LEVER CHARLES JAMES

ONE OF THEM

Charles Lever
One Of Them

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One Of Them:

Содержание

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Charles James Lever
One Of Them

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JAMES WHITESIDE, M.P., ETC., ETC., ETC.

My Dear Whiteside, – Amongst all the friends I can count over in my own country, and from whom space and the accidents of life have separated, and may separate me to the last, there is not “One of Them” for whom I entertain a sincerer regard, united with a higher hope, than yourself; and it is in my pride to say so openly, that I ask you to accept of this dedication from

Your attached friend,

CHARLES LEVER.

Spezia, December 90, 1860.

A WORD OF APOLOGY FOR MY TITLE

Before I begin my story, let me crave my reader's indulgence for a brief word of explanation, for which I know no better form than a parable.

There is an Eastern tale – I forget exactly where or by whom told – of a certain poor man, who, being in extreme distress, and sorely puzzled as to how to eke out a livelihood, bethought him to give out that he was a great magician, endowed with the most marvellous powers, amongst others, that of tracing out crime, and detecting the secret history of all guilty transactions. Day after day did he proclaim to the world his wonderful gifts, telling his fellow-citizens what a remarkable man was amongst them, and bidding them thank Destiny for the blessing of his presence. Now, though the story has not recorded whether their gratitude was equal to the occasion, we are informed that the Caliph heard of the great magician, and summoned him to his presence, for it chanced just at the moment that the royal treasury had been broken into by thieves, and gems of priceless value carried away.

"Find out these thieves for me," said the Caliph, "or with your own head pay the penalty of their crime."

"Grant me but forty days, O king," cried he, "and I will bring them all before you."

So saying, he went away, but was no sooner at home and in the solitude of his own house than be tore his beard, beat his breast, and, humbling his head to the ground, cried out,

"Son of a burned father was I, not to be content with poverty and a poor existence! Why did I ever pretend to gifts that I had not, or dare to tell men that I possessed powers that were not mine? See to what vainglory and boastfulness have brought me. In forty days I am to die an ignominious death!"

Thus grieving and self-accusing, the weary hours passed over, and the night closed in only to find him in all the anguish of his sorrow; nor was it the least poignant of his sufferings, as he bethought him that already one of his forty days was drawing to its close, for in his heart he had destined this period to enjoyment and self-indulgence.

Now, though aspiring to the fame of a magician, so little learning did he possess, that it was only by recourse to a contrivance he was able to reckon the days as they passed, and calculate how much of life remained to him. The expedient he hit upon was to throw each night into an olive-jar a single date, by counting which at any time he could know how many days had elapsed.

While his own conscience smote him bitterly for the foolish deception he had practised, there were, as it happened, others who had consciences too, and somewhat more heavily charged than his own. These were the thieves who had stolen the treasure, and who firmly believed in the magician's powers. Now, it so

chanced that on the very instant he was about to throw his first date into the jar, one of the robbers had crept noiselessly to the window, and, peering through the half-closed shutter, watched what was doing within. Dimly lighted by a single lamp, the chamber was half shrouded in a mysterious gloom; still, the figure of a man could be descried, as, with gestures of sorrow and suffering, he approached a great jar in the middle of the room and bent over it. It was doubtless an incantation, and the robber gazed with all eagerness; but what was his terror as he beheld the man drop something into the jar, exclaiming, as he did so, in a loud voice, "Let Allah be merciful to us! there is one of them!" With the speed of a guilty heart he hurried back to his confederates, saying, "I had but placed my eye to the chink, when he knew that I was there, and cried, 'Ha! there is one of them!'"

It is not necessary that I should go on to tell how each night a new thief stole to the window at the same critical moment to witness the same ceremony, and listen to the same terrible words; as little needful to record how, when the last evening of all closed in, and the whole robber band stood trembling without, the magician dropped upon his knees, and, throwing in the last of his dates, cried out, "There are all of them!" The application of the story is easy. You, good reader, are the Caliph, – the mock magician is myself. Our tale will probably, from time to time, reveal who may be

"One of Them."

ONE OF THEM, Volume I

CHAPTER I. A PIAZZA AFTER SUNSET

One of the most depressing and languid of all objects is the aspect of an Italian city in the full noon of a hot summer's day. The massive buildings, fortress-like and stern, which show no touch of life and habitation; the glaring streets, un-traversed by a single passer; the wide piazza, staring vacantly in the broiling sun; the shop doors closed, all evidencing the season of the siesta, seem all waiting for the hour when long shadows shall fall over the scorched pavement, and some air – faint though it be – of coming night recall the population to a semblance of active existence.

With the air of a heated wayfarer, throwing open his coat to refresh himself, the city, at last, flings wide jalousie and shutter, and the half-baked inhabitant strolls forth to taste the "bel fresco." It is the season when nationalities are seen undisturbed by the presence of strangers. No travellers are now to be met with; the heavy rumbling of the travelling-carriage no longer thunders over the massive causeway; no postilion's whip awakes the echoes of the Piazza; no landlord's bell summons the eager

household to the deep-arched doorway. It is the People alone are abroad, – that gentle Italian people, quiet-looking, inoffensive as they are. A sort of languid grace, a kind of dignified melancholy, pervades their demeanor, not at all unpleasing; and if the stranger come fresh from the west of Europe, with its busy turmoil and zeal of money-getting, he cannot but experience a sense of calm and relief in the aspect of this easily satisfied and simple population. As the gloom of evening thickens the scene assumes more of life and movement. Vendors of cooling drinks, iced lemonades, and such-like, move along with gay flags flaunting over the brilliant urnlike copper that contains the refreshing beverage. Watermelons, in all the gushing richness of color, are at every corner, and piles of delicious fruit lie under the motley glare from many a paper lantern. Along the quays and bridges, on wide terraces or jutting bastions, wherever a breath of fresh air can be caught, crowds are seated, quietly enjoying the cool hour. Not a sound to be heard, save the incessant motion of the fan, which is, to this season, what is the cicala to the hot hour of noon. One cannot help feeling struck by the aspect of a people come thus to blend, like the members of one large family. There they are, of every age and of every condition, mingling with a sort of familiar kindliness that seems like a domesticity.

In all this open-air life, with its inseparable equality, one sees the embers of that old fire which once kindled the Italian heart in the days of their proud and glorious Republics. They are the descendants of those who, in the self-same spots, discussed

the acts of Doges and Senates, haughty citizens of states, the haughtiest of all their age – and now —

Whether come by chance or detained by some accident, two English travellers were seated one evening in front of the Café Doney, at Florence, in contemplation of such a scene as this, listlessly smoking their cigars; they conversed occasionally, in that "staccato" style of conversation known to smokers.

One was an elderly, fine-looking man, of that hale and hearty stamp we like to think English; the young fellow at his side was so exactly his counterpart in lineament and feature that none could doubt them to be father and son. It is true that the snow-white hair of one was represented by a rich auburn in the other, and the quiet humor that lurked about the father's mouth was concealed in the son's by a handsome moustache, most carefully trimmed and curled.

The *café* behind them was empty, save at a single table, where sat a tall, gaunt, yellow-cheeked man, counting and recounting a number of coins the waiter had given him in change, and of whose value he seemed to entertain misgivings, as he held them up one by one to the light and examined them closely. In feature he was acute and penetrating, with a mixture of melancholy and intrepidity peculiarly characteristic; his hair was long, black, and wave-less, and fell heavily over the collar of his coat behind; his dress was a suit of coffee-colored brown, – coat, waistcoat, and trousers; and even to his high-peaked conical hat the same tint extended. In age, he might have been anything from two-and-

thirty to forty, or upwards.

Attracted by an extraordinary attempt of the stranger to express himself in Italian to the waiter, the young Englishman turned round, and then as quickly leaning down towards his father, said, in a subdued voice, "Only think; there he is again! The Yankee we met at Meurice's, at Spa, Ems, the Righi, Como, and Heaven knows where besides! There he is talking Italian, own brother to his French, and with the same success too!"

"Well, well, Charley," said the other, good-humoredly, "it is not from an Englishman can come the sneer about such blunders. We make sad work of genders and declensions ourselves; and as for our American, I rather like him, and am not sorry to meet him again."

"You surely cannot mean that. There's not a fault of his nation that he does not, in one shape or other, represent; and, in a word, he is a bore of the first water."

"The accusation of boredom is one of those ugly confessions which ennui occasionally makes of its own inability to be interested. Now, for my part, the Yankee does not bore me. He is a sharp, shrewd man, always eager for information."

"I 'd call him inquisitive," broke in the younger.

"There's an honest earnestness, too, in his manner, – a rough vigor – "

"That recalls stump-oratory, and that sledge-hammer school so popular 'down west.'"

"It is because he is intensely American that I like him,

Charley. I heartily respect the honest zeal with which he tells you that there are no institutions, no country, no people to be compared with his own."

"To me, the declaration is downright offensive; and I think there is a wide interval between prejudice and an enlightened patriotism. And when I hear an American claim for his nation a pre-eminence, not alone in courage, skill, and inventive genius, but in all the arts of civilization and refinement, I own I'm at a loss whether to laugh at or leave him."

"Take my advice, Charley, don't do either; or, if you must do one of the two, better even the last than the first."

Half stung by the tone of reproof in these words, and half angry with himself, perhaps, for his own petulance, the young man flung the end of his cigar away, and walked out into the street. Scarcely, however, had he done so when the subject of their brief controversy arose, and approached the Englishman, saying, with a drawling tone and nasal accent, "How is your health, stranger? I hope I see you pretty well?"

"Quite so, I thank you," said the other cordially, as he moved a chair towards him.

"You've made a considerable tour of it [pronounced 'tower'] since we met, I reckon. You were bound to do Lombardy, and the silkworms, and the rice-fields, and the ancient cities, and the galleries, and such-like, – and you 've done them?"

The Englishman bowed assent.

"Well, sir, so have I, and it don't pay. No, it don't! It's noways

pleasing to a man with a right sense of human natur' to see a set of half-starved squalid loafers making a livin' out of old tombs and ruined churches, with lying stories about martyrs' thumb-nails and saints' shin-bones. That won't make a people, sir, will it?"

"But you must have seen a great deal to interest you, notwithstanding."

"At Genoa, sir. I like Genoa, – they 're a wide-awake, active set there. They 've got trade, sir, and they know it."

"The city, I take it, is far more prosperous than pleasant, for strangers?"

"Well now, sir, that ere remark of yours strikes me as downright narrow, and, if I might be permitted, I 'd call it mean illiberal. Why should you or I object to people who prefer their own affairs to the pleasant task of amusing us?"

"Nay, I only meant to observe that one might find more agreeable companions than men intently immersed in money-getting."

"Another error, and a downright English error too; for it's one of your national traits, stranger, always to abuse the very thing that you do best. What are you as a people but a hard-working, industrious, serious race, ever striving to do this a little cheaper, and that a little quicker, so as to beat the foreigner, and with all that you 'll stand up and say there ain't nothing on this universal globe to be compared to loafing!"

"I would hope that you have not heard this sentiment from an Englishman."

"Not in them words, not exactly in them terms, but from the same platform, stranger. Why, when you want to exalt a man for any great service to the state, you ain't satisfied with making him a loafer, – for a lord is just a loafer, and no more nor no less, – but you make his son a loafer, and all his descendants forever. What would you say to a fellow that had a fast trotter, able to do his mile, on a fair road, in two forty-three, who, instead of keeping him in full working condition, and making him earn his penny, would just turn him out in a paddock to burst himself with clover, and the same with all his stock, for no other earthly reason than that they were the best blood and bone to be found anywhere? There ain't sense or reason in that, stranger, is there?"

"I don't think the parallel applies."

"Maybe not, sir; but you have my meaning; perhaps I piled the metaphor too high; but as John Jacob Byles says, 'If the charge has hit you, it don't signify a red cent what the wadding was made of.'"

"I must say I think you are less than just in your estimate of our men of leisure," said the Englishman, mildly.

"I ain't sure of that, sir; they live too much together, like our people down South, and that's not the way to get rid of prejudices. They 've none of that rough-and-tumble with the world as makes men broad-minded and marciful and forgiving; and they come at last to that wickedest creed of all, to think themselves the superfine salt of the earth. Now, there ain't no superfine salt peculiar to any rank or class. Human natur' is good and bad

everywhere, – ay, sir, I 'll go further, I 've seen good in a Nigger!"

"I'm glad to hear you say so," said the Englishman, repressing, but not without difficulty, a tendency to smile.

"Yes, sir, there 's good amongst all men, – even the Irish."

"I feel sorry that you should make them an extreme case."

"Well, sir," said he, drawing a long breath, "they're main ugly, – main ugly, that's a fact. Not that they can do *us* any mischief. Our constitution is a mill where there's never too much water, – the more power, the more we grind; and even if the stream do come down somewhat stocked with snags and other rubbish upon it, the machine is an almighty smasher, and don't leave one fragment sticking to the other when it gets a stroke at 'em. Have you never been in the States, stranger?"

"Never. I have often planned such a ramble, but circumstances have somehow or other always interfered with the accomplishment."

"Well, sir, you 're bound to go there, if only to correct the wrong impressions of your literary people, who do nothing but slander and belie us."

"Not latterly, surely. You have nothing to complain of on the part of our late travellers."

"I won't say that. They don't make such a fuss about chewing and whittling, and the like, as the first fellows; but they go on a-sneering about political dishonesty, Yankee sharpness, and trade rogueries, that ain't noways pleasing, – and, what's more, it ain't fair. But as *I* say, sir, go and see for yourself, or, if you can't do

that, send your son. Is n't that young man there your son?"

The young Englishman turned and acknowledged the allusion to himself by the coldest imaginable bow, and that peculiarly unspeculative stare so distinctive in his class and station.

"I 'm unreasonable proud to see you again, sir," said the Yankee, rising.

"Too much honor!" said the other, stiffly.

"No, it ain't, – no honor whatever. It's a fact, though, and that's better. Yes, sir, I like *you!*"

The young man merely bowed his acknowledgment, and looked even more haughty than before. It was plain, however, that the American attached little significance to the disdain of his manner, for he continued in the same easy, unembarrassed tone, —

"Yes, sir, I was at Lucerne that morning when you flung the boatman into the lake that tried to prevent your landing out of the boat. I saw how you buckled to your work, and I said to myself, 'There 's good stuff there, though he looks so uncommon conceited and proud.'"

"Charley is ready enough at that sort of thing," said the father, laughing heartily; and, indeed, after a moment of struggle to maintain his gravity, the young man gave way and laughed too.

The American merely looked from one to the other, half sternly, and as if vainly trying to ascertain the cause of their mirth. The elder Englishman was quick to see the awkwardness of the moment, and apply a remedy to it.

"I was amused," said he, good-humoredly, "at the mention of what had obtained for my son your favorable opinion. I believe that it's only amongst the Anglo-Saxon races that pugnacity takes place as a virtue."

"Well, sir, if a man has n't got it, it very little matters what other qualities he possesses. They say courage is a bull-dog's property; but would any one like to be lower than a bull-dog? Besides, sir, it is what has made *you* great, and *us* greater."

There was a tone of defiance in this speech evidently meant to provoke a discussion, and the young man turned angrily round to accept the challenge, when a significant look from his father restrained him. With a few commonplace observations dexterously thrown out, the old man contrived to change the channel of conversation, and then, reminded by his watch of the lateness of the hour, he apologized for a hasty departure, and took his leave.

"Well, was I right?" said the young man, as he walked along at his father's side. "Is he not a bore, and the worst of all bores too, – a quarrelsome one?"

"I 'm not so sure of that, Charley. It was plain he did n't fancy our laughing so heartily, and wanted an explanation which he saw no means of asking for; and it was, perhaps, as a sort of reprisal he made that boastful speech; but I am deeply mistaken if there be not much to like and respect in that man's nature."

"There may be some grains of gold in the mud of the Arno there, if any one would spend a life to search for them," said

the youth, contemptuously. And with this ungracious speech the conversation closed, and they walked on in silence.

CHAPTER II. THE VILLA CAPRINI

It was a few days after the brief scene we have just recorded that the two Englishmen were seated, after sunset, on a little terraced plateau in front of an antiquated villa. As they are destined to be intimate acquaintances of our reader in this tale, let us introduce them by name, – Sir William Heathcote and his son Charles.

With an adherence to national tastes which are rapidly fading away, they were enjoying their wine after dinner, and the spot they had selected for it was well chosen. From the terrace where they sat, a perfect maze of richly wooded glens could be seen, crossing and recrossing each other in every direction. From the depths of some arose the light spray of boiling mountain torrents; others, less wild in character, were marked by the blue smoke curling up from some humble homestead. Many a zigzag path of trellis-vines straggled up the hillsides, now half buried in olives, now emerging in all the grotesque beauty of its own wayward course. The tall maize and the red lucerne grew luxuriously beneath the fig and the pomegranate, while here and there the rich soil, rent with heat, seemed unable to conceal its affluence, and showed the yellow gourds and the melons bursting up through the fruitful earth. It was such a scene as at once combined Italian luxuriance with the verdant freshness of a Tyrol landscape, and of which the little territory that once called itself

the Duchy of Lucca can boast many instances.

As background to the picture, the tall mountains of Carrara, lofty enough to be called Alps, rose, snow-capped and jagged in the distance, and upon their summits the last rays of the setting sun now glowed with the ruddy brilliancy of a carbuncle.

These Italian landscapes win one thoroughly from all other scenery, after a time. At first they seem hard and stern; there is a want of soft distances; the eye looks in vain for the blended shadows of northern landscape, and that rustic character so suggestive of country life; but in their clear distinctness, their marvellous beauty of outline, and in that vastness of view imparted by an atmosphere of cloudless purity, there are charms indisputably great.

As the elder Englishman looked upon this fair picture, he gave a faint sigh, and said: "I was thinking, Charley, what a mistake we make in life in not seeking out such spots as these when the world goes well with us, and we have our minds tuned to enjoyment, instead of coming to them careworn and weary, and when, at best, they only distract us momentarily from our griefs."

"And my thought," said the younger, "was, what a blunder it is to come here at all. This villa life was only endurable by your Italian noble, who came here once a year to squabble with his 'Fattore' and grind his peasants. He came to see that they gave him his share of oil and did n't water his miserable wine; he neither had society nor sport. As to our English country-house life, what can compare with it!"

"Even that we have over-civilized, making it London in everything, – London hours, London company, topics, habits, tastes, all smacking of town life. Who, I ask you, thinks of his country existence, nowadays, as a period of quietness and tranquil enjoyment? Who goes back to the shade of his old elms to be with himself or some favorite author that he feels to like as a dear friend?"

"No; but he goes for famous hunting and the best shooting in Europe, it being no disparagement to either that he gets back at evening to a capital dinner and as good company as he 'd find in town."

"May is of *my* mind," said Sir William, half triumphantly; "she said so last night."

"And she told me exactly the reverse this morning," said the younger. "She said the monotony of this place was driving her mad. Scenery, she remarked, without people, is pretty much what a panorama is, compared to a play."

"May is a traitress; and here she comes to make confession to which of us she has been false," said Sir William, gayly, as he arose to place a chair for the young girl who now came towards them.

"I have heard you both, gentlemen," said she, with a saucy toss of her head, "and I should like to hear why I should not agree with each and disagree afterwards, if it so pleased me."

"Oh! if you fall back upon prerogative – " began Sir William.

"I have never quitted it. It is in the sovereignty of my woman's

will that I reconcile opinions seemingly adverse, and can enjoy all the splendors of a capital and all the tameness of a village. I showed you already how I could appreciate Paris; I mean now to prove how charmed I can be with the solitudes of Marlia."

"Which says, in plain English," said the young man, "that you don't care for either."

"Will you condescend to be a little more gallant than my cousin, sir," said she, turning to Sir William, "and at least give me credit for having a mind and knowing it?"

There was a pettish half-seriousness in her tone that made it almost impossible to say whether she was amused or angry, and to this also the changeful expression of her beautiful features contributed; for, though she smiled, her dark gray eyes sparkled like one who invited a contradiction. In this fleeting trait was the secret of her nature. May Leslie was one of Fortune's spoiled children, – one of those upon whom so many graces and good gifts had been lavished that it seemed as though Fate had exhausted her resources, and left herself no more to bestow.

She had surpassing beauty, youth, health, high spirits, and immense wealth. By her father's will she had been contracted in marriage with her distant relative, Charles Heathcote, with the proviso that if, on attaining the age of nineteen, she felt averse to the match, she should forfeit a certain estate in Wales which had once belonged to the Heathcotes, and contained the old residence of that family.

Sir William and his son had been living in the retirement

of a little German capital, when the tidings of this wardship reached them. A number of unfortunate speculations had driven the baronet into exile from England, and left him with a pittance barely sufficient to live in the strictest economy. To this narrow fortune Charles Heathcote had come back, after serving in a most extravagant Hussar regiment, and taking his part in an Indian campaign; and the dashing' soldier first heard, as he lay wounded in the hospital, that he must leave the service, and retire into obscurity. If it had not been for his strong affection for his father, Charles would have enlisted as a private soldier, and taken his chance for future distinction, but he could not desert him at such a moment, nor separate himself from that share of privation which should be henceforth borne in common; and so he came back, a bronzed, brave soldier, true-hearted and daring, and, if a little stern, no more so than might be deemed natural in one who had met such a heavy reverse on the very threshold of life.

Father and son were at supper in a little arbor of their garden near Weimar, when the post brought them the startling news that May Leslie, who was then at Malta, would be at Paris in a few days, where she expected to meet them. When Sir William had read through the long letter of the lawyer, giving an account of the late General Leslie's will, with its strange condition, he handed it to his son, without a word.

The young man read it eagerly; his color changed once or twice as he went on, and his face grew harder and sterner ere he finished. "Do you mean to accept this wardship?" asked he,

hurriedly.

"There are certain reasons for which I cannot decline it, Charley," said the other, mildly. "All my life long I have been Tom Leslie's debtor, in gratitude, for as noble a sacrifice as ever man made. We were both suitors to your mother, brother officers at the time, and well received in her father's house. Leslie, however, was much better looked on than myself, for I was then but a second son, while he was the heir of a very large estate. There could not have been a doubt that his advances would have outweighed mine in a father and mother's estimate, and as he was madly in love, there seemed-nothing to prevent his success. Finding, however, in a conversation with your mother, that her affections were mine, he not only relinquished the place in my favor, but, although most eager to purchase his troop, suffered me, his junior, to pass over his head, and thus attain the rank which enabled me to marry. Leslie went to India, where he married, and we never met again. It was only some seven or eight months ago I read of his being named governor of a Mediterranean dependency, and the very next paper mentioned his death, when about to leave Calcutta."

"It is, then, most probable that, when making this will, he had never heard of our reverses in fortune?" said the young man.

"It is almost certain he had not, for it is dated the very year of that panic which ruined me."

"And, just as likely, might never have left such a will, had he known our altered fortunes?"

"I 'm not so sure of that. At all events, I can answer for it that no change in our condition would have made Tom Leslie alter the will, if he had once made it in our favor."

"I have no fancy for the compact, read it how you may," said Charles, impatiently; "nor can I say which I like least, – the notion of marrying a woman who is bound to accept me, or accepting a forfeit to release her from the obligation."

"I own it is – embarrassing," said Sir William, after a moment's hesitation in choosing a suitable word.

"A downright indignity, I'd call it," said the other, warmly, "and calculated to make the man odious in the woman's eyes, whichever lot befell him."

"The wardship must be accepted, at all events," said Sir William, curtly, as he arose and folded up the letter.

"You are the best judge of that; for if it depended upon *me*"

"Come, come, Charley," said Sir William, in his tone of habitual kindness, "this life of quiet obscurity and poverty that we lead here has no terrors for *me*. I have been so long away from England that if I went back to-morrow I should look in vain for any of my old companions. I have forgotten the habits and the ways of home, and I have learned to submit myself to twenty things here which would be hardships elsewhere, but I don't like to contemplate the same sort of existence for *you*; I want to speculate on a very different future; and if – if – Nay, you need not feel so impatient at a mere conjecture."

"Well, to another point," said the young man, hastily. "We

have got, as you have just said, to know that we can live very comfortably and contentedly here, looking after our celery and seakale, and watching our silver groschen; are you so very certain that you 'd like to change all this life, and launch out into an expensive style of living, to suit the notions of a rich heiress, and, what is worse again, to draw upon *her* resources to do it?"

"I won't deny that it will cost me severely; but, until we see her and know her, Charley, until we find out whether she may be one whose qualities will make our sacrifices easy – "

"Would you accept this charge if she were perfectly portionless, and without a shilling in the world?"

"If she were Tom Leslie's daughter, do you mean?"

"Ay, any one's daughter?"

"To be sure I would, boy; and if I were only to consult my own feelings in the matter, I 'd say that I 'd prefer this alternative to the other."

"Then I have no more to say," said the son, as he walked away.

Within a month after this conversation, the little cottage was shut up, the garden wicket closed with a heavy padlock, and to any chance inquirer after its late residents, the answer returned was, that their present address was Place Vendôme, Paris.

"Tell me your company," said the old adage; but, alas! the maxim had reference to other habits than our present-day ones. With what company now does not every man mix? Bishops discuss crime and punishment with ticket-of-leave men; fashionable exquisites visit the resorts of thieves; "swell people"

go to hear madrigals at Covent Garden; and, as for the Ring, it is equally the table-land to peer and pickpocket. If, then, you would hazard a guess as to a man's manners nowadays, ask not his company, but his whereabouts. Run your eye over the addresses of that twice-remanded insolvent, ranging from Norfolk Street, Strand, to Berkeley Square, with Boulogne-sur-Mer, St John's Wood, Cadiz, the New Cut, Bermondsey, and the Edgware Road, in the interval, and say if you cannot, even out of such slight materials, sketch off his biography.

"The style is the man," says the adage; and we might with as much truth say, "the street is the man." In his locality is written his ways and means, his manners, his morals, his griefs, joys, and ambitions. We live in an age prolific in this lesson. Only cast a glance at the daily sacrifices of those who, to reside within the periphery of greatness, submit to a crushing rent and a comfortless abode.

Think of him who, to date his note " – Street, Berkeley Square," denies himself honest indulgence, all because the world has come to believe that certain spots are the "Regions of the Best," and that they who live there must needs be that grand English ideal, – respectable.

Dear me, what unheard-of sacrifices does it demand of humble fortunes to be Respectable! what pinching and starving and saving! what self-denial and what striving! what cheerless little dinner-parties to other Respectables! what dyeing of black silks and storing of old ostrich feathers! And how and wherefore

have we wandered off in this digression! Simply to say that Sir William Heathoote and his ward were living in a splendid quarter of Paris, and after that rambled into Germany, and thence to Como and down to Rome, very often delighted with their choice of residence, enjoying much that was enjoyable, but still – shall we own it? – never finding the exact place they seemed to want, nor exactly the people with whom they were willing to live in intimacy. They had been at Baden in the summer, at Como in the late autumn, at Rome in the winter, at Castellamare in the spring, – everywhere in its season, and yet somehow – And so they began to try that last resource of bored people, – places out of the season and places out of common resort, – and it was thus that they found themselves at Florence in June, and in Marlia in July.

CHAPTER III. TRAVELLING ACQUAINTANCE

About the same hour of the same evening which we have just chronicled, a group of persons sat under some spreading chestnut-trees beside a brawling little rivulet at the Bagni de Lucca. They were travellers, chance acquaintances thrown together by the accidents of the road, and entertained for each other those varied sentiments of like and dislike, those mingled distrusts, suspicions, and beliefs, which, however unconsciously to ourselves, are part of the education travelling impresses, and which, when long persevered in, make up that acute but not always amiable individual we call “an old traveller.”

