SHATTERED IDOLS.

VOL. I.
"What, Dagon up again! I thought we had hurled him
Down on the threshold, never more to rise.
Bring wedge and axe, and neighbours, lend your hands,
And rive the idol into winter fagots."

_Athelstone._

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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SHATTERED IDOLS.

CHAPTER I.

“When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat:
Yet, fooled with hope, men favour the deceit,
Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay—
To-morrow's falser than the former day;
Lies worse; and while it says we should be blest
With some new joys, cuts off what we possesst.”

Dryden.

Flying clouds had chased each other since morning over the sky, blown by currents which occasionally swept downwards along the ground in gusts damp and chill. The south-west wind rushed into every crevice, and blustered round every corner, beating a watery torrent in all directions, and arousing the dormant atmosphere from the previous baleful stagnation of a November calm.
The evening darkened prematurely into twilight, for the sun had not once penetrated the leaden clouds all day, nor sent the usual golden rays to earth with which it bids the world good night in climates such as that where my story is to be enacted.

It was in the south that the night which I am describing lowered over the inhabitants of a small village near Avignon: down the hill on which it was built tore the stream that in ordinary times crept lingeringly along the road’s mid-channel, now swollen to treble its usual breadth, and reflecting the wretched lights hung in lanterns across the street. They creaked, and jingled, and oscillated, so that the rays which they shed seemed to dance in the pools of water beneath them.

All other noises were silenced in this quiet little place by the approach of night; the poor small houses bordering the street had been long closed, for their inmates were now enjoying the calm sleep
purchased by hard labour with the wear of life.

One building, of some pretension, rose above the rest; it was, like others in the village, dilapidated, and from the external appearance you would conclude that it had been for years uninhabited. This gloomy night, however, one occupant sat there in a room upon the ground floor, where he had spent most days of the past month.

After an absence of two years in Italy, Castelle, a student of some repute at Padua, returned to the late home of his deceased parents, on a day as dreary as this just described; and he took possession of a miserable abode, uncheered by any kind greeting.

No affectionate welcome hailed him, no kind ministering of friendship alleviated his fatigue, no inquiring glance of love sought the improvement we look for after absence in the young; a dark, cold, lonely dwelling diffused a chill around the heart far more

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unendurable than mere personal inconveniencing.

After his arrival at Lieufort, our student remained for some days absorbed in the reflections suggested by a return to the home of early years. His stay there had been prolonged by various circumstances, which unexpectedly detained him till the time when he is introduced to my readers.

It was after a day spent in study that, seated in the half-furnished room of his cheerless dwelling, Castelle anticipated the coming future with the glow of hope which seems already to realize happiness for the young. An open volume lay before him on the table, beside a small lamp feebly illuminating the gloomy room. Relieved by the shadows of the dark background, his fine countenance seemed to give brilliancy to the light which it reflected. Expression harmonized features that were in themselves of the highest order of beauty: large dark lustrous eyes, of which the
searching glance might have been otherwise too harsh, were softened by long black lashes that seemed to shade you from their penetrating scrutiny. A mouth such as a sculptor would imitate, might have been too hard, too resolute, did not a peculiar smile often modulate its lines into less determined curves. His forehead, wide and elevated, promised great intellectual faculties, the force and persistence of which were guaranteed by the well-proportioned head, massive behind with a counterpoise to its frontal development.

No sound disturbed the quiet neighbourhood, chiefly inhabited by the poor and laborious, who had long since retired to enjoy their only luxury—sleep, till the village clock broke the prolonged silence, striking eleven. Castelle had been anxiously expecting this hour, and for the last few minutes walked restlessly up and down his room, as if watching for some looked-for summons. At last a gentle knock on the
door was followed by the appearance of an old woman there, who, with a sign of caution, said tremulously, "Are you ready, sir?"

"Is all quiet in the street?" whispered Castelle.

"Not a being stirring, sir; but make haste, for heaven's sake, or we may be too late."

Motioning assent, Castelle took the lamp from the table, and depositing it in the passage, quickly issued out into the dark court, where the old woman impatiently awaited his appearance. From this they entered a narrow street, in which the few lamps spared by the increasing rain gleamed with dull uncertainty through its mist, and Castelle mechanically drew the collar of his student's dress closer as he encountered the cold blast, and quickly followed his cautious guide with a light and noiseless step.

Emerging from the street, they entered
a path bounded on one side by some uninhabited cottages, and on the other by a dilapidated wall. Again turning, and entering a narrow lane, the old woman assumed more precaution, walked slower, and peered around in all directions; then drawing a key from a very deep pocket, she applied it to the door of a miserable hovel and admitted them both into its interior.

On his entrance Castelle looked inquiringly around him.

"It is not here, sir," said the old woman, her teeth chattering with cold and terror. "Oh, what will become of me if we are found out?"

"Silence," muttered Castelle; "where is the body?"

She pointed to a corner of the inner room, and Castelle started back as, on moving a table that stood beside it, the heavy arm of a corpse fell upon the floor at his feet. Recovering his composure im-
mediately, he wrapped the sheet which partly covered the body tightly round it, and using all his strength in the effort, drew it into the room without. He then bound it with a cord, and urging the old woman to assist him, they bore their lifeless burden through a back gate, thus avoiding the vicinity of some opposite dwellings. With much greater caution than before, the same road was retraced, Castelle bearing the chief part of their load, and urging his companion by threats and promises to exert all her strength for his help. The rain continued unabated; and when its covering shrank round the very meagre outlines of the corpse, the old woman remitted the assistance she had hitherto afforded Castelle, inducing him, when near his home, to dismiss her with injunctions of inviolable secrecy as to the events of the night.

Lifting the corpse with difficulty, Castelle now passed through the court, and finding his lamp still burning in the passage, he
deposited the emaciated body in a closet within his apartment. Locking the door, and placing the light beside him, he gently uncovered the face, contemplating anxiously the young man's countenance. The pallid cheek of Castelle faded to even a lighter tint, and his bright eyes glazed over with the mist of abstraction, as he knelt beside the spoil of death, on which youth and beauty had left some faded traces, spared by disease.

Did compassion or regret suggest the thoughts which passed through his mind as he calmly inspected the lifeless form before him? Did remorse chill his heart? did apprehension quicken his pulse? These are questions which will be answered as the story proceeds.

When Castelle arose from his bending position, he opened a pocket-book which the old nurse, Annette, as she left him, had placed in his hand, and commenced reading by the light of his little lamp a letter that
it contained. It had been written by a man of business "to Frederick Spencer Vivian, Esq.," whose remains lay before him. The poor pedestrian, crawling fevered and helpless into the town, plundered of his travelling equipment, was, then, it appeared, the rich heir to a lately deceased uncle, and had undertaken alone, in a spirit of romantic adventure, the walking tour which terminated so fatally. A Jesuit confessor, of whom you will learn more hereafter, had forwarded this letter to Castelle.

While the student read, his countenance assumed a new expression, which lasted for some minutes, as he meditated on this unexpected information. He had committed an error, now unfortunately irretrievable. Was science, which should make his fortune, now marring it? Why had he not received this letter a few days earlier? Why, with the recklessness of scientific ambition, did he hazard processes that were unluckily
but too successful? Questions like these only aggravated his distress at having selected such a victim for experiments, to which a less prosperous man might have been better sacrificed.

Exhausted by the incidents and emotions of the day, Castelle returned to his room, and threw himself, still dressed, upon his little bed, after closing the door that led into the closet where the body lay. For some time recollections of the recent occurrence engrossed him; by degrees they yielded to the influence of fatigue, which now subdued his faculties into a restless and unrefreshing sleep.

Fearful forms and horrid sounds seemed to surround him: he was then hurried into the midst of an immense mass of human beings, undulating with the restlessness of life, when suddenly a cry of "Murder—murder!" is prolonged by the echo of a thousand voices penetrating every pore, as if the sense of hearing resided in each.
Shattered Idols.

