Tho' F. Neighbour.
THE SILVER CORD:

A Story.

BY

SHIRLEY BROOKS,

AUTHOR OF "ASPEK COURT," "THK GORDIAN KNOT," ETC.

"A swarm of fire-flies, tangled in a silver braid."

TENNYSOK.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

Acting under orders, of the most explicit character, from his imperious mistress, M. Silvain abstained from paying a reconciliatory visit to Adair, lest so prompt an offer of the olive branch should excite the suspicion of the enemy, but the Frenchman sought an opportunity of meeting Ernest as if by accident. Chance favoured him, and he encountered Adair in one of the roads leading to Versailles, a solitary road, and so narrow that no two acquaintances could pass without recognition. M. Silvain played his little part well, and seemed disconcerted at seeing his late antagonist, and as if inclined to turn and avoid him. Adair, however, hastened to hold out his hand, and press it upon the apparently reluctant Frenchman.

"Why," said Ernest, retaining the hand of the other while speaking, "you surely do not bear any malice, Silvain. Life is too short for such folly."

"It is impossible for me to forget in a moment," said Silvain (their conversation being in French, as
before), "that at our last meeting you used lan-
guage, Monsieur, which ——"

"Which was perfectly justified, Silvain. Not
by anything you said or did, except by your un-
fortunately coming at a time when I was in the
highest state of irritation about some matters which,
if you knew them, you would allow to be an excuse
for anything. I was in a white heat of rage, and
your persistence in talking about things which
seemed comparatively trifling made me a brute."

"I believe that I found you reading a novel," said Silvain.

"Trying to read it, my friend, trying whether
somebody else's nonsense would take me out of
my own trouble. I cannot tell you what this was,
but be generous, and believe what I say."

"I have no right to doubt the word of a man of
honour."

"Pooh, pooh, don't stand on stilts, there's a good
man. I am not a man of honour, in the world's
sense, as you know perfectly well. But I am a
good fellow, when people trust me and treat me
well; and I have not behaved badly to you in
serious matters. As for anything I said, I only
know that I was in a demon's temper, and I heartily
apologise to you for every word. What more can I
say?"

"I do not claim to ask so much."

"Come, Silvain, you are not so brave a man as
I believed you, if that little affair with the foils
rankles in your mind. You are a much better
fencer than I am, but that day I suppose the devil that was in my heart did me the favour to help my hand, in the hope that I might do a friend some deadly harm. But I was luckier than Faust.”

“There is an end of the affair, M. Adair.”

“That is well,” said the other, again shaking hands, “and now walk with me, or I will walk with you—where are you going?”

“I was returning home; but I have no errand of importance.”

“Then come my way, for a stroll. And before we say any more, I feel that you were so right in your anger at my hasty conduct to Matilde, that I do not know what amends to make. I can only say that though I knew you were paying her attention, I had no idea that it was an affair of heart, or I should have respected it. Make my peace with her, and trust to my good behaviour for the future.”

“I will endeavour to do so, Monsieur.”

“Very well,” replied Adair, “and we will drop the question. I hate to quarrel with anybody, but my impulses are always leading me into scrapes. If I ask how business prospers, you will construe it into an indiscretion.”

“No, Monsieur, not after your frank assurances. I am glad to say that the business is satisfactory. I have just had a handsome order from the house of M. Urquhart.”

“I am glad to hear it. But that you owe, of course, to the good offices of Mademoiselle.”

“I should be proud to owe her anything,” said
Silvain, "but I do not think I am her debtor in this case."

"No. Come, don't look so mysterious. Have we made an impression in a higher quarter? Ah, Silvain, what chances our profession has."

"I dare not flatter myself to that extent," said Silvain, with a smile. "And the lady who has honoured me with her commands is an acquaintance of your own—the lady from England."

"Eh," said Adair, quickly. "Madame Lygon."

"A charming lady."

"So she is, very charming, worth a dozen of her sister. So—she has given you a handsome order. I see," said Ernest.

And he smiled, for a moment, as one who imagines himself to be detecting the spring of a device against him.

"A hundred and fifty francs, or more," said Silvain, complacently.

"What caprice! Have not Atkinson's and Rimmel's, scent-men of London, better than all the sweet waters of Paris?" said Adair, with one of his favourite irreverences of memory. "But I rejoice in a friend's luck. And perhaps you may owe it to me," he added.

"How so?"

"Madame knows that we are acquainted, and may mean a delicate attention to me," said the other, eyeing Silvain keenly.

"I should be glad to think so," said Silvain; "but nothing of the kind was said to me."
"Of course," said Ernest. "Women can, sometimes, hold their tongues at the proper time. Come, my dear Silvain, this is a noble proof of your loyalty to me. You understand the object of the lady's order just as well as I do, and you tell me of it. That is a brave forgiveness of wrongs."

"You pay me an unmerited compliment, M. Adair."

"I will not hear you say so. Mrs. Lygon knows of our intimacy, and favours you with this order to ensure your giving Mademoiselle exact information as to anything I may do. Well, you will not be party to any scheme against your friend, and you reveal the fact of the bribe. You shall be rewarded for your devotion, and you shall earn more orders."

"How you see through everything," said Silvain, with a look of admiration. "I swear to you that I did not regard the matter in that way. Ah! you are happy to have interested such a creature as Madame."

"We will not be vain," said Adair, caressing his moustache, and taking a sharpe side-glance at his companion.

"I never saw a better excuse for vanity," said Silvain.

"Come, come, my friend. I am going to be jealous. Do not be so earnest on the beauty of Madame. What would Mademoiselle say?"

Silvain shrugged his shoulders.

"Mademoiselle, however, admires her as much
as you do," continued Ernest. "Regards her as an angel."

"I have reason to believe to the contrary," said Silvain.

Again the keen eye was turned upon him, but the Frenchman affected to look inscrutable.

"Does not admire her?" said Ernest.

"You can conceive that I am not at liberty to repeat anything that Mademoiselle may have confided to me, and I might injure her with Madame Urquhart by indiscretion. But I have a right to form an impression of my own."

"Which is that Matilde does not like Madame."

"I will not say that. But the coldness with which she received my praises of the English lady, and I swear to you, M. Adair," said Silvain, with well acted warmth, "that she is divine—this astonished me in a young person of good taste—"

"For she had eyes and chose you," quoted Ernest.

"And," said Silvain, "this left me to draw an inference, which I will reserve until I know more of the matter."

"You are too honest and honourable a fellow to be a good deceiver," said Ernest Adair, "and you are not deceiving me. Matilde has told you something about Madame Lygon."

"It may be so, but Matilde has made some mistake, has misconceived some words. Madame Lygon is an angel."

"This is a good deal of homage for a hundred and fifty francs, my dear Silvain, unless I take the
more flattering view of the case, and suppose that you are praising the lady to please me."

"I speak from my heart," said Silvain, impressively. "I am grieved that Mademoiselle's estimate of her differs from my own, but I retain my own, nevertheless. But I must say no more on that subject."

"Well, we may talk of something better than women, I dare say," said Ernest. "I will pour out some of my sorrows to you, but of course, in the strictest confidence. Nay, I don't mean that I doubt you, but when a man has a serious affair of the heart, he gets very untrustworthy, for the time. I don't know a more demoralising thing than falling in love—it destroys all a man's ideas of the sacredness of friendship, and makes him sacrifice anything and everything in the hope of pleasing somebody who is laughing at him all the time, and whom he will heartily hate in twelve months."

"Frightful creed!" said Silvain. "Do not trust me."

"Yes, I will, because you have a brain as well as a heart." What have they been telling this ass, thought Ernest. Surely nothing of the truth—three women in council would know better than that.

"My dear Silvain," he said, linking his arm in that of his companion, "I am so glad that you don't play."

"Why, I never could afford it in the days when I desired to play, and now that I can afford it, I don't care about it. So I have no merit."
"I wish I had as much, on that head. I have been most unlucky."

"Lately?"

"Yes, this week. I have been constantly losing. I have been into Paris three nights running, and every night I have come away with just enough to bring me back. Another visit, and I shall be without a napoleon. Pooh, my dear fellow, take your hand out of your pocket. I do not speak literally, and certainly I would not plunder a man who is making arrangements for marriage. Besides, you could not do what I want. I owe a good deal, and, in fact, I must instantly apply to a certain source which I hate to trouble, but one must live."

"You are fortunate in having friends."

"Yes, I have two friends who will do a good deal for me, though not with any good will. But it will not do to be fastidious."

There, thought Ernest, if you are what I suppose, take that information back with you for the delight of those who hire you.

"You reject my purse?" said Silvain. "If you took it, you would give me a better proof of your friendship."

"Then I will take it," said Ernest, laying hand something abruptly on the porte-monnaie produced by Silvain, and dropping it into a coat-pocket. There was a touch of humour on his part in the transaction, and perhaps a touch of ill-humour, or at all events of surprise, on that of M. Silvain, who
might not have expected to be taken so promptly at his word.

"I will take it," continued Ernest, gazing kindly on Silvain, "but chiefly to show how completely I consider any little differences between us adjusted for ever. There cannot be much here, and very much is needed for my immediate wants, but whatever is here I will repay to the last centime before I leave France."

"Do not speak of repayment," said Silvain, with a very good grace. "If I ask you to return the purse itself, it is only because——"

"Ah, I should have thought of that," said Ernest, taking it out. And he deliberately removed the entire contents of the purse—some seven or eight napoleons and some silver—and pocketed them solemnly. He then handed the _porte-monnaie_ to his companion.

"A _gage d'amour_. May it be luckier to you than anything of the kind which I have ever had."

"Do you mean to abandon play, M. Adair?" asked Silvain.

"Why should I? It is true that I lose; but then, as I have told you, I possess friends who have sufficient good feeling to minister to my needs, though not enough to do so graciously. No, I have no other happiness, and I shall not deny myself that single solace."

"No other happiness," repeated M. Silvain, "and you are appreciated in a certain quarter?"

What _have_ they made him believe? thought
Ernest again. "Ah, my dear Silvain, if you knew all."

"I know nothing. But I have my surmises."

"They make me a happier man than I am," said Ernest, in the tone in which men of his class say that which they wish should be disbelieved. And M. Silvain, understanding this, again shrugged his shoulders, and thus was performed the little drama, talk and pantomime, in which a thousand honours have been lied away, and so will be many a thousand more, until that drama comes on for damnation. But, in this case, the actors were differently circumstanced, the one playing the part of a scoundrel, the other but affecting credulity. He would have liked to fight Ernest again, for the tone in which he had spoken, and, like a man with his feelings under proper control, he made a very different proposition.

"If, instead of going again to Paris to-night, you care to come and smoke in my little apartment—-" he said.

"Well, I will, and re-baptise our friendship in your excellent cognac. You could not please me more than by the proposal. Shall we be alone?"

"Unless you wish it otherwise."

"I would sooner talk to you than anybody else, my dear Silvain. But then I would also sooner rob anybody else than you, my dear Silvain. So if you happen to meet any one who has a taste for écarté, and a few napoleons to justify such an indulgence, I should be happy to afford him any amusement in my power."
"You have met a few persons of that kind at my house," said M. Silvain, archly.

"I have; and if they preserve as pleasant recollections of me as I do of them, there is a good deal of agreeable reminiscence scattered about the world. But fresh faces are almost as necessary to one as fresh air, dear Silvain."

"Connu," responded his companion. "I will do my best. But you will not be proud, and if my friend should not quite come up to your standard of elegance—"

"What are we that we should be proud," said Adair, relapsing into his old bantering manner. "Worms, dust, ashes,—what does it matter with whom we play at écorté if he have money in his purse?"

"I think that I can manage an agreeable introduction, and not an unprofitable one."

"Expect me at eight, then, prepared, if you succeed, to show my sense of your hospitality, and if you do not, to favour you with some more of my troubles. And you will make me very happy, if I find you are able to tell me that I am forgiven by Mademoiselle."

"I shall not see her to-day," said Silvain.

"Miserable man—and yet great man, for even in your own distress you can take thought for the advantage of your friend. Jonathan and Pythias were but types of you, my dear Silvain."

The Frenchman had heard of Pythias, though never of Jonathan, and made fitting reply.
When they had separated, Ernest Adair soliloquised after his usual fashion.

"I am a clear gainer by this transaction. I have got those napoleons, francs, and half-francs, and I have got the information that they think it necessary to watch me, and therefore have planted their spy. That's fair enough. But, in revenge, I have sent a bombshell into the camp of the enemy, and it will be lighted there by their own man. I will not be driven into spoiling a good game by hurrying it; the true artist takes his time, and never permits himself to grow impatient—but there is reason in all things. If they are plotting to get money for me and merely wish to keep me amused while they are doing it, that is a considerateness for which I kiss their hands. And if they are growing nervous while the delay occurs, and wish to know how I am conducting myself, and therefore employ M. Silvain, I can only feel complimented at the thought they bestow upon me. Therefore, pleased, and thankful for all mercies, let us prepare ourselves by a quiet dinner, for showing M. Silvain's new friend the art of turning up the king, or rather let us remember that *ars est celare artem.*"
CHAPTER II.

When Robert Urquhart had seen the train in motion, and had waved his farewell to Lygon, the Scotsman, for the first time perhaps in his busy life, walked off in a slow and sauntering manner, and took any streets that came in his way, whether they were also in the way to the hotel or not. He was greatly troubled in his mind, and nearly trod many sprawling children to death in his elephantine progress, answering the shrill remonstrances of the mothers with a growl, and a bit of exceedingly plain Scotch nomenclature.

For though in his heart he believed what he had called upon Lygon to believe, and he doubted not that the problem of Mrs. Lygon’s journey to France would be solved by some revelation of feminine absurdity, committed under the influence of feminine terror, both of which attributes of woman Mr. Urquhart held in considerable dis-esteem, he had a double reason for being much displeased at Laura’s conduct. In the first place, he had strong Scottish views of the marriage tie, and of the extreme impropriety of a wife’s ever presuming to act without the sanction of him whom the Scripture declares her Head; and in the second place, he had a keener insight into the character of Arthur Lygon than might have been
supposed by an indifferent spectator of the almost rough passages in their second interview. On the former point Urquhart might have felt that he should have little to say, should Arthur Lygon choose to take an indulgent view of Laura's proceedings, but Robert Urquhart had his own reasons for believing it more than doubtful whether Lygon would really take that view, and whether what the Scot considered a very wrong, not to say wicked step on the part of the wife, might not permanently alienate the affections of the husband. It was in this doubt, and from Urquhart's most earnest desire to prevent evil and estrangement, that he had laid so much stress upon the assurances which he gave Lygon of the absolute certainty of Laura's coming with honour from the ordeal; but Robert Urquhart was very, very far from feeling towards her, when he began to reflect upon the circumstances, anything like the cordiality he had expressed when endeavouring to work upon the heart of Lygon. Urquhart had said, truly enough, that nothing should have induced him to try to defend Laura, were he not convinced of her innocence, but when he had done with the defence, and had parted with his friend, and had leisure to weigh her conduct in the balance, he pronounced it greatly wanting: Indeed the more he reflected upon it, the more harshly he felt disposed to judge her, and as for the kindly thought and suggested kiss with which he had closed his appeal, these he utterly retracted, and became as little inclined to deal gently with her, as ever Knox showed himself with regard
to the unfortunate Queen of Scots. Nor was this severity merely the result of a habit of placing a severe interpretation on the words of the marriage bond.

Urquhart, as we have said, knew Arthur Lygon well. They had been a good deal thrown together in earlier life, and although their natures differed, there was in them that amount of difference and that amount of resemblance which, in union, draw together those whom the world is surprised to see closely attached. On the special features in the character of each it may not be necessary to dwell, until these are developed by subsequent incidents, but upon a single point it is desirable to say enough to explain the state of mind in which Urquhart found himself. Intimately acquainted with the nature of Lygon, Urquhart trembled for the future of Laura's husband from the first moment when he had doubted her. Devoted, thoughtful, cheerful, proud of his wife as well as earnestly attached to her, affectionate in his manner as well as in his heart, and, in brief, what is rightly considered the model of a husband, Arthur Lygon, blessed with health, energy, and worldly prosperity, seemed a man destined to a long life of tranquil but not stagnant happiness. But Urquhart, who knew all this, knew more. He knew that Lygon, admirably and lovingly as he estimated his wife, was by no means unconscious of his own high qualifications, and that though nothing could be more removed from his nature than a vulgar self-complacency, Arthur Lygon placed on himself as
just and liberal an estimate as he formed of another. He was proud of himself, of his successes, of his good fortune, and though he had far too much taste to permit this pride to appear, it was not the less potent for being latent. He was thoroughly sensible of, and we may add grateful for the numerous advantages of his lot, but he was not hypocrite enough to affect to say that he had not deserved them, and that they were not the legitimate reward of intellect and resolute will. Among the prizes of his life the chiefest was the beautiful woman whom he had loved and won, and for whom he retained so warm an affection; but beautiful and gifted, and good as Laura was, her husband did not esteem himself rewarded above his deserts in possessing the first and only love of that pure and gentle heart. I do not say that this self-appreciation was a fault, but it is needful to heed that it was a characteristic, and Robert Urquhart was well aware of its existence.

From this habit of mind would naturally arise—should circumstances evoke it—a sense of wrong done to himself, should aught that appertained to Arthur Lygon in the way of love, friendship, good fortune deteriorate—or seem to be deteriorated—by any of the events of life. Having made up his mind, or rather holding an instinctive belief that he deserved all that he had obtained, the diminution of this wealth, by one jot or tittle, was depriving him of a portion of his deserts. And, thought Robert Urquhart, as he moodily pondered over the
story, and wished that he had used even stronger or more reiterated arguments, when Arthur Lygon shall have had all this strange business explained to him, when he shall have declared himself satisfied, and gently rebuked Laura for not having at once confided in him, and their hands and lips have again met in token of perfect reconciliation, will he be again the happy confiding husband of other days? Reason would bid him resume his old, calm happiness; but when did reason ever make the heart hear her? Rather, thought Urquhart, will Lygon become thoughtful and moody. He will mentally cast up a private balance-sheet of his dealings with Providence, and he will convince himself that in one of the items he has not been fairly dealt by. The wife who was supposed to be all love, frankness, prudence, has wounded and mystified him, and has done one of those weak, wild things that might be expected from a romantic school girl, not a thoughtful matron. He has had nights of sorrow, days of harassing travel and search, and he was sent home to England in a state of doubt and gloom. This wife is not what she was taken for, and the admirable husband has been grievously wronged. When that is the form taken by a husband’s meditations, she must be a wife strong indeed in her love and truth who can lay such ghosts—for they are not mere fantastic phantoms, but the spectres of things that were.

Not in words like these, but in his own shrewd language did Robert Urquhart mutter his forebodings, and he ended by saying:

Vol. II.
"I doubt he'll never quite forgive her. They'll never be quite one again."

He had business in Paris, and determined to remain there another night, so he sent on Lygon's letter to Bertha, putting a word or two on the cover, to intimate that Mrs. Urquhart was not to expect him. And then he should have gone about his business, but Laura was still uppermost in his thoughts, and it was in vain that he essayed to work out, in his head, the calculations which were at other times so easy to his cool intellect. After three or four attempts, and as many discoveries that he was not doing himself justice, he resolved, with characteristic caution, to postpone the interview he had desired, which was one of importance. "For I'll be sure to forget some point," he said, "and then the beggars will have an advantage over me. I'll see them when we are on even terms."

Nor was his own wife entirely omitted in his consideration of the circumstances. He had nothing to lay to her charge, except that she had not written and told him that Laura had arrived, and as there was a general understanding between himself and Bertha that he was to hold no news to be good news, and not to be troubled with letters, which he hated, except in case of necessity; and as, moreover, he had been moving from place to place, and might easily have missed a letter, he really had not much ground for complaint. Doubtless Bertha would have plenty to tell him next day. But as regarded
Laura, his wrath against her became hotter and hotter the more he meditated on her conduct, and I fear that with some adhesion to the doctrine of special judgments, as understood in the north, he brought himself to say, with an ominous shake of the head, that it would be but meet and right if, when she reached her own door, she found one of her children almost at that of death. But he grew more placable as he realised this image, and thought of what he had seen of the idolatrous affection of Laura for her little ones. "I hope that the woman is with them," he growled. "Perhaps they will plead for her with Arthur better than I could do myself," a supposition which mothers may not consider irrational.

The letter from Lygon was duly delivered in the avenue, but Bertha, though in some measure recovered from her bewilderments and terrors, was unable to comprehend its meaning, and sought counsel of her sister.

Laura was in the secluded apartment that has been described, and was writing.

"A letter from Arthur, but I cannot tell what it means."

Laura hastily took the letter, and her heart throbbed as the well-known handwriting met the wife's eyes.

"There! See how you wronged him," she said, her face in a glow.

"I wronged him?" said Bertha.

"Yes. You were afraid that he might, by acci-
dent or design, say something to Robert that would compromise you. Not only has he not done so, but in all his own trouble he has had thoughtfulness enough to plan a letter that should tell you exactly how much it has been necessary to say. He is kindness itself, Bertha.”

“But what does he tell me?” said Bertha. “Please to explain, for I cannot understand him.”

“You really do not deserve the pains which is taken for you, Bertha,” said her sister, impetuously. “No, I don’t mean that, dear, but how can you fail to see his object? You told a story about papa having got into difficulties here, and this he has passed on to Robert—Heaven knows whether Arthur was deceived or not—but he writes to let you know that such is the story Robert is prepared to hear.”

“Oh, does it mean that?”

“Of course, and you had better consider how to tell the same thing to your husband.”

“To-morrow will do for that,” said Bertha. “It may,” said her sister, looking compassionately at her.

Laura used the word without much intention in it, but some hours later it was recalled to her recollection.

She was still occupied in writing when Mrs. Urquhart came hurrying down the little staircase. “He is come—he is come,” said she in a tremble. “Who—Arthur returned?” said Laura, starting up in almost as much agitation. “My husband?”
‘No, Robert.’

‘Well—well, dear child,’ said Mrs. Lygon, recovering her breath, and her firmness, after a moment or two of pause, ‘now you must be calm, and very likely you will find that there is nothing to be feared. You have not spoken to Robert?’

‘No; I saw him from the window, and darted down here.’

‘What madness! Go up and receive him.’

‘I told Henderson to say, I was out walking. There, do not look so displeased. The sight of his face drove all my thoughts out of my head, and I know that if I had attempted to talk to him, I should have betrayed you.’

‘If I were certain that Arthur had returned to England,’ said Mrs. Lygon, ‘I would confront Robert myself.’

‘Oh, if you could!’ said Bertha.

‘I dare not run that risk,’ said her sister, turning pale.

The two women remained together, and the heavy footsteps of Robert Urquhart were heard, as he paced the apartments above. Henderson had, no doubt, answered him as satisfactorily as might be, and would have the sense to come down, in due course, with bonnet and shawl, and manage that her mistress should appear as from a walk. Meantime Laura did her best to reassure her sister, and to impress upon her by every argument in the world that the secret which Arthur had learned, Arthur had kept. But that a more immediate and
encircling terror hemmed herself round, Laura would have been in an agony over the fatal addition to their sorrows, but her heart had its own bitterness, and aught that was more remote menaced her in vain.

After some time, Robert Urquhart, weary of waiting in the rooms above, descended to his own large room on the ground floor, and the sisters could hear him trampling to and fro, and apparently in no amiable mood, clearing a table, and sending a clattering cataract of miscellaneous articles down to the floor. Then they heard him execrating the dust, and vigorously opening the window, to let in ventilation. All was then comparatively silent, and he might be supposed to be laying a sheet of drawing-paper, and preparing to sketch.

"Henderson should come now," said Mrs. Lygon, in a low voice. "He is drawing, and you might go into the room. Indeed, I think you had better do so without waiting for her—go up-stairs, and it will seem that you had taken your things off."

"I am afraid," said Bertha. "No, let us wait for Henderson."

"Are you sure that you have a coherent story?" said Laura. "I am sadly afraid that you will fail. I am sure that you will fail. If I were only assured that Arthur had gone to England, and had not merely evaded Robert, and returned to search for me!"

"Robert can answer that."

"How can Robert do so? Even if he saw him off, as most likely he did, what is to hinder Arthur
from getting out at the first station, and coming back? Well, dear, you must do your best, and we must trust to be delivered. There, listen, Robert is whistling at his work. Now, go up-stairs, and then run down to him. Such a way of receiving him will take away much of your flurry, he will be so glad."

"Stop, I hear Henderson, I think."

"Never mind her. Go up."

Bertha, however, listened for a few moments, and the next sound she heard was a dissatisfied exclamation from Urquhart, and something dashed on the floor. Then Laura and Bertha heard him say in a loud voice:

"There's no seeing anything in this d---d dark room. I'll have those trees cut down, every one of them. Eh! I'm a fool. There's a capital west light in you room."

He made three strides to the door between the two rooms. It was locked, and the key was not in the door. There was an angry exclamation, and an exertion of a strong man's power, and in another moment the door had given way, and Robert Urquhart stood in the presence of Bertha and Laura.

Bertha uttered a faint cry as her husband entered. His look of surprise, as he perceived her, had nothing of an alarming character about it, and had she been alone, Robert would have seen nothing in the incident, and would have supposed a mistake by the servant, who might have believed that her mistress was out. But the next moment he turned to see
who was her companion—a lady whose face was towards the window. The recognition was, of course, instantaneous. The Scot's countenance at once assumed that stern scowl which had come upon it during the interview with Lygon. He looked at Laura for a moment, and then, without a word, left the room.
"What will become of me?" exclaimed Bertha, as the sound of her husband's footsteps ceased. "He knows all. I am lost."

"Why do you talk such folly?" said Mrs. Lygon, impatiently. "What more has Robert learned than he knew ten minutes ago, when you were going to meet him, except that I, whom he supposed on my way to England, am still in his house? Be calm, Bertha."

"This agitation will be too much for me to bear," said Mrs. Urquhart, in her helpless manner. "I shall break down under it."

"Give way now," said her sister, in an under-tone of strong determination—almost menace, "and we never speak to one another again in this world."

Bertha merely gazed on her; and, indeed, seemed deprived of all power of action.

"Listen, Bertha. It will now be for me to explain to Robert why I am here again. You thought that I had left for England. There, it is dreadful to have to say what is false, but saying that is the simplest thing for you to do, and I see well that you can do no more. You must leave the rest to me."

"Oh, why did you ever come here?" replied Bertha, repiningly.
"Bertha!"

The word was repeated, but in another and a sterner tone. Mr. Urquhart was heard summoning his wife.

"I will go," said Laura.

"Bertha will come," replied Robert Urquhart, in a voice which awed even Laura, and which his wife, in white terror, hastened to obey. With a piteous gesture of her hands, she went through the doorway into the larger apartment. There Robert received her, and with an imperative sign motioned her to precede him. They went up to the drawing-room, and Mr. Urquhart placed a chair for his wife, which she took without a word.

"Why is Mrs. Lygon in my house?" was his demand.

"I thought—I believed—that she had gone home, Robert, indeed I did," said Mrs. Urquhart, trembling.

"I know that you thought so, Bertha, for you told her husband so," said Mr. Urquhart, sternly.

"Do you suppose that I am suspecting you of a falsehood?"

"You ought not," said his wife, whose feeble courage was restored by a word, and as easily dispelled.

"I know that I ought not, and I do not. Now, why is she here, or what does she tell you is her reason for being here?"

Thus urged, and in some measure reassured by the language of her husband, from whom she had ex-
pected far different treatment, Bertha rallied as well as she could, and answered with some firmness:

"You know what she came about, and why she went to Paris. She has come back to say that she has succeeded, and is going to return to England directly."

"Is going to return to her home?"

"Yes, certainly, Robert, dear. Where else should she go?"

"Anywhere else," he said, to himself, however, rather than to his wife.

"Anywhere else?" she repeated. "What can you mean?"

He came up to her, and took her hands in his own.

"Bertha," he said, gravely, not harshly, "I have always done a husband's duty by you. Maybe I have loved you so well that there was no merit in that. But you have nothing to lay to my charge."

"I, Robert? You have been kindness itself! Have I ever said anything in my life in the way of accusing you? Why do you say this to me? I owe you everything in the world, and I only wish I were worthier of you."

And, if a shallow nature can be truthful, she was, at the moment, speaking truth in those last words.

"Nor have I ever complained of you," he replied, without noticing those words. "It will be an ill day for us when I complain, but it will be a short one."
"Robert!"

"All that I would say to you, Bertha, is, that I am sorry you have weakly allowed yourself to be the dupe and tool of your sister. She is a much cleverer woman than yourself, as you have often said to me; and this should have made you cautious. But I know full well that she has not dared to tell you what my wife ought not to have heard."

"Indeed she has not, Robert; but I cannot understand the mystery in your words."

"Better so."

"You frighten me to death, Robert! Tell me what you mean."

"I will not. That is not our business now. How long has she been here?"

"She came back yesterday," stammered Bertha, unable to consider what would be the best reply, and answering at random.

"Ay. Just so. She remains here, when she might have been by this time where a wife and a mother would long to be, if she were fit to be there. So she has slept in the house again. I am sorry for it."

"Sorry that Laura should sleep in this house!" echoed Bertha. "There is some dreadful thought in your mind. And you will not tell it to me?" said Bertha, who now that she felt herself safe, ventured on a tone of wifely reproach.

"It is not so to be spoken of," returned Urquhart, darkly. And he gazed on Bertha, for some moments, in silence. Then he said,
"She must leave the house instantly."

Slight as were Bertha's reasoning faculties, her instinct told her that she must make some stand against such a decree. Her own sister must not be turned from her house without some reason assigned for the act. Submission to it would imply that Mrs. Urquhart believed in the existence of a cause for such treatment of Laura.

"Robert," she said, "you are the master here, and have a right to say who shall stay with us. But Laura is my sister, and must not be insulted."

Something, resembling a smile of satisfaction, came over his face for a second, and disappeared.

"Insult means wrong treatment, Bertha," he said, "and I never willingly do wrong. You are right to protest, but, as you say, I am the master, and for once I must ask to be obeyed without dispute. In some time to come I am afraid you will have to thank me. Now, you must be content to obey me. But I will spare you all the pain I can. Go to your room, and I will dismiss Laura Lygon."

"Robert, I cannot behave to my sister in that way. What you mean I know not, and you refuse to tell me. But I must speak to her, and make her feel that if I am to part from her, it is in obedience to your wishes, and that I know nothing to blame her for."

"Nothing to blame her for? She has deceived you, and caused you to deceive her husband, and make him the victim of a trick. Is that not enough to separate you for the rest of your lives? If that
were all, Bertha, I would be sorry indeed to hear you call that woman sister again."

Here failed Mrs. Urquhart's power of resistance. Unable longer to defend the position she had taken up, she burst into tears. They were tears of real sorrow, but the cowardly and selfish nature would make no further effort for the sake of another. Let Laura go. What did it matter what Robert thought of her—she would be far away. And these schemes which Laura was trying, it would be better if they were at an end. Bertha could not understand them, and they would lead only to scenes of terror and agitation—let Laura go.

Such were the sisterly thoughts of the woman crying behind her handkerchief, and such was the repayment she meditated for what, so far as she knew, was a perilous and loving effort in her own behalf. We are commanded to help the weak-hearted, and we must obey the merciful command; but assuredly it is not at their hands that we must look for the reward of our deeds.

"I feel for you, and with you, Bertha," said her husband, kindly. "It is not often that I have brought the tears to your eyes."

"No, dear, no," sobbed Mrs. Urquhart.

"And right glad I would have been to save them now. But there is no mid-course between right and wrong, and Laura Lygon must leave this house at once, and without further speech with you."

"You are wronging Laura, I am certain, Robert," said Mrs. Urquhart, sadly.
"She has succeeded in so deceiving you, that you believe I am wronging her, and your love, your natural love and affection, helps her in preserving the delusion. We will say no more upon it while she remains under my roof, and that shall not be long. Now, Bertha, accept my counsel, and go to your room."

As he spoke, Mrs. Lygon entered.

Urquhart looked at her sternly, and Bertha, who had risen, and had been standing beside her husband, sank upon a couch.

"I heard angry voices," said Laura, with as much firmness as she could muster. *"My being here has caused unhappiness, and I am very sorry for it."

"There were no angry voices, Mrs. Lygon," said Urquhart, "nor have you any right to interpose between myself and your sister. As for your sorrow, there is no doubt abundant cause for it, but it need not be expressed to me."

His haughty manner awakened the pride of Laura, and it was with a calm loftiness of bearing that she replied,

"While you are in entire ignorance, Robert, of the circumstances, you will do well to avoid* saying that which you will hereafter be sorry for."

"You ought to be on your knees, Laura, imploring your Maker to forgive you," said Urquhart. "Be silent, Robert, until you have heard me," said Laura.

"I have no wish to hear you," he replied. "It
is your wronged husband who has to be your judge. I have only to take care that the contamination of your example does not injure my own happiness and honour."

She flushed over face and brow, and with difficulty said,

"You must be mad, to use such words."

"I am not mad, Mrs. Lygon. What your husband may become, in consequence of your conduct, I dare not think."

"You have been with him. He is not ill?" gasped Laura.

"Were you in the home you have abandoned, you would know. But I could wish to cut this short. I shall order a carriage for you."

"This must not be," said Bertha, aroused, in very shame, by the presence of her sister, "Laura must not be wronged. It is my duty to speak for her."

"Silence, Bertha," said her husband.

"No, it would be wicked, Robert. Laura will not tell you—"

"I too say—silence, Bertha," said Mrs. Lygon, approaching her sister, and taking her hand.

A terrible expression came again upon the face of the husband as he beheld this action. He strode across to the couch, removed Laura's hand from that of her sister, and led the former to a chair at some distance.

"Let the innocent hand hold off from the guilty one!" And turning, he rang the bell violently.
So, there were confronted the husband, the wife, the sister. The man believed himself to be acting wisely and justly. What the women knew, neither dared to utter, but in the look each turned on the other might have been read an agonising comment on the judgment that had been given. Then, overcome by her conflicting emotions, Bertha again sank sobbing on the couch, and Laura, after one long, compassionating look upon her sister, turned to Mr. Urquhart, and regarded him for a moment with a quiet and searching gaze, like that of one who would fix something for perpetual remembrance. In silence, but with the calm and almost proud bearing natural to her, Laura then withdrew.
CHAPTER IV.

It had been Mr. Urquhart's intention to have the carriage brought round for Laura, but his courtesy was rendered unnecessary by Mrs. Lygon's leaving the house in a few minutes after the interview which has been described. In going out, Laura took the precautionary measure of mentioning to Henderson, that she should probably walk in the gardens of the palace for an hour, before taking the train for Paris.

In the gardens, therefore, she awaited the explanation which it was impossible that her sister should not endeavour to send. Her watch for a messenger from Bertha was a long one, but it did not surprise her that it should be so. Bertha was timid and irresolute, and might herself be watched. But it will easily be surmised that Mrs. Lygon had more than enough at her heart to make the time seem alternately to pass with strange rapidity, and to drag with a wearisome, torturing slowness. The scene which she had gone through—its sudden occurrence, and its hasty conclusion, would have made it seem a dream, but for the vividness of its chief incident, and the unspeakable humiliation which it had brought.

Judged her conduct was to be, she knew, but she
had thought of the judgment as something deferred, until at least her errand should be fulfilled or abandoned. But suddenly and rudely her husband's most valued friend had taken her case in hand, and she was already driven out of the presence of her sister, and pronounced unworthy of her companionship. No wonder the woman's heart shrunk under the blow so unexpectedly delivered.

But, she asked herself, what did Mr. Urquhart know, that he had presumed to judge? Had the enemy been at work with him too? And was this but the prelude to a final and fearful stroke?

It seemed to the over-wrought mind and dimmed eye of Laura so natural a thing that the enemy should appear, than when Ernest Adair advanced towards her, she received his bow as something that she had been expecting. There is a kind of inferior second-sight in many who undergo strong trouble, and they will often tell you incidents which, to your calmer mind, seem startling coincidences, but for which they declare themselves to have been perfectly prepared.

"How considerate in you, Mrs. Lygon," said Adair, after a few words of commonplace, scarcely replied to by her, "how very considerate in you to leave the newly arrived husband to receive the congratulations of his wife, without the presence of a third person, even a third person who would be so welcome as yourself!"

"Have you any object in addressing me, Mr.
Adair? If you have, spare any useless introduction—if not—"

"Spare me your presence, you were going to add, Mrs. Lygon, with the admirable frankness I have so often had to admire. Believe that I should not have ventured to intrude upon you, unless I had had an object."

"What is it?"

"Although you are good enough to imply that introduction is needless, I feel ashamed of being too blunt on such a theme. I was about to offer some preliminary excuses."

"They are needless."

"Yet not the less due," persisted Adair. "I will only presume to inquire—no. I will only presume to remark that whenever either of two ladies who have my interests very much at heart shall have anything to communicate to me, the information will be most welcome."

"I understand. Be assured that no unnecessary delay is taking place."

"The assurance is more than sufficient. I may infer that the arrival of Mr. Urquhart will not interpose any new difficulty."

"Why should it?"

"Only by rendering the intercourse of those ladies more difficult."

The words seemed to imply a knowledge on the part of Adair of what had taken place in Mr. Urquhart's home that day. But had he avowed such knowledge, Laura would have felt no sur-
prise; or, rather, would have scarcely given a
thought to her surprise.

"Nothing will prevent the carrying out the
object," she said, coldly.

"I must say no more, or if I again venture to
hint that there are reasons why promptness would
confer a deep obligation upon me, I must couple
that hint with the hope that it will disturb none
of the admirable plans which I am sure are being
forwarded."

"I shall endeavour to act for the best."

"And you will succeed. Should I be trespass-
ing in asking whether in saying, 'I,' Mrs. Lygon
implies that the management of the affair is entirely
in her hands?"

"There is no use in entering into discussion.
You are well aware that the business must be com-
pleted, and that it can be nobody's wish to pro-
long it."

"I accept the painful intimation that the sooner
I am disposed of the better. I have only to add,
that if Mrs. Lygon finds Mr. Urquhart inclined
to any misconceptions upon the subject of her visit,
and those misconceptions should take a disagreeable
form, and one likely to interfere with what I may
call our object, I might think it desirable to remove
them, without her aid."

"Do anything like that which your menace im-
plies," said Mrs. Lygon, "and you destroy your own
hopes."

"But I substitute for them—certainties," replied
Adair. “I am sure that I am understood; and, as here comes Henderson, with a message (no, a letter, by her keeping her hand in her pocket so carefully), I will not longer trespass on your time.”

He bowed and passed to another part of the gardens.

“I saw him, Madame,” said Henderson, looking with a tigerish glance in the direction he had taken. “I would have waited until he had gone, but it was of no use. He knows of master breaking the door open, and, I suppose, a good deal more.”

“He still obtains information from the house, then, Mary?”

“I can’t quite bring it home to her yet,” said the girl, “but I know that Angelique had not a sou of money last Sunday, and she has bought herself a gold cross to hang round her great red neck. I guess where that money came from, but I cannot prove it yet, Madame. When I can, she and me will have a word of a sort. I suppose the sound of the money was too much for her fears of the ghost; and yet I thought I had frightened her into a fit. I know I tried my best, Madame.”

“You are sent by Mrs. Urquhart?”

“I have a note, Madame, and perhaps you would be so kind as to let me stand near you while you read it, for he might make a rush to get it.”

“I am not afraid of that,” said Mrs. Lygon, taking the note.
It was from Bertha, who had written a few hasty lines.

"Dearest Laura,

"I cannot explain, and I dare not come to you. I think that you had better go home, before worse comes of it, and leave me to manage in some way with A. You know what R. is when he takes anything into his head, and he will not hear a word in your favour; but of course you know my feelings. I will write to you to London. God bless you.

"Your affectionate "B."

A heartless letter wounds more than a heartless speech. It is not that the deliberation of the act of writing implies studied unkindness, for many cruel letters are more hasty than many cruel words; and most letters are less kindly than the intentions of the writer; but there is in a written message of unkindness the blow given by one who instantly recedes into the distance, out of the way of reproach or expostulation. So Laura felt this epistle. This was the return for all that she had done, and sought to do.

"There is no answer," she said with a smile to the expectant Henderson. "Only say that you delivered the note. Was Mrs. Urquhart's headache better?"

"I did not hear of it, Madame. She seemed cheerful enough with master, laughing at his rough hair, and what not."
"O, I am glad of that. Perhaps you had better not wait any longer, Mary."

"You would be offended with me if I was to say something, Madame, and yet I should like to say it."

"I do not take offence, Mary, where it is not intended. No one should do so."

"Far be it from me to mean offending, Madame. But it is a bold thing in me, and I think I am always saying bold things. Only this, Madame. I do not know how ladies feel when one lady, who does not deserve it, is made the scapegoat for another who does, but I know how I should feel if the other one did nothing to set me right with other folks. But my feelings are nothing, and I beg pardon for speaking of them. Only this, Madame, that, mistress or no mistress, you may rely upon me to the end of the world, and letters to the house might not be safe but sent to me to the care of M. Silvain would be always delivered instantly, or I would know the reason why. Good day, Madame, I'm sure."

All the latter part of this speech was delivered with great rapidity, and yet with nervousness, the speaker fearing to be interrupted before she had done. And when she had concluded she hastened away, and then, at the distance of some yards, made, in shame and with much elaboration, the curtsey with which she had intended to finish.

"Servants overhear. One sells the secret to my enemy. The other offers me her friendship and
assistance. A fit ending to a day like this,” thought Laura, bitterly, as she crunched up her sister’s note.

M. Silvain was in his neat little shop when Mrs. Lygon entered it, and great was the delight of the former at beholding the English lady. But with the tact of his class in France, he abstained from any excess of demonstration, and it was only by the sparkle of his eye that his pleasure at being thus visited could have been detected.

“You are very well acquainted with Versailles, M. Silvain?”

M. Silvain had had the honour of being born in Paris, but his parents had removed to Versailles, when he was six years old, and since then it had been his home. Could his perfect acquaintance with every nook and corner in the place be of the slightest use to Madame?

“I wish to remain here for a short time—how long I cannot exactly say at present—but I do not wish to go to an hotel. Do you know of a respectable lodging where—”

Might M. Silvain interrupt? It might be less trouble to Madame to assent to his supposition, to correct him if wrong, than to speak. Madame desired a perfectly comfortable lodging, in entire seclusion and privacy, where the persons would be more than content with the honour of entertaining Madame, would ask for no other name than that which she pleased to give, and whoever might inquire for any other name would obtain no information. He had been so fortunate as to describe
what madame wanted? In that case, if madame would allow him one half-hour, such a place should then be ready, and she would have but to take the trouble to walk to it.

And Silvain was as good as his word, and in another hour Mrs. Lygon had taken possession of an apartment in a pleasant white house, some distance from the avenue, and in a somewhat retired situation. A few hasty purchases, and a few general directions to the clean, withered-apple-faced old lady, to whom the place appertained, and Mrs. Lygon had nothing to think of but her life's own business, and the many sorrows arising to her there-from. With such thoughts for her companions, let us leave her for awhile.
CHAPTER V.

"Aventayle's Paris agent has made his inquiries," said Charles Hawkesley, hastily entering his wife's room on returning home.

"Well, and has news?" said Beatrice, starting up.

"Yes, indeed, if it may be depended on, and he is a man of business. He sent out, of course privately, to Versailles, and ascertained that somebody, who certainly answers the description of Arthur, had been at Robert's, and had left in the middle of the night."

"And Laura?"

"He was informed that no such person had been there. But it seems that the man who was sent was of a shrewd character, and though he does not send this message as part of his official answer, he has reason to think that a lady, not one of the regular inmates of the house, is staying there, and that she is English."

