument, or whether, as more likely, it was but a trick of ventriloquism, we leave to conjecture. At that note, an idea seemed to seize the dog. He ran first to his master, who was on the threshold about to depart; pulled him back into the centre of the room: next he ran to the child, dragging her towards the same spot, though with great tenderness, and then, uttering a joyous bark, he raised himself on his hind legs and, with incomparable solemnity, performed a minuet step! The child catches the idea from the dog. Was he not more worth seeing than the puppet-show in the streets? might not people give money to see him, and the old soldier still keep his cross? To-day there is a public fete in the gardens yonder: that showman must be going thither; why not go too? What! he the old soldier,—he stoop to show off a dog! he! he! The dog looked at him deprecatingly and stretched himself on the floor

— lifeless.

Yes, that is the alternative—shall his child die too, and he be too proud to save her? Ah! and if the cross can be saved also! But pshaw! what did the dog know that people would care to see? Oh, much, much. When the child was alone and sad, it would come and play with her. See those old dominos! She ranged them on the floor, and the dog leaped up and came to prove his skill. Artfully, then, the Comedian had planned that the dog should make some sad mistakes, alternated by some marvellous surprises. No, he would not do: yes, he would do. The audience took it seriously, and became intensely interested in the dog's success; so sorry for his blunders, so triumphant in his lucky hits. And then the child calmed the hasty irritable old man so sweetly, and corrected the dog so gently, and talked to the animal; told it how much they relied on it, and produced her infant alphabet, and spelt out "Save us." The dog looked at the letters meditatively, and henceforth it was evident that he took more pains. Better and better; he will do, he will do! The child shall not starve, the cross shall not be sold. Down drops the curtain. End of Act I.

Act II. opens with a dialogue spoken off the stage. Invisible dramatis persona, that subsist, with airy tongues, upon the mimetic art of the Comedian. You understand that there is a vehement dispute going on. The dog must not be admitted into a part of the gardens where a more refined and exclusive section of the company have hired seats, in order to contemplate, without sharing, the rude

dances or jostling promenade of the promiscuous merry-makers. Much hubbub, much humour; some persons for the dog, some against him; privilege and decorum here, equality and fraternity there. A Bonapartist colonel sees the cross on the soldier's breast, and, /mille tonnerres/! he settles the point. He pays for three reserved seats,—one for the soldier, one for the child, and a third for the dog. The veteran enters,—the child, not strong enough to have pushed through the crowd, raised on his shoulder, Rolla-like; the dog led by a string. He enters erect and warrior-like; his spirit has been roused by contest; his struggles have been crowned by victory. But (and here the art of the drama and the actor culminated towards the highest point)—but he now at once includes in the list of his dramatis persona the whole of his Gatesboro' audience. They are that select company into which he has thus forced his way. As he sees them seated before him, so calm, orderly, and dignified, /mauvaise honte/ steals over the breast more accustomed to front the cannon than the battery of ladies' eyes. He places the child in a chair abashed and humbled; he drops into a seat beside her shrinkingly; and the dog, with more self-possession and sense of his own consequence, brushes with his paw some imaginary dust from a third chair, as in the superciliousness of the well dressed, and then seats himself, and looks round with serene audacity.

The chairs were skilfully placed on one side of the stage,

as close as possible to the front row of the audience. The soldier ventures a furtive glance along the lines, and then speaks to his grandchild in whispered, bated breath: "Now they are there, what are they come for? To beg? He can never have the boldness to exhibit an animal for sous,— impossible; no, no, let them slink back again and sell the cross." And the child whispers courage; bids him look again along the rows; those faces seem very kind. He again lifts his eyes, glances round, and with an extemporaneous tact that completed the illusion to which the audience were already gently lending themselves, made sundry complimentary comments on the different faces actually before him, selected most felicitously. The audience, taken by surprise, as some fair female, or kindly burgess, familiar to their associations, was thus pointed out to their applause, became heartily genial in their cheers and laughter. And the Comedian's face, unmoved by such demonstrations,—so shy and sad, insinuated its pathos underneath cheer and laugh. You now learned through the child that a dance, on which the company had been supposed to be gazing, was concluded, and that they would not be displeased by an interval of some other diversion. Now was the tune! The dog, as if to convey a sense of the prevalent ennui, yawned audibly, patted the child on the shoulder, and looked up in her face. "A game of dominos," whispered the little girl. The dog gleefully grinned assent. Timidly she stole forth the old dominos, and ranged them on the ground; on which she slipped from her chair, the dog slipped from his; they

began to play. The experiment was launched; the soldier saw that the curiosity of the company was excited, that the show would commence, the sons follow; and as if he at least would not openly shame his service and his Emperor, he turned aside, slid his hand to his breast, tore away his cross, and hid it. Scarce a murmured word accompanied the action, the acting said all; and a noble thrill ran through the audience. Oh, sublime art of the mime!

The Mayor sat very near where the child and dog were at play. The Comedian had (as he before implied he would do) discreetly prepared that gentleman for direct and personal appeal. The little girl turned her blue eyes innocently towards Mr. Hartopp, and said, "The dog beats me, sir; will you try what you can do?"

A roar, and universal clapping of hands, amidst which the worthy magistrate stepped on the stage. At the command of its young mistress the dog made the magistrate a polite bow, and straight to the game went magistrate and dog. From that time the interest became, as it were, personal to all present. "Will you come, sir," said the child to a young gentleman, who was straining his neck to see how the dominos were played, "and observe that it is all fair? You, too, sir?" to Mr. Williams. The Comedian stood beside the dog, whose movements he directed with undetected skill, while appearing only to fix his eyes on the ground in conscious abasement. Those on the rows from behind now pressed forward; those in advance either came on the stage, or stood up intently contemplating. The Mayor was defeated, the crowd became too thick, and the caresses bestowed on the

dog seemed to fatigue him. He rose and retreated to a corner haughtily. "Manners, sir," said the soldier; "it is not for the like of us to be proud; excuse him, ladies and gentlemen. "He only wishes to please all," said the child, deprecatingly. "Say how many would you have round us at a time, so that the rest may not be prevented seeing you." She spread the multiplication figures before the dog; the dog put his paw on 10. "Astonishing!" said the Mayor.

"Will you choose them yourself, sir?"

The dog nodded, walked leisurely round, keeping one eye towards the one eye of his master and selected ten persons, amongst whom were the Mayor, Mr. Williams, and three pretty young ladies who had been induced to ascend the stage. The others were chosen no less judiciously.

The dog was then artfully led on from one accomplishment to another, much within the ordinary range which bounds the instruction of learned animals. He was asked to say how many ladies were on the stage: he spelt three. What were their names? "The Graces." Then he was asked who was the first magistrate in the town. The dog made a bow to the Mayor. "What had made that gentleman first magistrate?" The dog looked to the alphabet and spelt "Worth." "Were there any persons present more powerful than the Mayor?" The dog bowed to the three young ladies. "What made them more powerful?" The dog spelt "Beauty." When ended the applause these answers received, the dog went through the musket exercise with the soldier's staff; and

as soon as he had performed that, he came to the business part of the exhibition, seized the hat which his master had dropped on the ground, and carried it round to each person on the stage. They looked at one another. "He is a poor soldier's dog," said the child, hiding her face. "No, no; a soldier cannot beg," cried the Comedian. The Mayor dropped a coin in the hat; others did the same or affected to do it. The dog took the hat to his master, who waved him aside. There was a pause. The dog laid the hat softly at the soldier's feet, and looked up at the child beseechingly. "What," asked she, raising her head proudly—"what secures WORTH and defends BEAUTY?" The dog took up the staff and shouldered it. "And to what can the soldier look for aid when he starves and will not beg?" The dog seemed puzzled, —the suspense was awful. "Good heavens," thought the Comedian, "if the brute should break down after all!—and when I took such care that the words should lie undisturbed-right before his nose!" With a deep sigh the veteran started from his despondent attitude, and crept along the floor as if for escape—so broken-down, so crestfallen. Every eye was on that heartbroken face and receding figure; and the eye of that heartbroken face was on the dog, and the foot of that receding figure seemed to tremble, recoil, start, as it passed by the alphabetical letters which still lay on the ground as last arranged. "Ah! to what should he look for aid?" repeated the grandchild, clasping her little hands. The dog had now caught the cue, and put his paw first upon "WORTH," and then upon "BEAUTY."

"Worth!" cried the ladies—"Beauty!" exclaimed the Mayor. "Wonderful, wonderful!"

"Take up the hat," said the child, and turning to the Mayor —"Ah! tell him, sir, that what Worth and Beauty give to Valour in distress is not alms but tribute."

The words were little better than a hack claptrap; but the sweet voice glided through the assembly, and found its way into every heart.

"Is it so?" asked the old soldier, as his hand hoveringly passed above the coins. "Upon my honour it is, sir!" said the Mayor, with serious emphasis. The audience thought it the best speech he had ever made in his life, and cheered him till the roof rang again. "Oh! bread, bread, for you, darling!" cried the veteran, bowing his head over the child, and taking out his cross and kissing it with passion; "and the badge of honour still for me!"

While the audience was in the full depth of its emotion, and generous tears in many an eye, Waife seized his moment, dropped the actor, and stepped forth to the front as the man—simple, quiet, earnest man—artless man!

"This is no mimic scene, ladies and gentlemen. It is a tale in real life that stands out before you. I am here to appeal to those hearts that are not vainly open to human sorrows. I plead for what I have represented. True, that the man who needs your aid is not one of that soldiery which devastated Europe. But he has fought in battles as severe, and been left by fortune to as stern a desolation. True, he is not a Frenchman; he is one of

a land you will not love less than France,—it is your own. He, too, has a child whom he would save from famine. He, too, has nothing left to sell or to pawn for bread,—except—oh, not this gilded badge, see, this is only foil and cardboard,—except, I say, the thing itself, of which you respect even so poor a symbol,—nothing left to sell or to pawn but Honour! For these I have pleaded this night as a showman; for these, less haughty than the Frenchman, I stretch my hands towards you without shame; for these I am a beggar."

He was silent. The dog quietly took up the hat and approached the Mayor again. The Mayor extracted the half-crown he had previously deposited, and dropped into the hat two golden sovereigns. Who does not guess the rest? All crowded forward,—youth and age, man and woman. And most ardent of all were those whose life stands most close to vicissitude, most exposed to beggary, most sorely tried in the alternative between bread and honour. Not an operative there but spared his mite.

CHAPTER XIII

> Omne ignotum pro magnifico.—Rumour, knowing nothing of his antecedents, exalts Gentleman Waife into Don Magnifico.

The Comedian and his two coadjutors were followed to the Saracen's Head inn by a large crowd, but at respectful distance. Though I know few things less pleasing than to have been decoyed and entrapped into an unexpected demand upon one's purse,—when one only counted, too, upon an agreeable evening,—and hold, therefore, in just abhorrence the circulating plate which sometimes follows a public oration, homily, or other eloquent appeal to British liberality; yet, I will venture to say, there was not a creature whom the Comedian had surprised into impulsive beneficence who regretted his action, grudged its cost, or thought he had paid too dear for his entertainment. All had gone through a series of such pleasurable emotions that all had, as it were, wished a vent for their gratitude; and when the vent was found, it became an additional pleasure. But, strange to say, no one could satisfactorily explain to himself these two questions,—for what, and to whom had he given his money? It was not a general conjecture that the exhibitor wanted the money for his own uses. No; despite the evidence in favour of that idea, a person so respectable, so dignified, addressing them, too, with that noble assurance to which a man who begs for himself is

not morally entitled,—a person thus characterized must be some high-hearted philanthropist who condescended to display his powers at an Institute purely intellectual, perhaps on behalf of an eminent but decayed author, whose name, from the respect due to letters, was delicately concealed. Mr. Williams, considered the hardest head and most practical man in the town, originated and maintained that hypothesis. Probably the stranger was an author himself, a great and affluent author. Had not great and affluent authors—men who are the boast of our time and land—acted, yea, on a common stage, and acted inimitably too, on behalf of some lettered brother or literary object? Therefore in these guileless minds, with all the pecuniary advantages of extreme penury and forlorn position, the Comedian obtained the respect due to prosperous circumstances and high renown. But there was one universal wish expressed by all who had been present, as they took their way homeward; and that wish was to renew the pleasure they had experienced, even if they paid the same price for it. Could not the long-closed theatre be re-opened, and the great man be induced by philanthropic motives, and an assured sum raised by voluntary subscriptions, to gratify the whole town, as he had gratified its selected intellect? Mr. Williams, in a state of charitable thaw, now softest of the soft, like most hard men when once softened, suggested this idea to the Mayor. The Mayor said evasively that he would think of it, and that he intended to pay his respects to Mr. Chapman before he returned home, that very night: it was proper. Mr. Williams and many others wished

to accompany his worship. But the kind magistrate suggested that Mr. Chapman would be greatly fatigued: that the presence of many might seem more an intrusion than a compliment; that he, the Mayor, had better go alone, and at a somewhat later hour, when Mr. Chapman, though not retired to bed, might have had time for rest and refreshment. This delicate consideration had its weight; and the streets were thin when the Mayor's gig stopped, on its way villa-wards, at the Saracen's Head.

CHAPTER XIV

> It is the interval between our first repinings and our final resignation, in which, both with individuals and communities, is to be found all that makes a history worth telling. Ere yet we yearn for what is out of our reach, we are still in the cradle. When wearied out with our yearnings, desire again falls asleep; we are on the deathbed.

Sophy (leaning on her grandfather's arm as they ascend the stair of the Saracen's Head).—"But I am so tired, Grandy: I'd rather go to bed at once, please!"