Horror and pain give him a supernatural energy; he rushes through the crowd, reaching its verge with the rapidity of thought. His pursuers follow, while his throbbing heart threatens every instant to burst the barriers against which it beats with agonizing force. Still they advance, every step lessening the distance between them, when an iron grasp, sending a thrill of horror through every nerve, fixes him to the spot.

Violent efforts to escape now awoke Castelle, and gradually recovering from the effect of this dream, he sat up in his bed to enjoy the certainty of its cessation. Casting his eyes on the opposite wall, an object there presented itself which seemed to be but a waking recurrence of the late horrible vision. At a window between his own and the adjoining closet, which it lighted, he beheld the face of the corpse, its eyes open, and gleaming full upon him. The lamp, still burning, shone upon the ghastly
features, which seemed to express inquiry and astonishment. Castelle at first doubted the reality of this appearance, and waited for some moments in the expectation of its fading from his steadfast scrutiny. He was accustomed to death in all its varied forms, and now the figure that stood before him excited no other feeling than that of surprise, for he knew that a living hand must, for some purpose, have raised it there.

Yet the door of his apartment was locked inside and its windows fastened, the key remaining under his pillow, where on lying down he had placed it. Another, however, might have been procured, thought Castelle, when starting from his bed he hurried towards the next room to discover the intruder. Then a sudden apprehension checked him and he hesitated for a moment, when the consequence of detection occurred to him, and terror suspended the hand hastily laid upon the latch of the closet door. With sudden decision, however,
he pressed it down, and found, to his surprise, the lock still fast. The key admitted him immediately. On trying the windows of the adjoining room and ascertaining that they also were unopened, he returned to that part of the closet where the window was situated, and just reached it when with a heavy noise the corpse fell at his feet.

More convinced than ever that some neighbour who witnessed the scene of the preceding hours had resorted to this means of terrifying and detecting him, he now commenced a fresh search for the unwelcome visitor. Vainly the rooms beyond were examined—all remained as it was two hours before; while, the outside doors and shutters being closely fastened, an entrance from the street was impossible.

More and more perplexed, it suddenly occurred to Castelle that in the body itself might be found the cause of this strange apparition; and on touching it he found, as he expected, a gentle warmth diffused around
its chest, while on further examination he felt the heart beat feebly, struggling ineffectually to resume its natural pulsation.

Castelle removed the young man into his room, laid him on the bed, and proceeded to administer efficient restoratives. He threw some fresh wood on the smouldering fire, and with warm applications endeavoured to recall heat and animation; but his efforts for two hours were not rewarded with further success than a slight increase of the circulation, and a more healthy tinge upon the features of his patient.

Judging that determination of blood to the head prolonged this stupor, the young physician determined on means for its relief, which he must procure elsewhere; he should pass the house of Annette, the old woman who had lately left him, on his way to the druggist's, and he resolved on sending her immediately to take charge of this unexpected patient.
CHAPTER II.

"Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread."—LAMB.

There is nothing which we are more unwilling to acknowledge than a dread of supernatural agents; and yet the very wisest amongst us must occasionally have experienced apprehensions of their appearance at times, when darkness, and the absence of external impressions, leave the mind to the suggestions of a busy imagination. Old Annette's became very troublesome while she proceeded alone through the dismal streets towards her own abode. We are perhaps inclined to be as civil to unsubstantial as to material opponents
when terrified, and Annette, with true Gallic urbanity, curtsied to sundry posts and other unconscious representatives of the spiritual world, near which she passed on her way home. As these imaginary beings displayed no symptoms of hostility or pursuit she rejoiced in the success of such respectful attention.

How she wished to return to Castelle! The body, while he protected her, did not possess half the terror that darkness and solitude now induced; but she knew Castelle well, and dared not risk an intrusion upon him—indeed, her rapid progress towards home rendered a retreat there more desirable than the renewed encounter of the phantoms which she had just noticed. Annette's bed was now the goal of her fervent aspirations, and insinuating herself therein she remained motionless till the cold grey light of a November day dawned upon her as she peeped from under the coverlet, and assured herself that she might prepare for
a return to the student's, where the office of bonne, or dry-nurse, to the establishment, was her daily duty.

As she passed along the streets to his house, relief from the distresses of the night promoted the most gracious of humours, so she smiled at the begrimed and noisy children who abounded in the poor village, such possessions being mostly presented by kind fortune as substitutes for worldly goods. Chubby specimens, with vigorous constitutions and promising appetites, large mouths and compendious stomachs, looked out like domestic hydras from every door.

Annette at last reached the student's house, where she found him, as usual, seated near the fire with his back to the door, and wrapped in a dressing-gown; while a lace cap with blue ribbons, which she had left the preceding day upon the table, adorned his head, to the great astonishment of the owner. She supposed him
to have assumed it in a fit of abstraction.

"Monsieur is not indisposed, I hope?" murmured the polite woman, in her blandest accent, making a curtsy for her own satisfaction at the door. Monsieur did not pay the least attention to the kind query. This silence was not unusual, but Annette dared not proceed to her usual avocations at the grate without first announcing the disturbance. A small cough and another civil speech were equally disregarded, and now that Annette looked round she perceived very strange changes in the room. Everything seemed diverted from its proper use by some unaccountable caprice. The mattress lay across the table, while a broken chair, scattered papers, and torn books produced a confusion as inextricable as that which bewildered Annette's mind.

"Monsieur must be mad," she muttered, "or else the ghost of that poor creature last night, after performing these feats, may
perhaps have entranced him in the seat where he now sits as stiff and silent as death." Daylight being an effectual promoter of courage, Annette advanced with the conscious pride of valour to the place where her master preserved his unaccountable silence. "Monsieur, monsieur!" screamed in her loudest tone, was just uttered when she reached the chair, and then, as if shot through the heart, the old woman fell to the ground, convulsed with terror, for the face that turned towards her was that of the corpse. Starting from his chair with a maniacal shout, the young man contemplated his affrighted visitor as she lay on the ground, gathered together like a spider, offering the smallest possible surface to danger, and, with closed eyes, awaiting her doom.

A wicked lunatic was not nearly so objectionable as a ghost in Annette's opinion; but the demented gentleman's proceedings did not leave her much time to confer a
preference on either, for applying a phial of salvolatile (procured from Castelle's medicine chest) to her mouth, he appeared determined to discharge its contents into the stomach of the pretended swooner, whose single old green tooth afforded but a poor defence to the cavity.

At this juncture steps were heard in the passage; the young man paused, Annette felt that her life was reserved for its natural term, and Castelle appeared at the door, transfixed with surprise at the scene before him. There was the youth, whom he had left insensible a quarter of an hour previously, attired in his clothes, with a lace cap on his head, and seeming to enjoy an intimacy with Annette which their recent acquaintance could not warrant. Sundry winks and nods were attempted by the old lady to explain her situation to Castelle, varied by wreathed smiles when the lunatic turned his eyes from the student to her. These gestures, and, above all, the invalid's
restless eyes and abrupt movements, explained the mystery to Castelle, who now, with a fixed and determined gaze and authoritative tone, ordered the young man to be still, and not to disturb him further.

Throughout an entire week the stranger required the unremitting vigilance of his careful attendants to control repeated paroxysms of violent delirium.

When, after this period, consciousness returned, he several times expressed some surprise at his new location, while thanking both kind attendants for their unwearied assiduity. They as often discouraged any further effort at conversation, on the plea of expediency, and the invalid's silence was therefore only broken by these bursts of gratitude, from the utterance of which he could not be dissuaded.

Annette seemed particularly averse to answer any questions as to the means of his removal to Castelle's; but vivid recollections of the event itself, of its cause and
its object, failed not to suggest reflections of an unpleasant nature as she sat through the long dark winter nights beside the bed of her charge.

On the day that he first walked round the room and looked out of the window with an exclamation of surprise, he asked how and when they had removed him from the hospital; he remembered its position in the street, although retaining no recollection of his room there. Annette, evidently confused by the question, turned to Castelle, and with looks and signs intimated its importance. Castelle readily told the young man that, having found him in a miserable situation at the infirmary, he had brought him to his own house with the view of trying some new treatment, which had proved efficacious in other cases, but was yet neglected by the medical officers of the hospital.