"How did he know, dear?"

"That, of course, he does not explain. I consider that we had a right to make the inquiry in the way we did, because it might have caused alarm, had we applied direct to Bertha, under the circumstances, but I take it that the messenger has used other
means to find out the truth than I should have desired.”

“No matter, in a case like this. I hate meanness, but I would peep through a keyhole if I thought somebody inside the room was hurting any one I loved. Then you think that we may set our minds at rest so far?”

“I think that Arthur and Laura are in Paris, but as for setting our minds at rest, I fear that we are not much further advanced, dear.”

“Why not, if they are together at Bertha’s?”

“I do not gather that they are together. To tell you the truth, it looks very much as if one were in search of the other; and as we know that Laura left home before Arthur did—”

“You have told me all you have heard?”

“Every word. I hurried home to do so.”

“It is a great thing, Charles, to have ascertained that she is with Bertha.”

“It is something; but—”

“Nay, is it not an answer at once to all the wicked suggestions which we heard that people had dared to make? We wanted no assuring of her perfect innocence, dear soul; but it will lighten Price’s heart to be able to say that her mistress is with Mrs. Urquhart. I will write to her immediately.”

“Not without some more consideration, dear.”

“I hate consideration. Do let me tell Walter; it will be such a pleasure to see the sunshine come over his face.”

“Poor dear boy, yes, but a minute’s sunshine
may be bought too dear. We may be wrong. Are you not unconsciously adopting the story I suggested as possible—the idea of some religious motive having actuated Laura?"

"There would be a much simpler way of accounting for it all, if Laura were another kind of woman."

"Some quarrel? Out of the question. Such a thing would be almost as possible between you and me."

"No, don't say that. Your temper is a better one—naturally, I mean, sir, than Arthur's. He could be roused by a woman's tongue."

"So could Hawkesley, mind that, much as he has endured. But there has been no quarrel. It is impossible. If, indeed, Arthur had been another kind of man, and Laura could have imagined, or discovered anything to make her unhappy—"

"Do you mean, if he had got into difficulties?"

"No, in that case would she have left his side?"

"I mean difficulties he had concealed from her."

"When a man conceals such things from his wife it is her fault. She has not convinced him that she can bear his troubles with him. Arthur has not to learn what Laura would be in the hour of trouble. No, I meant—what it is almost wrong to suggest—even when we are trying all conjectures. I mean if she had reason to suppose that his heart had gone astray."

"Charles, dearest, if that were so, those children would not be here. She would have fled away with them all."
"Would you have done so?"

"Don’t raise such a thought, darling," said Beatrice, clutching at her husband’s hand, and the next moment dropping it, and adding, saucily,

"Yes, of course, but not until I had given you laudanum, and set fire to your house, and paid a hundred men to go and hiss your next play, and written to the ‘Times’ to say that you were a wretch. Then, we are not to tell the boys."

"Let us wait a day or two longer. Arthur may be returning, and then we shall know all. Meanwhile we have done our duty by the children."

"Poor dears. Charles, by the way, I have something to say to you. I have been setting your study to rights."

"Humph."

"Don’t be absurd—it was in a shocking condition, and I have put everything where I found it. But I want to know where you got a play, which is not your own, and which you have been pencilling and marking."

"Why, what of that?"

"Where did you get it? tell me."

"From Aventayle. He wanted me to see whether it would do for him."

"Do you know whose writing it is?"

"I forget the name, but I have the letter that came with it."

"The writing is that of our writing-master at Lipthwaite."

"What!" said Hawkesley. "Are you sure?"
"Certain. If there is one handwriting in all the world that one would know, it is one's writing-master's. Not that he was mine so much; he came when Mr. Frost went away, and I had been his pupil, but he taught the other girls."

"His name?"

"I told you the other day—Adair, Ernest Adair."

"Yes, that's it," said Hawkesley. "I recollect quite well. That is the name in the letter."

"How odd that you should have to sit in judgment on him! But that is nothing. Have you read the play?"

"Yes, it will not do."

"I should think it would not do," said Mrs. Hawkesley, indignantly. "Why, he has founded it upon Lipthwaite scandals, and I am perfectly certain that the character of Manacle is meant for himself."

"Lipthwaite scandals! Do you know, Beatrice, that you are putting some very extraordinary notions into my head," said the author, thoughtfully, and "trying back" upon the fable of the piece in question. "Have you left it on my table?"

"No, it is here," said his wife, taking the MS. out of a work-table.

"That is called leaving things as we found them," said Hawkesley, "but give it me."

And he turned over leaf after leaf with rapidity, reading passages as he went on, and finally becoming so absorbed in the play that Beatrice addressed him in vain.
"Yes," he said, gazing hard at her, as he concluded.

"Yes, what?" she replied. "I have asked you half a dozen times what you had discovered."

"I beg your pardon, my dear. So this is founded, you think, on Lipthwaite scandals?"

"I suppose not altogether, but he has taken such things as his groundwork. The part of the plain, ambitious, scheming, sly girl who loves Manacle, and whom he pretends to like for the sake of obtaining the situation, I know very well who that was meant for."

"There are worse things than that, in fact that is rather good comedy. But what do you say to the device by which Ellinor loses her character, although perfectly virtuous?"

"I overlooked that. But there is another part, that of Miriam, the daughter of the clergyman, who is deceived by the tutor, and becomes so vindictive. That he is a bad man for using, because the poor old man's heart was broken by the disgrace—it really occurred, and very nearly in the way Adair must have been told it, in confidence, for no one would have willingly talked about it."

"But her vindictiveness is nothing to that of the plain woman, what's her name? Sophia, who is so in love with Manacle."

"That was Marion Wagstaffe, I am certain. They said that she was desperately in love with Mr. Adair, but that after he had amused himself by flirting with her for a long time, and got some-
thing by her friends' influence, he threw her over, and it was said that she tried to poison him, but I don't believe that. She married an old attorney afterwards. I have forgotten his name."

"Then the ex-writing master has been dramatising Lipthwait, in short. I wonder none of the Miss Vernons came into the drama."

"Perhaps that suffering angel, brought in for contrast, Eugenia, is meant for one of us," said Mrs. Hawkesley.

"Yourself, perhaps," said her husband, laughing. "No, Betty, dear, I do not think you are exactly adapted for the rôle of a Suffering Angel."
CHAPTER VI.

The same evening, late, there came a rather timid knock at the door of Mr. Hawkesley's house. The author was sitting, with his wife, in the dining-room, and there had been mention made to Walter Lygon of the fact that such a thing as a bedroom candle might be had on demand—a hint which that young person, deep in Robinson Crusoe, had not been prompt to accept. In accordance with the custom of his order, he had preferred any other post for study than that suggested by such common-place articles as chairs and tables, and he had deposited himself on the rug, and was reading hard, somewhat in the attitude of the celebrated Magdalen, though by no means with the repose so exquisitely indicated by the painter. His good-natured uncle had once or twice suggested that restlessness was opposed to careful examination of history, but Walter continued to wriggle and shift over the conversion of Friday, until dismissal became imminent,

"Oh, Auntie!" exclaimed the boy, listening intently, as the servant was heard answering the person at the street door. The next minute he sprang to his feet, as the parlour door opened.

"I knew it was," he said. "I knew the voice."

It was Clara.
Her brother had the start, and had kissed her with a boy’s violence, and received her hearty kisses in return, before Mr. or Mrs. Hawkesley could speak; but their welcome to the child was a gladder one than even kind relations are in the habit of according.

“But are you alone, darling?” said Mrs. Hawkesley, when the first affectionate embraces were over, and Clara stood with her aunt’s arm round her.

“Yes, indeed, aunt. And I thought I should never get here.”

“And where do you come from, dear?”

“From Mrs. Berry’s, aunt.”

“Who is Mrs. Berry, love?—I don’t know her, do I?”

“At Liptonwaite, aunt.”

“And you have come up from Liptonwaite?—By yourself?—Surely not?”

“Yes, I have. I could not stay any longer. I hope papa will not be angry?”

“Not he,” said Walter, promptly. “I’ll make it all right with him. I am so glad you came. It was jolly of you.”

But Clara did not look as if there were anything of jollity in her fortunes. She was pale, and indisposed to speak, and as soon as the excitement of her reception was over, she began to cry hysterically.

“Ah, that’s a case for you, Dr. Betty,” said Hawkesley. “I should prescribe a large glass of hot negus, and twelve hours in bed, before I asked
another question. But I never interfere with the faculty."

An hour later, Walter having been at length disposed of, Mrs. Hawkesley returned to the parlour to her husband.

"Asleep, I hope?" said he, laying down his book.

"She soon will be now, dear; but she would speak, and on the whole I thought it was better to let her have her way. My dear Charles, that child has the strangest story to tell."

"Tell me this before you go into it. What about her mother?"

"She knows nothing about her mother, except that the woman with whom she has been staying has been filling her mind with the most painful hints and insinuations, telling her, in fact, that Laura is not a good woman, and that the best thing that can happen to Clara is her never seeing her mother again."

"But who is the hag, and how did the child get to her?"

"She is Mrs. Berry, of Lipthwaite, the wife of an old gentleman down there, whose name and existence I had entirely forgotten. They live, it seems, in a pretty house out of the town, but it is a house that must have been built since I left, so far as I can make out from her description. I have so completely lost sight of the place and the people that I cannot identify the woman; but Mr. Berry is an old friend of Arthur's."

"Berry. Why, Beatrice, of course he is. I have
heard Arthur speak of him as his confidential adviser, and all the rest of it. He is an old attorney."

"No, no, that is quite another person. That's Mr. Allingham. Everybody knew him in my time. He lives, if he is still alive, quite in the town. He was one of our great little men there, chief clerk, or something of that sort."

"Town clerk, perhaps? I am positive, though, that Berry is the name of Arthur's friend. But how did Clara get there?"

"Her father took her down, the day after Laura went away, and left her in the charge of this woman."

"While he went—where?" asked Hawkesley, eagerly.

"He did not tell the child, but the wretch with whom she was has made her think that he was gone on a very sad errand."

"She said that?" replied Hawkesley, slowly.

"Yes, and worse; but Clara does not believe it, and I would take the child's word rather than any one's. She says that he went away in good spirits, and smiling, and that she was not to be deceived."

"All this looks very bad, my dear one," said Hawkesley, gravely, almost sadly. "Very bad, dear; and painful as it is to say so, I fear that we have something to hear which will be most bitter."

"And are you—you who loved Laura so well—going to believe ill of her, Charles, before we know anything at all? No, I am sure that you are not."

"I do not believe, dear Beatrice, that even your
affection for her is much greater than mine; but I feel that we ought to be prepared for bad news," said Hawkesley. "But, tell me, why has Clara left the place where her father desired her to stay?"

"Because, like any loving and high-spirited child, she could not bear to hear the things that the woman said, day by day, and night by night, about her mother. I love the dear thing from my very heart for refusing to bear it any longer. As for the wretch at Lipthwaite, she ought to be transported."

"My dear, we had better discover her crimes coolly, and then we shall be better able to judge how to punish them. Clara is a good child, but a child's report of people it does not like is not always to be taken literally."

"What do you say, then, of a woman who is not only always insinuating to a child that her mother is bad, but who actually writes out a prayer for her, and makes Clara go on her knees and ask that God will be pleased to forgive her erring mamma? Clara tore it up, and was kept on bread and water for two days for doing it, and told that very likely an evil spirit might come to her in the night and punish her for such wickedness."

Hawkesley broke out with a word which we may forgive, as his wife forgave it.

"Yes, I knew that would be too much for you," said Beatrice, laying her hand on his. "Think of such cruelty."

"One would rather not think of it," said he, "unless for a reason. Arthur, of course, could have
no idea what sort of a woman he had placed his child with."

"I hope not."

"Nay, you are sure he had not."

"I don't know. Men think nothing about these things; and when a child has gone through a persecution that is enough to make it melancholy mad for the rest of its days, they think it is enough to say that the tormentor acted very injudiciously, but that many conscientious people believe with Solomon that you ought to be always beating children."

"That is not to be said of me, I think, Beatrice."

"Of you, dear? Not for a moment—how dare you suppose such a thing? But Arthur, with all his kindness of nature, has some hard notions—I think his father was a Baptist, or something of that kind, and brought his children up very sternly. He dragged them to chapel three times on Sundays, and scolded them if they went to sleep, or did not remember the texts. I know they rather hated him."

"I never saw any sternness about Arthur."

"You have never seen him except at pleasant times. I have been much more in the house, and I have watched. I never heard him say an unkind or ungentlemanly thing, but I have seen enough to make me believe that, on provocation, he would deal hard measure."

"Serve anybody right who gave a good man provocation."

"Ah! Charles, dear, I don't know that that is the
rule we ought to go by. One thing I do know, that it is not yours."

"Mine! No. I'm afraid I resemble Lord Ogleby and like my own frailties too well to be hard upon those of other people."

"Do not you speak as if you were ashamed of being a kind, forgiving man. If you do, I shall be ashamed of you, for the first time in all my life."

"Beatrice, dear," said her husband, "I do not wish to return to a subject which—well, which does not grow more pleasant as we recur to it, but we must look it in the face. Arthur Lygon puts his daughter out of the way, while he goes on an expedition which may or may not be what—what has been said, but which his friend's wife must believe to be so. This Mrs. Berry would not dare to invent such a story, nor is it likely she would. Arthur himself may have suspicions only, but I think you must see that he has imparted his suspicions to his adviser at Lipthwaine."

"It is not the name," persisted Mrs. Hawkesley.

"Is it probable that he would have two confidential friends there?—besides, I am certain of the name now. I recollect some foolish joke I made about it one evening—something on the word berry, and Arthur's answering with an imitation of the stock speech a snob makes: 'Put that in your next play.' The name is Berry."

"Then Mr. Allingham must be dead."

"Possibly. But do not you see the force of what I say?"
"My dearest Charles, I am determined to see no force in anything until I have had Laura's two hands in my two, and have asked her with my own lips why she went away."

"I only hope that she may be able to place her hands in yours, my dear, for that would mean that all was right indeed."

Beatrice looked earnestly at her husband for a moment or two, and then said, in a lower voice:—

"I fear you are all alike."

"I do not quite understand, dear."

"Let me alone. I won't say what I mean—you do not deserve that I should. Yes, you do, and I will," she added hastily, taking his hand. "I mean, that you, like other men, will be ready utterly to condemn Laura, if it should prove that she has done wrong."

"I have said no such thing."

"Dear, you said it this moment. You said that if I could take her hand she must be innocent. That is a man's thought."

"And a woman's, I trust," said the husband.

"And suppose—we have no right to do so, and you know that I have no secrets from you, and that I have no right whatever to suppose such a thing—but if this Lipthwaite hag—"

"She deserves the word, but do not you use it."

"Let me speak. If there should be a foundation for anything that the woman has said—if—"

"If Laura has wronged her husband—there?"

"Yes, and were kneeling before me on that rug,
as she used to do in the old days when we were girls, and as the youngest she often would say her prayers so—and if she told me of her sin, and what had led her to it, and poured out her heart in shame and sorrow—my hand is yours, Charles, what should I do with it? No, do not say that you hope such an hour may never come, but answer me as frankly as I speak to you."

"I know how one man whom you honour would reply—I mean Robert Urquhart."

"He is a religious man, in his way, and he would quote the Bible, and tell her to go and sin no more; but he is a proud man, too, and he would never speak to her again in this world. But what would my husband say? Answer me. Would he ask me to stand up, and tell Laura that with all desire to make every allowance for her, I could find no excuse for her conduct, and though we should willingly make every effort to place her out of the way of future temptation, it would of course be impossible for us to meet her any more?"

"I think that is a speech which, if repeated in the Divorce Court, would be unanimously pronounced as quite worthy of persons of our high character, and as combining tenderness for the erring with a proper regard to what is due to ourselves and to society."

"And you would have me say this to Laura if she were kneeling here?"

"Wait until we hear her at the door, and then I will tell you," said Hawkesley.
"I know you better, my own one," said his wife, impetuously. "And though God grant the day may never come, and that there may be no reason for its coming," she added, tearfully, "if it ever should come, I will trust your heart as I will trust my own, and though you do not often quote the Bible," she said, with something of a smile through her tears, "I know you have read about One who did not break a bruised reed."

"I will trust, with you, that the reed has not been bruised," said Hawkesley.

But as he looked into the pretty little room where Clara was sleeping,

"A dove out-wearyed with her flight,

Charles Hawkesley vainly struggled to hope for the best. The sister's affection bore her over doubts and fears, but the man of the world saw before him a child who had been placed, by an indignant father, out of the way of harm, perhaps out of the way of her own mother, while he should follow upon the traces of the woman who had deserted him. And hateful as Mrs. Berry became in his eyes, on the instant that he had heard of her cruelty to the child, it was one thing to detest an unworthy woman, and another to refuse all credence to her words. Had it chanced that Laura had just then returned, and come, not penitent as her sister had pictured her, but calmly and proudly as she left the room at Versailles, her brother-in-law might have held out no hand of greeting. Sadly enough he gazed on the sleeping child, who had innocently done so much to
shake his faith in her mother. Beatrice, who had entered with him, looked at the expression in his face, and answered it by bending over Clara, and pressing her fair cheek with a kiss, which meant hope and belief, and, still more emphatically, love and protection.
CHAPTER VII.

"I don't want to compliment you, Hawkesley," said Mr. Aventayle, the manager, as after the "reading" of the author's new play, and the distribution of the parts, they went up from the green-room to Aventayle's room, which has been described, "but I never heard a much better piece, or one much worse read."

"Did I read badly?" said Hawkesley.

"I hate to say a severe thing, but anybody else in the room would have read it better. Your mind seemed to be anywhere but among the dramatis persona, my son."

"I dare say that it was. I have had some perplexing family business to think about."

"Ah! Don't you hate relations? I do. It is right and proper that we should, moreover."

"I dare say it is," said Hawkesley, once more taking the nobleman's chair, "but why?"

"Do you understand natural history? Of course you'll say you do. Well, out of any stock—say horses, for instance—only two or three are really noble animals. The same rule applies to a family, and we, who are of course the noble animals of our families, have a right to contemn and despise the rest, who are rubbish. Sport that doctrine next
Christmas, at a family party, when you are pretending to respect your uncles, and trying not to hate your cousins."

So spoke Aventayle, but, as in the case of many other theorists, his practice was unworthy of his enlightenment, for he maintained about a dozen relatives of every degree of consanguinity, and found employment in his theatre for half a dozen more, for which two modes of treatment he was of course elaborately abused by each set; by the first for treating them as pensioners and beggars, instead of giving them work, and by the second for exacting service from them in return for his mean pay, instead of making them an allowance, as he could do in the case of other people.

"And now," continued the manager, "how do you like the cast?"

"I suppose that you have done the best you could."

"That's simply a most ungrateful, disrespectful, and intolerable way of looking at it. I have cast the piece capitally."

"Grayling did not seem very enthusiastic, and yet that is as good a part as he ever had in his life, if he knows how to bring it up."

"My boy, if you had three eyes, you would know better. But as you have only two, and use both of them when you are reading, you cannot observe the face of the folks you are reading at. I was watching Master Grayling, and I saw that he was perfectly happy, though much too old a bird to flutter his feathers to an author."
"Can Heygate do that footman bit?"

"He'll be capital. You want a stolid party, a Pyramid, don't you?"

"If he laughs at Whelker, who can't help gagging, the scene is spoiled."

"He will not laugh. He has stood the fire of a man who was even harder to resist than Whelker. Years ago, he had the part of a sentinel, who was to be unmoved by anything that could be said to him—it was in one of those charming little pieces which Charles Lance used to write—in exchange, as he said, for the Pulvis Olympicus—and Heygate had a long scene with Whiston. It told so well, and the house so recognised Heygate's share in the fun, that Whiston, who had his jealousies, determined to force the sentinel into a laugh. Night after night he tried grimaces, sudden bits of nonsense, anything that could discompose Heygate, but it was of no use—he never laughed. But one day the author was at the wing as the scene ended, and Heygate came off. His face was pale through the paint, and drops stood upon his forehead as if he had been tortured. 'You resisted Mr. Whiston's attacks bravely, Mr. Heygate,' said the author. 'Yes, Mr. Lance, I thank Providence that I had the strength to resist, sir. But,' he added, in the tone of a man who has been plundered of all his savings, or has had his wife stolen by his best friend, 'it is very cruel of Mr. Whiston, very cruel indeed. But, Mr. Lance, I will drop down a dead man upon that stage before I laugh at Mr. Whiston.'
"I never heard that story. I am proud to have such a hero in my service. If I had known it before, he should have had another speech or two. And now, Aventayle, what do you say about Miss Tartley?"

"Ye-e-s," said the manager, drawing out the word, as if approaching an inevitable grievance. "I thought you would come to her. Well, she is not Mrs. Curling or Mrs. Seeley. But that's not her fault."

"No, it isn't. But it is her fault that she is a lump of affectation, without a single natural action or accent, and utterly unable to learn either."

"There are a great many people who like her, and think her very pretty and clever."

"Who tells you such nonsense?"

"People who ought to know, because they have it direct from herself."

"It is really too bad to have to put a character into such hands."

"You can't say anything against her hands—they are daintiness itself—to say nothing of the rings. Be just to her."

"I suppose we can't help ourselves, but she will mull the wife's temptation scene for the sake of showing those rings. By the way, make her play it without them, and then she will keep her hands out of the face of the audience."

"I'll try. But if she loses her self-complacency, away will go that smile which sends the half-price youths spooony to the Albion."
“Eheu, eheu! Then, too, I’m afraid Brigling will make an awful mess of the Colonel.”

“A joke there. Note it down. Colonel ought to be superior to a mess. Put it elegant. That’s a sparkler.”

“Worthy of Brigling.”

“Why do you abuse Brigling? You should see him on horseback. He rides like a trooper.”

“But the Colonel isn’t a trooper, and moreover can’t come into the room to the wedding-breakfast on horseback. I can’t think what you gave him the part for. I thought we settled that Oysterley was to have it.”

“L’homme propose—le Jew dispose—our friend Oysterley, between ourselves, finds it convenient to be out of town for a short time, for the benefit of his creditors.”

“You might pay them, and secure him for the piece.”

“Well, that’s true,” said the manager, gravely. “So I might. I’ll secure him for the next, if you will be so good as to get to work again.”

“I’m sorry for Oysterley, though,” said the author, “for I thought of him all through the part.”

“Humane man! But Brigling will do it very well. He has been on his mettle ever since his little hit in the Green Stocking. Nothing succeeds like success, and it does a good fellow good, a world of good, to be patted on the back.”

“So I’m told. Nobody ever tried it with me in
the days when I wanted patting. You, for instance, were most icily disagreeable when I brought you my first play."

"No more of that, Hal, an’ thou lovtest me. It was my keen perception of character that made me severe, because I knew that you were a nature that would improve by being kept down, like the palm-tree —crescit sub pondere virtus."

"Where did you get that bit of learning?" said Hawkesley, laughing.

"Confound your impudence. Do you think nobody can read a book but an author? Charles the First had his head cut off before Whitehall."

"Yes, I credited you with being aware of that fact," said Hawkesley, "but do you suppose he talked Latin on the scaffold?"

"Who said he did? But there is a book called Icon Basilik, whatever that means, and it is about the aforesaid king, and in its frontispiece is a picture of the aforesaid palm-tree, with that respectable Latin; and if you deny it, I will show you the book, which I bought at the corner of Craven Buildings for the sum of one and sixpence. Now then!"

"Well, I accept your eighteenpenny excuse for your conduct to a young author whom you ought to have taken by the hand. But it's always the way. I dare say you have snubbed another, this very day whom ten years hence you will be inviting to work or you."

"By Jove, you may be nearer right than you
think, for on your opinion, I have declined to produce that piece I gave you to read—Mr. Adair's."

"I should like to see that gentleman," said Hawkesley.

"It may easily be managed for you, for I wrote very civilly, and told him that I should be happy to see him if he would call, and that though this drama did not suit my arrangements, another effort might be more acceptable, and all that one says to a gentleman."

"You never said it to me, mind that. It was as much as I could do to get my first piece out of your hands."

"Don't keep harping on old times. I dare say I tried to hold it back out of love for your reputation, as it was so bad."

"It ran a hundred and twelve nights at the Frippery, to your intense mortification and despair," said Hawkesley. And though there were nine-tenths of banter in the speech, there might have been one-tenth of something else. For even a mother does not like to hear her first-born lightly spoken of; how much less can an author bear depreciatio of the child of his youth?

"Yes, I sent in people to hiss it, of course."

"Anyhow, I was told that you did, and had not then heard that it was the custom with every manager to send in 'enemies' on all first nights."

"I believe that some people think it's true," said Aventayle. "By the way, I don't suppose that
there's anything in this piece that will give offence to our friend, the Lord Chamberlain."

"I hope that there is plenty," said Hawkesley. "I want another stand-up fight with that amiable institution. Let us see. I dare say he'll find offence in the title."

"What—where?" said Aventayle, "Reckoning without the Host?"

"Yes—what will you bet that he does not write and say that the Host may be construed by the Catholic world into a concealed sarcasm at their rites, and though he knows nothing can be further from the author's meaning, the name had better be changed into Reckoning without the Landlord?"

"I've had a much less likely message from the Censor than that," said the manager. "I expect some day to be told that I must not allow turtle-soup to be lightly spoken of, for fear of hurting the feelings of the Lord Mayor. But we'll hope for the best. You have not put as much low life into the piece as I wanted, my son."

"I hope I have not put any. I did not intend it."

"When I say low life, my son, do not mistake. I do not mean vulgarity. But what I want, in a theatre like this, to which the Swells resort—"

"They resort to every theatre where there is anything worth seeing."

"And there is always something worth seeing here," replied the manager, with lofty dignity, "especially when the plays of one Hawkesley of
Maida Hill are enjoying their brief run. I was going to state, for your instruction, that years of observation lead me to say that, in an aristocratic theatre, pieces of low life, or of broad fun, should be the staple."

"The contrary opinion hath its upholders, Aventayle the Discoverer."

"It may be so. But the thing stands to reason. These Swells come to the theatre to be amused. They do not want to see transcripts of their own life, with inelegant representatives of themselves doing queerly what the folks in the private boxes have been taught to do properly from their gilded youth upwards—gilded youth is a pretty phrase—jeunesse dorée, eh?"

"You are evidently engaged in pirating some French piece. But let us hear about the gilded youths—I once heard of a spangled officer in a melodrama."

"Spangled officer—that's a pretty idea, too. Harlequin in the Guards. Very good notion. Well, sir, touching the pieces you won't write. The upper classes want to see something new to them, different from what is always before their eyes, and they have, I suppose, a curiosity to see the habits and customs of their inferiors. Therefore, instead of trying a weak reproduction of good society, fill your boxes with Countesses by exhibiting the home life and troubles of a costermonger. Do it well, of course; and let it be understood that the sorrows of a costermonger are, on the whole, rather grotesque—
and you have got what you want, and the street is blocked with carriages."

"But I am not acquainted with the home life of a costermonger, you see."

"No more are your spectators, so they can't find out your mistakes. Besides, I suppose a costermonger is a human being—if you tickle him, shall he not laugh?—if you poison him—"

"If you make hack quotations to him, shall he not yawn?"

"Then, again, my son, touching farces, which belong to another department of the drama. I should like, instead of putting up delicate little comediettas, with the idea of pleasing the Ten Thousand, to give them the broadest fun that can be got upon the boards. Their lives are delicate little comediettas, which they play with more grace and finesse than we can show them. But as for fun—"

"True. I don't suppose that in Belgravia a footman very often drops the tray with the teathing things and falls on his knees, or sits down upon the baby of the house, and says he has squashed it."

"There are other means of obtaining a hearty laugh than those, Mr. Scoffer, though those are to farce what the red-hot poker is to pantomime, and I shall regret to see the day when China or baby is deemed too sacred to be demolished before a British audience."

"You have evidently thought deeply over an important subject."
"Paley, sir, holds nothing unimportant that contributes to the harmless enjoyment of multitudes. Paley, sir."

"I am rejoiced to see an evidence of your Christianity, my dear Aventayle, and I shall leave you in that becoming state of mind."

"Stop a bit. I see you are out of sorts, and like any man out of sorts, you have been angular and unpleasant, but I have not done with you yet. One word, by the way. Shall I give you a cheque?"

"Thanks, no. Keep it for the present."

"You've only to say the word," said the manager, who, at other times, would merely have answered "Very well," but whose experience taught him how many of the troubles of life connect themselves with the state of the banker's account, and whose liking for Hawkesley was very sincere.

"I know that," said Hawkesley, and looking straight at Aventayle, he caught the kindly intention in the manager's pleasant face. "My dear fellow, I comprehend. But there's nothing of that kind now. We are fundholders and all the rest of it."

"Two gowns, and everything handsome about you," laughed Aventayle. "You know that I could not mean to be obtrusive, but your harping upon old times, and, as I said, your general out-of-sortish-ness (which one notices in a cheerful man: a Mulligrubs may sulk unquestioned), made me think that some infernal relations might have been tugging too hard at the purse-strings."
"Thanks again, my dear Aventayle. But they have not been doing that."

"Well, you are too wise a man to let anybody tug at your heart-strings," replied Aventayle, who had once actually interrupted the run of a prosperous drama, in which he was acting, in order to attend the death-bed of a little child.

"Some day I'll tell you something about what has annoyed me," said Hawkesley, "but I can't now."

"Make it into a play," said the man of business. "That's the way to utilise your troubles. And if you do nothing else, you can revenge yourself on your enemies by putting their names to all the bad characters. I knew a young author who was much persecuted to pay his just debts, and who always consoled himself for having to hand over law costs, by sticking into his next piece some character he could describe in the play-bill as "Macgriddle—a low thief—Mr. So-and-so," the unhappy Mac being of course the plaintiff, or the attorney. It was delightful to my young friend to find every wall placarded with this pleasant little analysis of his creditor's character."

"I am afraid that I have no enemy at present."

"You'll have a good many in the morning after Reckoning without the Host, if it is as successful as I hope it will be."

"Aventayle, you have a bad opinion of mankind."

"And womankind—have I not reason, belles, that they are? There is another letter from that
woman I sent the private box to, and she says that she should not have intruded upon me, but for my kindness in obliging her before; and now she wants to send some of her husband's constituents to the theatre. Also, she is good enough to add, that as the post is irregular, and she should like to know early, would I kindly send out the note to Peckham Rye by one of the many men who must be hanging idle about the theatre all day? I believe there is no created being so impudent as a rich woman."

"Nobody ought to be more impudent. She has everything in the world—and irresponsibility."

"Do you call that a moral observation, or only an observation on morals?"
CHAPTER VIII.

The account that Henderson had given to Mrs. Lygon of the apparent restoration of amicable relations between Urquhart and Bertha was perfectly true. Mrs. Urquhart, relieved by the departure of Laura, and by the manner of Robert, from the immediate pressure and terror, had rallied, as such natures are mercifully permitted to do, and in another hour had smiles on her face, and even playfulness in her tongue. She had attained to the point of laughing at her husband's rough hair. Some among us consider those natures happy which can so rapidly undergo a transition from depression to levity, but some among us have their own standard of happiness. Yet Robert Urquhart was not dissatisfied with this facile nature. Himself a man of deep feeling, he was content with its absence in his wife, and though his admiration for the charming woman whom he had wedded never clouded his clear intellect with any haze of impression that she was far cleverer than she seemed—a delusion which many estimable husbands are proud to proclaim as a belief—he had contrived to find in the shallowness of her nature a reason for believing in its transparency. He fully recognised the intellect of Mrs. Lygon, and without hesitation pronounced Bertha to have been her dupe.
Having delivered his wife from the snares of her superior sister, Urquhart was quite ready to turn to Bertha as to a child whom he had rescued from a scrape, and to whom, after the mildest scolding for her being led astray, he opened his great arms, and petted as before. Are we to blame a wife who tries to fulfil her satisfied husband's ideal of her character? Bertha became as cheerful, lively, rianté, that afternoon, as if the little back chamber, the wrenched door, and two women in terror had been a morning dream, instead of a morning reality.

"I don't much care to talk about her any more at present, my woman," said Robert Urquhart, in the course of the day, "but I would like to know whether she has plenty of means for travelling. I might have thought of that when I was sending her off."

"Laura? Oh yes, plenty," said Bertha: "She is a woman of business, and not like poor me. She would never travel without all that she wanted. Don't let us talk about her any more, you great cross old thing."

"Nay, I am not cross," said Urquhart, taking one of her blond tresses in his large fingers. "I make a distinction, as my old schoolmaster used to say, between the child that has gone wrong and the child that has been led wrong, though when the old fellow came down on us with the taws I incline to believe that the delicate distinction vanished from his mind, or else his mind was not on terms with his old hand."
"Were you beaten much at school, Robert?"

"Not half enough," said her husband, in the tone of one who records a grievance. "I'd be a better man, if old Macfarlane had done his duty by me, but his conscience got scared in later life, and he only licked the small boys whom it was no trouble to fustigate; not that they didn't deserve all they got, though."

"You could not be a better man than you are, Robert dear."

"Eh, my woman, but that's a heathenish doctrine," said her husband, laughing. "I'm afraid your religious education was what might be expected from that prelatical church of yours. You hav'n't got much soundness of views out of what Sir Walter calls the 'lethargy' of the Church of England. However, I'll not say that I'm much worse than other people. I'll leave it to my wife to say that, behind my back."

"As if she would," said Bertha.

"Eh? He'll be a bold man that would like to hear all his wife says of him to other folks, Bertha. I've no such false courage, my dear woman."

"I am sure you might hear all I say of you, dear, though I know that I do not say half enough of your goodness. Don't, Robert dear—you'll pull my hair out. Let me go. I must talk to Angelique about your dinner, for I am afraid she has made no preparation for you."

"Well, go along, and then come back and soothe
my savage breast with some music, for I'm not in the mood to work."

"Ah, you will keep thinking about Laura, and it is not right in you after we have made it all up," pouted Bertha.

"No, I'm thinking about her husband."

"Oh, it will be all right. He is very fond of her, and he will soon forgive her foolishness. He is not a stern hard man like somebody else's husband, who makes his poor little wife afraid to speak to him."

And the poor little wife left the room, to hurry off the note to her sister. And then she returned, and made herself perfectly agreeable to Robert, and sung him Scottish songs, into which she infused that pathos which has deceived so many a wise man into believing that a throat has some connection with the heart, and which, doubtless, suggested to the wisest of Englishmen the hint given by Kent, "not so young, sir, as to love a woman for her singing." Bertha not only sang tears into the eyes of her husband, but even into her own, as she warbled the songs of his country—and while she was doing this, far other tears stood in the eyes of the sister to whom she had transmitted the note received in the garden.

It was not until the exigencies of the toilette sent her to her own room, that Bertha thought it necessary to summon her lady's-maid, and Henderson had, to her indignation, been permitted to make some progress in her duties before her
mistress inquired whether she had delivered that letter. Then, of course, the answer was monosyllabic.

"Did Mrs. Lygon send any message?"
"None, Madame."

"Gently, Henderson, you are tearing my hair, I am certain."

The lady's-maid brushed, and divided, and intersected, and plaited, and folded, and pinned, and performed all the rest of the capillary operations in a dogged silence. Such a manifestation of displeasure would have been utterly lost upon Mrs. Lygon, but was one of the things which it was in Bertha's nature to notice.

"You have lost your tongue to-day, Henderson, I think."

Henderson, delighted at having gained her little victory, did not abuse it by petulance, but said,

"Mrs. Lygon said that you had a headache, Madame, so I did not care to speak."

"Headache! had I a headache?" said Bertha, in her vacant way, and fixing her eyes on the window, yet not looking through it. "Oh! I dare say I had, but it has gone off."

"Mrs. Lygon was looking very pale and ill, Madame."

"Was she? I did not observe it, Henderson. Bring the braids lower down."

"I'll make you answer more feelingly than that, Madame," thought Henderson, as she disarranged her work, and flattened out a braid into a new shape.
"But it was not to be wondered at, Madame," she said, aloud.

"No, perhaps not."

"I mean, Madame, that when I got into the garden, I saw a certain person part from Mrs. Lygon!"

"What!" said Bertha, suddenly turning. The gesture snatched her hair from the hands of Henderson, to the detriment of the pending operation, but without causing the least impatient expression upon the face of the lady's-maid—on the contrary, she looked pleased.

"He had been speaking to her."

"And how did they seem—I mean were they quarrelling—at high words?"

Perhaps it was only into the mind of a person like Henderson that such a thought could have passed, as then darted across that curious repertory.

"Oh dear, no, Madame."

"They seemed on good terms?"

"The best, Madame."

"What do you mean by the best?"

"He was smiling, Madame, as he spoke—of course I could not hear what he said, but he seemed very much pleased at something Mrs. Lygon was saying, and he kissed his hand."

"His hand!" repeated Bertha, hastily.

"Madame?" replied Henderson, who had heard perfectly what her mistress said.

"You say that he kissed his hand as he went away."

"No, Madame, he did not go away then."
"Not until they saw you coming?"

"Yes, Madame. Then I suppose Mrs. Lygon desired him to go, but I was too far off to hear her."

There came a flush over Bertha's fair face. The lady's-maid of course observed it—interpreted it, no doubt, in her own way, and no doubt wrongly, but she was not one of those who are content to allow any riddle to remain without a reading.

"Henderson," said Bertha, after a pause, "Mrs. Lygon has had a good deal of conversation with you upon certain matters—she has told me so."

Mary Henderson could see here no cue for reply.

"Don't you hear what I say to you?" said her mistress, impatiently.

"Certainly, Madame."

"Well, I preferred that she should speak direct to you, because my sister is a woman of business, and two are better than three in business matters. But everything that concerns her concerns me equally; you quite understand that?"

"Quite, Madame."

"You say that she sent me no message."

"If she had, Madame, I should have delivered it at once," said Henderson, rather pertly. "Madame has not found that I neglect to deliver messages, I hope."

The rebuke that should have followed such a speech to one's mistress was not given. Both mistress and servant well knew why. The latter, however, if not the first to feel ashamed of the situation, was the first to express herself so.
"I beg your pardon, Madame, I am sure. I did not mean to say that, and I ought not to have said it; but knowing that it was very important for you to hear anything Mrs. Lygon had to send, I felt hurt that you should think me capable of neglecting. But Mrs. Lygon had no message to send, only I think—but perhaps I have no business to think, leastways not to talk."

"We both trust you, as you know," said Bertha, covering her retreat with a piece of unreal dignity, which, of course, did not for a second deceive her attendant.

"And I hope I am trustworthy, Madame. Mrs. Lygon is good enough to think so, Madame."

"And you know what I think, Henderson. What were you going to say?"

"Madame was saying that Mrs. Lygon had talked to me a good deal. I hope that it was quite right in me to listen to her. Being your sister, Madame, I supposed that it must be quite right, but if I have made a mistake, I hope you will overlook it, as I had no intention to offend, quite the contrary."

Perfectly well as Mrs. Urquhart knew this to be said only for the purpose of provocation, or, at the best, as a means of discharging the speaker's ill-humour, she made the gentlest reply:—

"I wished you to obey my sister as you would obey myself."

"And I was too happy to do it, Madame: not in regard of being turned over from one mistress to another, which is not what I understood was in my..."
place and my duty, but quite the contrary, but because Mrs. Lygon is a lady every inch of her, and if she is proud, which I am not saying she is not, a lady without pride is not the lady for me, and she knows her place and station, and I know mine. But if I might speak, Madame—"

The permission did not seem exactly needful, but Bertha gave it.

"Well, then, Madame, I think it is right for me to say that it would be a pity if any bad feelings, if you will excuse the word, should grow up between two ladies who are sisters."

"Bad feelings, Henderson!"

"Yes, Madame, that is my word, and it might be out of my place to look in a lady's face when she is reading another lady's letter, but as I could not help looking in Mrs. Lygon's face, my eyes told me that something was going wrong."

"My note appeared to displease my sister!"

"Quite that, Madame."

"But she had no right to be displeased at it," said Bertha in a reproachful tone. "How could I help what happened?"

"No, Madame, only I thought it right to let you know."

"She shall go and see her, now then," was the girl's muttered speech, as she was rectifying the orbit of a wreath which had been favourably noticed by Mr. Urquhart, and which his affectionate wife had therefore desired her servant to select from her well-stocked wreathery."
“Of course it was right to let me know, but I can do nothing. Mrs. Lygon is going back to England, and I will write to her when she gets there. In the meantime she must get over her displeasure.”

“Yes, Madame, and though Mr. Adair is a very bad man, he is no fool, and I dare say that he will give her the best advice.”

“What has Mrs. Lygon to do with taking advice from him?”

“I am only a servant, Madame, and it is not for me to know more than I am told.”

“After what has happened in this house, Henderson,” said Bertha, angrily, and surprised out of her ordinary tone of almost deference towards one who knew so much, “it is ridiculous in you to speak in that manner. There, I did not mean to speak unkindly, but you ought not to provoke me—you would not speak in that way to Mrs. Lygon.”

“I don’t think Mrs. Lygon would fly out at me, Madame, when I was only trying to speak for her good in my humble way.”

“Well, well, speak for my good. I know you mean it. What made you say that about Mr. Adair giving advice to my sister?”

“I suppose, Madame, that they had made friends, they seemed to be upon such good terms in the garden, and when I left Mrs. Lygon she walked off in the path which he had taken, so I thought that she might be going to show him your letter.”

“Absurd!”
"Very likely, Madame, and you must know best. It was only my guess."

"Why, she hates him."

"I do, Madame, with all my heart and soul and mind and strength, and hope to be forgiven for saying my Catechism backwards like a witch; but what a lady may do is not for me to say. Only they seemed very good friends, and I think that Mrs. Lygon went after him, when she had read your letter, which, as I said, made her angry. When we are angry, Madame, it stands to reason that we like to make a confidence to somebody."

"But not to people we hate," urged Bertha.

"But I have heard, Madame, that the easiest time to make up a quarrel with one person is when we are just beginning a quarrel with another."

"You don't know what you are talking about," said Mrs. Urquhart, impatiently. "Mrs. Lygon can have no friendship with that person, and she goes back to England directly."

"No, Madame, I think not."

"But I tell you that it is so. Mr. Urquhart advised her to do so, and I wrote her the same."

"Everybody does not always take advice, Madame, more's the pity! Mrs. Lygon is not going back to England, quite the contrary."

"How do you know?"

"I have no right to know anybody's secrets except my own, Madame, but if things are told me I can't help hearing them, and it has come to my
knowledge that Mrs. Lygon has taken a lodging in Versailles, Madame."

"It cannot be."

"Well, Madame, perhaps not," said Henderson, wilfully miscomprehending, "and perhaps Mr. Adair has taken it for her, which would be more becoming than a lady's having to search about in a foreign town for a place for herself."

"How did you hear this, Henderson? through Silvain, I suppose?"

"If it was through him, Madame, it is not the less true. He is not in the habit of speaking the thing which is not the truth, Madame."

"And did he tell you where Mrs. Lygon had taken a lodging?"

"No, he did not, Madame," said Henderson, who was quite above the ambition of deserving the kind of praise she had just assigned to her lover.

"Find out for me, then, Henderson, as quickly as you possibly can," said Bertha. "I shall not wear that dress again," she added, in order to prevent any further petulance from her domineering menial.

"Oh, Madame!" said Henderson, with a curtsey of real gratitude. And, indeed, it was a dress which her mistress had no business to give away, but, when one pays black mail, the best way is to pay it as handsomely and cheerfully as if it were a subscription to a charity, and going to be advertised.
CHAPTER IX.