We are not about to present them all to our reader, and will only beg to introduce to his notice a few of the notabilities then present. *Place aux dames!* then; and, first of all, we beg attention to the dark-eyed, dark-haired, and very delicately featured woman, who, in half-mourning, and with a pretty but fantastically costumed girl beside her, is working at an embroidery-frame close to the river. She is a Mrs. Penthony Morris, the wife or the widow – both opinions prevail – of a Captain Penthony Morris, killed in a duel, or in India, or alive in the Marshalsea, or at Baden-Baden, as may be. She is striking-looking, admirably dressed, has a most beautiful foot, as you may see where it rests upon the rail of the chair placed in

front of her, and is, altogether, what that very smartly dressed, much-beringed, and essenced young gentleman near her has already pronounced her, "a stunning fine woman." He is a Mr. Mosely, one of those unhappy young Londoners whose family fame is ever destined to eclipse their own gentility, for he is immediately recognized, and drawlingly do men inquire some twenty times a day, "Ain't he a son of Trip and Mosely's, those fellows in Bond Street?" Unhappy Trip and Mosely! why have you rendered yourselves so great and illustrious? why have your tasteful devices in gauze, your "sacrifices" in challis, your "last new things in grenadine," made such celebrity around you, that Tom Mosely, "out for his travels," can no more escape the shop than if he were languishing at a customer over a "sweet article in white tarlatan"? In the two comfortable armchairs side by side sit two indubitable specimens, male and female, of the Anglo-Saxon family, – Mr. Morgan, that florid man, wiping his polished bald head, and that fat lady fanning with all her might. Are they not English? They are "out," and, judging from their recorded experiences, only dying to be "in" again. "Such a set of cheating, lying, lazy set of rascals are these Italians! Independence, sir; don't talk to me of that humbug! What they want is English travellers to fleece and English women to marry." Near to these, at full length, on two chairs, one of which reclines against a tree at an angle of about forty degrees, sits our Yankee acquaintance, whom we may as well present by his name, Leonidas Shaver Quackinboss; he is smoking a "Virginian" about the size of a

marshal's bâton, and occasionally sipping at a "cobbler," which with much pains he has compounded for his own drinking. Various others of different ranks and countries are scattered about, and in the centre of all, at a small table with a lamp, sits a short, burly figure, with a strange mixture of superciliousness and drollery in his face, as though there were a perpetual contest in his nature whether he would be impertinent or amusing. This was Mr. Gorman O'Shea, Member of Parliament for Inchabogue, and for three weeks a Lord of the Treasury when O'Connell was king.

Mr. O'Shea is fond of public speaking. He has a taste for proposing, or seconding, or returning thanks that verges on a passion, so that even in a private dinner with a friend he has been known to arise and address his own companion in a set speech, adorned with all the graces and flowers of post-prandial eloquence. Upon the present occasion he has been, to his great delight, deputed to read aloud to the company from that magic volume by which the Continent is expounded to Englishmen, and in whose pages they are instructed in everything, from passports to pictures, and drilled in all the mysteries of money, posting, police regulations, domes, dinners, and Divine service by a Clergyman of the Established Church. In a word, he is reciting John Murray.

To understand the drift of the present meeting, we ought to mention that, in the course of a conversation started that day at the *table d'hote* it was suggested that such of the company as felt disposed might make an excursion to Marlia to visit a

celebrated villa there, whose gardens alone were amongst the great sights of Northern Italy. All had heard of this charming residence; views of it had been seen in every print-shop. It had its historical associations from a very early period. There were chambers where murders had been committed, conspiracies held, confederates poisoned. King and Kaiser had passed the night there; all of which were duly and faithfully chronicled in "John," and impressively recited by Mr. Gorman O'Shea in the richest accents of his native Doric. "There you have it now," said he, as he closed the volume; "and I will say, it has n't its equal anywhere for galleries, terraces, carved architraves, stuccoed ceilings, and frescos, and all the other balderdash peculiar to these places."

"Oh, Mr. O'Shea, what profanation!" interposed Mrs. Morris; "walls immortalized by Giotto and Cimabue!"

"Have n't they got stunning names of their own?" broke in Quackinboss. "That's one of the smallest dodges to secure fame. You must be something out of the common. There was a fellow up at Syracuse townland, Measles, North Carolina, and his name was Flay Harris; they called him Flea – "

"That ceiling of the great hall was a work of Guido's, you said?" inquired Mrs. Morris.

"A pupil of Guido's, a certain Simone Affretti, who afterwards made the designs for the Twelve Apostles in the window of the chapter-room at Sienna," read out Mr. O'Shea.

"Who can vouch for one word of all that, sir?" burst in Mr.

Morgan, with a choleric warmth. “Who is to tell me, sir, that you did n’t write that, or Peter Noakes, or John Murray himself, if there be such a man.”

“I can vouch for the last,” said a pale, gentle-looking young fellow, who was arranging the flies in a fishing-book under a tree at a little distance. “If it will relieve you from any embarrassments on the score of belief, I can assist you so far.”

If there was a faint irony in this speech, the mild look of the speaker and his softened accents made it seem of the very faintest, and so even the bluff Mr. Morgan himself appeared to acknowledge.

“As you say so, Mr. Layton, I will consent to suppose there is such a man; not that the fact, in the slightest degree, touches my original proposition.”

“Certainly not, Tom,” chimed in Mrs. Morgan, in a thick voice, like one drowning.

“But if you doubt Guido, you may doubt Raphael, Titian, Michael Angelo,” burst in Mrs. Morris, with a holy terror in her voice.

“Well, ma’am, I’m capable of all that – and worse.”

What that “worse” was there is no saying, though possibly Mr. Mosely was trying to guess at it in the whisper he ventured to Mrs. Morris, and which made that lady smile incredulously.

“I now, sir, rise to put the original motion,” said O’Shea, assuming that parliamentary tone which scandal pretended he displayed everywhere but in the House; “is it the opinion of this

committee that we should all go and visit the Villa Caprini?"

"Are we quite sure it is to be seen?" interposed Mr. Layton; "it may be occupied, and by persons who have no fancy to receive strangers."

"The observation strikes me as singularly narrow and illiberal, sir," burst in Morgan, with warmth. "Are we of the nineteenth century to be told that any man – I don't care how he calls himself – has a vested right in the sight or inspection of objects devised and designed and completed centuries before he was born?"

"Well put, Tom, – remarkably well put," smothered out Mrs. Morgan.

"Will you say, sir," assumed he, thus cheered on to victory, – "will you say, sir, that if these objects – frescos, bas-reliefs, or whatever other name you give them – have the humanizing influence you assume for them, – which, by the way, I am quite ready to dispute at another opportunity with you or that other young gentleman yonder, whose simpering sneer would seem to disparage my sentiment – "

"If you mean me, sir," took up Mr. Mosely, "I was n't so much as attending to one word you said."

"No, Tom, certainly not," burst in Mrs. Morgan, answering with energy some sudden ejaculated purpose of her wrathy spouse.

"I simply meant to say," interposed Layton, mildly, "that such a visit as we propose might be objected to, or conceded in a way little agreeable to ourselves."

"A well-written note, a gracefully worded request, which nobody could do better than Mr. Alfred Layton – " began Mrs. Morris, when a dissenting gesture from that gentleman stopped her. "Or, perhaps," continued she, "Mr. Gorman O'Shea would so far assist our project?"

"My motion is to appear at the bar of the house, – I mean at the gate-lodge, – sending in our names, with a polite inquiry to know if we may see the place," said Mr. O'Shea.

"Well, stranger, I stand upon your platform," chimed in Quackinboss; "I 'm in no manner of ways 'posted' up in your Old World doings, but I 'd say that you 've fixed the question all straight."

"Show-places are show-places; the people who take them know it," blurted out Mr. Morgan. "Ay, and what's more, they're proud of it."

"They are, Tom," said his wife, authoritatively.

"If you 'd give me one of them a present, for the living in it, I 'd not take it No, sir, I 'd not," reiterated Morgan, with a fierce energy. "What is a man in such a case, sir, but a sort of appraiser, a kind of agent to show off his own furniture, telling you to remark that cornice, and not to forget that malachite chimney-piece?"

"Very civil of him, certainly," said Layton, in his low, quiet voice, which at the same time seemed to quiver with a faint irony.

"No, sir, not civil, only boastful; mere purse-pride, nothing more."

"Nothing, Tom, – absolutely nothing."

"What's before the house this evening, – the debate looks animated?" said a fine bright-eyed boy of about fourteen, who lounged carelessly on Layton's shoulder as he came up.

"It was a little scheme to visit the Villa Caprini, my Lord," said Mosely, not sorry to have the opportunity of addressing himself to a person of title.

"How jolly, eh, Alfred? What say you to the plan?" said the boy, merrily.

Layton answered something, but in a tone too low to be overheard.

"Oh, as to that," replied the boy, quickly, "if he be an Englishman who lives there, surely some of us must know him."

"The very remark I was about to make, my Lord," smiled in Mrs. Morris.

"Well, then, we agree to go there; that 's the main thing," said O'Shea. "Two carriages, I suppose, will hold us; and, as to the time, shall we say to-morrow?"

To-morrow was unanimously voted by the company, who now set themselves to plot the details of the expedition, amidst which not the least knotty was, who were to be the fellow-travellers with Mr. and Mrs. Morgan, a post of danger assuredly not sought for with any heroic intrepidity, while an equally eager intrigue was on foot about securing the presence of the young Marquis of Agincourt and his tutor, Mr. Layton. The ballot, however, routed all previous machinations, deciding that the young peer

was to travel with the Morgans and Colonel Quackinboss, an announcement which no deference to the parties themselves could prevent being received with a blank disappointment, except by Mr. Layton, who simply said, —

"We shall take care to be in time, Mrs. Morgan." And then, drawing his pupil's arm within his own, strolled negligently away.

CHAPTER IV. VISITORS

"I foretold all this," said Charles Heathcote, peevishly, as a servant presented a number of visiting-cards with a polite request from the owners to be allowed to visit the villa and its gardens. "I often warned you of the infliction of inhabiting one of these celebrated places, which our inquisitive countrymen *will* see and their wives *will* write about."

"Who are they, Charley?" said May, gayly. "Let us see if we may not know some of them."

"Know them. Heaven forbid! Look at the equipages they have come in; only cast an eye at the two leathern conveniences now before the door, and say, is it likely that they contain any acquaintances of ours?"

"How hot they look, broiling down there! But who are they, Charley?"

"Mrs. Penthony Morris, – never heard of her; Mr. Algernon Mosely, – possibly the Bond Street man; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Rice Morgan, of Plwmnwrar, – however that be pronounced; Mr. Layton and friend, – discreet friend, who will not figure by name; Mr. Gorman O'Shea, by all the powers! and, as I live, our Yankee again!"

"Not Quackinboss, surely?" broke in Sir William, good-humoredly.

"Yes. There he is: 'U. S. A., Colonel Leonidas Shaver

Quackinboss;' and there's the man, too, with his coat on his arm, on that coach-box."

"I'll certainly vote for my Transatlantic friend," said the Baronet, "and consequently for any party of which he is a member."

"As for me!" cried May, – "I 've quite a curiosity to see him; not to say that it would be downright churlishness to refuse any of our countrymen the permission thus asked for."

"Be it so. I only stipulate for not playing cicerone to our amiable visitors; and the more surely to escape such an indignity, I 'm off till dinner."

"Let Fenton wait on those gentlemen," said the Baronet, "and go round with them through the house and the grounds. Order luncheon also to be ready." There was a little, a very little, irritation, perhaps, in his voice, but May's pleasant smile quickly dispelled the momentary chagrin, and his good-humored face was soon itself again.

If I have not trespassed upon my reader's patience by minute descriptions of the characters I have introduced to him, it is in the expectation that their traits are such as, lying lightly on the surface, require little elucidation. Nor do I ask of him to bestow more attention to their features than he would upon those of travelling acquaintances with whom it is his fortune to journey in company for a brief space.

Strange enough, indeed, is that intimacy of travelling acquaintanceship – familiar without friendship, frank without

being cordial. Curious pictures of life might be made from these groups thrown accidentally together in a steamboat or railroad, at the gay watering-place, or the little fishing-village in the bathing-season.

How free is all the intercourse of those who seem to have taken a vow with themselves never to meet each other again! With what humorous zest do they enjoy the oddities of this one, or the eccentricities of that, making up little knots and cliques, to be changed or dissolved within the day, and actually living on the eventualities of the hour, for their confidences! The contrasts that would repel in ordinary life, the disparities that would discourage, have actually invited intimacy; and people agree to associate, even familiarly, with those whom, in the recognized order of their daily existence, they would have as coldly repelled.

There was little to bind those together whom we have represented as seated under the chestnut-trees at the Bagni de Lucca. They entertained their suspicions and distrusts and misgivings of each other to a liberal extent; they wasted no charities in their estimate of each other; and wherever posed by a difficulty, they did not lend to the interpretation any undue amount of generosity; nay, they even went further, and argued from little peculiarities of dress, manner, and demeanor, to the whole antecedents of him they criticised, and took especial pains in their moments of confidence to declare that they had only met Mr. – for the first time at Ems, and never saw Mrs. – till they

were overtaken by the snow-storm on the Splugen.

Such-like was the company who now, headed by the obsequious butler, strolled leisurely through the spacious saloons of the Villa Caprini.

Who is there, in this universal vagabondage, has not made one of such groups? Where is the man that has not strolled, "John Murray" in hand, along his Dresden, his Venice, or his Rome; staring at ceilings, and gazing ruefully at time-discolored frescos, – grieved to acknowledge to his own heart how little he could catch of a connoisseur's enthusiasm or an antiquarian's fervor, – wondering within himself wherefore he could not feel like that other man whose raptures he was reading, and with sore misgivings that some nice sense had been omitted in his nature? Wonderfully poignant and painful things are these little appeals to an inner consciousness. How far such sentiments were distributed amongst those who now lounged and stared through *salon* and gallery, we must leave to the reader's own appreciation. They looked pleased, convinced, and astonished, and, be it confessed, "bored" in turn; they were called upon to admire much they did not care for, and wonder at many things which did not astonish them; they were often referred to histories which they had forgotten, if they ever knew them, and to names of whose celebrity they were ignorant; and it was with a most honest sense of relief they saw themselves reach the last room of the suite, where a few cabinet pictures and some rare carvings in ivory alone claimed their attention.

"A 'Virgin and Child,' by Murillo," said the guide.

"The ninth 'Virgin and Child,' by all that's holy!" said Mr. O'Shea. "The ninth we have seen to-day!"

"The blue drapery, ladies and gentlemen," continued the inexorable describer, "is particularly noticed. It is 'glazed' in a manner only known to Murillo."

"I 'm glad of it, and I hope the secret died with him," cried Mr. Morgan. "It looks for all the world like a bathing-dress."

"The child squints. Don't he squint?" exclaimed Mosely.

"Oh, for shame!" cried Mrs. Morris. "Mr. Layton is quite shocked with your profane criticism."

"I did not hear it, I assure you," said that gentleman, as he arose from a long and close contemplation of a "St. John," by Salvator.

"'St. John preaching in the Wilderness!'" said Quackinboss; "too tame for my taste. He don't seem to roll up his sleeves to the work, – does he?"

"It's not stump-oratory, surely?" said Layton, with a quiet smile.

"Ain't it, though! Well, stranger, I'm in a considerable unmixed error if it is not! You'd like to maintain that because a man does n't rise up from a velvet cushion and lay his hand upon a grand railing, all carved with grotesque intricacies, all his sentiments must needs be commonplace and vulgar; but I 'm here to tell you, sir, that you 'd hear grander things, nobler things, and greater things from a moss-covered old tree-stump in a western

pine-forest, by the mouth of a plain, hardy son of hard toil, than you've often listened to in what you call your place in Parliament Now, that's a fact!"

There was that amount of energy in the way these words were uttered that seemed to say, if carried further, the discussion might become contentious.

Mr. Layton did not show any disposition to accept the gage of battle, but turned to seek for his pupil.

"You 're looking for the Marquis, Mr. Layton," asked Mrs. Morris, "ain't you? I think you'll find him in the shrubberies, for he said all this only bored him, and he 'd go and look for a cool spot to smoke his cigar."

"That's what it all comes to," said Morgan, as soon as Layton had left the room; "that's the whole of it! You pay a fellow – a 'double first' something or other from Oxford or Cambridge – five hundred a year to go abroad with your son, and all he teaches him is to choose a cheroot."

"And smoke it, Tom," chimed in Mrs. Morgan.

"There ain't no harm in a weed, sir, I hope?" said Quackinboss. "The thinkers of this earth are most of 'em smoking men. What do you say, sir, to Humboldt, Niebuhr, your own Bulwer, and all our people, from John C. Colhoun to Daniel Webster? When a man puts a cigar between his lips, he as good as says, 'I 'm a-reflecting, – I 'm not in no ways to be broke in upon.' It's his own fault, sir, if he does n't think, for he has in a manner shut the door to keep out intruders."

"Filthy custom!" muttered Mr. Morgan, with a garbled sentence, in which the word "America" was half audible.

"What's this he's saying about eating, – this Italian fellow?" said Mr. Mosely, as a servant addressed him in a foreign language.

"It is a polite invitation to a luncheon," said Mrs. Morris, modestly turning to her fellow-travellers for their decision.

"Do any of us know our host?" asked Mr. OShea. "He is a Sir William Heathcote."

"There was a director of the Central Trunk line of that name, who failed for half a million sterling," whispered Morgan; "should n't wonder if it were he."

"All the more certain to give us a jolly feed, if he be!" chuckled Mosely. "I vote we accept."

"That of course," said Mrs. Morris.

"Well, I know him, I reckon," drawled out Quackinboss; "and I raythe suspect you owe this here politeness to *my* company. Yes, sir!" said he, half fiercely, to O'Shea, upon whose face a sort of incredulous smile was breaking, – "yes, sir!"

"Being our own countryman, sir, – an Englishman, – I suspect," said Mr. Morgan, with warmth, "that the hospitality has been extended to us on wider grounds."

"But why should we dispute about the matter at all?" mildly remarked Mrs. Morris. "Let us say yes, and be grateful."

"There's good sense in that," chimed in Mosely, "and I second it."

“Carried with unanimity,” said O’Shea, as, turning to the servant, he muttered something in broken French.

“Well, I’m sure, I never!” mumbled Quackinboss to himself; but what he meant, or to what new circumstance in his life’s experience he alluded, there is unhappily no explanation in this history; but he followed the rest with a drooping head and an air of half-melancholy resignation that was not by any means unusual with him.

CHAPTER V. ACCIDENTS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

When the young Marquis had made his escape from sightseeing, and all its attendant inflictions, he was mainly bent on what he would himself have called being "very jolly," – that is to say, going his own way unmolested, strolling the road he fancied, and following out his own thoughts. Not that these same thoughts absolutely needed for their exercise or development any extraordinary advantages of solitude and retirement. He was no deep-minded sage, revolving worlds to come, – no poet, in search of the inspiring influence of nature, – no subtle politician, balancing the good and evil of some nice legislation. He was simply one of those many thousand England yearly turns out from her public schools of fine, dashing, free-hearted, careless boys, whose most marked feature in character is a wholesome horror of all that is mean or shabby. Less than a year before, he had been a midshipman in her Majesty's gun-boat "Mosquito;" the death of an elder brother had made him a Marquis, with the future prospect of several thousands a year.

He had scarcely seen or known his brother, so he grieved very little for his loss, but he sorrowed sincerely over the change of fortune that called him from his sea life and companions to an "on-shore" existence, and instead of the gun-room and its gay guests, gave him the proprieties of station and the requirements

of high rank. One of his guardians thought he ought to go into the Guards; another advised a university; both agreed upon a tutor, and Mr. Layton was found, a young man of small fortune, whose health, injured by over-reading for honors, required change of scene and rest. They had been companions for a very short time, but had, as the young Lord would have said, "hit it off" admirably together; that is to say, partly from a just appreciation of his pupil, and partly out of a natural indolence of disposition, Layton interfered very little with him, gave him no troublesome tasks, imposed no actual studies, but contented himself with a careful watch over the boy's disposition, a gentle, scarce perceptible correction of his faults, and an honest zeal to develop any generous trait in his nature, little mindful of the disappointments his trustfulness must incur. Layton's theory was that we all become wise too early in life, and that the world's lessons should not be too soon implanted in a fresh unsuspecting nature. His system was not destined to be sorely tested in the present case. Harry Montserrat, Marquis of Agincourt, was a fortunate subject to illustrate it by. There never was a less suspectful nature; he was frank, generous, and brave; his faults were those of a hot, fiery temper, and a disposition to resent, too early and too far, what with a little patience he might have tolerated or even forgiven.

The fault, however, which Layton was more particularly guardful against, was a certain over-consciousness of his station and its power, which gradually began to show itself.

In his first experience of altered fortune he did nothing but

regret the past. It was no compensation to him for his careless sea-life, with all its pleasant associations, to become of a sudden invested with station, and treated with what he deemed over-deference. His reefer's jacket was pleasanter "wear" than his padded frock-coat; the nimble boy who waited on him in the gun-room he thought a far smarter attendant than his obsequious valet; and, with all his midshipman's love of money-spending and squandering, the charm of extravagance was gone when there were no messmates to partake of it; nor did his well-groomed nag and his well-dressed tiger suggest one-half the enjoyment he had often felt in a pony ride over the cliffs of Malta, with some others of his mess, where falls were rife and tumbles frequent. These, I say, were first thoughts, but gradually others took their places. The enervation of a life of ease began soon to show itself, and he felt the power of a certain station. In the allowance his guardian made him, he had a far greater sum at his disposal than he ever possessed before; and in the title of his rank he soon discovered a magic that made the world beneath him very deferential and very obliging.

"That boy has been very ill brought up, Mr. Layton; it will be your chief care to instil into him proper notions of the place he is to occupy one of these days," said an old Earl, one of his guardians, and who was most eager that every trace of his sea life should be eradicated.

"Don't let him get spoiled, Layton, because he's a Lord," said the other guardian, who was an old Admiral. "There's good

stuff in the lad, and it would be a thousand pities it should be corrupted."

Layton did his best to obey each; but the task had its difficulties. As to the boy himself, the past and the present, the good and the evil, the frank young middy and the rich lordling, warred and contended in his nature; nor was it very certain at any moment which would ultimately gain the mastery. Such, without dwelling more minutely, was he who now strolled along through shrubbery and parterre, half listless as to the way, but very happy withal, and very light-hearted.

There was something in the scene that recalled England to his mind. There were more trees and turf than usually are found in Italian landscape, and there was, half hidden between hazel and alder, a clear, bright river, that brawled and fretted over rocks, or deepened into dark pools, alternately. How the circling eddies of a fast-flowing stream do appeal to young hearts! what music do they hear in the gushing waters! what a story is there in that silvery current as it courses along through waving meadows, or beneath tall mountains, and along some dark and narrow gorge, emblem of life itself in its light and shade, its peaceful intervals and its hours of struggle and conflict.

Forcing his way through the brushwood that guarded the banks, the boy gained a little ledge of rock, against which the current swept with violence, and then careered onward over a shallow, gravelly bed till lost in another bend of the stream. Just as Agincourt reached the rock, he spied a fishing-rod deeply and

securely fastened in one of its fissures, but whose taper point was now bending like a whip, and springing violently under the struggling effort of a strong fish. He was nothing of an angler. Of honest "Izaak" and his gentle craft he absolutely knew nought, and of all the mysteries of hackles and green drakes he was utterly ignorant; but his sailor instinct could tell him when a spar was about to break, and this he now saw to be the case. The strain was great, and every jerk now threatened to snap either line or rod. He looked hurriedly around him for the fisherman, whose interests were in such grave peril; but seeing no one near, he endeavored to withdraw the rod. While he thus struggled, for it was fastened with care, the efforts of the fish to escape became more and more violent, and at last, just as the boy had succeeded in his task, a strong spring from the fish snapped the rod near the tip, and at the same instant snatched it from the youth's hand into the stream. Without a second's hesitation, Agincourt dashed into the river, which rose nearly to his shoulders, and, after a vigorous pursuit, reached the rod, but only as the fish had broken the strong gut in two, and made his escape up the rapid current.

The boy was toilfully clambering up the bank, with the broken rod in his hand, when a somewhat angry summons in Italian met his ears. It was time enough, he thought, to look for the speaker when he had gained dry land; so he patiently fought his way upwards, and at last, out of breath and exhausted, threw himself full length in the deep grass of the bank.

"I believe I am indebted to you, sir, for my smashed tackle

and the loss of a heavy fish besides?" said Charles Heathcote, as he came up to where the youth was lying, his voice and manner indicating the anger that moved him.

"I thought to have saved the rod and caught the fish too," said the other, half indolently; "but I only got a wet jacket for my pains."

"I rather suspect, young gentleman, you are more conversant with a measuring-yard than a salmon-rod," said Heathcote, insolently, as he surveyed the damaged fragments of his tackle.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" cried the boy, springing with a bound to his feet, and advancing boldly towards his adversary.

"Simply that it 's not exactly the sort of sport you follow in Bond Street," retorted Heathcote, whose head was full of "Mosely and Trip," and felt certain that a scion of that great house was before him.

"You must be a rare snob not to know a gentleman when you see him," said Agincourt, with an insolent defiance in his look.

"Perhaps I'd be a better judge if I saw him after a good washing," said Heathcote, who, with one hasty glance at the river, now turned a fierce eye on the youth.

Agincourt's gun-room experiences had not taught him to decline an offered battle, and he threw off his cap to show that he was ready and willing to accept the challenge, when suddenly Layton sprang between them, crying out, "What's the meaning of all this?"

"The meaning is, that your young friend there has taken the

liberty, first, to smash my fishing-gear, and then to be very insolent to me, and that I had very serious intentions of sending him to look for the one and pay forfeit for the other."

"Yes, I broke his rod, and I 'll pay for it, or, if he's a gentleman, I'll beg his pardon, or fight him," said the boy, in a tone of ill-repressed anger.

"When there is an evident mistake somewhere," said Layton, gently, "it only needs a moment of forbearance to set it right."

"Here's how it all happened," broke in the boy, eagerly. And in a few words he related his chance arrival at the spot, how he had seen the rod in what he deemed imminent danger, and how with the best intentions he had interfered to save it.

"I beg you to accept all my excuses for what I have said to you," said Heathcote, with a frank and manly courtesy. "I am quite ashamed of my ill-temper, and hope you'll forgive it."

"To be sure I will. But what about the rod, – you can't easily get such another in these parts?"

The boy looked eagerly at Layton as he spoke. Layton as quickly gave an admonitory glance of caution, and the youth's instinctive good breeding understood it.

"I think you came over with a party of friends to see the villa," said Heathcote, to relieve the awkward pause between them.

"Not friends, exactly; people of our hotel."

Heathcote smiled faintly, and rejoined, —

"Some of our pleasantest acquaintances come of chance intimacies, – don't you think so?"

"Oh, for the matter of that, they 're jolly enough. There's a wonderful Londoner, and a rare Yankee, and there's an Irishman would make the fortune of the Haymarket."

"You must own, Harry, they are all most kind and good-natured to you," said Layton, in a tone of mild half-rebuke.

"Well, ain't I just as – what shall I call it? – polite and the like to them? Ay, Layton, frown away as much as you like, they're a rum lot."