Annette looked very wise during this explanation, and seemed relieved from much
uneasiness when it was implicitly credited, although a certain confusion of her countenance indicated either astonishment at the student’s inventive powers or mistrust of her own memory, which, supplied as it was as much by dreams as reality, without the power of discriminating between them, furnished but a very uncertain chronicle of past events.

Castelle again resumed his scientific studies, and when towards evening he joined Vivian, and sat over a small fire in the large gloomy room, their conversation usually referred to some subjects connected with the morning’s investigation, which the latter was quite capable of estimating.

When Vivian was nearly convalescent, and questioned Castelle as to the expediency of removal for change of air, the young doctor gave him permission to travel in a few days, and then informed him that Paris was to be his own destination, and agreed that they
should proceed there together. The young man's joy at this prospect evinced itself with an earnestness which guaranteed its sincerity; seizing Castelle's hand, he expressed his gratitude in the warmest terms. "To you I owe my life, Castelle; whatever happiness I may yet enjoy you must share, for will it not be your gift? have you not restored me to life and health? Let me now love you as a brother, let me revere you as a father, and obey you as a master-spirit on whose sustaining power I can always rely for support and guidance."

These protestations were not required by Castelle to prove how much Vivian's romantic disposition, gratified by the strangeness of their meeting, enhanced the gratitude which he felt for Castelle's kindness. The student had long before fathomed that ardent, sensitive nature which would surrender itself entirely to those who won it by affection, or who excited its enthusiasm by intellectual or moral pre-eminence.
CHAPTER III.

"Morn, in the white wake of the morning star,
Came furrowing all the Orient into gold."

Tennyson.

A bright frosty morning ushered in the day on which Castelle and Vivian were to depart from Lieufort. Upon reaching the hotel from which a conveyance was to start, they took possession of its two best places. To those of our readers who have travelled in France the name of Coucou will recall the strange appearance of an indescribable machine, drawn by one unfortunate horse, which once abounded upon its roads, but resembled so little any other kind of carriage intended for human transport that describing it would be vain to such as are only familiar with the convenient vehicles of our present travelling epoch.
A vehicle of this nature now received Castelle and his companion, who, after much clambering and stumbling, reached its third row, where they were to enjoy the privilege of sitting, not leaning, against the back, as upright and hard as a new brick wall. The seat, eight inches wide, and the whole interior were covered with a deceptive moroon velvet, looking exceedingly dirty and soft, and feeling like a flesh-brush, while small apertures that should have been glazed admitted a current of air from one to the other, which played through their ears with the murmur of an Æolian lyre. Two enormous women now deposited themselves on the second row, bestowing half their volume and weight upon our travellers, and being wedged in their turn by a smoky soldier and a greasy fat man. The diligence had been engaged by an English family, and our travellers could not get places in it till they arrived at the next town. On reaching it, they seated themselves, amidst
the French confusion of a departure, in numbers one and two, the best corners of the ponderous structure. The night was so dark as to prevent them from discriminating the person of number three, although recognising him to be English by his accent, as he occupied the appointed corner opposite Vivian.

When all were seated the immense machine shook and clattered and rumbled, and then, with a jerk that jostled the inmates unexpectedly together, started amidst the din of valedictory vociferations, the barking of dogs, the neighing of horses, the slashing of whips, and the professional gibberish of the postillions, who, with many other officials, encouraged this uproar, considering it no doubt a demonstration quite suitable to the occasion.

This vehicle, like a travelling menagerie, contained passengers with very troublesome habits. A fat man was perpetually thrusting half his person out of the window, leaving
the other part within as a substitute for the view which he alone was enjoying; then between our travellers sat his wife, with an ugly big-mouthed baby which was always making gurgling noises and hideous faces, no doubt the consequences of an unpractised digestion.

Number three shrank into his corner, at first stiff and reserved, like any other Englishman, and only unbending when, perceiving Mr. Spencer Vivian's name upon a portmanteau, he addressed that gentleman for the purpose of ascertaining if he was any relation to an old schoolfellow of his own, lately deceased. On learning that his vis-à-vis was the only nephew and consequently the heir to this friend, he introduced himself as Sir Harry Ashworth. The two gentlemen then became very sociable, and Castelle, who spoke English perfectly, joined in their conversation.

They travelled together for four days,
and on arriving in Paris, Vivian took leave of his new acquaintance with regret. Sir Harry was proceeding hurriedly to London, and could not remain an hour in Paris, although his sister and niece resided there. He entrusted a note for the former, a Madame D’Albremont, to Vivian, promising him a pleasant acquaintance and a kind reception if he called next day to give her a report of the health and welfare of her brother.

Vivian had never alluded to his large fortune and high position in his conversations with Castelle. Already too well aware of the effect of both on his usual associates, the young Englishman was proud of having won the esteem of a stranger who valued him for his intrinsic qualities alone. Little did he suspect how much this new friend prized him for more palpable recommendations; and how already, fully aware of Vivian’s estimate of disinterested friendship, to propitiate him, he had rejected the offer
of hospitality which was made only when Sir Harry's allusion to a fine house in Paris thus revealed a secret which its owner had endeavoured hitherto to conceal.

The friends parted; Castelle persistent in his determination to occupy a small lodging, engaged for him near the Luxembourg, Vivian disconsolately accusing him of unkindness, and proceeding himself to the fine hotel of the Faubourg St. Honoré. He bade Castelle adieu with tearful eyes; and weak from the effects of fever, his hand trembled with emotion as he pressed that of the student.

"I feel as if we ought never to part, dear friend," said he, "but the separation must not be long, for although time and seclusion are requisite for the completion of these new experiments in prospect, still give me as much of your company as possible, and inform me from time to time how they succeed."
CHAPTER IV.

"What profits us that we from Heaven derive
A soul immortal, and with looks erect
Survey the stars, if, like the brutal kind,
We follow where our passions lead."—DRYDEN.

Sir Henry Ashworth was one of those fortunate men who enjoy all the advantages of wealth without the anxiety by which it is often so dearly purchased. Exempt from the cares of property, he lived on his acquaintance; and with the moderate income of five hundred pounds per annum contrived to dine, sup, ride, and drive in a more luxurious manner than many spending annually ten times that sum. The occasional splendid dinners of others became his daily fare, through their constant recurrence; and by persuading the said friends that he honoured them exceedingly
by accepting their invitations, riding their horses, flirting with their wives, and sitting in their opera-boxes, they soon considered him as essential to their parties as the eternal turbot which in his time it was usual to dispense, with the assistance of a friendly guest.

His father had been a celebrated silversmith, who during a long life so improved the troy weight of his importance as successfully to make a gentleman of his only son, Harry. He sent him to school, and furnished the means of bribing his superiors into friendship by gingerbread at Eton and claret at Oxford.

The considerate parent retired to the other world just when Harry "came out" in this, and willed him wealth sufficient to secure a seat anywhere—either in Parliament or at any fashionable dinner party. During ten years Harry Ashworth progressed rapidly in society, and became a passably fashionable man about town. He
purchased a borough, he bought a Lady Jane Willingham, and many celebrated racers, with so much more expensive notoriety, that his prodigality, together with the failure of a grand speculation, entangled him in difficulties from which most obliging and gentleman-like creditors extricated him at the cost of his entire fortune, affording him from its ruin the yearly stipend of five hundred pounds.

The Lady Jane died suddenly, and her husband did not consider the loss irreparable, for she departed in time to warrant a retrenchment, which he preferred ascribing to the duties of widowhood rather than to the reduced state of his finances. Borrowing seven hundred pounds from a newly-discovered relation in the City to purchase the dignity, Mr. Ashworth, with the help of his great connexions, got himself made a baronet, considering the loan fully cancelled by the honour he conferred on his cousins when occasionally conde-
scending to carve their vension with his newly acquired scarlet hand.