About the appointed hour, Ernest Adair presented himself at the house of his friend M. Silvain. The latter was superintending the closing of the neat little shop, and he expressed much pleasure at the punctuality of Adair, and conducted him into a small room, well known to the latter, and in the rear of the establishment. This apartment was Silvain’s pride and joy, and in the hope that it would one day be honoured by becoming the home of Madame Silvain, née Henderson, the affectionate perfumer had done his best to adorn it, and render it worthy such a distinction. The alcove, in which was M. Silvain’s bed, was shut off with pretty rose-coloured curtains, festooned with divers carefully chosen flowers, which, in the mind of the enamoured owner, symbolised love, truth, and beauty, though it must be revealed that he had hopelessly failed in an attempt to make Mademoiselle’s matter-of-fact nature recognise the poetical value of the device. An elegant clock, of curious contrivance, showed the figure of Pleasure, who was trying to conceal the Hours with her scanty drapery, whence one hour, that of the time then passing, always peeped forth, and M. Silvain’s whispered hope that his exertions to make all Mademoiselle’s hours those of pleasure,
had been more fortunate than his floral poetry; and had elicited a small slap on the cheek, and a request from his mistress that he would not talk such ridiculous nonsense. A variety of highly-coloured prints, selected with due regard to the extreme propriety of the British character, hung upon the walls, and there were two or three charming little mirrors, with china Cupids and nymphs inviting the beholder to look into the glass they surrounded. Need it be said that the eternal artificial flowers, in vases, were there under their crystal covers, or that a lamp, with a shade covered with the most unobjectionable diablerie, stood upon a gilded bracket? The apartment would not hold much furniture, but what there was had been chosen with taste. The small carpet was of English manufacture, and rather vulgar and flaring, but the homage was in its parentage, not its beauty, as M. Silvain had also explained to Matilde. Altogether the room was as dainty as the lover could make it, and its contiguity to the perfumery in the shop filled it with a composite and delectable aroma, and completed its bower-like character.

The appearance of the only occupant of the pretty room was scarcely in keeping with its attractions. This was a coarsely built man, with a face reddened, it might be, by constant exposure to sun and wind, and whose ear-rings were not seen to much advantage amid the mass of long, black hair that tangled around his head. The expression of his features was not exactly ferocious, but it was stern and forbidding, and a smile which disclosed an array of formidably
strong white teeth did not extend itself to his keen dark eyes. His hands were red and muscular, and a coloured shirt, secured at the throat by a ribbon and ring, was surmounted by no collar, and showed a powerful bull neck, one that might have belonged to a gladiator of the old days. The guest's figure was broad, and, as far as could be seen, for he did not rise from his lounging position on a low chair, he appeared to be under the middle height, a disadvantage apparently more than compensated for in his large and powerful limbs. Coarsely, rather than carelessly dressed, it would have been hard to assign him a profession, though perhaps his general bearing, and some mystic signs that had been traced with gunpowder on the backs of his hands, might suggest the impression that he had some connection with sea-service.

"This is my friend, Cesar Haureau," said Silvain, as they entered. "This, my friend Cesar, is Monsieur Adair, an Englishman, and now you have only to become friends for life."

The process by which the two visitors to M. Silvain initiated the amiable effort suggested by their host was perhaps but slightly in accordance with the affectionate sentiment. Their keen eyes instantly met, and each attempted a searching estimate of his new acquaintance. M. Cesar Haureau uttered a salutation, of which the most that can be said is that it was as cordial as the brief nod that accompanied it, and Adair, taking little pains to repress a curl of his lip, muttered something about the excess of his
happiness, deposited himself on a couch in the opposite corner of the room from that in which his new friend for life was seated, and kindled his cigarette without further speech. The action seemed to hint a similar course to M. Haureau, who drew out of a tin case a short black pipe, and in a few moments there was little reason to complain of the effeminate presence of perfumery in that desecrated bower.

M. Silvain made no complaint, but produced a bottle of cognac, and the usual adjuncts, shouted an order or two to his servant, and closing the door, sat down at the table, between his guests.

It is difficult to be silent, whether you are sulky or not, when a lively Frenchman resolves that you shall speak, and is not content with being the sole orator of a party; and although at first neither Adair nor the stranger seemed to evince the least inclination to sociability, M. Silvain's determined exertions gradually acted as a solvent, and he dexterously entangled first the one and then the other in conversation with himself, finally managing to link them together in a discussion which they approached reluctantly, but in which they at length engaged with some spirit. A few exchanges of the courtesies of the table aided to thaw the guests of M. Silvain, and in half an hour the three were as good friends as tobacco, brandy, and unrighteous talk can make three men, of whom no two would care one farthing if the third were taken out of the group and incontinently hanged. Indeed, such réunions are held by some folks to be pleasanter and healthier than society
in which the interlocutors stoop to the weakness of feeling friendly interest in one another, and bore themselves to convince, to advise, or to sympathise.

It might not be exactly profitable to relate the matter of their talk, but those who have had the advantage of joining in such debates—it is false to say that they are sometimes held nearer Pall Mall than is Versailles—will not have much difficulty in comprehending the staple of the discussion. There is one topic which never fails to supply ample theme on such occasions. There are men, of the class that loves such meetings, who have had the good fortune to meet with women in every way worthy of such biographers, and to have obtained, in the course of life, a large amount of anecdotal information bearing upon the general habits, or individual peculiarities, of that portion of the gentler creation. In France, that department of natural history is extensively cultivated, and upon this occasion the two Frenchmen, each in his way, vindicated the honour of his country by parading the results of much observation, and much original and acquired knowledge in regard to the other sex, but it would be doing Ernest Adair an injustice, and making a conventional sacrifice to popular prejudice, were it inferred that for every sly jest from M. Silvain, and every coarse story from M. Haureau, Mr. Adair was not quite prepared with repayment, or that his higher education did not enable him charmingly to vary his immoralties with the additional flavour of a profanity which was Voltairean in everything except wit. Could Matilde
have had a reporter in that room but for ten minutes, she would never have again spoken to its owner, and yet he was far the least communicative of the party. How happy ought Englishwomen to be in the thought that those to whom they have given their pure hearts, never, when the wine goes round, or the club smoking-room is merry at midnight, approach discussions, or introduce anecdotes, which only befit profligate Frenchmen, or Englishmen like Mr. Ernest Adair!

But conversation, be it never so curiously flavoured, palls after a time; and unless, as in the Scandinavian theory of the destiny of the world, the end of all things is to be Silence, some new excitement must be found. M. Silvain was not a Scandinavian, and he produced cards. Not caring to take part in the game himself, he found in his duty as a host a graceful excuse for abstaining; and having set his friends at the table, and provided them with ample store of stimulant, he promised them supper, and departed to prepare it.

M. Haureau and Mr. Adair had cemented the new friendship that was to last for life by a lavish interchange of the frankest communications on subjects of the nature that has been indicated; but the confidence which is implied by revelations of one's affairs of the heart, and one's views of theology, does not invariably extend itself into similar trustfulness in regard to mundane matters. The keen glance that marked the introduction of the two friends had been exchanged with increased earnestness, as they
drew near to the table, and while they were performing the prefatory operations with the cards. These have been unkindly called the Devil's picture-books; but had a sketching imp been seated between the curtains of that alcove, he would have probably enriched his patron's portrait-gallery with the aid of some recollections of the faces of those who were handling the picture-books, and were striving by sidelong and stealthy looks to ascertain the principle on which the play was to be conducted.

Before cutting, Adair filled himself a glass of cognac, and tossed it off to the health of his antagonist. The latter, who had been partaking more freely of the liquor than Adair, acknowledged the compliment, but did not imitate his friend for life.

"You are quite right to be timid and sober," said Adair. "I am a terrible player. Keep your eye on me."

"I shall do that," replied M. Haureau, almost rudely, looking his man straight in the face, and bringing down his cards on the table with a noise never heard where gentlemen cheat one another.

"Spare our friend's furniture," said Ernest, with a sneer, "unless you intend to present him with your winnings."

"They will not be much," replied the other, "according to what I hear."

"Of my play?" asked Adair, gaily.

"Of your means, on the contrary," said M. Haureau, with a coarse laugh. "But we won't ruin you, if we can help it."
"How good you are!" said Ernest Adair, blandly. And with these amiable preludes they got to work.

They played slowly at first, afterwards more rapidly, for each had perceived from indications well known to the professors of the art, that any vulgar cheating would be instantly detected by his friend. And they played in a vicious silence.

"Well, I have not hurt you much, M. the Englishman," said Haureau, after about an hour had passed. Ernest, in fact, was a slight winner.

"Not in my pocket," replied Adair. "But your nervousness and vigilance are not complimentary. I thought that you sailors had more dash."

"Who told you I was a sailor?" demanded Haureau, fiercely.

"I can smell the tar on your hands from where I sit," replied Adair. "But, as you would say, that proves nothing—at least it would prove nothing in England."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing. Only that in England the same odour is often found in hands that never handled a rope—except to pick it to pieces."

He, in his turn, looked steadily at his friend for life, but whether the full insolence of the speech was not comprehended by the latter, or whether his self-command was considerable, he only replied,

"Are you afraid to go on?"

"No, but it is hardly worth while, for such stakes. I wish Silvain would bring us some supper."

"Play away, and perhaps you'll be rich enough
to dine to-morrow better than I suppose you did to-day."

Adair smiled, and proposed to treble the stakes.

"Oh, if that will suit your finances, it will suit mine," said Haureau, rattling money in his pocket.

"If I am unfortunate, my dear friend Silvain will be delighted to help me," said Adair.

"I make no doubt of it," said Haureau, drily.

And they played again, and the sketching imp might have noticed, with admiration, Adair's distended nostril, and the rapid manipulations of his cards. His antagonist, on the contrary, seemed to take the work more easily, and once or twice refreshed himself at the cognac bottle.

When they next stopped Adair was a considerable winner. He counted and pouched the gold, looking pleasantly at Haureau.

"I shall dine well to-morrow," said Ernest.

"I hope so," said his companion. "But I must have my revenge."

"The sentiment is unworthy of a Christian," said Adair, yawning, and rising. "Where the devil is that Silvain and his supper?" And he was going to open the door, when M. Haureau laid a hand of iron on his arm.

"Sit down," he said, pressing Adair back towards his seat. "I'll have my revenge, I tell you."

And strong as was Adair, he found that he was no match for the Frenchman. He yielded to the ungentle suasion, and resumed his seat.
“Luck is against you,” he said. “Don’t blame me, if I double my winnings.”

“That depends,” said Haureau, significantly. “Do not play too fast.”

Ernest Adair’s eyes shone savagely, but he did not answer. He took another glass of brandy, and then, seizing the cards, shuffled them slowly.

Then they got to work for the third time, but not for long. Some ten minutes might have elapsed, and the luck was still with Adair, when, as he was putting a card on the table, Haureau brought his mighty hand down upon the delicate hand of Adair, which the blow seemed actually to flatten on the board.

“Hold it there, and give me the card from your lap,” shouted Haureau, keeping Adair’s hand down, as in a vice.

Ernest uttered a fierce oath, and had there been a candlestick beside him, would have dashed it on the head of the other; but the table was lighted by a small swinging lamp, and the bottle at which he next glanced was just beyond his reach.

“Let go, scoundrel!” he cried.

“You are the scoundrel. That card,” demanded Haureau, in a voice of thunder.

The sketching imp will not, until he returns home, see such a fire as sprang up in the eyes of the infuriated gambler. Maddened with shame, pain, and rage, he started to his feet, and suddenly thrust the disengaged hand into his bosom. The next instant steel glittered, and a small poniard was driven deep
Into the ponderous arm that fastened him down to the table.

Hureau's angry roar was answered by the door being thrown open, and by the appearance of a couple of gendarmes. They were accompanied by M. Silvain, and appeared completely to understand the situation.

"I assured them that you were not quarrelling," said Silvain, with much earnestness, "and that you were the best friends in the world—friends for life, in fact: but there is no making an official understand anything but what he sees."

What they saw was an exasperated man holding a poniard, and another with a grin of rage and pain trying to staunch the blood that was flowing from his wounded arm. In the presence of these facts it was not remarkable that the officers were deaf to argument, or that in five minutes Ernest Adair was on his way to prison.

"You did not tell me he would stab," said Hureau, reproachfully. "This business is in excess of our bargain."

"It shall be counted, my best friend," said Silvain, radiantly. "It shall be counted. But lose no time—hasten to a surgeon."

And it was with a smiling lip, and with occasional bursts of song, that M. Silvain addressed himself to the work of restoring order in the desecrated bower.
CHAPTER X.

It was rarely that Mr. Hawkesley, after he had entered his sanctum and sealed it against the world, for whose improvement he declared himself to be labouring, was intruded upon by visitors during the hours he set apart for the discharge of that elevated duty, and his wife was much too sensible a woman to exercise her own right of entrée, except upon emergency. So, when Beatrice Hawkesley hurried into the room without the faintest extenuating pretext, and suddenly recalled the author from fiction to reality, he dropped his pen with becoming marital submission.

"Charles, that woman will be here presently."

"That woman?"

"From Lipthwaite, with whom Clara was left."

"Mrs. Berry—what makes you say that?"

"Poor Price is here—she has hurried over as fast as she could come to warn us."

"But why did she think we wanted warning?—Is the woman coming to claim the child?"

"I should like to hear her ask for Clara."

"You do not purpose to give her up then apparently?"

"What!—give her up to a creature that maligns her mother, and frightens the child with evil spirits?"
I will send for a policeman if she dares even to hint at such a thing."

"You will send for me, my dear, which will answer your purpose far better. However, it is natural that she should make every search for a girl who was confided to her, and who departed without her leave or knowledge."

"Yes, and I suppose that she is in a state of terror lest Clara should tell how abominably she has been treated?"

"Possibly. But you don't tell me why Price thought it needful to warn us."

"It was quite right in her. The woman went to Gurdon Terrace, and spoke in a way which seems to have enraged Price beyond all measure. She said there was no probability of Laura's returning, and—"

"Who said, dear? Don't stop to call names, as they confuse a story."

"This Mrs. Berry, then," said Beatrice. "Price, of course, was thunderstruck —"

"Was astonished—well."

"The woman," persisted Mrs. Hawkesley, regardless of her moderator, "did not at first explain that Clara had been in her charge, but made a variety of inquiries about Laura, which Price baffled as well as she could; and it was only at last, and when she had irritated Price by all sorts of hints and insolent questionings, that she mentioned that Clara had been left at Liptonwaite."

"Mrs. Berry supposing that the child had gone home?"
"Yes, and ordering Price to bring her down. Then, I think, though Price knows her duty better than to say so, she gave the creature some very plain speaking, something like what she will get here, I can tell her."

"I trust not in the least like it," said Hawkesley, laying his hand on his wife's. "Mrs. Hawkesley's plain speaking will be as unlike Mrs. Price's as possible. Quite plain enough, though, I have no doubt. Then Price hurried off to see whether the child were here?"

"Yes; and to say that Mrs. Berry was coming."

"Did Mrs. Berry say so?"

"She asked for our address."

"I wonder she was not here as soon as Price."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I think that Price, wishing to gain time—"

"Did not tell the truth?"

"I don't think she made the address very plain to her, and Maida Hill is rather a wide place."

But, wide as it might be, less than half an hour had elapsed before Mr. Hawkesley was summoned to the parlour. There he found his wife in company with a lady whom the former introduced to him with as much frigidity as the warm-natured Beatrice could manage to superimpose upon her ordinarily demonstrative manner.

"This is Mrs. Berry, from Lipthwaite, Charles. She has called to inquire about Clara."

"Who is here, I am glad to find—a naughty little runagate," said Mrs. Berry, smiling kindly.
"You have informed this lady that Clara is here, and well?" said the author, addressing his wife.

"I have said nothing of the kind," replied Mrs. Hawkesley, "as Mrs. Berry did not wait to ask the question of me, but thought proper to let the servant know that Clara had run away."

"My dear lady," said Mrs. Berry, "my natural impatience to know that the darling child was safe made me forget ceremony. Such a weight has been taken off my heart, that I can hardly express my sensations, but you, Mrs. Hawkesley, as a mother, will be able to appreciate them."

Mrs. Hawkesley did not look as if she were inclined to make any particular effort to sympathise with her visitor, and Hawkesley said—

"We are happy, of course, to relieve you, Mrs. Berry, of a charge which may have been irksome. Clara will remain with us until her parents return to town."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Berry, tenderly, "perhaps that is the best way to put it."

"To put what?" said Mrs. Hawkesley, almost angrily.

"To arrange for Clara," said Hawkesley, with a movement of his hand, signifying his wish to understand the speech his own way, and avoid encounter. "Mrs. Berry, of course, thinks with us, that the child will be best with her uncle and aunt."

He would speedily have ended the interview, but neither lady was minded that it should have so inglorious an issue.
"I did not understand Mrs. Berry to mean that," said Mrs. Hawkesley.

"Nor did I, exactly," said Mrs. Berry, "but I perfectly comprehend Mr. Hawkesley's reluctance to allude to any circumstances of a painful character, and I am quite prepared to let that interpretation be placed on my words."

Her words were delivered with the utmost precision, but in the gentlest tone, and they produced in Mrs. Hawkesley certain slight indications, almost imperceptible except by her husband, that if anything more were said, it would be a good deal more. And for this he saw no reason.

"Some little portmanteau, or something of the kind, I think Clara mentioned that she had left behind her," he said. "If you would kindly cause it to be forwarded here, that will be the last trouble she shall give you." And he was evidently bent on bowing Mrs. Berry out of her chair. He might as well have tried to bow a limpet off a rock.

"It shall be sent up," she said, "and I trust that you will be rewarded for your kindness to the poor motherless child."

Over the Rubicon.

"Pray, Mrs. Berry," said Hawkesley, sternly, "what do you mean by that expression?"

His wife's face flushed with pleasure at his taking up the case which she had been impatiently believing that he would refuse to fight.

"What expression?" asked Mrs. Berry, so naturally.
"You called Clara motherless. Have you heard of Mrs. Lygon's death?"

"Her death!" responded Mrs. Berry, sadly. "To her sister, and to her brother-in-law, I may be forgiven for saying—alas! no. For you will understand me." And she put her handkerchief to her eyes.

Mrs. Hawkesley, her husband felt (though he was not looking at her), was on the point of replying that she quite understood Mrs. Berry, and of explaining, in the least agreeable manner, the view she took of that lady's nature, but he again interposed.

"A mysterious speech of that kind, addressed to a lady's nearest and dearest friends, must, of course, be explained," he answered. "Mrs. Berry will be good enough to understand that we have no idea of its meaning."

"You could not say such a thing insincerely," said Mrs. Berry, with so much energy, and looking so exceedingly pained, that Hawkesley, who knew that he had not spoken sincerely, hesitated over his reply.

"We have not the least idea of its meaning," said Mrs. Hawkesley, with vehemence.

"Then," said Mrs. Berry, making good play with her handkerchief, "I am indeed most unfortunate. I must throw myself upon your mercy. I have said what I ought never to have said,—I have violated a trust I ought never to have broken. But I have erred in total ignorance that I was going astray. I could not have imagined that what had been con-
fided to a stranger, a stranger at least in blood, would have been concealed from those who, as you say, are the nearest and dearest. And now what am I to do or say? Forget that I have said anything, and let me go.” And she wept.

“After what you have said, Mrs. Berry,” said Hawkesley, in the coldest tone, “it is, of course, clear that you are here for the purpose of saying more. We wait your explanation.”

“Do not mistrust me—do not misjudge me,” she replied, earnestly. “I would not have entered this room, after being once assured of the safety of that dear child, if I could have foreseen this. Oh, I have been most foolish—most wicked. Spare me. I spoke heedlessly, and much too strongly,—forget all I have said, and let me leave you.”

“My avocations compel me to be a watchful observer of acting, Mrs. Berry,” said Hawkesley. “If I were in a mood for compliment, I would compliment you on yours.”

The light eyes were behind the handkerchief, so the evil glance that would have followed this speech was saved.

“Mr. Hawkesley,” said Mrs. Berry, with some dignity, “I have begged your forgiveness, and humiliated myself so earnestly, that I think I might have been spared insult. But I accept it as part of the penalty of my thoughtlessness, and I do not forgive myself in the least degree. There is no necessity for my saying anything else; indeed, now that I am calmer, I feel that I have no right to say anything else, and
our interview must end. God bless poor dear little Clara."

Hawkesley thought that she was going to rise, but his wife's eye more truthfully interpreted Mrs. Berry's fidget with her drapery.

"Mrs. Berry does not mean to go," said Beatrice, in the most straightforward manner, "until she has tried to do more mischief than she can manage by lady-like conversations with servants and anonymous letters to tradespeople."

"Dear Mrs. Hawkesley," replied Mrs. Berry, "do you think that I can be displeased with you for doing and saying everything in your power in favour of your poor sister, or for being hurt to the very soul at hearing anything on the subject? I should be a worse woman than I hope I am if I could cherish a spark of anger against one who is being so bitterly tried. I forgive as much as I understand of your unkind language, and I will forget the rest. I wish that poor Mrs. Lygon were worthier of your devoted affection."

"How dare—" began Mrs. Hawkesley, with a kindling eye—but her husband laid his hand on her shoulder, and she restrained herself.

"Your husband is, I think, a solicitor, Mrs. Berry?" said Hawkesley.

"He was a solicitor," replied the lady, quietly, "as Mrs. Hawkesley is very well able to inform you."

"I never heard of him," was Mrs. Hawkesley's prompt reply.
"Yet your father has owed many a debt of kindness—pray do not think for a moment that I am bringing it up ungenerously—but Mr. Vernon has often been indebted to my husband for legal aid, and perhaps for aid of another kind."

"I repeat that I never heard Mr. Berry's name."

"Oh, had he not added the name of Berry to that of Allingham?"

"Allingham—Berry," repeated Mrs. Hawkesley, eagerly. "Then—then, you were Marion Wagstaffe," she exclaimed.

"I thought that you recognised me at once," said Mrs. Berry. "But as you did not say so, I forbore to make allusions to the past, which was not always pleasant."

"No, I did not recognise you," said Mrs. Hawkesley, in a low voice.

"I believe it, dear Mrs. Hawkesley, and that had you done so, many words of unkindness would have been spared. Now, do not let an old acquaintance be remembered only by bitter hours, but let me leave you, and pray that time may heal all sorrows."

"I asked whether your husband were a solicitor," said Hawkesley, in no way moved by this little episode. "You imply that he was, but is not now in practice. It will be necessary for me to communicate with him, in order to ascertain whether he takes upon himself the liability of answering for the slanders which his wife has been spreading, or whether he intends to repudiate them."
"I fear," said Mrs. Berry, preserving her temper with marvellous firmness, "that you do not quite understand the position of matters, Mr. Hawkesley, and that your zeal for your wife's sister may lead you astray. I will not notice strong words at a time like this, but if there is anything to complain of, the person to complain is Mr. Lygon, and he is my husband's most intimate friend. It was to Mr. Berry, and not to Mr. Hawkesley, that poor Arthur flew, when he heard of his dreadful sorrow; it was to Mrs. Berry, and not to Mrs. Hawkesley, that the distressed father confided his dearest child; and though doubtless two quiet country people are far less estimable in the eye of society than two London persons, of gay and worldly habits, it was to the country people that Mr. Lygon went for advice and consolation. To threaten us, therefore, is scarcely more wise than it is kind."

"I cannot bear this," said Mrs. Hawkesley, with energy. "If Mrs. Berry intends to equivocate and palter, instead of answering outright what it is that she dares to charge Laura with, she may. But now that I know who her husband is, I know too that he is incapable of being a party to any slander or meanness, and it will be for you, Charles, to go down to Lipthwaite to-night, and ask Mr. Berry for an explanation. Six words from him will be enough."

"Fewer than that will be enough," replied Mrs. Berry, "and if I do not speak them, it is only because I fear that my natural anger at your harsh-
ness might be gratified by my giving you pain—and I hope I have learned to mortify such feelings."

"Spare your apologies, Madam," said Hawkesley, now losing his temper at her pertinacity, "and do not spare me. I will hear either from you or your husband, before I sleep, what it is that you charge against my wife's sister."

"We charge her!" said Mrs. Berry. "Heaven forbid! We would do anything to screen her—ask her child how her mother was spoken of under our roof."

Mrs. Hawkesley was far too indignant to meet this unequalled effrontery as she desired, and Mrs. Berry went on.

"But since you are bent upon a course of wilfulness, which I would in all sincerity beg you to avoid, it is for me to remember that I have other duties beside those of friendship. My husband is old—much older than myself, and it is not well that at his time of life he should be disturbed by such a scene as you, Mrs. Hawkesley, would urge your compliant husband to make under our roof. I will reply for him; and, with tears in my eyes and sorrow at my heart, will tell you, if you still insist on my doing so, what we learned from Mr. Arthur Lygon."

"Speak your worst," said Mrs. Hawkesley.

"I pity you—I pity you, indeed, most deeply," replied Mrs. Berry, "and you will bear me witness hereafter that I have spoken only upon such provocation—no, in answer to such an appeal as has seldom been made to a woman."
"I will take the responsibility of having asked for plain words instead of hints and allusions," returned Hawkesley.

"Then—and chiefly to spare my aged husband a painful scene—I answer you. Mr. Lygon is pursuing an unfaithful wife."

"Utterly, wickedly false!" exclaimed Hawkesley. His wife turned deadly pale, moved restlessly on her chair, but made no reply.

"Unhappily it is true," said Mrs. Berry; "and Mr. Lygon knows that it is so."

"We must say no more while she remains, Charles, dear," said Mrs. Hawkesley, in a faint voice. "Let her go."

"Poor thing," said Mrs. Berry, compassionately. "This was to be looked for. Why did you not let me go earlier, instead of wringing this disclosure from me? There is much—very much—that I would have endured rather than have caused this sorrow."

"How dare you speak such words?" cried Beatrix, with an effort. "You have said that which you know to be false, and you exult in the torture you have caused. Charles, do you believe a word of this cruel slander?"

"I believe your sister to be as innocent as yourself. But what strange story may have been laid hold of, and twisted into a story of guilt, I cannot say, but Mr. Berry shall. I will not take Mrs. Berry's word for his being associated in a plot against one of the best women in the world."
"Surely you will not persist in your intention of persecuting an old man who can ill bear excitement," pleaded Mrs. Berry.

"Excitement—who talks of excitement, when a foul and hideous charge is made against those we love?" cried Hawkesley. "I have heard of Mr. Berry from Lygon, and if he is the friend Lygon has believed him, I shall hear the truth from his lips. Something tells me that I have not heard it from his wife's."

"You will go to Lipthwaite?"

"To-night. Meantime I have no more questions to put to Mrs. Berry."

"She has one to put to you. I wish to speak a word to you, Mr. Hawkesley, but not in the presence of your wife."

"I have no secrets from her."

"Go with her, Charles, if she wishes it," said Mrs. Hawkesley, "or I will go."

Beatrice walked slowly, and as one who had been half stunned, towards the door, and supporting herself by it she said—

"Marion Berry, for some purpose of your own, you are acting a wickedness for which God will judge you. I shall see that judgment." And she left the room.

"Even excited as she is, tell her, Mr. Hawkesley, that she should avoid such sinful language, such unholy appeals."

"Do not speak of my wife, but let me hear what you wished to say."
"Once more, I ask you whether you are bent on going to Lipthwaite?"

"Must I once more tell you that I will see Mr. Berry?"

"Then come. But be prepared to bring back with you a story twice as terrible as that which you struggle to disbelieve."

"Do you think to deter me by such language?"

"I do not wish to deter you now. I have striven to spare you, and have met nothing but insolence and insult. I now invite you to come, for perhaps the humiliation you will undergo may be a wholesome chastisement of your pride and arrogance. Come to Lipthwaite, and hear from Mr. Berry into what kind of a family you have married."

"I will come."

"Mrs. Hawkesley will not accompany you. I trust that you will find her awaiting your return. She did not try to prevent my speaking to you alone. Most wives would have done so. She dared not."

"Mrs. Berry," said Hawkesley, struggling to suppress his rage, and using the most contemptuous manner he could adopt, "by what conceivable falsehood do you think to make me believe that the wife of Charles Hawkesley cares whether her husband spends five minutes—more or less—with any other woman in this world, young or old?"

"I have prayed to be strengthened to bear anything that may be said to me while I am doing my duty," said Mrs. Berry, calmly, "but believe me,
Mr. Hawkesley, such words as you employ in the hope of wounding me, go by me like the idle wind. They are meant to hurt, but are powerless. You, who have not the privilege of being a Christian, cannot comprehend the pity with which you are regarded by those who know better things. If you come to Lipthwaite to-night, and can bow yourself at our family altar, you shall hear how little anger and how much love we bear for those who wrong and insult us. Farewell, Mr. Hawkesley."

And Mrs. Berry withdrew as composedly as she had entered. As the servant was opening the street door for her she paused, and drew from her pocket a tract.

"Read this, my good girl, when you have time. I fear that little teaching of this kind comes in your way; but read it, and may it be blessed to you."

It was called "Who is your Master?" When the girl, in some wonderment, showed it to her fellow-servant, and to Price, who had remained in the house, the latter personage looked at the title with considerable disfavour. 

"I could tell her who her master is," said Price, "only I don’t want to put my tongue to an ugly word."

"I would rather the old girl had given me a shilling," said Mrs. Hawkesley’s servant, simply and honestly.

Meantime, Hawkesley went in search of his wife, and as he expected, found her in tears.
Beatrice looked up, with mute inquiry as to the secret which he had been told in her absence.

"She tells me that if I come to Lipthwaite, I shall hear something much worse than that we have heard from her."

"Charles, dearest, I am very ill. While that woman was speaking, and especially when I found out who she really was, a cold chill came across me, and I could scarcely speak."

"My dear one, such a tale, told of one whom you love, is surely enough to shock you to the heart."

"But now I want to speak, and to say much to you, dear, and I am utterly unequal to the task."

"How can it be necessary for you to say much to me, Beatrice? Have we come to a point in our lives when a dozen words are not enough between us?"

"I thought we never should come to it, dearest; but this woman seems to have brought it about. You trust me, Charles," she said, taking both his hands, and looking up at him earnestly; "you trust me, do you not, fully and implicitly?"

"I did not think I should ever feel so grieved with you," he replied, "as I do at hearing such a question."

"No, no, I have not grieved you—you shall not say that I have ever grieved you, my own one. But I told you that I could not speak as I ought. Sit down by me here, close to me, and let me try to say what is in my mind."
CHAPTER XI.

It was very bad in the prisoner to have used a weapon, but then on the other hand he spoke French so admirably, that when he reached the place of captivity, instead of being thrust, as would have happened in the case of any other offender, and especially an English offender, into a gloomy cell, of very dungeon-like character, the officials placed him in a not very uncomfortable room, the uncleanliness whereof was simply an incident of the administration of justice, and not intended as any addition to the prisoner's own punishment. It was late, and of course nothing could be done until the morning, but many an Englishman, taken into custody, in his own country, for a far lighter crime than that imputed to Adair, has been compelled to pass a much more miserable night than was spent by the latter. He was not locked up with ruffians, he was not put upon a stone floor, nor were his boots taken away; and if he had required food, or medical assistance, he would not have been told that nobody there was allowed to be hungry or ill until to-morrow morning.

Very early on the following day, and hours before Adair's case could come before the authorities,
he had summoned to his presence his host of the preceding night.

M. Silvain was not very long in obeying the summons, but when he entered the room, the windows of which were strongly barred, and he heard the door fastened heavily behind him, he rather felt as one who is introduced into the den of a wild animal. He was a brave man, too, but it was satisfactory to him to recollect that the weapon Ernest had used upon M. Haureau had been seized by one of the gendarmes who had interposed with such felicitous punctuality.

Adair rose from the bed on which he had been lying, half dressed, and glared viciously at his friend.

"So you have come," said Ernest. "That was wise in you. I thought that you would have been too great a coward to come. But certainly it would have been braver in you to stay away, all things considered."

"Am I sent for at this extremely inconvenient hour, to have injurious remarks addressed to me?" said Silvain, quietly.

"Remarks to you?" repeated Adair, savagely, and without a touch of the bantering manner he had been in the habit of manifesting in his interviews with Silvain. "No, do not alarm yourself."

"I am not alarmed, M. Adair, and I should like to speak."

"I forbid you to speak. Hold your tongue. You have not had time to learn any lesson of lies which could serve your turn with me; or, if you
think you have, you may keep them until further notice."

"With a prisoner," said M. Silvain, with dignity, "it is impossible to quarrel."

"Hold your tongue, I repeat," said Adair, "or you may find that it is very possible for a prisoner to get you by the throat before you can make the fellows outside open the door for you. And if I do, it will not be worth their while to open the door for you."

He looked so vindictive, and his eyes glared so, that Silvain instinctively placed himself in an attitude to resist a sudden attack. But Adair did not rise, and laughed scoffingly.

"I want you," he said, "and you have nothing to fear while you can be of use to me. Now listen, and if you do not obey my orders, woe unto you."

"Orders, M. Adair?"

"Orders, sir! and once more be silent. It is now seven o'clock. You will go from here to the lodging which you have taken for the English lady, Mrs. Lygon,—now do not begin to lie, because I know the house, and could tell you at what time she took possession of her room, and what rent she is to pay."

Silvain deemed it wisest to remain silent.

"I know all. You will go, I repeat, to that house, and, with as much or as little regard to the convenances as you like, you will obtain speech of Mrs. Lygon, and inform that lady, first that I am here, and secondly that I wish to see her here before nine o'clock. That is your message, and now call to the gendarmes to let you out."
“Do I hear you aright?” said Silvain. “I am to intrude upon Madame Lygon, and ask her to come and visit you in a police cell?”

“That is what you are to do, and instantly,” replied Adair. “You are not mad enough to hesitate.”

“Why should I obey?”

“Ask Matilde. Are you not gone?”

“Before making the least approach to Madame Lygon, I will assuredly consult with Mademoiselle Matilde, and if her opinion be my own, your brutal errand will remain undone, M. Adair.”

“Go and ask Matilde, fool, I tell you, and don’t waste time, or you may be doing more mischief than you dream of. Mischief to Matilde, and the lady, and more people besides. Now, be off.”

“You will have to account to me for all this, Monsieur,” said Silvain, as he went to the door.

“Stop,” said Ernest Adair, in a furious voice. “Stop a second. I have humoured your folly and swagger long enough. Take warning now. If ever you provoke me again into inflicting personal chastisement on you, it is the last you will want, M. Silvain.”

“The tiger has tasted blood, and is ferocious,” said Silvain, contemptuously, as the door opened for him. He pointed to his arm, in illustration of his meaning, and departed.

How he sped on his mission need not be said, but considerably before the appointed time it was announced to Adair that a lady desired to see him.
Ernest Adair again seated himself on his bed, and cast a cynical glance around the disordered cell, intending to receive his guest without any effort to render the chamber more fit for a visitor. But the gendarme, without a word, took the matter into his own hands,—opened the windows, and, with military rapidity, brought the room into something like a decorous condition. He could not, however, prevent Adair from taking a lounging attitude on the bed, though the look of the honest soldier expressed the displeasure he felt at such a demonstration.

A few moments later, and Ernest's visitor was introduced.

He retained the position he had insolently taken up, until the lady (who was in the simplest morning costume, and veiled) advanced a step or two, and raised her veil.

"You?" said Ernest, springing to his feet. "I sent for your sister."

"I—I wished to come," said Bertha Urquhart.

"But your coming is useless," he replied without a word of courtesy, or the offer of the single chair which stood near him. "It is strange that I cannot be obeyed, when persons have such good reasons for obeying me."

"Do not be angry with me," said Bertha, "for I am very miserable."

"And why does a lady who is miserable come to a place like this at such an hour, especially when no one has asked for her presence?"
"I thought it best to come," pleaded Bertha. "It is for me to think in the matter," he replied. "Do I understand from your being here that the idiot Silvain has not delivered my message to Mrs. Lygon?"

"He will do as you ask, of course," said Bertha, deprecatingly. "But I thought I would come and ask what you wish, and what can be done for you—Silvain has told me of the unfortunate affair last night."

"Silvain has told you!" he began, in a high and angry voice, which dropped as he observed her terror. "No, no, I am wrong to speak so to you. I do not accuse you of trying to involve me in a quarrel with a ruffian who would probably have strangled me, but for my being armed. That stroke was not yours, my poor Bertha. Do not look so white. I would say take a chair, but time is precious. When you leave me, find Mrs. Lygon, and deliver the message which Silvain has presumed to neglect."

"He did not neglect it. I delayed him, in order to come and see whether we could serve you in any way. Pray let us do so, if we can."

"Go, and send Mrs. Lygon to me."

"But what will you say to her that you cannot say to me?"

Ernest Adair advanced, took the chair, and sat down before Bertha, so that his face was lower than hers, and his up-turned eyes met hers, with an expression which made her shudder.
"Are you afraid of my eyes?" he said, gently and slowly. "It was not always so."

"Ernest!"

"The old voice too. He is in prison, and she comes unto him," he added, mockingly. "But I have no time for recollections now. Bertha, go, and send your sister here."

"Tell me, for mercy's sake, what you are going to do."

"She shall tell you when she leaves me."

"I assure you, Ernest, on my life, that it is not our fault that we have not yet got the money for you, but we are doing our best, and you shall soon have it. Do not do anything hasty and cruel—think of the misery you will cause."

"To whom? and why should I care?"

"Ernest, you ought not to speak thus."

"To whom should I cause misery?"

"Oh, Ernest!" said Bertha, bursting into tears, and sinking on her knees before him. "Do not, do not be so cruel—we will do anything to satisfy you, but have some mercy."

His back was towards the door as he sat, and as she looked up he beheld her face suddenly become of ashy whiteness. It was not, he felt on the instant, anything in his words that had worked this change—some terror was before her. He continued to gaze wonderingly at the change, and he said, almost involuntarily—

"Bertha!"

"Who speaks so to a married woman?" said a
stern voice, and as Ernest sprang to his feet he was suddenly pushed, hurled, flung,—what you will,—against the side of the cell, by a hand that seemed only bent on removing him from out of the way.

And the kneeling Bertha looked up piteously in the face of her husband.
CHAPTER XII.

Robert Urquhart raised his wife from the position whence her terror had left her powerless to arise, and he placed her in the single chair in the apartment. Adair, recovering from the rude shock he had received, came up to his assailant, and with much composure, said:

"There had better be no mistake between us, Mr. Urquhart."

"There will be none, sir, rely on that," replied the Scot, turning sternly upon him. "Who are you?"

"My name is Ernest Adair, I am an Englishman, and I am a prisoner at the moment, on the charge of having wounded a Russian who assaulted me during a gambling quarrel."

"Creditable company for a lady."

"When you know the lady's errand here, you will be glad to have abstained from harsh language."

"The sooner I hear it the better, my man," said Urquhart, who spoke calmly enough, but whose lip and nostril gave sign which even a braver man than Adair might have noted with apprehension.

"What is going to be said?" sobbed Bertha, wringing her hands in the extremity of her dismay.
"Very little, Bertha," replied her husband. "But I believe it will be to the purpose."

"It will, indeed, Mr. Urquhart," said Adair. "But it is more fit that I should say it, than Mrs. Urquhart. You found this lady earnestly entreatng a favour of me. Do you desire to hear what that favour was?"

"I desire it so much," said the husband, "that if I do not learn it in your next words I will shake the answer out of you, or the life out of your body. Is that plain speaking, my man?"

"Useless violence, because I am as ready to tell as you are to hear. But will you request Mrs. Urquhart to withdraw?"

"No, sir," replied Urquhart, in a fierce voice. "I have to judge her conduct, and I choose to have her presence."

"Then the fault is not mine if her feelings are wounded by what I must say to you."

"Hold your d—d tongue about feelings, and speak the truth at once," thundered Urquhart, "or it will be the worse for you."

"Your violence is cowardly, Mr. Urquhart," said Adair, with spirit. "Your personal strength is double my own, and I am unarmed, and if you choose to be brutal, strike. Else, hear me."

And he folded his arms, and calmly confronted his gigantic companion.

"What hinders me to hear you," returned Urquhart, "but yourself." The display of courage in the undeniable presence of extreme peril produced
its invariable effect upon a brave nature, and his tone, though stern, was somewhat less menacing. "Go on, sir."

"Mrs. Urquhart is here to entreat that I, who hold in my hands the means of exposing an unworthy person, will refrain from doing so,"

"And who is the unworthy person who has the good fortune to enlist the sympathies of my wife? Silence, sir. I ask the question of her."

"When you hear," said Adair, promptly, "you will be glad not to have forced the name from her lips. The name is that of her sister."

Robert Urquhart looked at his wife, who was swaying herself, after her custom in distress, backwards and forwards in her chair, and he saw by her piteous tremor that he was hearing the truth.

An oath escaped him, and he strode to the window, where he stood for a few moments in silence. If Bertha tried to steal a glance at the face of Adair it was unnoticed, for he stood with folded arms, and with his look immovably fixed on the wall.

"I guessed that there was some shameful story to tell," said Robert Urquhart, turning round to them, "but I did not guess that my own wife would dare to mix herself in sin and shame. But that she and I will speak of elsewhere. What is this secret, sir?"

"To reveal it to you, Mr. Urquhart, is to refuse the petition which you heard Mrs. Urquhart making to me."

"Petition," repeated Urquhart, furiously. "My
wife stooping to petition anything from any man, and above all, petitioning that he will screen a worthless woman. It is my demand, sir, and it is hers,” he added, in a tone of authority, “that I hear the truth on this instant. Are you the—the lover of the woman who is to be screened?”

“If I were, Mr. Urquhart, and my life or death were in your hands, you would hear no word from me.”

“That swagger means that you are not. Who is?”

“It suits me to tell you in my own way, and in no other. It may occur to you on reflection that a man who has no fear may choose his own course. In my turn I demand that Mrs. Urquhart withdraw.”

He seated himself on the bed, and was so clearly resolved to be silent unless his demand were complied with, that Urquhart—after giving one savage thought to the expediency of violence—was not sorry that Bertha spoke.

“Yes—let me go, Robert—and come home to me directly, or I shall die.”

She looked so white, and so helpless, and so sad, that Urquhart could not but compassionate her.

“Wait for me in the walk below,” he said. “I do not know that we shall meet at home again. If you are not waiting for me, we never shall.”

Bertha trembled from the room, and then Urquhart, advancing to Adair, said,

“Now, sir, his name.”
"His name is on a tombstone, Mr. Urquhart."
"Do you mean that he is dead, man?"
"He is dead."
"And is it his death that brought her over to France?"
"In part. But she had other objects which I cannot explain, but which those who are interested in the matter may discover for themselves. My share in it will be a small one, but I owe a duty to the dead, and I intend to discharge it in spite of Mrs. Urquhart's tears, and notwithstanding your menaces."
"You know this dead scoundrel, then?"
"He was no scoundrel, and he was my friend. Use your own common sense as to the policy of such language when you wish for information."
"Well, sir, what more? I suppose you have proofs of what you say?"
"You would have asked for them long since, if you had not been prepared to believe what I have to say. We may speak freely, Mr. Urquhart. I am, unhappily, well acquainted with many circumstances which you suppose to be unknown out of your family, and I am aware that you have reason to wish that Mrs. Arthur Lygon were not one of you."
"How do you know this?" said Urquhart, darkly.
"Do not suppose for a moment that I have information from Mrs. Urquhart—if that thought is in your mind, dispel it. I have perfect knowledge,
from other sources, of all that takes place under your roof, and many a roof beside. I tell you this frankly."

"You are a spy?"