GENTLEMAN WAIFE.—"Surely you could take something to eat first— something nice,—Miss Chapman?"—(Whispering close), "We can live in clover now,—a phrase which means" (aloud to the landlady, who crossed the landing-place above) "grilled chicken and mushrooms for supper, ma'am! Why don't you smile, Sopby? Oh, darling, you are ill!"

"No, no, Grandy, dear; only tired: let me go to bed. I shall be better to-morrow; I shall indeed!"

Waife looked fondly into her face, but his spirits were too much exhilarated to allow him to notice the unusual flush upon her cheek, except with admiration of the increased beauty which the heightened colour gave to her soft features.

"Well," said he, "you are a pretty child!—a very pretty child, and you act wonderfully. You would make a fortune on the stage;

but—"

SOPHY (eagerly).—"But—no, no, never!—not the stage!"

WAIFE.—"I don't wish you to go on the stage, as you know. A private exhibition—like the one to-night, for instance—has" (thrusting his hand into his pocket) "much to recommend it."

SOPHY (with a sigh).—"Thank Heaven! that is over now; and you'll not be in want of money for a long, long time! Dear Sir Isaac!"

She began caressing Sir Isaac, who received her attentions with solemn pleasure. They were now in Sophy's room; and Waife, after again pressing the child in vain to take some refreshment, bestowed on her his kiss and blessing, and whistled "/Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre/" to Sir Isaac, who, considering that melody an invitation to supper, licked his lips, and stalked forth, rejoicing, but decorous.

Left alone, the child breathed long and hard, pressing her hands to her bosom, and sank wearily on the foot of the bed. There were no shutters to the window, and the moonlight came in gently, stealing across that part of the wall and floor which the ray of the candle left in shade. The girl raised her eyes slowly towards the window,—towards the glimpse of the blue sky, and the slanting lustre of the moon. There is a certain epoch in our childhood, when what is called the romance of sentiment first makes itself vaguely felt. And ever with the dawn of that sentiment the moon and the stars take a strange and

haunting fascination. Few persons in middle life-even though they be genuine poets—feel the peculiar spell in the severe stillness and mournful splendour of starry skies which impresses most of us, even though no poets at all, in that mystic age when Childhood nearly touches upon Youth, and turns an unquiet heart to those marvellous riddles within us and without, which we cease to conjecture when experience has taught us that they have no solution upon this side the grave. Lured by the light, the child rose softly, approached the window, and, resting her upturned face upon both hands, gazed long into the heavens, communing evidently with herself, for her lips moved and murmured indistinctly. Slowly she retired from the casement, and again seated herself at the foot of the bed, disconsolate. And then her thoughts ran somewhat thus, though she might not have shaped them exactly in the same words: "No, I cannot understand it. Why was I contented and happy before I knew him? Why did I see no harm, no shame in this way of life—not even on that stage with those people—until he said, 'It was what he wished I had never stooped to'? And Grandfather says our paths are so different they cannot cross each other again. There is a path of life, then, which I can never enter; there is a path on which I must always, always walk, always, always, always that path,—no escape! Never to come into that other one where there is no disguise, no hiding, no false names,—never, never!" she started impatiently, and with a wild look,—"It is killing me!"

Then, terrified by her own impetuosity, she threw herself

on the bed, weeping low. Her heart had now gone back to her grandfather; it was smiting her for ingratitude to him. Could there be shame or wrong in what he asked,—what he did? And was she to murmur if she aided him to exist? What was the opinion of a stranger boy compared to the approving sheltering love of her sole guardian and tried fostering friend? And could people choose their own callings and modes of life? If one road went this way, another that, and they on the one road were borne farther and farther away from those on the other—as that idea came, consolation stopped, and in her noiseless weeping there was a bitterness as of despair. But the tears ended by relieving the grief that caused them. Wearied out of conjecture and complaint, her mind relapsed into the old native, childish submission. With a fervour in which there was self- reproach she repeated her meek, nightly prayer, that God would bless her dear grandfather, and suffer her to be his comfort and support. Then mechanically she undressed, extinguished the candle, and crept into bed. The moonlight became bolder and bolder; it advanced tip the floors, along the walls; now it floods her very pillow, and seems to her eyes to take a holy loving kindness, holier and more loving as the lids droop beneath it. A vague remembrance of some tale of "guardian spirits," with which Waife had once charmed her wonder, stirred through her lulling thoughts, linking itself with the presence of that encircling moonlight. There! see the eyelids are closed, no tear upon their fringe. See the dimples steal out as the sweet lips are parted. She sleeps, she dreams already!

Where and what is the rude world of waking now? Are there not guardian spirits? Deride the question if thou wilt, stern man, the reasoning and self-reliant; but thou, O fair mother, who hast marked the strange happiness on the face of a child that has wept itself to sleep, what sayest thou to the soft tradition, which surely had its origin in the heart of the earliest mother?

CHAPTER XV

There is no man so friendless but what he can find a friend sincere enough to tell him disagreeable truths.

Meanwhile the Comedian had made himself and Sir Isaac extremely comfortable. No unabstemious man by habit was Gentleman Waife. He could dine on a crust, and season it with mirth; and as for exciting drinks, there was a childlike innocence in his humour never known to a brain that has been washed in alcohol. But on this special occasion, Waife's heart was made so bounteous by the novel sense of prosperity that it compelled him to treat himself. He did honour to the grilled chicken to which he had vainly tempted Sophy. He ordered half a pint of port to be mulled into negus. He helped himself with a bow, as if himself were a guest, and nodded each time he took off his glass, as much as to say, "Your health, Mr. Waife!" He even offered a glass of the exhilarating draught to Sir Isaac, who, exceedingly offended, retreated under the sofa, whence he peered forth through his deciduous ringlets, with brows knit in grave rebuke. Nor was it without deliberate caution—a whisker first, and then a paw—that he emerged from his retreat, when a plate heaped with the remains of the feast was placed upon the hearth-rug.

The supper over, and the attendant gone, the negus still left, Waife lighted his pipe, and, gazing on Sir Isaac, thus addressed that canine philosopher: "Illustrious member of the Quadrupedal

Society of Friends to Man, and, as possessing those abilities for practical life which but few friends to man ever display in his service, promoted to high rank— Commissary-General of the Victualling Department, and Chancellor of the Exchequer—I have the honour to inform you that a vote of thanks in your favour has been proposed in this house, and carried unanimously." Sir Isaac, looking shy, gave another lick to the plate, and wagged his tail. "It is true that thou wert once (shall I say it?) in fault at 'Beauty and Worth,'—thy memory deserted thee; thy peroration was on the verge of a breakdown; but 'Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit, I as the Latin grammar philosophically expresseth it. Mortals the wisest, not only on two legs but even upon four, occasionally stumble. The greatest general, statesman, sage, is not he who commits no blunder, but he who best repairs a blunder and converts it to success. This was thy merit and distinction! It hath never been mine! I recognize thy superior genius. I place in thee unqualified confidence; and consigning thee to the arms of Morpheus, since I see that panegyric acts on thy nervous system as a salubrious soporific, I now move that this House do resolve itself into a Committee of Ways and Means for the Consideration of the Budget!"

Therewith, while Sir Isaac fell into a profound sleep the Comedian deliberately emptied his pockets on the table; and arranging gold and silver before him, thrice carefully counted the total, and then divided it into sundry small heaps.

"That's for the bill," quoth he,—"Civil List!—a large item.

That's for Sophy, the darling! She shall have a teacher, and learn Music,— Education Grant; Current Expenses for the next fortnight; Miscellaneous Estimates; tobacco,—we'll call that Secret-service Money. Ah, scamp, vagrant, is not Heaven kind to thee at last? A few more such nights, and who knows but thine old age may have other roof than the workhouse? And Sophy?—Ah, what of her? Merciful Providence, spare my life till she has outgrown its uses!" A tear came to his eye; he brushed it away quickly, and, recounting his money, hummed a joyous tune.

The door opened; Waife looked up in surprise, sweeping his hand over the coins, and restoring them to his pocket. The Mayor entered.

As Mr. Hartopp walked slowly up the room, his eye fixed Waife's; and that eye was so searching, though so mild, that the Comedian felt himself change colour. His gay spirits fell, —falling lower and lower, the nearer the Mayor's step came to him; and when Hartopp, without speaking, took his hand,—not in compliment, not in congratulation, but pressed it as if in deep compassion, still looking him full in the face, with those pitying, penetrating eyes, the actor experienced a sort of shock as if he were read through, despite all his histrionic disguises, read through to his heart's core; and, as silent as his visitor, sank back in his chair, —abashed, disconcerted.

MR. HARTOPP.—"Poor man!"

THE COMEDIAN (rousing himself with an effort, but still confused).— "Down, Sir Isaac, down! This visit, Mr. Mayor, is

an honour which may well take a dog by surprise! Forgive him!"

MR. HARTOPP (patting Sir Isaac, who was inquisitively sniffing his garments, and drawing a chair close to the actor, who thereon edged his own chair a little away,—in vain; for, on that movement, Mr. Hartopp advanced in proportion).—"Your dog is a very admirable and clever animal; but in the exhibition of a learned dog there is something which tends to sadden one. By what privations has he been forced out of his natural ways? By what fastings and severe usage have his instincts been distorted into tricks? Hunger is a stern teacher, Mr. Chapman; and to those whom it teaches, we cannot always give praise unmixed with pity."

THE COMEDIAN (ill at ease under this allegorical tone, and surprised at a quicker intelligence in Mr. Hartopp than he had given that person credit for).—"You speak like an oracle, Mr. Mayor; but that dog, at least, has been mildly educated and kindly used. Inborn genius, sir, will have its vent. Hum! a most intelligent audience honoured us to-night; and our best thanks are due to you."

MR. HARTOPP.—"Mr. Chapman, let us be frank with each other. I am not a clever man; perhaps a dull one. If I had set up for a clever man, I should not be where I am now. Hush! no compliments. But my life has brought me into frequent contact with those who suffer; and the dullest of us gain a certain sharpness in the matters to which our observation is habitually drawn. You took me in at first, it is true. I thought you were a

philanthropical humourist, who might have crotchets, as many benevolent men, with time on their hands and money in their pockets, are apt to form. But when it came to the begging hat (I ask your pardon; don't let me offend you), when it came to the begging hat, I recognized the man who wants philanthropy from others, and whose crotchets are to be regarded in a professional point of view. Sir, I have come here alone, because I alone perhaps see the case as it really is. Will you confide in me? you may do it safely. To be plain, who and what are you?"

THE COMEDIAN (evasively).—"What do you take me for, Mr. Mayor? What can I be other than an itinerant showman, who has had resort to a harmless stratagem in order to obtain an audience, and create a surprise that might cover the naked audacity of the 'begging hat'!"

MR. HARTOPP (gravely).—"When a man of your ability and education is reduced to such stratagems, he must have committed some great faults. Pray Heaven it be no worse than faults!"

THE COMEDIAN (bitterly).—"That is always the way with the prosperous. Is a man unfortunate? They say, 'Why don't he help himself?' Does he try to help himself? They say, 'With so much ability, why does not he help himself better?' Ability and education! Snares and springes, Mr. Mayor! Ability and education! the two worst mantraps that a poor fellow can put his foot into! Aha! Did not you say if you had set up to be clever, you would not be where you now are:' A wise saying; I admire you for it. Well, well, I and my dog have amused your

townsfolk; they have amply repaid us. We are public servants; according as we act in public— hiss us or applaud. Are we to submit to an inquisition into our private character? Are you to ask how many mutton bones has that dog stolen? how many cats has he worried? or how many shirts has the showman in his wallet? how many debts has he left behind him? what is his rent-roll on earth, and his account with Heaven? Go and put those questions to ministers, philosophers, generals, poets. When they have acknowledged your right to put them, come to me and the other dog."

MR. HARTOPP (rising and drawing on his gloves).—"I beg your pardon! I have done, sir. And yet I conceived an interest in you. It is because I have no talents myself that I admire those who have. I felt a mournful anxiety, too, for your poor little girl,—so young, so engaging. And is it necessary that you should bring up that child in a course of life certainly equivocal, and to females dangerous?"

The Comedian lifted his eyes suddenly, and stared hard at the face of his visitor, and in that face there was so much of benevolent humanity, so much sweetness contending with authoritative rebuke, that the vagabond's hardihood gave way! He struck his breast, and groaned aloud.

MR. HARTOPP (pressing on the advantage he had gained). —"And have you no alarm for her health? Do you not see how delicate she is? Do you not see that her very talent comes from her susceptibility to emotions which must wear her away?"

WAIFE.-"No, no! stop, stop, stop! you terrify me, you break my heart. Man, man! it is all for her that I toil and show and beg,—if you call it begging. Do you think I care what becomes of this battered hulk? Not a straw. What am I to do? What! what! You tell me to confide in you; wherefore? How can you help me? Would you give me employment? What am I fit for? Nothing! You could find work and bread for an Irish labourer, nor ask who or what he was; but to a man who strays towards you, seemingly from a sphere in which, if Poverty enters, she drops a courtesy, and is called 'genteel,' you cry, 'Hold, produce your passport; where are your credentials, references?' I have none. I have slipped out of the world I once moved in. I can no more appeal to those I knew in it than if I had transmigrated from one of yon stars, and said, 'See there what I was once!' Oh, but you do not think she looks ill!—do you? do you? Wretch that I am! And I thought to save her!"

The old man trembled from head to foot, and his cheek was as pale as ashes.

Again the good magistrate took his hand, but this time the clasp was encouraging. "Cheer up: where there is a will there is a way; you justify the opinion I formed in your favour despite all circumstances to the contrary. When I asked you to confide in me, it was not from curiosity, but because I would serve you if I can. Reflect on what I have said. True, you can know but little of me. Learn what is said of me by my neighbours before you trust me further. For the rest, to-morrow you will

have many proposals to renew your performance. Excuse me if I do not actively encourage it. I will not, at least, interfere to your detriment; but—"

"But," exclaimed Waife, not much heeding this address, "but you think she looks ill? you think this is injuring her? you think I am murdering my grandchild,—my angel of life, my all?"