To Baréges our baronet proceeded one summer after the fatigues of a London season, and there, amongst the English visitors assembled, he met a lady who realized the visions of his widowed dreams. An heiress and a beauty, Miss Somerton immediately captivated Sir Harry, as well as his travelling companion and old friend, a Mr. Annesley; and at the expiration of one month since their first introduction to her the two gentlemen secretly determined on placing their affections, with their less profuse worldly possessions, at the disposal of the bewitching Agnes.

Sir Harry and his rival of course both imagined that the fair lady was inspired with a reciprocal attachment; and unknown to each other, their hopes, fears, and supplications were transmitted to her in two neat letters the day preceding her departure from Baréges. Each tendermissive
received an immediate reply, so unsatisfactory that the gentlemen started for Italy, still totally ignorant of each other's disappointment. Miss Somerton returned to England, and thither Annesley followed, excusing a longer companionship with Sir Harry, on the plea that urgent business required his presence in London.

Six months had elapsed since their separation, when the baronet, in a packet of newspapers received from England, perceived amongst "fashionable arrangements, matrimonial and festive," the announcement that "a marriage in high life is about to be concluded between the Honourable Edward Annesley, youngest son to the Earl of Courtville, and the beautiful and accomplished heiress, Miss Somerton, who inherits, under the will of her late uncle, a portion exceeding one hundred thousand pounds." On reading this paragraph Ashworth formed a sudden decision, which he as readily executed, by posting from
Florence to Lyons, where a letter announcing the postponement of this marriage induced him to proceed in a more economical manner to Paris.

Sir Harry and Edward Annesley were college companions; both pursuing the same career, their early acquaintance ripened subsequently into an intercourse which they called friendship. Edward furnished the fashion and Ashworth the finances for their social partnership; and the latter had most kindly selected his titled spouse, the late Lady Jane, from amongst the portionless progeny of his friend's cousin, the Earl of Arnford, proprietor of as extensive a stock of daughters as Danaus, without the same prospect of securing husbands for them. Annesley, in fact, acted the part of godfather to Ashworth; and on presenting him to the fashionable world answered for his sins of premature fashion, and promised in his name the fulfilment of all duties enforced by the Code Civile of high life. In
return, Harry Ashworth, while still rich, fulfilled not only these but the other promises to pay, for which Annesley gave his honourable signature to many of the unbelieving children of Israel, who soon received solid proofs of the sincerity of this Siamese friendship. Never had its cordiality relaxed, for the interests of both parties were ever combined until the period we have now reached in their history.

It was with indignant surprise that Sir Harry read the newspaper notice of Annesley's engagement to his quondam favourite, to whose good graces he still aspired, when the expiration of a few months would justify a claim to her gratitude, if such constancy did not insure a warmer requital. To have his plans frustrated by a man whom he considered his inferior in address, intellect, and appearance—hitherto the tool of his will and the puppet of his caprice—one bound to him, too, with the tie of many obligations, was
indeed galling. Like other ingrates, Sir Harry forgot the equivalent return which he had tacitly agreed to receive in barter for his expended thousands. Such a defeat was most obnoxious to Ashworth, and he resolved on proceeding immediately to the scene of his discomfiture, when a circumstance occurred which afforded him some hope of postponing, if not preventing, this obnoxious match.

Some time previous to the friends' arrival at Baréges, Annesley accomplished a feat of gentlemanly villany with which he wished to grace the calendar of his anticipated bonnes fortunes.

During a short separation of the otherwise inseparables, Annesley, with the assistance of a friend of Sir Harry's, effected the exploit which was now to become the insurmountable barrier to his projected marriage. During a tour abroad, in which he was accompanied by this gentleman, a Captain Benson, they were detained through
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Annesley was to convey the new-married couple from illness for a month at a small town in the south of France. Wandering idly in the environs, Annesley one evening met a young girl who was the guest of her aunt, the Abbess of a neighbouring convent, from which she sometimes escaped, released by a purloined key, to enjoy the pleasures of a stolen ramble on the seashore. Fascinated with her remarkable beauty, which seemed enhanced by the romantic scene where they met, he soon became deeply enamoured, and after several clandestine meetings, in which the usual protestations of eternal fidelity and unparalleled attachment captivated the poor child, he persuaded her to elope; and at the altar of a ruined chapel in the neighbour-
hood the marriage ceremony was performed, as Annesley believed, by a pretended clergyman. Most fortunately for them both, some misunderstanding delayed a carriage that was to convey the new-married couple.
the chapel to a distant place of concealment, and this accident obliged the bridegroom to reconduct his victim back to the convent, where she was to remain until he conveyed her away the next night. Her escape, however, had already been discovered, and the day subsequent to it she was transferred to a religious house in Italy, after being sworn to secrecy by her confessor, who threatened immediate exposure and public excommunication did she resist the authority of the Church. He told her how the ceremony had been performed by a pretended clergyman, and that, a victim to the profligacy of some worthless English adventurer, it was her interest, as well as her duty, to conceal the deplorable occurrence with religious secrecy.

All Annesley's efforts to discover her retreat were ineffectual, and after an interval of some months he at last reconciled himself to the failure of an adventure the excite-
ment of which soon subsided into very bitter repentance.

Sir Harry Ashworth’s servant, who had assisted Annesley in this exploit, on hearing of the new engagement, informed his late master that he believed Captain Benson had employed an ordained clergyman to perform the ceremony; and from this conscientious friend of Annesley’s the truth could now readily be ascertained. Transported by such welcome intelligence, Sir Harry endeavoured to authenticate it by an immediate application to Captain Benson; but this officer had sailed six months before with his regiment for India, and Sir Harry was reluctantly obliged to be satisfied with the information afforded by his late valet. This was, however, so very cleverly substantiated that he felt assured, with good management and Fabelli’s help, it would prevent the approaching marriage, by convincing Annesley that he was already a married man.
Sir Harry even began to flatter himself that he might yet supplant his friend in Miss Somerton's affection; and the prospect of a quiet home, an independent fortune, and her agreeable companionship, quickened his ingenuity and reconciled him to the licence of its manoeuvres.

Miss Somerton had retired, soon after her return in England, to the residence of an old relative at Sandon, near London, and there Annesley resumed his suit, and was ultimately received as her accepted lover. With clever foresight he encouraged her to remain in her actual privacy till after their union, when he would accompany her in a tour through Germany and France. For three months he had been an assiduous visitor at the quiet villa, where no amusements supplied its inmates with any other variety than his company, and no competitor interfered with the progress of his suit. The devoted adorer arrived daily from town in a neat cab at three o'clock, and after
partaking of a luncheon, which was to him a late breakfast, he sauntered with Agnes in the gardens behind her house, or drove the ladies in their open carriage through the adjoining country, accompanying them home again to remain with his betrothed during the hours intervening between that time and his return to London. This daily routine lasted for weeks. Annesley was witty and good-tempered; his flights of fancy amused Agnes, and enlivened the dulness of her quiet life. To these qualities were added a good person, and such apparent devotion to his lady love that, like Charity's mantle, such idolatry covered the multitude of foibles which Agnes was too acute not to detect in his character.

Retirement and constant intercourse promoted Annesley's views; her novel position effected what would never have been accomplished under other circumstances. Philosophers assure us that by daily substitution of new materials the
whole body is changed in the space of seven years; while experience of the mutability of our feelings and opinions teaches us that the mind is equally unstable, and that at the present moment we are very different characters from the predecessors who represented us ten years ago.

Agnes abroad, courted by society and busied with amusements, seemed another being to the quiet Miss Somerton of Sandon, whose monotonous existence was only varied by Annesley’s humour, his talents, and his anecdotes. She yielded to this solitary influence, and accepted for a husband the man whom she had rejected but a few months before.
CHAPTER V.

"Marriage is a feast where the grace is sometimes better than the dinner."—Colton.