"If not, I have the means of commanding the services of persons of that class. If you doubt me, I will tell you of something which you have never told to any one, and which certainly Mrs. Urquhart could neither learn, nor comprehend if told to her."

And he mentioned to Urquhart that the latter had, before returning from Paris, visited an obscure mechanic in a suburb, and gone through some experiments with him, for the purpose of testing the comparative power of resistance possessed by certain different kinds of manufactured iron.

"That shows how well the rascal work is done," said Urquhart, contemptuously, "and I am quite ready to believe that you are what you say. Now, what are your proofs against this unhappy woman?"

"What use do you intend to make of them?"

"That is my affair."

"True; but it is mine to know what you will do."

"Suppose I say that there is but one use to which an honourable man can put the knowledge that his friend is wronged. Can you understand that?"

"Again I counsel you, Mr. Urquhart, to abstain from insult. Do I rightly interpret you to mean
that you will apprise Mr. Lygon of what you may learn?"

"If the proofs hold, man, what else, in the devil's name, do you suppose I should do?"

"Suppress them, for the sake of Mrs. Urquhart, and bribe me to silence."

"Is that what you are going to propose to me?" said Urquhart, looking at him with an evil eye.

"No; that is not my plan. I will not be silenced on any terms that you can offer; but it is natural to suppose that you might wish to avoid a painful exposure."

"Whether it is natural or not, sir, I am not going to debate with you. But if you have any fears that make you keep back your evidence, you may take my word for this, that if I cannot resist the proof, it shall be before Mr. Lygon in twenty-four hours thereafter."

"That is as much as concerns me. I care for none of you all; but I have a duty to do, and I am in Versailles to do it. You have been wondering, I doubt not—nay, I know it—why Mrs. Lygon has been here. She has probably deceived you with an admirably-told story, for she is one of the cleverest women in the world; it is no news to you, and I need not apologise for saying that Mrs. Urquhart is a child in her hands. But you will discover the real reason for her presence when you have read some documents which are in my possession."

"Give them to me."

"Unfortunately they are not here. I was be-
trayed into a blunder last night, and in spite of my influence, whatever that may be, with certain quarters, I was brought here, and, until discharged, I can do nothing."

"That seems a shuffle. You can say where the documents are, if you please to do so."

"I do not please to do so. It is my pleasure to be discharged."

"What have I to do with that? What did you say you had done?"

"I told you that I was gambling, and my antagonist assaulted me, on which I struck him in the arm with a dagger. I had, it is true, taken too much brandy."

"I suppose your spy-friends can get you out by a word to the police?"

"I do not choose to employ them. But if I am not released through your agency, and have to release myself in my own way, I shall disappear, without further troubling myself in your affairs, and leave you to extract the truth from my hints to Mrs. Urquhart, and the confessions of Mrs. Lygon."

"I will not have Mrs. Urquhart's name dragged into question," said Urquhart, "and I will see your proofs. Else you might lie here till doomsday, my man, for me."

"I am well aware of that," said Adair, "nor do I complain. I have no claim on you or Mrs. Urquhart."

"I will send a lawyer to you. I suppose he will know what to do."
"Send the lawyer who managed the affair for you when you were cheated in a horse, and threw the seller into the pond behind M. Daubiac's stables."

"Five years ago," said Urquhart.

"Nothing is overlooked—nothing forgotten," replied Adair, in answer to his tone rather than his words.

"You will come to my house, on being let out of this place," said Urquhart, "and bring these papers. I have only your word for that."

"Which you don't value."

"Not a jot, and that's truth."

"I will be more just to you, sir. I will take your word for something which, unless you promise, I will not produce a single line."

"What am I to promise?"

"That the papers I place in your hands you will read, and then immediately return them to me."

"I will not give the promise. I may desire to send them to Mr. Lygon."

"Mr. Lygon will not need them. Mr. Lygon will be in no state to read papers. Let him receive the assurance that his brother-in-law and counsellor has examined them, and he will ask no more. Be this as it may, I must have them returned."

"Why?"

"When they have done their work, I have sworn to burn them on the tomb of him who is gone."

"What accursed play-book folly is that?" said Urquhart, with contempt.

"What? The keeping an oath!"
"You are no doubt exactly the man to indulge in fits of sentimentality," said the Scot. "And you have never broken an oath?"

"I may have broken oaths, and induced others to break them," said Ernest Adair, calmly; "but I intend to keep this oath. Give me your word."

"I have no choice, I suppose?"

"None, as might have occurred to you before."

"You have my word," said Urquhart. "I will send the lawyer."

"Bertha," said her husband, when he joined her in the walk below, "listen to me, and do not make any answer. In yon room there lies one of the greatest scoundrels that God ever permitted to draw breath. I saw at the first glance that he was so, and that he was a man I am called on to hate, and some day, I hope, to punish. But he states that he holds proofs which I must see before I sleep. He is coming to my house with them as soon as he is set at liberty. At present my house is yours, and all that is in it. You know best whether there is anything which he can say to me, or show me, that should make us two. Do not tremble in that way, wife; I am making no charge, I am speaking in all kindness. I shall not return home for an hour. If I find you there, I shall know in one second—it will be a glad one, Bertha—that you were blameless of all knowledge of Laura's sin until you learned it from this man. If this were so, Bertha,—but say that it was so, wife, whom I have loved so well, so
dearly,—say that you knew nothing of Laura's sin."

And the strong man's voice grew thick, and his stalwart form trembled beside that fragile woman.

"As I shall be judged at the last, Robert, and as I hope for mercy," said Bertha, in a low voice, but with unusual firmness, "I never knew that Laura had sinned; nor, Robert, do I know it now."

"God bless you, child!" said Urquhart, suppressing his emotion. "There, go to your home, and wait for me. I fear we have sad work to do. Go home, dear woman."

And his eyes rested lovingly on her figure, as, after touching his hand as if thanking him for his kind words, she went homewards.
CHAPTER XIII.

The mode in which the lawyer, employed by Robert Urquhart, achieved the liberation of Ernest Adair, does not connect itself with our narrative, and it is only necessary to say, that in the course of the day Adair was set at liberty.

The condition of mind in which Bertha returned to the house of her husband, and still, as he had said, her own, was indeed pitiable.

What had passed in her presence in the prison apartment had, of course, conveyed to her the conviction that Ernest intended to save her at the expense of her sister, and it was in Bertha's weak nature to derive comfort and re-assurance from the idea of her present safety. But independently of her agitation at the prospect of any inquiry into past histories, and without taking into consideration what her feeble and half-hearted affection for her sister might cause her to feel, when informed that the latter was to be formally accused, Bertha had an undefined dread of some act of new treachery or cruelty on the part of Adair, and a terror lest the stern eye of her husband might detect in any tale that Ernest might frame the vitiating flaw that would ruin the whole. Then the knowledge, derived from Henderson, that Laura had not left Versailles,
was a new element of fear, for if Laura should claim to be confronted with Adair, the scene would end very differently from that in which Mrs. Lygon submitted to the insult of Urquhart, and departed silently from the room where she had been wronged. And if any thoughts of a deeper and nobler kind came to the mind of the feeble Bertha in her hour of trial,—if womanly pride, or womanly love had voices that made themselves heard amid the vulgar strife of shallow hopes and fears, those voices were soon stilled in the presence of the immediate danger.

It was no ordinary consolation to her when, a couple of hours after parting from her husband, Bertha received from the hand of Angelique an envelope in which were written, in the well-known hand of Adair, the words—

"Be quite calm and fear nothing."

"If Laura had only gone home," thought Bertha, "it would not so much matter, for I am certain that Arthur will never forgive her for what she has done already; so that, let him think what he may, things would not be a great deal worse. And why did she come at all?"

It was in this state of feeling—if feeling it may be called—that Bertha Urquhart prepared herself for the dreaded interview.

M. Ernest Adair was announced to Robert Urquhart, who was in the drawing-room with his wife. Up to the time of Adair’s arrival Urquhart had scarcely exchanged twenty words with her, but his manner, though sad, was kind. He also paid
her several of those small attentions which are habitual with some husbands, and which others as habitually neglect. Urquhart himself was somewhat careless in such matters, and this, of course, made Bertha notice the circumstance, although she misconstrued it, and supposed that Robert desired to atone to her for having been harsh in the earlier part of the day. "There was no such stuff in his thoughts."

Adair entered, bowed gravely to Bertha, something less ceremoniously to her husband, and said:

"I have to thank you, Mr. Urquhart, for the assistance which you have been good enough to afford me. I have offered my thanks to your legal adviser, who has enabled me to keep my appointment with you."

"You have come prepared to substantiate what you stated this morning?" asked Urquhart.

"I stated nothing—I mean nothing for substantiation," replied Adair. "I spoke very guardedly, but your own inferences went in the right direction, and those it is my painful duty to support by proofs."

"Give them to me."

"I need not recal your engagement?"

"I will return them when I have satisfied myself."

"Then, before producing them, I will say a few words, and very few. The position in which I am placing myself would be under ordinary circumstances a humiliating one."

"Most humiliating," said Urquhart, bluntly. "A
woman may be evil, but I do not envy the man who hunts her down."

"Pardon me if I reply that here we are upon even terms, Mr. Urquhart, as I understood from you that this was the very course you proposed to take."

"I am not inclined to bandy words with you, sir. In my case, however, the friend whom I value most in this world has either been deeply injured, or you are—what I need not say. It is my business to know which is the truth."

"The friend whom I did value most in this world was deeply injured, Mr. Urquhart, and there is no alternative in my case."

"Do not let us talk," said the Scot. "The proofs you promised."

"These proofs, Mr. Urquhart, consist of a series of letters addressed by a lady to her lover. They were placed in my charge for the purpose with which I am about to use them now, but the mode of my doing so and the time, were left to my own discretion. The time has now arrived, and the mode I now adopt is to lay the letters before the truest and best friend of that lady's husband. If that friend, in perusing them, finds evidence that the husband possesses an unworthy wife, he will take whatever course he pleases. My duty will have been discharged when I have afforded this opportunity."

Bertha sat to hear this speech, and maintained a dead silence, but some little action of her hand afforded Adair an excuse to add,
"It was not my wish that Mrs. Urquhart should undergo the pain of being present while Mr. Urquhart peruses these documents. I perceive that she was on the point of again appealing to me on the subject; but, I say it with all feeling for her, such an appeal would be in vain, even in the absence of the legitimate demand of her husband to know her justification for being found with me this morning."

"I think it very — very wicked," stammered Bertha.

"I have said that I will have these proofs," Urquhart replied. "It is right, however, that you should be free to retire, Bertha, if you please."

"It is also right," said Adair, "that Mrs. Urquhart should be within reach, should it be wished to ask her a question."

"I—I will go into the next room," said Bertha, hurrying away, as she might have done from the scene of some painful operation, or to be out of hearing of the cries of a child that was to undergo punishment.

Ernest Adair then produced a book into which a series of letters had been fastened, the original printed pages having been cut away to make room for the manuscripts. He handed the book to Robert Urquhart, who received it with an instinctive disgust, that was not entirely latent in the eye he cast upon Adair.

Urquhart took the volume, and laying it on a table, applied himself steadily to a perusal of the contents.
Adair watched him intensely, and with feelings in which excitement mingled far more powerfully than the circumstances, as hitherto related, would seem to warrant. Once or twice the pale face of Adair became even paler, and there were convulsive movements of his hands.

And once, when Bertha, childishly impatient of the long delay, rose from her seat in the further room, and ventured to glance in at the two men who had been so long silent, Adair's look became perfectly fiendish. He ground his teeth, and the fierce expression that came over his face told that he utterly—actively hated Bertha Urquhart for presenting herself—that is, the recollection of herself—at that moment.

But when Urquhart looked up, Adair was engaged with a book.

Once—twice—in the course of the reading a groan, that as nearly resembled an execration as an inarticulate sound could do, broke from Robert Urquhart.

Suddenly he sprang up, and called loudly—
“Bertha! Bertha!”

Mrs. Urquhart came in, and was beckoned to her husband's side.

“There can be no earthly doubt,” he said, in a low voice, which sent an intense thrill through her.
She was safe.

“Look at that writing—and that—and that. Whose letters are they, Bertha?”

“There is no need to ask,” said Bertha, as the
lines burned into her very brain. Here and there a word of affection—of love—of passion branded itself more deeply than the rest that went past her eyes as he turned over the leaves.

"There is no need to ask," he repeated, placing his arm kindly around her shuddering and shivering form. "Be calm, dear, be calm. You have nothing to reproach yourself with. Be calm."

And Ernest Adair gazed upon that husband and wife.

"You have proved your words, sir," said Robert Urquhart, after a long pause.

"I see that I have done so. I read it in the face of an honest man, of an honourable woman. I have done my duty to him who is gone."

"Let me hear no more of that," said Urquhart, sternly. "If it be indeed true that the miscreant to whom these letters are addressed is dead, he is gone where no earthly curse can increase his punishment. If he is alive, I hope that he may live a curse to himself, and die by his own hands, for those of justice are too good for him. Silence on that subject! Take back your volume, and the best thing that I can say at parting is, that I hope neither I nor mine will ever meet with you again."

"I forgive all wild language at such a moment, Mr. Urquhart. It is a terrible thing to find that one's family is stained."

"Who are you to talk of stains?" replied Urquhart, fiercely. "A spy who would crawl into
the bosom of a household, and win the confidence of all in it, from the mother by the fire to the child playing on the carpet, and would sell the trust they placed in you—would sell the woman's kindly talk, the child's prattle, to the ruffians who hire you. A spy talk of stains! Begone, sir, I have done with you."

"You are violent," said Ernest Adair, with a sinister smile, "but we will not quarrel over words. I fear that the expression to Mrs. Urquhart of my profoundest regret at having been compelled to inflict such suffering would not be acceptable."

"I answer for my wife, sir, that she desires to hear no other word from you."

"I believe it, sir," said Adair, in a tone which struck upon the heart of Bertha. "At present, at all events, I will end an interview which is so fraught with sorrow."

He bowed respectfully, and was gone.

"Sad—sad—Bertha," said Urquhart, sorrowfully. "I clung to the hope that she might have been only foolish, weak, deluded; but the words are there, and the words are guilt."

Bertha sobbed, but spoke not.

"I gave my promise to return him the letters, and I have done so, and kept my word," said he. "But I doubt it would be wiser to follow him, and take them back; and if I wrung his neck in the process the work would be better done."

"No, no, no," said Bertha, clinging to his arm. "He might stab you, as he did the man yes-
terday, Robert, and what would become of me then?"

"Do not cry so bitterly, wife. The sorrow is great, but we must bear it. And if anything happened to me, she would be so lonely and sad, eh?"

"Why, whom have I in the world, but you, dearest?"

"Ay. Well, we must try and be more to one another than we have been of late. If the sorrow draws us nearer together, it will not be so grievous. But that poor dear Arthur. I must write to him to-night, Bertha."

"Not to-night, Robert."

"Not at once?"

"No, I am sure that you are too much agitated to write the letter that should be written, and you always say that you wish to sleep over anything of importance."

"Ay, but this is not a thing to sleep over. She may have joined him, have told her own story, been taken back to his honest arms, have had his children on her knee."

"And if that were so, Robert, would it be for you to tear her from his arms again?"

"I would prevent her getting back to him."

"But if she should have got back?"

"Bertha, you do not mean that you would have me possess this secret and keep it from him. You cannot for one moment entertain such a thought, or presume to utter it."
"Do not be angry."

"Angry. If I could think you serious, I would never be angry with you again. I do not see that we could ever have another thought in common."

"Please do not make me cry any more. You know that I would sooner die than advise you to do anything against your honour. I only meant that if you thought, after considering everything over in your own wise, deep manner—you know I can never think in that way, and you ought never to be angry at my seeing only bits and pieces of things—"

"No, Bertha, I know you are incapable of unworthiness. Well, tell me what you thought."

"Those letters—now please bear with me—those letters must have been written a long time ago, and since then there may have been repentance, and sorrow—real earnest repentance; and we know that since then has come marriage, and perhaps a better sense of what is good and right."

"Grant all—and go on."

"Well, the knowledge of the—the man came to you by an accident, and you certainly forced the secret out. I only want you to consider whether you are bound to act on knowledge that came in such a way."

"I am still unable to understand you, Bertha. But while we are upon the subject, tell me how you learned that this Adair was in the prison-place."

"He sent to tell me," said Bertha, not knowing what other answer to make at the spur of the moment.
"He sent to tell you! Who was his messenger?"
"I do not know the man's name, but he is a perfumer."
"Do you mean the man who comes after Henderson?"
"Yes."
"But you did not see him at that time in the morning?"
"He sent the message through Henderson," said Bertha, uneasily.
Robert Urquhart rang violently, and Angelique entered.
"Send Henderson here directly."
"Oui, Monsieur."
"What are you going to say to the poor girl?" said Bertha, whose terrors were all aroused again, and who especially remembered Henderson's excitability on the subject of her lover.
The lady's-maid entered. It would be too much to say that she had not been prepared for a scene, for she had seen Ernest Adair enter the house, and knew that he had been for a long time with her employers, to whom such visit boded no good. But she was surprised, on coming in, to see Mr. and Mrs. Urquhart standing near together, and apparently on no hostile terms, and she was still more surprised at the greeting she received from her master.
"Henderson, I never judge anybody without giving him or her the chance of making answer. Did any Frenchman give you a message this morning, to be delivered to your mistress?"
"Yes, sir," said Henderson, perceiving at a glance that her mistress had spoken the truth, and therefore that it was useless for her attendant to tell a lie.

"Who was it?"

"M. Silvain, sir."

"That person wants to marry you, does he not? Don't look impertinent, but answer the question."

"I hope there is no harm in a poor girl listening to an honest man, sir."

"This Silvain wishes to marry you? I ask once more," said Urquhart, in a voice that made Henderson tremble.

"Yes, sir, he does," she said.

"Then you had better tell him that the sooner he takes you away and does it, the better; and that if he has not made up his mind to take you into his own house, he will find you a lodging somewhere else, for you don't sleep another night in mine."

"Sir?" said Henderson, doubtful of her ears.

"And you may tell him, at the same time, that if ever he brings a message from another gaol-bird to any member of my family, I will kick him up and down the avenue like a football, and then hand him to the police. Explain that to the fellow in your best French, and now go and pack your boxes."

"Might I speak to you, Madame?" Henderson contrived to say through her anger. "I think it would be best if I were to speak to you, Madame, as gentlemen do not understand everything. Per-
haps by-and-by might be more convenient, Madame?"

And Henderson withdrew.

"She is not a good girl, Bertha," said Urquhart, "and I never understood your liking her. Pay her all she asks, however, as you have rather spoiled her, and we must not be over-hard upon faults that we have helped to create."
CHAPTER XIV.

The agitation which Bertha had been suffering, since the hour when she was roused that morning to hear Henderson's version of Adair's summons, had been so severe that it could receive little addition from a new interview with her rebellious servant. The latter, conscious of her power, had expected that when called to the presence of her mistress in the little bed-room where Mrs. Lygon had achieved her victory over Henderson, she should find Mrs. Urquhart eager to make atonement for the roughness of her husband. But if it is unsafe to calculate upon the acts of strong persons, it is almost as difficult to estimate the endurance of weak ones, and Henderson, to her surprise, found her mistress more than usually self-possessed, and by no means in a penitent state of mind. There was no actual resolution in Bertha, but she had resigned herself to float with a stream that was too strong for her, and she now indulged a vague hope of being safely landed.

"Mr. Urquhart has told you that he wishes you to leave, Henderson," she said, "and, of course, his will is law. I am very sorry to part with you, as you know, and I shall be glad to do everything for you, and to help you to any new situation. I shall
have no hesitation in recommending you strongly to any one. And Mr. Urquhart is ready to behave with the greatest liberality as to wages."

For a few moments Henderson's indignation was so blended with her surprise, that she could not decide upon her reply, and she stood angrily crushing and rubbing a corner of her apron. Then she answered, breathing hard and fast,

"I am to go, Madame?"

"You heard what your master said, Henderson?"

"Yes, Madame, I did. But I took the great liberty to answer, Madame, that gentlemen did not always understand everything, and it was very far from my expectation, Madame, to hear you speak what you have done. I supposed, Madame, that you would make Mr. Urquhart understand that I was not to be turned out of the house like a dog."

"What could I say to Mr. Urquhart in the state of mind in which you saw him, Henderson?"

"It is not for a poor servant to counsel or advise her mistress what she ought to say to her master, Madame," returned Henderson, with elaborate affectation of humility; "it is quite enough for her to answer when she is asked questions."

"Mr. Urquhart's determination is very distressing, no doubt, Henderson," said Bertha, "and I am sure as much so to me as to you, for you suit me exceedingly well, and how I shall be able to replace you, I have not the least idea in the world. But
who can say anything to him when he has made up his mind?"

"If I did not take that liberty, Madame, it wasn't because I had not anything to say, or was afraid to say it, but because I thought and hoped that you would say it much better than me. Is Mr. Urquhart gone out, Madame?"

"No, he is not," said Bertha; "but what do you mean by asking?"

"My character, Madame, is as dear to me as any lady's is to her, and perhaps more so, as she has everything in the world, and I have got nothing but my good name. And though Mr. Urquhart's tongue is very rough, he has a good heart, and he will do what is just and right."

"I tell you that he is ready to make you compensation for your going away hastily, and I will do a good deal besides."

"You don't understand me, Madame, or you don't want to understand me, but it is not about money I was speaking, after such words as were said to me in the drawing-room, and which I never thought to hear said to me, least of all in your house, Madame; and I know right well that if such words had been unjustly used to a poor girl in the service of Mrs. Lygon, she would never have rested until they were called back, and it is not a gentleman's angry voice and black looks that would have frightened her."

"I do not see why you should speak of Mrs. Lygon, Henderson. You are perfectly aware of
the trouble which has come to us all by her visit to France, and I heartily wish that it had not happened."

Henderson's anger suddenly gave way to a feeling of superiority, which it became impossible for her not to manifest by a smile of exceeding insolence.

"What I may know about Mrs. Lygon, Madame, and what I may not know, and what she may have thought proper to tell me, or not to tell me, is not the business now. I only meant to say that she would have stood by a servant that had stood by her, and would have saved her from the disgrace and shame of being turned out of doors."

"There is no turning out of doors," said the humiliated Bertha, "and everything is done to spare your feelings. Of course you would not think of repeating to Silvain the angry nonsense which Mr. Urquhart told you to repeat to him, and you will be able to show him the proof that you were well thought of here. If you like, you can say that you left of your own accord."

It was not in the Hendersonian nature to abstain from trampling on a defeated antagonist.

"Thanking you very much for your advice, Madame, I beg your pardon if I choose to say to Silvain what I choose to say to him. It is for ladies and gentlemen to have secrets between one another, and tell one another the thing that is not, but poor persons are taught that man and wife is one flesh, and that what concerns one concerns
the other. Humbly thanking you for your advice, Madame, I don't intend to deceive a man who never deceived me."

Yet, in this speech, Bertha—a woman—heard but a woman's taunt, and a woman's ungovernable tongue, and was saved by instinct from feeling the full force of words that might have shamed her to the soul.

"Your indignation at being sent away makes you very angry, Henderson, but you ought to feel that you have no cause of complaint against me. I have always treated you with the greatest kindness; and trusted you."

"Yes, Madame, and you have trusted me with things that have brought me to this, and for aught I know may ruin me, with poor Silvain. It is a pretty state of things when a lady's conduct not only puts herself in danger, but destroys people about her, who can't help themselves. I don't want to say too much, Madame, for I pity you very sincerely, but I can't have my comfort and happiness broken to pieces because a lady that I live with chooses to play a dangerous game, and has not got the wisdom to play it properly."

"What do you want to do, Henderson—what do you want me to do?" said Bertha, quailing.

"I don't see what you can do, Madame, though I should be ashamed of myself if I was afraid to say anything to my husband—when he had no proof against me."

Bertha gazed, with mixed feelings of fear and of
insulted womanhood, upon the inferior who dared address such words to her.

"I think you had better go and consult with Mrs. Lygon before you take any step at all," said Mrs. Urquhart.

"And if it is not making too bold to ask, Madame, what would you like me to say to Mrs. Lygon? I am not a great coward, Madame, but I should shiver in my shoes to stand up before that sweet lady, and tell her what I think, or, I may say, what I know."

"And what do you know, Henderson?" cried the persecuted Bertha, recklessly.

"At least, Madame, I know this much, that one lady is kindly making herself the scape-goat for another lady, but does not think what a wicked burden is being laid upon the scape-goat's back," said Henderson, making, in her lofty anger, an unusual diversion into the regions of imagery.

"My sister knows her own business," said Bertha, in a low voice. "All I say is, that I think you had better consult with her before doing yourself any harm."

The word was not well chosen.

"I am not afraid of doing myself any harm," retorted Henderson. "It is only because I should wish to save other people from harm that I don't set myself right in two minutes; but if Madame is much afraid of my coming to harm, she will, perhaps, be so good as to favour me with her leave to go and speak to Mr. Urquhart."
“Henderson,” said poor Bertha, “Mrs. Lygon likes you very much, and I am sure would take you to England with her. Why should you not go with her, and Silvain could set up a shop in London, where he would be sure to succeed?”

“Begging your pardon, Madame, that will not suit. And if I was to be handed over to Mrs. Lygon, (and I don’t say that it wouldn’t be a pride and an honour to be with her,) if her character is to be taken away in France, I don’t see what place she could offer a respectable girl in England.”

“Would you like to marry Silvain, and I could assist you from time to time with money?” Such was Bertha’s next pitheous proposal.

“It is very good, I am sure,” replied the inexorable Henderson, “for a lady to take so much thought about the welfare of poor people like me and Silvain; but if it is all the same, we should prefer to take care of ourselves in our own way. But if I might ask a favour of Madame, if I am not making too free——” she added.

“What can I do for you, Henderson?” asked Bertha, eagerly.

“It is not so much for me, Madame, as for yourself. I think if you was to go and see Mrs. Lygon, and tell her what has happened, it might be a good thing.”

The tone in which the last words were said, implied so much, that Mrs. Urquhart saw that this was what Henderson intended her to do.

“Yes, I might do that,” said Bertha, slowly.
And even in that hour of trouble she instinctively cast a look into the mirror that was nearest to her.

"It would be a very good thing," said Henderson. And in a moment she darted to a basketed flask of eau-de-Cologne that stood on a table, moistened her mistress's handkerchief, and was bathing Mrs. Urquhart's forehead and eyes as gently and seduliously as if the relations of mistress and maid had been of the most kindly character.

"Do you know Mrs. Lygon's lodgings?" said Bertha, entirely surrendering.

"Quite well, Madame. I will show them to you."

"Yes, but I must not be missed. In the temper in which Mr. Urquhart—"

"I understand, Madame. But we shall not be very long—and—I think you said that you would have no objection to give me a character."

"Of course I will."

"Mr. Urquhart has no objection to that, Madame?"

"On the contrary, he thinks that I have spoiled you a little, and the last thing he said was, that he did not wish to be hard."

"I am sure he is very kind, Madame. Well, Madame, I do know an old French lady, who was brought up in England, and who would like to have an English girl who could read to her, and remind her of young days, and I think that she would take me. But, poor thing, she cannot come out of her room to ask about my character. It would be a
great thing for me, if Madame would have the condescension to visit her; and if I am to turn out of the house to-night, it would be necessary to see her at once. Mr. Urquhart would have no objection to that?"

The tale was told so glibly, that Bertha doubted for a moment whether it were not a true one. She did not repeat it quite so glibly to Robert Urquhart, but told it quite well enough to satisfy a man who was naturally unsuspecting, and who, at this moment, was almost resolutely so—for woman's choicest time to deceive man is when he is generously regretful for having been harsh—and in half an hour Bertha was following Henderson, who, some distance in advance of her mistress, led the way to the lodging of Mrs. Lygon.

"I expected *that*," said Ernest Adair to himself, as he observed Henderson moving down upon the house he was watching from a window. "And here is my lady, walking as fearlessly as if she were a Sister of Charity. I fear that I have undervalued her intellects, or have not pursued the best method of developing them. The woman who, after that pleasant scene to-day, calmly walks off to see the other woman, has shown either marvellous tact or unequalled courage, and I had not credited my poor Bertha with any extraordinary quantity of either. I am truly glad that I determined to be her guardian angel—I shall conduct her to a better destiny than I expected. So, the old lady of the house has no lady staying there—no lodger in the world, never
let lodgings—I can see the lies, though I can’t hear them. Quite indignant, actually—her departed saint of a husband left her quite enough to live upon without turning lodging-letter—how the old head nods. But the advanced guard closes with the enemy, wants to say a word, enters, and the door closes—my lady looks doubtful, but she will not have to wait long—door re-opens, and Mrs. Urquhart is received with a kindly smile—Madame is upstairs, and will be delighted to see her, and my lady enters—the old lady stands at the door—I wonder why. No, I see. Because that possibly holy, and certainly dirty, priest is coming by. To be sure; and she receives his benediction, and smiles thankfully—blessed are they that tell the truth, when it is quite convenient, for they shall be allowed to lie when it is not—did he mumble that beatitude to her? Now then, how long shall I give the amiable sisters for their interview?”
CHAPTER XV.

It was a quiet, neat little chamber in which Laura received her sister. The single window looked upon the street, but creepers had been trained upon wires that were drawn from the sill to the eaves of the two-storeyed house, and a pleasant light came through the green leaves, and a pleasant perfume from some flowers that showed among them.

"I had expected you sooner, dear Bertha; but I suppose that it was impossible for you to escape. Did you come alone?" said Laura, embracing her.

Mrs. Lygon had been writing, and several sheets covered with manuscript lay upon the table. As she put them together, Bertha suddenly turned away her eyes, as if some recollection had come upon her. Mrs. Lygon misconceived the action.

"These are scarcely secrets, dear, and you know them."

"I wish I did not," said Bertha, seating herself.

It was a childish exclamation, and produced only a look of calm pity from her sister, who, having placed her writing in a drawer near her, sat down opposite to Bertha.

"Have you any news to tell me?" asked Laura.

A simple question, to elicit such an answer as
Bertha might have given. But, in truth, she had come with the hope that, though at the bidding of Henderson, she would be compelled to tell her sister of the girl's discharge, and perhaps of the earlier portion of the scene that had led to it, the more terrible revelation might be spared. If any sort of a peace should be made with Henderson, and if Laura should be induced to leave France, Bertha would have temporised to her heart's content.

"Yes," said Bertha, "two or three things have happened, but I hoped that you would take my advice, and go home."

"Your advice, dear?"

"Yes, I wrote to you to go home. You had my note in the garden, I know, for Henderson told me that she had delivered it into your hand."

"My dear Bertha, you need not be energetic on such a matter. Of course I had your note, and I have not gone home."

"It is very easy for you to be calm, but if you had to go through the scenes that I experience, you would not be quite so composed. Are you going to stay here?"

"That may depend upon what you have to tell me."

"I do not know why it should," replied Bertha, "because what I have to tell you does not concern yourself, but me."

"And I came to France on my own concerns, not yours."
"If you are going to reproach me with that, I wish that I had not come to you," said Bertha. "It is too much that I should be attacked on all sides in the way I am."

"Bertha," said her sister, calmly, "if you consider the circumstances under which I left the house of your husband, and yet think that this is a tone which you ought to use to me, I, too, shall be compelled to wish you had not come. But do not cry, dear. I know your nature, and I do not reproach you that while you think nothing of the sacrifices others make for you—sacrifices you can scarcely understand, Bertha—the smallest affliction to yourself makes you petulant. You are my sister, and I am true to you in spite of all. Now, tell me your news."

"Well, Robert has taken a strong dislike to Henderson."

"I am not surprised at that. Of course he thinks that she was party to my returning to the house, and even if he thinks that she was not to blame,—a man does not like the presence of any one who reminds him that he has been deceived. We must not let her suffer."

"That is what I told her; and I said that I thought you would take her to England with you."

"You must make no engagements for me. I know not what my course may be, but we can do something for her."

"It must be done soon, for Robert insists on her leaving."
"When did he tell you so?"
"To-day," said Bertha.
"Then it is Henderson's affairs that have brought you, not mine or your own, and yet you knew that I was here, Bertha."
"What good could I do by coming?" replied Bertha; "and then I was afraid of exciting Robert's suspicions, after what had happened. But what can be done for Henderson?" she persisted, anxious to evade any closer inquiry.
"You must try and find her another place."
"But there is no time. Robert is so resolved on her leaving, and she is naturally unhappy about it."
"But he does not wish to discharge her at a moment's notice—surely we have much more pressing matters to consider than what is to be done with Henderson."
"Yes—but you don't know her," said Bertha, reddening. "She is afraid for her character, and something must be done."
"She brought you here, did she not?" said Mrs. Lygon.
"Yes."
"Henderson!" said Mrs. Lygon, opening the door quickly.
The girl was seated at the foot of the stair leading up to the room. Laura might have been excused for supposing that Henderson had been pursuing her trade of listener, but even Tasso's Erminia could hardly have "precipitated" from the door to the spot which Henderson occupied.
"I am here, m'm," said the girl, springing up. "You might think, m'm," she hastened to say, "that I was listening at the door, but far from that, m'm, if you'll believe me, I was determined that nobody else should listen."

"I did not suspect you, Henderson," replied Mrs. Lygon, quietly. "Come in. We were speaking of you. Mrs. Urquhart tells me," said Laura, resuming her seat, "that Mr. Urquhart does not wish you to continue in his service."

Henderson darted a quick glance at her mistress.

"Those are the quiet words in which ladies put things, m'm. Mr. Urquhart has turned me out of his house."

"No, no, not that," said Bertha.

"I am ordered to be out of the house to-night, m'm," said Henderson, addressing Laura, "which is one and the same thing."

"I did not understand you, Bertha, to say that the discharge was so immediate."

"I said there was no time to lose," stammered Bertha.

Mrs. Lygon looked at her even more piercingly than Henderson had done.

"Did Mr. Urquhart himself order you away?" Laura said, turning to the girl.

"Yes, m'm," she replied, compressing her lips.

"When?"

"This morning, I told you," interposed Bertha.

"As soon as M. Adair had left the house," added Henderson.
Laura started—turned deadly pale—and gazed on Bertha without speaking. A pause, and then a thought sent the blood to Mrs. Lygon's face, and it was almost breathlessly that she asked—

"Whom did M. Adair see?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Urquhart, m'm."

Once more, pale as a marble statue, and as motionless, Laura sat gazing intently upon Bertha.

Neither spoke, but Bertha made convulsive movements with her hands, and gave other evidence that she was fearfully ill at ease.

Laura continued to gaze upon her sister. But the eyes of the latter were averted, and it needed a subtler interpreter than the girl to say what was denoted by that rigid expression on Mrs. Lygon's beautiful features.

Henderson could bear the suspense no longer.

"I know I ought not to speak until I am spoken to, m'm," she said, "but those who are at all, ought to be trusted altogether, and though I ought not to give my opinion," she added (again using the curious plea by which the inferior classes conceive that they have excused themselves for doing wrong—the avowal of a full knowledge that they know they are not doing right), "between two ladies who are sisters there ought to be no secrets."

"Henderson," said Mrs. Lygon, suddenly arousing, "it is not for you to say anything to me which your mistress has not ordered you to say. Remember that."

"Begging your pardon, m'm, a hundred times,
and a thousand at the back of that, if needful, what
you say is quite right, and it is a liberty in me
to say whether it is right or wrong. But Mrs.
Urquhart is not my mistress now, being, as I am,
discharged—"

"Mrs. Urquhart is my sister, Henderson," said
Mrs. Lygon, firmly.

"Then let her behave as a sister," burst out
Henderson, breaking through all propriety, and
forgetting even her respect for Mrs. Lygon, in the
resolve to make a revelation. "Things have hap-
pened in our house which you ought to know, m'm,
and out of it also."

Mrs. Lygon rose, and pointed to the door, but the
gesture had not its effect.

"And I could run out at that door, and hide my
head, m'm, for presuming to speak in such a way,
but I feel that I must speak, and I will. Mr. Adair
has been in prison, m'm, and master found Mrs.
Urquhart in the prison too, and how they have
worked upon master I don't know; but if you'll
take my opinion, the lady that left our house
because she was too proud to say that she had
a right to stay in it, that lady has been given
up to save her sister, who won't even tell her
the truth."

"If we are ever to speak again in this world,
Henderson," said Mrs. Lygon, when the impetuous
rush of words ceased, and the girl stood with swelling
nostril, yet with eyes ready to run over with tears,
"you will instantly ask pardon of Mrs. Urquhart,
and of myself, for your having dared to speak as you have done."

Down, actually on her knees, fell once more the excitable Henderson, and poured out apology, thick and fast, but (with the pertinacity of her nature) interwoven and interlaced with her petition for forgiveness, reiterations of the story she had been telling so volubly. There was no escaping from her assurances that Mrs. Lygon had been wronged, or from her prayers to be pardoned for having revealed the wrong; and in the most effectual way she forced her narrative, over and over again, upon the ears of her to whom she seemed to be suing for grace. And when she was almost silenced, Laura knew far more than had passed the lips of the girl.

"Go down-stairs," said Laura, still preserving her calmness.

"This moment, m'm," said Henderson, springing to her feet; "and now, m'm, never heed me, or what is going to happen to me and mine, for that's of no account now. Do justice to yourself, m'm, for the dear love of those who are left behind you in England—do that, m'm," cried the girl, tearing open the door, and rather plunging from the room than leaving it.

Mrs. Lygon secured the door.

"Now, Bertha, the truth?"

"O, don't torment me; don't, don't," said the miserable Bertha, wringing her hands and writhing on her chair.

"Have done with that folly," returned her sister,
almost sternly. "It will not avail you here, to-day. Tell me what you have done, or permitted to be done, with my name and fame."

"I cannot tell you—you have heard from her—Robert believes that you are not—not good."

"He believed that when he took my hand from yours, and I, your sister, from sisterly love bore that we should change places, that I should be led away from you for fear I should dishonour you by my touch. I bore that—and now I would know how you have repaid me."

"What could I do?"

"I ask you what you have done? Did you go to the prison and meet this man?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He sent for me," gasped Bertha, "at least I thought it was better that I should go."

"Better than what?"

"Better than you."

"He sent for me, then? Ah!—I can have the truth by a word to her; but do not you humiliate yourself any more. But I will have the truth."

"Yes, he sent for you, and I went, and Robert found me there."

"And you had to give a reason for being in that man's company in a prison, and you said—"

Bertha was silent, but weeping hysterically.

Her sister took her hands from her face, as one might deal with a rebellious child.
"And you said— If you do not answer, I will have him fetched."

"I said nothing," sobbed Bertha, in her sister's grasp. "I had no words and no voice. But he spoke. Was it my fault that he said what he did?"

"Your fault! What did he say?"

"That I had come to beg him not to injure a certain person."

"He made no such weak, foolish speech; and if he had made it, Robert would have given him the lie. He said that you had come to beg safety for me—me—he named me?"

"Could I prevent it?"

"Am I accusing you? And you listened, and confirmed his falsehood by your silence?"

"It was not quite a falsehood."

"Bertha!"

"I had been begging him on my knees not to do anything at all. I had told him that we were trying to get the money for him, and that we should do so very soon, and I was imploring him not to ruin us both—this was when Robert came in."

"There is no quarrel between you and Robert. I could see that by a glance at your face. The shame—the guilt—has been transferred to me. Do not dare to deny it—let me know all—give me a chance for my life, Bertha."

"Do not speak so. O! why did you not go to England?" said Bertha, crying bitterly.

"I will go to England," replied Mrs. Lygon, in a strange tone, "only I must know exactly how I
stand with friends and enemies. Perhaps I will go to-night."

"O! do, do."

"Then there is a reason why I should go at once—escape."

"Yes—at least there may be—I do not know what Robert will do. He may send for—"

"Do not you mention that name," replied Laura. "Tell me what passed between your husband and that man."

"He is a bad man, a very cruel man—"

"I know what he is—say what he did."

"He had a book of letters."

"Letters!" gasped Mrs. Lygon, her face once more becoming ashy white.

"And he gave them to Robert to read. O! do not look so dreadfully."

"Never mind my looks," said Mrs. Lygon, with a distorting smile. "So he gave Mr. Urquhart a book of letters?"

"A book, yes," said Bertha. "You have seen the book, then?"

"I have seen it—yes, I have seen it," repeated Mrs. Lygon, slowly, and gazing intently into the eyes of her sister. "And you saw Robert read it?"

"He read every word."

"Then he said—what? Do not fear to tell me exactly."

"He called me to him, and showed me some of the—the letters."

"And you read them?"
"A few words, here and there, only, Laura."

"And you said—what did you say for your sister, Bertha?"

"What could I say, with those letters before my eyes?"

"True—very true—what could you say with those letters before your eyes," repeated Mrs. Lygon, slowly. "What could be said? There was no one to dash the book on the ground, and cry out that wickedness was at work, and that God was just—no one to speak for me, and to demand that I should be heard before I was judged. A sister was there, but there was no one to do this."

"O, Laura, Laura, remember who was in the room."

"Yes, Ernest Adair was there. And Robert Urquhart was there. And I will tell you who else was there. A wife, who, if her husband had laid his strong hand upon Ernest Adair, and had sworn to kill him on the spot, as he would have done, had he known all—a wife was there, who even now keeps a place in her heart for that villain, and would have tried to stay her husband's hand, at the price of her sister's honour."

"It is false that I care for Ernest Adair," said Bertha, terrified, and crying.

"It is true," replied her sister. "I was not long in discovering that. You were wearied with his importunities, and frightened at his menaces, and you would gladly have been separated from him by some shift, some accident. But the moment that
you found this could only be done with peril to him, old, evil feelings came back, and you would have saved him."

Bertha flushed angrily under these words, and angrily she replied,

"It is not for you to speak to me thus. You had better think of your own position, and escape to England as soon as you can. Mr. Urquhart intends to write to Mr. Lygon to-night, and you know best whether you wish to meet him."

"Was this what you came to tell me, Bertha?" said Mrs. Lygon, calmly. "I heard nothing of this from you until that girl had been with us."

"It is not pleasant to tell such things, but I have told you now."

"It is not pleasant. No, you are quite right, Bertha. Let us speak of something else. Let us speak of your position."

"Leave me alone. I must manage for myself, as I have done before, and as I suppose I can do again."

"You wish for no further assistance from me?"

"I do not know what assistance I have had. You have made every day a terror to me, and I have wished myself dead a thousand times."

"You may have to wish it again, poor child, before all is over. Do you suppose that such men as your husband and—Mr. Lygon—are likely to leave this terrible story where it is? Do you think that Ernest Adair will not sacrifice you, when he is pressed, and the time comes?"
"No, he will not," said Bertha, promptly. "I am not defending him—"

"Yes, defend him; why not? You have already saved his life—will you shrink from doing him a smaller service! Why should you not defend him—he will need defenders soon."

"Then you are going to persevere in your plans," said Bertha. "I think that it is very wicked and very unwomanly, and in spite of all that has taken place, you are not justified in such revenge."

"Revenge! How little do you know of me. But I must not talk with you upon this. Even now, while you are almost hating me in your heart, you need my help. What do you intend to do with Henderson? She is not your sister—she has no pity for your weakness and folly, and she does not recollect being one of two children walking about a great garden with their arms round one another's neck, and talking innocently of love and marriage, but vowing to one another never to be separated—she is enraged with you, and at all events she has her own battle to fight."
CHAPTER XVI.

"You seem to take a pleasure in making the worst of my situation," said Bertha.

"Indeed I do not," replied Mrs. Lygon, "but it is necessary that you should understand it. You have taken Henderson into your confidence, and she will betray it to-night."