"Not so; I spoke too bluntly. Yet still—"

"Yes, yes, yet still—"

"Still, if you love her so dearly, would you blunt her conscience and love of truth? Were you not an impostor tonight? Would you ask her to reverence and imitate and pray for an impostor?"

"I never saw it in that light!" faltered Waife, struck to the soul; "never, never, so help me Heaven!"

"I felt sure you did not," said the Mayor; "you saw but the sport of the thing; you took to it as a schoolboy. I have known many such men, with high animal spirits like yours. Such men err thoughtlessly; but did they ever sin consciously, they could not keep those high spirits! Good night, Mr. Chapman, I shall hear from you again."

The door closed on the form of the visitor; Waife's head sank on his breast, and all the deep lines upon brow and cheek stood forth, records of mighty griefs revived,—a countenance so altered, now its innocent arch play was gone, that you would not have known it. At length he rose very quietly, took up the candle, and stole into Sophy's room. Shading the light with careful hand, he looked on her face as she slept. The smile was still upon the

parted lip: the child was still in the fairyland of dreams. But the cheek was thinner than it had been weeks ago, and the little hand that rested on the coverlet seemed wasted. Waife took that hand noiselessly into his own! it was hot and dry. He dropped it with a look of unutterable fear and anguish, and, shaking his head piteously; stole back again. Seating himself by the table at which he had been caught counting his gains, he folded his arms, and rooted his gaze on the floor; and there, motionless, and as if in stupefied suspense of thought itself, he sat till the dawn crept over the sky,—till the sun shone into the windows. The dog, crouched at his feet, sometimes started up and whined as to attract his notice: he did not heed it. The clock struck six; the house began to stir. The chambermaid came into the room. Waife rose and took his hat, brushing its nap mechanically with his sleeve. "Who did you say was the best here?" he asked with a vacant smile, touching the chambermaid's arm.

"Sir! the best—what?"

"The best doctor, ma'am; none of your parish apothecaries,—the best physician,—Dr. Gill,—did you say Gill? Thank you; his address, High Street. Close by, ma'am." With his grand bow,—such is habit!— Gentleman Waife smiled graciously, and left the room. Sir Isaac stretched himself and followed.

CHAPTER XVI

In every civilized society there is found a race of men who retain the instincts of the aboriginal cannibal, and live upon their fellow-men as a natural food. These interesting but formidable bipeds, having caught their victim, invariably select one part of his body on which to fasten their relentless grinders. The part thus selected is peculiarly susceptible, Providence having made it alive to the least nibble; it is situated just above the hip-joint, it is protected by a tegument of exquisite fibre, vulgarly called "THE BREECHES POCKET." The thoroughbred Anthropophagite usually begins with his own relations and friends; and so long as he confines his voracity to the domestic circle, the law interferes little, if at all, with his venerable propensities. But when he has exhausted all that allows itself to be edible in the bosom of private life, the man-eater falls loose on society, and takes to prowling, —then "Sauve qui peut!" the laws rouse themselves, put on their spectacles, call for their wigs and gowns, and the Anthropophagite turned prowler is not always sure of his dinner. It is when he has arrived at this stage of development that the man- eater becomes of importance, enters into the domain of history, and occupies the thoughts of Moralists.

On the same morning in which Waife thus went forth from the Saracen's Head in quest of the doctor, but at a later hour, a man, who, to judge by the elaborate smartness of his attire, and the

jaunty assurance of his saunter, must have wandered from the gay purlieus of Regent Street, threaded his way along the silent and desolate thoroughfares that intersect the remotest districts of Bloomsbury. He stopped at the turn into a small street still more sequestered than those which led to it, and looked up to the angle on the wall whereon the name of the street should have been inscribed. But the wall had been lately whitewashed, and the whitewash had obliterated the expected epigraph. The man muttered an impatient execration; and, turning round as if to seek a passenger of whom to make inquiry, beheld on the opposite side of the way another man apparently engaged in the same research. Involuntarily each crossed over the road towards the other.

"Pray, sir," quoth the second wayfarer in that desert, "can you tell me if this is a street that is called a Place,—Podden Place, Upper?"

"Sir," returned the sprucer wayfarer, "it is the question I would have asked of you."

"Strange!"

"Very strange indeed that more than one person can, in this busy age, employ himself in discovering a Podden Place! Not a soul to inquire of, —not a shop that I see, not an orange-stall!"

"Ha!" cried the other, in a hoarse sepulchral voice, "Ha! there is a pot- boy! Boy! boy! boy! I say. Hold, there! hold! Is this Podden Place, —Upper?"

"Yes, it be," answered the pot-boy, with a sleepy air, caught in that sleepy atmosphere; and chiming his pewter against an area

rail with a dull clang, he chanted forth "Pots oho!" with a note as dirge-like as that which in the City of the Plague chanted "Out with the dead!"

Meanwhile the two wayfarers exchanged bows and parted; the sprucer wayfarer whether from the indulgence of a reflective mood, or from an habitual indifference to things and persons not concerning him, ceased to notice his fellow-solitary, and rather busied himself in sundry little coquetries appertaining to his own person. He passed his hand through his hair, re-arranged the cock of his hat, looked complacently at his boots, which still retained the gloss of the morning's varnish, drew down his wristbands, and, in a word, gave sign of a man who desires to make an effect, and feels that he ought to do it. So occupied was he in this self-commune that when he stopped at length at one of the small doors in the small street and lifted his hand to the knocker, he started to see that Wayfarer the Second was by his side. The two men now examined each other briefly but deliberately. Wayfarer the First was still young,— certainly handsome, but with an indescribable look about the eye and lip, from which the other recoiled with an instinctive awe,—a hard look, a cynical look,—a sidelong, quiet, defying, remorseless look. His clothes were so new of gloss that they seemed put on for the first time, were shaped to the prevailing fashion, and of a taste for colours less subdued than is usual with Englishmen, yet still such as a person of good mien could wear without incurring the charge of vulgarity, though liable to that of self-conceit. If you doubted

that the man were a gentleman, you would have been puzzled to guess what else he could be. Were it not for the look we have mentioned, and which was perhaps not habitual, his appearance might have been called prepossessing. In his figure there was the grace, in his step the elasticity which come from just proportions and muscular strength. In his hand he carried a supple switch-stick, slight and innocuous to appearance, but weighted at the handle after the fashion of a life-preserver. The tone of his voice was not displeasing to the ear, though there might be something artificial in the swell of it,—the sort of tone men assume when they desire to seem more frank and off-hand than belongs to their nature,—a sort of rollicking tone which is to the voice what swagger is to, the gait. Still that look! it produced on you the effect which might be created by some strange animal, not without beauty, but deadly to man. Wayfarer the Second was big and burly, middle-aged, large-whiskered, his complexion dirty. He wore a wig,—a wig evident, unmistakable,—a wig curled and rusty,—over the wig a dingy white hat. His black stock fitted tight round his throat, and across his breast he had thrown the folds of a Scotch plaid.

WAYFARER THE FIRST.—"YOU call here, too,—on Mrs. Crane?"

WAYFARER THE SECOND.—"Mrs. Crane? you too? Strange!"

WAYFARER THE FIRST (with constrained civility).—"Sir, I call on business,—private business."

WAYFARER THE SECOND (with candid surliness).—"So do I."

WAYFARER THE FIRST.—"Oh!"

WAYFARER THE SECOND.—"Ha! the locks unbar!"

The door opened, and an old meagre woman-servant presented herself.

WAYFARER THE FIRST (gliding before the big man with a serpent's undulating celerity of movement).—"Mrs. Crane lives here?"—"Yes!" "She's at home I suppose?"—"Yes!"—"Take up my card; say I come alone, not with this gentleman."

Wayfarer the Second seems to have been rather put out by the manner of his rival. He recedes a step.

"You know the lady of this mansion well, sir?" "Extremely well."

"Ha! then I yield you the precedence; I yield it, sir, but conditionally.

You will not be long?"

"Not a moment longer than I can help; the land will be clear for you in an hour or less."

"Or less, so please you, let it be or less. Servant, sir."

"Sir, yours: come, my Hebe, track the dancers; that is, go up the stairs, and let me renew the dreams of youth in the eyes of Bella!"

The old woman meanwhile had been turning over the card in her withered palm, looking from the card to the visitor's face, and then to the card again, and mumbling to herself. At length

she spoke:

"You, Mr. Losely! you!—Jasper Losely! how you be changed! what ha' ye done to yourself? where's your comeliness? where's the look that stole ladies' hearts? you, Jasper Losely! you are his goblin!"

"Hold your peace, old hussey!" said the visitor, evidently annoyed at remarks so disparaging. "I am Jasper Losely, more bronzed of cheek, more iron of hand." He raised his switch with a threatening gesture, that might be in play, for the lips wore smiles, or might be in earnest, for the brows were bent; and pushing into the passage, and shutting the door, said, "Is your mistress up stairs? show me to her room, or—"

The old crone gave him one angry glance, which sank frightened beneath the cruel gleam of his eyes, and hastening up the stairs with a quicker stride than her age seemed to warrant, cried out, "Mistress, mistress! here is Mr. Losely! Jasper Losely himself!" By the time the visitor had reached the landing-place of the first floor, a female form had emerged from a room above, a female face peered over the banisters. Losely looked up and started as he saw it. A haggard face,—the face of one over whose life there has passed a blight. When last seen by him it had possessed beauty, though of a masculine rather than womanly character. Now of that beauty not a trace! the cheeks shrunk and hollow left the nose sharp, long, beaked as a bird of prey. The hair, once glossy in its ebon hue, now grizzled, harsh, neglected, hung in tortured, tangled meshes,—a study for

an artist who would paint a fury. But the eyes were bright,—brighter than ever; bright now with a glare that lighted up the whole face bending over the man. In those burning eyes was there love? was there hate? was there welcome? was there menace? Impossible to distinguish; but at least one might perceive that there was joy.

"So," said the voice from above, "so we do meet at last, Jasper Losely! you are come!"

Drawing a loose kind of dressing-robe more closely round her, the mistress of the house now descended the stairs, rapidly, flittingly, with a step noiseless as a spectre's, and, grasping Losely firmly by the hand, led him into a chill, dank, sunless drawing-room, gazing into his face fixedly all the while.

He winced and writhed. "There, there, let us sit down, my dear Mrs.

Crane."

"And once I was called Bella."

"Ages ago! Basta! All things have their end. Do take those eyes of yours off my face; they were always so bright! and—really—now they are perfect burning-glasses! How close it is! Peuh! I am dead tired. May I ask for a glass of water; a drop of wine in it—or—brandy will do as well."

"Ho! you have come to brandy and morning drams, eh, Jasper?" said Mrs. Crane, with a strange, dreary accent. "I, too, once tried if fire could burn up thought, but it did not succeed with me; that is years ago; and- there—see the bottles are full

still!"

While thus speaking, she had unlocked a chiffonniere of the shape usually found in "genteel lodgings," and taken out a leathern spirit-case containing four bottles, with a couple of wine-glasses. This case she placed on the table before Mr., Losely, and contemplated him at leisure while he helped himself to the raw spirits.

As she thus stood, an acute student of Lavater might have recognized, in her harsh and wasted countenance, signs of an original nature superior to that of her visitor; on her knitted brow, a sense higher in quality than on his smooth low forehead; on her straight stern lip, less cause for distrust than in the false good-humour which curved his handsome mouth into that smile of the fickle, which, responding to mirth but not to affection, is often lighted and never warmed. It is true that in that set pressure of her lip there might be cruelty, and, still more, the secretiveness which can harbour deceit; and yet, by the nervous workings of that lip, when relieved from such pressure, you would judge the woman to be rather by natural temperament passionate and impulsive than systematically cruel or deliberately-false,—false or cruel only as some predominating passion became the soul's absolute tyrant, and adopted the tyrant's vices. Above all, in those very lines destructive to beauty that had been ploughed, not by time, over her sallow cheeks, there was written the susceptibility to grief, to shame, to the sense of fall, which was not visible in the unreflective, reckless aspect of the sleek human animal before

her.

In the room, too, there were some evidences of a cultivated taste. On the walls, book-shelves, containing volumes of a decorous and severe literature, such as careful parents allow to studious daughters,—the stately masterpieces of Fenelon and Racine; selections approved by boarding-schools from Tasso, Dante, Metastasio; amongst English authors, Addison, Johnson, Blair (his lectures as well as sermons); elementary works on such sciences as admit female neophytes into their porticos, if not into their penetralia,—botany, chemistry, astronomy. Prim as soldiers on parade stood the books,—not a gap in their ranks, —evidently never now displaced for recreation; well bound, yet faded, dusty; relics of a bygone life. Some of them might perhaps have been prizes at school, or birthday gifts from proud relations. There, too, on the table, near the spirit-case, lay open a once handsome workbox,—no silks now on the skeleton reels; discoloured, but not by use, in its nest of tarnished silk slept the golden thimble. There, too, in the corner, near a music-stand piled high with musical compositions of various schools and graduated complexity from "lessons for beginners" to the most arduous gamut of a German oratorio, slunk pathetically a poor lute-harp, the strings long since broken. There, too, by the window, hung a wire bird- cage, the bird long since dead. In a word, round the woman gazing on Jasper Losely, as he complacently drank his brandy, grouped the forlorn tokens of an early state,—the lost golden age of happy girlish studies, of

harmless girlish tastes.

"Basta, eno'," said Mr. Losely, pushing aside the glass which he had twice filled and twice drained, "to business. Let me see the child: I feel up to it now."

A darker shade fell over Arabella Crane's face, as she said," The child! she is not here! I have disposed of her long ago."