"It is young gentlemen of this age who nowadays are most severe on the manners and habits of those they chance upon in a journey, not at all aware that, as the world is all new to them, their criticism may have for its object things of every-day frequency."

The youth looked somewhat vexed at this reproof, but said nothing.

"I have the same unlucky habit myself," said Heathcote, good-humoredly. "I pronounce upon people with wonderfully little knowledge of them, and no great experience of the world neither; and – case in point – your American acquaintance is exactly one of those I feel the very strongest antipathy to. We have met at least a dozen times during the winter and autumn, and the very thought of finding *him* in a place would decide *me* to leave it."

It was not Layton's business to correct what he deemed faulty in this sentiment; but in the sharp glance he threw towards his pupil, he seemed to convey his disapproval of it.

"'My Coach,' Mr. Layton, is dying to tell us both we are wrong, sir," said the boy; "he likes the 'kernal.'" And this he said

with a nasal twang whose imitation was not to be mistaken.

Though Heathcote laughed at the boy's mimicry, his attention was more taken by the expression "my Coach," which not only revealed the relations of tutor and pupil between them, but showed, by its familiarity, that the youth stood in no great awe of his preceptor.

Perhaps Layton had no fancy for this liberty before a stranger; perhaps he felt ashamed of the position itself; perhaps he caught something in Heathcote's quick glance towards him, – whatever it was, he was irritated and provoked, and angrily bit his lip, without uttering a word.

"Oh, here come the sight-seers! they are doing the grounds, and the grottos, and the marble fountains," cried the boy, as a large group came out from a flower-garden and took their way towards an orangery. As they issued forth, however, Mrs. Morris stopped to caress a very large St. Bernard dog, who lay chained at the foot of an oak-tree. Charles Heathcote had not time to warn her of her danger, when the animal sprang fiercely at her. Had she not fallen suddenly backward, she must have been fearfully mangled; as it was, she received a severe wound in the wrist, and, overcome by pain and terror together, sank fainting on the sward.

For some time the confusion was extreme. Some thought that the dog was at liberty, and fled away in terror across the park; others averred that he was – must be – mad, and his bite fatal; a few tried to be useful; but Quackinboss hurried to the river, and, filling his hat with water, sprinkled the cold face of the

sufferer and washed the wound, carefully binding it up with his handkerchief in a quick, business-like way, that showed he was not new to such casualties.

Layton meanwhile took charge of the little girl, whose cries and screams were heartrending.

"What a regular day of misfortunes, this!" said Agincourt, as he followed the mournful procession while they carried the still fainting figure back to the house. "I fancy you 'll not let another batch of sight-seers into your grounds in a hurry."

"The ill-luck has all befallen our guests," said Heathcote. "Our share of the mishap is to be associated with so much calamity."

All that care and kindness could provide waited on Mrs. Morris, as she was carried into the villa and laid on a bed. May Leslie took all upon herself, and while the doctor was sent for, used such remedies as she had near. It was at once decided that she should not be removed, and after some delay the company departed without her; the day that had dawned so pleasantly thus closing in gloom and sadness, and the party so bent on amusement returned homeward depressed and dispirited.

"They 're mean vicious, these Alp dogs, and never to be trusted," said Quackinboss.

"Heroines will be heroines," said Mrs. Morgan, gruffly.

"Or rather won't be heroines when the occasion comes for it. She fainted off like a school-girl," growled out Morgan.

"I should think she did!" muttered Mosely, "when she felt the beast's teeth in her."

"A regular day of misfortunes!" repeated Agincourt.

"And we lost the elegant fine luncheon, too, into the bargain," said O'Shea. "Every one seemed to think it wouldn't be genteel to eat after the disaster."

"It is the fate of pleasure parties," said Layton, moodily. And so they jogged on in silence.

And thus ended a day of pleasure, as many have ended before it.

Assuredly, they who plan picnics are not animated by the spirit of an actuary. There is a marvellous lack of calculation in their composition, since, of all species of entertainment, there exists not one so much at the mercy of accident, so thoroughly dependent for success on everything going right. Like the Walcheren expedition, the "wind must not only blow from the right point, but with a certain graduated amount of force." What elements of sunshine and shade, what combinations of good spirits and good temper and good taste! what guidance and what moderation, what genius of direction and what "respect for minorities"! We will not enter upon the material sources of success, though, indeed, it should be owned they are generally better looked to, and more cared for, than the moral ingredients thus massed and commingled.

It was late when the party reached the Bagni, and, wishing each other a half-cold good-night, separated.

And now, one last peep at the villa, where we have left the sufferer. It was not until evening that the Heathcotes had so

far recovered from the shock of the morning's disaster and its consequences as to be able to meet and talk over the events, and the actors in them.

"Well," said Sir William, as they all sat round the tea-table, "what do you say to my Yankee now? Of all that company, was there one that showed the same readiness in a difficulty, a quick-witted aptitude to do the right thing, and at the same time so unobtrusively and quietly that when everything was over it was hard to say who had done it?"

"I call him charming. I'm in ecstasies with him," said May, whose exaggerations of praise or censure were usually unbounded.

"I 'm quite ready to own he 'came out' strong in the confusion," said Charles, half unwillingly; "but it was just the sort of incident that such a man was sure to figure well in."

"Show me the man who is active and ready-minded in his benevolence, and I 'll show you one who has not to go far into his heart to search for generous motives. I maintain it, Quackinboss is a fine fellow!" There was almost a touch of anger in Sir William's voice as he said these words, as though he would regard any disparagement of the American as an offence to himself.

"I think Charley is a little jealous," said May, with a sly malice; "he evidently wanted to carry the wounded lady himself, when that great giant interposed, and, seizing the prize, walked away as though he were only carrying a baby."

"I fancied it was the tutor was disappointed," said Charles;

"and the way he devoted his cares to the little girl, when deprived of the mamma, convinced me he was the party chiefly interested."

"Which was the tutor?" asked May, hastily. "You don't mean the man with all the velvet on his coat?"

"No, no; that was Mr. O'Shea, the Irish M.P., who, by the way, paid *you* the most persevering attention."

"A hateful creature, insufferably pretentious and impertinent! The tutor was, then, the pale young man in black?"

"A nice, modest fellow," broke in Sir William; "and a fine boy that young Marquis of Agincourt. I 'm glad you asked him up here, Charles. He is to come on Tuesday, is he not?"

"Yes, I said Tuesday, because I can't get my tackle to rights before that; and I promised to make him a fly-fisher. I owe him the reparation."

"You included the tutor, of course, in your invitation?" asked his father.

"No. How stupid! I forgot him altogether."

"Oh! that was too bad," said May.

"Indeed," cried Charles, turning towards her with a look of such malicious significance that she blushed deeply, and averted her head.

"Let us invite them all up here for Tuesday, May," said Sir William. "It would be very unfair if they were to carry away only a disagreeable memory of this visit. Let us try and efface the first unhappy impression."

"All right," said Charles, "and I'll dash off a few lines to Mr. Layton, I think his name is, to say that we expect he will favor us with his company for a few days here. Am I not generosity itself, May?" said he, in a low whisper, as he passed behind her chair.

A blush still deeper than the first, and a look of offended pride, were her only answer.

"I must go in search of these good people's cards, for I forget some of their names," said Charles; "though I believe I remember the important ones."

This last sally was again directed towards May, but she, apparently, did not hear it.

"Who knows but your patient upstairs may be well enough to meet her friends, May?" said Sir William.

"Perhaps so. I can't tell," answered she, vaguely; for she had but heard him imperfectly, and scarcely knew what she was replying.

CHAPTER VI. THE MEMBER FOR INCHABOGUE

Mr. O'Shea lay in his bed at the Bagni di Lucca. It was late in the afternoon, and he had not yet risen, being one of those who deem, to travesty the poet, —

> That the best of all ways
> To shorten our days
> Is to add a few hours to the night, my dear.

In other words, he was ineffably bored and wearied, sick of the place, the people, and himself, and only wearing over the time as one might do the stated term of an imprisonment His agent – Mr. Mahony, the celebrated Mr. Miles Mahony, who was agent for all the Irish gentlemen of Mr. O'Shea's politics, and who has either estates very much encumbered, or no estates at all – had written him that letter, which might be stereotyped in every agent's office, and sent off indiscriminately by post, at due intervals, to any of the clients, for there was the same bead-roll of mishaps and calamities Ireland has been suffering under for centuries. Take any traveller or guide-book experience of the land, and it is a record of rain that never ceased. The Deluge was a passing April shower compared to the national climate. Ask any proprietor, however, more especially if a farmer, and he

would tell you, "We're ruined, entirely ruined, with the drought," – perhaps he 'd have called it "druth." "If the rain doesn't fall before twenty-four hours, there will be no potatoes, no grass, no straw, the wheat won't fill, the cattle will be destroyed," and so on; just as if the whole population was not soaked through like a wet sponge, and the earth a sludge of mud and swamp, to which Holland seems a sand-bank in comparison! Then came the runaway tenants, only varied by those who couldn't be induced to "run" on any terms. There was the usual "agrarian outrage," with the increased police force quartered on the barony in consequence, and perhaps a threat of a special commission, with more expense besides. There was the extract of the judge's charge, saying that he never remembered so "heavy a calendar," the whole winding up with an urgent appeal to send over ten or twenty pounds to repair the chapel or the priest's house, or contribute to some local object, "at your indifference to which there is very great discontent at this moment."

A pleasant postcript also mentioned that a dissolution of Parliament was daily expected, and that it would be well you 'd "come home and look after the borough, where the Tories were working night and day to increase their influence."

"Bad luck to them for Tories!" muttered he, as he threw the crumpled document from him. "I 'd have been well off to-day if it was n't for them. There's no telling the money the contested elections cost me, while, to make out that I was a patriot, I could n't take a place, but had to go on voting and voting out of the

purity of my motives. It was an evil hour when I took to politics at all. Joe! Joe!" cried he, aloud, following up the appeal with a shrill whistle.

"Tear and ages, sure the house isn't on fire!" said a man, rushing into the room with an air and manner that little indicated the respect due from a servant to his master; "not to say," added he, "that it's not dacent or becomin' to whistle after me, as if I was a tarrier or a bull-dog."

"Hold your prate, will you?" said Mr. O'Shea.

"Why would I? 'Tis humiliated I am before all in the place."

"Will you hold your prate?" muttered his master, in a deeper tone, while, stretching forth his hand, he seemed in search of any missile to hurl at his mutinous follower.

"If I do, then, it's undher protest, mind that I put it on record that I 'm only yieldin' to the 'vis magiory.'"

"What o'clock is it?" yawned out O'Shea.

"It wants a trifle of four o'clock."

"And the day, – what's it like?"

"Blazin' hot – hotter than yesterday – 'hotter than New Orleens,' Mr. Quackinbosh says."

"D – n Mr. Quackinbosh, and New Orleens too!" growled out O'Shea.

"With all my heart. He's always laughing at what he calls *my* Irish, as if it was n't better than *his* English."

"Any strangers arrived?"

"Devil a one. Ould Pagnini says he 'll be ruined entirely; there

never was such a set, he says, in the house before, – nothing called for but the reg'lar meals, and no wine but the drink of the country, that is n't wine at all."

"He's an insolent scoundrel!"

"He is not. He is the dacentest man I seen since I come to Italy."

"Will you hold your prate, or do you want me to kick you downstairs?"

"I do not!" said he, with a stern doggedness that was almost comic.

"Did you order breakfast?"

"I did, when I heard you screech out. 'There he is,' said ould Pan; 'I wish he 'd be in the same hurry to call for his bill.'"

"Insolent rascal! Did you blacken his eye?"

"I did not"

"What did you do, then?"

"I did nothing."

"What did you say? You're ready enough with a bad tongue when it's not called for, – what did you say?"

"I said people called for their bills when they were lavin' a house, and too lucky you 'll be, says I, if he pays it when he calls for it."

This seemed too much for Mr. O'Shea's endurance, for he sprang out of bed and hurled a heavy old olive-wood inkstand at his follower. Joe, apparently habituated to such projectiles, speedily ducked his head, and the missile struck the frame of an

old looking-glass, and carried away a much-ornamented but very frail chandelier at its side.

"There's more of it," said Joe. "Damage to furniture in settin'-room, forty-six pauls and a half." With this sage reflection, he pushed the fragments aside with his foot, and then, turning to the door, he took from the hands of a waiter the tray containing his master's breakfast, arranging it deliberately before him with the most unbroken tranquillity of demeanor.

"Did n't you say it was chocolate I'd have instead of coffee?" said O'Shea, angrily.

"I did not; they grumble enough about sending up anything, and I was n't goin' to provoke them," said Joe, calmly.

"No letters, I suppose, but this?"

"Sorra one."

"What's going on below?" asked he, in a more lively tone, as though dismissing an unpleasant theme. "Any one come, – anything doing?"

"Nothing; they 're all off to that villa to spend the day, and not to be back till late at night."

"Stupid fun, after all; the road is roasting, and the place, when you get there, not worth the trouble; but they 're so proud of visiting a baronet, that's the whole secret of it, those vulgar Morgans and that Yankee fellow."

These mutterings he continued while he went on dressing, and though not intended to be addressed to Joe, he was in no wise disconcerted when that free-and-easy individual replied to them.

"'Your master 's not coming with us, I believe,' said Mrs. Morgan to me. 'I'm sure, however, there must have been a mistake. It 's so strange that he got no invitation.'

"'But he did, ma'am,' says I; 'he got a card like the rest.'"

"Well done, Joe; a lie never choked you. Go on," cried O'Shea, laughing.

"'But you see, ma'am,' says I, 'my master never goes anywhere in that kind of promiscuous way. He expects to be called on and trated with "differince," as becomes a member of Parliament – '

"'For Ireland?' says she.

"'Yes, ma'am,' says I. 'We haven't as many goats there as in other parts I 'm tould of, nor the females don't ride straddle legs, with men's hats on thim.'"

"You didn't say that?" burst in O'Shea, with a mock severity.

"I did, and more, – a great deal more. What business was it of hers that you were not asked to the picnic? What had she to say to it? Why did she follow me down the street the other morning, and stay watching all the time I was in at the banker's, and though, when I came out, I made believe I was stuffin' the bank-notes into my pocket, I saw by the impudent laugh on her face that she knew I got nothing?"

"By the way, you never told me what Twist and Trover said."

"I did."

"Well, what was it? Tell it again," said O'Shea, angrily.

"Mr. Trover said, 'Of course, whatever your master wants, just step in there and show it to Mr. Twist;' and Mr. Twist said, 'Are

you here again,' says he, 'after the warnin' I gave you? Go back and tell your master 't is takin' up his two last bills he ought to be, instead of passin' more.'

"' Mr. Trover, sir,' says I, 'sent me in.'

"'Well, Mr. Twist sent you out again,' says he, 'and there's your answer.'

"'Short and sweet,' says I, goin' out, and pretending to be putting up the notes as I went."

"Did you go down to the other fellow's, – Macapes?"

"I did; but as he seen me coming out of the other place, he only ballyragged me, and said, 'We only discount for them as has letters of credit on us.'

"'Well,' says I, 'but who knows that they 're not coming in the post now?'

"'We 'll wait till we see them,' says he.

"'By my conscience,' says I, 'I hope you 'll not eat your breakfast till they come.' And so I walked away. Oh dear! is n't it a suspicious world?"

"It's a rascally world!" broke out O'Shea, with bitterness.

"It is!" assented Joe, with a positive energy there was no gainsaying.

"Is Mr. Layton gone with the rest this morning?"

"He is, and the Marquis. They 're a-horseback on two ponies not worth fifty shilling apiece."

"And that counter-jumper, Mosely, I'll wager he too thinks himself first favorite for the heiress."

"Well, then, in the name of all that's lucky, why don't you thry your own chance?" said Joe, coaxingly.

"Is n't it because I *did* try that they have left me out of this invitation? Is n't it because they saw I was like to be the winning horse that they scratched me out of the race? Is n't it just because Gorman O'Shea was the man to carry off the prize that they would n't let me enter the lists?"

"There 's only two more as rich as her in all England," chimed in Joe, "and one of them will never marry any but the Emperor of Roosia."

"She has money enough!" muttered O'Shea. "And neither father nor mother, brother, sister, kith or kin," continued Joe, in a tone of exultation that seemed to say he knew of no such good luck in life as to stand alone and friendless in the world.

"Those Heathcotes are related to her."

"No more than they are to you. I have it all from Miss Smithers, the maid. 'We 're as free as air, Mr. Rouse,' says she; 'wherever we have a "conceit," we can follow it' That's plain talking, anyhow."

"Would you marry Smithers, Joe?" said his master, with a roguish twinkle in his eye.

"Maybe, if I knew for what; though, by my conscience, she's no beauty!"

"I meant, of course, for a good consideration."

"Not on a bill, though, – money down, – hard money."

"And how much of it?" asked O'Shea, with a knowing look.

"The price of that place at Einsale."

"The 'Trout and Triangle,' Joe?" laughed out his master. "Are you still yearning after being an innkeeper in your native town?"

"I am just that," replied Joe, solemnly. "'T is what I 'd rather be than Lord Mayor of Dublin!"

"Well, it is an honorable ambition, no doubt of it. Nothing can be more reasonable, besides, than a man's desire to fill that station in life which, to his boyish ideas, seemed high and enviable." This speech Mr. O'Shea delivered in a tone by which he occasionally turned to rehearse oratorical effects, and which, by some strange sympathy, always appeared to please his follower. "Yes, Joe," continued he, "as the poet says, 'The child is father of the man.'"

"You mane the man is father of the child," broke in Joe.

"I do not, booby; I meant what I have said, and what Wordsworth said before me."

"The more fool he, then. It's nobody's father he 'd be. Arrah! that's the way you always spoil a fine sintiment with something out of a poet. Poets and play-actors never helped a man out of a ditch!"

"Will you marry this Smithers, if that be her name?" said O'Shea, angrily.

"For the place – "

"I mean as much."

"I would, if I was treated – 'raysonable,'" said he, pausing for a moment in search of the precise word he wanted.

Mr. O'Shea sighed heavily; his exchequer contained nothing but promises; and none knew better than his follower what such pledges were worth.

"It would be the making of you, Joe," said he, after a brief silence, "if I was to marry this heiress."

"Indeed, it might be," responded the other.

"It would be the grand event of *your* life, that's what it would be. What could I not do for you? You might be land-steward; you might be under-agent, bailiff, driver, – eh?"

"Yes," said Joe, closing his eyes, as if he desired to relish the vision undisturbed by external distractions.

"I have always treated you as a sort of friend, Joe, – you know that."

"I do, sir. I do, indeed."

"And I mean to prove myself your friend too. It is not the man who has stuck faithfully by me that I 'd desert. Where's my dressing-gown?"

"She was torn under the arm, and I gave her to be mended; put this round you," said he, draping a much-befrogged pelisse over his master's shoulders.

"These are not my slippers, you stupid ass!"

"They are the ould ones. Don't you remember shying one of the others, yesterday, at the organ-boy, and it fell in the river and was lost?"

Mr. O'Shea's brow darkened as he sat down to his meal. "Tell Pan," said he, "to send me up some broth and a chop about seven.

I must keep the house to-day, and be indisposed. And do you go over to Lucca, and raise me a few Naps on my 'rose-amethyst' ring. Three will do; five would be better, though."

Joe sighed. It was a mission he had so often been charged with and never came well out of, since his master would invariably insist on hearing every step of the negotiation, and as unfailingly revenged upon his envoy all the impertinences to which the treaty gave rise.

"Don't come back with any insolent balderdash about the stone being false, or having a flaw in it. Holditch values it at two hundred and thirty pounds; and, if it wasn't a family ring, I'd have taken the money. And, mind you, don't be talking about whose it is, – it 's a gentleman waiting for his letters – "

"Sure I know," burst in Joe; "his remittances, that ought to be here every day."

"Just so; and that merely requires a few Naps – "

"To pay his cigars – "

"There's no need of more explanation. Away with you; and tell Bruno I 'll want a saddle-horse to-morrow, to be here at the door by two o'clock."

Joe took his departure, and Mr. O'Shea was left to his own meditations.

It may seem a small cause for depression of spirits, but, in truth, it was always a day of deep humiliation to Mr. O'Shea when his necessities compelled him to separate himself from that cherished relic, his great-grandmother's ring. It had been

reserved in his family, as a sort of charm, for generations; his grand-uncle Luke had married on the strength of it; his own father had flashed it in the eyes of Bath and Cheltenham, for many a winter, with great success; and he himself had so significantly pointed out incorrect items in his hotel bills, with the forefinger that bore it, that landlords had never pressed for payment, but gone away heart-full of the man who owned such splendor.

It would be a curious subject to inquire how many men have owed their distinction or success in life to some small adjunct, some adventitious appendage of this kind; a horse, a picture, a rare bronze, a statue, a curious manuscript, a fragment of old armor, have made their owners famous, when they have had the craft to merge their identity in the more absorbing interest of the wondrous treasure. And thus the man that owns the winner of the Derby, a great cup carved by Cellini, or a *chef-d'oeuvre* of Claude or Turner, may repose upon the fame of his possession, identified as he is with so much greatness. Oh! ye possessors of show places, handsome wives, rare gardens, or costly gems, in what borrowed bravery do ye meet the world! Not that in this happy category Mr. O'Shea had his niche; no, he was only the owner of a ring – a rose-amethyst ring – whose purity was perhaps not more above suspicion than his own. And yet it had done him marvellous service on more than one occasion. It had astonished the bathers at St. Leonard, and dazzled the dinner company at Tunbridge Wells; Harrogate had winked under it, and

Malvern gazed at it with awe; and society, so to say, was divided into those who knew the man from the ring, and those who knew the ring from the man.

CHAPTER VII. MRS. PENTHONY MORRIS

Our reader has been told how Mrs. Penthony Morris stormed the Villa Caprini, established herself, child, maid, and Skye terrier within its walls, and became, ere many days went over, a sort of influence in the place. It is not in chemistry alone that a single ingredient, minute and scarce perceptible, can change the property and alter all the quality of the mass with which it is mingled. Human nature exhibits phenomena precisely alike, and certain individuals possess the marvellous power of tingeing the world they mix in, with their own hue and color, and flavoring society with sweet or bitter, as temper induces them. The first and most essential quality of such persons is a rapid – an actually instinctive – appreciation of the characters they meet, even passingly, in the world's intercourse. They have not to spell out temperaments slowly and laboriously. To them men's natures are not written in phonetic signs or dark symbols, but in letters large and legible. They see, salute, speak with you, and they understand you. Not, perhaps, as old friends know you, with reference to this or that minute trick of mind or temper, but, with a far wider range of your character than even old friends have taken, they know your likes and dislikes, the things you fear and hope, the weak points you would fortify, and sometimes the strong ones you would mask, – in a word, for all the purposes of intercourse,

they are able to estimate your strength and weakness, and all this ere, perhaps, you have noted the accents of their voice or the color of their eyes.

The lady of whom it is now our business to speak was one of this gifted class. Whence she came, and how she became such, we are not about to enter upon. She had had her share of trials, and yet was both young and good-looking; her good looks in no wise evidencing the vestiges of any sorrow. Whether a widowed or deserted wife, she bore bereavement admirably; indeed, so far as one could see, she professed a very rare ethical philosophy. Her theory was, the world was a very nice world, the people in it very nice people; life itself a very nice thing; and that people, generally speaking, only needed their own consent to be very happy and contented. She had, it is true, some very able adjuncts to carry out her system. There was scarcely an acquirement that she did not possess reasonably well; she spoke several languages, sang, rode, drew, played billiards most gracefully, and could manufacture the most charming cigarettes that ever were smoked. Some of these are envied qualities, and suggest envy; but against this she was careful to guard, and this by a very simple method indeed. In whatever she did, tried, or attempted, she always asked your advice. She had carefully studied the effect of the imputed superiority of those who counsel their neighbors, and she saw in its working one of the most tangible of all human weaknesses. The tendency to guide and direct others is a very popular one. Generous people practise it out of their generosity;

gentle natures indulge in the practice in very sympathy. To stern moralists it is an occasion for the hard lessons they love to inculcate. The young are pleased with its importance; the old are gratified to exercise their just prerogative. "Tell me how do you do this;" or, "Teach me how to correct that;" "What would you advise in *my* place?" or, "What reply would you give to that?" are appeals that involve a very subtle flattery. Every man, and more decisively too, every woman, likes to be deemed shrewd and worldly-wise. Now, Mrs. Morris had reflected deeply over this trait, and saw to what good account care and watchfulness might turn it. He who seeks to be guided by another makes his appeal in a guise of humility, besides, which is always a flattery, and when this is done artfully, with every aid from good looks and a graceful manner, success is rarely wanting; and lastly, it is the only form of selfishness the world neither resents nor repudiates.

He who comes to you with a perfectly finished tale of his misfortunes, with "Finis" written on the last volume of his woes, is simply a bore; whereas he who approaches you while the catastrophe yet hangs impending, has always an interest attached to him. He may marry the heiress yet, he may be arrested on that charge of forgery, obtain that Cross of the Bath, or be shot in that duel; you are at least talking to a man Fortune has not done with, and this much is something.

Mrs. Morris had been little more than a fortnight domesticated at the Villa Caprini, where her weakness still detained her, and yet she had contrived to consult Sir William about her fortune,

invested, almost entirely, in "Peruvians," which her agent, Mr. Halker, had told her were "excellent;" but whether the people of that name, or the country, or the celebrated Bark, was the subject of the investment, she really professed not to know.

To May Leslie she had confided the great secret of her heart, – an unpublished novel; a story mainly comprised of the sad events of her own life, and the propriety of giving which to the world was the disputed question of her existence.

As to Charles, she had consulted him how best to disembarrass herself of the attentions of Mr. Mosely, who was really become a persecutor. She owned that in asking his counsel she could not impart to him all the circumstances which he had a right to be possessed of, – she appealed to his delicacy not to question her. So that whether wife or widow, he knew not what she might be, and, in fact, she even made of the obscurity another subject of his interest, and so involved him in her story that he could think of nothing else. She managed each of these confidences with such consummate skill that each believed himself her one sole trusted friend, depositary of her cares, refuge of her sorrows; and while thus insinuating herself into a share of their sympathy, she displayed, as though by mere accident, many of her attractions, and gave herself an opportunity of showing how interesting she was in her sorrow and how fascinating in her joy!

The Heathcotes – father, son, and niece – were possessed of a very ample share of the goods of fortune. They had health, wealth, freedom to live where and how they liked.

They were well disposed towards each other and towards the world; inclined to enjoy life, and suited to its enjoyment. But somehow, pretty much like some mass of complicated machinery, which by default of some small piece of mechanism – a spring, a screw, or a pinion the more – stands idle and inert, – all its force useless, all its power unused, they had no pursuit, – did nothing. Mrs. Morris was exactly the motive power wanting; and by her agency interests sprang up, occupations were created, pleasures invented. Without bustle, without even excitement, the dull routine of the day grew animate; the hours sped glibly along. Little Clara, too, was no small aid to this change. In the quiet monotony of a grave household a child's influence is magical. As the sight of a butterfly out at sea brings up thoughts of shady alleys and woodbine-covered windows, of "the grass and the flowers among the grass," so will a child's light step and merry voice throw a whole flood of sunny associations over the sad-colored quietude of some old house. Clara was every one's companion and everywhere, – with Charles as he fished, with May Leslie in the flower-garden, with old Sir William in the orangery, or looking over pictures beside him in the long-galleried library.