"Yes," said Bertha, almost spitefully, "she is an enemy to me; but she has become wonderfully attached to you."

"And you are angry with me for that, and yet, Bertha, you wish me to intercede with your servant for you. No, do not answer; do you think that I would willingly humiliate you? Do you refuse to let me speak to her?"

"Refuse,—no," replied Mrs. Urquhart, sullenly.

Mrs. Lygon again summoned the girl, who came with her customary alacrity, but whose eyes gave testimony that she had been crying, as she did everything else, with all her might.

"Henderson," said Laura, "I believe that you consider me your friend."

"Indeed and indeed I do, m'm, if you are good enough to let me call you so," replied Henderson.

"Are you willing to be guided by my advice?"

"Would you please to put it in the way of orders,
m’m. It would be much more becoming in me to take your orders.”

“I have no right to give you any orders. But if you are disposed to follow out my wishes, I will tell you what they are.”

“Indeed I will, m’m. And if I don’t I give you leave to think me all that I know you was told to think me, and I can’t say worse than that, m’m.”

“Then leave Mr. Urquhart’s house, without any rebellious behaviour. Do not use a single disrespectful word to any one. Get yourself a quiet and decent lodging in Versailles, where you may easily be found at need, for I think that you will be needed to assist in a good work. Remember that you will be unfit for such work, your word will not be taken, and your services will not be asked, if you now do anything wrong or hasty.”

“I hope I understand you, m’m. Will the work be for you?”

“Yes.”

“I will do everything, m’m, exactly as you order me. And I am sure you would like me to ask Madame’s pardon for anything I said to her when I was naturally put out, as I certainly was, m’m, about being ordered out of the house. I ask your pardon, Madame, and humbly, I do, indeed.”

“Very well,” said Bertha, much relieved, yet unwilling to own her obligation, “no more need be said upon a disagreeable subject.”

At a signal from Mrs. Lygon, Henderson again withdrew.
"You are secured from that danger, for the time," said Mrs. Lygon calmly, "but the greater danger is behind, and against that I can do nothing to protect you—now. Heaven help you, my poor Bertha."

"Why do you delight in terrifying me, I ask you?" replied Bertha. "Unless you have irritated him beyond all bearing, he will do no more than he has done before, and I must try to meet his demands. It is a very sad thing that you came over at all, but the best thing you can do is to go back again, and keep out of the way until the storm has blown over."

"That is your advice to me?"

"Certainly it is, and the sooner you return to England the better. And now I must hurry home again, for fear of some fresh unpleasantness. Good bye, Laura. You know that I should much like to hear of you, but I am afraid it will not do for you to write to our house, so I must trust to hear of you in some other way. Good bye."

And the kiss which Bertha gave her sister was scarcely warmer than her words. She gave it and turned to go, taking special heed to her drapery, lest it might be damaged in the narrow stair that led from her sister's room.

But Laura's heart could not brook that parting, and as Bertha was taking careful hold of her dress, preparatory to descending, Laura sprang forward, threw her arms round her neck, and kissed her again and again.

"There, go now, Bertha. I do not think that we shall ever meet again. God bless you."
Mrs. Urquhart murmured some almost unintelligible words, settled her bonnet, which had been somewhat disarranged by Laura's vehemence, and she went down.

Henderson was waiting below, and opened the door for her mistress. Bertha passed out into the street, and the next moment encountered Ernest Adair, who had descended from his post of watchfulness, in order to await her re-appearance.

He did not speak, but raised his hat, and smiled, as approving what she had been doing. Mrs. Urquhart passed on without returning his salute; but Henderson, following, gave him a look of undisguised hatred.

"Your prospects are improving, Matilda," he said, carelessly.

"Not when I am looking upon a wretch," replied the undaunted Henderson, promptly.

"You may apply to me for a character, if you like," responded Adair.

We must not set down mention of the quarter where the lady's-maid energetically declared that she would prefer to obtain a testimonial. She then hastened on after Bertha.

Mr. Adair entered the house, at once informed its mistress that he was sent on by the lady who had gone out, mounted the stair, and knocked at the door of Laura's apartment.

Supposing that Henderson had returned, Mrs. Lygon made the usual answer to a knock, and Ernest Adair presented himself.
"I am the most unwelcome visitor Mrs. Lygon could receive," he said; "but my visit is necessary."

Without a word, Laura rose, collected the papers she had laid aside on Bertha's entrance, and placed them in her pocket, then put on bonnet and shawl, and deigning no notice of the intruder, left the house. With all his effrontery, Adair was abashed for the instant, and had not even presence of mind to examine the room, as he would otherwise assuredly have done in search of anything that might be turned to his own account. But he followed Laura into the street, and rapidly recovering his self-command, once more addressed her.

"Action of this kind is childish, Mrs. Lygon, under the circumstances. You do not suppose that I shall be turned from my purpose of speaking to you by any assumption of displeasure on your part. How far do you wish me to follow you before you accord me five minutes of attention? There, it is as idle to look up and down for a gendarme—you will see none in this secluded part of the town, or if one should appear, he will not interfere with me. Be pleased, therefore, to listen to me."

Laura stood still, and made no reply.

"Your sister has been with you, and has apprised you of what has occurred at Mr. Urquhart's. If she had not come, I should have felt it only justice to you to have given you that information, in order to enable you to provide for your own safety."

"Justice," Mrs. Lygon repeated, scornfully.

"You are right, the word was ill-chosen—I should
have said kindness, for your own conduct would have
made it perfectly just in me to have left you to dis-
cover what had occurred by your meeting the con-
sequences. In spite of all that you had done, or
intended to do, however, I had not designed to
strike, but I had no alternative."

Mrs. Lygon still listened, in silence.

"The treachery of your friend and agent, M.
Silvain, with whom I have a long account to settle,
sent me to a place at which I requested your attend-
ance, but as it pleased other persons to disobey my
orders, and as your sister was discovered by her hus-
band kneeling at my feet, there was no means of
saving her but one."

"I received no message from you."

"I am aware of it, and you are, to a certain extent,
exonerated from blame for what has happened, an
additional reason why I am still willing to do any-
thing in my power for you."

"You can do nothing."

"It may be so. Or you may believe that I will
do nothing, and your own conscience tells you that
you have deserved nothing at my hands."

"I cannot understand you; but it is useless to
talk. You have completed your wickedness, and
can injure me no more."

"I have said that it was not my intention to
strike."

"No matter—it is done. You were stronger than
I was, this morning; now I am stronger than you.
You cannot make my position worse than it is."
"And you would imply that you can do much in the way of revenge? I doubt not that you will attempt it."

"I do not wish to speak of revenge. Some fearful day the judgment of God will certainly overtake you for what you have done."

"I understand that pious form of words, and also that you would gladly be the humble instrument in bringing an enemy to destruction."

"Ernest Adair, you said just now that you had acted in order to save my sister. If there is any lingering goodness in your nature, any spark of regard for her, you will make those words good. You have ruined my reputation in order to preserve hers—you will be content with that cruelty, and for the future you will spare her."

Adair looked at his victim long and silently. At length he said:

"You are a brave woman. I would say a good woman, but that you would despise such a tribute from me. But you are good, and you are brave, if in the midst of the most deadly affliction that ever came upon a wife and a mother, you have a thought for another, for the very person who has brought you into your sorrow."

"Have I your promise to cease all persecution of my sister from this moment?"

"If I give it, you will forgive what I have done to you?"

"No. I will never forgive you," said Mrs. Lygon. "Never," she added. "But if you will now leave
her unmolested, I will try to act as if I had forgiven."

"Truthfulness, even in misery," replied Adair, with something of admiration. "Let me strive to imitate it, and say frankly that I am grieved that I cannot give the promise."

"What!—you will persecute her still?"

"I cannot allow you to achieve, in the moment of defeat and ruin, the object which you came over to accomplish so triumphantly. Not that I have any false pride, or desire for mere victory. I have my eye only upon my own interests, and these will not suffer me to alter the course which I have hitherto pursued."

"She can do nothing more for you now," pleaded Mrs. Lygon. "You had already driven her nearly to distraction, and now that you have aroused her husband's suspicions, she will not dare to run any further risk—will you not desist from useless torture?"

"I know not why I should enter into explanations with you," said Adair, "but I seem compelled to tell you that I think—let me say that I hope—you mistake your sister's position. She is now so thoroughly reinstated in the good opinion of Mr. Urquhart, so taken anew to his heart, as it were, that he will be eager to show her every indulgence. His liberality, which had been somewhat restricted, I really cannot tell why, will break out again, and I speak very coarsely, but I prefer not to annoy you by a kind of diction which you detest—Mrs."
Urquhart will be able to help me more largely than heretofore."

"There is no answering such cold-blooded wickedness," said Mrs. Lygon, in a low voice.

"You might, of course, stop this flow of advantage to me," said Adair, "but there is no one else in the world that can, and I am quite sure of your inaction."

"I!" said Mrs. Lygon, glancing at him for a moment.

"I forgive the scorn in that look," he replied, "for the sake of the assurance it gives me that, however you may seek to revenge yourself, you will abstain from any vengeance that may compromise your sister. Let me add another word. I believe that I have, by my frankness in avowing that I still intend to obtain money from your sister, exposed myself to whatever danger your hatred may bring upon me."

"Leave Bertha in peace, and I—no, it would be false to say I could forgive you, but I will never seek to injure you."

"If I do not make that promise, you will do your utmost against me."

"What can I do?"

"You are a determined person, and you have great power of self-assistance. That consideration, if there had been no other, would have been enough to justify me in preferring to sacrifice one who can do so much for herself, and to save one who is so utterly helpless. You have made two distinct attempts upon my life."
"Your life! I! Are you mad, Ernest Adair?"

"Even my knowledge of Mrs. Lygon's habitual truthfulness cannot do away with my own personal knowledge of circumstances. I cannot forget that the first agent selected was Silvain, who was sent to pick a quarrel with me, and endeavour to kill me in a duel; or that the second was a ruffian who had probably escaped from the galleys, and who would have assassinated me in a quarrel at play. *Me servavit Apollo,*" added Adair, in his old sarcastic manner.

"And you dare to accuse me, even in your heart, of being party to such attempts? You dare not, Ernest Adair! and such charges are mean, dishonest efforts to justify your wickedness towards me. You know that you are speaking falsely."

"I do not, though it is difficult to look at you, and believe that you are trying to deceive me. I have, however, heard the most audacious falsehoods from women who have looked as truthful as yourself, and I believe no woman. I was about to offer you one caution."

"I am beyond your reach now," said Mrs. Lygon.

"Whether that be so or not, Bertha is still within it. The sop has been flung to Cerberus, but he may easily be awakened."

"You mean—"

"I mean this. For my own sake, I will do all in my power to keep your sister in her present position. I will levy my taxation with all the caution I can exercise. But if I discover that any one—I need
not be more explicit, Mrs. Lygon—that any one is plotting against me, I will take the shortest way towards ending the whole complication of interests."

"You would ruin Bertha with her husband?"

"Only in self-defence—but in self-defence I will do anything. That was what I designed to say to you, and I think you will now feel that I was warranted in intruding upon you."
CHAPTER XVII.

Mrs. Urquhart returned home, and found her husband awaiting her in the drawing-room.

"Have you placed yon girl?" was his question, asked in an indifferent tone.

"I think so," replied Bertha; "but I did not see the lady—she was too ill to be seen. But Henderson leaves, of course, to-night."

"Certainly—we'll have no more of her in this house. And now about this sad affair, which looks sadder the more I think about it."

"Then don't think about it, dear," was Bertha's answer. "I wish we had never known anything of it."

"Sometimes I am weak enough to wish so too, Bertha," he said; "but it is childish to wish to continue deceived in the character of those we love and trust. And if there was a woman in the world whom I loved and trusted next to yourself, it was your unhappy sister. Poor Arthur will bitterly remember what I said to him about her at parting, when I charged him to keep his faith in her, and some day to tell her that it was I who had so counselled him."

"Poor Arthur!" said Bertha, putting her handkerchief to her eyes.
There's a question or two I would like to ask you, my woman," he said, drawing her near him; "but I'm loath to talk to you too much about such a grief."

"No, please do not," said his wife.

"I will only ask you this, at present," said Robert; "and when we have got over the blow a bit, you shall tell me more. How came this fellow, Adair, to know anything about you, and why did he presume to send to you to come to him?"

There was a whole history of a life—of two lives—that might have been told in the reply; but that history was not for Bertha to tell. She pondered for a moment as she stood nestling under the wing of her husband, and then she said, boldly:

"I know nothing about him, except through Laura, and of course she must have been in communication with him."

"And bade him send for you."

"I suppose so."

"You think he wanted hush-money from her, and could not get it?"

"Laura cannot have much money to spare, you know. Arthur has a good salary, but the house is an expensive one."

"Ay, and to think of the bad woman stealing the money given her by her trustful husband, and handing it over to yon white-faced scoundrel. It's not the money I am thinking of, wife, but the mean, shameful deceit. I would say that she must despise herself whenever her husband takes out his purse.
for her, but she is past feeling in that way. However, she is your sister, my woman, and whatever I may think of her, I’ll say but little in your hearing.”

“Try and forget her,” plained Bertha.

“No, that will not do. Besides, I have my duty to do by that poor Arthur. What will he do with the children. I am minded to have them over here, Bertha. What would you say?”

“Oh no, Robert. Indeed I could not take the charge of children. I am not fit for it, and that makes me thankful that we have none of our own. Do not think of that.”

“It is not whether we would like the charge or not,” said Robert, gravely, “but whether it is not our duty to undertake it. A woman who is a wife, and might be a mother, should not talk about unfitness for such a work, I think. But there is time to consider that when we know what Arthur intends to do. I must write him to-night, but it is the heaviest letter I ever sat down to pen, Bertha.”

“I could not do it,” replied his wife.

“We can do anything that Providence is pleased to set before us in the way of our allotted duties,” said Robert, “and I have not much patience with people who dare to think Providence is unreasonable. But, as I said, it’s heavy wor. And there’s another thing I must do. That fellow Adair said, truly enough, that the police here know everything, and he proved it by telling me some matters of my own, that I did not suppose anybody but myself had heeded. I would like to be informed whether this
omniscient police knows anything about Mr. Adair himself, and what his comings and goings may be?"

It may easily be imagined that the latter part of this speech was a bad hearing for Bertha, who said, hastily,

"Surely you would not stoop to spy on him?"

"Surely I would stoop, or climb either," he answered coolly, "or do anything else that wasn't dishonest, to get the right to lay hold on the rascal. But it would be of no use for one to make inquiries here, as the folk, by his own tale, are all his own accomplices. But there's a high fellow in Paris, who owes me a day in harvest, and who would, I think, make it his business to find out the matter for me. I'll write to him about it, anyhow."

"What is his name?" asked Bertha. A vague idea that Adair might profit by the information, and in some way prevent revelations, hurried through her mind.

"You don't know anything of him," replied her husband. "He is not one of the people who are talked about, being wiser in his generation, and preferring to pocket his gains in silence. I rather helped him to the filling of his pockets, I fancy."

Bertha did not dare to press the question of the name, but the cunning of which she had a considerable share suggested other means of knowing it.

"If you are going to write letters, Robert dear," she said, "I wish you would sit up here and write them."

"What for, my woman?"
"Because what I have gone through to-day has made me so fearfully nervous that I cannot bear to be left alone. I must have your company a great deal more than I have had it of late, bad man," she said, affectionately pulling at his huge fingers.

"Very well, my woman, so be it," said Urquhart, and he sat down to write, bestowing contemptuous imprecations on the gaily bedizened blotting case, and the lady-trifles around it.

This was his letter to Arthur Lygon.

"My dear Arthur,

"I think that by a merciful dispensation your mind has been some way prepared for sad news, and that the blow which this letter will inflict upon you will not be so fearfully felt as if it were altogether sudden. I am not a man of many words, and I know not how to lead up to a revelation which it has become my painful duty to make to you. But I am writing to a strong man, and not to a weak woman, and I know that I would myself feel that the quicker bad news were given to me, the kinder would be the man who told them.

"Your wife is unworthy of you.

"By a strange chance, which I will not now stop to tell, the end of the chain of evidence came into my hand this day. I have since had the whole case before me, and it is my duty to extinguish every spark of hope by telling you that I have read a series of letters, in the handwriting of Mrs. Lygon, which place her guilt beyond a doubt. My poor
dear fellow, you must discard her at once and for ever.

"How my heart bleeds for you, Arthur, I can never tell you. When I recall our last conversation, and the counsel and charge I gave you, and the picture I made of your again meeting your wife, and making her happy in your love, I can but think what blinded, deceived creatures we are, and how weak and presumptuous it is in us to say what we will do on the morrow.

"But this we must do, if permitted. I hasten off these lines because it is not fit that you should be without the knowledge an hour longer than needful. I had thought to be myself the bearer of the sad tidings; but you will, I know, choose to be alone at the first shock. But write by return, or telegraph an appointment to meet me, at any English place, or where you will, as I must recount to you the whole details, and say much that must not be said in a letter. Only this—the person is not one of your own friends; I do not think you know him—you are spared this additional pang, but this is all. Do not hope, for a moment, that when you receive the particulars, they will contain aught of comfort, for it will not be so. But take no step whatever until we meet, and I will abide at home until I receive your answer.

"Poor Bertha sits by my side, sobbing her heart out. God bless you and console you, my dear Arthur.

"Your sorrowing friend,

"Arthur Lygon, Esq." "Robert Urquhart."
Such was the missive for England.

A few hasty lines were then penned to the Paris official, from whom Urquhart expected to gain information as to Ernest Adair, and Bertha, in spite of her affliction, had presence of mind enough to suggest that such a letter ought to be sealed. Her husband handed it to her for the purpose, and the same evening Ernest Adair received a note apprising him that Mr. Urquhart was applying to M——, Bureau de ——, Paris, for knowledge which must certainly not reach him who asked it.

"I must get in my harvest at once," was his comment on the note, "or it will be blasted."

But he did not neglect a precautionary measure in regard to the application by Urquhart, and while taking it, soliloquised upon the extreme happiness of that good man in having so good a wife as Bertha.
CHAPTER XVIII.

When the arrangements of this world cease to permit inferior persons to aid in working out the fortunes of their betters, it will be time for the novelist to apologise for plebeian portraiture. In the meantime he must take the actors as he finds them, in the drama of nature, and the footman must come in with a message when the heroine has finished her declamation.

The fretful Silvain, when it was explained to him by Henderson that she herself had been extruded from Mr. Urquhart's house, and that Ernest Adair had in some way poisoned the mind of the Scot against the beautiful lady whom the Frenchman almost adored, rose into a state of wrath which was far above raving. He was at a white heat. He scarcely spoke at all, but occasionally slapped his heart, pulled his hat on very firmly, and emitted savage noises with an oathy flavour in them. There was an utter absence of tenderness in his conversation with Matilde, as if her wrong had to be avenged before her sorrow could properly be consoled. He walked about vigorously, suddenly checking himself for no apparent reason, and then addressing himself to think intensely. The lion was eager for a spring,
but the direction in which the vengeful leap was to be taken was undecided.

"Nothing whatever is to be done yet, M. Silvain," was Henderson's reply to a muttered threat delivered for the tenth time to a large bottle of tooth-brushes that adorned the perfumer's counter.

"It is impossible to submit to such insults, Mademoiselle," was the reply.

"Do not talk nonsense. If a lady like Mrs. Lygon can wait to be righted, I suppose that I can wait. At all events, I have told you her wish, and that wish is mine."

Certainly Mademoiselle's slightest word was a law which should be observed with the utmost loyalty, but it was permitted to one to speak.

"And that is why you do not speak, I suppose," retorted Henderson, "but only walk about the place in a passion."

Silvain could not trust himself to speak on such a subject in the words that befitted the presence of his beloved Matilde.

"Then the less said the better," remarked his Matilde. "Listen to me. There are new plots being hatched, Silvain; mark my word if it is not so. Last night that Angelique was sent out of the house with a letter, and the fuss that she made about it, and the way she talked about being in time for the post, when it was long past the post hour, made me notice her. I was just leaving, so I offered to put the letter in, but she would not let me touch it. Then I determined I would know where she was
going, and though she took pains not to be traced, and turned back two or three times, she was no match for me."

"No, indeed," escaped the lips of the girl's admirer.

"She left the note for that man, Adair."

An execration which followed the mention of the name seemed a form with which M. Silvain made it a duty to comply, he having already gone through it at least a dozen times in the course of Henderson's narrative.

"Well, swearing does no good that I know of," said the girl, "so please not to do it any more while I am here. If ever you swear, after we are married, Silvain, it will be a bad day for you."

The Frenchman actually missed the opportunity of making what seemed the inevitable remark that the one vow at which his mistress had hinted would, &c., &c., &c. He simply begged pardon.

"I got back," continued Matilde, "before that heavy-legged Angelique could, and I said that she had been gone a long time, and that I thought she must have been delivering the letter in Paris. She got angry, and told me to mind my own business, forgetting that if I liked I could walk her out of the house in ten minutes."

"You shall do so."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. How do I know that she may not be useful in some way, and I had better have to deal with her, who I have got under my thumb, than with a new servant who does not
know me. Do you think a woman is such a fool as to remember some angry words, when she can gain a point by forgetting them? We leave such folly to men, M. Silvain. I made it up with Angelique, and gave her a China stud for her neck-ribbon, and we agreed to be friends for ever, and I could have got out all about the letter, only I knew it without, and besides I had another reason."

Might M. Silvain ask it?

"Yes, to be sure. I did not want Madame to know that I had two upon ten."

The phrase was incomprehensible by M. Silvain, notwithstanding that his mistress was good enough to translate it into *deux sur dix*.

"Why, you stupid," she said, laughing, "it is what one shopman in London whispers to another when he wants to put him on his guard against a customer who looks like a thief. 'Two eyes upon ten fingers.'"

M. Silvain was charmed, but not into the ecstacies which, on another occasion, would have been evoked by the explanation.

"Mrs. Urquhart has got to play her own game now, with Angelique to help her, and a nice game they will make of it. Oh, Silvain, he is coming here."

"Who is coming?" cried Silvain.

"Adair."

The perfumer seized a huge pair of scissors, which gave rather a ludicrous look to a demonstration of wrath by no means ludicrous. Henderson snatched
them, impatiently, from his hand, and darted into the apartment behind the shop, saying, as she closed the door,

"Don't let him see me, or I shall be obliged to say something I might be sorry for."

"He shall enter the room only over my body," was the chivalrous rejoinder.

Ernest Adair—with his accustomed cigarette—entered the shop, and took a chair with perfect *sang froid*.

"Well, Silvain, here I am again, but without the guard of honour that was good enough to attend me from your place the other night."

"If you come as a customer, Monsieur, I beg to decline serving you; in any other capacity I beg to decline knowing you," was Silvain's answer. It would have been angrier, but he knew that every word was heard by Matilde.

"Bah! let us have no such nonsense, man. Why, if I can forget and forgive, surely you may. If I say nothing about your having been seduced into hiring that ruffian Haureau to attempt my life, I do not think it is for you to recollect my irritation at being trapped and locked up."

"You are making an untruthful statement, M. Adair. The charge against me is false, and M. Haureau, who is a man of honour——"

"Ha! ha! A man of honour who has had the misfortune to differ with the world on first principles, and whose theories have been rewarded with a bit of chain and a cannon-ball at the end of it."
"It is false again, Monsieur. M. Haureau has been a brave sailor; and he assures me that not all the coarse language which you used towards him should have provoked him to touch you, but that he was excited by your shameless attempt to cheat him. As for any idea of assassination, your own terrors must have created it, and transferred your own dagger to the hand of my friend."

"Be it so, my dear Silvain; but, as you have heard bad language and seen bad play before, do not let those accidents of the other night deprive me of the title you confer on the amiable Haureau—that of your friend. I bear you no malice. I forgive you as freely as I did for insisting on fighting me, for the sake of that spiteful little devil, Matilde, whom her master has very properly turned out of his house. There! don't look savage, and don't seize the glass pestle, because it might break in your hands. I am not come to renew a quarrel with you, but to offer peace."

"I wish to discontinue all intercourse of every kind with you, Monsieur."

"But there must be two parties to such a severance of partnership, and I decline to be cast loose. Don't talk nonsense. Quarrels and points of honour are not for perfumers and people of that kind. We have been useful to one another, and may be useful again. Whether or not, we have each a few secrets of the other's, which it might be highly inconvenient to have divulged in unpleasant ways."

"You have no secret of mine, Monsieur, and I
have no longer that interest in your proceedings that can make me care to remember any secret of yours. Be at ease as to my revealing anything that concerns you, and do me the favour to drop my acquaintance."

"I shall do nothing of the kind."

"Then you will compel me to have recourse to violence."

"What, again. Have you got Haureau locked up in that room, ready to be let loose upon me again? Let us see?"

"Dare not to approach that room, Monsieur, at your peril."

"What, secrets from an old friend, Silvain?" said Adair. "For shame, that is a disloyalty for which I did not give you credit."

And Adair moved towards the door of the bower.

The Frenchman sprang to face him, and in a menacing manner bade him stand back.

"Is it such an awful secret?" said Adair, mockingly. "Ah; I have solved it. We are untrue alike to our friend and to our mistress. You fear that I shall acquire the mastery of a fact which will disarrange the relations between yourself and Matilde. But I am her friend, you know, and insist upon knowing the truth."

He pressed forward, smiling, and rather with the intention of provoking the Frenchman than of persisting in his attempt, when Silvain rushed upon him, and, taking him somewhat unawares, thrust
him violently from before the door. Adair staggered backward, and only preserved himself from falling by clinging to the door-post of the shop.

When he recovered himself, he made no effort to renew the conflict, but looked at Silvain for a few moments with a very diabolical expression, and then said:

"It is decreed, it seems. One of these days, Silvain, I shall kill you."

"The traveller is not always killed by the thief, but sometimes the thief by the traveller," returned Silvain, undauntedly.

"I shall do it," said Adair, between his teeth. "Look to yourself, Silvain," he added, leaving the shop.

As soon as he was gone, Henderson re-appeared, and the proud lover began to apologise to her for having been compelled to disregard her admonition to do nothing against Ernest Adair. He was promptly forgiven, and even rewarded with a kiss, a favour very charily vouchsafed by the prudent English girl, and M. Silvain was in the seventh heaven of delight for the rest of the day. Majora canamus.
CHAPTER XIX.

French officials usually exhibit a promptitude not so often displayed by their English contemporaries. Whether it be for good or for evil that the government functionary in France is invited to communicate with you, he never neglects you, and he seldom makes the Dawdle Move with which British bureaucracy always begins the game, in the hope that something may turn up to prevent you from again pestering your betters. Mr. Urquhart had not to wait three or four days without reply to his note to M. —— of the bureau, that at the end of that time he might receive a formal acknowledgment of his letter, and an assurance that it was under consideration, which is a euphuism, here, for under the letter-weight. He received no letter at all, but was called upon by an ugly little man in plain clothes, who had more real authority than was delegated to a hundred showy officials in splendid uniform, and who apprised him that if he chose to go to Paris, and see M. ——, he should have all the information he desired, up to the latest date.

This communication he mentioned to Bertha, and, as may be believed, it was sufficiently perturbing to her. She had helplessly calculated on some cessation of her troubles, and, having contrived to
make Adair aware that his character was to be inquired into, she trusted that his devices would be brought into play to avert the revelations which might be expected. Mrs. Urquhart was, indeed, less anxious upon this point than she would have been had she really comprehended the mechanism of the system that was working around her, and she limited her apprehensions to the terror lest her meetings with Adair, and his correspondence with her, should be brought to the knowledge of her husband. This exposure would be bad enough, but she had sufficient confidence in a woman's power of cajoling the man who loves her, to make her hope that even if the revelation came, she should, when she heard a definite charge made, be able to render it harmless by liberal asseveration and some display of extra emotion. For, weak as she was, she was strong against Urquhart, and fool as she was, she was wise enough to know it; and but for her constitutional timidity she might have deceived him with perfect ease to the end of the chapter. Had the information asked by Mr. Urquhart been given in a letter, which he would probably have handed to her, and demanded her reply to what might concern herself, Bertha did not despair of being able to put such a gloss upon its language as, now that Urquhart's indignation had concentrated upon Laura, would justify him in regarding his wife's conduct with indulgence, and as part of her sisterly efforts for the salvation of the character of Mrs. Lygon. But when Bertha heard that there
was to be a personal interview with an official upon whose table met the wires of the police-telegraph of France, she trembled, and would have trembled still more had she known how much that telegraph could reveal.

"I have a mind just to run over this night, and see the man," said Robert Urquhart, when he had informed her of the visit he had received. "I would like to lose no time."

"Pray, pray, do not leave me yet, Robert, dear," said his wife. "I am in no state to be left. Until we hear what Arthur is going to do, and all about it, do not let us be separated."

"Why, my woman, you were not used to make such a work about separations. I have gone off for a month at a time, and left you with dry eyes, and I've even fancied that you were not that ill-pleased to be rid of your tiresome husband."

"If you dared to think so, bad man," said Bertha, taking his hand, "you did me great wrong; but you never did; and if I did not cry when you went away, perhaps it was only that I might not send you off with melancholy thoughts, and you do not know what a cry I may have had after you had left—and now I just won't tell you, for presuming to say such things. But stay with me now, Robert."

"My dear woman! But you see this is the state of the case. If Arthur writes me to meet him, meet him I must, and I would like to have all the particulars about yon rascal cut and dry against I met poor Arthur."
"Make one journey do, then. Is everybody to be thought of except your own wifie, as you call her?"

"It will be only an affair of three or four hours, or less," said Robert. "I feel, my woman, that it's a hard time for you, and that to hear such awful things of your sister is enough to break your heart, but we'll do no good by greeting. But I'll tell you what we'll do. You shall just come over to Paris with me, and so I'll only leave you for the time I'm talking with the man at the bewro."

"No, Robert, I could not bear even that short railway journey in the state in which my nerves are."

"Then we'll have the carriage, for go I must, my woman." And she knew his word was fate. It was his way to try to win her assent to his plans; but when he had resolved on action, Bertha knew by divers experiences that she could as easily have turned him by her physical as by her moral force.

The carriage was ordered to be ready in half an hour.

"Oh," thought Bertha, "if I had not been deprived of that clever insolent girl! If Ernest should have taken no precautions, I am leaving my home for the last time."

And as they drove off in the open carriage, she actually stood up and gave a remorseful look at the home which an honest man's love had provided for her, and in which, had she been worthy of his love, she might have spent so many a happy year. It
was a low, mean kind of remorse, however, that came upon her,—she was thinking little of him, much of herself, and it was upon the luxuriously furnished drawing-rooms, which she might never tread again, that her penitence was dwelling, not upon the image of the strong, good man who might that night be pacing those rooms in an agony of shame and indignation. Standing up, with such thoughts in her heart, she withdrew her eyes from the receding house, and the next instant they lighted on the figure of Ernest Adair.

He must have been concealed behind the trunk of one of the large trees of the pathway, and have glided round it as the carriage passed, so as to avoid observation, but he was watching for her look.

As he caught it, he made her a sign, which she interpreted, as he intended, as a reassuring one. He placed his hand on his heart, and nodded three or four times, as intimating that all was right, and that she was to be of good courage.

So she took her seat, much comforted.

"What were you looking at, my woman?" said her husband.

"I wanted to see whether that stupid Angelique had closed the windows which you opened. If she does not shut them, we shall have the dust in, and when that gets into the books and things, it is a day's work to get it out again. But you men never think anything of a woman's trouble."

So dilated on household trifles the single-minded wife, as she went to Paris by the side of her husband.
But she soon became silent, and then Urquhart, deeming that the sorrowful story of her sister was weighing down the spirits of his wife, took the hand that was near him, and with a gentleness of tone that was rare in him, for his robust nature was somewhat noisy and outspoken, and it refined only for a few—and for those only when they were in sorrow—he sought to comfort her for what had come upon Laura. He assured her with all earnestness, that though he came of a nation in which such sin as Laura's is held to be black and unpardonable, he loathed the injustice that made a family suffer for the guilt of one member, and that if Bertha feared lest his pride might be wounded at his being known as the connection of one who had so disgraced herself, his wife did him wrong. She had been dear to him for herself alone, and it was herself alone that would ever make her less dear. And with other words of love and comfort, and with a kindly pressure of the little hand in his own, the single-minded husband went to Paris by the side of his wife.

Meantime, though Ernest Adair had made the sign which, and not her husband's affectionate language, was the real consolation to his perturbed helpmate, Adair himself was by no means in a pleasant state of mind.

The new outrage which he had received from Silvain was not much. It was something, for no man likes to be so assaulted. But there was no humiliation—not even the small humiliation of being physically worsted, for Adair had been set
upon unawares, and the force with which his antagonist had repelled him had in great part been due to a stratagem, well known to the gymnast, and which, suddenly brought into play, would almost have staggered the giant Urquhart himself. Ernest Adair knew that, either with or without weapons, Silvain could not hold his own in fair conflict. And though Adair had uttered a savage threat, on leaving the perfumer's, there was not much savageness in his heart, beyond that perfect indifference to the feelings and interests of others which—if not pushed to ostentation—helps more honoured men than Ernest Adair to the good things of this world. He was almost inclined to smile at the transaction, by the time he reached the end of the street. But, there, such inclination deserted him, and with singularly good reason.

An ugly little man in plain clothes came round the corner.

Ernest instantly recognised him, and after the fashion of a craft of which both seemed to be masters, Adair was about to pass the other with the most vacant look of non-recognition.

"No, I want you," said the stranger. "Walk beside me."

They turned, and proceeded, side by side, without a word. The stranger made for the palace, and into the gardens, Ernest attending him submissively, until they reached an unfrequented corner, where both men gave a rapid searching glance all round them. The double lynx look was enough—a spy no
larger than a mouse could not have remained concealed after that look. Then the stranger said, in a cold, business-like tone, and in English,

"This will not do, M. Ernest."

Under ordinary circumstances, and even if a man's conscience told him exactly what was referred to, the answer in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred would have been a demand as to what it was that would not do. Ernest Adair simply replied,

"I have been a little unlucky."

"We do not allow persons to be unlucky."

"I can say no more," said Ernest, "except that I do not think my ill-luck will return."

"That remark shows that you are unaware of your position, and I need not tell you what is the consequence of my convicting an employé of such ignorance."

"It is not probable, M. Wolowski, but it is possible, that I may be in possession of information of a later date than yours."

"It is not probable, certainly," said the Pole, with a slight sneer. "Does your late information carry you to the fact that a Scotch gentleman has demanded of us your biography?"

There was something of an answering smile on the lip of Adair, as he silently drew out Bertha's hasty note, apprising him of the letter that had been written by Mr. Urquhart.

"That is something—not in itself—but as showing that you still retain an influence in that quarter. What do you infer from seeing me?"
"That the Scotchman is to receive ample information, and none at all."

"On the contrary."

"I am to be sacrificed?" asked Ernest, livid with anger.

"Those are my instructions."

A fierce oath from Adair drew a contemptuous expression from his companion.

"It is ever with regret," said M. Wolowski, "that I sacrifice a useful and creditable man, but I perceive that I have no cause for regret in your case. Your habits demoralise you, and at an important crisis you blaspheme instead of thinking."

"You mistake me," replied Adair. "It is because I was thinking that I spoke angrily. I find myself betrayed at a moment when I specially need forbearance, if not assistance."

"I do not think that you must expect either. Plainly, this Scotchman has claims on us, and it is felt that he must be treated fairly. I have seen him, and at this moment his carriage is at his door, waiting to convey him and his wife to Paris. He goes to the bureau, by invitation."

"After what I have done," said Ernest, hardly able to articulate for wrath. "After all my services—"

"After all your services you were paid for all your services," replied the Pole, coldly. "Do not talk idly."

"I expected some consideration, however," said Adair, struggling for self-mastery under the icy and scornful rebuke of his superior.
"And it is shown to you," replied Wolowski. "I come direct from the Scotchman to you, to give you warning, which, from all I hear of him, may be a valuable present to a man who values his life."

"M. Wolowski," said Adair, with an earnestness strangely unlike his ordinary manner—he spoke, in fact, as one who pleads earnestly for something very near his heart—"I had some hope that you entertained a private regard for me."

"I do. I see much in you that I appreciate, though you are not what you were some time ago. But can it be necessary for me to tell Ernest Adair that I do not permit private feelings to interfere with public duty?"

"I speak in vain, I see," said Ernest, "and yet I would make one appeal to you. For myself, I care little, I can make my way in some other part of the world—in Brazil, in the United States, anywhere. But, apart from your duties, M. Wolowski, you are a man of heart."

"It may be so, but I am not now apart from my duties, and certainly if I could be astonished, it would be at hearing the word 'heart' from M. Ernest Adair."

"I hardly know my own voice while I am talking thus," said Adair, hurriedly, and entreatingly, "but I must speak to you. Give me time—a little time."

"To escape? Is it not given? A gentleman who drives in his carriage to Paris is in no violent hurry. There is the railway station," he said, pointing, "and there lies England."
"It is not that. Let me have time to save her."

"What? You wish to save her?"

"Yes, yes, I must, I will. Wolowski, I shall simply go mad if you do not stop this matter until I can extricate her. Then, do as you will. It is not much to ask, and I have served you well."

"Your demand should certainly be received with favour, but that of the Scotchman predominates."

"I swear to you that unless you do this, I will waylay your Scotchman, and shoot him dead."

M. Wolowski almost laughed.

"My instructions do not extend to the saving the gentleman's life," he said. "I had only to invite him to Paris. But your excitement, though utterly absurd, is respectable. May I ask what has aroused this consideration for a lady whose interests you can hardly be said to have been very actively promoting of late years?"

"I cannot see her murdered—and murdered she will assuredly be by that infernal husband, when he leaves your bureau? Do you refuse to interfere?" said Adair, with compressed lips.

"If I answer yes, what do you purpose to do?"

"Answer me, that is all," said Adair, fiercely.

"What time do you desire?"

"Three days."

"Take four, and then say again that I have no private regard for you."

"I will repay you, I will," cried Ernest Adair, with a deep oath. "Claim it when you will. Wait for me."
And he bounded away, as if on some mission of the utmost moment.

The mission was to hurry, at the top of his speed, to the first point whence he could see whether the Urquharts had departed. The carriage still at the door rewarded his straining eyes and panting heart. Then he checked his pace, but made his way rapidly round the back of the house, and again darted out into the road just in time to see Urquhart handing his wife into the carriage.

Adair concealed himself, as has been mentioned, and when the moment arrived, he gave Bertha the sign. Then he returned towards the palace, but met M. Wolowski strolling leisurely from it.

"I can wait and talk to you for an hour if you like," said the Pole; "but then your Scotch friend will reach Paris before me. On the whole, I think that if your arrangements permit, you had better come with me. As I am to lose your services, I should like to tender you a few of mine. There will be a train in ten minutes. Come."
CHAPTER XX.

"I repeat, that I am sorry to have to dispense with you," said M. Wolowski, as soon as they were seated in the carriage—a hint from the Pole having secured the exclusion of other travellers—"but you owe it entirely to yourself that we can use you no longer."

"Of course there are plenty of good reasons for getting rid of a man who can be sacrificed with advantage," replied Adair.

"Gambling, drunkenness, stabbing, idleness, and intrigue, are good reasons," said the Pole, quietly.

"Much better ones are thought of no weight when a man is wanted," said Ernest. "I remember Marchaud was in favour for a very long time after it was perfectly proved that he was a parricide, M. Wolowski."

"Your memory is quite accurate. But parricide is not a habit; few men indulge in it very often; and in Marchaud's case his one error did not prevent his rendering very faithful service to us. You, my poor Adair, have permitted your cardinal sins to engross your time, and to make you comparatively valueless. Therefore, you must perceive that if we can oblige a valuable friend by giving
you up, you yourself indicate what the course must be."

"I shall say no more. I thank you very much for deferring the blow, and I shall make the best use of the time you allow me."

"You will not tell me your plans, I suppose."

"Certainly it would be worth my while to affect to conceal them," said Adair, with a half smile. "I mean to save this woman from her husband."

"Why should you do so?"

"Because I must."

He did not make the answer offensively, but as one who had or chose to give no other reason.

"I am sorry. I am grieved. Because this folly shows so clearly that you are bent upon a downward course. I did not suppose that you, of all the men and women in my employ, would have ruined himself for a piece of sentimentality."

"You inform me that I am ruined already."

"All words are comparative. We shall give you up to the Scotchman, if you choose to be given up; but if you do not, there are other fields of labour."

"Oh, I can live. I have told you that."

"Live, but how? Your sheet anchor is a billiard cue—break your wrist, and you are a beggar. For with cards, I need not remind you, Adair, that you can never make a living."

"I can live, I tell you. But I know that my future will be a doubtful one. I cannot work."

"Not doubtful at all. You will pick up victims
now and then, and when you get their money you will spend it rapidly. When you have none, which will be your ordinary condition, you will be miserable. When you have undergone so much that you have become reckless, you will drink. When you are drunk you will make some mad coup for plunder, and you will either be killed in a brawl, or sent to the galleys."

While the Pole was calmly sketching this outline of a future for his friend, the latter was making his cigarette. And when Wolowski had finished, Adair said, smiling,

"You make me quite happy."

"The deuce I do. I see no particular material of happiness in the picture I have drawn you."

"No, but it is not to be realised. You never took so much pains with any man you designed to abandon. I believe, M. Wolowski, that in spite of my errors, as I hope you will let me call them after what you have been indulgent enough to consider in that light, you appreciate me, and like me, and do not intend that I shall be trampled upon by the Caledonian elephant."

And he smoked with the calmness of one who awaits pleasant but not unexpected good news.

"That," said the Pole, "is a touch of the Adair whom I enlisted long ago, and who was a different person from the vaurien before me."

"Vindicate your original judgment, and set me a task."
“Leave Mrs. Urquhart to go to the deuce.”

“Sometimes you are frank enough, M. Wolowski. I can but ask you a question. Who is moving against this unfortunate woman?”

“Mr. Ernest Adair is.”

“Ah, I am not to be told. But that is the same as telling me. You are Urging this course upon me with some zeal, M. Wolowski.”

“It is a sign of small-mindedness to be ever suspicious. It is a sign of bad-heartedness to be suspicious of a friend. I have been trying to save you, that is to say, to see whether you would save yourself. You will not. I have discharged my duty.”

“There is a motive power at work, M. Wolowski, and I am nothing in the game but one of the pawns. You have let that light in upon me. I believe that you do not intend to give me up, but that is a very small part of the business. So, it is designed that she should be ruined.”

“How can that be, Adair, when we give you four days to save her?”

“Save her. I can merely save her from brutal outrage. She abandons her home, and becomes an outcast.”

“Mrs. Lygon does?” asked the Pole, as if for information, and as if the name had been used throughout their conversation.

“Mrs. Lygon—who spoke of her?” said Adair.

“Oh, you were describing so exactly what you
have brought her to, that for a moment I confused
the fortunes of the sisters."

"I perceive," said Ernest Adair, gloomily, and
throwing away the end of his cigarette, he remained
silent and thoughtful for some minutes.

At the end of that time his companion said,
"Entirely wrong, and perfectly unjustifiable."
"What?" asked Adair, looking up.
"The conclusion, and the revenge. Do you think
I do not read your mind? Do you think that we
are unaware of your last interview with Mrs.
Lygon?"

"You know that I spoke to her. That you should
know what passed is an impossibility."

"This from an old hand like yourself."

"For that reason I say it. We met, M. Wolow-
ski, beside a dead wall. There was no one in the
street."

"The wall may have been dead, but the person
close behind it, I have reason to think, was
not dead, for he has the honour of addressing
you."

"You were there."