"Eh!—disposed of her! what do you mean?"

"Do you ask as if you feared I had put her out of the world? No! Well, then,—you come to England to see the child? You miss—you love, the child of that—of that—" She paused, checked herself, and added in an altered voice, "of that honest, high-minded gentlewoman whose memory must be so dear to me,—you love that child; very natural, Jasper."

"Love her! a child I have scarcely seen since she was born! do talk common-sense. No. But have I not told you that she ought to be money's worth to me; ay, and she shall be yet, despite that proud man's disdainful insolence."

"That proud man! what, you have ventured to address him—visit him—since your return to England?"

"Of course. That's what brought me over. I imagined the man would rejoice at what I told him, open his pursestrings, lavish blessings and bank-notes. And the brute would not even believe me; all because—"

"Because you had sold the right to be believed before. I told you, when I took the child, that you would never succeed there, that—I would never encourage you in the attempt. But you had

sold the future as you sold your past,—too cheaply, it seems, Jasper."

"Too cheaply, indeed. Who could ever have supposed that I should have been fobbed off with such a pittance?"

"Who, indeed, Jasper! You were made to spend fortunes, and call them pittances when spent, Jasper! You should have been a prince, Jasper; such princely tastes! Trinkets and dress, horses and dice, and plenty of ladies to look and die! Such princely spirit too! bounding all return for loyal sacrifice to the honour you vouchsafed in accepting it!"

Uttering this embittered irony, which nevertheless seemed rather to please than to offend her guest, she kept moving about the room, and (whether from some drawer in the furniture, or from her own person, Losely's careless eye did not observe) she suddenly drew forth a miniature, and, placing it before him, exclaimed, "Ah, but you are altered from those days; see what you then were!"

Losely's gaze, thus abruptly invited, fixed itself on the effigies of a youth eminently handsome, and of that kind of beauty which, without being effeminate, approaches to the fineness and brilliancy of the female countenance,—a beauty which renders its possessor inconveniently conspicuous, and too often, by winning that ready admiration which it costs no effort to obtain, withdraws the desire of applause from successes to be achieved by labour, and hardens egotism by the excuses it lends to self-esteem. It is true that this handsome face had not the elevation

bestowed by thoughtful expression but thoughtful expression is not the attribute a painter seeks to give to the abstract comeliness of early youth; and it is seldom to be acquired without that constitutional wear and tear which is injurious to mere physical beauty. And over the whole countenance was diffused a sunny light, the freshness of buxom health, of luxuriant vigour; so that even that arrogant vanity which an acute observer might have detected as the prevailing mental characteristic seemed but a glad exultation in the gifts of benignant Nature. Not there the look which, in the matured man gazing on the bright ghost of his former self, might have daunted the timid and warned the wise. "And I was like this! True! I remember well when it was taken, and no one called it flattering," said Mr. Losely, with pathetic self-condolence. "But I can't be very much changed," he added, with a half laugh. "At my age one may have a manlier look, yet —"

"Yet still be handsome, Jasper," said Mrs. Crane. "You are so. But look at me; what am I?"

"Oh, a very fine woman, my dear Crane,—always were. But you neglect yourself: you should not do that; keep it up to the last. Well, but to return to the child. You have disposed of her without my consent, without letting me know?"

"Letting you know! How many years is it since you even gave me your address! Never fear: she is in good hands."

"Whose? At all events I must see her."

"See her! What for?"

"What for! Hang it, it is natural that, now I am in England, I should at least wish to know what she is like. And I think it very strange that you should send her away, and then make all these difficulties. What's your object? I don't understand it."

"My object? What could be my object but to serve you? At your request I took, fed, reared a child, whom you could not expect me to love, at my own cost. Did I ever ask you for a shilling? Did I ever suffer you to give me one? Never! At last, hearing no more from you, and what little I heard of you making me think that, if anything happened to me (and I was very ill at the time), you could only find her a burden,—at last I say, the old man came to me,—you had given him my address,—and he offered to take her, and I consented. She is with him."

"The old man! She is with him! And where is he?"

"I don't know."

"Humph; how does he live? Can he have got any money?"

"I don't know."

"Did any old friends take him up?"

"Would he go to old friends?"

Mr. Losely tossed off two fresh glasses of brandy, one after the other, and, rising, walked to and fro the room, his hands buried in his pockets, and in no comfortable vein of reflection. At length he paused and said, "Well, upon the whole, I don't see what I could do with the girl just at present, though, of course, I ought to know where she is, and with whom. Tell me, Mrs. Crane, what is she like,—pretty or plain?"

"I suppose the chit would be called pretty,—by some persons at least."

"Very pretty? handsome?" asked Losely, abruptly. "Handsome or not, what does it signify? what good comes of beauty? You had beauty enough; what have you done with it?"

At that question, Losely drew himself up with a sudden loftiness of look and gesture, which, though prompted but by offended vanity, improved the expression of the countenance, and restored to it much of its earlier character. Mrs. Crane gazed on him, startled into admiration, and it was in an altered voice, half reproachful, half bitter, that she continued,

"And now that you are satisfied about her, have you no questions to ask about me?—what I do? how I live?" "My dear Mrs. Crane, I know that you are comfortably off, and were never of a mercenary temper. I trust you are happy, and so forth: I wish I were; things don't prosper with me. If you could conveniently lend me a five-pound note—"

"You would borrow of me, Jasper? Ah! you come to me in your troubles. You shall have the money,—five pounds, ten pounds, what you please, but you will call again for it: you need me now; you will not utterly desert me now?"

"Best of creatures!—never!" He seized her hand and kissed it. She withdrew it quickly from his clasp, and, glancing over him from head to foot, said, "But are you really in want?—you are well-dressed, Jasper; that you always were."

"Not always; three days ago very much the reverse: but I have

had a trifling aid, and—"

"Aid in England? from whom? where? Not from him whom you say you had the courage to seek?"

"From whom else? Have I no claim? A miserable alms flung to me. Curse him! I tell you that man's look and language so galled me,—so galled," echoed Losely, shifting his hold from the top of his switch to the centre, and bringing the murderous weight of the lead down on the palm of his other hand, "that, if his eye had quitted mine for a moment, I think I must have brained him, and been—"

"Hanged!" said Mrs. Crane.

"Of course, hanged," returned Losely, resuming the reckless voice and manner in which there was that peculiar levity which comes from hardness of heart, as from the steel's hardness comes the blade's play. "But if a man did not sometimes forget consequences, there would be an end of the gallows. I am glad that his eye never left mine." And the leaden head of the switch fell with a dull dumb sound on the floor.

Mrs. Crane made no immediate rejoinder, but fixed on her lawless visitor a gaze in which there was no womanly fear (though Losely's aspect and gesture might have sent a thrill through the nerves of many a hardy man), but which was not without womanly compassion, her countenance gradually softening more and more, as if under the influence of recollections mournful but not hostile. At length she said in a low voice, "Poor Jasper! Is all the vain ambition that made you so false shrunk into a ferocity

that finds you so powerless? Would your existence, after all, have been harder, poorer, meaner, if your faith had been kept to me?"

Evidently disliking that turn in the conversation, but checking a reply which might have been rude had no visions of five pounds, ten pounds, loomed in the distance, Mr. Losely said, "Pshaw! Bella, pshaw! I was a fool, I dare say, and a sad dog, a very sad dog; but I had always the greatest regard for you, and always shall! Hillo, what's that? A knock at the door! Oh, by the by, a queer-looking man, in a white hat, called at the same time I did, to see you on private business, gave way to me, said he should come again; may I ask who he is?"

"I cannot guess; no one ever calls here on business except the tax- gatherer."

The old woman-servant now entered. "A gentleman, ma'am; says his name is Rugge."

"Rugge,—Rugge; let me think."

"I am here, Mrs. Crane," said the manager, striding in. "You don't, perhaps, call me to mind by name; but—oho! not gone, sir! Do I intrude prematurely?"

"No, I have done; good-day, my dear Mrs. Crane."

"Stay, Jasper. I remember you now, Mr. Rugge; take a chair."

She whispered a few words into Losely's ear, then turned to the manager, and said aloud, "I saw you at Mr. Waife's lodging, at the time he had that bad accident."

"And I had the honour to accompany you home, ma'am, and —but shall I speak out before this gentleman?"

"Certainly; you see he is listening to you with attention. This gentleman and I have no secrets from each other. What has become of that person? This gentleman wishes to know."

LOSELY.—"Yes, sir, I wish to know-particularly."

RUGGE.—"So do I; that is partly what I came about. You are aware, I think, ma'am, that I engaged him and Juliet Araminta, that is, Sophy."

LOSELY.—"Sophy? engaged them, sir,—how?"

RUGGE.—"Theatrical line, sir,—Rugge's Exhibition; he was a great actor once, that fellow Waife."

LOSELY.—"Oh, actor! well, sir, go on."

RUGGE (who in the course of his address turns from the lady to the gentleman, from the gentleman to the lady, with appropriate gesture and appealing look).—"But he became a wreck, a block of a man; lost an eye and his voice too. How ever, to serve him, I took his grandchild and him too. He left me—shamefully, and ran off with his grandchild, sir. Now, ma'am, to be plain with you, that little girl I looked upon as my property,—a very valuable property. She is worth a great deal to me, and I have been done out of her. If you can help me to get her back, articled and engaged say for three years, I am willing and happy, ma'am, to pay something handsome,—uncommon handsome."

MRS. CRANE (loftily).—"Speak to that gentleman; he may treat with you."

LOSELY.—"What do you call uncommon handsome, Mr.—Mr. Tugge?"

RUGGE.—"Rugge! Sir; we sha'n't disagree, I hope, provided you have the power to get Waife to bind the girl to me."

LOSELY.—"I may have the power to transfer the young lady to your care— young lady is a more respectful phrase than girl —and possibly to dispense with Mr. Waife's consent to such arrangement. But excuse me if I say that I must know a little more of yourself, before I could promise to exert such a power on your behalf."

RUGGE.—"Sir, I shall be proud to improve our acquaintance. As to Waife, the old vagabond, he has injured and affronted me, sir. I don't bear malice, but I have a spirit: Britons have a spirit, sir. And you will remember, ma'am, that when I accompanied you home, I observed that Mr. Waife was a mysterious man, and had apparently known better days, and that when a man is mysterious, and falls into the sear and yellow leaf, ma'am, without that which should accompany old age, sir, one has a right to suspect that some time or other, he has done something or other, ma'am, which makes him fear lest the very stones prate of his whereabout, sir. And you did not deny, ma'am, that the mystery was suspicious; but you said, with uncommon good sense, that it was nothing to me what Mr. Waife had once been, so long as he was of use to me at that particular season. Since then, sir, he has ceased to be of use,—ceased, too, in the unhandsomest manner. And if you would, ma'am, from a sense of justice, just unravel the mystery, put me in possession of the secret, it might make that base man of use to me again, give me a handle over

him, sir, so that I might awe him into restoring my property, as, morally speaking, Juliet Araminta most undoubtedly is. That's why I call,— leaving my company, to which I am a father, orphans for the present. But I have missed that little girl,—that young lady, sir. I called her a phenomenon, ma'am; missed her much: it is natural, sir, I appeal to you. No man can be done out of a valuable property and not feel it, if he has a heart in his bosom. And if I had her back safe, I should indulge ambition. I have always had ambition. The theatre at York, sir,—that is my ambition; I had it from a child, sir; dreamed of it three tunes, ma'am. If I had back my property in that phenomenon, I would go at the thing, slap-bang, take the York, and bring out the phenomenon with A CLAW!"

LOSELY (musingly).—"You say the young lady is a phenomenon, and for this phenomenon you are willing to pay something handsome,—a vague expression. Put it into L. s. d."

RUGGE.—"Sir, if she can be bound to me legally for three years, I would give L100. I did offer to Waife L50,—to you, sir, L100."

Losely's eyes flashed, and his hands opened restlessly. "But, confound it, where is she? Have you no clew?"

RUGGE.—"No, but we can easily find one; it was not worth my while to hunt them up before I was quite sure that, if I regained my property in that phenomenon, the law would protect it."

MRS. CRANE (moving to the door).—"Well, Jasper Losely,

you will sell the young lady, I doubt not; and when you have sold her, let me know." She came back and whispered, "You will not perhaps now want money from me, but I shall see you again; for, if you would find the child, you will need my aid."

"Certainly, my dear friend, I will call again; honour bright."

Mrs. Crane here bowed to the gentlemen, and swept out of the room.

Thus left alone, Losely and Rugge looked at each other with a shy and yet cunning gaze,—Rugge's hands in his trouser's pockets, his head thrown back; Losely's hands in voluntarily expanded, his head bewitchingly bent forward, and a little on one side.

"Sir," said Rugge, at length, "what do you say to a chop and a pint of wine? Perhaps we could talk more at our ease elsewhere. I am only in town for a day; left my company thirty miles off,—orphans, as I said before."

"Mr. Rugge," said Losely, "I have no desire to stay in London, or indeed in England; and the sooner we can settle this matter the better. Grant that we find the young lady, you provide for her board and lodging; teach her your honourable profession; behave, of course, kindly to her."

"Like a father."

"And give to me the sum of L100?"

"That is, if you can legally make her over to me. But, sir, may I inquire by what authority you would act in this matter?"

"On that head it will be easy to satisfy you; meanwhile I accept

your proposal of an early dinner. Let us adjourn; is it to your house?"

"I have no exact private house in London; but I know a public one, —commodious."

"Be it so. After you, sir."

As they descended the stairs, the old woman-servant stood at the street door. Rugge went out first; the woman detained Losely. "Do you find her altered?"

"Whom? Mrs. Crane?—why, years will tell. But you seem to have known me; I don't remember you."

"Not Bridget Greggs?"