On the morning preceding that fixed for Miss Somerton's marriage the good people of Sandon had ascertained, after sundry inquiries, that a real wedding would actually enliven their parish next day. Hymen in his saffron robe had long abandoned the spot; the experienced were beginning to despair of his reappearance, and their juniors, harassed by alternate hopes and fears, summed up after a sigh the endless list of unmarrying ones who had long wasted their sweetness on the sun and air of Sandon. Mothers sat like Niobe, lamenting the possession of as many daughters, though not, alas, made of stone or any
such economical material, as the trades-
men's bills hebdomadally testified. "Ma-
riages are made in heaven," they thought,
"and we must wait till our sweet girls go
there; for Sandon is certainly the worst
spot on the habitable globe for disposing of
home produce like ours."

Every place is accused of the same
peculiarity by mothers and daughters of
marrying activity; and those of Sandon
could not muster means to remove beyond
the spell of the condemned parish. Girls
going out and no money coming in were
the prevailing epidemics of the place;
which did not possess any other staple
trade than that, which mostly ended there
in bankruptcy.

Mrs. Jones, the old aunt with whom
Agnes resided, from her age and infirmities
was unwilling to form new acquaintances,
and her name and habits were all the neigh-
bours knew of the good old lady at Lilly
Hill Cottage. They were, to be sure, as
fully versed in the course of her proceedings as Mrs. Jones herself; they understood the deficiencies of her green chariot better than the maker, together with the faults and misfortunes of her old greys, whose faculties they ascertained to be as much impaired as those of their ancient proprietress.

It may be imagined that Annesley's cab had attracted particular attention at Sandon; and when the two faces under a hood, of the dandy and his groom, appeared to fly through the street, winged with the rapid paces of a lively chestnut, many pairs of beaming eyes shot destructive glances over the low green blinds along the street. Nor had Miss Somerton been less an object of interest than Annesley, to those who could observe her kind and unassuming manner.

It was, however, but recently softened to its present gentle tone; for she had been long the spoilt child of doting parents, whose great devotion, at first a weakness, became confirmed as a tribute when increasing intelli-
gence made her an oracle in the family. Expert at detecting a motive, ready at suggesting an expedient, quick in effecting a purpose, the young heiress soon excited the wonder of friends and dependents, and she was not long before their admiration grew apparent and agreeable to her natural vanity. Engrossed completely by selfish triumphs, she despised the humble merits of her parents; their love was unreturned, their endearments disregarded, while they, good, unpretending people, attributed Agnes's coldness to the preoccupation of her thoughts, to the superiority of her mind, to any cause rather than to one which would disparage their darling child.

The ambition to excel in every accomplishment, to surpass all competitors, to reign alone in her circle, stimulated Agnes's natural activity to ceaseless exertions.

The approval which she claimed through her talents was not retained by the attraction of humbler though more valuable
recommendations, for she was arrogant and inconsiderate in early girlhood. But sorrow, that antidote to petulance and pride, soon subdued her with its chastening influence, when her father was attacked with a fatal and lingering malady, and when she awoke at that blow from her dream of pleasure and vanity to the realities of life, which then appeared stern and ruthless to her bewildered consciousness.

Then she felt for the first time her heart responding to a father's love; her affections expanding with an energy proportioned to their former repression. If her father's life were but spared, on the condition of passing it with him in a desert, she would joyfully have relinquished all her pursuits and triumphs.

Now it was that her natural strength of mind became available for a good purpose, and how well it enabled her to practise all the little duties of love just learnt!

Those who have languished on the bed
of suffering know that within the sick-room as well as during the more stirring scenes of life, intelligence and handiness are inestimable qualities in the female companion. Intense affection may prompt the wish to be useful; but the suggestive mind and ready hand must execute it, for presence of mind, method, perseverance, and dexterity, are all qualities essential to a good nurse, and the weak, the timid, or the awkward, too often aggravate the evil which they wish to mitigate.

Released at last from her melancholy duties by Mr. Somerton’s death, Agnes felt as if existence would be to her henceforward but a wearying journey along the rough path of life which she was to travel inexperienced and alone. Depressed by fatigue and anxiety, her courage abandoned her, and she shrank in dread from a task which seemed to her interminable.

At this juncture, a friend and relative of her father’s, a clergyman, and a very pious
man, supported and guided her till the consolations of religion effected all that he could desire, and supplied her with the courage to pursue cheerfully her allotted path through life.

To him she honestly avowed past errors, and her awakened conscience would have provoked self-reproach too bitter to bear did not her friend by judicious encouragement lead her to hope for pardon of the past through unremitting efforts in the future to deserve it.

Alas, alas! she had now no mother to chill with her indifference, no father to disobey and neglect. History records great crimes, the law avenges detected delinquencies; but the domestic sins of children are buried in their parents' hearts. Many a grave is filled with the victim of filial heartlessness on whom the blow took fatal aim, while no sound of complaint, no sigh of pain, betrayed the hand that inflicted it, and the last faint words of the dying victim may have blessed his cruel child.
Agnes suffered intensely from sorrow and self-reproach, till, her health beginning to give way, a southern climate was ordered for her residence.

Then it was that she became acquainted with Sir Henry Ashworth, and his companion, Mr. Annesley, for the family with whom she resided saw much company, and Agnes met in their house the cream of Roman and English society, varied by the occasional appearance of travellers from all parts of Europe. The two English gentlemen, as we have already seen, tendered their affections and destinies to Miss Somerton, and were immediately rejected; but Annesley would not be so readily discouraged, and he effected his purpose later with time and opportunity. Those great matchmakers, who overcome all difficulties, charm us with dulness, enamour us of ugliness, equalize all ages, and reconcile all tempers, accomplished their usual exploit at Sandon.

The cake arrived, the bridal bonnet
emerged from its wicker cage, chaperoned by a fashionable milliner from town, and these decisive symptoms of matrimony had suspended the household business of Agnes's neighbours on the eve of her wedding-day. At six o'clock that expected and eventful morning, the young Misses Smith, the matured Misses Johnstone, and the double-refined Misses Thomson, arose with the sun, to watch the proceedings that would usher in the important day at Lilly Hill Cottage, just opposite their respective dwellings. Alas, alas! their intention of proceeding to church to avail themselves of its prescriptive hospitality for the purpose of witnessing the ceremony was defeated. The rain descended slowly and surely in a drizzling mist, and the fog of London seemed to have come into the country for change of air, and the clouds descended so near the earth as to obscure air and light, and the view of all else beside.
CHAPTER VI.

"When souls that should agree to will the same,
To have one common object for their wishes,
Look different ways regardless of each other,
Think what a train of wretchedness ensues."

Agnes arose betimes, and was still occupied in superintending arrangements for her journey, when a comfortable plain cab drove round the small lawn that separated her abode from the street. No guests were invited to the wedding, which we can easily understand Annesley wished to be strictly private; and when the visitor in the brown cab inquired for Mrs. Jones he was ushered into the drawing-room, where the old lady reclined in an easy-chair, dozing for want of thought, never being much troubled with a variety of that kind, and now expecting
no other visitor than the bridegroom and his young cousin, Mr. Martyn.

"Mr. Hudson" was however announced, and a short, elderly, fat, discoloured gentleman bowed at the door to the hostess. Not having attended to Agnes's preparation, Mrs. Jones now imagined that he might be a relation or friend of Mr. Annesley's, recently invited for the occasion.

Hudson, good reader, was indeed a friend of the bridegroom, to the amount of two thousand pounds, which he had in various sums yielded to the persuasive entreaties of his fashionable customer, who ungratefully neglected to assure Hudson of his recent good fortune; and having fruitlessly sought an interview in town, the cautious creditor determined on proceeding to Sandon to secure a draft for some part of the sum before the bridegroom's projected tour abroad. Old Hudson was as deaf as a post, and Mrs. Jones deafer; her infirmity proceeding as much from the confusion of
age as any organic imperfection, while Hudson had periodical respites, and therefore invariably attributed his oft-recurring deficiency to recent cold.

"I have the honour of addressing Mrs. Jones?" premised Mr. Hudson, for he had ascertained all the family connexions.