"Yes. But do yourself no injustice. You bore
your part excellently, nobly, and it was only at the
end, when you were weak enough to let your heart
be softened by the lady's unselfish behaviour, that I
felt at all ashamed of you. When I heard your voice
becoming suddenly respectful, and your language
that of praise, I could have hissed at you through

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the rotten old bricks, only that would have been rude to your companion.”

“You are one of the ablest men in the world, M. Wolowski, and born to adorn the situation which you hold; but, *aliquando Homerus*, you know. And as you have revealed to me so much, I believe without intending to be quite so explicit, I am certain that you are about to tell me the rest. I am a vain man, but not vain enough to suppose that you are sufficiently interested in my affairs to take the trouble of coming and personally supervising them.”

“There you show both modesty and sense.”

“But your powers have been invoked against me, and I comprehend how.”

“There you utter absurdity and falsehood.”

“No matter. I am in your hands. I have underestimated an enemy.”

“That is a fatal strategic blunder, but a greater blunder is the imagining an enemy that does not exist. You affect to think that this poor Englishwoman, whom you have separated from her husband, the clerk of the Plaudit Office, and who is half mad at the position into which you have plunged her, is moving heaven and earth and the police against you, for the sake of vengeance. Bah! Adair, your brandy-drinking has deteriorated your once masculine understanding—we do not talk upon even terms.”

“True—we do not, but not for the reason you give.”
"Well, be it as it may, take this from me, who having no interest in deceiving you, will not deceive you. The woman from London is not at the table."

"But there is a table, and players are seated," retorted Adair, with great quickness.

"Good boy—sharp at his lesson."

"I am back again in favour, I perceive. What must I do to deserve it?"

"Leave Mrs. Urquhart to her fate."

"Are those the only terms?"

"Are they not easy ones? You can get no more money from that quarter, Adair; that is the first consideration."

Hardened as he was, a faint sign of shame came over the pale face as he was urged to take this view of his relations with a woman who had trusted him.

"So," continued the Pole, "to say nothing of the immorality of the course you have been adopting, in abetting a wife in plundering her husband—a rude exclamation of impatience, M. Adair, but I pass it by—it is useless to think of that any longer. Let her take her chance—if she is worth anything, she will lie herself out of harm's way; if she cannot do that, she is unworthy the attention of an intellectual man like yourself. Now, take my advice, and instead of availing yourself of the four days I have conceded to you, take the boat for England to-night, and lie there perdu, until you hear from me."

"I should read in the Paris news of a murder," said Ernest, with something like a shudder.
"You will read nothing of the kind, at least in connection with the Hotel Urquhart. Come, we are getting near Paris."

"If there were any way of ensuring her personal safety."

"It will not be endangered. Don't you know that the Scotchman is a religious man, and keeps the commandments, and all that sort of thing."

"You do not know him."

"It has been my business to know him, for some very good reasons, M. Adair, during the time that you have been pursuing the far more interesting study of the character of Madame. You need not dread personal violence—as for the rest, women must take their chance of that when they play interdicted games. Come, decide, because I never go back from my word, and if you still insist upon the four days I gave, I shall have to hurry to the bureau. Consider whether you are able to bear a life of general privation, relieved by a few orgies, and finished in the embrace of the law."

"You talk," said Adair, suddenly manifesting some self-assertion, "as if I were capable of nothing but the infernal work which I have been doing of late years. I am not a fool, and I am well educated, and if I choose to change my name, and take up some honest calling——"

"It would be my painful duty to prevent any such contamination of virtuous households," said the Pole, coolly. "We are in charge of public morals."
"Do you defy me to escape you?"

"If you repeat the question, I consign you to the charge of the first gendarme. Come, come, Adair, be reasonable. I did not think that intemperance could have produced such an effect upon you. You take up an honest calling, and even an honest man's wages. What are you thinking of? Perhaps you contemplate returning to that English town with the diabolical name, Lipwait, is it not, and again addressing yourself to the writing copies for the little ladies."

You hate Ernest Adair. It is right that you should hate him. Therefore, be glad to see that he looks actually livid at these words.

"No, you do not think of Lipwait," continued the Pole, "but perhaps of some other quiet rustic home, where M. Ernest Adair, gambler, drinker, seducer, liar, mouchard, arriving under some new and gentle name,—shall we say as Mr. Manly, or Mr. Rightheart,—shall forget all his old evil courses, and shall pass the rest of his life in the practice of every moral and social virtue. It is very unhappy for him, and for me, that I must find out Mr. Manly or Mr. Rightheart, and explain to the rustic authorities that the gentleman is a living proof of the efficacy of conversion."

"Hear me, M. Wolowski, and spare me that kind of talk."

"My friend, I am told that it is exactly in your own style, and that it is with talk like this that you have been so successful in impressing your views on
the minds of the Mesdames Lygon and Urquhart.'

"Listen to me, I say. I must have a better price for doing what you propose."

"Why do you say that, when we are not obliged to give any price at all?"

"Yes—or you would not have offered so much. I am a bad employé, but you will not part with me, and you will accede to my terms. I think I know why you would retain me; but that matters not. I do not ask much."

"There is no harm in stating what you would have."

"Give me the means of putting her out of harm's way before her husband sees M. ——, and then let the Scotchman learn all that you can tell him."

"Bah! You want to fly with the foolish woman."

"No, no; a thousand times no. I would not be encumbered with her folly and helplessness for her weight in ingots of gold. I will simply place her out of the way of his rage, and when he has cooled down she may face him if she pleases."

"This sentimentality is perfectly affecting," said the Pole, with a laugh that was almost good-natured. "I thought I understood human nature, but we are but children lecturing on a skeleton. Never say again that I am not your friend."

"You will do this?"

"That I may be able to do it, let us get into my carriage, which I see is waiting for me."

The train stopped, and the two travellers left the
carriage. Unless a third person had been told to observe their reception by the officials of the railway line, he would probably have not noticed a shade of difference in their behaviour towards himself and towards the men who had just alighted. But, once invited to observation, he would have seen (and would avail himself of the hint in subsequent travel) that whereas he was looked at carefully, almost scrutinisingly, by more than one of the officials, and perhaps by a person whom he did not know to be in office, not one of the railway people appeared to be at all conscious of the presence of M. Wolowski or his companion.
CHAPTER XXI.

On reaching Paris, Mr. Urquhart drove into the quarter where the official residence of M. —— was situated; and having arranged with Bertha that she should dispose of an hour as might suit her, and should meet him, at its expiration, at a certain shop, not far from the bureau in question, they separated.

Urquhart had been expected, and was at once ushered into the presence of M. ——.

The official was a very handsome man, scrupulously dressed to the last fashion, and might have been supposed to be the entrepreneur of one of the fashionable theatres, or a member of the Senate who took his responsibilities easily, or a speculative gentleman who, if he amused himself on the Bourse, did so chiefly because peripatetic gambling is a more healthy and elegant amusement than the shutting oneself up with cards. He was certainly a man of business, and was thought to carry the peculiar ethics of business almost to an extreme of free-thinking; but, in revenge, he was said to hold quite as advanced views in reference to matters of pleasure. Supposed to be very rich, he certainly availed himself of the arts which, in a civilised community, enrich many who are enlightened enough
not to oppose traditional scruples to the proffers of fortune; and he bore that fortune, whatever it might be, so gracefully, that every one liked him, except perhaps those whose interests had not been his own, and had suffered by his unhesitating devotion to the latter. His appearance was in his favour, until you had formed an unkind estimate of his character, and then perhaps a certain hardness and keenness about the somewhat Hebraic features forced itself upon your attention, and diminished the attraction of his friendly manner and pleasant voice. Some people hinted that he had the means of obtaining valuable political and other information a little earlier than some other people. But this was a harsh thing to say. M. — was very particular about keeping his superb watch in exquisite order, and therefore was enabled to be admirably punctual in attending appointments with those whose confidences he valued—if the watch were even a trifle too fast, the fault was with Parisian chronometry, not with the wearer.

M. — had reasons, as Mr. Urquhart has mentioned, for showing him every possible attention, and no one could justly charge the graceful official with ingratitude, at least while there existed any probability of increasing the debt he was so ready to acknowledge. His reception of Mr. Urquhart was warm; but if the Scotsman had been in the habit of noticing lights and shades of manner, he might have observed that M. — was graver than usual. This circumstance, however, was not re-
uarded by Urquhart, who proceeded to business with his usual promptitude.

"My time in Paris is short," said Robert Urquhart.

"So all your friends complain," said M. ——, who spoke English perfectly, and with a very slight accent. "But let it be spent where it may, it is too valuable to be wasted. You have seen M. Wolowski, and you are here to pursue an inquiry?"

"Just that. What can you tell me of the man whose name I sent you?"

"Much, of course. But there are some complications which it may be well to clear away before I offer you the information which you ask for. The subject is a very delicate one, and I approach it with some apprehension—with more pain."

"You need not," replied Urquhart. "I know a great deal, and it is needful that I should know more."

"I repeat that I approach the subject with very great pain," said M. ——, looking steadily at Urquhart.

"So do I. But neither of us, M. ——, is in the habit of letting our feelings be our masters. I am here for serious business, and I am ready for it."

M. —— still gazed at him steadily, and paused for some moments before he said:

"My dear Mr. Urquhart, if you were a Frenchman, I should make our preliminaries much easier to us, by asking a question—if indeed I needed to ask it—in a very straightforward way. We are neither better nor worse than yourselves, but we
have different modes of dealing with certain subjects. My impulse is to place these memoranda before you”—he laid his hand upon a small portfolio—“and to retire, after which we should never recur to the unpleasant topic. But I am far from assured that I should be justified in this course.”

“You mean to tell me all you know, I expect,” said Robert Urquhart, bluntly.

“That you have no right to doubt.”

“Then the sooner and the shorter the better.”

“Of that I am not so certain. For I do not quite comprehend the attitude—so to speak—in which you appear to-day.”

Urquhart looked at him inquiringly—impatiently.

“I think you had better give me yon papers, and then we need not talk.”

“Give me credit for not wasting your time, my good friend. I am as much a man of business as yourself, but I do not forget that there are other things than business which have to be considered. Perhaps the best plan will be for you to permit me to ask you a question or two?”

“A dozen, if you will.”

“I will not delay by begging your pardon for introducing a name that demands every delicacy, but I will at once inquire whether Mrs. Urquhart still resides in your house?”

“Why, where the devil else should she reside?” answered Urquhart, promptly.

“And you reside there, also?”

“Of course I do.”
"And, once more permit a question—your relations are those of friendship?"

"We are man and wife, M. ——, and what are you driving at?"

"I need hardly tell you, Mr. Urquhart, that certain disagreeable events which have just occurred in your family are not secrets to me, gladly as I would have avoided the knowledge."

"I don't suppose that they are. Nothing seems a secret from your police spies. This very man, about whom I have come, told me of things that I had long forgotten, but which I dare say are written down in some black book, duly indexed. Now, I want to avail myself of your system. You know all that has happened in my house. I suppose you imagine that your affair has brought about a separation between me and my wife. That's not so, sir. We Scottish folk have our own notions of what marriage means, sir; and we don't quarrel and separate. There has been folly in my house, and wickedness somewhere else, but as far as myself and my wife are concerned, that's all done with. She came with me to Paris, as no doubt you could know by ringing this bell, if you did not know it before."

A puzzled look upon the handsome features of M. —— was followed by the very slightest smile, and then he answered as one who entirely comprehended the situation.

"My dear Mr. Urquhart, you take what I am sure is a very Christian view of matters; but now,
though you relieve me from any difficulty, you create a puzzle. That, however, I have no right to ask you to solve. Else I should, perhaps, have been curious to know why, in the present state of affairs, you come to me. But I will infer that you have reasons of business for wishing to have all the circumstances before you, and I need delay no longer in giving you all the information you require."

M. gave another curious look at Urquhart, as if to study a new variety in human nature, and then opened the portfolio.

"The memoranda are in French," said M., "for there was no time to translate them; but you speak French well enough to follow me—or, no, I will not give you that trouble. I will read to you in English. 'Ernest Adair,' he continued, looking at his papers, "'he bore the name of Hardwique in England in 18—, when he was a teacher of writing at— at—. Can you read the word?"

"'At Lipthwaite, in Surrey,' said Urquhart, looking at the paper handed to him.

"You know the place?" asked the other, looking keenly at him.

"Only by name. Go on," said Urquhart.

"His description—but with that I need not trouble you?"

"I'll never forget him."

"We have next an enumeration of his services since he entered upon employment here. You just said something which shows me you are aware how we have employed him."
"A spy—yes, he owned it to me."

"He gave considerable satisfaction up to a certain date, but he appears to have got into very bad company; here are the names of several of his companions, and the places he frequented—all this I will have transcribed for you if you desire it. He became a confirmed gambler, and played ill. But he was constantly in the possession of money, and has boasted to—other names—great scoundrels—that he had a never-failing bank. One of his friends also supposed that he forged, and very properly came in May, 18—, and intimated that belief."

"Not true to one another, even, the thieves."

"True to their country, Mr. Urquhart," said M. ——, with a smile. "But it appeared that this was not the case. On the 17th of August, 18—, he, being somewhat under the influence of drink, avowed that a lady supplied him with money."

Again M. —— looked up at Urquhart, who nodded.

"You understand that, then?" said the other, in a grave voice.

"Ay, ay. I understand. Poor wretch."

"He afterwards denied this, and challenged the friend who reminded him of his words, but they did not fight. It was then resolved to ascertain, if possible, whether he had boasted falsely, and he was carefully watched, until a chain of testimony was procured that left the matter beyond doubt."

"He was proved to have taken the money from her?"
"Yes, so clearly that the lady's name is at once given, without hesitation, and dates are added to show when he was in possession of certain sums."

"That he got by the post, of course?"

"No, certainly not. French money—most of it notes—but gold also."

"How could she get gold sent over," muttered Urquhart. "The notes she could get anywhere in London. He would tell her how to manage that."

"Some of the payments must have been received from the lady's own hand."

"That's just impossible."

"I rarely find our agents at fault when they state a fact positively. It is fatal to their ambition to be found so committing themselves," said M. ——.

"But the other part of the money he received from her attendant and confidential lady's maid."

"They are all wrong—they are blundering."

"It will be worth their places, should it prove so," replied M. ——, "and we must test their report. This girl's name is Henderson."

He looked up once more, and ghastly was the change that these syllables had wrought.

The face of Robert Urquhart was distorted, and of a horrid whiteness. His head was bent forward, and the lips parted, while his eyes were set upon the line the Frenchman had been reading, as if Urquhart dreaded that the record should escape him, and with it the secret.

"Read the name again," said Urquhart, hoarsely.
“No, give it me,” he cried, springing up and snatching the papers from the other. “Where is it!—where is it?—I can’t see it—there is no such name set down here.”

The Frenchman rose, and slid his finger down the crabbed writing until he touched the word.

Urquhart fastened upon it, and sought to read on. But in the bewilderment of the sudden shock the power of deciphering the story, written in another language than his own, deserted him, and after glaring at the record for a few moments, he thrust it back into the hand of his companion.

“Read it to me, read it all to me, sir,” he said, clutching at the corner of the strong table before M. ——, and, strong as it was, it vibrated in that gripe. Large drops broke out upon his forehead, and a thin line of white appeared at each corner of his mouth, which worked convulsively.

“Read it all!” he stormed.

The Frenchman, not at heart an unkind man, averted his face as he obeyed.

“This girl, Matilda Henderson (English), was in the confidence of her mistress, and frequently informed Ernest Adair when the—husband was on his journeys, which were frequent, from his occupation upon our railways and those of Belgium. It was observed that when Adair had visited the house—”

“Visited my house,” said Urquhart, in an undertone, like the growl of a wild animal.

“'He was always in funds, and when he had
wasted these, it was his habit to importune the lady.'” (M. —— used the name as little as he could—a vain humanity), ‘‘‘and to threaten her with exposure. This plan frequently brought him money, but sometimes he received excuses only, which seemed to enrage him. Lately, the supplies had been very short, and he disappeared, it was supposed, upon official business. When he returned, he re-appeared at Versailles at the same time with the lady’s sister, from England, and he was again in possession of money, and seemed to expect more from the influence of the latter, Mrs. Lygon, the wife of—’”

“Stop, stop, be silent. There is justice yet, my God!” cried Urquhart, with a cry that from that huge frame was more terrible, in its shrillness, than the fiercest exclamation could have been. “Do not speak. All the treachery, all the falsehood—I can sweep it all away with a word—it was all for her—for her—for Laura Lygon—and I have been wicked enough—read on, read every word, sir.”

And his breath came in gasps, as he trembled, and pointed to the writing.

“Had I foreseen this scene,” said M. ——, “it should never have happened, Mr. Urquhart; but I believed you knew all. It is now possible to deceive you no longer.”

Urquhart did not speak, but continued to gaze at the other.

“It became the business of one of those who were in our employ, to procure written evidence
of what he stated. He did procure it, and it is here."

He laid a small written note near Urquhart, and turned away.

This was no French document.
It was in a handwriting that Robert Urquhart knew, and loved, and he could read it but too well.
And it told him all.

* * * * *

"You look pre-occupied, my friend," said a stout, jovial-looking gentleman to M. ——, as an hour afterwards they met in the Bourse. "Is La Sylvana in a bad humour this morning, or has she broken her china? I know of some superb bits with which you can replace it. I have had them offered to me, but they are too pretty for the domestic altar."

"China—no, I am obliged. But I have something to say to you, Desgleaux."

"Good news, I hope, though you do look rather gloomy."

"Your friend at Versailles is fully aware of his conjugal happiness."

"Ah!" said M. Desgleaux, "you have enlightened him. I was afraid you would not care to do it."

"I has cost me more than I care to say," replied M. ——, "but it is done. He is nearly mad."

"Poor man! He will need the reviving fogs of his island—or, at all events, we shall hear no more of his infernal contracts for public works, which ought, patriotically speaking, to be reserved for native hands."
"And native profits—which reminds you, M. Desgleaux—"

"Indeed it does not. I need no reminder, my dear friend, of the obligations I owe you, and I hope for the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow, at your own bureau, at this hour."

"So be it."

And M. Desgleaux went away, smilingly humming a tune, to which words are affixed, setting out that "Never shall the English reign in France."

"That brave Scot is worth a hundred of Desgleaux," said M. ——, as he watched the burly form of the French contractor disappearing; "and it is a misfortune that one cannot estimate a man's claims by a man's value; but I did not invent the table of social weights and measures. He deceived me completely in the early part of the interview, and I thought that he had made up his mind to take a philosophical view of the case, and not put himself out of the way because that insipid blonde had preferred somebody else. However, it is over, and he will be out of the way of my fat friend there —after whom I suspect I shall have to look one of these days, if he buys so many pictures. Ah, Adolphe! you here! How well Fuoco danced last night! I don't wonder at your infatuation."
CHAPTER XXII.

Charles Hawkesley and his wife spoke long together after Mrs. Berry's departure from Gurdon Terrace. But when Beatrice had told her story, and her husband had asked all explanations that it seemed to him to require, the wife, who had spoken in frankness and loyalty, and the husband, who had listened in confidence and affection, were drawn together, even closer than before, by the influence of the sorrow that was coming. It is not necessary to record their conversation, as the narrative of events that followed it will disclose as much of it as had bearing upon the course of our tale. Towards its close Beatrice said:

"And now, dearest, let me hear you say you are not hurt that I have never found courage to tell you all this before."

"Hurt, my own one? No. But I could tell you some reasons why I earnestly wish you had told it me."

"Remember, I never knew anything, and I know nothing now."

"No, love. But I will not attempt to disguise from you that it is more than possible to give a very dark shade to the story as you have told it, and, without supposing that your love for Laura, and
your faith in her, have induced you to pass lightly over things which would seem more important to a stranger, I am bound to say, dearest, that you have told me enough to—" he hesitated.

"Never pick a word for me, Charles, dear," she said, almost impetuously. "I never hesitate with you. Were you going to say that you believe Laura unworthy? You were not going to say that?"

"I was not, Beatrice."

"Nay, speak plainly to me. Who should, if you will not? I am sure I have deserved it from you."

"My dear wife, I am so desirous not to say more than I mean, lest I should wrong her and wound you, that I am still inclined to say—let us wait, and hear her own exculpation. I have told you, in the most earnest manner, that I believed she could offer the amplest vindication of this strange errand to France. But if we are to couple it with that other strange story of Lipthwaite, I don't know where we may be led. The one may have nothing to do with the other, and, therefore, let us suspend all judgment."

"I know you are speaking from your heart," said Beatrice, taking both his hands, and looking at him with the confidence of a true wife.

"I know that you know it," he answered. "So we must leave the matter exactly as it stands—and hope—and hope."

"And you treat all the malice of that woman who was here to-day with utter contempt."
"Let it be as if we had never seen her."

"And you still believe, darling, that Laura will clear herself. O, if you knew how we three poor girls, with no mother, and with a father who, kind as he was, could be no guide and friend—if you knew how we clung to one another in our poor days, you would not wonder that such a day as this is a dreadful one to me, even though I feel that Laura will be cleared of all."

"Do you excuse yourself to me for loving your sister?" said Charles Hawkesley, drawing her nearer to him. "Did not I love her?"

"And you do," said Beatrice through her tears. "Say you do."

"And I do," he repeated, "and will, until you yourself tell me that I should cease to love her."

An hour later, and Hawkesley was informed that Mr. Lygon was in the study, and wished to see him only.

"Arthur!" exclaimed Mrs. Hawkesley. "I will go to him."

"He sends for me—let me go first, dear, at all events."

"But the children—the children," said Beatrice, with a mother's instinct. "Let them know—I will tell them—they will go wild with delight."

"Do not send the children until I have spoken to Arthur," said Charles Hawkesley, laying his hand on his wife's shoulder as he passed her, and went out.
Beatrice looked wistfully after him, but she loved him too well not to know the tone in which he spoke, when to disobey his requests would be no proof of love. But she waited eagerly for the summons to the study.

Its hermetically sealing doors closed, and not a word reached her ears.

The interview lasted for some time, when a thought struck her, and she rang, and inquired whether the children were in the house, or out for their walk.

They were all at home.

Mrs. Hawkesley would not ask the question that she was thirsting to ask, and the servant withdrew.

"Another time," said Beatrice, "that girl would have flown up-stairs like a wild thing, to tell Clara that her papa was here. He has ordered that she shall not be told."

At last, the study doors opened again, and Beatrice, who had been watching them for the signal that should call her, saw her husband come forth. He was very pale.

Eagerly gazing in his face, she did not hear Arthur Lygon draw the bolt after Hawkesley—the father taking precautions that his children should not leap into his arms.

"Charles"

"My own love, how am I to tell you this?"

"You have told me already."

She lay for some minutes in his arms, and each felt that words were idle.

But when her spasm of sobbing abated, and
Hawkesley, after several ineffectual efforts to speak, found his voice return to him, he said:

"The judgment is taken out of our hands."

"She is not dead!" exclaimed Beatrice, starting up. "She is not dead!"

"Nay, nay,—it might be better if she were, poor girl. I mean that the pain of deciding as to the past is spared us. Robert Urquhart has such evidence, that he has not hesitated to write to Arthur that—that he must see her no more."

"I must see that letter, Charles," said Mrs. Hawkesley, slowly.

"I have read it," he replied, sadly. "The truth is told in six words, the rest is kindness, and a summons to Arthur to join him."

"What are those words?"

"'Your wife is unworthy of you.'"

"No proof—no name—no more?"

"He has seen a series of letters in the handwriting of Laura which prove all."

"Charles—listen to me."

And as she spoke, upon her pleasant, kindly face there appeared an elevation of expression which, but once before, in all his life, Hawkesley remembered to have seen on his wife's features—some day, he may tell you when—and her usual energy of voice became a sweet earnestness.

"Listen to me, dearest," she repeated. "I ask you whether, upon the judgment of Robert Urquhart, or of any other man living, you would believe me unworthy of you?"
“No,” he answered, instantly, and if he added to his word a solemn appeal, it will not be set down as sin.

“Then is Laura to be refused the justice that would be shown to me? It is simply wicked to accept any judgment at all; and if Arthur Lygon is not strong enough to stand by his wife in her sorrow, Charles, dearest, you must stand by him. Is it true,” she said, in an under-voice, “that he has refused to see the children?”

“Yes.”

“And me?”

“We did not mention your name.”

“Then I will see him. You will not forbid me, Charles?”

“Certainly not, but should you do so? How painful the scene will be you cannot conceive; but when I tell you that he has fastened the door, lest Clara—”

“It is too shocking, Charles. On another man’s word! Stay, there is more for me to hear. He has been over to France. He saw Robert. Tell me what passed.”

“In two words, dearest, he had reason to believe that he was being deceived.”

“Robert told him so?”

“On the contrary, Robert believed fully in Laura’s innocence, and sent Arthur back, assuring him that she would prove all that he believed her.”

“And Robert has since changed his faith?”
"Having had letters laid before him in her writing."

"What does he know of her writing, Charles? Has he seen a dozen letters from her in the course of his life?"

"She has written to Bertha, of course?"

"Very little. I do not believe that he really knows her hand from mine. We were all taught by the same master. Charles, is it not horrible that a woman's honour and life are to be wrenched from her upon such evidence as this? Do let me see Arthur."

"If you will. But what will you say? Why increase his sorrow by giving him a spark of hope which must be trodden out again? You are speaking in all the excitement of the moment, and you do not see, as I do, that Robert Urquhart would have burned his hand off sooner than have written those six words, unless he had such proof of their truth as would condemn an angel."

"I am no angel, Charles, and you have just said that you could not condemn me on such testimony."

"There must be far more, my dearest, which Robert summons Arthur to come over and hear."

"Charles! You assume that there is more, because you are not satisfied with what you know; and see how you are struggling with yourself in defence of Robert Urquhart's justice, when you will not make one effort to believe in Laura's truth. I tell you again and again that she is innocent; and though a man will always take another man's judg-
ment sooner than any woman's—Love, I don't speak of you—but I feel in my very heart that my woman's instinct is right now, and that Robert is deceived. Oh, my dear Charles, think of that unhappy woman whom we must be wronging; think of her children, laughing and playing up-stairs, and little knowing that only a floor separates them from the father they almost adore! For Heaven's sake let us refuse to believe anything so dreadful while there is a shadow of doubt—and let me tell Arthur that we will not believe it."

"You shall tell him that you do not believe it, Beatrice. But I fear that you will bring him but little comfort."

"Charles! Until I have had Laura face to face with me, I will never think that she has for one moment forgotten those children. Now take me in to Arthur."
CHAPTER XXIII.

Ernest Adair sat in a small, mean room on the second floor of a house in a little street in the neighbourhood of the Rue de la Paix. He was alone, and awaiting a summons.

"All things considered," he said to himself, "I shall have done enough in giving her this chance. If she had behaved with devotion, with courage, with intelligence, it might have been another affair. But I believe that she detests me, or nearly so, and brief would be her weeping if I had been blown to the devil by an explosion on that rail, or assassinated by a fellow-traveller who might have fancied my tobacco-pouch was a purse. Anything she will ever do for me again will be done grudgingly, and as a martyrdom, and we are, in fact, all but hostile. Clearly, I have done enough in saving her from outrage—more than she would do for me. I may have led her into embarrassments by my over-appreciation of her merits in other days, but I cannot permit that error to cloud all my future existence. Jacta est alea."

His amiable musings were interrupted by the entrance of a pretty young girl, whose dark eyes and rich complexion denoted her southern birth. She seemed something superior to a servant of the house;
but her dress was too smart to be that of a lady, and her brevity of petticoat, though disclosing the neatest of feet and ankles, was a misfortune to which no Frenchwoman who was her own mistress would have subjected herself—nor would the large gold ear-rings have been endurable in society. She came in with a hasty step, and with an arch smile at the gentleman, who, as she believed, was merely fulfilling the first duty of man—was engaged in a clandestine love-affair.

"What will Monsieur give me for good news?" she said.

Ernest's reply need not be set down, but though sufficiently explicit, it did not seem to give much offence to his pretty visitor.

"Indeed, sir," she answered, with a toss of her head. "I do not love a pre-occupied lover, and the heart of Monsieur would be in the shop of Madame Delorme, confectioner, Rue de ** *, corner house!"

"O, that is the place!" said Adair, springing up. The girl thought that he intended to offer her a kiss by way of payment for her news of the rendezvous, and prepared a decorous resistance before surrender, but the distinguished-looking gentleman who was to afford this ephemeral amusement snatched at his hat, and darted from the room without a word.

The young person was not offended, though she had good cause to be. She was touched.

"Ah, that is a case of true love," she said.

And she looked at herself in a small dingy
looking-glass, and re-assuring herself at a glance that it was impossible that a gentleman could have been blind to the charms of such a pretty person, had he not been entirely wrapped up in the thoughts of the lady who awaited him, she sang herself a little verse of a little song, and we may leave her singing it.

Ernest Adair walked rapidly towards the shop that had been mentioned to him. It was a place which, unless it be wronged, had often witnessed such a meeting as the dark-eyed girl supposed was in hand. A large and handsome shop, and one in the construction of which the architect had remembered that ladies and gentlemen do not like to be stared at by the canaille, and he had so arranged his ground-glass that though the world without was freely permitted to gaze upon the tasteful array of coloured confections and flowers in the window, the world's vision was bounded, and could not penetrate into the shop itself. In other respects, there was nothing to distinguish Madame Delorme's establishment from most places of the kind.

Adair entered. There were but two or three persons in the shop, in addition to the mistress, but at a small table, with some slight pretence of lunch before her, sat Mrs. Urquhart.

His entrance made her start—she compressed her lips—and then, affecting not to notice him, she pretended to be engaged with her lunch.

A single glance to satisfy himself that Urquhart was not there, and Ernest was by the side of Bertha.
"Come away with me this instant."

"Are you mad?" she said, in an undertone.

"This instant, I tell you, or you are lost." And with an admirable self-possession he placed a two-franc piece before Madame Delorme—"For what Madame has had. Bestow the change on some poor mendicant," he added, in order to avoid any exclamation that might attract notice in their way out.

Bertha hesitated.

"He knows all," said Ernest, in a fierce whisper.

There was no need for him to speak again—she clutched at his arm as a terrified child clings to its mother—and the gay parasol itself would have been left on that table but for Adair's self-possession.

"Must I always think of that parasol?" he said, in a playful voice, for the ear of Madame Delorme and the others.

And he even restrained Bertha's over-hasty step, and forced her to leave with as much lady-like composure of walk as if he were escorting her for a promenade.

And when well out of the shop, his arm still restrained her, until they came to a narrow court, down which they turned. Then he hurried her along in silence, she knew not in what direction; and, awed by his stern whisper, dared not to ask.
CHAPTER XXIV.

Adair had hurried his companion for some considerable distance, when he suddenly seemed to change his purpose, and slackened their pace. Partially retracing their walk, he made for the river, and a vehicle passing, he hailed it, and they entered. In a few minutes they had crossed one of the bridges, and a short ride brought them to the corner of a small square, in which was one of the noblest of the Parisian churches. Bertha had some recollection of having been once brought to see this edifice, but the district into which they next plunged was entirely unknown to her.

He stopped at the door of a very large, but mean-looking hotel, of no inviting appearance, but very dear to a class of sojourners in Paris, whose means are in the future, and who are obliged to be content with humble lodging, not very dainty fare, and exceeding joviality, while working up to a position in which they may live more sumptuously and dully.

As they entered a gloomy hall, Ernest Adair saw two or three young men hanging their keys upon the appointed and numbered hooks near the door. He quitted Bertha, and spoke to one of the men, who recognised him, but seemed not much pleased at the
encounter. With some coldness of manner, and an
evident desire to shorten the interview, he handed to
Adair the key which the latter had asked for. In
two or three minutes Bertha and Adair were in a
small narrow room, strongly flavoured with the odour
of the strongest tobacco, and as scantily furnished as
could well be imagined. But the dingy little room
had echoed to merry songs and hearty laughs, that
had proceeded from many a gay party of struggling
men, who reserved their gravity for the days when
their professional reputation might demand it, and
wasted none of it upon the period of light hearts and
light pockets.

Bertha had little time or care to note the details
of the uncongenial scene into which she had been
brought, and at once addressed an appealing look to
her companion.

"We are safe here, for a short time," he said,
placing a chair for her; "but our time is very
short."

"Why have you brought me here?" she asked,
helplessly.

"Because it is just the one place where I shall
not be looked for. We are among very honest
people, and you need not be more alarmed than
is needful. The case itself is bad enough, and we
must decide at once what is to be done."

"I am ruined, Ernest; is it so?" said Bertha, in
a low, piteous voice.

"You have been sacrificed. I have not been able
yet to discover by whom; but when I do, you shall
be revenged. In the meantime there is but one question. Where will you go?"

"Oh, Ernest, where can I go?"

"I have been trying to answer that," he said, as calmly as if he were discussing the business of some third person, unconnected with himself. "I have been considering all your chances, and it is very difficult to advise you. It is most unfortunate that circumstances have deprived us of the aid of your sister, as her calmness and resolution would have been invaluable to us now; but regret is folly, and we acted, as we supposed, for the best."

"Tell me," said Bertha, trembling; "how are you sure that he knows the truth?"

"He came to Paris to learn it. I hoped, when I saw you from the road, that I should be able to prevent his doing so; but since then I have been undeceived as to my power. He went to an interview, at which everything would be revealed to him, not for the sake of injuring you, but for some other purpose, I know not what; but those who had to inform him are too deeply interested in doing it, to leave a shadow of hope that the work will not be completely done. At this moment he is probably rushing into that shop in search of you."

"And you say it without a show of feeling," exclaimed Bertha, as bitterly as she could speak; "you, who have brought me to this!"

"There is no time for reproaches," he answered. "Every minute is precious. There will be ample time for reproach hereafter. Believe that your
thought, now, must be how to keep out of the way of Mr. Urquhart, until his indignation shall have softened a little. Unless, indeed, you have a higher estimate of your own power, and would rather meet him."

"No, no, no," cried Bertha, shuddering. "But you must protect me, Ernest, and you will. I have now nobody in the world to help me but you."

"Unhappily," he said with some compassion in his voice, "my help, at this time, would be fatal. I am a marked man, who can scarcely move without a spy at my heels. My natural course would be to provide some refuge for you, but I should hardly have taken you a lodging when my taking it would have been reported, and you would be met at the very door by a police-agent, who would probably be accompanied by Mr. Urquhart."

"Oh my God! what is to become of me?" sobbed the unhappy woman.

"You must have often contemplated the possibility of a day like this," replied Adair; "and surely you must have thought over some plan of your own. At least let me hear it."

"I have no plan. I always hoped that this day would never come,—that you would at least save me from utter shame and ruin."

"It has come, and I am powerless to save you longer."

"You cannot, Ernest, you cannot be so heartless and wicked as to say that you will abandon me in my
great misery,—misery caused by you and you only? No, I will not believe that."

"Once more, I beg you not to waste time in words. I am in the hands of others, and it is they, not myself, whom you must reproach when you have leisure for reproach. Have you no course to propose?"

"None, none."

"I know that you have few acquaintances in Paris, and not one friend; yet does no name occur to you—no house where you might remain until your safety were assured?"

"No, none," said Bertha, piteously.

"It is strange that you should have failed to provide yourself with some such friend, knowing as you did, that she would be so needful to you. But as it is, I see but one course to recommend."

"What is it?" she asked, with streaming eyes.

"You must go to England."

"To England! And alone?"

"I cannot be your escort, for the reasons I have given you, and I know of no other. The journey is nothing—your sister performed it for your sake—surely you may take it for your own."

"And where should I go? I have no friends in England now, except those who would not receive me. Where should I go?"

"How helplessly, how childishly, you talk. Cannot even danger induce you to show a little courage and self-reliance? What does it matter where you go, provided that you are not traced, and I think
that, once in England, you would be safe. I do not suppose that there would be any motive for endeavouring to discover you, and for a short time you might certainly breathe in peace."

"I have no money."

He glanced at her dress, and noticed that she had a few ornaments of value, and he mentally remarked that it was fortunate that her love of such things had induced her to put them on for a journey for which a Frenchwoman would have dressed herself with elaborate simplicity.

"How poor I am," he said, "you know better than most people in the world; but I have more than enough to furnish you with funds for the journey, and when you are in London, any jeweller will supply you if you show him that bracelet."

Perhaps these words grated more harshly upon the soul of Bertha than aught else that he had said—than the cruel coldness of his manner—than the bitterness of the destiny he had announced to her.

"And you leave me alone in the world!" she said, passionately.

"The world forbids our being companions," said Adair; "but you know full well that my heart bleeds for you."

"I do not know it," exclaimed Bertha, roused by her sorrow, and by his measured phrase. "I believe that you are utterly heartless and cruel, and that you see me driven from my home, and crushed to the earth, without one pang of feeling
or pity. Oh, I have been mad, mad, to think better of you, and this is what I have brought myself to. I am to fly like a thief to England; I am to sell my jewellery, that I may be able to live; and when that money is gone, Ernest, I am to do—what? I am a fool to ask you—what do you care? You do not even tell me how I am to let you know where I am," she added, her energy exhausted with her protest, and her weakness returning full upon her.

"I will take care of that," he replied, without a syllable in answer to her impassioned appeal.

"When ought I to go?"

"To-night. In four hours."

"And where am I to spend those four hours? Here?"

"No; the owner of this room will want it. Is it so difficult for a woman to amuse herself in Paris for a short time on a fine day? Keep on this side the river until it is nearly the time of starting. It might not be well to linger too long at the terminus, as you might attract observation."

"I feel in a wild, miserable dream. Is it all true?—am I so wretched? Oh, if it were a dream, and I could wake!"

"We shall wake from all dreams too soon," said Ernest Adair, perhaps speaking from his heart.

She swayed herself on the chair, and sobbed violently. But no kind hand took hers, no voice whispered her to be of courage, that she was still loved, and that love should watch over her, unknown to herself, and that in all her trials she was to trust
in a protector. Adair maintained a silence, which made her sobs distinctly audible.

"Farewell," she said, rising, and what little dignity of manner she possessed manifested itself under this cold and aggravated insult to her sorrow.

"You will need this," he said, promptly, as if desirous to terminate the interview. He placed some gold in her hand. "And you will also need this passport, which is not in your own name, but in one which you will take, for the journey. At the terminus, ask for the person whose name is on this card, and he will save you all trouble. I should have accompanied you there, but I dare not."

"A passport ready! Then you had intended me to leave France?" exclaimed Bertha.

"Unless you had a better plan to propose. I therefore provided the necessary means. Is that, too, a matter of reproach?"

"I shall never reproach you again," said Bertha, in a low voice. "Some day, perhaps, when you hear that a woman whom you have ruined has died in her misery, you may reproach yourself that you did not spare her a little. Farewell, Ernest."

"Bertha!" he exclaimed.

But she had gone.

"It is better so," he said. "Ten words from me, and we should never have parted. Far better so. And thus ends a friendship that did not promise so long a life, or so violent a death. It was none of my seeking, that is true. And now for M. Wolowski once more."
CHAPTER XXV.

Adair left the hotel, and, with a furtive glance to assure himself that Mrs. Urquhart had really departed, hastened back to the house in which he had awaited news of her arrival in Paris. He rushed up to the small apartment, and found the Pole, who received him with a grim smile.

"You were justified in your demand, M. Adair," said Wolowski.

"Which demand?"

"For time to enable your friend, Mr. Urquhart, to recover his reason. Indeed, you were moderate, and I am not sure that the four days you wished for might not have been fairly granted."

"The revelation has been made?" asked Ernest, uneasily.

"Assuredly."

"He has nothing to learn?"

"It is not for me to pry into the secrets of affection," said Wolowski, "and what may still be concealed from him I do not ask. But, after his perusal of the letter, I suppose him to be quite sufficiently informed for all purposes of marital vengeance."

"The letter—what letter?"

"True, you would not remember. Gallant men
should take better care of their papers than you seem to have done. A note which it was, to say the least, indiscreet to have preserved, formed part of the evidence which has been to-day laid before the Scotchman, and the production of that note rendered all further explanation superfluous."

"Some note to me which has been stolen from me?"

"Put the fact in that form, if it please you, M. Adair."

Ernest's look was an evil one. For there was room in his heart for some sensation of shame, and the information that a letter which had been written to him by a trusting woman, and which had been preserved by him for a selfish purpose, had been the instrument for the completion of her ruin, struck home with keenness. The interview with poor Bertha had not tended to render him more tolerant of Wolowski's sar- cazms, and this last piece of news almost stirred him to rebellion. His glance, and the expression on his face, did not escape the eye of the Pole.

"As the revelation had your assent, M. Adair," he said, "the means were a secondary consideration; but you would have a right to reproach yourself had such evidence been voluntarily furnished by you."

"My assent!" said Ernest, bitterly. "But the work is done. Let us speak of business."

"Have you no curiosity to know how your friend received the news that must have placed you in
such an amiable light in his eyes? Are you so entirely uninterested in his sentiments towards you?"

"I can imagine enough."

"Without disputing your imaginative powers, which have been cultivated in the service of your country, I may say, my dear Adair, that you are unequal to picture the mental condition of that colossal Scot."

"I suppose that he has vowed to kill me?"

"No; he is more dangerous than if he had done that. We know something of vows of vengeance, and how often they are kept. He made no vow at all. But, while he was recovering from the first prostration of the intelligence, he put his hand on a metallic ruler that lay near him, and then he took it into both hands, and during his meditation he snapped the stiff piece of brass in two as a child snaps a stick of barley-sugar. If the piece of metal happened to represent yourself, in the course of thought in which he was indulging, it may be as well that you should not come in his way at present."

"I am not terrified, M. Wolowski; but I shall observe all precaution."

"That is well. And what have you done with Madame?"

"She leaves for England to-night."

"Yes, you could hardly have done better for her. But I am afraid that her going to England can hardly be permitted at present."

"Surely, you will not intercept the poor woman's
flight? You have achieved your object; let her go."

"It must be considered," said Wolowski; "but the more I think of it, the more I am disposed to reject the idea that she can be allowed to depart."

"If you choose to tell me why, I may meet the difficulty," said Ernest, submissively.

"To tell you why, would be to tell you a great deal more," replied his chief; "but as you seem inclined to adopt a discreet view of things, I do not know why I should conceal from you, that it is Mr. and not Mrs. Urquhart's sojourn in England that is particularly desired at this time."

"Ah! you wish to drive Urquhart from Paris."

"Wishes to that effect exist. And it may occur to you that he is not more likely to select England as his residence, because an unfaithful wife is there."

"Here you can help her, M. Wolowski, without in the least endangering your object."

"If you can show me that, I shall be happy to co-operate with you, my good Adair."

"She can live nowhere but in England—I mean if she is alone. She has not had even force of character enough to induce her to learn French thoroughly, though her life was to be spent here. She is utterly unfit for continental struggle of any kind. In England she might manage to exist in obscurity. It is not a great deal to ask of your friendship, M. Wolowski, that you permit her to escape to England—making it clear to her husband that she has fled to Italy."
"The suggestion is business-like, and so far commends itself to me. But I am informed that having missed his wife, on his returning to the shop whence you took her, and having ascertained that she departed with a gentleman whose description was accurately given—the woman at the shop was so deceived by Mr. Urquhart’s calmness that she forgot to lie, and depicted you faithfully, not dreaming that she was disobliging a customer—the Scotchman, I say, seemed instinctively to decide that his wife would go to England, and he is now at the terminus, waiting, no doubt, to pay for her railway ticket."

"And she, in foolish impatience, will go up there early, and he will pounce upon her," said Adair, starting up.