"Is it possible? I left you a middle-aged, rosy-faced woman. True, I recognize you now. There's a crown for you. I wish I had more to spare!"

Bridget pushed back the silver.

"No; I dare not! Take money from you, Jasper Losely! Mistress would not forgive me!"

Losely, not unreluctantly, restored the crown to his pocket; and, with a snort rather than sigh of relief, stepped into open daylight. As he crossed the street to join Rugge, who was waiting for him on the shady side, he mechanically turned to look back at the house, and, at the open window of an upper story, he beheld again those shining eyes which had glared down on him from the stairs. He tried to smile, and waved his hand feebly. The eyes seemed to return the smile; and as he walked down the street, arm-in-arm with the ruffian manager, slowly recovering

his springy step, and in the gloss of the new garments that set forth his still symmetrical proportions, the eyes followed him watchfully, steadfastly, till his form had vanished, and the dull street was once more a solitude.

Then Arabella Crane turned from the window. Putting her hand to her heart, "How it beats!" she muttered; "if in love or in hate, in scorn or in pity, beats once more with a human emotion. He will come again; whether for money or for woman's wit, what care I?—he will come. I will hold, I will cling to him, no more to part; for better for worse, as it should have been once at the altar. And the child?" she paused; was it in compunction? "The child!" she continued fiercely, and as if lashing herself into rage, "the child of that treacherous, hateful mother,—yes! I will help him to sell her back as a stage-show,—help him in all that does not lift her to a state from which she may look down with disdain on me. Revenge on her, on that cruel house: revenge is sweet. Oh! that it were revenge alone that bids me cling to him who deserves revenge the most." She closed her burning eyes, and sat down droopingly, rocking herself to and fro like one in pain.

CHAPTER XVII

> In life it is difficult to say who do you the most mischief —enemies with the worst intentions, or friends with the best.

The conference between Mr. Rugge and Mr. Losely terminated in an appointment to meet, the next day, at the village in which this story opened. Meanwhile Mr. Rugge would return to his "orphans," and arrange performances in which for some days they might dispense with a father's part. Losely, on his side, undertook to devote the intervening hours to consultation with a solicitor to whom Mr. Rugge recommended him as to the prompt obtaining of legal powers to enforce the authority he asserted himself to possess. He would also persuade Mrs. Crane to accompany him to the village and aid in the requisite investigations; entertaining a tacit but instinctive belief in the superiority of her acuteness. "Set a female to catch a female," quoth Mr. Rugge.

On the day and in the place thus fixed the three hunters opened their chase. They threw off at the Cobbler's stall. They soon caught the same scent which had been followed by the lawyer's clerk. They arrived at Mrs. Saunders's; there the two men would have been at fault like their predecessor. But the female was more astute. To drop the metaphor Mrs. Saunders could not stand the sharp cross-examination of one of her own

sex. "That woman deceives us," said Mrs. Crane on leaving the house." They have not gone to London. What could they do there? Any man with a few stage juggling tricks can get on in country villages but would be lost in cities. Perhaps, as it seems he has got a dog,—we have found out that from Mrs. Saunders, —he will make use of it for an itinerant puppet-show."

"Punch!" said Mr. Rugge; "not a doubt of it."

"In that case," observed Mrs. Crane, "they are probably not far off. Let us print handbills, offering a reward for their clew, and luring the old man himself by an assurance that the inquiry is made in order that he may learn of something to his advantage."

In the course of the evening the handbills were printed. The next day they were posted up on the walls, not only of that village, but on those of the small towns and hamlets for some miles round. The handbills ran invitingly thus, "If William Waife, who left—on the 20th ult., will apply at the Red Lion Inn at ————-, for X. X., he will learn of something greatly to his advantage. A reward of L5 will be given to any one who will furnish information where the said William Waife and the little girl who accompanies him may be found. The said William Waife is about sixty years of age, of middle stature, strongly built, has lost one eye, and is lame of one leg. The little girl, called Sophy, is twelve years old, but looks younger; has blue eyes and light brown hair. They had with them a white French poodle dog. This bill is printed by the friends of the missing party." The next day passed; no information: but on the day following, a young

gentleman of good mien, dressed in black, rode into the town, stopped at the Red Lion Inn, and asked to see X. X. The two men were out on their researches; Mrs. Crane stayed at home to answer inquiries.

The gentleman was requested to dismount, and walk in. Mrs. Crane received him in the inn parlour, which swarmed with flies. She stood in the centre,—vigilant, grim spider of the place.

"I c-ca-call," said the gentleman, stammering fearfully, in con-consequence of a b-b-bill—I—ch-chanced to see in my ri-ri-ri-ride yesterday—on a wa-wa-wall. You-you, I—sup-sup—"

"Am X. X.," put in Mrs. Crane, growing impatient, "one of the friends of Mr. Waife, by whom the handbill has been circulated; it will indeed be a great relief to us to know where they are,—the little girl more especially."

Mrs. Crane was respectably dressed,—in silk iron-gray; she had crisped her flaky tresses into stiff hard ringlets, that fell like long screws from under a black velvet band. Mrs. Crane never wore a cap, nor could you fancy her in a cap; but the velvet band looked as rigid as if gummed to a hoop of steel. Her manner and tone of voice were those of an educated person, not unused to some society above the vulgar; and yet the visitor, in whom the reader recognizes the piscatorial Oxonian, with whom Waife had interchanged philosophy on the marge of the running brooklet, drew back as she advanced and spoke; and, bent on an errand of kindness, he was seized with a vague misgiving.

MRS. CRANE (blandly).—"I fear they must be badly off. I

hope they are not wanting the necessaries of life. But pray be seated, sir." She looked at him again, and with more respect in her address than she had before thrown into it, added, with a half courtesy, as she seated herself by his side, "A clergyman of the Established Church, I presume, sir?"

OXONIAN (stammer, as on a former occasion, respectfully omitted).—"With this defect, ma'am!—But to the point. Some days ago I happened to fall in with an elderly person, such as is described, with a very pretty female child and a French dog. The man—gentleman, perhaps I may call him, judging from his conversation—interested me much; so did the little girl. And if I could be the means of directing real friends anxious to serve them—"

Mrs. CRANE.—"You would indeed be a benefactor. And where are they now, sir?"

OXONIAN.—"That I cannot positively tell you. But before I say more, will you kindly satisfy my curiosity? He is perhaps an eccentric person,—this Mr. Waife?—a little—" The Oxonian stopped, and touched his forehead. Mrs. Crane made no prompt reply: she was musing. Unwarily the scholar continued: "Because, in that case, I should not like to interfere."

MRS. CRANE.—"Quite right, sir. His own friends would not interfere with his roving ways, his little whims on any account. Poor man, why should they? He has no property for them to covet. But it is a long story. I had the care of that dear little girl from her infancy, sweet child!"

OXONIAN.—"So she seems."

MRS. CRANE.—"And now she has a most comfortable home provided for her; and a young girl, with good friends, ought not to be tramping about the country, whatever an old man may do. You must allow that, sir?"

OXONIAN.—"Well,—yes, I allow that; it occurred to me. But what is the man?—the gentleman?"

MRS. CRANE.—"Very 'eccentric,' as you say, and inconsiderate, perhaps, as to the little girl. We will not call it insane, sir. But—are you married?"

OXONIAN (blushing).—"No, ma'am."

MRS. CRANE.—"But you have a sister, perhaps?"

OXONIAN.—"Yes; I have one sister."

MRS. CRANE.—"Would you like your sister to be running about the country in that way,—carried off from her home, kindred, and friends?"

OXONIAN.—"Ah! I understand. The poor little girl is fond of the old man,—a relation, grandfather perhaps? and he has taken her from her home; and though not actually insane, he is still—"

MRS. CRANE.—"An unsafe guide for a female child, delicately reared. I reared her; of good prospects, too. O sir, let us save the child! Look—" She drew from a sidepocket in her stiff iron-gray apron a folded paper; she placed it in the Oxonian's hand; he glanced over and returned it.

"I see, ma'am. I cannot hesitate after this. It is a good many

miles off where I met the persons whom I have no doubt that you seek; and two or three days ago my father received a letter from a very worthy, excellent man, with whom he is often brought into communication upon benevolent objects,—a Mr. Hartopp, the Mayor of Gatesboro', in which, among other matters, the Mayor mentioned briefly that the Literary Institute of that town had been much delighted by the performance of a very remarkable man with one eye, about whom there seemed some mystery, with a little girl and a learned dog; and I can't help thinking that the man, the girl, and the dog, must be those whom I saw and you seek."

MRS. CRANE.—"At Gatesboro'? is that far?"

OXONIAN.—"Some way; but you can get a cross train from this village. I hope that the old man will not be separated from the little girl; they seemed very fond of each other."

MRS. CRANE.—"No doubt of it; very fond: it would be cruel to separate them. A comfortable home for both. I don't know, sir, if I dare offer to a gentleman of your evident rank the reward,—but for the poor of your parish."

OXONIAN.—"Oh, ma'am, our poor want for nothing: my father is rich. But if you would oblige me by a line after you have found these interesting persons; I am going to a distant part of the country to-morrow,—to Montfort Court, in ————-shire."

MRS. CRANE.—"To Lord Montfort, the head of the noble family of Vipont?"

OXONIAN.—"Yes; do you know any of the family, ma'am?

If you could refer me to one of them, I should feel more satisfied as to—"

MRS. CRANE (hastily).—"Indeed, sir, every one must know that great family by name and repute. I know no more. So you are going to Lord Montfort's! The Marchioness, they say, is very beautiful."

OXONIAN.—"And good as beautiful. I have the honour to be connected both with her and Lord Montfort; they are cousins, and my grandfather was a Vipont. I should have told you my name,—Morley; George Vipont Morley."

Mrs. Crane made a profound courtesy, and, with an unmistakable smile of satisfaction, said, as if half in soliloquy, "So it is to one of that noble family—to a Vipont—that the dear child will owe her restoration to my embrace! Bless you, sir!"

"I hope I have done right," said George Vipont Morley, as he mounted his horse. "I must have done right, surely!" he said again, when he was on the high road. "I fear I have not done right," he said a third time, as the face of Mrs. Crane began to haunt him; and when at sunset he reached his home, tired out, horse and man, with an unusually long ride, and the green water-bank on which he had overheard poor Waife's simple grace and joyous babble came in sight, "After all," he said dolefully, "it was no business of mine."

"I meant well; but—" His little sister ran to the gate to greet him. "Yes, I did quite right. How should I like my sister to be roving the country, and acting at Literary Institutes 'with a poodle

dog? Quite right; kiss me, Jane!"

CHAPTER XVIII

> Let a king and a beggar converse freely together, and it is the beggar's fault if he does not say something which makes the king lift his hat to him.

The scene shifts back to Gatesboro', the forenoon of the day succeeding the memorable exhibition at the Institute of that learned town. Mr. Hartopp was in the little parlour behind his country-house, his hours of business much broken into by those intruders who deem no time unseasonable for the indulgence of curiosity, the interchange of thought, or the interests of general humanity and of national enlightenment. The excitement produced on the previous evening by Mr. Chapman, Sophy, and Sir Isaac was greatly on the increase. Persons who had seen them naturally called on the Mayor to talk over the exhibition. Persons who had not seen them, still more naturally dropped in just to learn what was really Mr. Mayor's private opinion. The little parlour was thronged by a regular levee There was the proprietor of a dismal building, still called "The Theatre," which was seldom let except at election time, when it was hired by the popular candidate for the delivery of those harangues upon liberty and conscience, tyranny and oppression, which furnish the staple of declamation equally to the dramatist and the orator. There was also the landlord of the Royal Hotel, who had lately built to his house "The City Concert-Room,"—

a superb apartment, but a losing speculation. There, too, were three highly respectable persons, of a serious turn of mind, who came to suggest doubts whether an entertainment of so frivolous a nature was not injurious to the morality of Gatesboro'. Besides these notables, there were loungers and gossips, with no particular object except that of ascertaining who Mr. Chapman was by birth and parentage, and suggesting the expediency of a deputation, ostensibly for the purpose of asking him to repeat his performance, but charged with private instructions to cross-examine him as to his pedigree. The gentle Mayor kept his eyes fixed on a mighty ledger-book, pen in hand. The attitude was a rebuke on intruders, and in ordinary times would have been so considered. But mildness, however majestic, is not always effective in periods of civic commotion. The room was animated by hubbub. You caught broken sentences here and there crossing each other, like the sounds that had been frozen in the air, and set free by a thaw, according to the veracious narrative of Baron Munchausen.

PLAYHOUSE PROPRIETOR.—"The theatre is the—"

SERIOUS GENTLEMAN.—"Plausible snare by which a population, at present grave and well-disposed, is decoyed into becoming—"

EXCITED ADMIRER.—"A French poodle, sir, that plays at dominos like a—"

CREDULOUS CONJECTURER.—"Benevolent philanthropist, condescending to act for the benefit of some

distressed brother who is—"

PROPRIETOR of CITY CONCERT-ROOM.—"One hundred and twenty feet long by forty, Mr. Mayor! Talk of that damp theatre, sir, you might as well talk of the—"

Suddenly the door flew open, and pushing aside a clerk who designed to announce him, in burst Mr. Chapman himself.

He had evidently expected to find the Mayor alone, for at the sight of that throng he checked himself, and stood mute at the threshold. The levee for a moment was no less surprised, and no less mute. But the good folks soon recovered themselves. To many it was a pleasure to accost and congratulate the man who the night before had occasioned to them emotions so agreeable. Cordial smiles broke out; friendly hands were thrust forth. Brief but hearty compliments, mingled with entreaties to renew the performance to a larger audience, were showered round. The Comedian stood hat in hand, mechanically passing his sleeve over its nap, muttering half inaudibly, "You see before you a man," and turning his single eye from one face to the other, as if strug gling to guess what was meant, or where he was. The Mayor rose and came forward,—"My dear friends," said he, mildly, "Mr. Chapman calls by appointment. Perhaps he may have something to say to me confidentially."