A smile and a bow from Mrs. Jones answered Hudson's query affirmatively, the lady perhaps guessing its import. She begged him to be seated. Now, Mr. Hudson spoke very low, like all patients of his description, and Mrs. Jones, from the same cause and the absence of her front teeth, could not be understood by the best ears at six feet distance from her person. She had heard of Annesley's aristocratic relatives; of his uncles, both peers, and his honourable cousins, and his father, the Earl of Courtville; and in her own mind, five minutes after Hudson's immersion in the arm-chair opposite, she elevated him to
Lord Courtville's rank in the House of Peers.

Mrs. Jones, being rather unaccustomed to the peerage, her perspicuity of language and mental activity were not improved by the supposed vicinity of so much dignity: she wished that Annesley would arrive, or that Agnes might relieve her from this awful tête-à-tête.

"I have some very particular business to transact with Mr. Annesley, ma'am," said Hudson, "and shall feel much obliged by being allowed to remain here till he arrives."

"Your lordship is extremely kind; it is a connexion most flattering to Agnes and her family," mumbled Mrs. Jones.

Of course Hudson heard not a syllable of this compliment, but supposing that she had assented to his request, proceeded with a bow—"It's a very unfavourable day for the event, ma'am."

"Just three-and-twenty next Michaelmas, my lord."
Does Mr. Annesley intend making a long visit to the Continent, Mrs. Jones?” continued Hudson.

“A most charming young man,” smiled Mrs. Jones.

“Confound the old woman,” thought the tailor; “one cannot understand a word she says, and this is not one of my deaf days.”

“Lord Courtville is not as agreeable as his son,” was Mrs. Jones’s mental conclusion.

Annesley’s cab now bounding to the door, Mrs. J. pleaded this excuse for quitting her aristocratic acquaintance, and, curtseying out of the room, she met the bridegroom in the hall—Hudson’s vehicle had been sent to the inn, and Annesley was therefore totally unaware of his arrival.

“Oh dear! Mr. Annesley,” exclaimed Mrs. Jones, “why did you not tell me that you invited Lord Courtville? He has been sitting with me this half-hour, and a vastly polite nobleman he is, only a little deaf, I
think; do go in and speak to him, while I seek Agnes.”

“What the deuce has brought my father here?” thought Annesley: “no good, I am sure;” and he hurried to meet this unexpected guest.

“Hudson! you here—good gracious! what does this mean? Where is my father? have you seen him?”

“I have seen no one but Mrs. Jones,” replied Hudson, comprehending Annesley’s questions, uttered near his ear in a voice suited to its deficiency. “Mr. Annesley, I have come here for you to sign a little paper that——”

“Good, good, anything you like, my good fellow; you said nothing of our concerns to Mrs. Jones, eh?”

“Nothing, nothing, upon my honour, Mr. Annesley.” The truth then flashed upon Annesley; he guessed how Mrs. Jones had taken Mr. Hudson for his father, and ere this Agnes, he imagined, would have
shared her mistake. The dilemma required a moment's consideration, and this was prevented by Mrs. Jones opening the door and presenting Agnes to her future relative, who, to do him justice, seemed rather surprised when she reached him her hand with smiling cordiality.

"Confound that old deaf devil." thought Annesley, "I must let her have her way;" and then he endeavoured to divert Agnes's attention from Hudson.

Seeing no prospect of releasing himself from it, Annesley was obliged to submit to his misfortune; and observing Agnes lead his supposed father into the breakfast-room, he gave an unwilling support to Mrs. Jones, who, with his friend Hudson, he wished most cordially at the bottom of the sea. She was some time following the others, and her cavalier had time to reflect on his predicament.

"It is really most flattering," thought he, "to have tailor Hudson doing the honours
of my wedding, escorting my bride. What the deuce would my friends say were they informed of the company that graces my 'marriage in high life'—my tailor, and this old deaf fool whom I am dragging after me to our honoured banquet?"

Hudson, with much complacency, received his cup of coffee from the bride's fair hand. "They are uncommon civil," thought he, "but this attention shan't make me forget Annesley's signature, for all that."

"Do you like sugar, or shall I give you some sugar-candy?" inquired Edward, by way of interrupting Agnes's attentions.

"I always take the moist," said Hudson, putting his wet spoon into the sugar-candy, and then stirring the mixture with unnecessary action and energy. He next poured his coffee into the saucer, imbibing it with sonorous effect; and, on his cramming an Esquimaux mouthful of toast into his left cheek, Mrs. Jones came to the conclusion that the nobility were not so elegant as she
expected, and that the late Mr. Jones had a much neater method of nourishing himself than Lord Courtville.

"By-the-bye, have you heard anything lately of Sir Harry Ashworth, Mr. Annesley?" said Hudson; "he had the impudence to write from abroad some nonsense about a new suit that he requires at once. He must know that I will have nothing to do with his suits now."

"My father paid the expenses of some Chancery suits for Ashworth a short time since, Agnes," said Annesley, in a gentle voice, to the bride elect.

"And Madame D'Albremont, his sister, do you know where she is?" continued Annesley, in hopes of changing the subject.

"Oh, she is in foreign parts; a very nice woman, very—but always very ill dressed—had shocking bad habits, very shabby, very."

"Yes, she was penurious," added Annesley, always addressing himself to Agnes. "Why, miss," said Hudson, "hers used
to be threadbare; I spoke to her brother about it—and such a waist, at the same time—"

"Yes, she was penurious, and yet lavish in some things; it was quite a mania," said Annesley.

"She was the first lady who ever wore one of my waistcoats, Miss Somerton."

"His waistcoats, Edward?" said Agnes, amazed.

"Yes, indeed; my father has invented a strait-waistcoat that is now much approved of by the faculty," answered Annesley.

"I wish you would try one of my waistcoats, Miss Somerton," said Hudson, smilingly.

Annesley now spilt the cream on the tailor's nether garments, and whilst he was spooning it again into the ewer, the former asked Agnes if she had received a packet of books sent from London the day before.

Hudson, very much elated at being received like a gentleman, growing every
moment more loquacious and familiar, notwithstanding the damage done to his wearables, interrupted the answer by exclaiming—

"Books—books! you ladies and gentlemen are very lucky to have time for other people's books; my own entirely occupy me—though I keep plenty of clerks, too. I suppose that I write four hours every day, myself."

"Does your father write, Edward?"

"Yes, he wrote—"

"My books," proceeded the incorrigible Hudson, "are quite a peerage; I serve all the first families in town, Miss Somerton; and a fashionable tailor has not an easy life of it."

Agnes stared. Annesley was electrified, and putting his hand to his head he whispered to Agnes—

"My dear girl, it is impossible to conceal the melancholy fact any longer; my poor father is rather unsettled in his mind—this
is his delusion, he thinks that he is Hudson, the famous tailor, and, as a paroxysm is now commencing, I advise you to retire while I persuade the poor sufferer to go home to my afflicted mother."

Agnes complied with this proposal and left the room, casting a glance of pity on poor Lord Courtville's libeller, and trusting in her heart that no hereditary taint of insanity affected the family to which she would shortly belong.

"It is better to let things take this turn than inform Hudson of their mistake," thought Annesley; "he would overact his part, and make a fine story of the adventure to amuse my friends in town."

"Mr. Hudson, I can now sign any paper you please; we are just starting for church —here are the carriages, you will find your cab at the gate."

The paper was signed, and Hudson, approaching Mrs. Jones, not however within
earshot, proffered his service in the clothing department for her establishment.

"What does his lordship say, Mr. Annesley?"

"He regrets that particular business in town obliges him to return there immediately without waiting for the ceremony; but he rejoices that this visit has afforded him an opportunity of becoming acquainted with you and Agnes."

"Oh dear, what a pity that he cannot remain a little longer," said Mrs. Jones, smiling complacently under her spectacles at Hudson.

Edward now got Hudson out of the room, and in a minute more the bewildered tailor drove from the door in his cab. Agnes entered soon after with her white satin pelisse, bridal bonnet, and the usual equipment of wedding finery.