"Be seated, M. Adair, and show more confidence in your friends. I have taken care that should that very probable early visit occur, the lady shall be prevented from meeting her husband."

"But how?"

"Can you not trust such a very simple matter to my management? I tell you that, knowing perfectly well that you would advise the lady’s flight, I have sent her a guardian angel."

"Then Urquhart will not know of her intention, and you can let her fly, as I propose, and make him believe her on the road to Italy."

"If I agree to this, Ernest Adair, accept my assent as the highest of compliments. For though as a moralist, I have no sympathy for a bad lady who allows herself to be found out, I am inclined to help
her, rather than lose your services. I should like you
to resume your duties with a mind at ease; and if
I put the sea between you and the person who has
led you astray, I shall perhaps once more find you a
credit to my training."

"I am sensible of your indulgence, M. Wolowski,"
replied Adair, with a very good imitation of earnest-
ness, "and I am, as always, at your orders. But
until this unfortunate person is fairly out of France,
I confess to you that I shall not be worth much to
you."

"Mrs. Urquhart shall take her next breakfast
at Folkestone. Do you wish for proof when she
has done so?—do you desire the bill at the
hotel?"

"Proof, after your promise, M. Wolowski?"

"Thanks. And now, my dear Adair, let me avail
myself of the privilege of a friend, to warn you
against ever again being induced to mix up a serious
passion with your business pursuits. We are not all
constituted alike, no doubt, and some of us absolutely
need the amusements of society,—I am not preach-
ing to you. But, my dear Adair, if you cannot
drink without getting tipsy, and if you cannot play
without being cheated, and if you cannot quarrel
without stabbing, and, above all, if you cannot accept
a bonne fortune without becoming demoralised, I
recommend you to try a course of piety. Suppose you
adopt that, and continue a credit to the secret police
of France."

"I am bound, after what you have done for me,
bear any quantity of good-natured badinage,” said Adair.

“There is no badinage,” said the Pole. “I shall soon have to propose to you a certain course of action, for which you would be very much better qualified than you are now, if you choose to avail yourself of some preliminary instructions from certain worthy priests to whom I could accredit you. Do you not see advantages in this?”

“I am at your orders, M. Wolowski.”

“You are not certainly without acquaintance with religious matters, I know.”

“You flatter me.”

“Not at all. You had an intimate friend who was a Jesuit, and who died young, I think. He must have talked to you, very frequently, upon serious topics, M. Adair.”

Ernest Adair had recovered all his self-possession, and now looked very steadily at his companion. The latter had suddenly disclosed the knowledge of a fact which Adair believed to be unknown to him, and which was only one of a series, the revelation of which would strangely complicate the position of Ernest. But he replied instantly:

“I had such a friend, and he is dead. But I do not recollect that we ever talked much about religion, or, if we did, I have forgotten his teaching, and you will have to recommence my education.”

“Ah! you did not talk much about that sacred subject. It was natural, at your time of life, that you should not. And yet he must have had very serious
views on some subjects. *When do you burn the letters on his tomb?*

Adair started. He remembered, perfectly well, the words he had used to Robert Urquhart when promising the documents that had sealed the doom of Mrs. Lygon; but how had this come to the knowledge of his chief? There was no time for hesitating.

"You complimented me on my imagination. Class among its products that sentimental statement, which was intended only to enforce my demand that certain letters should be returned to me."

"But your lamented friend is dead, and buried, and you know where his tomb is?" demanded Wolowski.

"Certainly," said Ernest, "unless it has been removed during the years that have elapsed since I visited it last."

"In company with Miss Laura Vernon?"

"Ah," said Adair, visibly disconcerted, "I perceive that you have indeed been taking pains with my history."

"It is worth while to know all that can be known about a man like yourself, you comprehend?"

Adair made no reply.

"The compliment is too much for you? You have no answer. Well, I will not press you, and you have a good deal upon your mind. Now go away and dine, as joyously as you can, for to-day marks, I hope, a new epoch in your life, and you
should celebrate it with due honours. Have no fear for Mrs. Urquhart, and have as much fear of her husband as will keep you out of his way. And let me see you to-morrow at twelve, when I hope to hear that you have enjoyed your night.”

Nothing could be more benevolent than the tone, but the smile upon the lip of the Pole was by no means so agreeable. Adair withdrew from the presence of his chief, and savage was the curse with which, as he closed the door, he repaid the kindly wish of the Pole.

As soon as Adair had departed, M. Wolowski rang his bell, and the pretty girl who had sent Ernest to his interview with Mrs. Urquhart came in.

“Is Chantal in the house, little one?”

“I shall not tell you,” said the girl, saucily.

M. Wolowski looked at her with considerable astonishment.

“Are you out of your senses, my child?” he said, after a moment’s pause.

“Not the least in the world, papa Wolowski. But I shall not tell you anything about poor Chantal, unless you tell me one thing.”

“What’s that, Madelon?”

“Are you going to send him to England again?”

“That’s my affair.”

“Indeed, papa Wolowski, it is mine and his,” said Madelon. “I will not have him sent to England any more.”

“Why, he is half an Englishman, child, and ought to like to visit his mother’s country.”
"Yes, but the other half of him, which is not English, papa Wolowski, likes to stay here with me, and I choose that it should."

"You great little fool, send him here. I am not going to dispatch him to England at present. Not at all, perhaps, until you want another pair of hideous ear-rings from the Burling Arcade."

M. Chantal presently appeared, a quiet-looking, clerky young fellow, of gentlemanly bearing. His fair hair and blue eyes testified to the truth of M. Wolowski's report to his pedigree, as did his extremely composed and undemonstrative manner. Possibly these characteristics, so exactly opposed to the physical and moral attributes of the demoiselle Madelon, had given M. Chantal his fortunate place in her affections.

"Sit down there, Chantal," said the Pole, from whose manner there was at once dismissed all the reticence and oft-recurring sarcasm that marked his intercourse with Adair, and who spoke as to a favourite and trusted subordinate. "Your friend Madelon is sadly afraid of your being sent to England again. Have you been tormenting her with accounts of the blond beauty you saw there?"

"Not at all," said M. Chantal, smiling quietly.

"Then your silence has frightened her. One never knows whether to talk to a woman, or to hold one's tongue, as you will find out one of these days. Well, it is clear that you hit upon the right scent
about our friend Ernest. But I had no time to ask you as to the detail of your visit. In what position in society is the lady you went to see?"

"Her husband is a wealthy lawyer retired from practice."

"And Madame his wife?"

"First I thought her a formal pietist."

"And secondly?"

"A she-devil."

"Second thoughts are always best where women are concerned. Well, you achieved a conquest over the saint and over the sinner?"

"Conquest!" said M. Chantal, with a slight grimace. "She had the distinguished honour of converting me to the Protestant faith?"

"From which other faith, if one might ask without indiscretion?" laughed M. Wolowski.

"And, of course," continued Chantal, smiling, "she could not withhold her confidence from a convert of her own making. She hates well, that good woman."

"Whom?"

"Most people, I think, and dislikes the rest. But specially I perceive she hates Mrs. Lygon, the wife, you remember, of the man—"

"In the public office in the Strand. I know. Why does she hate that beautiful personage?"

"Oh, is she beautiful? I might have gathered that, from Mrs. Berry's account of her, which was not flattering. Why does she hate her? You have laughed once or twice at my solutions of problems
which you have offered to me, yet I have not been proved wrong in the end."

"That means, my excellent Chantal, that you have something pre-eminently ridiculous to suggest, and you beg pardon beforehand."

"As you like, M. Wolowski."

"Now, do not begin to boulder, but let us hear your conjecture."

"My visit was a short one, but the letter of introduction which you were so good as to get me from the agent of the Missionary Society was invaluable, and made me quite at home. It was a master-stroke to have it written in French, because Mrs. Berry reads French very well, and her vanity and importance were flattered. She at once commenced the good work upon the young Frenchman, who was of a serious turn, but had grave doubts, and gave me a tract the very first evening. Not to fatigue you with detail, we became the best of friends, and as soon as I could easily introduce mention of M. Urquhart and his wife, the seed was sown in good ground. Mixed with her spiritual advice, I had all the scandal of Liptthwaite for the last twenty years."

"You have made full notes, of course, Chantal," said his chief, in a voice of paternal interest in the businesslike habits of a protégé.

"Even to a sketch or two of the localities."

"Excellent fellow. And now that you have taken such pains to show me that you had materials
for a good guess at the hostility of these ladies, let me have it."

"Ernest Adair, as you knew, was once a teacher of writing in that beautiful Lipthwaite."

"Speak to me of Adam and Eve," quoted M. Wolowski."

"I ask you to recal the fact, and couple it with what I say. At some period of our elegant Ernest's residence in England, he permitted himself to inspire a passion in the heart of that woman Berry—not then Berry, of course—"

"Of course, Englishman," repeated Wolowski, mockingly.

"Whether he encouraged it or not, I am not able to say, but it is probable that as he was utterly poor and equally unhesitating, he tried upon her, in a small way, the same game of exaction which he has played in so distinguished a manner here, and it may have failed, or he may have abandoned it for another game. But I believe that he finished by discarding her, and that she believes—truly or falsely—that he would not have discarded her, but for the young beauty of Miss Vernon, now Mrs. Lygon."

"Bah, Chantal; this is a romance of Madelon's, not a serious suggestion of your own. Is this your gratitude for your conversion, monster?"
CHAPTER XXVI.

Lygon withdrew the bolt at the sound of Hawkesley's voice, and the latter entered the study. Arthur, nervous, agitated, kept his hold upon the door, prepared to fasten it again. The unhappy husband looked haggard and weary; his dress, ordinarily so careful, was neglected; he seemed to have snatched at the first articles that came to hand, that he might hurry off to Hawkesley—and yet it was not so. He had lingered and pondered long over the letter from Urquhart, had spent many a miserable hour in alternate sadness and anger, had wandered many an unreckoned mile, before he resolved on seeking out Hawkesley. The man of orderly mind had received a blow which not only prostrated but bewildered him.

"Do not fasten it," said Charles Hawkesley, "Beatrice begs that you will see her."

"I will not, I cannot," said Arthur Lygon.

"Let me get out of the house."

"Arthur, you will do well to see my wife."

"Why do you say so?"

"Would I say so unless I felt that it were well?"

As he spoke Beatrice opened the door softly, glided in, and took Arthur's hand in her own.
"My dear, dear Arthur."

The unfortunate Lygon held her hand passively, for a moment or two, and slowly raised his eyes to her face. Far less beautiful than Laura, Beatrice nevertheless wore the same expression; and as she struggled to give him a compassionating smile, the likeness became more apparent. He dropped her hand, sank into the large chair beside him, and, throwing back his head, covered his face with his hands, and wept as perhaps he had never wept before.

Beatrice knew better than to interrupt the paroxysm of his sorrow, but she stood near him, and as he gradually calmed she placed a handkerchief to his eyes.

"Arthur," she said, bending down to his ear, and speaking in a calm low voice, "believe in our love."

He did not look at her, but thrust out his hand impulsively, and clasped that of Beatrice.

She made a sign to her husband, who hesitated. But the imploring look with which she seconded her appeal was not to be resisted. He left the room.

"Oh, Arthur," she said, "if I could tell you how you have comforted me and Charles, by coming to us with your sorrow."

"Can you say this?" he answered, under his breath. "Her sister."

"Because I am her sister," replied Beatrice, firmly.

He looked up suddenly, and in the kindly look
that met his own so unflinchingly, he saw what seemed a puzzle and a wonder to him, but he could not speak.

The next moment Clara sprang almost at a bound from the door to his neck, which she clasped tightly, kissing him with all the wild affection of childhood.

"One moment, my dear boy," said Hawkesley, restraining Walter, who had been with difficulty induced to let his sister make the first rush into their father's arms. "Papa is not well, as I told you—he has been travelling a long way."

"Let him go, Charles dear," said the better judging mother, and Walter's head was upon his father's cheek.

Beatrice passed across to her husband, and led him from the room. But as they went out, she turned for a moment, and looking at the children, now locked in Arthur's arms, she said:

"There is one more wanting there, darling, and please God we will see her there yet."

And Beatrice ran up to her own nursery, and had a great cry over her own baby.
CHAPTER XXVII.

The miserable Bertha, on leaving the hotel, wandered for some time in a state of recklessness and bewilderment that left her alike uncertain and careless as to the route that she was taking. Her torpid nature had been shaken to its depths by the heartlessness of Adair, and whatever remains of affection for him had been left in her heart, had been rudely stirred up by the passionate interview she had undergone, and had then become extinct for ever. At once wounded and terrified, Bertha strayed away from the quarter to which Adair had conducted her, and perhaps among all the strange outcasts who sojourned in that part of the mighty city, none was more to be pitied that day than Bertha Urquhart.

It was not until she had wandered for nearly an hour, hither and thither, that she perceived that she had reached a district in which an elegantly dressed woman became an object of general remark among those by whose squalid dwellings she passed. She became alarmed, and after one or two efforts to find her way back to a better-looking neighbourhood, she looked helplessly round for direction. Her almost purposeless inquiries, however, made in not the very easiest and most intelligible French, procured her no
information, and she began to feel more utterly wretched than ever, when a well-dressed man, in a military undress frock coat and cap, and with some military stiffness in his manner, accosted her respectfully, and in more courteous language than his appearance seemed to promise, expressed his supposition that Madame had lost her way, and his willingness to direct her into it. The stranger was of middle age, and he spoke with a certain gravity, and without the smile and bow of society, and Bertha supposed him to be what she would have known in England as a non-commissioned officer. His grey moustache, and the grizzled hair slightly curling from under the cap, gave him so respectable an appearance, that Mrs. Urquhart felt relief at being addressed by him.

Oh yes, she had lost her way, and wished to be directed to the side of the river.

"The river is rather a wide direction, Madame," said the stranger.

"Anywhere near it," said Bertha, "and then I know my own way."

"But would not Madame Urquhart prefer to have a carriage?"

At hearing her name, Bertha looked the astonishment which she naturally felt.

"I had some time ago the honour of being employed by M. Urquhart on one of the railways he was constructing, and had more than one opportunity of seeing Madame, whom it is not easy to forget," he added, but without the indiscretion of
the smile which would have made the compliment an impertinence.

But, for once, Bertha had no ear for a compliment. She had encountered an employé of her husband, and might be conducted into the very presence of the latter. What was she to say to him?

It seemed as if the stranger had read her thoughts. At all events he continued:

"A difference, I might say a quarrel, between M. Urquhart and myself made us hostile, and I should be sorry to meet him; but if Madame would permit me to direct her, or assist her—"

That was better, and Bertha managed to explain that in the course of two hours she wished to be near the embarcadère of the Northern Railway, and that, having desired to walk about until that time, she had missed her way.

"Did Madame still desire to walk?"

Yes, Bertha did wish it, if she could be guided to a better part of Paris, whence she could easily reach the station.

Two hours was rather a prolonged walk, and if Madame would prefer reposing in a perfectly secluded and respectable restaurant, near the terminus, he would be happy to show it to her.

His manner and appearance disarmed mistrust, and she felt relieved at the idea of a resting-place.

He conducted her through a series of mean streets, apparently familiar to him, at rather a rapid pace, for which he once or twice made a brief
apology, but when they emerged into a better quarter he slackened his speed, and said:

"At the next corner is an omnibus waiting. I would suggest to Madame to enter it. I shall follow, but of course am unknown to Madame until we alight. The hind wheels can be seen from where we stand."

He placed in her hand the coins for the fare, and fell behind her and stopped at a shop window.

Bertha almost mechanically obeyed, took her seat in the vehicle, and soon afterwards, though not so soon as she expected, it was stopped, and the stranger entered. His seat was at a distance from her own, and he was absorbed in the Siècle, until, after a long and circuitous route, the omnibus drew up at the embarcadère itself.

"Follow quickly," he said, rather imperatively, in an under tone, as he drew near her amid the group of descending passengers.

Bertha followed him, in some wonderment at his tone, but she was in no mood to do aught but be guided by one who seemed her friend. He led the way into the station, but avoiding the portion appropriated to the public, he suddenly opened a small door in a wooden partition, the upper part of which was glass, and motioned to her to enter. As soon as she had done so, he closed and locked the door.

"Madame is now safe, and would be safe nowhere else in the city of Paris."

It was apparently a waiting-room for passengers of
the humbler kind, was spacious, and contained simply a large table, and a wooden seat that ran round the walls, and the sole ornament was a framed copy of some printed regulations of the railway. There was plenty of light, but it was admitted only through glass that was whitened up to a considerable height, so that no one from without could look into the room.

The stranger approached Bertha and said—

"There is an English proverb that it is best to be near to the fire when the chimney smokes."

"I do not understand," said Bertha, looking round at the cheerless apartment.

"Madame Urquhart shall understand in a few minutes," he said, quite respectfully. He then mounted upon the seat, and looked out through the clear portion of one of the windows. So he stood watching for some minutes, during which Bertha remembered the caution of Adair not to show herself too long at the terminus.

He sprang hastily down.

"To explain the English proverb, Madame, deign to come this way. Stand for a moment near the window, but not close to it, if Madame pleases."

He waited for a moment or two, and then slowly slid the lower portion of the window, which opened sideways on rollers, a few inches open.

A few inches. To Bertha it seemed as if he had thrown down the side of the room, and the avenger was upon her. For, approaching with hasty steps, and, as it seemed to the guilty wife, with his eyes
fixed upon the opening in the window, came Robert Urquhart.

His face was strangely pallid, and she imagined for a moment that she could see the mark of blood upon his lower lip.

But she had but a moment or two for the glance. She uttered a very faint cry like that of a child.

"He can see nothing, Madame," said the stranger, who was a little in front of her.

But the speech was addressed to unheeding ears. She had fainted.
CHAPTER XXVIII.

When Bertha returned to consciousness, she found herself in the same apartment, but with a different companion. A middle-aged, decently attired woman, of the humbler class, was with her; had brought her water and other restoratives, and had placed her in a chair, which must have been added to the scant furniture of the place during Mrs. Urquhart's faintness. The woman spoke but little, and in a low voice, and her conversation was restricted to the begging Madame to be calm and tranquil, and to the assurance that she had nothing to apprehend.

Nor had she anything to apprehend, at that moment, from him whose pallid face she had seen as he approached the window.

Urquhart had, as was natural, believed that his wife would take the road to England, and he had made his way to the terminus, resolved to intercept her flight. What might have been the result of the meeting need not now be surmised. It was prevented by the precautions of M. Wolowski, whose emissary, speedily receiving an order from his chief, left Bertha in the charge of the attendant, and placed himself in the way of Robert Urquhart, as he returned from the interior of the station, after once
more satisfying himself that as yet Bertha had not arrived.

He had the honour of addressing M. Urquhart.

"Yes."

He was sent to him by M. ——, whose bureau M. Urquhart had visited that day.

"Well?"

M. —— had some additional information which it might be desirable for M. Urquhart to possess.

"What is it?"

The other produced a letter, folded largely, and resembling a despatch, and handed it to Urquhart. It was unsealed; had some apparently official stamp upon it; but Urquhart was in no condition to note its nature. He seemed to read the letter, and after gazing at it vacantly two or three times, he handed it back without a remark. It was evident to the stranger that Robert Urquhart had not mastered the meaning of the words.

"We are therefore at the wrong place," said the former.

"Yes, at the wrong place," repeated Urquhart, mechanically.

"Madame will be met at the terminus of the Orleans line."

"Madame? Yes."

"Mrs. Urquhart, the wife of Monsieur," said the other, and it was a brave thing to say it. For, at the word, the eyes of the Scot gleamed with rage, and he looked savagely at his companion, as if including him in the fierce hate which had seized
upon Robert Urquhart, and which bade him regard all around him with an indiscriminate vindictiveness.

"Hold your tongue about my wife," he said, and snatched the paper from the hand of the stranger. Then, his faculties once more aroused, he read the letter again, and fully grasped its information.

"South—south," he said. "I wonder if this is a lie."

"Monsieur!"

"How am I to know that this is true?"

"I have no concern with its truth or falsehood, Monsieur. I am simply charged by M. —— to convey the message to M. Urquhart, who knows better than myself whether M. —— is likely to be deceived."

"You talk a great deal."

"I have discharged my duty, Monsieur," said the other, retiring.

"Stop. Don't I know you?"

"I had once the honour of being entrusted by you, Monsieur, with the examination of some accounts."

"We quarrelled. I forget why, but I remember that you were not to be trusted."

"I am not here to justify my character to M. Urquhart, but only to inform him where he will discover his wife," replied the stranger, impassively.

"You are in the employ of M. ——?"

"I am, Monsieur."

"What made you follow me here?"
"Information reached M.——, that Madame was preparing for flight, and he has despatched messengers to all the points of departure. It was my first business to see that they were at their posts, and my second to find M. Urquhart as soon as I had any tidings."

"That is business," said Robert Urquhart, to himself.

"Monsieur continues to think that this will be the line taken by Madame. If he pleases to remain here, and watch, I will go to the other terminus, and if our information be incorrect, which I am bound to say it seldom or never is, I will venture to act in the name of M. Urquhart."

"You," said Urquhart, his eyes again shining with anger. "You offer to go and arrest my wife, and drag her from her carriage."

"In what other way would M. Urquhart stop a fugitive?"

Robert flung a curse at him, and rushed from the station.

"He is a magnificent man," said the other, looking after Urquhart, and speaking without the slightest excitement. "His strength must be colossal. Had he closed with me in his rage I must have used steel. I am truly glad to have been spared that pain. Now, we are safe. That train leaves at the same moment with this, and he will watch to the last instant."

He returned to the room where Bertha was, and a
peculiar scratch which he made, after knocking, caused the attendant to open the door.

"You have recovered, Madame?" he said. "That is well."

"Ah, he is watching for me," cried Bertha, with every sign of prostration.

"No, Madame, he is gone. But you will be unequal to the journey if you excite yourself so unduly."

"He will come back."

"He is gone to Versailles, with the intention of remaining there until a certain M. Lygon—if I have the name rightly—can come over from England to confer with him on certain grave matters."

The falsehood was well selected, and probability was in its favour. Bertha was somewhat reassured, and was able to speak calmly of the hour of departure.

"I will obtain Madame's billet—she has her passport, I know, and two minutes before the hour I will conduct her to the carriage."

He went out.

But ten minutes before the hour he reappeared, looking graver than usual.

Robert Urquhart had been unable to relinquish the conviction that it was to England that Bertha would betake herself, and the conviction increased in strength as he left the embarcadère for the north. He knew that she had no friends in the provinces, and that she was almost childishly averse to finding herself among strangers. He could perceive no reason
for her attempting to fly in any other direction than that of her own country, except, of course, her desire to elude him by resorting to the most unlikely means of concealment, and he knew her nature sufficiently well to disbelieve that she would have nerve and endurance enough to persevere in any protracted scheme of escape. The nearer came the hour for the departure of the train, the stronger came his original conviction upon him, and before he had reached the terminus of the southern line, he turned, and hurried back to his former post. The stranger caught one glimpse of the tall figure, and hastened to Bertha.

"Is it time?" she said, with more composure than he had expected.

Without reply, he whispered to the woman, who left the room.

"There is no danger," he said, "but Madame must consent to adopt certain precautions."

"Precautions!"

"They will not be troublesome, and it will be for a short time only."

The woman came back, bringing with her a cloak, such as is worn by the humblest class of travellers, and a bonnet so coarse that Bertha instinctively shuddered at it. The Frenchman noted the feeling, and perhaps sympathised with what an Englishman would, under the circumstances, have regarded with measureless contempt.

"They are new, though poor," said the woman.

"For two stages of the journey only," said the
man. "At the end of that time, Madame will be invited from the third-class carriage to her proper place, and will find her own property restored to her."

As he spoke, the female attendant, at his gesture, removed Bertha's elegant bonnet, substituted the other, threw the cloak upon her, and then the stranger led her out, through another door from that which she had entered, and along a dark passage. She was very near the carriages, for she heard the fierce hiss of the steam almost close upon her ears, and, all unimaginative as she was, it seemed to have a menace in its gusty voice. Her guide left her for a moment, and then, returning, hurried her out upon the platform, and the next instant handed her into one of the third-class compartments. There were several persons in the carriage, and she dropped into a seat between a large German, who was already making preparations for kindling a huge pipe, and a jovial looking female bound for Amiens, who had tied a yellow silk handkerchief over her head, and had radishes in her lap, for her refreshment during the journey. Bertha, ever sensitive to externals, felt an increase of wretchedness at being placed in such companionship, and her indignant look was not lost on her protector.

"He is on the platform," he whispered; "keep close."

There was no need, after that, to bid the unhappy wife shrink guiltily from view. She bent her head, and sought to hide her face in the coarse cloak.
"Screen her from view, my friend," said her companion, in German, to the man by her side. "She is parting from an only child, and if it sees her it will scream—you know what a child's cry is to a mother's heart."

"Mein Gott!" said the kind-hearted German; "I do not like it myself, so I make my wife whip them. The child shall not see through me."

And he sat forward.

Then came the minutes that seem hours. The carriage door was opened three or four times, and Bertha, with closed eyes, sat awaiting the touch of the husband hand that might the next moment drag her forth from her hiding-place. Travellers poured upon the platform, and among all their voices Bertha listened, with a fast-beating heart, for the tone of one voice that should demand whether an English lady named Urquhart were in the carriage. But the minutes passed, and the hour of starting arrived, and the signal was given. The train glided away, and Bertha, when she perceived the motion, felt irresistibly compelled to look up for a last glance at him whom she had so bitterly wronged.

It was not yet dark, and though it was almost impossible for the eyes of those who were on the platform to penetrate the gloom of the carriage, their faces could be clearly discerned by the departing travellers. And the train glided on, and for one moment the gaze of Bertha rested upon the now flushed features of her husband. His tall form rose
high among the group on the platform, and it was an almost vacant glance that fell upon carriage after carriage as they passed him. She thought—it may have been only thought—that his lips muttered something, as she went by him.

"And I have deserved his curse," was the wife’s bitter thought, as she sped on her road to England.
CHAPTER XXIX.

When the train was out of sight, the military-looking man, with the grizzled hair, made his way towards Mr. Urquhart, and waited, as one who expects to be addressed.

"Have you stayed here on my business?" was the demand of Urquhart.

"No, Monsieur, but by the order of M. ——."

"Is he at his office now?"

"He has gone into the country, to his father's. He will, no doubt, be at the bureau early to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" repeated Urquhart, angrily. Then, after a pause, he said, "You told me that he had sent persons to the stations."

"I told Monsieur the truth."

"There is one at the Orleans terminus?" asked Urquhart.

"There was, three minutes ago. But as that train has now started, the person is on his way here, to inform me of the result of his watch. I would suggest that Monsieur should await his report."

Urquhart nodded a grim assent, and strode about the terminus, with impatient steps, until he saw the stranger accosted by another person, when Robert walked up to them.
"Is this the person?"

It was M. Chantal, who made no reply.

"The lady has not departed by the Orleans train, Monsieur," said the other.

"I have a belief that some treachery is being practised on me," said Urquhart, in a low but angry voice. "I am not speaking of you, who are but tools in the hand of your employer, but of him. I know right well that he has it in his power to lay his hand upon any person in Paris at a couple of hours' notice."

"You do not over-rate the resources of the department, Monsieur," said M. Chantal; "but is it the case that you have required those resources to be put in play?"

"No, sir, I have not. But you," he said, turning to the other, "endeavoured to lead me to the Orleans station. I am now told that I should have gone on a fool's errand. How do you answer that?"

"We can but act on information, Monsieur. Your own presence here has been, as you will admit, as useless as it would have been at the other line. It may be that Madame Urquhart has changed her plans, and resolved to remain in Paris. That can be ascertained to-morrow."

"It must be ascertained to-night," replied Urquhart.

"Monsieur is too much of a disciplinarian not to know that we are limited by our instructions," said Chantal. "I am desired to watch one train,
and report to my friend here, who may have ampler discretion."

"I am ready to pay for any service I require," returned Urquhart, who supposed that a couple of police spies, held by him in extreme contempt, were simply endeavouring to obtain money from him.

"Monsieur does not comprehend the usages of the service," said the military-looking man, unruffled. "But he asks what is impossible."

"Where does your employer's father live?"

"I do not know, Monsieur."

"Nor you, sir?"

Chantal merely bowed, in sign of his ignorance.

"Of course you both know, and are afraid to tell me, lest I should follow him. I must learn elsewhere."

He was walking away without another word, when M. Chantal said—

"M. Urquhart, misfortune is an apology for a certain kind of conduct, and I make no other remark upon what would, at another time, be an intolerable insult. Also, M. Urquhart is a man whose character demands admiration, and whom one would be honoured in serving, were it possible."

By a marvellous effort, prompted less by his own feeling than by an impression that the speaker had more to tell him, Urquhart restrained his indignation at a tribute of homage and sympathy from a police spy, and merely said—

"You know what I want to know, and what I must know immediately."
"M. Urquhart desires to discover a lady. There is no person in Paris who can help him to that discovery to-night."

His emphasis on the name of the city indicated a second meaning.

"Who can?"

"A person who is not in Paris (I am not alluding to M. ——) has no doubt the clue, but I may be committing an indiscretion in naming that person."

"Do you mean the scoundrel Adair?"

"I do not speak of M. Ernest Adair," replied Chantal, quietly.

"This discussion is apart from my duty," said the other Frenchman, "and I prefer to withdraw from it. M. Urquhart," he added, "has an unfavourable opinion of me, and therefore I do not venture to say more than this; namely, that whatever he may hear from M. Chantal—" indicating his companion—"he may rely upon as implicitly as if it came from M. —— himself."

And he walked away, and quite out of earshot.

"Who is the person you speak of?" said Urquhart, quickly.

"May I ask you to recall to your mind who it is that has been most in the secrets of the lady you wish to discover, M. Urquhart?"

"You said this instant that you did not mean that villain, who will be saved all future villany from the next moment he comes in my way," said Urquhart.

"He has probably been warned," said Chantal,
with a slight smile. "I meant to suggest a very different person—M. Urquhart's sister-in-law."

"Mrs. Lygon!" exclaimed Urquhart. "She is in London."

"We, on the contrary, believe that she has never left Versailles."

"I know not," said Urquhart, with an oath, "I know not what devil's plottings may be going on, or may not, but I believe yon woman to be in London, I tell you."

"She was certainly in Versailles yesterday, M. Urquhart. And although I have not knowledge of her residence there, you will obtain the address from a person who is known to you—M. Silvain, a perfumer."

"He in her confidence," muttered Urquhart, astonished. For he thought of the proud Laura, and her look as she had left his drawing-room when last they parted—Laura have a secret in the keeping of a petty shopkeeper at Versailles!

"As far as I understand the case, Monsieur Silvain's services have been limited to the hiring a lodging for Mrs. Lygon, but of that I know nothing."

"And you are in the employ of M. —?"

"I am, Monsieur."

"I wish you a better trade, for you seem to have the makings of a decent man, and it's a pity you have sold yourself to the Devil. But you have a right to your hire?"

He forced a napoleon into the hand of Chantal,
who was taken too much by surprise to repel the present, and then Urquhart went off with his usual rapid step.

M. Chantal rejoined his acquaintance.

"You have fired a new train, apparently," said the latter, pointing to the retreating figure of Urquhart.

"And have been paid for firing it," said Chantal, smiling, and holding up the coin. "We will drink, at supper, to the success of the brave Scot, and I will pay for the supper."

"I see no objection to either proposition," said the other. "You have not, however, sent him to the father's?"

"Why should I not have sent him there?"

"Wolowski will tell you that. But you know better. Do you think that he will get any clue to his wife's hiding-place?"

Chantal looked up, at the last word, and smiled.

"I suppose that she will leave Paris as soon as we permit it," said Chantal.

"I suppose that she will show that bad taste," said his friend, quietly.

"It is bad taste; but the poor woman does what she can. She takes over the last new bonnet. I hope you took care to urge that it was not to be crushed, or when she descends from that third-class carriage she will endure a new pang."

They looked at each other for a moment, and then, dropping the subject altogether, left the embarcadère.
"I should like to ask Ernest to our supper," said Chantal.

"That proposition, unlike your former two, I utterly repudiate," said the other. "He does not amuse me."

"You are selfish. I wished to amuse him. Besides the napoleon is in part his earning."

"Eh? You have something pleasant for him."

"Only that Urquhart has resolved on destroying our poor friend."

"Ah, well, do not let us tell him. The anticipation of misfortune is very painful,—worse than the reality. We will not be inhuman, and we shall have all the more wine to reward our philanthropy."

It was late when Mr. Urquhart returned to Versailles, whence he had driven that day with a wife smiling by his side, and to which he came back alone, disgraced, enraged. But it was not in his nature, as in that of Arthur Lygon, to sit down stunned under his sorrow, or to ponder over it, and work it hither and thither, until it grew to him and became a part of himself. Robert Urquhart met it as an enemy, and one with whom he would make no terms. His trust had been met with treachery; his honour had been stained; and he was conscious of having done no wrong that could call down on him such a judgment. There was no second thought in his mind—punishment was the thought that reigned there, the first and the last.

He had scarcely arrived when he went off in quest
of Silvain. The house was closed, but light was visible, and the sound of voices could be heard.

Urquhart's knocking silenced them.

To the demand from within he replied:

"Mr. Urquhart, and I must see you this moment."

Silvain opened the door, though with misgivings, for Henderson had not concealed from him the angry language which Mr. Urquhart had used when discharging the girl, and Silvain had apprehensions that Urquhart might be coming to carry some of his threats of chastisement into execution. However, he confronted his visitor courageously, the rather that Henderson herself was at the little supper-table in the bower, and looked aghast at the appearance of her late master.

"Don't be alarmed," said Urquhart, in a calm voice. He walked through the shop into the parlour, and sat down, Henderson instinctively springing to her feet, though she was no longer in his service; and as prospective mistress of all around, her, had as good right as himself to be seated.

"It is late, Monsieur," said Silvain.

"I know that," said Urquhart, "but late as it is, I will thank you to put on your hat, and conduct me to the lodgings of Mrs. Lygon."

The girl flushed crimson, compressed her lips tightly, and looked at her lover to see how he would meet the demand.

"I will not do so, Monsieur," said Silvain, resolutely.
"You will do so, and that directly," replied Mr. Urquhart, looking at him much as a school-master might survey a contumacious urchin who decline to perform a task.

"I know that he will not!" exclaimed the girl.

"And, if I might take the liberty to speak, it is not for the honour of a gentleman like Mr. Urquhart to ask such a thing."

"I don't talk of honour, and I don't talk of asking, girl," replied Urquhart; "but unless this man instantly obeys me, I shall take him by the scruff of the neck and walk him about Versailles until he either drops down dead or shows me the house."

And, rising as he spoke, he looked so capable of performing his threat that Henderson shuddered at the idea of seeing her lover in the grasp of such an enemy.

"Yet, I will not do it," replied the brave little man.

"I love you, Silvain," exclaimed the girl involuntarily.

"Are you mad, to disobey me, my man?" said Urquhart. "I think you know why I wish to see that woman, and if you know that, you may judge how likely I am to be stopped in my way. Put on your hat, and do not be a fool."

Silvain did not stir.

"Let me speak, sir," said Henderson, terrified at the look which now came upon the face of Urquhart. "Please to let me speak."
"Quick!"

"He has said that he will not do it, sir, and he shall not go from his word. But I will show you the house, if you will only hear me first."

"Well?"

"You said this moment, sir, that we knew why you wanted to see Mrs. Lygon. I am only a servant—leastways, I was one just now—and he is a tradesman. We have no right to ask questions; but when you put it, sir, on the ground that we do know, and we do not know, it is not overbold to ask the reason."

This was just, and Robert Urquhart felt it to be so. Stern and wrathful as he was, the Scot's nature asserted itself in the hour of anger, and he would not refuse justice.

"The reason is, that I have discovered sin and shame in my household, and Mrs. Lygon is able to give me information which I must have."

"You are not speaking, sir," said Henderson, colouring to the roots of her hair, and scarcely able to utter for agitation, "you are not speaking of anything wrong done by Mrs. Lygon?"

"She has known of wrong, and so, girl, have you," replied Urquhart, very sternly.

"Never mind me, let the worst come on me," said Henderson, crying violently; "I only want to know one thing, and on my knees I beg you to answer me, sir. You said 'sin and shame.' You were not speaking of Mrs. Lygon?"

"No," replied Urquhart, fiercely.
"That is enough, sir,—more than enough," said the girl, hastily snatching her bonnet and shawl. "If you will allow me to show you the way it will be much better, because it is late, and the poor lady may be gone to bed. Do not look angry, Silvain. I saw this must come, and come it has."
CHAPTER XXX.

The resolution of the brothers-in-law was speedily taken, and it may be easily surmised. A message to Mr. Urquhart announced that they would be with him at Versailles as quickly as the journey could be performed, and he was desired to await their arrival before taking any step whatever. Mean- 
time, but little conversation passed between Mrs. 
Hawkesley and Arthur, the former deeming that 
what soothing, what consolation, could find its way 
to Lygon's heart while the mystery of his sorrow 
remained unexplained, must come from others 
than herself, from those whose young arms were 
incessantly around their father's neck, and whose 
cheeks were constantly against his own. Arthur 
was left as much as possible with his children. But 
when Beatrice spoke to him, her voice spoke of hope, 
and her manner, even more than her voice, assured 
him that she regarded him, not as a friend about to 
be separated for ever from her household, but as 
one whose part was to endure, and to believe that 
re-union was at hand.

Hawkesley and Arthur would depart that evening, 
and the former had gone into town to make some 
arrangements for charge of his literary duties during 
his absence. He was to have returned to dinner,
after which the friends were to leave by the night train. But the hour passed, and another followed it, and Charles Hawkesley did not come back.

He had called at the theatre to leave a message for the manager, and found a note for himself. It had been left, the hall-porter said, by a person who was certainly a lady, although poorly dressed, and she had said that she knew Mr. Hawkesley had a play in rehearsal, and therefore that he would be frequently at the theatre.

"Some lady who wants me to help her to an engagement, I suppose," said Hawkesley, reserving the note for a leisurely reading, and proceeding to his own business. This occupied him until late, and he was driving hastily towards Maida Hill, when it occurred to him to look at the letter.

Five minutes later, and the horse's head was in another direction, and Hawkesley was hurrying to one of the hotels near the London Bridge terminus.

The waiter who conducted him to the apartment occupied by Mrs. Urquhart seemed relieved by his appearance, and surveyed the gentlemanly looking man with a certain satisfaction, which might indicate that a different sentiment had previously pervaded and perturbed the faithful bosom of the domestic. But Hawkesley, ordinarily keensighted and observant of such signs and tokens, had little attention for them now.

He found Bertha alone, in a large and gloomy room, rendered more dreary, at that hour, by the
sunlight without, which was streaming on the varied crowds hurrying away from the great city into the country, after the business of the day. The unhappy and solitary Bertha was seated away from the window, and had been trying to read a gaily covered novel; but the book had fallen from her hand, and she appeared to be utterly listless and prostrated. On the table, which was covered with a dingy checked cover, stood a full bottle of some red wine, and a glass, and a few large hard biscuits—a less delicate looking dessert had seldom been set before a woman accustomed to the elegancies of life.

The servant merely announced "a gentleman," and withdrew, eager, probably, to inform his employer that a mistake had not been made in receiving the lady in No. 26.

"I hoped that you would have come before, Charles," said Mrs. Urquhart, almost peevishly.

"I had not read your note three minutes when I was hurrying here as fast as a horse could bring me, Mrs. Urquhart."

"You might call me Bertha?" she answered, fretfully. "I have done you no harm, at least."

"Who spoke of harm, Bertha?" he said, taking her hand, kindly. "We will hope that no harm has been done to any one. But why are you here?"

"O, I was too wearied out to care where I went, and somebody told me that this was a respectable place. I do not know whether they think that I am respectable, for they are a long time answering the bell, and they keep me waiting a great while,
until I have been quite faint with hunger. So I ordered that great bottle of wine to put them in good humour—do not suppose that I have tasted it."

"We will manage better for you than that," said Hawkesley, who was touched at her helplessness, and who, it may be said, was more easily moved by the sight of a woman in minor distresses than by her greater griefs, a not very uncommon characteristic of men who have lived a good deal in the world. "Is there anything that you would like now?"

"If you think they would bring me some tea, and at once, I should be very glad."

So he ordered tea, and at once, for the wife who was in flight from her husband, and his heart was quite softened as he watched the thankfulness with which it was received from the now prompt and courteous attendant.

"And now, Bertha, why have you sent for me? Let me say that I am going to Paris to-night."

"Do not name Paris. Why are you going there, Charles? Do not go until I know what is to become of me. I shall die if I am left in London by myself."

"But why should you be in London by yourself? You will come on, of course, to Gurdon Terrace."

Bertha looked at him wonderingly, for a moment or two, and asked,

"Why are you going to Paris?"

"I am going to meet your husband," he said.
"It must be needless to tell you why, or who will accompany me."

"But you will not tell him that I am here, that you have seen me. For the love of heaven, do not do that, Charles. We have not been friends, you and myself, it is true, but that has not been my fault; I have been obliged to live in France, though I hate it, and always shall; but you will not be cruel to me, now that I have not a friend in the world. You will not help him to hunt me down?"

"To hunt you down?" repeated Hawkesley.

"Yes, yes. But what would be the use of his tracing me, poor wretch. I will give up everything, I will do everything, only do not let me be hurt, and let me live in quiet for the little time I have to live. I am sure that I shall not trouble any one long."

"We are strangely misunderstanding one another, Bertha," said Hawkesley. "I can only suppose that, out of the painful events of which Robert has written to England, a quarrel has arisen between yourself and him."

"A quarrel—yes—indeed," said Bertha, slowly.

"He has connected you with the misdeeds of—of another," said Hawkesley, "and is making you suffer for your relationship—no, that is not like Robert Urquhart."

"You do not know Robert Urquhart," replied Bertha. It was not that at the moment she was seeking to deceive—it was the feebleness of a nature that ever shrank from the point before it.
“What?” said Hawkesley. “Perhaps you have been carrying your sisterly love too far, and have offended your husband by your defence of Laura. But that must not be allowed to make a quarrel between you. I will take upon myself to interfere and prevent that.”

“You cannot interfere, now,” said Bertha. “It is too late. Only arrange that I may be left to myself, and not be allowed to starve to death. That is all, and it is not much to ask, Charles.”

A suspicion crossed Hawkesley’s mind that the mind of Bertha must be affected. What else could explain such flightiness, such wildness of talk? He could but conjecture that the strong excitement connected with the discovery of Laura’s wrong, and possibly some terrible scene with Robert Urquhart, had been too much for the feeble Bertha.

“My minutes are numbered,” he said, “and Arthur Lygon is expecting me. You must come on at once with me to Beatrice.”

And he rang the bell, and ordered the bill for Bertha’s lodging and other expenses. It was brought with unusual quickness, and was at once discharged by Hawkesley, who made a severe remark upon the neglect of which Mrs. Urquhart had complained. The rebuke was received in silence; but the attendant, as he went out, said, in a low voice, that his master would be glad to speak a word to the gentleman before he left.

“I will send for your trunks, Bertha,” said Hawkesley. “We have not a moment to lose.”
"Where are you going to take me?"

"Where but to my own house, to your sister's?"

"What is the use?" said Bertha, piteously, and throwing herself into a large old black chair,—the chair looked funereal, and the pale, fragile creature seemed lost in the coffin-like embrace.

"The use? Come, Bertha!"

"Yes, what is the use? I may as well be turned into the street from this house as from yours, and it must come to that. So you had better spare your wife's feelings, if she has any for me, and get rid of me at once. I can go out of the hotel, now, I know. They would not let me this afternoon, when I only wanted to get a little air from the river."