The three serious gentlemen, who had hitherto remained aloof, eying Mr. Chapman much as three inquisitors might have eyed a Jew, shook three solemn heads, and set the example of retreat. The last to linger were the rival proprietors of the theatre

and the city concert-room. Each whispered the stranger,—one the left ear, one the right. Each thrust into his hand a printed paper. As the door closed on them the Comedian let fall the papers: his arm drooped to his side; his whole frame seemed to collapse. Hartopp took him by the hand, and led him gently to his own armchair beside the table. The Comedian dropped on the chair, still without speaking.

MR. HARTOPP.—"What is the matter? What has happened?"

WAIFE.—"She is very ill,—in a bad way; the doctor says so,—Dr. Gill."

MR. HARTOPP (feelingly).—"Your little girl in a bad way! Oh, no; doctors always exaggerate in order to get more credit for the cure. Not that I would disparage Dr. Gill, fellow-townsman, first-rate man. Still 't is the way with doctors to talk cheerfully if one is in danger, and to look solemn if there is nothing to fear."

WAIFE.—"DO you think so: you have children of your own, sir?—of her age, too?—Eh! eh!"

MR. HARTOPP.—"Yes; I know all about children,—better, I think, than Mrs. H. does. What is the complaint?"

WAIFE.—"The doctor says it is low fever."

MR. HARTOPP.—"Caused by nervous excitement, perhaps."

WAIFE (looking up).—"Yes: that's what he says,—nervous excitement."

MR. HARTOPP.—"Clever sensitive children, subjected

precociously to emulation and emotion, are always liable to such maladies. My third girl, Anna Maria, fell, into a low fever, caused by nervous excitement in trying for school prizes."

WATFE.—"Did she die of it, sir?"

MR. HARTOPP (shuddering).—"Die! no! I removed her from school, set her to take care of the poultry, forbade all French exercises, made her take English exercises instead, and ride on a donkey. She's quite another thing now, cheeks as red as an apple, and as firm as a cricket-ball."

WAIFE.—"I will keep poultry; I will buy a donkey. Oh, sir! you don't think she will go to heaven yet, and leave me here?"

MR. HARTOPP.—"Not if you give her rest and quiet. But no excitement, no exhibitions."

WAIFE (emptying his pockets on the table).—"Will you kindly count that money, sir? Don't you think that would be enough to find her some pretty lodgings hereabouts till she gets quite strong again? With green fields,—she's fond of green fields and a farm-yard with poultry,—though we were lodging a few days ago with a good woman who kept hens, and Sophy did not seem to take to them much. A canary bird is more of a companion, and—"

HARTOPP (interrupting).—"Ay—ay—and you! what would you do?"

WAIFE.—"Why, I and the dog would go away for a little while about the country."

HARTOPP.—"Exhibiting?"

WAIFE.—"That money will not last forever, and what can we do, I and the dog, in order to get more for her?"

HARTOPP (pressing his hand warmly).—"You are a good man, sir. I am sure of it; you cannot have done things which you should be afraid to tell me. Make me your confidant, and I may then find some employment fit for you, and you need not separate yourself from your little girl."

WAIFE.—"Separate from her! I should only leave her for a few days at a time till she gets well. This money would keep her,—how long? Two months? three? how long? the doctor would not charge much."

HARTOPP.—"YOU will not confide in me then? At your age,—have you no friends,—no one to speak a good word for you?"

WAIFE (jerking up his head with a haughty air).—"So—so! Who talks to you about me, sir? I am speaking of my innocent child. Does she want a good word spoken for her? Heaven has written it in her face."

Hartopp persisted no more; the excellent man was sincerely grieved at his visitor's obstinate avoidance of the true question at issue; for the Mayor could have found employment for a man of Waife's evident education and talent. But such employment would entail responsibilites and trust. How recommend to it a man of whose life and circumstances nothing could be known,—a man without a character? And Waife interested him deeply. We have all felt that there are some persons towards whom we

are attracted by a peculiar sympathy not to be explained,—a something in the manner, the cut of the face, the tone of the voice. If there are fifty applicants for a benefit in our gift, one of the fifty wins his way to our preference at first sight, though with no better right to it than his fellows. We can no more say why we like the man than we can say why we fall in love with a woman in whom no one else would discover a charm. "There is," says a Latin love-poet, "no why or wherefore in liking." Hartopp, therefore, had taken, from the first moment, to Waife,—the staid, respectable, thriving man, all muffled up from head to foot in the whitest lawn of reputation,—to the wandering, shifty, tricksome scatterling, who had not seemingly secured, through the course of a life bordering upon age, a single certificate for good conduct. On his hearthstone, beside his ledger-book, stood the Mayor, looking with a respectful admiration that puzzled himself upon the forlorn creature, who could give no reason why he should not be rather in the Gatesboro' parish stocks than in its chief magistrate's easy-chair. Yet, were the Mayor's sympathetic liking and respectful admiration wholly unaccountable? Runs there not between one warm human heart and another the electric chain of a secret understanding? In that maimed outcast, so stubbornly hard to himself, so tremulously sensitive for his sick child, was there not the majesty to which they who have learned that Nature has her nobles, reverently bow the head! A man true to man's grave religion can no more despise a life wrecked in all else, while a hallowing affection stands out sublime through

the rents and chinks of fortune, than he can profane with rude mockery a temple in ruins,—if still left there the altar.

CHAPTER XIX

Very well so far as it goes.

MR. HARTOPP.—"I cannot presume to question you further, Mr. Chapman. But to one of your knowledge of the world, I need not say that your silence deprives me of the power to assist yourself. We'll talk no more of that."

WAIFE.—"Thank you, gratefully, Mr. Mayor."

MR. HARTOPP.—"But for the little girl, make your mind easy,—at least for the present. I will place her at my farm cottage. My bailiff's wife, a kind woman, will take care of her, while you pursue your calling elsewhere. As for this money, you will want it yourself; your poor little child shall cost you nothing. So that's settled. Let me come up and see her. I am a bit of a doctor myself. Every man blest with a large family, in whose house there is always some interesting case of small-pox, measles, whooping-cough, scarlatina, etc., has a good private practice of his own. I'm not brilliant in book-learning, Mr. Chapman. But as to children's complaints in a practical way," added Hartopp, with a glow of pride, "Mrs. H. says she'd rather trust the little ones to me than to Dr. Gill. I'll see your child, and set her up I'll be bound. But now I think of it," continued Hartopp, softening more and more, "if exhibit you must, why not stay at Gatesboro' for a time? More may be made in this town than elsewhere."

"No, no; I could not have the heart to act here again without her. I feel at present as if I can never again act at all!"

"Something else will turn up. Providence is so kind to me, Mr. Mayor."

Waife turned to the door. "You will come soon?" he said anxiously.

The Mayor, who had been locking up his ledgers and papers, replied, "I will but stay to give some orders; in a quarter of an hour I shall be at your hotel."

CHAPTER XX

Sophy hides heart and shows temper.

The child was lying on a sofa drawn near the window in her own room, and on her lap was the doll Lionel had given to her. Carried with her in her wanderings, she had never played with it; never altered a ribbon in its yellow tresses; but at least once a day she had taken it forth and looked at it in secret. And all that morning, left much to herself, it had been her companion. She was smoothing down its frock, which she fancied had got ruffled,—smoothing it down with a sort of fearful tenderness, the doll all the while staring her full in the face with its blue bead eyes. Waife, seated near her, was trying to talk gayly; to invent fairy tales blithe with sport and fancy: but his invention flagged, and the fairies prosed awfully. He had placed the dominos before Sir Isaac, but Sophy had scarcely looked at them, from the languid heavy eyes on which the doll so stupidly fixed its own. Sir Isaac himself seemed spiritless; he was aware that something was wrong. Now and then he got up restlessly, sniffed the dominos, and placed a paw gently, very gently, on Sophy's knee. Not being encouraged, he lay down again uneasily, often shifting his position as if the floor was grown too hard for him. Thus the Mayor found the three. He approached Sophy with the step of a man accustomed to sick-rooms and ailing children,—step light

as if shod with felt,—put his hand on her shoulder, kissed her forehead, and then took the doll. Sophy started, and took it back from him quickly, but without a word; then she hid it behind her pillow. The Mayor smiled. "My dear child, do you think I should hurt your doll?"

Sophy coloured and said murmuringly, "No, sir, not hurt it, but—" she stopped short.

"I have been talking to your grandpapa about you, my dear, and we both wish to give you a little holiday. Dolls are well enough for the winter, but green fields and daisy chains for the summer."

Sophy glanced from the Mayor to her grandfather, and back again to the Mayor, shook her curls from her eyes, and looked seriously inquisitive.

The Mayor, observing her quietly, stole her hand into his own, feeling the pulse as if merely caressing the slender wrist. Then he began to describe his bailiff's cottage, with woodbine round the porch, the farm- yard, the bee-hives, the pretty duck-pond with an osier island, and the great China gander who had a pompous strut, which made him the droll est creature possible. And Sophy should go there in a day or two, and be as happy as one of the bees, but not so busy. Sophy listened very earnestly, very gravely, and then sliding her hand from the Mayor, caught hold of her grandfather's arm firmly, and said, "And you, Grandy, —will you like it? won't it be dull for you, Grandy dear?"

"Why, my darling," said Waife, "I and Sir Isaac will go and

take a stroll about the country for a few weeks, and—"

SOPHY (passionately).—"I thought so; I thought he meant that. I tried not to believe it; go away,—you? and who's to take care of you? who'll understand you? I want care! I! I! No, no, it is you,—you who want care. I shall be well to-morrow,—quite well, don't fear. He shall not be sent away from me; he shall not, sir. Oh, Grandfather, Grandfather, how could you?" She flung herself on his breast, clinging there,— clinging as if infancy and age were but parts of the same whole.

"But," said the Mayor, "it is not as if you were going to school, my dear; you are going for a holiday. And your grandfather must leave you, —must travel about; 'tis his calling. If you fell ill and were with him, think how much you would be in his way. Do you know," he added, smiling, "I shall begin to fear that you are selfish."

"Selfish!" exclaimed Waife, angrily.

"Selfish!" echoed Sophy, with a melancholy scorn that came from a sentiment so deep that mortal eye could scarce fathom it. "Oh, no, sir! can you say it is for his good, not for what he supposes mine that you want us to part? The pretty cottage, and all for me; and what for him? —tramp, tramp along the hot dusty roads. Do you see that he is lame? Oh, Sir, I know him; you don't. Selfish! he would have no merry ways that make you laugh without me; would you, Grandy dear? Go away, you are a naughty man,—go, or I shall hate you as much as that dreadful Mr. Rugge."

"Rugge,—who is he?" said the Mayor, curiously, catching at any clew.

"Hush, my darling!—hush!" said Waife, fondling her on his breast.

"Hush! What is to be done, sir?"

Hartopp made a sly sign to him to say no more before Sophy, and then replied, addressing himself to her, "What is to be done? Nothing shall be done, my dear child, that you dislike. I don't wish to part you two. Don't hate me; lie down again; that's a dear. There, I have smoothed your pillow for you. Oh, here's your pretty doll again." Sophy snatched at the doll petulantly, and made what the French call a moue at the good man as she suffered her grandfather to replace her on the sofa.

"She has a strong temper of her own," muttered the Mayor; "so has Anna Maria a strong temper!"

Now, if I were anyway master of my own pen, and could write as I pleased, without being hurried along helter-skelter by the tyrannical exactions of that "young Rapid" in buskins and chiton called "THE HISTORIC MUSE," I would break off this chapter, open my window, rest my eyes on the green lawn without, and indulge in a rhapsodical digression upon that beautifier of the moral life which is called "Good Temper." Ha! the Historic Muse is dozing. By her leave!—Softly.

CHAPTER XXI

Being an essay on temper in general, and a hazardous experiment on the reader's in particular.

There, the window is open! how instinctively the eye rests upon the green! How the calm colour lures and soothes it! But is there to the green only a single hue? See how infinite the variety of its tints! What sombre gravity in yon cedar, yon motionless pine-tree! What lively but unvarying laugh in yon glossy laurels! Do those tints charm us like the play in the young leaves of the lilac,—lighter here, darker there, as the breeze (and so slight the breeze!) stirs them into checker,—into ripple? Oh, sweet green, to the world what sweet temper is to man's life! Who would reduce into one dye all thy lovely varieties? who exclude the dark steadfast verdure that lives on through the winter day; or the mutinous caprice of the gentler, younger tint that came fresh through the tears of April, and will shadow with sportive tremor the blooms of luxuriant June?

Happy the man on whose marriage-hearth temper smiles kind from the eyes of woman! "No deity present," saith the heathen proverb, "where absent Prudence;" no joy long a guest where Peace is not a dweller,—peace, so like Faith that they may be taken for each other, and poets have clad them with the same veil. But in childhood, in early youth, expect not the changeless green of the cedar. Wouldst thou distinguish fine temper from spiritless

dulness, from cold simulation,—ask less what the temper than what the disposition.

Is the nature sweet and trustful; is it free from the morbid self-love which calls itself "sensitive feeling" and frets at imaginary offences; is the tendency to be grateful for kindness, yet take kindness meekly, and accept as a benefit what the vain call a due? From dispositions thus blessed, sweet temper will come forth to gladden thee, spontaneous and free. Quick with some, with some slow, word and look emerge out of the heart. Be thy first question, "Is the heart itself generous and tender?" If it be so, self-control comes with deepening affection. Call not that a good heart which, hastening to sting if a fibre be ruffled, cries, "I am no hypocrite." Accept that excuse, and revenge becomes virtue. But where the heart, if it give the offence, pines till it win back the pardon; if offended itself, bounds forth to forgive, ever longing to soothe, ever grieved if it wound; then be sure that its nobleness will need but few trials of pain in each outbreak to refine and chastise its expression. Fear not then; be but noble thyself, thou art safe!