"So your father is gone, Edward; he left this parcel for me," said she.

Now, Agnes firmly believed that a small flat
packet neatly tied, which she was in the act of opening, contained some costly wedding-present from her future father—it might be a necklace or a diamond bracelet: the paper fell off and disclosed to the disappointed expectant—patterns of cloth and cards of address!

"Poor man," said she, after a short pause, "how inveterate is his delusion! Indeed it seems so engrossing that he forgets the manners and bearing of his class, and certainly assumes the air and tone of a tradesman."
CHAPTER VII.

"Of all the actions of a man's life, his marriage does least concern other people; yet of all actions of our life it is most meddled with by other people."—Selden.

Agnes’s wedding was not to be celebrated with much pomp or display, even in the columns of the Morning Post, in which happy ceremonies appear to so much more advantage than they do anywhere else; its incidents could not be well amplified into the poetic details of bridal festivity and the universal suffrage to beauty that generally enhance such incentives to matrimony. Agnes floated not in gauze and high spirits down the hall towards the awaiting equipage, admired and envied by dependents and equals; neither did she tremble with a crown of orange flowers responding to the
vibration, while the blush of hope evaporated the tears of affection as they escaped from her downcast eyes. No—our bride descended her aunt's high steps with unpromising composure, hurrying to escape the rain, and further protected from its injuries by a brown cotton umbrella, which Mr. O'Rourk, the Irish butler, carefully held over her white satin bonnet.

Mrs. Jones and Miss Williams, Agnes's companion, had already seated themselves in the ancient vehicle, and Annesley following in another carriage with a relation who just arrived as he entered it, they all proceeded to the parish church, situated where the village street merges into the road leading towards the metropolis.

"For the happiest day of my life," thought Annesley, "this has begun rather unpropitiously; arrested and released at seven o'clock, bored and terrified for an hour with the intrusion, of that confounded
fellow Hudson, I have not yet recovered my composure, nor shall I feel perfectly at ease till we are a few miles on our road to France. The happiest day of our lives by right divine, this certainly should be considered; we begin a new score with fate and our tailor, we assume the duties of life and the dinner-table; if we are ever to be entrusted with sublunary bliss this is the moment to expect it. All uncertainty of the future and our wives' temper, Time shrouds within the shadow of his own wings, and Hope, with her handmaid Novelty, leads us onward and banishes all the doubts and difficulties, the suspicion and suspense, that vulgar Reason will on other occasions obtrude on the most exuberant imagination in the shape of expensive tastes and straitened means, distant prospects and proximate difficulties, large families and small incomes."

To do Annesley justice he was exceedingly susceptible of the tender passion; and
although Agnes's fortune had been the original motive for his proposal, still her many estimable moral qualities and superior mental recommendations received from him their just tribute of admiration, which soon warmed to a tenderer feeling.

Agnes's character was peculiar, you will say; what she believed to be love was but a newly-awakened taste for the reciprocity of approval and the emulation of industry; she mistook one species of enthusiasm for another, and the excitement of her mind she exalted into a sentiment of the heart. Besides, Agnes sometimes questioned the prudence of her own selection, and doubt or calculation are no symptoms of true love; even on her wedding-day some unpleasant thoughts arose that questioned the course she had selected now that it was irretrievable. Still, however, after some unsatisfactory conclusions, she remembered the popular axiom of curing and enduring, when the carriage door opened and Annes-
ley stood beside it to hand his affianced to the hymeneal altar. They passed through the neat churchyard undulated with its groups of grassy mounds and recent graves, and on entering the building perceived a few spectators in the most prominent pews, who seemed awaiting the object for which they had assembled with eager impatience.

There was no vestry at the church of Sandon large enough to accommodate the bridal party; they therefore advanced towards the altar and stood without its railing, anxiously expecting the clergyman.

Annesley, whose anxiety was in his position very natural, heard with no good grace that the Reverend Mr. Ball had not yet arrived; the clerk expected him immediately, and Edward and Agnes with their friends were forced to seat themselves in an adjoining pew rather than parade their impatience before the wondering assembly by standing in a less resigned attitude.

The church was dark and gloomy, and
the rain beat against the large window, while the wind moaned wildly through its crevices. Mr. Martyn, the bridegroom's best man, vainly attempted to whisper some common-places to the others; but what can be said at a moment like this? and Mrs. Jones just then claimed his exclusive attention to read for her some Latin verses carved on a new white monumental entablature just above their pew, on which the sculptor had displayed much taste and skill, to secure no doubt the custom of the congregation. It furnished Annesley with a pretext for reminding Agnes of a monument at Père la Chaise, where the demise of Pierre le Doyen is duly lamented by his distracted spouse, who adds a postscript to the record, announcing that "sa veuve inconsolable tient magasin de modes, No. 3, Rue Vivienne." Annesley's cousin, Mr. Martyn, added to this his story of Madame B——, who visited the same cemetery annually during the fruit season, to eat cherries from a tree
that grew right through the heart of her
dear defunct baby "le petit Eugène." Agnes
was too much pre-occupied to smile, and
Mrs. Jones begged the anecdotes might be
explained to her more clearly, a request
which implied that the whole was to be
repeated till perseverance conquered the
obtuseness of her faculties.

They sat for ten minutes longer, still
anxiously looking to the door, and occa-
sionally mistaking the fitful gusts that
shook it for a summons to admit Mr. Ball.
At length a very audible application of no
gentle hand claimed the clerk's attendance,
and after some whispering with a person in
the street, he walked towards Annesley
with a pompous step, presenting a note
that was so wet it might have swum to its
destination. Edward perused it, turned
pale, and handing the dropping missive to
the bride, she read as follows—"Mrs. Ball
presents her compliments to Mr. Annesley,
and regrets much to inform him that Mr.
Ball was this morning thrown from his horse and much injured by a very bad fall. It will not, therefore, be possible for him to obey Mr. Annesley's summons, but Mrs. Ball feels assured that at his recovery Mr. B. will have much pleasure in officiating at Mr. Annesley's wedding should he consider it expedient to postpone it till then."

"Pish! what an idiot!" said Annesley, as he read the last sentence.

Agnes looked distressed, and Mrs. Jones could not be made to understand the nature of this disappointment; she was, however, coaxed to the door, but, alas! no carriage stood there to relieve the bridal party from their dilemma. The servants, thinking that the external moisture should be balanced by some internal humidity, had driven themselves and the carriages to a neighbouring public-house for the purpose of celebrating the happy day in their own fashion, and awaiting the termination of the ceremony
at their ease. Agnes, Annesley, and their train consequently were doomed to return to the place from whence they came, under the lamented Mr. Jubb's monument; and Mrs. Jones, much to her perplexity, was persuaded to seat herself again in her former place.

The partitions of the pew were remarkably high, no doubt from a principle of exclusiveness; and as the party sat all in a row, their heads just emerging from the white wooden box, they furnished subject for much tittering to all the misses spectators of the scene. They smiled and laughed with much enjoyment, for Mrs. Jones had declined their proffered acquaintance on her arrival at Sandon, so that her rheumatism they mistook for the stiffness of pride, and her deafness they considered an affectation to repel their unacceptable advances, deeming the poor woman's three warnings specially intended for themselves: so effectually will vanity afflict its victims with the same
obtuseness that nature reserves for the old and the dull.

The carriages at length returned, and the bridal procession moved to the door, observing the order of advance in their retreat. A wet day, an incipient cold crawling over you, and your marriage ceremony postponed *sine die*, are not materials for much enjoyment; and although the spectators tittered, none of our friends smiled as they stepped into the carriages, which, in the servants' haste to their rendezvous, were left with open windows till it was no longer of any use to close them. A vapour bath and a damaged dress therefore awaited Agnes on her way home, where the expectant servants curtsied and bowed their superfluous congratulations as they received her in the hall.