Mrs. Morris herself was yet too great an invalid for an active life. Her chair would be wheeled out into the lawn, under the shade of an immense weeping-ash, and there, during the day, as to some "general staff," came all the "reports" of what was doing each morning. Newspapers and books would be littered about

her, and even letters brought her to read, from dear friends, with whose names conversation had made her familiar. A portion of time was, however, reserved for Clara's lessons, which no plan or project was ever suffered to invade.

It may seem a somewhat dreary invitation if we ask our readers to assist at one of these mornings. Pinnock and Mrs. Barbauld and Mangnall are, perhaps, not the company to their taste, nor will they care to cast up multiplications, or stumble through the blotted French exercise. Well, we can only pledge ourselves not to exaggerate the infliction of these evils. And now to our task. It is about eleven o'clock of a fine summer's day, in Italy; Mrs. Morris sits at her embroidery-frame, under the long-branched willow; Clara, at a table near, is drawing, her long silky curls falling over the paper, and even interfering with her work, as is shown by an impatient toss of her head, or even a hastier gesture, as with her hands she flings them back upon her neck.

"It was to Charley I said it, mamma," said she, without lifting her head, and went on with her work.

"Have I not told you, already, to call him Mr. Charles Heathcote, or Mr. Heathcote, Clara?"

"But he says he won't have it."

"What an expression, – 'won't have it'!"

"Well, I know," cried she, with impatience; and then laughingly said, "I 've forgot, in a hurry, old dear Lindley Murray."

"I beg of you to give up that vile trash of doggerel rhyme. And

now what was it you said to Mr. Heathcote?"

"I told him that I was an only child, – 'a violet on a grassy bank, in sweetness all alone,' as the little book says."

"And then he asked about your papa; if you remembered him?"

"No, mamma."

"He made some mention, some allusion, to papa?"

"Only a little sly remark of how fond he must be of *me*, or *I* of *him*."

"And what did you answer?"

"I only wiped my eyes, mamma; and then he seemed so sorry to have given me pain that he spoke of something else. Like Sir Guyon, —

> "'He talked of roses, lilies, and the rest,
> The shady alley, and the upland swelling;
> Wondered what notes birds warbled in their nest,
> What tales the rippling river then was telling.'"

"And then you left him, and came away?" said her mother.

"Yes, mamma. I said it was my lesson time, and that you were so exact and so punctual that I did not dare to be late."

"Was it then he asked if mamma had always been your governess, Clara?"

"No; it was May that asked that question. May Leslie has a very pretty way of pumping, mamma, though you 'd not suspect it She begins with the usual 'Are you very fond of Italy?' or 'Don't

you prefer England?' and then 'What part of England?'"

Mrs. Morris bit her lip, and colored slightly; and then, laying her work on her lap, stared steadfastly at the girl, still deeply intent on her drawing.

"I like them to begin that way," continued Clara. "It costs no trouble to answer such bungling questions; and whenever they push me closer, I 've an infallible method, mamma, – it never fails."

"What's that?" asked her mother, dryly.

"I just say, as innocently as possible, 'I 'll run and ask mamma; I 'm certain she 'll be delighted to tell you.' And then, if you only saw the shame and confusion they get into, saying, 'On no account, Clara dearest. I had no object in asking. It was mere idle talking,' and so on. Oh dear! what humiliation all their curiosity costs them!"

"You try to be too shrewd, too cunning, Miss Clara," said her mother, rebukingly. "It is a knife that often cuts with the handle. Be satisfied with discovering people's intentions, and don't plume yourself about the cleverness of finding them out, or else, Clara," – and here she spoke more slowly, – "or else, Clara, they will find *you* out too."

"Oh, surely not, while I continue the thoughtless, guileless little child mamma has made me," said she. And the tears rose to her eyes, with an expression of mingled anger and sorrow it was sad to see in one so young.

"Clara!" cried her mother, in a voice of angry meaning; and

then, suddenly checking herself, she said, in a lower tone, "let there be none of this."

"Sir William asked me how old I was, mamma."

"And you said – "

"I believed twelve. Is it twelve? I ought to know, mamma, something for certain, for I was eleven two years ago, and then I have been ten since that; and when I was your sister, at Brighton, I was thirteen."

"Do you dare – " But ere she said more, the child had buried her head between her hands, and, by the convulsive motion of her shoulders, showed that she was sobbing bitterly. The mother continued her work, unmoved by this emotion. She took occasion, it is true, when lifting up the ball of worsted which had fallen, to glance furtively towards the child; but, except by this, bestowed no other notice on her.

"Well," cried the little girl, with a half-wild laugh, as she flung back her yellow hair, "Anderson says, —

"'On joy comes grief, – on mirth comes sorrow;
We laugh to-day, that we may cry to-morrow.'

And I believe one is just as pleasant as the other, – eh, mamma? *You* ought to know."

"This is one of your naughty days, Clara, and I had hoped we had seen the last of them," said her mother, in a grave but not severe tone.

"The naughty days are much more like to see the last of *me*," said the child, half aloud, and with a heavy sigh.

"Clara," said her mother, in the same calm, quiet voice, "I have made you my friend and my confidante at an age when any other had treated you with strict discipline and reserve. You have been taught to see life – as my sad experience revealed it to me, too – too late."

"And for me, too – too soon!" burst in the child, passionately.

"Here 's poor Clara breaking her heart over her exercise," burst in Sir William, as he came forward, and, stooping over the child, kissed her twice on the forehead. "Do let me have a favor to-day, and let this be a holiday."

"Oh, yes, by all means," cried she, eagerly, clapping her hands.

"The lizard can lie in the sun, and bask
'Mid the odor of fragrant herbs;
Little knows he of a wearisome task,
Or the French irregular verbs.

"The cicala, too, in the long deep grass,
All day sings happily,
And I'd venture to swear
He has never a care For the odious rule of three.

"And as for the bee,
And his industry – "

"Oh, what a rhyme" laughed in Mrs. Morris.
"Oh, let her go on," cried Sir William. "Go on, Clara."

"And as for the bee,
And his industry,
I distrust his toilsome hours,
For he roves up and down,
Like a 'man upon town,'
With a natural taste for flowers.

There, mamma, no more, – not another the whole day long, I promise you," cried she, as she threw her arms around her neck and kissed her affectionately.

"Oh, these doggerel rhymes
Are like nursery chimes,
That sang us to sleep long ago.

I declare I'm forgetting already; so I'll go and look for Charley, and help him to tie greendrakes, and the rest of them."

"What a strange child!" said Sir William, as he looked fondly after her as she fled across the lawn.

"I have never seen her so thoroughly happy before," said Mrs. Morris, with a faint sigh. "This lovely place, these delicious gardens, these charming old woods, the villa itself, so full of objects of interest, have made up a sort of fairy-tale existence for her which is positive enchantment. It is, indeed, high time we

should tear ourselves away from fascinations which will leave all life afterwards a very dull affair."

"Oh, that day is very distant, I should hope," said he, with sincere cordiality; "indeed, my ward and myself were, this very morning, plotting by what pretext, by what skilful devices, we could induce you to spend your autumn with us."

Mrs. Morris covered her face, as if to conceal her emotion, but a faint sob was still audible from beneath her handkerchief. "Oh!" cried she, in a faint and broken voice, "if you but knew in what a wounded heart you have poured this balm! – if I could tell – what I cannot tell you – at least, not yet – No, no, Sir William, we must leave this. I have already written to my agent about letters for Alexandria and Cairo. You know," she added, with a sad smile, "the doctors have sentenced me to Egypt for the winter."

"These fellows are mere alarmists. Italy is the best climate in the world, or, rather, it has all the climates in the world; besides, I have some wonderful counsel to give you about your bonds. I intend that Miss Clara shall be the great heiress of her day. At all events, you shall settle it with May." And so, with that dread of a scene, a sort of terror about everything emotional, – not very unnatural in gentlemen of a certain time of life, and with strong sanguineous temperaments, – Sir William hurried away and left her to her own reflections.

Thus alone, Mrs. Morris took a letter from her pocket, and began to read it. Apparently the document had been perused by her before, for she passed hastily over the first page, scarcely

skimming the lines with her eye. It was as if to give increased opportunity for judgment on the contents that she muttered the words as she read them. They ran thus: —

"A month or six weeks back our proposal might have been accepted, so at least Collier thinks; but he is now in funds, has money in abundance, and *you* know *what* he is at such moments. When Collier went to him at his lodgings in King Street, he found him in high spirits, boasting that he occupied the old quarters of the French Emperor, – that he had even succeeded to his arm-chair and his writing-table. 'A splendid augury, Tom,' said he, laughing. 'Who knows but I, too, shall be "restored" one of these days?' After some bantering he stopped suddenly, and said, ' By the way, what the devil brings you here? Is n't it something about Loo? They say you want to marry her yourself, Collier, – is that true?' Not heeding C.'s denial, given in all solemnity, he went on to show that you could be no possible use to Collier, – that he himself could utilize your abilities, and give your talents a fitting sphere; whereas in Collier's set you would be utterly lost. C. said it was as good as a play to hear his talk of all the fine things you might have done, and might yet do, in concert. 'Then there's Clara, too,' cried he, again; 'she 'll make the greatest hit of our day. She can come out for a season at the Haymarket, and she can marry whoever she likes.' Once in this vein, it was very hard to bring him back to anything like a bargain. Indeed, Collier says he would n't hear of any but immense terms, – ridiculed the notion of your wanting to be free, for mere freedom's sake, and

jocularly said, 'Tell me frankly, whom does *she* want to marry? or who wants to marry *her!* I 'm not an unreasonable fellow if I 'm treated on "the square."' Collier assured him that you only desired liberty, that you might take your own road in life. 'Then let her take it, by all means,' cried he. 'I am not molesting her, – never have molested her, even when she went so far as to call herself by another name; she need n't cry out before she's hurt;' and so on. C. at last brought him to distinct terms, and he said, 'She shall cut the painter for five thousand; she's worth to me every guinea of it, and I'll not take less.' Of course, Collier said these were impossible conditions; and then they talked away about other matters. You know his boastful way, and how little reliance can be laid on any statement he makes; but certain it is, Collier came away fully impressed with the flourishing condition of his present fortune, his intimacy with great people, and his actual influence with men in power. That this is not entirely fabulous I have just received a most disagreeable proof. When Collier rose to go away, he said, 'By the way, you occasionally see Nick Holmes; well, just give him a hint to set his house in order, for they are going to stop payment of that Irish pension of his. It appears, from some correspondence of Lord Cornwallis that has just turned up, Nick's pension was to be continued for a stated term of years, and that he has been in receipt of it for the last six years without any right whatever. It is very hard on Nick,' said he, 'seeing that he sold himself to the devil, not at least to be his own master in this world. I 'm sorry for the old dog on

family grounds, for he is at least one of my father-in-laws.' I quote his words as Collier gave them, and to-day I have received a Treasury order to forward to the Lords a copy of the letter or warrant under which I received my pension. I mean simply to refer them to my evidence on Shehan's trial, where my testimony hanged both father and son. If this incident shows nothing else, it demonstrates the amount of information he has of what is doing or to be done in Downing Street. As to the pension, I 'm not much afraid; my revelations of 1808 would be worse than the cost of me in the budget.

"If I find that nothing can be done with Ludlow, I don't think I shall remain here longer, and the chances are that I shall take a run as far as Baden, and who says not over the Alps after? Don't be frightened, dear Loo, we shall meet at the same *table d'hôte*, drink at the same public spring, bet on the same card at *rouge-et-noir*, and I will never betray either of us. Of your Heathcotes I can learn next to nothing. There was a baronet of the name who ruined himself by searches after a title – an earldom, I believe – and railroad speculations, but he died, or is supposed to have died, abroad. At all events, your present owners of the name keep a good house, and treat you handsomely, so that there can be no great mistake in knowing them. Sufficient for the day is the evil – as the old saying is; and it is a wise one if we understood how to apply it.

"I have been twice with Hadson and Reames, but there is nothing to be done. They say that the town does not care for

a wife's book against her husband; they have the whole story better told, and on oath, in the Divorce Court. A really slashing volume of a husband against his wife might, however, take; he could say a number of things would amuse the public, and have a large sympathy with him. These are Hadson's or Reames's words, I don't know which, for they always talk together. How odd that *you* should have thought of the ballet for Clara just as I had suggested it! Of course, till free of Ludlow, it is out of the question. I am sorry to seal and send off such a disagreeable letter, dear Louisa, but who knows the sad exigencies of this weary world better than your affectionate father,

"N. Holmes.

"I accidentally heard yesterday that there was actually a Mrs. Penthony Morris travelling somewhere in Switzerland. Washington Irving, I believe, once chanced upon a living Ichabod Crane, when he had flattered himself that the name was his own invention. The complication in the present case might be embarrassing. So bear it in mind."

"Tant pis pour elle, whoever the other Mrs. Morris may be," said she, laughing, as she folded up the letter, and half mechanically regarded the seal. "You ought to change your crest, respectable father mine," muttered she; "the wags might say that your portcullis was a gallows." And then, with a weary sigh, she closed her eyes, and fell a-thinking.

That quiet, tranquil, even-tempered category of mankind, whose present has few casualties, and whose future is, so far

as human foresight can extend, assured to them, can form not the slightest conception of the mingled pleasure and pain that chequer the life of "the adventurer." The man who consents to gamble existence, has all the violent ecstasies of joy and grief that wait on changeful fortunes.

"Shall I hit upon the right number this time? Will red win once more? Is the run of luck good or ill, or, it may be, exhausted?" These are questions ever rising to his mind; and what contrivance, what preparation, what spirit of exigency do they evoke! Theirs is a hand-to-hand conflict with Fate; they can subsidize no legions, skulk behind no parapets; in open field must the war be carried on; and what a cruel war it becomes when every wound festers into a crime!

This young and pretty woman, on whose fair features not a painful line was traced, and whose beautifully chiselled mouth smiled with a semblance of inward peace, was just then revolving thoughts little flattering to humanity generally. She had, all young as she was, arrived at the ungracious conclusion that what are called the good are mere dupes, and that every step in life's ladder only lifts us higher and higher out of the realm of kindly sympathies and affections. Reading the great moralist in a version of their own, such people deem all virtue "vanity," and the struggles and sacrifices it entails, "vexation of spirit." Let us frankly own that Mrs. Morris did not lose herself in any world of abstractions; she was eminently practical, and would no more have thrown away her time in speculations on humanity generally

than would a whist-player, in the crisis of the odd trick, have suffered his mind to wander away to the manufactory where the cards were made, and the lives and habits of those who made them.

And now she had to think over Sir William, of whom she was half afraid; of Charles, whom she but half liked; and of May, whom she half envied. There were none of them very deep or difficult to read, but she had seen enough of life to know that many people, like fairy tales, are simple in perusal, but contain some subtle maxim, some cunning truth, in their moral. Were these of this order? She could not yet determine; how, therefore, should we? And so we leave her.

CHAPTER VIII. PORT-NA-WHAPPLE

Although time has not advanced, nor any change of season occurred to tinge the landscape with colder hues, we are obliged to ask our reader's company to a scene as unlike the sunny land we have been sojourning in as possible. It is a little bay on the extreme north coast of Ireland, closely landlocked by rugged cliffs, whose basalt formation indicates a sort of half-brotherhood with the famed Causeway. Seen from the tall precipices above, on a summer's day, when a vertical sunlight would have fallen on the strip of yellow crescent-like beach along which white-crested waves slowly came and went, the spot was singularly beautiful, and the one long, low, white cottage which faced the sea would have seemed a most enviable abode, so peaceful, so calm it looked. Closely girt in on three sides by rocky cliffs, whose wild, fantastic outlines presented every imaginable form, now rising in graceful pinnacles and minarets, now standing out in all the stern majesty of some massive fortress or donjon keep, some blue and purple heaths might be seen clothing the little shelves of rock, and, wherever a deeper cleft occurred, some tall, broad-leaved ferns; but, except these, no other vegetation was to be met with. Indeed, the country for miles around displayed little else than the arid yellowish grass that springs from light sandy soil, the scant pasturage of mountain sheep. Directly in front of the bay, and with a distinctness

occasionally startling, might be seen rising up from the sea a mass of stately cliffs, which seemed like a reflection of the Causeway. This was Staffa, something more than thirty-odd miles off, but which, in the thin atmosphere of a calm day, might easily be traced out from the little cove of Port-na-Whapple.

Port-na-Whapple had once been a noted spot amongst fishermen; the largest "takes" of salmon – and of the finest fish on the coast – had been made there. For three or four weeks in the early autumn the little bay was the scene of a most vigorous activity, the beach covered with rude huts of branches and boat canvas, the strand crowded with people, all busily engaged salting, drying, or packing the fish; boats launching, or standing in, deep-laden with their speckled freight; great fires blazing in every sheltered nook, where the cares of household were carried on in common, for the fishermen who frequented the place lived like one large family. They came from the same village in the neighborhood, and, from time out of mind, had resorted to this bay as to a spot especially and distinctively their own. They had so identified themselves with the place that they were only known as Port-na-Whapple men; a vigorous, stalwart, sturdy race of fellows were they, too, that none molested or interfered with willingly.

About forty years before the time we now speak of, a new proprietor had succeeded to the vast estate, which had once belonged to the Mark-Kers, and he quickly discovered that the most valuable part of his inheritance consisted in the fishing

royalties of the coast. To assert a right to what nobody ever believed was the actual property of any one in particular, was not a very easy process. Had the Port-na-Whapple men been told that the air they breathed, or the salt sea they traversed, were heritable, they could as readily have believed it, as that any one should assert his claim to the strip of sandy beach where they and their fathers before them had fished for ages.

Sir Archibald Beresford, however, was not a man to relinquish a claim he had once preferred; he had right and parchment on his side, and he cared very little for prescription, or what he called the prejudices of a barbarous peasantry. He went vigorously to work, served the trespassers with due notice to quit, and proceeded against the delinquents at sessions. For years and years the conflict lasted, with various and changeful successes. Now, the landlord would seem triumphant, he had gained his decree, taken ont his execution against the nets, the boats, and the tackle, but when the hour of enforcing the law arrived, his bailiffs had been beaten ignominiously from the field, and the fishermen left in full possession of the territory. Driven to desperation by the stubborn resistance, Sir Archy determined on a bolder stand. He erected a cottage on the beach, and established himself there with a strong garrison of retainers well armed, and prepared to defend their rights. Port-na-Whapple was at length won, and although some bloody affrays did occasionally occur between the rival parties, the fishermen were compelled to abandon the station and seek a livelihood elsewhere.

With a confidence inspired by some years of security, Sir Archy diminished his garrison, till at length it was his habit to come down to the bay accompanied by only a single servant. The old feud appeared to have died out; not, indeed, that the landlord met those signs of respect from his tenantry which imply good understanding between them; no welcome met him when he came, no regrets followed him when he departed, and even few of the country people accorded the courtesy of touching their hat as they met him passingly on the road. He was a "hard man," however, and cared little for such slights. At length – it was a season when he had exceeded his usual stay at the coast – there came a period of great distress amongst the fishermen. Day after day the boats went out and returned empty. It was in vain that they passed days and nights at sea, venturing far out upon that wild northern ocean, – the most treacherous in existence, – in vain they explored the bays, more perilous still than the open sea. Their sole subsistence was derived from the sea, and what was to be done? Gaunt famine was stamped on many a hardy face, and strong men dragged their limbs lazily and languidly, as if in sickness. As Sir Archy had never succeeded in obtaining a tenant for the royalty of Port-na-Whapple, he amused himself gaffing the salmon, which he from time to time sent as presents to his friends; and even now, in this season of dearth, many a well-filled hamper found its way up the steep cliffs to be despatched to some remote corner of the kingdom. It was on one of these days that an enormous fish – far too big for any basket – was

carefully encased in a matting, and sent off by the Coleraine coach, labelled, "The largest ever gaffed at Port-na-Whapple." Many an eye, half glazed with hunger, saw the fish, and gazed on the superscription as it was sent into the village, and looks of ominous meaning were cast over the deep cliffs towards the little cottage below. The morning after this, while Sir Archibald's servant was at the post for his letters, a boat rowed into the little cove, and some men, having thrown out the anchor, waded ashore.

"What brings you here, fellows?" cried Sir Archy, haughtily, as he met them on the beach.

"We are come to gaff a bigger fish than yours o' yesterday," said the foremost, striking him on the forehead with the handle of the gaff; and he passed the spear through his heart while he yet reeled under the blow.

Notwithstanding the most active exertions of the Government of the day and the local magistrature, the authors of the foul deed were never discovered, and although there could be no doubt they were well known to a large population, none betrayed them. More strange still, from that day and hour not a fish was ever taken at Port-na-Whapple!

The property had fallen into Chancery, and, the interests of the claimants not being very closely guarded, the fishermen were again at liberty to fish wherever they pleased. The privilege was of no value; the fish had deserted the spot, and even when they swarmed at Carrig-a-rede, and all along the shore, not one

ever was taken there! That the place was deemed "uncannie," and that none frequented it, need not cause any wonder, and so the little cottage fell into ruin, the boat-house was undermined by the sea and carried away, and even of the little boat-pier only a few bare piles now remained to mark the place, when at length there arrived, from Dublin, a doctor to take charge of the Ballintray Dispensary, and, not being able to find a habitable spot in the village, he was fain to put the old cottage in repair, little influenced by the superstition that attached to the unholy place.

He was an elderly man, whose family consisted of his wife and a single servant, and who, from the day of his first arrival, showed a decided repugnance to forming acquaintance with any, or holding other intercourse with his neighbors than what the cares of his profession required. In person he was tall, and even stately; his features those of a man once handsome, but now disfigured by two red blotches over the eyes, and a tremulousness of the nether lip, indications of long years of dissipation, which his watery eye and shaking hand abundantly confirmed. Either, too, from a consciousness of his infirmity, or a shame not less deeply rooted, he never met the eyes of those he addressed, but turned his gaze either askance or to the ground, giving him then an expression very different from the look he wore when alone and unobserved. At such times the face was handsome but haughty, a character of almost defiant pride in the eye, while the angles of the mouth were slightly drawn down, as one sees in persons of proud temperament. A few words will suffice for so much

of his history as the reader need know. Herbert Layton had the proud distinction of being a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of twenty-one, and, three years later, won, against many distinguished competitors, the chair of medicine in the university. His whole academic career had been a succession of triumphs, and even able men made this excuse for not obtaining honors, that they were "in Layton's division." His was one of those rare natures to which acquirements the most diverse and opposite are easy. The most critical knowledge of the classics was combined in him with a high-soaring acquaintance with science, and while he carried away the gold medal for verse composition, the very same week announced him as prizeman for microscopic researches. And while he thus swept the college of honors, he was ever foremost in all athletic games and manly exercises. Indeed, the story goes that the gown in which he won his fellowship had been hastily thrown over the jacket of the cricketer. If the blemish served to afflict those who felt the truest friendship for him, it rather contributed to exaggerate the prestige of his name that he was haughty and even overbearing in manner; not meanly condescending to be vain of his successes and the high eminence he had won, – far from it, no man treated such triumphs with such supercilious levity, boldly declaring that they were within the reach of all, and that it was a simple question of application to any, – his proud demeanor had its source in a certain sense of self-reliance, and a haughty conviction that the occasion had not come – might never come – to show the world the great

"stuff that was in him;" and thus, many a rumor ran, "Layton is sorry for having taken to medicine; it can lead to nothing: at the Bar he must have gained every eminence, entered Parliament, risen Heaven knows to what or where. Layton cannot conceal his dissatisfaction with a career of no high rewards." And thus they sought for the explanation of that demeanor which hurt the pride of many and the sympathy of all.

Partly from the aggressive nature of the passion of self-esteem, never satisfied if with each day it has not made further inroad, partly, perhaps, from the estrangement of friends, wearied out by endless pretensions, Layton at last lived utterly companionless and alone. His habits of hard work made this the less remarkable; but stories were soon abroad that he had abandoned himself to drink, and that the hours believed to be passed in study were in reality spent in debauch and intoxication. His appearance but unhappily gave some corroboration to the rumor. He had grown careless in his dress, slouching in his walk; his pale, thoughtful face was often flushed with a glow exercise never gives; and his clear bright eye no longer met another's with boldness. He neglected, besides, all his collegiate duties, his pupils rarely could obtain sight of him, his class-room was always deserted, a brief notice "that the Regius Professor was indisposed, and would not lecture," remaining affixed to the door for the entire session.

While this once great reputation was thus crumbling away, there arose another, and, the time considered, a far more

dangerous imputation. It was the terrible period of 1807, and men said that Layton was deep in all the designs of the Emmet party. So completely was the insurrection limited to men of the very humbler walks in life, so destitute was the cause of all support from persons of station or influence, that it is scarcely possible to picture the shock – almost passing belief – of the world when this report began to gain currency and credit. Were the public to-morrow to learn that some great and trusted political leader was found out to be secretly in the pay of France or Russia, it would not excite more incredulous horror than at that day was caused by imputing rebellious projects to Herbert Layton.

The honor of the University was too deeply involved to suffer such a charge to be rashly circulated. The board summoned the Regius Professor to attend before them. He returned his reply to the summons on the back of a letter constituting him a member of the "United Irishmen," the great rebel association of the day. As much out of regard to their own fame, as in pity for a rashness that might have cost him his life, they destroyed the document and deprived him of his fellowship.

From the day that he wandered forth a ruined, houseless, destitute man, little is known of him. At long intervals of time, men would say, "Could that have been poor Herbert, that 'Layton,' taken up by the police for drunkenness, or accused of some petty crime? Was it he who was charged with sending threatening letters to this one, or making insolent demands on

that?" Another would say, "I could swear I saw Layton as a witness in one of those pot-house trials where the course of law proceedings is made the matter of vulgar jest." Another met him hawking quack medicines in a remote rural district.

It is not necessary we should follow him through these changes, each lower than the last in degradation. We arrive by a bound at a period when he kept a small apothecary's shop in a little village of North Wales, and where, with seeming reformation of character, he lived discreetly, and devoted himself assiduously to the education of an only son.

By dint of immense effort, and sacrifices the most painful, he succeeded in entering his boy at Cambridge; but in his last year, his means failing, he had obtained a tutorship for him, – no less a charge than that of the young Marquis of Agincourt, – an appointment to which his college tutor had recommended him. Almost immediately after this, a vacancy occurring in the little village of Ballintray for a dispensary doctor, Layton applied for the appointment, and obtained it. Few, indeed, of the electors had ever heard of his name, but all were astonished at the ample qualifications tendered by one willing to accept such humble duties. The rector of the parish, Dr. Millar, was, though his junior, perhaps, the only one well conversant with Layton's story, for he had been his contemporary at the University.

On the two or three occasions on which they met, Dr. Millar never evinced by the slightest allusion any knowledge of the other's antecedents. He even, by adroit reference to English life

and habits, in contradistinction to Irish, seemed to infer that his experiences were more at home there; and whatever might have been Layton's own secret promptings, there was nothing in the clergyman's manner to provoke the slightest constraint or awkwardness.