Yet what in childhood is often called, rebukingly, "temper" is but the cordial and puissant vitality which contains all the elements that make temper the sweetest at last. Who amongst us, how wise soever, can construe a child's heart? who conjecture all the springs that secretly vibrate within, to a touch on the surface of feeling? Each child, but especially the girl-child, would task the whole lore of a sage deep as Shakspeare to distinguish those

subtle emotions which we grown folks have outlived.

"She has a strong temper," said the Mayor, when Soppy snatched the doll from his hand a second time, and pouted at him, spoiled child, looking so divinely cross, so petulantly pretty! And how on earth could the Mayor know what associations with that stupid doll made her think it profaned by the touch of a stranger? Was it to her eyes as to his,—mere waxwork and frippery; or a symbol of holy remembrances, of gleams into a fairer world, of "devotion to something afar from the sphere of her sorrow?" Was not the evidence of "strong temper" the very sign of affectionate depth of heart? Poor little Sophy! Hide it again,—safe out of sight, close, inscrutable, unguessed, as childhood's first treasures of sentiment ever are!

CHAPTER XXII

The object of civilization being always to settle people one way or the other, the Mayor of Gatesboro' entertains a statesmanlike ambition to settle Gentleman Waife; no doubt a wise conception, and in accordance with the genius of the Nation. Every session of Parliament England is employed in settling folks, whether at home or at the Antipodes, who ignorantly object to be settled in her way; in short, "I'll settle them," has become a vulgar idiom, tantamount to a threat of uttermost extermination or smash; therefore the Mayor of Gatesboro' harbouring that benignant idea with reference to "Gentleman Waife," all kindly readers will exclaim, "Dii meliora! What will he do with it?"

The doll once more safe behind the pillow, Sophy's face gradually softened; she bent forward, touched the Mayor's hand timidly, and looked at him with pleading, penitent eyes, still wet with tears,—eyes that said, though the lips were silent, "I'll not hate you. I was ungrateful and peevish; may I beg pardon?"

"I forgive you with all my heart," cried the Mayor, interpreting the look aright. "And now try and compose yourself and sleep while I talk with your grandpapa below."

"I don't see how it is possible that I can leave her," said Waife, when the two men had adjourned to the sitting-room. "I am sure," quoth the Mayor, seriously, "that it is the best thing for her: her pulse has much nervous excitability; she wants a complete rest;

she ought not to move about with you on any account. But come: though I must not know, it seems, who and what you are, Mr. Chapman, I don't think you will run off with my cow; and if you like to stay at the bailiff's cottage for a week or two with your grandchild, you shall be left in peace, and asked no questions. I will own to you a weakness of mine: I value myself on being seldom or never taken in. I don't think I could forgive the man who did take me in. But taken in I certainly shall be, if, despite all your mystery, you are not as honest a fellow as ever stood upon shoe-leather! So come to the cottage."

Waife was very much affected by this confiding kindness; but he shook his head despondently, and that same abject, almost cringing humility of mien and manner which had pained at times Lionel and Vance crept over the whole man, so that he seemed to cower and shrink as a Pariah before a Brahmin. "No, sir; thank you most humbly. No, sir; that must not be. I must work for my daily bread; if what a poor vagabond like me may do can be called work. I have made it a rule for years not to force myself to the hearth and home of any kind man, who, not knowing my past, has a right to suspect me. Where I lodge, I pay as a lodger; or whatever favour shown me spares my purse, I try to return in some useful humble way. Why, sir, how could I make free and easy with another man's board and roof-tree for days or weeks together, when I would not even come to your hearthstone for a cup of tea?" The Mayor remembered, and was startled. Waife hurried on. "But for my poor child I have no such scruples,—

no shame, no false pride. I take what you offer her gratefully, —gratefully. Ah, sir, she is not in her right place with me; but there's no use kicking against the pricks. Where was I? Oh! well, I tell you what we will do, sir. I will take her to the cottage in a day or two,—as soon as she is well enough to go,—and spend the day with her, and deceive her, sir! yes, deceive, cheat her, sir! I am a cheat, a player, and she'll think I'm going to stay with her; and at night, when she's asleep, I'll creep off, I and the other dog. But I'll leave a letter for her: it will soothe her, and she'll be patient and wait. I will come back again to see her in a week, and once every week, till she's well again."

"And what will you do?"

"I don't know; but," said the actor, forcing a laugh, "I 'm not a man likely to starve. Oh, never fear, sir."

So the Mayor went away, and strolled across the fields to his bailiff's cottage, to prepare for the guest it would receive. "It is all very well that the poor man should be away for some days," thought Mr. Hartopp. "Before he comes again, I shall have hit on some plan to serve him; and I can learn more about him from the child in his absence, and see what he is really fit for. There's a schoolmaster wanted in Morley's village. Old Morley wrote to me to recommend him one. Good salary,—pretty house. But it would be wrong to set over young children—recommend to a respectable proprietor and his parson—a man whom I know nothing about. Impossible! that will not do. If there was any place of light service which did not require trust or responsibility,—

but there is no such place in Great Britain. Suppose I were to set him up in some easy way of business,—a little shop, eh? I don't know. What would Williams say? If, indeed, I were taken in! if the man I am thus credulously trusting turned out a rogue,"—the Mayor paused and actually shivered at that thought,—"why then, I should be fallen indeed. My wife would not let me have half-a-crown in my pockets; and I could, not walk a hundred yards but Williams would be at my heels to protect me from being stolen by gypsies. Taken in by him! No, impossible! But if it turn out as I suspect,—that, contrary to vulgar prudence, I am divining a really great and good man in difficulties, aha, what a triumph I shall then gain over them all! How Williams will revere me!" The good man laughed aloud at that thought, and walked on with a prouder step.

CHAPTER, XXIII

> A pretty trifle in its way, no doubt, is the love between youth and youth,—gay varieties of the bauble spread the counter of the great toy-shop; but thou, courteous dame Nature, raise thine arm to yon shelf, somewhat out of every-day reach, and bring me down that obsolete, neglected, unconsidered thing, the love between age and childhood.

The next day Sophy was better; the day after, improvement was more visible; and on the third day Waife paid his bill, and conducted her to the rural abode to which, credulous at last of his promises to share it with her for a time, he enticed her fated steps. It was little more than a mile beyond the suburbs of the town; and, though the walk tired her, she concealed fatigue, and would not suffer him to carry her. The cottage now smiled out before them,—thatched gable roof, with fancy barge board; half Swiss, half what is called Elizabethan; all the fences and sheds round it, as only your rich traders, condescending to turn farmers, construct and maintain,—sheds and fences, trim and neat, as if models in waxwork. The breezy air came fresh from the new haystacks; from the woodbine round the porch; from the breath of the lazy kine, as they stood knee-deep in the pool, that, belted with weeds and broad- leaved water-lilies, lay calm and gleaming amidst level pastures.

Involuntarily they arrested their steps, to gaze on the cheerful

landscape and inhale the balmy air. Meanwhile the Mayor came out from the cottage porch, his wife leaning on his arm, and two of his younger children bounding on before, with joyous faces, giving chase to a gaudy butterfly which they had started from the woodbine.

Mrs. Hartopp had conceived a lively curiosity to see and judge for herself of the objects of her liege lord's benevolent interest. She shared, of course, the anxiety which formed the standing excitement of all those who lived but for one godlike purpose, that of preserving Josiah Hartopp from being taken in. But whenever the Mayor specially wished to secure his wife's countenance to any pet project of his own, and convince her either that he was not taken in, or that to be discreetly taken in is in this world a very popular and sure mode of getting up, he never failed to attain his end. That man was the cunningest creature! As full of wiles and stratagems in order to get his own way—in benevolent objects—as men who set up to be clever are for selfish ones. Mrs. Hartopp was certainly a good woman, but a made good woman. Married to another man, I suspect that she would have been a shrew. Petruchio would never have tamed her, I'll swear. But she, poor lady, had been gradually, but completely, subdued, subjugated, absolutely cowed beneath the weight of her spouse's despotic mildness; for in Hartopp there was a weight of soft quietude, of placid oppression, wholly irresistible. It would have buried a Titaness under a Pelion of moral feather-beds. Mass upon mass of downy influence descended upon you,

seemingly yielding as it fell, enveloping, overbearing, stifling you; not presenting a single hard point of contact; giving in as you pushed against it; supplying itself seductively round you, softer and softer, heavier and heavier,—till, I assure you, ma'am, no matter how high your natural wifely spirit, you would have had it smothered out of you, your last rebellious murmur dying languidly away under the descending fleeces.

"So kind in you to come with me, Mary," said Hartopp. "I could not have been happy without your approval: look at the child; something about her like Mary Anne, and Mary Anne is the picture of you!"

Waife advanced, uncovering; the two children, having lost trace of the butterfly, had run up towards Sophy. But her shy look made themselves shy,—shyness is so contagious, and they stood a little aloof, gazing at her. Sir Isaac stalked direct to the Mayor, sniffed at him, and wagged his tail.

Mrs. Hartopp now bent over Sophy, and acknowledging that the face was singularly pretty, glanced graciously towards the husband, and said, "I see the likeness!" then to Sophy, "I fear you are tired, my dear: you must not overfatigue yourself; and you must take milk fresh from the cow every morning." And now the bailiff's wife came briskly out, a tidy, fresh-coloured, kind-faced woman, fond of children; the more so because she had none of her own.

So they entered the farm-yard, Mrs. Hartopp being the chief talker; and she, having pointed out to Sophy the cows and the

turkeys, the hen-coops, and the great China gander, led her by the one hand—while Sophy's other hand clung firmly to Waife's'—across the little garden, with its patent bee-hives, into the house, took off her bonnet, and kissed her. "Very like Mary Anne!—Mary Anne, dear." One of the two children owning that name approached,—snub-nosed, black-eyed, with cheeks like peonies. "This little girl, my Mary Anne, was as pale as you,—over-study; and now, my dear child, you must try and steal a little of her colour. Don't you think my Mary Anne is like her papa, Mr. Chapman?"

"Like me!" exclaimed the Mayor, whispering Waife, "image of her mother! the same intellectual look!"

Said the artful actor, "Indeed, ma'am, the young lady has her father's mouth and eyebrows, but that acute, sensible expression is yours,—quite yours. Sir Isaac, make a bow to the young lady, and then, sir, go through the sword exercise!"

The dog, put upon his tricks, delighted the children; and the poor actor, though his heart lay in his breast like lead, did his best to repay benevolence by mirth. Finally, much pleased, Mrs. Hartopp took her husband's arm to depart. The children, on being separated from Sir Isaac, began to cry. The Mayor interrupted his wife,—who, if left to herself, would have scolded them into worse crying,—told Mary Anne that he relied on her strong intellect to console her brother Tom; observed to Tom that it was not like his manly nature to set an example of weeping to his sister; and contrived thus to flatter their tears away in a trice, and

sent them forward in a race to the turnstile.

Waife and Sophy were alone in the cottage parlour, Mrs. Gooch, the bailiff's wife, walking part of the way back with the good couple, in order to show the Mayor a heifer who had lost appetite and taken to moping. "Let us steal out into the back garden, my darling," said Waife. "I see an arbour there, where I will compose myself with a pipe,—a liberty I should not like to take indoors." They stepped across the threshold, and gained the arbour, which stood at the extreme end of the small kitchen-garden, and commanded a pleasant view of pastures and cornfields, backed by the blue outline of distant hills. Afar were faintly heard the laugh of the Mayor's happy children, now and then a tinkling sheep-bell, or the tap of the woodpecker, unrepressed by the hush of the. Midmost summer, which stills the more tuneful choristers amidst their coverts. Waife lighted his pipe, and smoked silently; Sophy, resting her head on his bosom, silent also. She was exquisitely sensitive to nature: the quiet beauty of all round her was soothing a spirit lately troubled, and health came stealing gently back through frame and through heart. At length she said softly, "We could be so happy here, Grandfather! It cannot last, can it?"

"It is no use in this life, my dear," returned Waife, philosophizing, "no use at all disturbing present happiness by asking, 'Can it last?' To-day is man's, to-morrow his Maker's. But tell me frankly, do you really dislike so much the idea of exhibiting? I don't mean as we did in Mr. Rugge's show. I know

you hate that; but in a genteel private way, as the other night. You sigh! Out with it."

"I like what you like, Grandy."

"That's not true. I like to smoke; you don't. Come, you do dislike acting? Why? you do it so well,—wonderfully. Generally speaking, people like what they do well."

"It is not the acting itself, Grandy dear, that I don't like. When I am in some part, I am carried away; I am not myself. I am some one else!"

"And the applause?"

"I don't feel it. I dare say I should miss it if it did not come; but it does not seem to me as if I were applauded. If I felt that, I should stop short, and get frightened. It is as if that somebody else into whom I was changed was making friends with the audience; and all my feeling is for that somebody,—just as, Grandy dear, when it is over, and we two are alone together, all my feeling is for you,—at least (hanging her head) it used to be; but lately, somehow, I am ashamed to think how I have been feeling for myself more than for you. Is it—is it that I am growing selfish? as Mr. Mayor said. Oh, no! Now we are here,—not in those noisy towns,—not in the inns and on the highways; now here, here, I do feel again for you,—all for you!"