"I must not hear you talk any more," he said, firmly. "You are very ill, and the sooner you are under Beatrice's care the better. You are frightfully feverish."

And he took her hand, as if to lead her from the room.

Bertha looked at him with an expression of childish misery, and then withdrew her hand.

"Promise one thing, Charles—promise it solemnly, on your honour, on your soul. I will not move unless you promise it."

"I am sure I may. It is promised."

"That, no matter what may happen, you will not let me be turned out of your house to-night. I will go to-morrow as soon as you and Beatrice like; but you will let me stay to-night!"

"To-night, and many a night; and you shall stay,
or go, as you choose," said Hawkesley, desirous to humour her.

"Then I will go with you."

"I will get a conveyance while you put on your bonnet. Pray lose no time, but follow me down."

At the door of the hotel stood its proprietor, who, on receiving a sign from the waiter that this was the gentleman who had visited Mrs. Urquhart, addressed him respectfully:

"The waiter tells me, sir, that you have made a complaint about the attendance on the lady in No. 26."

"The lady seems to have had such good cause for complaint," replied Hawkesley, sharply, "that it shall not be my fault if any acquaintance of mine has to complain of your house again."

"We do not often give cause for such remarks as yours, sir," replied the hotel-keeper; "but there is something very strange in this lady's case, and my servants have been frightened out of their senses. She has begged and entreated of them to get her poison, and at last I thought she had better not go out until some one had seen her."

"You might have seen that she was a lady," said Hawkesley, "and have treated her with kindness."

"I would ask you, sir, if that is a lady's appearance?" replied the other; "and we can only go by appearances."

And at this moment Bertha appeared in the coarse cloak and bonnet in which she had made her escape at the Paris station, and Hawkesley could not help
admitting to himself that the landlord had a justification for his doubts.

"A family affliction compelled her to arrive in town hastily, and she had lost my address," he said, doing his best for Bertha, and offering her his arm with marked attention.

"I've seen that gentleman's face before," said the hotel-keeper, as they drove off. "I think he is an actor, or something in that line. What's No. 11 ringing like that for?"

"He ordered a bottle of twenty-six port, sir," said the waiter.

"Isn't that the young gentleman who has the brandy in bed in the morning?"

"Yes, sir; and he is very particular about what he calls his twenty-six port."

"Then take him the bottle out of No. 26, which they didn't touch. That's near enough for him, I'm sure."
CHAPTER XXXI.

"My dearest Charles, you will not save the train," exclaimed Mrs. Hawkesley, hurrying from the drawing-room, as her husband, opening the door with his latch-key, entered the hall. "I have made poor Arthur try to go on with his dinner, but you—"

"A word, dear. If we miss it, we must take the next. You want no preparation for news—Bertha is in the cab—and she is miserably ill."

"Bertha! Poor child!"

And the next moment Beatrice was at the door of the vehicle, and bringing Bertha out of it, with their hands locked together.

"Has he told you his promise?" said Bertha, stopping on the door-stone.

"Promise, darling! no," said her sister, endeavouring to lead her in.

"You must agree to it, Beatrice."

"Come in! come in! I agree to everything. Why, you are in a burning fever."

And she forced her sister into the hall.

"I am not to be turned out to-night," said Bertha, earnestly. "That is promised?"

"I fear it will be many a night before you are fit to go out," replied her sister. "I think you shall
come upstairs at once. She had better not meet Arthur now, Charles," she added to her husband, closing the door of the parlour.

"Is Arthur Lygon here?" said Bertha, trembling.

"Yes, dear; but do not meet him now."

"No, indeed," said Bertha, under her breath, and hastening up the stairs with her sister. "Do not let him know that I am here. But I have your promise—your promise—you know that."

The sisters entered Mrs. Hawkesley's room, and then Bertha, suddenly kneeling down at a couch, began to sob as if her heart were breaking.

Better, perhaps, that it had broken, than that a wife, leaning on the knees of her sister, should have to tell out such a story as that which Bertha Urquhart told.

First, Beatrice had soothed her as a mother might soothe a weeping child. Then came words and broken sentences of strange doubt and terror, and, at length, Beatrice Hawkesley, herself well nigh as agitated as the woman beside her, had drawn from Bertha the full confession that she had purchased a brief reprieve from exposure by her wicked and cowardly confirmation of the charge of Adair and the error of Urquhart.

Beatrice rose hastily from the couch, and Bertha, displaced from her sister's knees, sank on the ground beside her.

"I have your promise," she cried. "Not to-night."

Mrs. Hawkesley went down, and found Lygon and her husband in the hall.
"We can just do it, Beatrice," said Charles Hawkesley, "and that is all."

"Give up the journey to-night," said Beatrice.

Arthur Lygon looked at her with some surprise, as she had hitherto been urgent in advising their immediate departure; but Hawkesley at once surmised that Bertha had given his wife information of importance.

"If Beatrice advises the delay, Arthur—"

"It is but for twelve hours," said Mrs. Hawkesley.

"You have heard something. She is coming!"

exclaimed Arthur Lygon.

"I have heard something, dear Arthur; and though she is not coming, it must prevent your journey,"—and she spoke in the utmost agitation,—"at least until—Charles!" she cried, bursting out into a passion of tears, "it is true! it is true!"

"My own love!" said her husband, leading her into the room. "Come in, Arthur," and he closed the door. "What is true? What Arthur would give his life to hear?"

"Yes, yes; Robert has been deceived," said Beatrice. But where was the radiant smile that should have announced the innocence of Laura?

"Ha! Arthur." And Charles Hawkesley laid hearty clutch on his friend's hand and shoulder. But Arthur's gaze was upon the face of Beatrice, and he read strange things there.

"Robert has been deceived?" repeated Lygon.

"Yes," said Beatrice, pale as ashes.
"You have more to tell," exclaimed Hawkesley, eagerly.

"If I must tell it," she said, sadly. "Charles, one sister is saved to me; but the other, the other—"

Her husband drew her to his heart.

"Poor Bertha!" he said. "That was the meaning of her words to me."

"Bertha is in this house?" said Arthur Lygon, calmly.

"I had not meant to keep that from you," said Hawkesley, "but her own condition was so miserable—"

"She deserves that it should be so," replied Arthur. "And Robert Urquhart has discovered all. I wish I had known this earlier, for nothing should have prevented my hastening to meet him."


"I have no right to either. Dear Beatrice, that miserable woman upstairs has told you the truth about herself."

"You knew it, Arthur?" exclaimed she.

"Yes, and she knew that I knew it. Ask her, if you will, what took place between us in her own house at Versailles; ask her who fell on her knees, and with clasped hands begged that her wicked secret might be kept from a husband whose personal violence she declared that she dreaded. I kept her secret, though my doing so compelled me to sit face to face with that good and noble man, and hear him talk of his love for her, and of his plans for her
happiness, until my very heart turned sick at the silent treachery I was doing. So she has confessed. Now I must indeed face Robert Urquhart, and own my treason to him; and in return he will tell me that I am as much to be pitied as he is—perhaps there is no such bravery in my going, after all. But I will go."

The settled, stern melancholy of Lygon's voice came strangely upon the ears of the listeners. Hawkesley remained silent. But Beatrice, after a short pause, replied almost as calmly:

"Arthur, I do not know what a man calls friendship, or how far it compels him to hasten the destruction of a woman whose fate has come into his hands. But you spared my sister at a time when you were yourself in the deepest anguish of heart, and I love you for having had a thought for her salvation when most men would have flung everything to the winds but their own sorrow. God will reward you for that nobleness."

"But," said Hawkesley, anxiously, "you have other than sorrowful news to tell him. You have something to say—I feel you have, of another, dearest of all."

"My wife, you mean," said Arthur Lygon. "I do not wish to ask you what strange tales poor Bertha may have invented, or been taught—do not let us speak of what can be but a painful tampering with a subject too sad to be so treated. Dear Beatrice, you have also been kindness itself to me, and I have no words to tell you how deeply I feel..."
this blow to you. I hoped against hope that in some way the revelation might be spared. Take if you can the comfort you have sought to give to me under a still more fearful shock. You have a husband who loves and trusts you, children who need not blush when they hear the name of their mother. You must forget, dear woman, that you have had sisters, and you must forget their unhappy husbands. I leave you to comfort your wife, Charles—but let me see you the last thing to-night."

He pressed her hand affectionately, and was leaving the room.

"Do not let him go, Charles," said Mrs. Hawkesley, faintly. "I must speak to him."

"To-morrow, dear Beatrice," said Arthur. *

"To-night!" she replied. "Arthur, for the sake of your children, for the love of those darling children, whose voices have brought more tears into my eyes than I have ever shed in my life, do not continue to set yourself against a belief that would bring back joy and comfort to you and them. I know what is going on in your heart—I know that you would give all you have in the world to feel as I do at this moment—to feel that Laura is as worthy of you as she was the first time you led her into this room, the evening you came home after your bridal trip. Do you remember that evening, Arthur?"

"Beatrice!"

"Yes, I will recal it, and I would recal a thousand happy memories, if I could, that they might
fight with the cruel pride and the fierce judgments that are filling your heart."

"Beatrice," said her husband, "I refused to hear more from Bertha, on our way here, than that she was in great trouble, and was very ill. I told her that she must give you her confidence, and that you would be her best counsellor. I little thought that this was to be the confession."

"Right," said Arthur, "you did not think it, or you would not have brought her over the threshold of your house, and let her hand touch that of Beatrice."

Beatrice gazed on her husband with swimming eyes.

"You do not hear Charles say that," was her gentle answer.

"Nor did I mean it, Arthur," said Hawkesley. "Right or wrong, I have my own belief of duty, and that belief forbids my judging less mercifully than I trust to be judged. I would not have brought this miserable woman here, but assuredly I would not have required my wife, her sister, to abandon her utterly. Shall I add, my dear Arthur, that while I am speaking of one about whose guilt we have no doubt, your mind is with one around whose innocence some mysterious doubts have come—are your thoughts doing the commonest justice to her, and to yourself?"

"You are in league with your wife," said Arthur Lygon, with a sigh, "but I struggle in vain to accept your comfort. Let us be silent. I love you too well, Beatrice, to speak any more on this."
"And if we loved you less, Arthur," replied Mrs. Hawkesley, "should we be striving to persuade you to believe in the goodness of my sister? If we did not know how truly you have loved and still love her, would we battle for her with you? Dear Arthur, the happiness of two lives is too solemn a thing to be played with, and for me to keep back a word or a plea now would be to do a sin that I might repent to my dying hour. I am sacrificing no dignity, Arthur—I understand you—in begging you to be just to my sister."

"The justest man whom I know," replied Lygon, "has deliberately written to me—you know what he has written, Charles. Is it not madness, after that letter from Urquhart, to talk of the future?"

"And in the very hour," said Beatrice, eagerly, "when you were about to hurry over to his presence, comes this poor, wretched girl, with a fresh key to the mystery that has wrung all our hearts—she comes to tell us that the wise and just man, upon whose sentence, you, Arthur, are ready to renounce the woman who gave herself heart and soul to you, the mother of your children, the best creature that ever rewarded a husband's love—is she not all that?—" exclaimed Beatrice with wet cheeks.

"I believed it," said Arthur, turning away to hide his face.

"You believe it now, and thank God that you do, and thank him that at this very hour comes the news we have had—terrible as it is for us, Arthur, it comes in mercy to you, and tells you not to throw
away Laura from your heart at the bidding of a man who has been unable to see the sin that was going on in his own household. I say nothing against Robert’s justice, Charles,” she added, “but you, who, like Arthur, were so ready to accept his judgment, you must feel that we should be cruelly wrong to trust in it now.”

“Beatrice,” said Hawkesley, “is she in a state to answer questions?”

“She must answer,” said Mrs. Hawkesley, with firmness.

“It is useless to ask the truth from her,” said Lygon, moodily. “She is a practised and an accomplished deceiver, Beatrice—painful as it is to use such language to you—it is right that I should caution you against giving belief to what she may say. She is not what you knew her—she has learned to think of woman’s honour and man’s constancy as those things are thought of abroad, and she has also learned how to screen herself from discovery, and even from suspicion. I give no credence to her tale, be it what it may.”

“Arthur,” said Hawkesley, “you may be right as to this poor creature’s frailty, but you are contradicted as to her worldly tact by the fact that she is upstairs in this house, hiding from those whom she was unable to deceive.”

“That is her story, is it?” said Arthur.

Beatrice looked at him steadfastly with her earnest eyes.

“What!” she said, “are you doubting that?
Doubting that when a fugitive wife sobs out a confession of her sin, she is speaking the truth of others? Nay, do not retract, for I see hope for Laura."

"For Laura!" repeated Lygon.

"Yes," answered Beatrice, "yes, indeed. Yes, Arthur, you have no conviction of any kind. You are trying to deceive yourself into the belief that you have judged and condemned Laura—you would fall down on your knees in thankfulness for any witness to her goodness. Do not answer me, dear Arthur, or do as you will, for you cannot deceive me again."

He made no reply.

"Stay with him, Charles dear," said Beatrice, leaving the room.
CHAPTER XXXII.

It was a lovely moonlit night, and Versailles lay in silence. For one who had thought for the memories of the place, that was a night on which the Genius Loci would have arisen, almost unbidden. But there was no place for such fancies and recollections in the minds of the two who at that late hour set out on their errand. With a quick step, and in silence, Robert Urquhart and Henderson made their way towards the dwelling of Mrs. Lygon, and Silvain, who had said that he should follow, was permitted to do so without comment—his mistress accepting the attention as her due, Urquhart scarcely heeding it.

They arrived at the house. A light was burning in the foliaged window, and Henderson pointed that window out to Mr. Urquhart.

"I do not wish to alarm her," he said. "Say that I must speak to her." And as Henderson was stepping forward towards the house, he added, "It may be better to say, also, that I know all."

"She would have told her so without orders," he said to himself, as the girl went off, "and it will shorten the affair."

Urquhart waited at some distance, while Henderson sought to rouse the proprietor of the house.
But she knocked and called in vain until Laura, recognising the voice, spoke to the girl from the window, and in a few minutes admitted her to the room down-stairs, which served for hall, kitchen, and the day apartment of the owner. Laura had not retired to bed, but was in a deshabeille, and had been writing. Her hair flowed amply over her shoulders, and in the simplicity of her dress she looked an image of melancholy beauty.

"What brings you at this hour, Henderson? And I thought I heard a man's voice. What has happened?"

"Nothing, m'm, that should frighten you, though what has happened must be frightful to some others. It was what I expected all along. Mr. Urquhart knows the real truth now; and, m'm, he has come to tell you so."

"He knows the real truth," repeated Laura, slowly. "What truth?"

"If there was time to talk, m'm, I would beg your pardon on my knees for daring to speak of it, but he is waiting outside, and has allowed me to come in and prepare you to see him. He has been to Paris with Madame, and he came back just now, having learned that you were here, and he knows all."

"Henderson," said Laura, faintly, and supporting herself against the chimney-piece, "I have heard so many mysterious messages—"

"There is no mystery now, dear Mrs. Lygon,"
said the girl, in a low voice, and very respectfully.

"He knows that he is a wronged husband."

"And—and he wishes to see me."

She was answered by a knock at the door.

"He is there, m'm."

"Say that I will come down to him," said Mrs. Lygon, calmly. And she went up to her room.

Some little re-arrangement of dress occupied a few minutes, during which Mr. Urquhart waited in stern silence outside the door, and then Laura came to him.

"You have sent me a strange message, Robert," she said.

"Ay," he answered, "there are strange doings in this world. I must speak to you."

"We can never meet under one roof, Robert," she replied, "until—until that happens which is not likely to happen now. And if it were not for the sake of others, I would not have met you again. Do not suppose that I am speaking vainly. I could have left this house, and avoided you, had I chosen to do so—there is another entrance, and by this time I could have been beyond your reach. But I have come, at your wish. What do you want with me?"

He took her hand, but with perfect gentleness, and drew her a step or two over the threshold.

"Come under God's roof, Laura," he said, in a grave voice, "and when we have sin and shame to speak of, let us not talk in the world's way. Come out to me here, will you not?" he said, relinquishing
her hand, and drawing back a little, as if to leave her perfect freedom of action.

Henderson heard the words, and in another second had darted to Laura's room, and brought her a light hat, which she placed, without a word, in Mrs. Lygon's hand.

"I will stay here, m'm, until you return."

Laura stepped out into the moonlight, and on a lovelier form and face it had never streamed even in that city of the fair women of days gone by. Even Urquhart, as he gazed upon her with a sterner glance than has often been cast on such an object, felt a thrill of admiration, and scorned himself for owning that he felt it.

There was a somewhat broad road, a short distance from the house, and over this road the branches met, and the moonlight broke through them, but with difficulty. The two turned under the trees, and Urquhart said:—

"Stand here. I have but a little to say, and I have been thinking how to say it in the fewest words. Your sister Bertha is a guilty woman, who has dishonoured her husband."

"Why do you say this to me?"

"Why, indeed, do I tell you that which you know too well? That you may know from my own lips that I am deluded no longer—that you may know that I have seen in her own handwriting the proof of her shame, and that I have no longer a wife."

"Robert!" she exclaimed, white with terror at
his last words, which might bear a fearful meaning. "Robert—Bertha is—is well?"

"I know nothing of her," he said. "By some devilish device it was managed that she should know that I was made aware of her sin, and she has fled."

"Thank Heaven!" gasped Laura, scarce knowing that she spoke.

"You knew this," he continued, "and why do you affect surprise? Is it to prepare me for your refusing to answer my questions?"

"I will answer you no questions, Robert," replied Mrs. Lygon.

"You will not?"

"At least I will answer none until I am holding the hand of my own husband, and receiving his permission to speak to you. When you have settled with him the fearful account which now stands between you, it will be time for you to ask help from me."

"Laura, are you in your senses? Do you dare even to name your husband to me?"

"To name him, Robert! When your messenger knocked at my door I was on my knees naming him to One who will yet deliver him, and me, from the consequences of your madness and foolishness."

"Mine!"

"Yours, Robert Urquhart, as you will live to know, and as you will some day own, and will beg for pardon. In the mean time, the less we speak together the better for both. Why have you asked to see me to-night?"
“Why? Because you have all Bertha's secrets, and you know where she has taken refuge.”

“I do not know. And if I did know, I would not, without my husband’s permission, dare to tell you. Do not attempt to see me again, unless you bring Arthur with you to say that he has forgiven you, and permits me to forgive you for your crime against us both.”

Without another word she left him, and went back to the house, and Robert Urquhart, bewildered, did not attempt to stay her.
CHAPTER XXXIII.

MRS. HAWKESLEY returned to the bed-room in which she had left Bertha. The latter had raised herself to the couch at the foot of the bed, and lay there extended and exhausted.

When her sister came in, Bertha scarcely moved, but her eyes followed every motion of Beatrice. Mrs. Hawkesley drew a chair near the couch, and said, sadly:

"Bertha, it is something to be able to begin at once to make atonement for what is past."

"Do not speak to me about anything to-night," was the reply. "Let me go to bed, and to-morrow we will talk of everything."

And it was evident from Bertha's tone that she felt that she had already done much in the way of atonement by the confession she had made to Beatrice.

"To-morrow will be too late," replied her sister, with more firmness than before. "Arthur Lygon is resolved to go to Paris to your husband, and before he goes you must see him."

"Why should he see me? What can I say to him? Beatrice, this is too cruel in you. I will not see him."

"Bertha, listen to me. Not one word of anger
have you from me, not one word of reproach for the shame that has come upon all of us. I have heard your terrible story, and as God shall bless me and mine, I have had only two thoughts, how to believe that you are penitent, and how to save you from future sin and trouble. Do not make me ashamed of my love for you—do not make me believe that you are afflicted only because the judgment has come upon you. Bertha, if we are to be sisters, you must show yourself a sister to Laura."

"What can I do for Laura?"

"You can see her husband, and you can explain to him what you know of the wickedness that has made Robert believe her what you know she is not. This you can do, Bertha, and you must do it now."

"Do not ask me to meet him. Tell him yourself, tell him from me, if you will, that it is all a mistake, and that it will be cleared up if he will only have patience."

"Bertha!" exclaimed her sister, "you are talking of the honour of a wife whom Arthur loves with all his soul, and you would send him such a message as might excuse a forgotten invitation. But Laura shall not be sacrificed, and you shall see Arthur."

"You think only of Laura; you have no mercy on me."

"Show that you deserve mercy," returned her sister, now becoming indignant at Bertha's selfishness. "I will fetch Arthur to you, and I tell you, Bertha, that if you fail in the plain duty before you, we shall never speak again."
She rose to go, when Bertha sprang up and clutched at her dress.

"Beatrice," she said, "wait a little—stay a little. There is so much to tell, and I cannot remember things. I am so ill. To-morrow——"

"To-morrow, Bertha," said her sister, impressively, "you may be unable to tell anything, for fever is upon you; and I only ask you to perform this duty, and then you shall be nursed and tended like a child. But while you have strength and memory, save her who is innocent—save Laura."

"Will he believe me? You know he will not."

"The truth will have its weight with him, no matter who tells it. You know why Laura left her home?"

"Yes."

"You know that it was to do no wrong?"

"I know it."

"Tell Arthur that, and why she came to you."

"He will not believe me."

"Why do you repeat that so earnestly?"

"Because—because he has asked me the question before, and I told him—well, it was the best thing that came to my mind at the moment," said Bertha, half despairingly, half irritated.

"But you will speak the truth now, and he will find out that you have spoken it."

"It is so painful to have to say that one has told a falsehood. Tell him from me, Beatrice, tell him that I was persecuted by a bad man, who wanted
money of me, and that Laura came over to try to make terms with him."

As she spoke, the face of Beatrice assumed an expression of anger, such as perhaps it had never worn before. She became deadly pale, and she seized one of the hands of Bertha.

"And is this the truth, Bertha," she said, sternly, "as you hope for mercy and forgiveness for your great wickedness?"

"Yes, yes, indeed it is."

"Laura went over at all the fearful risk of ruin—Laura went over to help and save you—and you, you hesitate at making any confession of the truth that can save her!"

"Have I not told you?" stammered Bertha, terrified at her sister's anger.

"Me! You will tell it to Arthur Lygon in the next five minutes, or you are no sister of mine."

And, repulsing Bertha's hand, Mrs. Hawkesley left her.
CHAPTER XXXIV.

AVENTAYLE, the manager, was enraged, and justly so. He could get no pieces from his friends the English authors, and his friends the French authors behaved no better to him. They were perpetually bringing out plays which made extraordinary successes in Paris, and furnished proverbs and caricatures to the Parisian press; but, with the most selfish disregard to the interests of English dramatic literature, they composed all these pieces (whose prosperity made Aventayle's mouth water) upon themes which could by no possible manipulation be rendered presentable here.

"And they talk of international relations, and be hanged to them!" said Mr. Aventayle, throwing down "Figaro," in wrath. "If our fellows," and it may be feared that he actually meant our Ministers—"knew their business, and were worth a farthing, they would provide in their treaties that French authors should not write anything that could not be used here."

"When are you going to do Hawkesley's piece?" demanded Mr. Grayling, the recipient of the manager's growls.

"How can I tell? He wants to re-write that end of the second act, and he has got some family..."
troubles, and can't settle to work. What the deuce business has an author with a family, I should like to know!"

"I dare say a good many authors have asked themselves the same question."

"Not in these days, confound 'em! They are the best paid fellows going, except the actors, Master Grayling. They wax fat and kick, as Shakspere says."

"Shakspere!" replied the actor, who was exceedingly respectable, and went to church, and behaved quite properly when there. "That doesn't come out of Shakspere, Mr. Aventayle."

"Well, then, it ought. It's good enough to be his," replied the manager, quite unconscious of his irreverence. "I meant to have called the play tomorrow, but what's the good of getting a scene right, if it is to be knocked to pieces afterwards? I swear I've got nothing else to put up."

"Why don't you do that strange piece that the man in Paris sent you? It looked very good, I thought," said Mr. Grayling.

"Because it wants a week's work upon it, to lick it into anything like shape."

"Lick!"

"Very fine talking, as if I had nothing else to do."

"Catch the author, and make him do it."

"He lives in Paris, and has reasons of his own for not coming to London."

"Well, Aventayle, I suppose you have read of an
interesting trait in the character of the prophet Mohammed,—when a mountain declined to come to him—eh?”

“By Jove! I have a good mind to go to the mountain, as you say. And one might see something. Will you come? Yes. You are taking your salary for nothing, just now: show your greatness of soul, by spending some of it in giving your manager a treat.”

“I should like, but I can’t be treating a manager while I am building a house; the bricks and mortar mop up every available sixpence.”

“That’s the way; actors building houses, and authors striking work, and a manager looking nine ways for Sunday; and can’t see it at any price whatsoever.”

“That frame of mind is very objectionable, Aventayle. Come and dine with me to-morrow, and I’ll take you to church to hear a sermon on contentment and virtue, and that last lot of Lafitte is the thing, my boy.”

“I shan’t. I shall go to Paris. You might come with a fellow, Grayling: what an unsocial brute you are! Come, I’ll stand one dinner at the Trois Frères, and you shall order it yourself.”

“I can’t, my dear fellow, and there’s an end. We’re going to christen the small kid on Wednesday.”

“Well, things have come to something when a play-actor lets a religious ceremonial stand between him and his duty to the theatre. However, I sup-
pose I must bear with it. And here," he said, putting something into a piece of paper, "give that with my love to Mrs. Grayling, and ask her to buy a coral and bells for the young one, and I hope every time you hear them ring they will sound a reproach for your unnatural conduct to me."

"Pop’s got a coral," laughed the actor, "but we’ll buy her a spoon."

"It will equally remind you of your unhappy manager," returned Aventayle, mixing himself some brandy-and-water. "Now there’s another go. I believe it rains and hails tribulations. I gave Hawkesley the letter with that Paris fellow’s address, and he has never returned it to me—just like his unbusiness-like ways."

"I suppose you can send up for it?"

"Well, that is an inspiration. I suppose I can. And then I dare say he won’t be at home, or he won’t be able to find it—all the troubles of life are heaped upon my miserable head. Pop’s health, and in due time may she have a better husband than her mamma has got."

"We shall meet in Paris," wrote Charles Hawkesley, enclosing, not the letter, but the address given by Ernest Adair. "Leave word at Galignani’s where you are to be found. And on no account whatever let this man know that you expect to see me.—C. H."

"Some mystification," grumbled Aventayle, as he read the charge. "And if he can be running off to Paris, why can’t he stay at home and touch up Reckoning without the Host? If there’s one thing in
the world that I hate more than another, it is a man’s taking a holiday until he has finished off every single thing that he ought to attend to.”

And the excellent manager, who had made a dozen appointments for the next Monday, called a confidential employé into council, left his theatre in that conscientious person’s charge, and ate his breakfast in Paris next day.

This was Sunday, and he had a certain scruple about beginning any business on that day—unless some other manager was likely to be less religious—so Aventayle did not hunt up Adair, but inspected the improvements, dined pleasantly, and went to the theatre. There he did not see a literary production that was calculated to be of much use to him, but his abstinence from secular occupation was rewarded by his beholding a wonderful pantomimic trick, in which eight old ladies, who had been dancing on the stage in old-fashioned but not ridiculous garments, suddenly bowed their heads, and instantly became the elegant modern furniture of a drawing-room. The trick had drawn all Paris, and its ingenuity had baffled the double opera-glasses of a whole gang of intending pirates, but as a special boon to Aventayle, and further reward for his Sabbatical observance, a hitch in the transformation of a lady, who became a chair, occurred. It was the action of a moment, but it told the secret to the keen eye of Aventayle, and the effect was booked for his Christmas piece. So that night he slept the sleep of the good, and remarked in the morning, that change of climate was
as lucky as turning your chair round three times after a run of bad cards at whist.

He sent a note to the address which Adair had given, and requested that gentleman to call on him at the Hotel Bedford.

The note was received, and a quarter of an hour later Ernest Adair was in the presence of M. Wolowski.

"Ah, M. Adair, delighted to see you. I should have sent for you in a day or two, but I am glad you have forestalled me. Are you impatient to enter upon new duties?"

Adair's reply was to place Aventayle's note in the hand of M. Wolowski.

"Just received?" asked the Pole.

"Within a quarter of an hour."

"Then you have not, as yet, complied with the request?"

"Certainly not."

"Ah! I see," replied M. Wolowski, with a slight smile. "Yes, your precaution is perfectly right—it may be, as you do not say, a ruse to bring you into unpleasant society, and we cannot be too careful, in this evil city, my dear Adair, as to what company we keep. We will call Chantal into council."

M. Chantal made his appearance. There was no incivility in his manner towards Adair, but it would have required a very indulgent eye to discover that the semi-Englishman entertained any particular regard for his colleague.
"Do you know that name?" said Wolowski, tossing him the note.
"Yes, certainly. He is the director of one of the London theatres—he often comes over here."
"Does he know you?"
"No."
"Nor you, Adair?"
"Certainly not. But he has a drama of mine in his hands, and some time ago I wrote to him in reference to it."
"Well, gentlemen, I suppose you can manage the rest without me?"
"You do not quite comprehend the position, M. Wolowski," said Ernest. "I know that this is Mr. Aventayle's writing, and I make no doubt that he is at the Hotel Bedford. But we know that a certain person is in England, and it is more than probable she has put herself into communication with Mr. Charles Hawkesley."
"Hawkesley?" repeated the Pole, in uncertainty.
"Dramatic author," said Chantal, promptly, "who writes much for this M. Aventayle, and is his friend."
"Ah!" said Ernest to himself, "it is you, then, M. Chantal, who have been employed in getting up my history? It is well to know that."
"But how comes Hawkesley?—ah!—I remember," said Wolowski.
Clearly seeing that he did not, the discreet Chantal added:
"Hawkesley is married to a sister of Mrs. Urquhart."

"Yes," said the Pole, calmly, "if Hawkesley, Urquhart, and Aventayle should all fall upon our friend together when he enters the Hotel Bedford, the conflict would be a little unequal."

"I may point out," said Chantal, "that if it were deemed well to send a substitute for M. Adair, one who should represent him, the same awkward result might occur."

"Do not be alarmed, my dear Chantal. You shall not play the part of M. Adair. I will myself encounter the Cerberus, or three-headed monster. Remain until my return."

Aventayle was smoking in front of the hotel when he was pointed out to M. Wolowski by one of the servants.

"This," said the Pole, after saluting the manager with much politeness, and producing the note; "this is the note which Monsieur was good enough to send a short time ago."

"Yes. Have I the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Adair?"

The quick apprehension of the spy immediately told him that there was no arrière pensée behind that frank and pleasant address.

"No," replied M. Wolowski. "I am unfortunate enough to be several years that gentleman's senior. You have never seen him, or would not have made the mistake."

"I have never seen him. But I am very desirous to see him."
"Not more desirous than Mr. Adair is to see Mr. Aventayle. But, unhappily, Adair is confined to his house—to his bed, in fact—by illness, and has requested me, an old friend, to meet you, and, if possible, to negotiate any business that may require attention."

"And that, I fear, is just what no third person can do," said Aventayle. "But let us go into the hotel."

"You have a cigar, and may prefer to walk in the gardens."

"So be it," said the manager, and they went into the walk.

"This is very vexing," said Aventayle ("just like my luck," he observed to himself), "for, I suppose, you guess what my errand with your friend is likely to be."

"His drama—"

"Exactly. Well, are you a literary man—perhaps you are his collaborateur?"

"In a humble way—very humble," said the Pole; "but I am quite capable of conveying your ideas to Adair."

"Well, then, he has sent me a play in which there is a great deal of good stuff, but it won't do in its present form. I wanted him to come and see me, and hear my suggestions for alterations, and then to go and make them, and let me take the play back, supposing, of course, that he liked my terms. But if it is not probable that he will soon be able to work, I must see what else can be done."
"That sounds all safe," thought Wolowski. "May I ask," he said, "whether your referring to something else is connected with my friend's production?"

"Why, yes, to this extent," said Aventayle. "If he cannot attend to it, and chooses to sell it to me, out and out, and we agree, I would get an English author to deal with it in my own way."

"These dramatists," said the Pole, with a smile, deprecatory of such small vanity as that he was about to mention, "have a sort of jealousy of their works being touched by other people; but supposing that we could get over that weakness, which of course it is, I conclude that you would employ the services of some author not unworthy to be associated with my friend?"

"Your friend," said the manager, smiling, "has never produced a single piece: but I should place his play in the hands of a gentleman with a first-class London reputation, and of whom I should think you may have heard in Paris. That is Mr. Hawkesley."

"His name is well known to me, and to Adair also," replied the Pole, gravely. "How unfortunate that he does not happen to accompany you, for my friend, though confined to his room, could receive you both, and ideas might be exchanged."

He watched Aventayle narrowly as he spoke. The manager, whose thought was, not unnaturally, upon his own interests, utterly forgot the injunction of Hawkesley, and eagerly replied,

"That's the very thing that I should like.
Hawkesley is coming over; I shall know of his arrival, and I will bring him to call on Mr. Adair. He has read the piece, too.”

This puzzled the Pole. It was either a perfectly frank and loyal proposition, or else it was a stupid English way of trying to arrange a bit of treachery. As he could not satisfy himself which was intended, he naturally decided to accept the second alternative.

“And when do you expect Mr. Hawkesley?”

“I am uncertain, but it will be very soon. He is to leave word for me at Galignani’s and——”

It was a curious study, that expressive and handsome face of the manager. With the word—as often happens—came back a sort of photographic reproduction of the lines of the letter in which the word had been used, and Aventayle, professionally accustomed to allow his features all play that was prompted by sensation, instantly manifested a discomfiture which would have been loudly applauded in the theatre, and which was so marked that for a moment the actor beside him actually thought it an assumed manner. But Aventayle speedily disarmed this suspicion.

“Monsieur is not well, perhaps. The change from the atmosphere of London to that of Paris is sometimes trying.”

“No, no,” said Aventayle, “it was not that. I had forgotten something that I ought to have remembered, but I dare say that it is of no importance.”

“I need not remind you of the telegraph.”
"That would not remedy it," said Aventayle. "But it is nothing. Well, then, I think that we cannot do better than leave the matter as it stands. Just ascertain from Mr. Adair whether he will have any objection to his play being doctored under my direction, and if he assents, Mr. Hawkesley and myself will call upon him."

"Suppose, to save time," said the Pole, "we endeavoured to arrange preliminaries first. Frankly, I should not feel much sympathy with my friend, if upon a mere question of literary fame, he resisted the improvement of his play, and it is only upon the question of terms that men of business need talk. Would it suit you to visit him in the first instance, and if you arranged the matter satisfactorily, the rest could await the arrival of your friend?"

"Very well, by all means. Can we go to him now?"

"I should like to prepare him a little, for he has been extremely unwell. Would two hours hence suit you?"

"Perfectly. I am here on business."

"He lives in a somewhat humble dwelling, but you will have no difficulty in finding it, and, if you please, he will expect you after one o'clock."

M. Wolowski returned to the house where his younger friends awaited him.

"Your precaution, I have the honour to repeat to you, Mr. Adair, was perfectly right. I have seen your director, and he is singularly desirous to see you. This pleasure I have promised him. But
inasmuch as it might be far safer for you to entertain that worthy man and his possible companions here, than that you should risk the kind of entertainment they might offer you at the Hotel Bedford, I have made an appointment for him to visit you."

"What does he want?"

"Mr. Hawkesley accompanies him to Paris, and they desire to have an interview with you upon the subject of a certain plot, which they consider an unworthy one, you know with what justice."

"Why is this Aventayle dragged into the matter?" asked Adair.

"That he wishes to explain to you himself."

"I shall not meet him."

"Having ventured to pledge myself that you will, I am sure that you will not permit me to be reproached. Besides, I think that you will be, in a pecuniary sense, a gainer by the interview."

"What!" said Adair, with no feigned surprise.

"Has it taken that turn?"

"Most things take that turn," replied M. Wolowski. "And all things would, if people were not fools enough to have hearts, and passions, and consciences, and all the rest of it."

"Do I understand you, that there is a proposition to buy my silence as to certain matters?"

"There is a proposal to purchase your assent to certain representations."

The smile that came upon the lips of Chantal, who had detected in the tone of his chef what Adair’s surprise and eagerness forbad him to perceive, now
told Ernest that he was a victim to the malice of Wolowski's tongue. Evil was the glance of Adair, and not much less evil was the laugh under which he suppressed his anger.

"It is you who should be the dramatist, M. Wolowski," he said. "Accept my congratulations on your finesse. In return, may I ask whether I am to have any part in the comedy?"

Wolowski paused for a moment, eyeing Adair with some amusement, and then said, in his ordinary voice,

"This man Aventayle appears to me to be really come on the errand he describes. He tells me that he has got a play of yours, which is not so bad but that a real author could make it decent and presentable. He wants to buy it of you, on condition that a gentleman—whom he named—may do as he likes with it."

Barry Cornwall has, with a poet's truth, indicated the condition of a wretched, degraded girl as that of one who once had

"Gentleness, vanity, maiden shame."

Let it be said that amid all the degradation to which Ernest Adair had bowed and debased himself, the quality, or fault, which abandons woman only when she is abandoned indeed, survived in the bosom of the demoralised spy, and that at the coarsely-worded speech of the Pole, an angry flush came over the pale forehead of the younger man. He exclaimed, in as earnest a voice as an honest man might have used—
"I will see him and his insolence at the devil first."

Chantal laughed a small laugh, but Wolowski said, gravely,

"You must not make an appointment that interferes with mine. That is against all rule, M. Adair."

Adair recovered himself sufficiently to smile at the retort, but he was for once dreadfully and genuinely angry.

"And pray, M. Wolowski, whom was Mr. Aventayle good enough to mention as the workman who was to deal with my play?"

"The gentleman I have named to you—Mr. Hawkesley. I am told that your reputation will not suffer in his hands."

"Wolowski," said Adair, with an eagerness quite apart from his former manner. "Did Aventayle say that Mr. Hawkesley had seen that piece?"

"I infer that it was upon his perusal that the director formed the favourable opinion which I have had the pleasure of imparting."

Ernest Adair rose from his seat, and with something like defiance, said:

"Now, M. Wolowski, and you, M. Chantal, for I know your interest in my affairs: now you can show your skill, if you think proper to do so. Now, gentlemen, there is a tangle worthy the talent of both of you. Now let us see a specimen of the vaunted clear-sightedness of those whom I was told I had disgraced by my shortcomings at Versailles."

"Your acting does you honour, my dear Adair,"
said Wolowski, "and shows that when M. Berryer recommended M. Lacordaire to adopt a religious vocation, he was not more in the right than myself when giving the same counsel to you. The world will hear you in the pulpit—meantime, don't let them hear you in the street. Close the windows, Chantal, unless our friend has done."

"Listen to me, I tell you," said Adair, resuming his seat. "It is now my turn to be heard. There is a riddle set for you which I defy you to solve. You, M. Wolowski, with all the help of the information which M. Chantal has acquired during his secret journey to England, you cannot say whether you are going to admit into this house an honest man with an honest purpose, or an agent from the family of Mr. Urquhart's wife."

"Fairly put," replied Wolowski, promptly. "I have no mercy, Adair, on blunderers, but I am never unjust. I do not know in which capacity this Aventayle is coming. You will discover, I take it for granted."

"I will not see him."

"Behind that tone there lurks some reason that one should hear, of course," said the Pole.

"Let M. Chantal take my place, if he likes."

"I should have no objection," said Chantal; "but he professedly comes to talk about a play, which play the person he will see is supposed to have written. Not having enjoyed the great advantage of perusing that play, it might be difficult for me to discuss its scenes and personages."
"Less difficult than M. Chantal supposes, if he did his duty in England."

"Another riddle, Adair," said M. Wolowski. "Does M. Chantal find it a riddle?"

"I confess that I do."

"M. Chantal has apprised you, M. Wolowski, that he has travelled to England, and has made himself thoroughly master of my history."

"I cannot suppose you, Adair, to be such a fool—I do not withdraw the word—as to entertain any ill-feeling towards a colleague who has simply obeyed orders, and done by you what you have done by dozens of colleagues of yours."

"I am not such a fool, M. Wolowski. But I know my own value, and I do not choose that your favouritism shall be exerted in ignorance. You have every confidence in M. Chantal, and you have taken every opportunity of showing that you have no confidence in me. I do not complain of that. But I call on M. Chantal to vindicate your good opinion of himself."

"I dare say he will respond to the call."

"Let him, then, meet Mr. Aventayle, and, as Ernest Adair, discuss this play with him. And if M. Chantal did his duty in England, he will be able to discuss it with full knowledge of its contents, for, in that play, I have set out my own history. If he has learned that, he can talk to Mr. Aventayle."

"It is for me to decide," said M. Wolowski, "whether I will submit Chantal to any such test."

"It is," said Adair. "But you say, and with
truth, M. Wolowski, that you pique yourself upon justice. I offer you a touchstone of the merits of a man whom you insist on preferring to me, and you are about to encourage him to shrink from the challenge."

"I wish to hear M. Wolowski before I reply," said Chantal.

"No doubt you do," returned Adair, with a bitter sneer.

"Your challenge means a charge against M. Chantal, as I understand it," said the Pole. "Is that so?"

"Yes," said Adair, "but there is no need for me to put that charge into words. If he comes well out of the trial, my charge falls to the ground. But he, I make no doubt, tells you that he has learned the principal incidents in my life. Well, they are in that play, and he need not be afraid of going too near the wind. I have not hesitated in telling them."

"I may observe," said Chantal, quietly, "that M. Adair has adopted an ingenious course for avoiding a meeting of which he evidently stands in dread, I do not say unnaturally."

"You speak falsely, M. Chantal. To have gone to the Hotel Bedford and exposed myself singly to the chance of some brutal attack would have been a fool's act. What have I to apprehend here from a single visitor?"

"That is just," said the Pole. "Adair is perfectly certain that if I desired him to give a meeting to
this Aventayle, or any one else, I should take care that he was protected from violence. He would be aided by one whom he little thinks is likely to help him, and who, with others, will be in attendance, if required.”

“M. Chantal hesitates to accept.”

“I deny M. Adair’s right to demand my acceptance of a challenge that implies a charge.”

“Were you in England?” asked Ernest Adair, carelessly.

“I think that I may answer with contempt.”

“You need not answer at all,” retorted Adair.

“But when you have come disgraced out of the trial to which I invite you, I shall have something more to say, and that I think you may find it very expedient to answer.”

“After this, M. Wolowski,” said Chantal, “I have only to claim the interview with M. Aventayle.”

“There is an hour between this time and the appointment,” said M. Wolowski, coldly. “Remain in the house, both of you, and I will let you know what I intend.”

“I understand you,” said Ernest Adair. “There is an hour. But, M. Wolowski, you pique yourself on your justice.”

Ernest left the room.

“My position here is unsafe enough,” he said to himself, as in entire disregard of M. Wolowski’s recommendation, he went down into the street, “and if I am to re-establish myself with Wolowski, it must be by some coup, which is always more in my way
than slow climbing. The thought was a fortunate one. If it should turn out that this man is an emissary of the Scot and his friends, it is in every sense better that my excellent Chantal should take whatever chance there is of an unpleasant affair. And if Aventayle means plain sailing, let us see how the same excellent Chantal will get out of the dilemma. I ought not, perhaps, to have left him with M. Wolowski, who lets himself be talked over by that silky vagabond in a way that disgraces his profession—but stay. Three quarters of an hour—more. Wolowski and his man are not going to waste it, that I will swear. Yes. I see a very much better way of using those fifty minutes than in looking into shop windows.”

END OF VOL. II.