The reader is now sufficiently informed to accompany us to the little cottage on the beach of Port-na-Whapple. It is a warm autumnal afternoon, the air calm and still, but the great sea comes heaving in, wave swelling after wave, as though moved by a storm. Strange contrast to that loud thundering ocean the little peaceful cottage, whose blue smoke rises in a thin, straight column into the air. The door is open, and a few ducks, with their young brood, are waddling up and down the blue stone step, as though educating their young in feats of difficulty and daring. On a coarse wooden perch within the hall sits a very old gray parrot, so old that his feathers have assumed a sort of half-woolly look, and his bleared eyes only open at intervals, as though he had seen quite enough of this world already, and could afford to take it easily. In the attitude of the head, partially thrown forward and slightly on one side, there is a mock air of thought and reflection, marvellously aided by a habit the creature has of muttering to himself such little broken ends of speech as he possesses. Layton had bought him a great many years back, having fancied he could detect a resemblance in him to a once famed vice-provost of Trinity, after whom he called him "Dr. Barret," a name the bird felt proud of, as well he might, and seemed even now, in his half

dotage, to warm up on hearing it. Through the open door of a little room adjoining might be seen a very pale, sickly woman, who coughed almost incessantly as she bent over an embroidery-frame. Though not much more than middle-aged, her hair was perfectly white, and deep discolorations – the track of tears for many a day – marked her worn cheeks.

On the opposite side of the hall, in a small room whose furniture was an humble truckle-bed, and a few shelves with physic-bottles, the doctor was engaged at his toilet, if by so pretentious a term we may record the few preparations he was making to render his every-day appearance more presentable. As he stood thus in trousers and shirt, his broad chest and powerful neck exposed, he seemed to testify even yet to the athletic vigor of one who was known as the best hurler and racket-player of his day. He had been swimming a long stretch far out to sea, and air and exercise together had effaced many of those signs of dissipation which his face usually wore, while in his voice there was a frank boldness that only came back to him at some rare intervals.

"I can fancy, Grace," cried he, loud enough to be heard across the hall, "that Millar is quite proud of his condescension. The great rector of the parish, man of fortune besides, stooping to invite the dispensary doctor! Twelve hundred per annum associating with eighty! To be sure he says, 'You will only meet two friends and neighbors of mine,' as though to intimate, 'I am doing this on the sly; I don't mean to make you a guest on field-

days.'"

She muttered something, speedily interrupted by a cough; and he, not caring to catch her words, went on: —

"It is a politeness that cuts both ways, and makes *me* as uncomfortable as him. This waistcoat has a beggarly account of empty button-holes; and as for my coat, nothing but a dim candle-light would screen its deficiencies. I was a fool to accept!" cried he, impatiently.

"Don't go, Tom! don't go!" screamed the parrot, addressing him by a familiar sobriquet.

"And why not, doctor?" said Layton, laughing at the apropos.

"Don't go! don't go!" repeated the bird.

"Give me your reasons, old boy, and not impossible is it I 'll agree with you. What do you say, Grace?" added he, advancing to the door of his room the better to catch her words.

"It is to them the honor is *done*, not to you," said she, faintly, and as though the speech cost her heavily.

"Very hard to persuade the rector of that, – very hard to convince the man of silver side-dishes and cut decanters that he is not the patron of him who dines off Delf and drinks out of pewter. Is this cravat too ragged, Grace? I think I 'd better wear my black one."

"Yes, the black one," said she, coughing painfully.

"After all, it is no grand occasion, – a little party of four."

"What a swell! what a swell!" shrieked the parrot.

"Ain't I? By Jove," laughed Layton, "the doctor is marvellous

in his remarks to-day."

"There, I have done my best with such scanty 'properties,'" said he, as he turned away from the glass. "The greatest peril to a shabby man is the self-imposed obligation to show he is better than he looks. It is an almost invariable blunder."

She muttered something inaudibly, and, as usual, he went on with his own thoughts.

"One either assumes a more dictatorial tone, or takes more than his share of the talk, or is more apt to contradict the great man of the company, – at least *I* do."

"Don't go, Tom! don't! don't!" called out Dr. Barret.

"Not go? – after all these splendid preparations!" said Layton, with a laugh. "After yourself exclaiming, 'What a swell!'"

"It 'll never pay, – never pay, – never pay!" croaked out Poll.

"That I'm sure of, doctor. I never knew one of these politic things that did; but yet we go on through life practising them in the face of all their failure, dancing attendance at levées, loitering in antechambers, all to be remembered by some great man who is just as likely to hate the sight of us. However, this shall be my last transgression."

The faint female voice muttered some indistinct words about what he "owed to himself," and the "rightful station that belonged to him;" but he speedily cut the reflection short as he said: "So long as a man is poor as I am, he can only hold his head high by total estrangement from the world. Let him dare to mix with it, and his threadbare coat and patched shoes will soon convince

him that they will extend no equality to him who comes among them in such beggarly fashion. With what authority, I ask, can he speak, whose very poverty refutes his sentiments, and the simple question stands forth unanswerable: 'If this man knew so much, why is he as we see him?'"

"This is, then, to say that misfortune is never unmerited. Surely you do not mean that, Herbert?" said she, with an eagerness almost painful.

"It is exactly what I would say, – that for all the purposes of worldly judgments upon men, there is no easier rule than to assume that they who fail deserve failure. Richelieu never asked those who sought high command, 'Are you skilful in the field? are you clever in strategy?' but' 'Are you lucky?'"

A deep sigh was her only answer.

"I wonder who Millar's fourth man is to be? Colonel Karstairs, I know, is one; a man of importance to me, Grace," said he, laughing; "a two-guinea subscriber to the dispensary! How I wish I were in a more fitting spirit of submissiveness to my betters; and, by ill fortune, this is one of my rebellious days!"

"Don't go, Tom! Don't go, I say!" yelled out Poll.

"Prophet of evil, and evil prophet, hold your tongue! I will go," said he, sternly, and as if answering a responsible adviser; and setting his hat on, with a certain air of dogged defiance, he left the house.

His wife arose, and with feeble steps tottered to the door of the cottage to look after him. A few steps brought him to the foot

of the cliff, up the steep face of which a zigzag path led upwards for fully four hundred feet, a narrow track trodden by the bare feet of hardy mountaineers into some semblance of a pathway, but such as few denizens of towns would willingly have taken. Layton, however, stepped along like one whose foot was not new to the heather; nay, the very nature of the ascent, the bracing air of the sea, and something in the peril itself of the way, seemed to revive in the man his ancient vigor; and few, seeing him from the beach below, as he boldly breasted the steep bluff, or sprang lightly over some fissured chasm, would have deemed him one long since past the prime of life, – one who had spent more than youth, and its ambitions, in excess.

At first, the spirit to press onward appeared to possess him entirely; but ere he reached the half ascent, he turned to look down on the yellow strip of strand and the little cottage, up to whose very door-sill now the foam seemed curling. Never before had its isolation seemed so complete. Not a sail was to be seen seaward, not even a gull broke the stillness with his cry; a low, mournful plash, with now and then a rumbling half thunder, as the sea resounded within some rocky cavern, were the only sounds, and Layton sat down on a mossy ledge, to drink in the solitude in all its fulness. Amidst thoughts of mingled pain and pleasure, memories of long-past struggles, college triumphs and college friendships, came dreary recollections of dark reverses, when the world seemed to fall back from him, and leave him to isolation. Few had ever started with more ambitious yearnings, –

few with more personal assurances of success. Whatever he tried he was sure to be told, "*There* lies your road, Layton; *that* is the path will lead you to high rewards." He had, besides, – strange inexplicable gift, – that prestige of superiority about him that made men cede the place to him, as if by prescription. "And what had come of it all? – what had come of it all?" he cried out aloud, suddenly awaking out of the past to face the present. "Why have I failed?" asked he wildly of himself. "Is it that others have passed me in the race? Have my successes been discovered to have been gained by trick or fraud? Have my acquirements been pronounced mere pretensions? These, surely, cannot be alleged of one whose fame can be attested by almost every scientific and literary journal of the empire. No, no! the explanation is easier, – the poet was wrong, – Fortune *is* a Deity, and some men are born to be unlucky."

With a sudden start he arose, and rallied from these musings. He quickly bethought himself of his engagement, and continued his way upward. When he reached the tableland at top, it wanted but a few minutes of five o'clock, and five was the hour for which he was invited, and there was yet two miles to walk to the Rectory. Any one who has lived for a considerable space estranged from society and its requirements, will own to the sense of slavery impressed by a return to the habits of the world. He will feel that every ordinance is a tyranny, and the necessity of being dressed for this, or punctual for that, a downright bondage.

Thus chafing and irritable, Layton walked along. Never was

man less disposed to accept hospitality as a polite attention, and more than once did he halt, irresolute whether he should not retrace his steps towards home. “No man,” thought he, “could get off more cheaply. They would ascribe it all to my ignorance. What should a poor devil with eighty pounds a year know of politeness? and when I had said, *I* had forgotten the invitation, they would forget *me*!”

Thus self-accusing and self-disparaging, he reached the little avenue gate, which by a trim gravel walk led up to the parsonage. The neat lodge, with its rustic porch, all overgrown with a rich japonica, – the well-kept road, along whose sides two little paved channels conducted the water, – the flower-plats at intervals in the smooth emerald turf, were all assurances of care and propriety; and as Layton marked them, he muttered, “This is one of the lucky ones.”

As Layton moved on with laggard step, he halted frequently to mark some new device or other of ornamental gardening. Now it was a tasteful group of rock-work, over which gracefully creepers hung in festoons; now it was a little knot of flowering shrubs, so artfully intermingled as to seem as though growing from a single stem; now a tiny fishpond could be descried through the foliage; even the rustic seats, placed at points of commanding view, seemed to say how much the whole scene had been planned for enjoyment, and that every tint of foliage, every undulation of the sward, every distant glimpse caught through a narrow vista, had all been artfully contrived to yield its share of pleasure.

"I wonder," muttered he, bitterly, to himself, – "I wonder when this man preaches on a Sunday against wealth and its temptations, reminding others that out of this world men take nothing, but go out upon their new pilgrimage naked and poor, does he ever turn a thought to all these things, so beautiful now, and with that vitality that will make them beautiful years and years after he himself has become dust? I have little doubt," added he, hurriedly, "that he says all this, and believes it too. Here am I, after just as many determinations to eat no man's salt, nor sit down to any board better than my own, – here I am to-day creeping like a poor parasite to a great man's table, – ay, he is a great man to *me!*

"How strange is the casuistry, too, with which humble people like myself persuade themselves that they go into the world against their will; that they do so purely from motives of policy, forgetting all the while how ignoble is the motive they lay claim to.

"The old Roman moralist told us that poverty had no heavier infliction in its train than that it made men ridiculous, but I tell him he is wrong. It makes men untrue to themselves, false to their own hearts, enemies to their own convictions, doing twenty things every day of their lives that they affect to deem prudent, and know to be contemptible. I wish my worthy host had left me unnoticed!"

He was at last at the door, and rang the bell with the impatient boldness of one chafing and angry with himself. There was a

short delay, for the servants were all engaged in the dining-room, and Layton rang again.

"Dr. Millar at home?" asked he, sternly, of the well-powdered footman who stood before him.

"Yes, sir; he's at dinner."

"At dinner! I was invited to dinner!"

"I know, sir; and the doctor waited for half an hour beyond the time; but he has only gone in this moment."

It is just possible, in Layton's then frame of mind, that he had turned away and left the house, never to re-enter it, when a slight circumstance determined him to the opposite. This was the footman's respectful manner as he took the hat from his hand, and threw wide the door for him to pass onward. Ay, it is ever so! Things too trivial and insignificant for notice in this life are every hour influencing our actions and swaying our motives. Men have stormed a breach for a smile, and gone out in black despair with life just for a cold word or a cold look. So much more quickly does the heart influence than the head, even with the very cleverest amongst us.

As Layton entered the dining-room, his host rose to receive him, and, with a polished courtesy, apologized for having gone to table before his arrival. "I gave you half an hour, doctor, and I would have given you longer, but that I am aware a physician is not always master of his time. Colonel Karstairs you are acquainted with. Let me present you to Mr. Ogden. Dr. Layton, Mr. Ogden."

There is no manner that so impresses the world with the idea of self-sufficiency and pretension as that of the bashful man contending against his own diffidence; and this same timidity, that one would imagine so easily rubbed off by contact with the world, actually increases with age, and, however glossed over by an assumed ease and a seeming indifference, lives to torment its possessor to his last day. Of this Layton was an unhappy victim, and while imbued with a consummate self-esteem, he had a painful consciousness of the criticism that his manner and breeding might call forth. The result of this conflict was to render him stern, defiant, and even overbearing, – traits which imparted their character even to his features in first intercourse with strangers.

"I don't know how Halford managed it," said Mr. Ogden, as he reseated himself at table, "but I 've heard him say that his professional engagements never lost him a dinner."

Simple as were these words, they contained a rebuke, and the air of the man that uttered them did not diminish their significance.

Mr. Ogden was a thin, pale, pock-marked man, with an upstanding head of gray hair, a very high and retreating forehead, and a long upper lip, – one of those men in whom the face, disproportionately large for the head, always gives the impression of a self-sufficient nature. He had a harsh, sharp voice, with an articulation of a most painful accuracy, even his commonplaces being enunciated with a sort of distinct impressiveness, as

though to imply that his copper was of more value than another man's gold. Nor was this altogether a delusion; he had had a considerable experience of mankind and the world, and had contrived to pass his bad money on them as excellent coin of the realm. He was – and it is very distinctive in its mark – one of those men who always live in a class above their own, and, whatever be the recognition and the acceptance they have there, are ever regarded by their rightful equals as something peculiarly privileged and superior.

"My Lord" would have called him a useful man; his friends all described him as "influential." But he was something greater than either, – he was a successful man. We are constantly told that the efficiency of our army is mainly owing to the admirable skill and ability of its petty officers. That to their unobtrusive diligence, care, and intelligence we are indebted for all those qualities by which a force is rendered manageable, and victories are won. Do we not see something very similar in our Bureaucracy? Is not our Government itself almost entirely in the hands of "petty officers"? The great minister who rises in his place in Parliament, the exponent of some grand policy, the author of some extensive measure, is, after all, little more than the mouthpiece of some "Mr. Ogden" in Downing Street; some not very brilliant or very statesmanlike personage, but a man of business habits, every-day intelligence, and long official traditions, – one of those three or four men in all England who can say to a minister, "It can't be done," and yet give no reason

why.

The men of this Ogden stamp are, in reality, great influences in a country like ours, where frequent changes of government require that the traditions of office should be transmitted through something higher and more responsible than mere clerks. They are the stokers who keep the fires alight and the steam up till a new captain comes aboard, and, though neither commanders nor pilots, they *do* manage to influence the course of the ship, by the mere fact that they can diminish the force of her speed or increase its power without any one being very well aware of how or wherefore.

Such men as these are great people in that dingy old house, whose frail props without are more than emblems of what goes on within. Of their very offices men speak as of the Holy of Holies; places where none enter fearlessly save secretaries of state, and at whose door inferior mortals wipe their feet with heart-sinking fear and lowness of spirit, rehearsing not unfrequently the abject words of submissiveness with which they are to approach such greatness.

It is curious, therefore, to see one of these men in private life. One wishes to know how M. Houdin will look without his conjuring-rod, or what Coriolanus will do in plain clothes; for, after all, he must come into the world unattended with his belongings, and can no more carry Downing Street about with him than could Albert Smith carry "China" to a dinner-party.

And now the soup has been brought back, and the fish,

somewhat cold and mangled, to be sure, has been served to Dr. Layton; the servant has helped him to an admirable glass of sherry, and the dinner proceeds pleasantly enough, – not, however, without its casualties. But of these the next chapter will tell us.

CHAPTER IX. A DINNER AT THE RECTORY

These are men who have specialities for giving admirable "little dinners," and little dinners are unquestionably the *ne plus ultra* of social enjoyment. To accomplish these there are far more requirements necessary than the world usually wots of. They are not the triumphs of great houses, with regiments of yellow plush and gold candelabra; they affect no vast dining-rooms, nor a private band. They are, on the contrary, the prerogatives of moderate incomes, middle-aged or elderly hosts, usually bachelors, with small houses, furnished in the perfection of comfort, without any display, but where everything, from the careful disposal of a fire-screen to the noiseless gait of the footman, shows you that a certain supervision and discipline prevail, even though you never hear an order and rarely see a servant.

Where these people get their cooks, I never could make out! It is easy enough to understand that fish and soup, your sirloin and your woodcock, could be well and carefully dressed, but who devised that exquisite little *entrée*, what genius presided over that dish of macaroni, that omelette, or that soufflé? Whence, besides, came the infinite taste of the whole meal, with its few dishes, served in an order of artistic elegance? And that butler, too, – how quiet, how observant, how noiseless his ministration;

how steady his decanter hand! Where did they find *him?* And that pale sherry, and that Chablis, and that exquisite cup of Mocha? Don't tell me that you or I can have them all as good, – that you know his wine-merchant, and have the receipt for his coffee. You might as well tell me you could sing like Mario because you employ his hairdresser. No, no; they who accomplish these things are peculiar organizations. They have great gifts of order and system, the nicest perceptions of taste, considerable refinement, and no small share of sensuality. They possess a number of high qualities in miniature, and are, so to say, "great men seen through the wrong end of a telescope."

Of this the Rev. Dr. Millar was a pleasing specimen. With that consciousness of having done everything possible for your comfort which makes a good host, he had a racy gratification in quietly watching your enjoyment. Easily and unobtrusively marking your taste for this or preference for that, he would contrive that your liking should be gratified, as though by mere accident, and never let you know yourself a debtor for the attentions bestowed upon you. It was his pride to have a perfect establishment: would that all vanity were as harmless and as pleasurable to others! And now to the dinner, which, in our digression, we are forgetting.

"Try these cutlets, doctor," interposed the host. "It is a receipt I brought back with me from Provence; I think you 'll find them good."

"An over-rich, greasy sort of cuisine is the Provençale,"

remarked Ogden.

"And yet almost every good cook of France comes from that country," said Layton.

Ogden raised his large double eye-glass to look at the man who thus dared to "cap" a remark of his.

"I wish we could get out of the bastard French cookery all the clubs give us nowadays," said the Colonel. "You neither see a good English joint nor a well-dressed entrée."

"An emblem of the alliance," said Layton, "where each nation spoils something of its own in the effort to be more palatable to its neighbor."

"Apparently, then, Sir, the great statesmen who promoted this policy are not fortunate enough to enjoy your sanction?" said Ogden, with an insolent air.

"My sanction is scarcely the word for it. They have not, certainly, my approval."

"I hope you like French wines, though, doctor," said the host, eager to draw the conversation into some easier channel. "Taste that Sauterne."

"It only wants age to be perfect," said the doctor, sipping. "All these French white wines require more time than the red."

Ogden again looked through his glass at the dispensary doctor who thus dared to give judgment on a question of such connoisseurship; and then, with the air of one not easily imposed on, said, —

"You have travelled much abroad, perhaps?"

Layton bowed a silent assent.

"I think I saw a German diploma amongst the papers you forwarded to our committee?" said Karstairs.

"Yes, I am a doctor of medicine of Gottingen."

"A university, I verily believe, only known to Englishmen through Canning's doggerel," said Ogden.

"I trust not, sir. I hope that Blumenbach's name alone would rescue it from such oblivion."

"I like the Germans, I confess," broke in the Colonel. "I served with Arentschild's Hanoverians, and never knew better or pleasanter fellows."

"Oh, I by no means undervalue Germans!" said Ogden. "I think we, at this very moment, owe to them no small gratitude for suggesting to us the inestimable practice of examination for all public employment."

"In my mind, the greatest humbug of an age of humbug!" said Layton, fiercely.

"Nay, doctor, you will, I 'm certain, recall your words when I tell you that my friend here, Mr. Ogden, is one of the most distinguished promoters of that system."

"The gentleman would confer a far deeper obligation upon me by sustaining than by withdrawing his thesis," said Ogden, with a sarcastic smile.

"To undertake the task of sustaining the cause of ignorance against knowledge," said Layton, quietly, "would be an ungrateful one always. In the present case, too, it would be like

pitting myself against that gentleman opposite. I decline such an office."

"So, then, you confess that such would be your cause, sir?" said Ogden, triumphantly.

"No, sir; but it would partake so much the appearance of such a struggle, that I cannot accept it. What I called a humbug was the attempt to test men's fitness for the public service by an examination at which the most incapable might distinguish himself, and the ablest not pass. The system of examination begot the system of 'grinding,' – a vulgar term for a more vulgar practice, and a system the most fatal to all liberal education, limiting study to a question-and-answer formula, and making acquirements only desirable when within the rubric of a Government commission. Very different would have been the result if the diploma of certain recognized educational establishments had been required as qualification to serve the State; if the law ran, 'You shall be a graduate of this university, or that college, or possess the licentiate degree of that school.'"

"Your observations seem, then, rather directed against certain commissioners than the system they practise?" said Odgen, sarcastically.

"Scarcely, sir. My experience is very limited. I never met but one of them!"

The Colonel laughed heartily at this speech, – he could n't help it; and even the host, mortified as he was, gave a half-smile. As for Ogden, his pale face grew a shade sicklier, and his green eyes

more fishy.

"To question the post-office clerk or the landing waiter," continued Layton, with fresh warmth, – for when excited he could rarely control himself, – "to test some poor aspirant for eighty pounds per annum in his knowledge of mathematics or his skill in physical geography, while you make governors that cannot speak correctly, and vice-governors whose despatches are the scorn of Downing Street; to proclaim that you want your tide-waiter to be a moral philosopher, but that the highest offices in the State may be held by any political partisan active enough, troublesome enough, and noisy enough to make himself worth purchase; you demand logarithms and special geometry from a clerk in the Customs, while you make a mill-owner a cabinet minister on the simple showing of his persevering; and your commissioners, too, – 'Quis custodiet, ipsos custodes!'"

"You probably, however, submitted to be examined, once on a time, for your medical degree?" asked Ogden.

"Yes, sir; and that ordeal once passed, I had ample leisure to unlearn the mass of useless rubbish required of me, and to address myself to the real cares of my profession. But do you suppose that if it were demanded of me to subject myself to another examination to hold the humble post I now fill, that I should have accepted it?"

"I really cannot answer that question," said Ogden, superciliously.

"Then I will, sir. I would not have done so. Eighty pounds a

year is a very attractive bribe, but it may require too costly a sacrifice to win it."

"The neighborhood is a very poor one," struck in Millar, "and, indeed, if it had not been for the strenuous exertions of my friend Colonel Karstairs here, we should never have raised the forty pounds which gives us the claim for as much more in the presentments."

"And yet you got two hundred and thirty for a regatta in June last!" said Layton, with a quiet smile.

"The way of the world, doctor; the way of the world! Men are never stingy in what regards their own amusements!"

"That is the port, doctor; the other is Lafitte," said the rector, as he saw Layton hesitate about a choice.

And now the talk took a capricious turn, as it will do occasionally, in those companies where people are old-fashioned enough to "sit" after dinner, and let the decanter circulate. Even here, however, conversation could not run smoothly. Ogden launched into the manufacture of wines, the chemistry of adulterations, and the grape disease, on every one of which Layton found something to correct him, – some slip or error to set right, – an annoyance all the more poignant that Karstairs seemed to enjoy it heartily. From fabricated wines to poisons the transition was easy, and they began to talk of certain curious trials wherein the medical testimony formed the turning-point of conviction. Here, again, Layton was his superior in information, and made the superiority felt. Of what the most subtle tests

consisted, and wherein their fallacy lay, he was thoroughly master, while his retentive memory supplied a vast variety of curious and interesting illustration.

Has our reader ever "assisted" at a scene where the great talker of a company has unexpectedly found himself confronted by some unknown, undistinguished competitor, who, with the pertinacity of an actual persecution, will follow him through all the devious windings of an evening's conversation, ever present to correct, contradict, amend, or refute? In vain the hunted martyr seeks out some new line of country, or starts new game; his tormentor is ever close behind him. Ogden wandered from law to literature. He tried art, scientific discovery, religious controversy, agriculture, foreign travel, the drama, and field sports; and Layton followed him through all, – always able to take up the theme and carry it beyond where the other had halted. If Millar underwent all the tortures of an unhappy host at this, Karstairs was in ecstasy. He had been spending a week at the Rectory in Ogden's company, and it seemed a sort of just retribution now that this dictatorial personage should have met his persecutor. Layton, always drinking deeply as the wine came to him, and excited by a sort of conflict which for years back he had never known, grew more and more daring in his contradictions, less deferential, and less fearful of offending. Whatever little reserve he had felt at first, oozed away as the evening advanced. The law of physics is the rule of morals, and as the swing of the pendulum is greater in proportion to

the retraction, so the bashful man, once emancipated from his reserve, becomes the most daringly aggressive to mortals. Not content with refuting, he now ridiculed; his vein of banter was his richest, and he indulged it in all the easy freedom of one who defied reprisals. Millar tried once or twice to interpose, and was at last fain to suggest that, as the decanters came round untouched, they should adjourn to coffee.

Ogden rose abruptly at the intimation, and, muttering something inaudible, led the way into the drawing-room.

"You have been too hard upon him, doctor," whispered Karstairs, as he walked along at Layton's side. "You should be more careful; he is a man of note on the other side of the Channel; he was a Treasury Lord for some six months once, and is always in office somewhere. I see you are rather sorry for this yourself."

"Sorry! I 'm sorry to leave that glorious Madeira, which I know I shall never taste again," said Layton, sternly.

"Are you a smoker, Dr. Layton?" said the host. "If so, don't forget this house gives all a bachelor's privileges. Try these cheroots."

"Liberty Hall!" chimed in the Colonel, with a vacant laugh.

"Not a bad name for your dining-room, Millar," said Ogden, bitterly.

A slight shrug was the parson's answer.

"Is this man a frequent guest here?" he asked again, in a low whisper.

"It is his first time. I need scarcely say, it shall be his last,"

replied Millar, as cautiously.

"I felt for you, Millar. I felt what pain he must have been giving you, though, for myself, I pledge you my word it was most amusing; his violence, his presumption, the dictatorial tone in which he affirmed his opinions, were high comedy. I was half sorry when you proposed coffee."

Under pretence of admiring some curiously carved chessmen, Karstairs had withdrawn the doctor into a small room adjoining; but, in reality, his object was the friendly one of suggesting greater caution and more reserve on his part.

"I don't say," whispered he, – "I don't say that you were n't right, and he wrong in everything. I know nothing about false quantities in Latin, or German metaphysics, or early Christian art. You may be an authority in all of them. All I say is, *he* is a great Government official, and *you* are a village doctor."

"That was exactly why I couldn't let slip the opportunity," broke in Layton. "Let me tell you an incident I once witnessed in my old days of coach travelling. I was going up from Liverpool to London in the 'Umpire,' that wonderful fast coach that astonished the world by making the journey in thirty-six hours. I sat behind the coachman, and was struck by the appearance of the man on the box-seat, who, though it was the depth of winter, and the day one of cutting sleet and cold wind, wore no upper coat, or any protection against the weather. He was, as you may imagine, speedily wet through, and presented in his dripping and soaked habiliments as sorry a spectacle as need be. In fact, if any man's

external could proclaim want and privation, his did. The signs of poverty, however, could not screen him from the application of 'Won't you remember the coachman, sir?' He, with no small difficulty, – for he was nearly benumbed with cold, – extricated a sixpence from his pocket and tendered it. The burly driver flung it contemptuously back to him with insult, and sneeringly asked him how he could dare to seat himself on the box when he was travelling like a pauper? The traveller never answered a word; a slight flush, once, indeed, showed how the insult stung him, but he never uttered a syllable.