"You are my little angel, you are," said Waife, tremulously. "Selfish! you! a good joke that! Now you see, I am not what is called Demonstrative,—a long word, Sophy, which means, that I don't show to you always how fond I am of you; and, indeed," he

added ingenuously, "I am not al ways aware of it myself. I like acting,—I like the applause, and the lights, and the excitement, and the illusion,—the make-belief of the whole thing: it takes me out of memory and thought; it is a world that has neither past, present, nor future, an interlude in time,-an escape from space. I suppose it is the same with poets when they are making verses. Yes, I like all this; and, when I think of it, I forget you too much. And I never observed, Heaven forgive me! that you were pale and drooping till it was pointed out to me. Well, take away your arms. Let us consult! As soon as you get quite, quite well, how shall we live? what shall we do? You are as wise as a little woman, and such a careful, prudent housekeeper; and I'm such a harumscarum old fellow, without a sound idea in my head. What shall we do if we give up acting altogether?"

"Give up acting altogether, when you like it so! No, no. I will like it too, Grandy. But—but—" she stopped short, afraid to imply blame or to give pain.

"But what? let us make clean breasts, one to the other; tell truth, and shame the Father of Lies."

"Tell truth," said Sophy, lifting up to him her pure eyes with such heavenly, loving kindness that, if the words did imply reproof, the eyes stole it away. "Could we but manage to tell truth off the stage, I should not dislike acting! Oh, Grandfather, when that kind gentleman and his lady and those merry children come up and speak to us, don't you feel ready to creep into the earth?—I do. Are we telling truth? are we living truth? one name to-day,

another name to morrow? I should not mind acting on a stage or in a room, for the time, but always acting, always,—we ourselves 'make beliefs!' Grandfather, must that be? They don't do it; I mean by they, all who are good and looked up to and respected, as—as—oh, Grandy! Grandy! what am I saying? I have pained you."

Waife indeed was striving hard to keep down emotion; but his lips were set firmly and the blood had left them, and his hands were trembling.

"We must, hide ourselves," he said in a very low voice; "we must take false names; I—because—because of reasons I can't tell even to you; and you, because I failed to get you a proper home, where you ought to be; and there is one who, if he pleases, and he may please it any day, could take you away from me, if he found you out; and so—and so—" He paused abruptly, looked at her fearful wondering soft face, and, rising, drew himself up with one of those rare outbreaks of dignity which elevated the whole character of his person. "But as for me," said he, "if I have lost all name; if, while I live, I must be this wandering, skulking outcast,— look above, Sophy,—look up above: there all secrets will be known, all hearts read; and there my best hope to find a place in which I may wait your coming is in what has lost me all birthright here. Not to exalt myself do I say this,—no; but that you may have comfort, darling, if ever hereafter you are pained by what men say to you of me."

As he spoke, the expression of his face, at first solemn and

lofty, relaxed into melancholy submission. Then passing his arm into hers, and leaning on it as if sunk once more into the broken cripple needing her frail support, he drew her forth from the arbour, and paced the little garden slowly, painfully. At length he seemed to recover himself, and said in his ordinary cheerful tone, "But to the point in question, suppose we have done with acting and roaming, and keep to one name and settle somewhere like plain folks, again I ask, How shall we live?"

"I have been thinking of that," answered Sophy. "You remember that those good Miss Burtons taught me all kinds of needlework, and I know people can make money by needlework. And then, Grandy dear, what can't you do? Do you forget Mrs. Saunders's books that you bound, and her cups and saucers that you mended? So we would both work, and have a little cottage and a garden, that we could take care of, and sell the herbs and vegetables. Oh, I have thought over it all, the last fortnight, a hundred hundred times, only I did not dare to speak first."

Waife listened very attentively. "I can make very good baskets," said he, rubbing his chin, "famous baskets (if one could hire a bit of osier ground), and, as you say, there might be other fancy articles I could turn out prettily enough, and you could work samplers, and urn-rugs, and doileys, and pincushions, and so forth; and what with a rood or two of garden ground, and poultry (the Mayor says poultry is healthy for children), upon my word, if we could find a safe place, and people would not trouble us with their gossip, and we could save a little money for you

when I am—"

"Bees too,—honey?" interrupted Sophy, growing more and more interested and excited.

"Yes, bees,—certainly. A cottage of that kind in a village would not be above L6 a year, and L20 spent on materials for fancy-works would set us up. Ah but furniture, beds and tables, —monstrous dear!"

"Oh, no! very little would do at first."

"Let us count the money we have left," said Waife, throwing himself down on a piece of sward that encircled a shady mulberry-tree. Old man and child counted the money, bit by bit, gayly yet anxiously,—babbling, interrupting each other,— scheme upon scheme: they forgot past and present as much as in acting plays; they were absorbed in the future,— innocent simple future,—innocent as the future planned by two infants fresh from "Robinson Crusoe" or fairy tales.

"I remember, I remember, just the place for us," cried Waife, suddenly. "It is many, many, many years since I was there; I was courting my Lizzy at the time,—alas! alas. But no sad thoughts now!—just the place, near a large town, but in a pretty village quite retired from it. 'T was there I learned to make baskets. I had broken my leg; fall from a horse; nothing to do. I lodged with an old basketmaker; he had a capital trade. Rivulet at the back of his house; reeds, osiers, plentiful. I see them now, as I saw them from my little casement while my leg was setting. And Lizzy used to write to me such dear letters; my baskets were all for her. We

had baskets enough to have furnished a house with bask'ts; could have dined in baskets, sat in baskets, slept in baskets. With a few lessons I could soon recover the knack of the work. I should like to see the place again; it would be shaking hands with my youth once more. None who could possibly recognize me could be now living. Saw no one but the surgeon, the basketmaker, and his wife; all so old they must be long since gathered to their fathers. Perhaps no one carries on the basket trade now. I may revive it and have it all to myself; perhaps the cottage itself may be easily hired." Thus, ever disposed to be sanguine, the vagabond chattered on, Sophy listening fondly, and smiling up in his face. "And a fine large park close by: the owners, great lords, deserted it then; perhaps it is deserted still. You might wander over it as if it were your own, Sophy. Such wonderful trees,—such green solitudes; and pretty shy hares running across the vistas,—stately deer too! We will make friends with the lodge-keepers, and we will call the park yours, Sophy; and I shall be a genius who weaves magical baskets, and you shall be the enchanted princess concealed from all evil eyes, knitting doileys of pearl under leaves of emerald, and catching no sound from the world of perishable life, except as the boughs whisper and the birds sing."

"Dear me, here you are; we thought you were lost," said the bailiff's wife; "tea is waiting for you, and there's husband, sir, coming up from his work; he'll be proud and glad to know you, sir, and you too, my dear; we have no children of our own."

It is past eleven. Sophy, worn out, but with emotions far more

pleasurable than she has long known, is fast asleep. Waife kneels by her side, looking at her. He touches her hand, so cool and soft; all fever gone: he rises on tiptoe; he bends over her forehead,—a kiss there, and a tear; he steals away, down, down the stairs. At the porch is the bailiff holding Sir Isaac.

"We'll take all care of her," said Mr. Gooch. "You'll not know her again when you come back."

Waife pressed the hand of his grandchild's host, but did not speak.

"You are sure you will find your way,—no, that's the wrong turn,— straight onto the town. They'll be sitting up for you at the Saracen's Head, I suppose, of course, sir? It seems not hospitable like, your going away at the dead of night thus. But I understand you don't like crying, sir, we men don't; and your sweet little girl I dare say would sob ready to break her heart if she knew. Fine moonlight night, sir,— straight on. And I say, don't fret about her: wife loves children dearly,—so do I. Good-night."

On went Waife,—lamely, slowly,—Sir Isaac's white coat gleaming in the moon, ghostlike. On he went, his bundle strapped across his shoulder, leaning on his staff, along by the folded sheep and the sleeping cattle. But when he got into the high road, Gatesboro' full before him, with all its roofs and spires, he turned his back on the town, and tramped once more along the desert thoroughfare,—more slowly and more, more lamely and more, till several milestones were passed; and then he crept through the gap of a hedgerow to the sheltering eaves of a haystack; and

under that roof-tree he and Sir Isaac lay down to rest.

CHAPTER XXIV

> Laugh at forebodings of evil, but tremble after day-dreams of happiness.

Waife left behind him at the cottage two letters,—one entrusted to the bailiff, with a sealed bag, for Mr. Hartopp; one for Sophy, placed on a chair beside her bed.

The first letter was as follows:—

"I trust, dear and honoured sir, that I shall come back safely; and when I do, I may have found perhaps a home for her, and some way of life such as you would not blame. But, in case of accident, I have left with Mr. Gooch, sealed up, the money we made at Gatesboro', after paying the inn bill, doctor, etc., and retaining the mere trifle I need in case I and Sir Isaac fail to support ourselves. You will kindly take care of it. I should not feel safe with more money about me, an old man.

"I might be robbed; besides, I am careless. I never can keep money; it slips out of my hands like an eel. Heaven bless you, sir; your kindness seems like a miracle vouchsafed to me for that child's dear sake. No evil can chance to her with you; and if I should fall ill and die, even then you, who would have aided the tricksome vagrant, will not grudge the saving hand to the harmless child."

The letter to Sophy ran thus:—

"Darling, forgive me; I have stolen away from you, but only

for a few days, and only in order to see if we cannot gain the magic home where I am to be the Genius, and you the Princess. I go forth with such a light heart, Sophy dear, I shall be walking thirty miles a day, and not feel an ache in the lame leg: you could not keep up with me; you know you could not. So think over the cottage and the basket-work, and practise at samplers and pincushions, when it is too hot to play; and be stout and strong against I come back. That, I trust, will be this day week,—-'t is but seven days; and then we will only act fairy dramas to nodding trees, with linnets for the orchestra; and even Sir Isaac shall not be demeaned by mercenary tricks, but shall employ his arithmetical talents in casting up the weekly bills, and he shall never stand on his hind legs except on sunny days, when he shall carry a parasol to shade an enchanted princess. Laugh; darling,—let me fancy I see you laughing; but don't fret,—don't fancy I desert you. Do try and get well,—quite, quite well; I ask it of you on my knees."

The letter and the bag were taken over at sunrise to Mr. Hartopp's villa. Mr. Hartopp was an early man. Sophy overslept herself: her room was to the west; the morning beams did not reach its windows; and the cottage without children woke up to labour noiseless and still. So when at last she shook off sleep, and tossing her hair from her blue eyes, looked round and became conscious of the strange place, she still fancied the hour early. But she got up, drew the curtain from the window, saw the sun high in the heavens, and, ashamed of her laziness, turned, and lo! the letter on the chair! Her heart at once misgave her; the truth

flashed upon a reason prematurely quick in the intuition which belongs to the union of sensitive affection and active thought. She drew a long breath, and turned deadly pale. It was some minutes before she could take up the letter, before she could break the seal. When she did, she read on noiselessly, her tears dropping over the page, without effort or sob. She had no egotistical sorrow, no grief in being left alone with strangers: it was the pathos of the old man's lonely wanderings, of his bereavement, of his counterfeit glee, and genuine self-sacrifice; this it was that suffused her whole heart with unutterable yearnings of tenderness, gratitude, pity, veneration. But when she had wept silently for some time, she kissed the letter with devout passion, and turned to that Heaven to which the outcast had taught her first to pray.

Afterwards she stood still, musing a little while, and the sorrowful shade gradually left her face. Yes; she would obey him: she would not fret; she would try and get well and strong. He would feel, at the distance, that she was true to his wishes; that she was fitting herself to be again his companion: seven days would soon pass. Hope, that can never long quit the heart of childhood, brightened over her meditations, as the morning sun over a landscape that just before had lain sad amidst twilight and under rains.

When she came downstairs, Mrs. Gooch was pleased and surprised to observe the placid smile upon her face, and the quiet activity with which, after the morning meal, she moved about

by the good woman's side assisting her in her dairywork and other housewife tasks, talking little, comprehending quickly,—composed, cheerful.

"I am so glad to see you don't pine after your good grandpapa, as we feared you would."

"He told me not to pine," answered Sophy, simply, but with a quivering lip.

When the noon deepened, and it became too warm for exercise, Sophy timidly asked if Mrs. Gooch had any worsted and knitting-needles, and being accommodated with those implements and materials, she withdrew to the arbour, and seated herself to work,—solitary and tranquil.

What made, perhaps, the chief strength in this poor child's nature was its intense trustfulness,—a part, perhaps, of its instinctive appreciation of truth. She trusted in Waife, in the future, in Providence, in her own childish, not helpless, self.

Already, as her slight fingers sorted the worsteds and her graceful taste shaded their hues into blended harmony, her mind was weaving, not less harmoniously, the hues in the woof of dreams,—the cottage home, the harmless tasks, Waife with his pipe in the armchair under some porch, covered like that one yonder,—why not?—with fragrant woodbine, and life if humble, honest, truthful, not shrinking from the day, so that if Lionel met her again she should not blush, nor he be shocked. And if their ways were so different as her grandfather said, still they might cross, as they had crossed before, and—the work slid

from her hand— the sweet lips parted, smiling: a picture came before her eyes,—her grandfather, Lionel, herself; all three, friends, and happy; a stream, fair as the Thames had seemed; green trees all bathed in summer; the boat gliding by; in that boat they three, borne softly on,—away, away,—what matters whither?—by her side the old man; facing her, the boy's bright kind eyes. She started. She heard noises,—a swing ing gate, footsteps. She started,—she rose,—voices; one strange to her,—a man's voice,— then the Mayor's. A third voice,—shrill, stern; a terrible voice,-heard in infancy, associated with images of cruelty, misery, woe. It could not be! impossible! Near, nearer, came the footsteps. Seized with the impulse of flight, she sprang to the mouth of the arbour. Fronting her glared two dark, baleful eyes. She stood,—arrested, spellbound, as a bird fixed rigid by the gaze of a serpent.

"Yes, Mr. Mayor; all right! it is our little girl,—our dear Sophy. This way, Mr. Losely. Such a pleasant surprise for you, Sophy, my love!" said Mrs. Crane.