"'If I had you down here for five minutes, I 'd teach you as how you 'd set yourself on the box-seat again!' cried coachee, whose passion seemed only aggravated by the other's submission. Scarcely were the words spoken, when the dripping traveller began to descend from the coach. He was soon on the ground, and almost as he touched it the coachman rushed upon him. It was a hand-to-hand conflict, which, however, could not have lasted four minutes. The stranger not only 'stopped' every blow of the other, but followed each 'stop' by a well-sent-in one of his own, dealt with a force that, judging from his size, seemed miraculous. With closed eyes, a smashed jaw, and a disabled wrist, the coachman was carried away; while the other, as he drank off a glass of cold water, simply said, 'If that man wishes to know where to find me again, tell him to ask for Tom Spring, Crane Alley, Borough Road!'"

Karstairs followed the anecdote with interest, but, somehow –

for he was not a very brilliant man, though "an excellent officer" – missed the application. "Capital – excellent – by Jove!" cried he. "I 'd have given a crown to have seen it."

Layton turned away in half ill-humor.

"And so it was Tom Spring himself?" said the Colonel. "Who 'd have guessed it?"

Layton made no reply, but began to set the chessmen upon the board at random.

"Is this another amongst your manifold accomplishments, sir?" asked Ogden, as he came up to the table.

"I play most games," said Layton, carelessly; "but it's only at billiards that I pretend to any skill."

"I'm a very unworthy antagonist," said Ogden; "but perhaps you will condescend to a game with me, – at chess, I mean?"

"With pleasure," said Layton, setting the pieces at once. He won the first move, and just as he was about to begin he stopped, and said, "I wish I knew your strength."

"The players give me a knight, and generally beat me," said Ogden.

"Oh! I understand. Will you allow me to fetch a cheroot? I move king's knight's pawn one square." He arose as he spoke, and walked into the adjoining room.

Ogden moved his queen's pawn.

Layton, from the adjoining room, asked the move, and then said, "King's bishop to knight's first square;" meanwhile continuing to search for a cigar to his liking.

"Do you purpose to continue the game without seeing the board?" asked Ogden, as he bit his lip with impatience.

"Not if you prefer otherwise," said Layton, who now came back to his place, with his cigar fully lighted.

"You see what an inexorable enemy I have, Millar," said Ogden, with an affected laugh; "he will not be satisfied unless my defeat be ignominious."

"Is it so certain to be a defeat, George?" said the rector. "Chess was always your great game. I remember how the Windsor Club entertained you on the occasion of your victory over that Swiss player, Eshwald."

"And so you have beaten Eshwald," broke in Layton, hastily. "We must give no quarter here." And with this he threw away his cigar, and bent down over the board.

"We shall only disturb them, Karstairs; come along into the drawing-room, and let us talk parish business," said the rector. "Our little dinner has scarcely gone off so well as I had expected," said Millar, when they were alone. "I meant to do our doctor a service, by asking him to meet Odgen, who has patronage and influence in every quarter; but I suspect that this evening will be remembered grievously against him."

"I confess I was highly amused at it all, and not sorry to see your friend Ogden so sorely baited. You know well what a life he has led us here for the last week."

"A hard hitter sometimes, to be sure," said the rector, smiling; "but a well-meaning man, and always ready for a kind action.

I wish Layton had used more moderation, – more deference towards him."

"Your Madeira did it all, Millar. Why did you give the fellow such insinuating tipple as that old '31 wine?"

"I can't say that I was not forewarned," continued Millar. "I was told, on his coming down to our neighborhood, to be careful of him. It was even intimated to me that his ungovernable and overbearing temper had wrecked his whole fortune in life; for, of course, one can easily see such a man ought not to be sentenced to the charge of a village dispensary."

"No matter how clever you are, there must be discipline; that's what I've always told the youngsters in my regiment."

The rector sighed; it was one of those hopeless little sighs a man involuntarily heaves when he finds that his companion in a *tête-à-tête* is always "half an hour behind the coach."

"I intended, besides," resumed Millar, "that Ogden should have recommended to the Government the establishment of a small hospital down here; an additional fifty or sixty pounds a year would have been a great help to Layton."

"And of course he 'll do it, when you ask him," said the hearty Colonel. "Now that he has seen the man, and had the measure of his capacity, he 'll be all the readier to serve him."

"The cleverest of all my school and college companions sacrificed his whole career in life by shooting the pheasant a great minister had just 'marked.' He was about to be invited to spend a week at Drayton; but the invitation never came."

"I protest, Millar, I don't understand that sort of thing."

"Have you never felt, when walking very fast, and eagerly intent upon some object, that if an urchin crossed your path, or came rudely against you, it was hard to resist the temptation of giving him a box on the ear? I don't mean to say that the cases are parallel, but great people do, somehow, acquire a habit of thinking that the road ought always to be cleared for *them*, and they will not endure whatever interferes with their wishes."

"But don't you think if you gave Layton a hint – "

"Is n't that like it? Hear that – "

A loud burst of laughter from the adjoining room cut short the colloquy, and Layton's voice was heard in a tone of triumph, saying, "I saw your plan – I even let you follow it up to the last, for I knew you were checkmated."

"I 'm off my play; I have not touched a chessman these three years," said Ogden, pettishly.

"Nor I for three times three years; nor was it ever my favorite game."

"I'm coming to crave a cup of tea from you, Millar," said Ogden, entering the drawing-room, flushed in the cheek, and with a flurried manner.

"Who won the game?" asked the Colonel, eagerly.

"Dr. Layton was the conqueror; but I don't regard myself as an ignoble foe, notwithstanding," said Ogden, with a sort of look of appeal towards the doctor.

"I 'll give you a bishop and play you for – " He stopped in

some confusion, and then, with an effort at a laugh, added, "I was going to say fifty pounds, quite forgetting that it was possible you might beat me."

"And yet, sir, I have the presumption to think that there are things which I could do fully as well as Dr. Layton."

Layton turned hastily round from the table, where, having half filled a large glass with brandy, he was about to fill up with soda-water; he set down the unopened soda-water bottle, and, drinking off the raw spirit at a draught, said, —

"What are they? Let's hear them, for I take the challenge; these gentlemen be my witnesses that I accepted the gage before I knew your weapon." Here he replenished his glass, and this time still higher than before, and drank it off. "You have, doubtless, your speciality, your pet subject, art or science, what is it? Or have you more than one? You're not like the fellow that Scott tells us could only talk of tanned leather, – eh, Millar, you remember that anecdote?"

The rector started with that sort of spasm that unobtrusive men feel when first accosted familiarly by those almost strangers to them.

"Better brandy than this I never tasted," said Layton, now filling out a bumper, while his hand shook so much that he spilled the liquor over the table; "and, as Tom Warrendar used to say, as he who gives you unpleasant advice is bound in honor to lend you money, so he who gives you light claret, if he be a man of honor, will console you with old brandy afterwards; and you are

a man of honor, Millar, and a man of conscience, and so is our colonel here, – albeit nothing remarkable in other respects; and as for that public servant, as he likes to call himself, – the public servant, if I must be candid, – the public servant is neither more nor less than – " Here he stretched out his arm to its full length, to give by the gesture greater emphasis to what he was about to utter, and then staring half wildly, half insolently around him, he sank down heavily into a deep armchair, and as his arms dropped listlessly beside him, fell back insensible.

"I will say that I never felt deeper obligation to a brandy-bottle; it is the first enjoyable moment of the whole evening," said Ogden, as he sat down to the tea-table.

In somewhat less than half an hour afterwards, Layton awoke with a sort of start, and looked wildly and confusedly around him. What or how much he remembered of the events of the evening, is not possible to say, as, with a sudden spring to his feet, he took his hat, and with a short "good-night," left the house, and hurried down the avenue.

CHAPTER X. THE LABORATORY

There was a small closet-like room in Layton's cottage which he had fitted up, as well as his very narrow means permitted, as a laboratory. Everything in it was, of course, of the very humblest kind; soda-water flasks were fashioned into retorts, and even blacking-jars held strange chemical mixtures. Here, however, he spent most of his time in the search of some ingredient by which he hoped to arrest the progress of all spasmodic disease. An accidental benefit he had himself derived from a certain salt of ammonia had suggested the inquiry, and for years back this had constituted the main object of all his thoughts. Determined, if his discovery were to prove a success, it should burst upon the world in all its completeness, he had never revealed to any one but his son the object of his studies. Alfred, indeed, was made participator of his hopes and ambitions; he had seen all the steps of the inquiry, and understood thoroughly the train of reasoning on which the theory was based. The young man's patience in investigation and his powers of calculation were of immense value to his father, and Layton deeply regretted the absence of the one sole assistant he could or would confide in. A certain impatience, partly constitutional, partly from habits of intemperance, had indisposed the old man to those laborious calculations by which chemical discovery is so frequently accompanied, and these he

threw upon his son, who never deemed any labor too great, or any investigation too wearisome, if it should save his father some part of his daily fatigue. It was not for months after Alfred's departure that Layton could re-enter his study, and resume his old pursuits. The want of the companionship that cheered him, and the able help that seconded all his efforts, had so damped his ardor, that he had, if not abandoned his pursuit, at least deferred its prosecution indefinitely. At last, however, by a vigorous effort, he resumed his old labor, and in the interest of his search he soon regained much of his former ambition for success.

The investigations of chemistry have about them all the fluctuating fortunes of a deep and subtle game. There are the same vacillations of good and bad luck; the same tides of hope and fear; the almost certain prospect of success dashed and darkened by failure; the grief and disappointment of failure dispelled by glimpses of bright hope. So many are the disturbing influences, so subtle the causes which derange experiment, where some infinitesimal excess or deficiency, some minute accession of heat or cold, some chance adulteration in this or that ingredient, can vitiate a whole course of inquiry, requiring the labor of weeks to be all begun again, that the pursuit at length assumes many of the features of a game, and a game only to be won by securing every imaginable condition of success.

Perhaps this very character was what imparted to Layton's mind one of the most stimulating of all interests; at all events, he addressed himself to his task like one who, baffled and

repulsed as he might be, would still not acknowledge defeat. As well from the indefatigable ardor he showed, as from the occasional bursts of boastful triumph in anticipation of a great success in store, his poor ailing wife had grown to fancy that his pursuit was something akin to those wonderful researches after the elixir vitae, or the philosopher's stone. She knew as little of his real object as of the means he employed to attain it, but she could see the feverish eagerness that daily gained on him, mark his long hours of intense thought, his days of labor, his nights of wakefulness, and her fears were that these studies were undermining his strength and breaking up his vigor.

It was, then, with a grateful joy at her heart she saw him invited to the Rectory, – admitted once more to the world of his equals, and the notice of society. She had waited hour by hour for his return home, and it was already daybreak ere she heard him enter the cottage, and repair to his own room. Who knows what deep and heartfelt anxieties were hers as she sought her bed at last? What sorrowful forebodings might not have oppressed her? What bitter tears have coursed along her worn cheeks? for his step was short and impatient as he crossed the little hall, and the heavy slam of his door, and the harsh grating of the lock, told that he was ruffled and angry. The morning wore on heavily, – drearily to her, as she watched and waited, and at last she crept noiselessly to the door, and tapped at it gently.

"Who's there? Come in!" cried he, roughly.

"I came only to ask if you would not have your breakfast,"

said she, timidly. “It is already near eleven o’clock.”

“So late, Grace?” said he, with a more kindly accent, as he offered her a seat. “I don’t well know how the time slipped over; not that I was engaged in anything that interested me, – I do not believe I have done anything whatever, – no, nothing,” muttered he, vaguely, as his wearied eye ranged over the table.

“You are tired to-day, Herbert, and you need rest,” said she, in a soft, gentle tone. “Let this be a holiday.”

“Mine are all holidays now,” replied he, with an effort at gayety. Then suddenly, with an altered voice, he added: “I ought never to have gone there last night, Grace. I knew well what would come of it. I have no habits, no temper, no taste, for such associates. What other thoughts could cross me as I sat there, sipping their claret, than of the cold poverty that awaited me at home? What pleasure to me could that short hour of festivity be, when I knew and felt I must come back to this? And then, the misery, the insult of that state of watchfulness, to see that none took liberties with me on the score of my humble station.”

“But surely, Herbert, there is not any one – ”

“I don’t know that,” broke he in. “He who wears finer linen than you is often a terrible tyrant, on no higher or better ground. If any man has been taught that lesson, *I* have! The world has one easy formula for its guidance. If you be poor, you must be either incompetent or improvident, or both; your patched coat and shabby hat are vouchers for one or the other, and sleek success does not trouble itself to ask which.”

"The name of Herbert Layton is a sure guarantee against such depreciation," said she, in a voice tremulous with pride and emotion.

"So it might, if it had not earned a little extra notoriety in police courts," said he, with a laugh of intense bitterness.

"Tell me of your dinner last night," said she, eager to withdraw him from the vein she ever dreaded most. "Was your party a pleasant one?"

"Pleasant! – no, the very reverse of pleasant! We had discussion instead of conversation, and in lieu of those slight differences of sentiment which flavor talk, we had stubborn contradictions. All *my* fault, too, Grace. I was in one of *my* unhappy humors, and actually forgot I was a dispensary doctor and in the presence of an ex-Treasury Lord, with great influence and high acquaintances. You can fancy, Grace, how boldly I dissented from all he said."

"But if you were in the right, Herbert – "

"Which is exactly what I was not; at least, I was quite as often in the wrong. My amusement was derived from seeing how powerless he was to expose the fallacies that outraged him. He was stunned by a fire of blank cartridge, and obliged to retreat before it. But now that it's all over, I may find the amusement a costly one. And then, I drank too much wine – " She gave a heavy sigh, and turned away to hide her look. "Yes," resumed he, with a fierce bitterness in his tone, "the momentary flush of self-esteem – Dutch courage, though it be – is a marvellous temptation to

a poor, beaten-down, crushed spirit, and wine alone can give it; and so I drank, and drank on."

"But not to excess," said she, in a half-broken whisper.

"At least to unconsciousness. I know nothing of how or when I quitted the Rectory, nor how I came down the cliffs and reached this in safety. The path is dangerous enough at noonday with a steady head and a cautious foot, and yet last night assuredly I could not boast of either."

Another and a deeper sigh escaped her, despite her efforts to stifle it.

"Ay, Grace, the doctor was right when he said to me, 'Don't go there.' How well if I had but taken his advice! I am no longer fit for such associates. They live lives of easy security, – they have not the cares and struggles of a daily conflict for existence; we meet, therefore, on unequal grounds. Their sentiments cost them no more care than the French roll upon their breakfast-table. They can afford to be wrong as they can afford debt, but the poor wretch like myself, a bare degree above starvation, has as little credit with fine folk as with the huckster. I ought never to have gone there! Leave me now," added he, half sternly; "let me see if these gases and essences will not make me forget humanity. No, I do not care for breakfast, – I cannot eat!"

With the same noiseless step she had entered, she now glided softly from the room, closing the door so gently that it was only when he looked round that he was aware of being alone. For a moment or two he busied himself with the objects on the table; he

arranged phials and retorts, he lighted his stove, he stood fanning the charcoal till the red mass glowed brightly, and then, as though forgetting the pursuit he was engaged in, he sat down upon a chair, and sank into a dreamy revery.

Another low tap at the door aroused him from his musings, and the low voice he knew so well gently told him it was his morning to attend the dispensary, a distance fully three miles off. More than one complaint had been already made of his irregularity and neglect, and, intending to pay more attention in future, he had charged his wife to keep him mindful of his duties.

"You will scarcely reach Ballintray before one o'clock, Herbert," said she, in her habitually timid tone.

"What if I should not try? What if I throw up the beggarly office at once? What if I burst through this slavery of patrons and chairmen and boards? Do you fancy we should starve, Grace?"

"Oh, no, Herbert," cried she, eagerly; "I have no fears for our future."

"Then your courage is greater than mine," said he, bitterly, and with one of the sudden changes of humor which often marked him. "Can't you anticipate how the world would pass sentence on me, the idle debauchee, who would not earn his livelihood, but must needs forfeit his subsistence from sheer indolence? – ay, and the world would be right too. He who breaks stones upon the highroad will not perform his task the better because he can tell the chemical constituent of every fragment beneath his hammer. Men want common work from common workmen, and there are

always enough to be found. I'll set out at once."

With this resolve, uttered in a tone she never gainsaid or replied to, he took his hat and left the cottage.

There is no more aggressive spirit than that of the man who, with the full consciousness of great powers, sees himself destined to fill some humble and insignificant station, well knowing the while the inferiority of those who have conquered the high places in life. Of all the disqualifying elements of his own character, his unsteadiness, his want of thrift, perseverance, or conduct, his deficiency in tact or due courtesy, his stubborn indifference to others, – of all these he will take no account as he whispers to his heart,

"I passed that fellow at school! – I beat this one at college! – how often have I helped yonder celebrity with his theme! – how many times have I written his exercise for that great dignitary!" Oh, what a deep well of bitterness lies in the nature of one so tried and tortured, and how cruel is the war that he at last wages with the world, and, worse again, with his own heart!

Scarcely noticing the salutations of the country people, as they touched their hats to him on the road, or the more familiar addresses of the better-to-do farmers as they passed, Layton strode onwards to the little village where his dispensary stood.

"Yer unco late, docther, this morning," said one, in that rebukeful tone the northern Irishman never scruples to employ when he thinks he has just cause of complaint.

"It's na the way to heal folk to keep them waitin' twa hours at

a closed door," said another.

"I'se warrant he's gleb eneuch to call for his siller when it's due to him," said a third.

"My gran'mither is just gane hame; she would na bide any longer for yer comin'," said a pert-looking girl, with a saucy toss of her head.

"It's na honest to take people's money and gie naething for it," said an old white-haired man on crutches; "and I 'll just bring it before the board."

Layton turned an angry look over the crowd, but never uttered a word. Pride alone would have prevented him from answering them, had he not the deeper motive that in his conflict with himself he took little heed of what they said.

"Where's the key, Sandy?" cried he, impatiently, to an old cripple who assisted him in the common work of the dispensary.

The man came close and whispered something secretly in his ear.

"And carried the key away, do you say?" asked Layton, eagerly.

"Just so, sir. There was anither wi' him, – a stranger, – and he was mair angry than his rev'rance, and said, 'What can ye expec'? Is it like that a man o' his habits could be entrusted with such a charge as this?"

"And Dr. Millar – what did he reply?"

"Na much; he just shook his head this way, and muttered, 'I hoped for better, – I hoped for better!' I dinna think they 'd

have taken away the key, but that old Jonas Graham kem up at the time, and said, 'It's mair than a month since we seen him' – yourself he meant – 'down here, and them as has the strength for it would rather gae all the gait to Coleraine than tak their chance o' him.' For a' that," said Sandy, "I opened the dispensary door, and was sarvin' out salts and the like, when the stranger said, 'Is it to a cretur like that the people are to trust their health? Just turn the key in the door, Millar, and you'll certainly save some one from being poisoned this morning.' And so he did, and here we are." And poor Sandy turned a rueful look on the surrounders as he finished.

"I can't cure you as kings used to cure the evil, long ago, by royal touch, good people," said Layton, mockingly; "and your guardians, or governors, or whatever they call themselves, have shut me out of my own premises. I am a priest cut off from his temple."

"I 'm na come here to ask for charity," said a stout old fellow, who stood alongside of a shaggy mountain pony; "I 'm able to pay ye for a' your docther's stuff, and your skill besides."

"Well spoken, and like a man of independence," said Layton. "Let us open the treaty with a gill of brandy, and you shall tell me your case while I am sipping it." And with these words he led the way into a public-house, followed by the farmer, leaving the crowd to disperse when and how they pleased.

Whatever the nature of those ailments now so confidentially imparted, they were long enough in narration not only to require

one, or two, or three gills, but a full bottle of strong mountain whiskey, of which it is but fair to say the farmer took his share. Layton's powers as a talker were not long in exercise ere they gained their due influence over his companion. Of the very themes the countryman deemed his own, he found the doctor knew far more than himself; while by his knowledge of life and human nature generally, he surprised his listener, who actually could not tear himself away from one so full of anecdote and observation.

Partly warned by the lateness of the hour – for already the market was over and the streets deserted – and partly by the thick utterance of his companion, whose heavy, bloodshot eye and sullen look now evidenced how deeply he had exceeded, the farmer at last arose to go away.

"You 're not 'flitting.' as you call it hereabouts," said Layton, half stupidly, "you're not thinking of leaving me alone to my own company, are you?"

"I maun be thinkin' of home; it's more than twalve miles o' a mountain that's afore me. There's na anither but yoursel' had made me forget it a' this while," said the farmer, as he buttoned his coat and prepared for the road. "Just tell me now what's to pay for the bit o' writin' ye gav' me."

"You 've had a consultation, my friend, – not a visit, but a regular consultation. You've not been treated like the outer populace, and only heard the oracles from afar, but you have been suffered to sit down beside the augur, to question him, and to

drink with him. Pay, – nothing to pay! I'll cure your boy, there's my word on't. These cases are specialities with me. Bell used to say, 'Ask Layton to look at that fellow in such a ward; he's the only one of us understands this sort of thing. Layton will tell us all about it.' And I 'm Layton! Ay, sir, this poor, shabby, ill-dressed fellow that you see before you is that same Herbert Layton; so much for brains and ability to work a man's way in life! Order another quart of Isla whiskey, man, – that's my fee; at least it shall be to-day. Tell them to send me pen, ink, and paper, and not disturb me; tell them, besides – no, nevermind, I'll tell them that! And now, good-day, my honest fellow. *You* 've been *my* physician to-day as much as *I* have been *yours*. You have cured a sick heart – cheated it, at least – out of one paroxysm, and so, a good journey, and safe home to you. Send me news of your boy, and good-bye." And his head dropped as he spoke; his arms fell heavily at his sides; and he appeared to have sunk into a profound sleep. The stupor was but brief; the farmer was not well out of the village when Layton, calling for a basin of cold water, plunged his face and part of his head in it, baring his brawny throat, and bathing it with the refreshing liquid. As he was thus employed, he caught sight of his face reflected in a much-cracked mirror over the fireplace, and stood gazing for a few seconds at his blotched and bloated countenance.

"A year or two left still, belike," muttered he. "Past insuring, but still seaworthy, or, at least" – and here his voice assumed an intense mockery in tone, – "at least, capable of more shipwreck!"

The sight of the writing-materials on the table seemed to recall him to something he had half forgotten, and, after a pause of reflection, he arranged the paper before him and sat down to write.

With the ease of one to whom composition was familiar, he dashed off a somewhat long letter; but though he wrote with great rapidity, he recurred from time to time to the whiskey-bottle, drinking the strong spirits undiluted, and, to all seeming, unmoved by its potency. "There," cried he, as he finished, "I have scuttled my own ship; let's see what will come of it."

He called for the landlord to give him wax and a seal. Neither were to be had, and he was fain to put up with a wafer. The letter closed and addressed, he set out homewards; scarcely, however, beyond the outskirts of the village, than he turned away from the coast and took the road towards the Rectory. It was now the early evening, one of those brief seasons when the wind lulls and a sort of brief calm supervenes in the boisterous climate of northern Ireland. Along the narrow lane he trod, tall foxgloves and variegated ferns grew luxuriantly, imparting a half-shade to a scene usually desolate and bare; and Layton lingered along it as though its calm seclusion soothed him. At last he found himself at a low wall, over which a stile led to a little woodland path. It was the Rectory; who could mistake its trim neatness, the order and elegance which pervaded all its arrangements? Taking this path, he walked leisurely onward, till he came to a small flower-garden, into which three windows opened, their sashes reaching

to the ground. While yet uncertain whether to advance or retire, he heard Ogden's sharp voice from within the room. His tone was loud, and had the vibration of one speaking in anger. "Even on your own showing, Millar, another reason for getting rid of him. *You* can't be ambitious, I take it, of newspaper notoriety, or a controversy in the public papers. Now, Layton is the very man to drag you into such a conflict. Ask for no explanations, inquire for no reasons, but dismiss him by an act of your board. Your colonel there is the chairman; he could n't refuse what you insist upon, and the thing will be done without your prominence in it."

Millar murmured a reply, but Layton turned away without listening to it, and made for the hall door. "Give this to your master," said he, handing the letter to the servant, and turned away.

The last flickerings of twilight guided him down the steep path of the cliff, and, wearied and tired, he reached home.

"What a wearisome day you must have had, Herbert!" said his wife, as she stooped for the hat and cane he had thrown beside him on sitting down.

"I must n't complain, Grace," said he, with a sad sort of smile. "It is the last of such fatigues."

"How, or what do you mean?" asked she, eagerly.

"I have given it up. I have resigned my charge of the dispensary. Don't ask any reasons, girl," broke he in, hastily, "for I scarcely know them myself. All I can tell you is, it is done."

"I have no doubt you were right, Herbert," began she. "I feel

assured – ”

“Do you? Then, by Heaven! you have a greater confidence in me than *I* have in myself. I believe I was more than two parts drunk when I did it, but doubtless the thought will sober me when I awake to-morrow morning; till when, I do not mean to think of it.”

“You have not eaten, I ‘m sure.”

“I cannot eat just yet, Grace; give me a cup of tea, and leave me. I shall be better alone for a while.”

CHAPTER XI. A REMITTANCE

"A letter, – a long letter from Alfred," said Layton's wife, as she knocked at his door on the following morning. "It has been lying for four days at the office in Coleraine. Only think, Herbert, and I fretting and fretting over his silence."

"Is he well?" asked he, half gruffly.

"Quite well, and so happy; in the midst of kind friends, and enjoying himself, as he says he thought impossible when absent from his home. Pray read it, Herbert. It will do you infinite good to see how cheerfully he writes."

"No, no; it is enough that I know the boy is well. As to being happy, it is the affair of an hour, or a day, with the luckiest of us."

"There are so many kind messages to you, and so many anxious inquiries about the laboratory. But you must read them. And then there is a bank order he insists upon your having. Poor fellow! the first money he has ever earned – "

"How much is it, Grace?" asked he, eagerly.

"It is for twenty pounds, Herbert," said she, in a faltering accent, which, even weak as it was, vibrated with something like reproach.

"Never could it be more welcome," said he, carelessly. "It was thoughtful, too, of the boy; just as if he had known all that has happened here." And with this he opened the door, taking hurriedly from her hand the letter and the money-order. "No; not

this. I do not want his letter," said he, handing it back to her, while he muttered over the lines of the bank check. "Why did he not say, – or order?" said he, half angrily. "This necessitates my going to Coleraine myself to receive it. It seems that I was overrating his thoughtfulness, after all."

"Oh, Herbert!" said she, pressing both her hands over her heart, as though an acute pain shot through it.

"I meant what I have said," said he, roughly; "he might have bethought him what are twelve weary miles of road to one like me, as well as that my clothes are not such as suit appearance in the streets of a town. It was *not* thoughtful of him, Grace."

"The poor dear boy's first few pounds; all that he could call his own – "

"I know that," broke he in, harshly; "and in what other way could they have afforded him a tithe of the pleasure? It was a wise selfishness suggested the act; that is all you can say of it."

"Oh, but let me read you how gracefully and delicately he has done it, Herbert; how mindful he was not to wound one sentiment – "

"'Pay to Herbert Layton, Esquire,'" read he, half aloud, and not heeding her speech. "He ought to have added 'M. D.'; it is as 'the doctor' they should know me down here. Well, it has come right opportunely, at all events. I believe I was the owner of some fifteen shillings in the world."

A deep, tremulous sigh was all her answer.

"Fifteen and ninepence," muttered he, as he counted over the

pieces in his hand. “Great must be the self-reliance of the man who, with such a sum for all his worldly wealth, insults his patrons and resigns his office, – eh, Grace?”

There was in his tone a blended mockery and seriousness that he often used, and which, by the impossibility of answering, always distressed her greatly.

“It is clear you do not think so,” said he, harshly. “It is evident you take the vulgar view of the incident, and condemn the act as one dictated by ill temper and mere resentment. The world is always more merciful than one’s own fireside, and the world will justify me.”

“When you have satisfied your own conscience, Herbert – ”

“I’ll take good care to make no such appeal,” broke he in. “Besides,” added he, with a bitter levity, “men like myself have not one, but fifty consciences. Their after-dinner conscience is not their waking one next morning; their conscience in the turmoil and bustle of life is not their conscience as they lie out there on the white rocks, listening to the lazy plash of the waves. Not to say that, after forty, every man’s conscience grows casuistical, – somewhat the worse for wear, like himself.”

It was one of Layton’s pastimes to sport thus with the feelings of his poor wife, uttering at random sentiments that he well knew must pain her deeply; and there were days when this spirit of annoyance overbore his reason and mastered all his self-control.

“What pleasant little sketches Alfred gives of his travelling acquaintances!” said she, opening the letter, and almost asking

to be invited to read it.

"These things have no value from one as untried in life as he is," broke he in, rudely. "One only learns to decipher character by the time the world has become very wearisome. Does he tell you how he likes his task? How does he fancy bear-leading?"

"He praises Lord Agincourt very much. He calls him a fine, generous boy, with many most attaching qualities."

"They are nearly all such in that class in very early life, but, as Swift says, the world is full of promising princes and bad kings."

"Lord Agincourt would appear to be very much attached to Alfred."

"So much the worse; such friendships interfere with the work of tuition, and they never endure after it is over. To be sure, now and then a tutor is remembered, and if he has shown himself discreet about his pupil's misdeeds, reserved as to his shortcomings, and only moderately rebukeful as to his faults, such virtue is often rewarded with a bishopric. What have we here, Grace? Is not that a row-boat rounding the point yonder, and heading into the bay?"

So rare an event might well have caused astonishment; for since the place had been deserted by the fishermen, the landlocked waters of the little cove had never seen the track of a boat.

"Who can it be?" continued he; "I see a round hat in the stern-sheets. Look, he is pointing where they are to land him, quite close to our door here." Stimulated by an irrepressible curiosity,

Herbert arose and walked out; but scarcely had he reached the strand when he was met by Colonel Karstairs.

"I could n't trust my gouty ankles down that precipice, doctor," cried he out; "and although anything but a good sailor, I came round here by water. What a charming spot you have here, when one does reach it!"

"It is pretty; and it is better, – it is solitary," said Layton, coldly; for somehow he could not avoid connecting the Colonel with a scene very painful to his memory.

"I don't think I ever saw anything more beautiful," said Karstairs, as he gazed around him. "The wild, fantastic outlines of those rocks, the variegated colors of the heath blossom, the golden strand, and the cottage itself, make up a fairy scene."

"Let me show you the interior, though it dispel the illusion," said Layton, as he moved towards the door.

"I hope my visit is not inconvenient," said Karstairs, as he entered and took a seat; "and I hope, besides, when you hear the object of it, you will, at least, forgive me." He waited for a reply of some sort, but Layton only bowed his head stiffly, and suffered him to continue: "I am a sorry diplomatist, doctor, and have not the vaguest idea of how to approach a point of any difficulty; but what brought me here this morning was simply this: you sent that letter" – here he drew one from his pocket, and handed it to Layton – "to our friend the rector."

"Yes; it is my hand, and I left it myself at the parsonage."

"Well, now, Millar has shown it to no one but myself, –

indeed, he placed it in my hands after reading it; consequently, its contents are unknown save to our two selves; there can, therefore, be no difficulty in your withdrawing it. You must see that the terms you have employed towards him are not such as – are not civil, I mean; in fact, they are not fair. He is an excellent fellow, and sincerely your friend, besides. Now, don't let a bit of temper get the mastery over better feeling, nor do not, out of a momentary pique, throw up your appointment. None of us, nowadays, can afford to quarrel with his bread-and-butter; and though you are certainly clever enough and skilful enough not to regard such an humble place as this, yet, remember, you had a score of competitors when you looked for it. Not to say that we all only desire to know how to be of service to you, to make your residence amongst us agreeable, and – and all that sort of thing, which you can understand far better than I can say it!" Nor, to do the worthy Colonel justice, was this a very difficult matter, seeing that, in his extreme confusion and embarrassment, he stammered and stuttered at every word, while, to increase his difficulty, the manner of Layton was cold and almost stately.

"Am I to suppose, sir," said he, at length, "that you are here on the part of Dr. Millar?"

"No, no; nothing of the kind. Millar knows, of course, the step I have taken; perhaps he concurs in it; indeed, I 'm sure he does. He is your sincere well-wisher, doctor, – a man who really wants to be your friend."

"Too much honor," said Layton, haughtily. "Not to say how

arduous the task of him who would protect a man against himself; and such I opine to be the assumed object here."

"I 'm sure, if I had as much as suspected how you would have taken my interference," said the Colonel, more hurt by Layton's tone than by his mere words, "I 'd have spared myself my mission."

"You had no right to have anticipated it, sir. It was very natural for you to augur favorably of any intervention by a colonel, – a C.B., with other glorious distinctions – in regard to a poor dispensary doctor, plodding the world wearily, with a salary less than a butler's. You had only to look down the cliff, and see the humble cottage where he lived, to calculate what amount of resistance could such a man offer to any proposal that promised him bread."

"I must say, I wish you would not mistake me," broke in Karstairs, with warmth.

"I am not stating anything with reference to you, sir; only with respect to those judgments the world at large would pronounce upon *me*."

"Am I to conclude, then," said the Colonel, rising, and evidently in anger, – "am I to conclude, then, that this is your deliberate act, that you wish to abide by this letter, that you see nothing to recall nor retract in its contents?"

Layton bowed an assent

"This is too bad – too bad," muttered the Colonel, as he fumbled for his gloves, and dropped them twice over in his

confusion. “I know well enough where the sting lies: you are angry with Ogden; you suspect that he has been meddling. Well, it’s no affair of mine; you are the best judge. Not but a little prudence might have shown you that Ogden was a dangerous man to offend, – a very dangerous man; but of course you know best. I have only to ask pardon for obtruding my advice unasked, a stupid act always, but I ‘m right sorry for it.”

“I am very grateful for the intention, sir,” said Layton, with dignity.

“That ‘s all I can claim,” muttered the Colonel, whose confusion increased every moment. “It was a fool’s errand, and ends as it ought. Good-bye!”

Layton arose and opened the door with a respectful air.

Karstairs offered his hand, and, as he grasped the other’s warmly, said, “I wish you would let me talk this over with your wife, Layton.”

The doctor drew haughtily back, and, with a cold stare of astonishment, said: “I have addressed you by your title, sir; *I* have mine. At all events, there is nothing in your station nor in my own to warrant this familiarity.”

“You are quite right, – perfectly right, – and I ask pardon.”

It was a liberty never to be repeated, and the bronzed weatherbeaten face of the old soldier became crimson with shame as he bowed deeply and passed out.

Layton walked punctiliously at his side till he reached the boat, neither uttering a word; and thus they parted. Layton stood for a

moment gazing after the boat. Perhaps he thought that Karstairs would turn his head again towards the shore; perhaps – who knows? – he hoped it. At all events, the old Colonel never once looked back, and the boat soon rounded the point and was lost to view.

There are men so combative in their natures that their highest enjoyment is derived from conflict with the world, – men whose self-esteem is never developed till they see themselves attacking or attacked. Layton was one of this unhappy number, and it was with a sort of bastard heroism that he strolled back to the cottage, proud in the thought of how he stood, alone and friendless, undeterred by the enmity of men of a certain influence and station.

He was soon in his laboratory and at work, the reaction imparting a great impulse to his energy. He set to work with unwonted vigor and determination. Chemical investigation has its good and evil days, – its periods when all goes well, experiments succeed, tests answer, and results respond to what was looked for; and others when disturbing causes intervene, gases escape, and retorts smash. This was one of the former; and the subtle essence long sought after by Layton, so eagerly desired, and half despaired of, seemed at last almost within reach. A certain salt, an ingredient very difficult of preparation, was, however, wanting to his further progress, and it was necessary that he should provide himself with it ere he advanced any further. To obtain this without any adulterating admixture and

in all purity was essential to success; and he determined to set out immediately for Dublin, where he could himself assist in its preparation.

"What good luck it was, Grace," said he, as he entered the room where she sat awaiting dinner for him, – "what good luck that the boy should have sent us this money! I must go up to Dublin to-morrow, and without it I must have given up the journey."

"To Dublin!" said she, in a half-frightened voice, for she dreaded – not without reason – the temptations he would be exposed to when accidentally lifted above his usual poverty.

"Ay, girl; I want a certain 'cyanuret' of which you have never heard, nor can help me to any knowledge of, but which a Dublin chemist that I know of will assist me to procure; and with this salt I purpose to make myself a name and reputation that even Mr. Ogden will not dare to dispute. I shall, I hope, have discovered what will render disease painless, and deprive operation of all its old terrors. If my calculations be just, a new era will dawn upon medical science, and the physician come to the sick man as a true comforter. My discovery, too, is no empyric accident for which I can give no reason, nor assign no cause, but the result of patient investigation, based upon true knowledge. My appeal will be to the men of science, not to popular judgments. I ask no favor; I seek no patronage. Herbert Layton would be little likely to find either; but we shall see if the name will not soar above both favor and patronage, and rank with the great discoverers,

or, better again, with the great benefactors of mankind."

Vainglorious and presumptuous as this speech was, – uttered, too, in a tone boastful as the words themselves, – it was the mood which Layton's wife loved to see him indulge. If for nothing else than it was the reverse of the sardonic and bitter raillery he often practised, – a spirit of scoff in which he inveighed against the world and himself, – it possessed for her an indescribable charm. It represented her husband, besides, in what she loved to think his true character, – that of a noble, enthusiastic man, eagerly bent upon benefiting his fellows. To her thinking, there was nothing of vanity, – no overweening conceit in all these foreshadowings of future fame; nay, if anything, he understated the claims he would establish upon the world's gratitude.

With what eager delight, then, did she listen! how enchanting were the rich tones of his voice as he thus declaimed!

"How it cheers my heart, Herbert, when I hear you speak thus! how bright everything looks when you throw such sunlight around you!"

"'Is this the debauchee, – is this the fellow we have been reading of in the reports from Scotland Yard? Methinks I hear them whispering to each other. Ay, and that haughty University, ashamed of its old injustice, will stoop to share the lustre of the man it once expelled."

"Oh, think of the other and the better part of your triumph!" cried she, eagerly.

"The best part of all will be the vengeance on those who have

wronged me. What will these calumniators say when it is a nation does homage to my success?"

"There are higher and better rewards than such feelings," said she, half reproachfully.

"How little you know of it!" said he, in his tone of accustomed bitterness. "The really high and great rewards of England are given to wealth, to political intrigue, to legal success. It's your banker, your orator, or your scheming barrister, who win the great prizes in our State Lottery. Find out some secret by which life can be restored to the drowned, convert an atmosphere of pestilence into an air of health and vigor, discover how an avalanche may be arrested in its fall, and, if you be an Englishman, you can do nothing better with your knowledge than sell it to a company, and make it marketable through shareholders. Philanthropy can be quoted on 'Change like a Welsh tin-mine or a patent fuel company; and if you could raise the dead, make a 'limited liability' scheme of it before you tell the world your secret."

"Oh, Herbert, it was not thus you were wont to speak."

"No, Grace," said he, in a tone of gentle, sorrowful meaning; "but there is no such misanthrope as the man who despises himself." And with this he hastened to his room and locked the door. It was while carelessly and recklessly he scattered the harsh words by which he grieved her most that he now and then struck some chord that vibrated with a pang of almost anguish within him, uttering aloud some speech which from another he would

have resented with a blow. Still, as the criminal is oftentimes driven to confess the guilt whose secret burden is too heavy for his heart, preferring even the execration of mankind to the terrible isolation of secrecy, so did he feel a sort of melancholy satisfaction in discovering how humbly and meanly he appeared before himself.

"A poor man's pack is soon made, Grace," said he, with a sad smile, as he entered the room, where she was busily engaged in the little preparations for his journey.

"Tom, don't go! don't go! don't!" screamed out the parrot, wildly.

"Only listen to the creature," said he; "he 's at his warnings again. I wish he would condescend to be more explanatory and less oracular."

She only smiled, without replying.

"Not but he was right once, Grace," said Layton, gravely. "You remember how he counselled me against that visit to the Rectory."

"Don't! don't!" croaked out the bird, in a low, guttural voice.

"You are too dictatorial, doctor, even for a vice-provost. I will go."

"All wrong! all wrong!" croaked the parrot.

"By Jove! he has half shaken my resolution," said Layton, as he sat down and drew his hand across his brow. "I wish any one would explain to me why it is that he who has all his life resented advice as insult, should be the slave of his belief in omens." This

was uttered in a half-soliloquy, and he went on: “I can go back to at least a dozen events wherein I have had to rue or to rejoice in this faith.”

“I too would say, Don’t go, Herbert,” said she, languidly.

“How foolish all this is!” said be, rising; “don’t you know the old Spanish proverb, Grace, ‘Good luck often sends us a message, but very rarely calls at the door herself?’ meaning that we must not ask Fortune to aid us without our contributing some effort of our own. I will go, Grace. Yes, I will go. No more auguries, doctor,” said he, throwing a handkerchief playfully over the bird and then withdrawing it, – a measure that never failed to enforce silence. “This time, at least,” said he, “I mean to be my own oracle.”

CHAPTER XII. A FELLOW-TRAVELLER ON THE COACH

The morning was raw, cold, and ungenial, as Layton took his outside seat on the coach for Dublin. For sake of shelter, being but poorly provided against ill weather, he had taken the seat behind the coachman, the place beside him being reserved for a traveller who was to be taken up outside the town. The individual in question was alluded to more than once by the driver and the guard as "the Captain," and in the abundance of fresh hay provided for his feet, and the care taken to keep his seat dry, there were signs of a certain importance being attached to his presence. As they gained the foot of a hill, where the road crossed a small bridge, they found the stranger awaiting them, with his carpet-bag; he had no other luggage, but in his own person showed unmistakable evidence of being well prepared for a journey. He was an elderly man, short, square, and thick-set, with a rosy, cheerful countenance, and a bright, merry eye. As he took off his hat, punctiliously returning the coachee's salute, he showed a round, bald head, fringed around the base by a curly margin of rich brown hair. So much Layton could mark, – all signs, as he read them, of a jovial temperament and a healthy constitution; nor did the few words he uttered detract from the impression: they were frank and cheerful, and their tone rich and pleasing to the ear.

The stranger's first care on ascending to his place was to share a very comfortable rug with his neighbor, the civility being done in a way that would have made refusal almost impossible; his next move was to inquire if Layton was a smoker, and, even before the answer, came the offer of a most fragrant cigar. The courtesy of the offered snuff-box amongst our grandfathers is now replaced by the polite proffer of a cigar, and, simple as the act of attention is in itself, there are some men who are perfect masters in the performance. The Captain was of this category; and although Layton was a cold, proud, off-standing man, such was the other's tact, that, before they had journeyed twenty miles in company, an actual intimacy had sprung up between them.

There is no pleasanter companionship to the studious and reading man than that of a man of life and the world, one whose experience, drawn entirely from the actual game of life, is full of incident and adventure. The Captain had travelled a great deal and seen much, and there was about all his observations the stamp of a mind that had learned to judge men and things by broader, wider rules than are the guides of those who live in more narrow spheres.

It was in discoursing on the political condition of Ireland that they reached the little village of Cookstown, about a mile from which, on a slight eminence, a neat cottage was observable, the trim laurel hedge that separated it from the road being remarkable in a country usually deficient in such foliage.

"A pretty spot," remarked Layton, carelessly, "and, to all

seeming, untenanted."

"Yes, it seems empty," said the other, in the same easy tone.

"There's never been any one livin' there, Captain, since *that*," said the coachman, turning round on his seat, and addressing the stranger.

"Since what?" asked Layton, abruptly.

"He is alluding to an old story, – a very old story, now," rejoined the other. "There were two men – a father and son – named Shehan, taken from that cottage in the year of Emmet's unhappy rebellion, under a charge of high treason, and hanged."

"I remember the affair perfectly: Curran defended them. If I remember aright, too, they were convicted on the evidence of a noted informer."

"The circumstance is painfully impressed on my memory, by the fact that I have the misfortune to bear the same name; and it is by my rank alone that I am able to avoid being mistaken for him. My name is Holmes."

"To be sure," cried Layton, "Holmes was the name; Curran rendered it famous on that day."

The coachman had turned round to listen to this conversation, and at its conclusion touched his hat to the Captain as if in polite acquiescence.

By the time they had reached Castle Blayney, such had been the Captain's success in ingratiating himself into Layton's good opinion, that the doctor had accepted his invitation to dinner.

"We shall not dine with the coach travellers," whispered the

stranger, “but at a small house I ‘ll show you just close by. I have already ordered my cutlet there, and there will be enough for us both.”

Never was speech less boastful; a most admirable hot dinner was ready as they entered the little parlor, and such a bottle of port as Layton fancied he had never tasted the equal. By good luck there was ample time to enjoy these excellent things, as the mail was obliged to await at this place for an hour or more the arrival of a cross-post. A second and a third brother of the same racy vintage succeeded; and Layton, warmed by the generous wine, grew open and confidential, not only in speaking of the past, but also to reveal all his hopes for the future, and the object of his journey. Though the Captain was nothing less than a man of science, he could fathom sufficiently the details the other gave to see that the speaker was no ordinary man, and his discovery no small invention.

“Ay,” said the doctor, as, carried away by the excitement of the wine, he grew boastful and vain, “you ‘ll see, sir, that the man who sat shivering beside you on the outside of the mail without a great-coat to cover him, will, one of these days, be recognized as amongst the first of his nation, and along with Hunter and Bell and Brodie will stand the name of Herbert Layton!”

“You had a very distinguished namesake once, a Fellow of Trinity – ”

“Myself, sir, none other. I am the man!” cried he, in a burst of triumphant pride. “I am – that is, I was – the Regius Professor

of Medicine; I was Gold Medallist in 18 – ; then Chancellor's Prizeman; the following year I beat Stack and Naper, – you 've heard of *them*, I 'm sure, on the Fellowship bench; I carried away the Verse prize from George Wolffe; and now, this day, – ay, sir, this day, – I don't think I 'd have eaten if you had not asked me to dine with you."

"Come, come," said the Captain, pushing the decanter towards him, "there are good days coming. Even in a moneyed point of view, your discovery is worth some fifteen or twenty thousand pounds."

"I 'd not sell it for a million; it shall be within the reach of the humblest peasant in the land the day I have perfected the details. It shall be for Parliament – the two Houses of the nation – to reward me, or I 'll never accept a shilling."

"That's a very noble and high-spirited resolve. I like you for it; I respect you for it," said the Captain, warmly.

"I know well what had been my recognition if I had been born a German or a Frenchman. It is in England alone scientific discovery brings neither advancement nor honor. They pension the informer that betrays his confederates, and they leave the man of intellect to die, as Chatterton died, of starvation in a garret. Is n't that true?"

"Too true, – too true, indeed!" sighed the Captain, mournfully.

"And as to the Ireland of long ago," said Layton, "how much more wise her present-day rulers are than those who governed her in times past, and whose great difficulty was to deal with

a dominant class, and to induce them to abate any of the pretensions which years of tried loyalty would seem to have confirmed into rights! I speak as one who was once a 'United Irishman,'" said he.

Laying down the glass he was raising to his lips, the Captain leaned across the table and grasped Layton's hand; and although there was nothing in the gesture which a bystander could have noticed, it seemed to convey a secret signal, for Layton cried out exultingly, —

"A brother in the cause!"

"You may believe how your frank, outspoken nature has won upon me," said he, "when I have confided to you a secret that would, if revealed, certainly cost me my commission, and might imperil my life; but I will do more, Layton, I will tell you that our fraternity exists in full vigor, – not here, but thousands of miles away, – and England will have to reap in India the wrongs she has sown in Ireland."

"With this I have no sympathy," burst in Layton, boldly. "Our association – at least, as I understood it – was to elevate and enfranchise Ireland, not humiliate England. It was well enough for Wolfe Tone and men of his stamp to take this view, but Nielson and myself were differently minded, and *we* deemed that the empire would be but the greater when all who served it were equals."

Was it that the moment was propitious, was it that Layton's persuasive power was at its highest, was it that the earnest zeal

of the man had carried conviction with his words? However it happened, the Captain, after listening to a long and well-reasoned statement, leaned his head thoughtfully on his hand, and said, —

"I wish I had known you in earlier days, Layton. You have placed these things before me in a point I have never seen them before, nor do I believe that there are ten men amongst us who have. Grant me a favor," said he, as if a sudden thought had just crossed him.

"What is it?" asked Layton.

"Come and stay a week or two with me at my little cottage at Glasnevin; I am a bachelor, and live that sort of secluded life that will leave you ample time for your own pursuits."

"Give me a corner for my glass bottles and a furnace, and I 'm your man," said Layton, laughingly.

"You shall make a laboratory of anything but the dinner-room," cried Holmes, shaking hands on the compact, and thus sealing it.

The guard's horn soon after summoned them to their places, and they once more were on the road.

The men who have long waged a hand-to-hand combat with fortune, unfriended and uncheered, experience an intense enjoyment when comes the moment in which they can pour out all their sorrows and their selfishness into some confiding ear. It is no ordinary pleasure with them to taste the sympathy of a willing listener. Layton felt all the ecstasy of such a moment, and he told not alone of himself and his plans and his hopes, but of

his son Alfred, – what high gifts the youth possessed, and how certain was he, if common justice should be but accorded to him, to win a great place in the world's estimation.

"The Captain" was an eager listener to all the other said, and never interrupted, save to throw in some passing word of encouragement, some cheering exhortation to bear up bravely and courageously.

Layton's heart warmed with the words of encouragement, and he confided many a secret source of hope that he had never revealed before. He told how, in the course of his labors, many an unexpected discovery had burst upon him, – now some great fact applicable to the smelting of metals, now some new invention available to agriculture. They were subjects, he owned, he had not pursued to any perfect result, but briefly committed to some rough notes, reserving them for a time of future leisure.

"And if I cannot convince the world," said he, laughingly, "that they have neglected and ignored a great genius, I hope, at least, to make *you* a convert to that opinion."

"You see those tall elms yonder?" said Holmes, as they drew nigh Dublin. "Well, screened beneath their shade lies the little cottage I have told you about. Quiet and obscure enough now, but I 'm greatly mistaken if it will not one day be remembered as the spot where Herbert Layton lived when he brought his great discovery to completion."

"Do you really think so?" cried Layton, with a swelling feeling about the heart as though it would burst his side. "Oh, if I could

only come to feel that hope myself! How it would repay me for all I have gone through! How it would reconcile me to my own heart!”

CHAPTER XIII. HOW THEY LIVED AT THE VILLA

The Heathcotes had prolonged their stay at Marlia a full month beyond their first intention. It was now November, and yet they felt most unwilling to leave it. To be sure, it was the November of Italy in one of its most favored spots. The trees had scarcely began to shed their leaves, and were only in that stage of golden and purple transition that showed the approach of winter. The grass was as green, and the dog-roses as abundant, as in May; indeed, it was May itself, only wanting the fireflies and the violets. One must have felt the languor of an Italian summer, with its closed-shutter existence, its long days of reclusion, without exercise, without prospect, almost without light, to feel the intense delight a bright month of November can bring, with its pathways dry, its rivulets clear, its skies cloudless and blue, – to be able to be about again, to take a fast canter or a brisk walk, is enjoyment great as the first glow of convalescence after sickness. Never are the olive-trees more silvery; never does the leafy fig, or the dark foliage of the orange, contrast so richly with its golden fruit. To enjoy all these was reason enough why the Heathcotes should linger there; at least, they said that was their reason, and they believed it. Layton, with his pupil, had established himself in the little city of Lucca, a sort of deserted, God-forgotten old place, with tumble-down palaces, with strange iron “grilles” and

quaint old armorial shields over them; he said they had gone there to study, and *he* believed it.

Mr. O'Shea was still a denizen of the Panini Hotel at the Bagni, – from choice, he said, but *he* did not believe it; the Morgans had gone back to Wales; Mr. Mosely to Bond Street; and Quackinboss was off to "do" his Etruscan cities, the "pottery, and the rest of it;" and so were they all scattered, Mrs. Penthony Morris and Clara being, however, still at the villa, only waiting for letters to set out for Egypt. Her visit had been prolonged by only the very greatest persuasions. "She knew well – too bitterly did she know – what a blank would life become to her when she had quitted the dear villa." "What a dreary awaking was in store for them." "What a sad reverse to poor Clara's bright picture of existence." "The dear child used to fancy it could be all like this!" "Better meet the misery at once than wait till they could not find strength to tear themselves away." Such-like were the sentiments uttered, sometimes tearfully, sometimes in a sort of playful sadness, always very gracefully, by the softest of voices, accompanied by the most downcast of long-fringed eyelids.

"I am sure I don't know how May will manage to live without her," said Charles, who, be it confessed, was thinking far more of his own sorrows than his cousin's; while he added, in a tone of well-assumed indifference, "We shall all miss her!"

"Miss her," broke in Sir William; "by George! her departure would create a blank in the society of a city, not to speak of a narrow circle in a remote country-house." As for May

herself, she was almost heart-broken at the thought of separation. It was not alone the winning graces of her manner, and the numberless captivations she possessed, but that she had really such a "knowledge of the heart," she had given her such an insight into her own nature, that, but for her, she had never acquired; and poor May would shudder at the thought of the ignorance with which she had been about to commence the voyage of life, until she had fortunately chanced upon this skilful pilot. But for Mrs. Morris it was possible, nay, it was almost certain, she should one day or other have married Charles Heathcote, – united herself to one in every way unsuited to her, "a good-tempered, easy-natured, indolent creature, with no high ambitions, – a man to shoot and fish, and play billiards, and read French novels, but not the soaring intellect, not the high intelligence, the noble ascendancy of mind, that should win such a heart as yours, May." How strange it was that she should never before have recognized in Charles all the blemishes and shortcomings she now detected in his character! How singular that she had never remarked how selfish he was, how utterly absorbed in his own pursuits, how little deference he had for the ways or wishes of others, and then, how abrupt, almost to rudeness, his manners! To be sure, part of this careless and easy indifference might be ascribed to a certain sense of security; "he knows you are betrothed to him, dearest; he is sure you must one day be his wife, or, very probably, he would be very different, – more of an ardent suitor, more eager and anxious in his addresses. Ah, there it is! men are ever so,

and yet they expect that we poor creatures are to accept that half fealty as a full homage, and be content with that small measure of affection they deign to accord us! That absurd Will has done it all, dear child. It is one of those contracts men make on parchment, quite forgetting that there are such things as human affections. You must marry him, and there's an end of it!"

Now, Charles, on his side, was very fond of his cousin. If he was n't in love with her, it was because he did n't very well understand what being in love meant; he had a notion, indeed, that it implied giving up hunting and coursing, having no dogs, not caring for the Derby, or even opening "Punch" or smoking a cigar. Well, he could, he believed, submit to much, perhaps all, of these, but he could n't, at least he did n't fancy he could, be "spooney." He came to Mrs. Morris with confessions of this kind, and she undertook to consider his case.

Lastly, there was Sir William to consult her about his son and his ward. He saw several nice and difficult points in their so-called engagement which would require the delicate hand of a clever woman; and where could he find one more to the purpose than Mrs. Penthony Morris?

With a skill all her own, she contrived to have confidential intercourse almost every day with each of the family. If she wished to see Sir William, it was only to pretend to write a letter, or look for some volume in the library, and she was sure to meet him. May was always in her own drawing-room, or the flower-garden adjoining it; and Charles passed his day rambling listlessly

about the stables and the farm-yard, or watching the peasants at their work beneath the olive-trees. To aid her plans, besides, Clara could always be despatched to occupy and engage the attention of some other. Not indeed, that Clara was as she used to be. Far from it. The merry, light-hearted, capricious child, with all her strange and wayward ways, was changed into a thoughtful, pensive girl, loving to be alone and unnoticed. So far from exhibiting her former dislike to study, she was now intensely eager for it, passing whole days and great part of the night at her books. There was about her that purpose-like intentness that showed a firm resolve to learn. Nor was it alone in this desire for acquirement that she was changed, but her whole temper and disposition seemed altered. She had grown more gentle and more obedient. If her love of praise was not less, she accepted it with more graceful modesty, and appeared to feel it rather as a kindness than an acknowledged debt. The whole character of her looks, too, had altered. In place of the elfin sprightliness of her ever-laughing eyes, their expression was soft even to sadness; her voice, that once had the clear ringing of a melodious bell, had grown low, and with a tender sweetness that gave to each word a peculiar grace.

"What is the matter with Clara?" said Sir William, as he found himself, one morning, alone with Mrs. Morris in the library. "She never sings now, and she does not seem the same happy creature she used to be."

"Can you not detect the cause of this, Sir William?" said her

mother, with a strange sparkle in her eyes.

"I protest I cannot. It is not, surely, that she is unhappy here?"

"No, no, very far from that."

"It cannot be ill health, for she is the very picture of the contrary."

"No, no," said her mother again.

"What can it be?"

"Say, rather, who?" broke in Mrs. Morris, "and I 'll tell you."

"Who, then? Tell me by all means."

"Mr. Layton. Yes, Sir William, this is *his* doing. I have remarked it many a day back. You are aware, of course, how sedulously he endeavors to make himself acceptable in another quarter?"

"What do you mean? What quarter? Surely you do not allude to my ward?"

"You certainly do not intend me to believe that you have not seen this, Sir William?"

"I declare not only that I have never seen, but never so much as suspected it. And have *you* seen it, Mrs. Morris?"

"Ah! Sir William, this is our woman's privilege, though really in the present case it did not put the faculty to any severe test."

For a moment or two he made no reply, and then said, "And Charles – has Charles remarked it?"

"I really cannot tell you. His manner is usually so easy and indifferent about everything, that, whether it comes of not seeing or never caring, I cannot pretend to guess."

"I asked the young man here, because he was with Lord Agincourt," began Sir William, who was most eager to offer some apologies to himself for any supposed indiscretion. "Agincourt's guardian, Lord Sommerville, and myself have had some unpleasant passages in life, and I wished to show the boy that towards *him* I bore no memory of the ills I received from his uncle. In fact, I was doubly civil and attentive on that account; but as for Mr. Layton, – isn't that his name?"

"Yes; Alfred Layton."

"Layton came as the lad's tutor, – nothing more. He appeared a pleasing, inoffensive, well-bred young fellow. But surely, Mrs. Morris, my ward has given him no encouragement?"

"Encouragement is a strong word, Sir William," said she, smiling archly; "I believe it is only widows who give encouragement?"

"Well, well," said he, hurriedly, and not caring to smile, for he was in no jesting mood, "has she appeared to understand his attentions?"

"Even young ladies make no mistakes on that score," said she, in the same bantering tone.

"And I never to see it!" exclaimed he, as he walked hurriedly to and fro. "But I ought to have seen it, eh, Mrs. Morris? – I ought to have seen it. I ought, at least, to have suspected that these fellows are always on the lookout for such a chance as this. Now I suppose you 'll laugh at me for the confession, but my attention was entirely engaged by watching our Irish friend."

"The great O'Shea!" exclaimed Mrs. Morris, laughing.

"And to tell you the truth, I never could exactly satisfy myself whether he came here to ogle my ward, or win Charley's half-crowns at billiards."

"I imagine, if you asked him, he 'd say he was in for the 'double event,'" said she, with a laugh.

"And, then, Mrs. Morris," added he, with a sly smile, "if I must be candid, I fancied, or thought I fancied, his attentions had another object."

"Towards me!" said she, calmly, but in an accent as honest, as frank, and as free from all concern as though speaking of a third person. "Oh, that is quite true. Mr. Layton also made his little quiet love to me as college men do it, and I accepted the homage of both, feeling that I was a sort of lightning-conductor that might rescue the rest of the building."

Sir William laughed as much at the arch quietness of her manner as her words. "How blind I have been all this time!" burst he in, angrily, as he reverted to the subject of his chagrin. "I suppose there's not another man living would not have seen this but myself."

"No, no," said she, gently; "men are never nice observers in these matters."

"Well, better late than never, eh, Mrs. Morris? Better to know it even now. Forewarned, – as the adage says, – eh?"

In these little broken sentences he sought to comfort himself, while he angled for some consolation from his companion; but

she gave him none, – not a word, nor a look, nor a gesture.

"Of course I shall forbid him the house."

"And make a hero of him from that moment, and a martyr of her," quietly replied she. "By such a measure as this you would at once convert what may be possibly a passing flirtation into a case of love."

"So that I am to leave the course free, and give him every opportunity to prosecute his suit?"

"Not exactly. But do not erect barriers just high enough to be surmounted. Let him come here just as usual, and I will try if I cannot entangle him in a little serious flirtation with myself, which certainly, if it succeed, will wound May's pride, and cure her of any weakness for him."

Sir William made no reply, but he stared at the speaker with a sort of humorous astonishment, and somehow her cheek flushed under the look.

"These are womanish artifices, which you men hold cheaply, of course; but little weapons suit little wars, Sir William, and such are our campaigns. At all events, count upon my aid till Monday next."

"And why not after?"

"Because the Peninsular and Oriental packet touches at Malta on Saturday, and Clara and I must be there in time to catch it."

"Oh no; we cannot spare you. In fact, we are decided on detaining you. May would break up house here and follow you to the Pyramids, – the Upper Cataracts, – anywhere, in short. But

leave us you must not."

She covered her face with her handkerchief, and never spoke, but a slight motion of her shoulders showed that she was sobbing. "I have been so uncandid with you all this time," said she, in broken accents. "I should have told you all, – everything. I ought to have confided to you the whole sad story of my terrible bereavement and its consequences; but I could not. No, Sir William, I could not endure the thought of darkening the sunshine of all the happiness I saw here by the cloud of my sorrows. When I only saw faces of joy around me, I said to my heart, 'What right have I, in my selfishness, to obtrude here?' And then, again, I bethought me, 'Would they admit me thus freely to their hearth and home if they knew the sad, sad story?' In a word," said she, throwing down the handkerchief, and turning towards him with soft and tearful eyes, "I could not risk the chance of losing your affection, for you might have censured, you might have thought me too unforgiving, – too relentless!"

Here she again bent down her head, and was lost in an access of fresh afflictions.

Never was an elderly gentleman more puzzled than Sir William. He felt that he ought to offer consolation, but of what nature or for what calamity he could n't even guess. It was an awkward case altogether, and he never fancied awkward cases at any time. Then he had that unchivalric sentiment that elderly gentlemen occasionally will have, – a sort of half distrust of "injured women." This was joined to a sense of shame that it was

usually supposed by the world men of his time of life were always the ready victims of such sympathies. In fact, he disliked the situation immensely, and could only muster a few commonplace remarks to extricate himself from it.

"You'll let me tell you everything; I know you will," said she, looking bewitchingly soft and tender through her tears.

"Of coarse I will, my dear Mrs. Morris, but not now, – not to-day. You really are not equal to it at this moment."

"True, I am not!" said she, drying her eyes; "but it is a promise, and you 'll not forget it."

"You only do me honor in the confidence," said he, kissing her hand.

"A thousand pardons!" cried a rich brogue. And at the same moment the library door was closed, and the sound of retreating steps was heard along the corridor.

"That insufferable O'Shea!" exclaimed she. "What will he not say of us?"

CHAPTER XIV. THE BILLIARD-ROOM

Mr. O'Shea had a very happy knack at billiards. It was an accomplishment which had stood him more in stead in life than even his eloquence in the House, his plausibility in the world, or his rose-amethyst ring. That adventurous category of mankind, who have, as Curran phrased it, "the title-deeds of their estates under the crown of their hats," must, out of sheer necessity, cultivate their natural gifts to a higher perfection than that well-to-do, easy-living class for whom Fortune has provided "land and beeves," and are obliged to educate hand, eye, and hearing to an amount of artistic excellence of which others can form no conception. Now, just as the well-trained singer can modulate his tones, suiting them to the space around him, or as the orator so pitches his voice as to meet the ears of his auditory, without any exaggerated effort, so did the Member for Inch measure out his skill, meting it to the ability of his adversary with a graduated nicety as delicate as that of a chemist in apportioning the drops of a precious medicament.

It was something to see him play. There was a sort of lounging elegance, – a half purpose-like energy, dashed with indolence, – a sense of power, blended with indifference, – a something that bespoke the caprice of genius, mingled with a spirit that seemed to whisper that, after all, "cannons" were only vanity,

and "hazards" themselves but vexation of spirit. He was, though a little past his best years, a good-looking fellow, – a thought too pluffy, perhaps, and more than a thought too swaggering and pretentious; but somehow these same attributes did not detract from the display of certain athletic graces of which the game admits, for, after all, it was only Antinous fallen a little into flesh, and seen in his waistcoat.

It was mainly to this accomplishment he owed the invitations he received to the villa. Charles Heathcote, fully convinced of his own superiority at the game, was piqued and irritated at the other's success; while Sir William was, perhaps, not sorry that his son should receive a slight lesson on the score of his self-esteem, particularly where the price should not be too costly. The billiard-room thus became each evening the resort of all in the villa. Thither May Leslie fetched her work, and Mrs. Morris her crochet needles, and Clara her book; while around the table itself were met young Heathcote, Lord Agincourt, O'Shea, and Layton. Of course the stake they played for was a mere trifle, – a mere nominal prize, rather intended to record victory than reward the victors, – just as certain taxes are maintained more for statistics than revenue, – and half-crowns changed hands without costing the loser an afterthought; so at least the spectators understood, and all but one believed. Her quiet and practised eye, however, detected in Charles Heathcote's manner something more significant than the hurt pride of a beaten player, and saw under all the external show of O'Shea's indifference a purpose-

like energy, little likely to be evoked for a trifling stake. Under the pretext of marking the game, a duty for which she had offered her services, she was enabled to watch what went forward without attracting peculiar notice, and she could perceive how, from time to time, Charles and O'Shea would exchange a brief word as they passed, – sometimes a monosyllable, sometimes a nod, – and at such times the expression of Heathcote's face would denote an increased anxiety and irritation. It was while thus watching one evening, a chance phrase she overheard confirmed all her suspicions, – it was while bending down her head to show some peculiar stitch to May Leslie that she brought her ear to catch what passed.

"This makes three hundred," whispered Charles.

"And fifty," rejoined O'Shea, as cautiously.

"Nothing of the kind," answered Charles, angrily.

"You 'll find I 'm right," said the other, knocking the balls about to drown the words. "Are you for another game?" asked he, aloud.

"No; I 've bad enough of it," said Charles, impatiently, as he drew out his cigar-case, – trying to cover his irritation by searching for a cigar to his liking.

"I 'm your man, Inch-o'-brogue," broke in Agincourt; for it was by this impertinent travesty of the name of his borough he usually called him.

"What, isn't the pocket-money all gone yet?" said the other, contemptuously.

"Not a bit of it, man. Look at that," cried he, drawing forth a long silk purse, plumply filled. "There's enough to pay off the mortgage on an Irish estate, I 'm sure!"

While these freedoms were being interchanged, Charles Heathcote had left the room, and strolled out into the garden. Mrs. Morris, affecting to go in search of something for her work, took occasion also to go; but no sooner had she escaped from the room than she followed him.

Why was it, can any one say, that May Leslie bestowed more than ordinary attention on the game at this moment, evincing an interest in it she had never shown before? Mr. O'Shea had given the young Marquis immense odds; but he went further, he played off a hundred little absurdities to increase the other's chances, – he turned his back to the table, – he played with his left hand, – he poked the balls without resting his cue, – he displayed the most marvellous dexterity, accomplishing hazards that seemed altogether beyond all calculation; for all crafty and subtle as he was, vanity had got the mastery over him, and his self-conceit rose higher and higher with every astonished expression of the pretty girl who watched him. While May could not restrain her astonishment at his skill, O'Shea's efforts to win her praise redoubled.

"I'll yield to no man in a game of address," said he, boastfully: "to ride across country, to pull a boat, to shoot, fish, fence, or swim – There, my noble Marquis, drop your tin into that pocket and begin another game. I 'll give you eighty-five out of

a hundred."

"Is n't he what Quackinboss would call a 'ternal swaggerer, May?" cried Agincourt.

"He is a most brilliant billiard-player," said May, smiling courteously, with a glance towards the recess of the window, where Layton was leaning over Clara's chair and reading out of the book she held in her hand. "How I wish you would give me some lessons!" added she, still slyly stealing a look at the window.

"Charmed, – only too happy. You overwhelm me with the honor, Miss Leslie, and my name is not O'Shea if I do not make you an admirable player, for I've remarked already you have great correctness of eye."

"Indeed!"

"Astonishing; and with that, a wonderfully steady hand."

"How you flatter me!"

"Flatter? Ah, you little know me, Miss Leslie!" said he, as he passed before her.

May blushed, for at that moment Layton had lifted his eyes from the book and turned them full upon her. So steadfastly did he continue to look, that her cheek grew hotter and redder, and a something like resentment seemed to possess her; while he, as though suddenly conscious of having in some degree committed himself, held down his head in deep confusion.

May Leslie arose from her seat, and, with a haughty toss of her head, drew nigh the table.

"Are you going to join us, May?" cried the boy, merrily.

"I 'm going to take my first lesson, if Mr. O'Shea will permit me," said she; but the tone of her voice vibrated less with pleasure than resentment.

"I 'm at my lessons, too, May," cried Clara, from the window. "Is it not kind of him to help me?"

"Most kind, – most considerate!" said May, abruptly; and then, throwing down the cue on the table, she said, "I fancy I have a headache. I hope you 'll excuse me for the present." And almost ere Mr. O'Shea could answer, she had left the room. Clara speedily followed her, and for a minute or two not a word was uttered by the others.

"I move that the house be counted," cried the Member for Inch. "What has come over them all this evening? Do *you* know, Layton?"

"Do *I* know? Know what?" cried Alfred, trying to arouse himself out of a revery.

"Do you know that Inch-o'-brogue has not left me five shillings out of my last quarter's allowance?" said the boy.

"You must pay for your education, my lad," said O'Shea. "I did n't get mine for nothing. Layton there can teach you longs and shorts, to scribble nonsense-verses, and the like; but for the real science of life, 'how to do *them* as has done *you*,' you must come to fellows like me."

"Yes, there is much truth in *that*," said Layton, who, not having heard one word the other had spoken, corroborated all of it, out of pure distraction of mind.

The absurdity was too strong for Agincourt and O'Shea, and they both laughed out. "Come," said O'Shea, slapping Layton on the shoulder, "wake up, and roll the balls about. I 'll play you your own game, and give you five-and-twenty odds. There's a sporting offer!"

"Make it to me," broke in Agincourt.

"So I would, if you weren't pumped out, my noble Marquis."

"And could you really bring yourself to win a boy's pocket-money, – a mere boy?" said Layton, now suddenly aroused to full consciousness, and coming so close to O'Shea as to be inaudible to the other.

"Smallest contributions thankfully received, is *my* motto," said O'Shea. "Not but, as a matter of education, the youth has gained a deuced sight more from *me* than *you!*"

"The reproach is just," said Layton, bitterly. "I *have* neglected my trust, – grossly neglected it, – and in nothing more than suffering him to keep *your* company."

"Oh! is that your tone?" whispered the other, still lower. "Thank your stars for it, you never met a man more ready to humor your whim."

"What's the 'Member' plotting?" said Agincourt, coming up between them. "Do let *me* into the plan."

"It is something he wishes to speak to *me* about tomorrow at eleven o'clock," said Layton, with a significant look at O'Shea, "and which is a matter strictly between ourselves."

"All right," said Agincourt, turning back to the table again,

while O'Shea, with a nod of assent, left the room.

"We must set to work vigorously to-morrow, Henry," said Layton, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder. "You have fallen into idle ways, and the fault is all my own. For both our sakes, then, let us amend it."

"Whatever you like, Alfred," said the boy, turning on him a look of real affection; "only never blame yourself if you don't make a genius of me. I was always a stupid dog!"

"You are a true-hearted English boy," muttered Layton, half to himself, "and well deserved to have fallen into more careful hands than mine. Promise me, however, all your efforts to repair the past."

"That I will," said he, grasping the other's hand, and shaking it in token of his pledge. "But I still think," said he, in a slightly broken voice, "they might have made a sailor of me; they 'll never make a scholar!"

"We must get away; we must leave this," said Layton, speaking half to himself.

"I 'm sorry for it," replied the boy. "I like the old villa, and I like Sir William and Charley, and the girls too. Ay, and I like that trout stream under the alders, and that jolly bit of grass land where we have just put up the hurdles. I say, Layton," added he, with a sigh, "I wonder when shall we be as happy as we have been here?"

"Who knows?" said Layton, sorrowfully.

"I'm sure *I* never had such a pleasant time of it in my life.

Have you?"

"*I*– I don't know, – that is, I believe not. I mean – never," stammered out Layton, in confusion.

"Ha! I fancied as much. I thought you didn't like it as well as *I* did."

"Why so?" asked Layton, eagerly.

"It was May put it into my head the other morning. She said it was downright cruelty to make you come out and stop here; that you could n't, with all your politeness, conceal how much the place bored you!"

"She said this?"

"Yes; and she added that if it were not for Clara, with her German lessons and her little Venetian barcarolles, you would have been driven to desperation."

"But you could have told her, Henry, that I delighted in this place; that I never had passed such happy days as here."

"I did think so when we knew them first, but latterly it seemed to me that you were somehow sadder and graver than you used to be. You didn't like to ride with us; you seldom came down to the river; you'd pass all the morning in the library; and, as May said, you only seemed happy when you were giving Clara her lesson in German."

"And to whom did May say this?"

"To me and to Clara.

"And Clara, – did she make any answer?"

"Not a word. She got very pale, and seemed as though she

would burst out a-crying. Heaven knows why! Indeed, I 'm not sure the tears were n't in her eyes, as she hurried away; and it was the only day I ever saw May Leslie cross."

"I never saw her so," said Layton, half rebukefully.

"Then you didn't see her on that day, that's certain! She snubbed Charley about his riding, and would n't suffer Mrs. Morris to show her something that had gone wrong in her embroidery; and when we went down to the large drawing-room to rehearse our tableau, – that scene you wrote for us, – she refused to take a part, and said, 'Get Clara; she 'll do it better!'"

"And it was thus our little theatricals fell to the ground," said Layton, musingly; "and I never so much as suspected all this!"

"Well," said the boy, with a hesitating manner, "I believe I ought not to have told you. I 'm sure she never intended I should; but somehow, after our tiff – "

"And did *you* quarrel with her?" asked Layton, eagerly.

"Not quarrel, exactly; but it was what our old commander used to call a false-alarm fire; for I thought her unjust and unfair towards you, and always glad when she could lay something or other to your charge, and I said so to her frankly."

"And she?"

"She answered me roundly enough. 'When you are a little older, young gentleman,' said she, 'you 'll begin to discover that our likings and dislikings are not always under our own control.' She tried to be very calm and cool as she said it, but she was as pale as if going to faint before she finished."

"She said truly," muttered Layton to himself; "our impulses are but the shadows our vices or virtues throw before them." Then laying his arm on the boy's shoulder, he led him away, to plan and plot out a future course of study, and repair all past negligence and idleness.

Ere we leave this scene, let us follow Mrs. Morris, who, having quitted the house, quickly went in search of Charles Heathcote. There was that in the vexed and angry look of the young man, as he left the room, that showed her how easy it would be in such a moment to become his confidante. Through the traits of his resentment she could read an impatience that could soon become indiscretion. "Let me only be the repository of any secret of his mind," muttered she, – "I care not what, – and I ask nothing more. If there be one door of a house open, – be it the smallest, – it is enough to enter by."

She had not to go far in her search. There was a small raised terrace at the end of the garden, – a favorite spot with him, – and thither she had often herself repaired to enjoy the secret luxury of a cigar; for Mrs. Morris smoked whenever opportunity permitted that indulgence without the hazard of forfeiting the good opinion of such as might have held the practice in disfavor. Now, Charles Heathcote was the only confidant of this weakness, and the mystery, small as it was, had served to establish a sort of bond between them.

"I knew I should find you here," said she, stealing noiselessly to his side, as, leaning over the terrace, he stood deep in thought.

"Give me a cigar."

He took the case slowly from his pocket, and held it towards her in silence.

"How vastly polite! Choose one for me, sir," said she, pettishly.

"They 're all alike," said he, carelessly, as he drew one from the number and offered it.

"And now a light," said she, "for I see yours has gone out, without your knowing it. Pray do mind what you 're doing; you've let the match fall on my foot. Look there!"

And he did look, and saw the prettiest foot and roundest ankle that ever Parisian coquetry had done its uttermost to grace; but he only smiled half languidly, and said, "There's no mischief done – to either of us!" the last words being muttered to himself. Her sharp ears, however, had caught them; and had he looked at her then, he would have seen her face a deep crimson. "Is the play over? Have they left the billiard-room?" asked he.

"Of course it is over," said she, mockingly. "Sportsmen rarely linger in the preserves where there is no game."

"What do you think of that same Mr. O'Shea? You rarely mistake people. Tell me frankly your opinion of him," said he, abruptly.

"He plays billiards far better than *you*," said she, dryly.

"I 'm not talking of his play, I 'm asking what you think of him."

"He's your master at whist, écarté, and piquet. I *think* he's a

better pistol shot; and he says he rides better."

"I defy him. He's a boastful, conceited fellow. Take his own account, and you 'll not find his equal anywhere. But still, all this is no answer to my question."

"Yes, but it is, though. When a man possesses a very wide range of small accomplishments in a high degree of perfection, I always take it for granted that he lives by them."

"Just what I thought, – exactly what I suspected," broke he in, angrily. "I don't know how we ever came to admit him here, as we have. That passion May has for opening the doors to every one has done it all."

"If people will have a menagerie, they must make up their mind to meet troublesome animals now and then," said she, dryly.

"And then," resumed he, "the absurdity is, if I say one word, the reply is, 'Oh, you are so jealous!'"

"Naturally enough!" was the cool remark.

"Naturally enough! And why naturally enough? Is it of such fellows as Layton or O'Shea I should think of being jealous?"

"I think you might," said she, gravely. "They are, each of them, very eager to succeed in that about which you show yourself sufficiently indifferent; and although May is certainly bound by the terms of her father's will, there are conditions by which she can purchase her freedom."

"Purchase her freedom! And is that the way she regards her position?" cried he, trembling with agitation.

"Can you doubt it? Need you do more than ask yourself, How do you look on your own case? And yet you are not going to bestow a great fortune. I 'm certain that, do what you will, your heart tells you it is a slave's bargain."

"Did May tell you so?" said he, in a voice thick with passion.

"No."

"Did she ever hint as much?"

"No."

"Do you believe that any one ever dared to say it?"

"As to that, I can't say; the world is very daring, and says a great many naughty things without much troubling itself about their correctness."

"It may spare its censure on the present occasion, then."

"Is it that you will not exact her compliance?"

"I will not."

"How well I read you," cried she, catching up his cold and still reluctant hand between both her own; "how truly I understood your noble, generous nature! It was but yesterday I was writing about you to a very dear friend, who had asked me when the marriage was to take place, and I said: 'If I have any skill in deciphering character, I should say, Never. Charles Heathcote is not the man to live a pensioner on a wife's rental; he is far more likely to take service again as a soldier, and win a glorious name amongst those who are now reconquering India. His daring spirit chafes against the inglorious idleness of his present life, and I 'd not wonder any morning to see his place vacant at the breakfast-

table, and to hear he had sailed for Alexandria.'"

"You do me a fuller justice than many who have known me longer," said he, pensively.

"Because I read you more carefully, – because I considered you without any disturbing element of self-interest; and if I was now and then angry at the lethargic indolence of your daily life, I used to correct myself and say, 'Be patient; his time is coming; and when the hour has once struck for him, he 'll dally no longer!'"

"And my poor father – "

"Say, rather, your proud father, for he is the man to appreciate your noble resolution, and feel proud of his son."

"But to leave him – to desert him – "

"It is no eternal separation. In a year or two you will rejoin him, never to part again. Take my word for it, the consciousness that his son is accomplishing a high duty will be a strong fund of consolation for absence. It is to mistake him to suppose that he could look on your present life without deep regret."

"Ah! is that so?" cried he, with an expression of pain.

"He has never owned as much to me; but I have read it in him, just as I have read in *you* that you are not the man to stoop to an ignominious position to purchase a life of ease and luxury."

"You were right there!" said he, warmly.

"Of course I was. I could not be mistaken."

"You shall not be, at all events," said he, hurriedly. "How cold your hand is! Let us return to the house." And they walked back

in silence to the door.

CHAPTER XV. MRS. PENTHONY MORRIS AT HER WRITING-TABLE

It was late on that same night, – very late. The villa was all quiet and noiseless as Mrs. Morris sat at her writing-table, engaged in a very long letter. The epistle does not in any way enter into our story. It was to her father, in reply to one she had just received from him, and solely referred to little family details with which our reader can have no interest, save in a passing reference to a character already before him, and of whom she thus wrote: —

"And so your alchemist turns out to be the father of my admirer, Mr. Alfred Layton. I can sincerely say your part of the family is the more profitable, for I should find it a very difficult problem to make five hundred pounds out of mine! Nor can I sufficiently admire the tact with which you rescued even so much from such a wreck! I esteem your cleverness the more, since – shall I confess it, dear papa? – I thought that the man of acids and alkalies would turn out to be the rogue and you the dupe! Let me hasten, therefore, to make the *amende honorable*, and compliment you on your new character of chemist.

"In your choice, too, of the mode of disembarrassing yourself of his company, you showed an admirable wisdom; and you very justly observe, these are not times when giving a dog a bad name will save the trouble of hanging him, otherwise an

exposure of his treasonable principles might have sufficed. Far better was the method you selected, while, by making *him* out to be mad, you make *yourself* out to be benevolent. You have caught, besides, a very popular turn of the public mind at a lucky conjuncture. There is quite a vogue just now for shutting up one's mother-in-law, or one's wife, or any other disagreeable domestic ingredient, on the plea of insanity; and a very clever physician, with what is called 'an ingenious turn of mind,' will find either madness or arsenic in any given substance. You will, however, do wisely to come abroad, for the day will come of a reaction, and 'the lock-up' system will be converted into the 'let-loose,' and a sort of doomsday arrive when one will be confronted with very unwelcome acquaintances."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.