Annesley's cousin, Mr. Martyn, had not breakfasted, and as eating is a grand resource and solace when people have nothing else to do, Agnes ordered luncheon, and the party sat down to consume both
time and the good things before them. Annesley, drinking hastily some wine and water, in which the former ingredient was by far the better half, suggested the expediency of engaging a clergyman at once for the next morning. A friend in London would, he was sure, cheerfully perform the ceremony, and Edward therefore, hastily taking leave, proceeded to town in order to secure an interview with the reverend gentleman before he left his home for the day.

Mr. Martyn being an amateur did not abandon his breakfast, but declaring that he would remain with his new cousin to improve their acquaintance, saw Edward Annesley depart, and then composed himself to enjoy a good meal.

"What an excellent ham this is, Mrs. Jones," said he, "I never ate better."

"I hope you like the ham," said Mrs. Jones, seeing him point towards it. "Lord Courtville seemed to think it very good this morning."
“Lord Courtville!” exclaimed Martyn; “was he here to-day?”

“Oh dear, yes,” said Miss Somerton, “he breakfasted with us at nine o’clock.”

“Very strange,” said Martyn; “my uncle wrote to beg I would dine with him to-night in Portman Square, as he is to arrive there at six o’clock. At nine o’clock you say he was here? I never knew him up before till near eleven.”

“Vastly agreeable man, Lord Courtville,” said Mrs. Jones; “it is a great pity he should be so distressingly deaf.”

“Deaf! my dear madam, my uncle is not deaf; perhaps an accidental cold has affected his hearing.”

“Yes, he said so,” added Miss Somerton, “but, you know, in his present state one does not attach much importance to what he thinks.”

“In what state?” said Martyn, suspending midway the piece of chicken he was carrying to its destination, and looking eagerly at Agnes.
“In the deranged state of his intellect,” added Miss Williams. “I really feel very much for Lady Courtville and his daughters.”

“Bless me!” exclaimed Martyn, “surely you must labour under some strange mistake; my uncle is perfectly acute and collected, and I should say one of the best heads in the House of Peers.”

“Then, Mr. Martyn,” said Agnes, with a sympathizing voice and tearful eye, “I perceive you are not aware of the sad affliction that has fallen upon your uncle’s family: he labours under a very unhappy delusion which you may not have noticed in a cursory interview, and the secrecy preserved by his family while he continues inoffensive naturally confines a knowledge of the fact to his own immediate associates.”

“This is very strange,” said Martyn; “I have not seen my uncle for some months. You perceived his aberration, Miss Williams——”
“Oh yes,” interrupted Miss Williams; “he sat for an hour with Agnes and Mrs. Jones, and at length was induced through Mr. Annesley’s persuasions to return to town, lest he might have conducted himself irreverently at the church.”

“Very extraordinary, very extraordinary indeed,” said Martyn; “and was Edward aware of my uncle’s infirmity before this morning?”

“Oh dear, yes,” replied Miss Williams; “he endeavoured to screen it as long as possible, and to divert our attention to other subjects, but at last it was impossible to conceal the fact any longer, when Lord Courtville said he was a tailor, requesting Mrs. Jones’s custom, and giving Agnes some patterns of cloths for habits.”

“A tailor!” exclaimed Martyn, “what a preposterous fancy! Lord Courtville might imagine himself an autocrat or a demi-god, but a tailor! a tailor!”

“Mr. Martyn,” said Agnes, solemnly, “as a relative it is proper that you should be
aware of this calamity, although it seems evident that the family carefully avoid its disclosure. I cannot, therefore, regret the freedom with which we have discussed the subject in your presence, and I feel convinced that you will not defeat the secrecy which Annesley seems to consider so expedient, even with his nearest relatives."

"You do me but common justice," replied Martyn; "be assured that I shall not betray your confidence. To-day I dine with Lord Courtville, and may then have an opportunity of witnessing what you describe. If he has but this one delusion they do not dread immediate exposure, particularly as Lord Courtville is a remarkably silent man. Still, it is most strange that they all take it so quietly."

Shortly after this conversation Martyn departed, and the fair inhabitants of Lilly Hill Cottage were left to ruminate upon the events of the day until Annesley's return to dinner.
CHAPTER VIII.

"Mischief that may be helped is hard to know,
And danger going on still multiplies:
When harm hath many wings, care comes too late."
Lord Brooke.

Mr. Martyn, burdened with an important secret, walked thoughtfully to the place where he could find a coach to convey him to the metropolis. Having reached town, he proceeded at once to the bachelor residence of Lord Courtville's eldest son in Curzon Street. Lord Ames was at Richmond, and not expected home till six o'clock to dress for dinner. Martyn left a message importing his intention of calling again precisely at that hour, in order to proceed with his cousin to Lord Courtville's at the appointed time for dinner.

Martyn, one of those embryo lawyers
whose causes and effects are equally unproductive, and whose superfluous energies were seldom exhausted by a legitimate employment, now proceeded to visit one of his few clients, and afterwards at six o'clock repaired to Curzon Street, and heard that Lord Ames had just returned.

"I must see your master immediately," said Martyn to his cousin's servant; "tell him to despatch his toilette and come down at once, for I wish to communicate something very important before we leave this house."

"My good fellow," said Lord Ames, on entering the room soon after, "what on earth have you to say so very urgent as to fright me thus from my proprieties and interrupt the preparation I was making to appear like a respectful son before his lawful governor and legislator? Is Edward or his marriage arrested? or is he prematurely divorced a mensâ et thoro?"

"His espousals are alone arrested," re-
plied Martyn, "and but for one day. No, Ames, I have something more important to communicate than any of his variegated adventures; we will shut the door."

"What can have happened?" said Ames; "is my——"

"First answer me the question I am about to propose," said Martyn, interrupting his cousin. "When have you seen your father?"

"Not for some weeks; he returns, you know, to-night to attend the House; but what of him?"

"I thought that you were not aware of his situation, and that it would be my duty to impart to you this distressing intelligence—it is best that you should hear it at once. Your poor father, I am truly sorry to say, is mad."

"Mad!" cried Ames. "Good heaven! what do you mean?"

"Mad as a March hare," continued Martyn, "and, as I suppose, escaped from Lady
Courtville's vigilance, for I find that he spent this morning at Sandon with Annesley's intended, Miss Somerton, where he attempted to personate a tailor and wished to make a suit of clothes for an old deaf woman, the bride's aunt—he frightened the whole party into fits."

Martyn then proceeded to repeat Agnes's account of Hudson's conduct, finishing his detail by suggesting the expediency of preventing Lord Courtville's attendance at the House that night.

"We must certainly not allow him to appear there," said Ames. "This is a most distressing calamity," he continued, "and will decidedly militate against my father's political advancement."

"But," said Martyn, "the attack must be recent, and may perhaps be abridged by timely treatment, in which case the utmost secrecy is necessary, to confine a knowledge of his situation to our own family. You know, of course, Ames, that our mutual
grandmother died in an asylum, Aunt Jane was also remarkably eccentric, and I really have often fancied that Edward Annesley's inconsistency and thoughtlessness savoured of the hereditary taint."

"I am sure," said Ames, "nothing can be more irrational than his indifference to my poor father's situation; he never once mentioned it to me, although I saw him today on my return from Brighton. The trying task of restraining him then devolves upon us till we devise some plan and excuse for his temporary seclusion, and with his despotic character I do not think the undertaking an easy one."

"You are quite mistaken, Ames," said Martyn; "Miss Somerton assured me that Lord Courtville's conciliatory manner and affectionate cordiality enhances materially her affliction at his unfortunate situation."

"Is it possible?" said Ames. "Then insanity works miracles, for my father certainly does not distribute endearments even
amongst his own daughters; and you well know, Martyn, that he merely tolerates Edward's *mésalliance* with Miss Somerton for the sake of her fortune, which is to ransom that inconsiderate gentleman from his delicate pecuniary engagements."

The two young men now proceeded to Portman Square in Lord Ames’s cab, and on the way it was determined to prevent Lord Courtville’s attendance at the House of Lords at all hazards. After the rejection of many other suggested expedients, Martyn proposed asking his uncle to convey them a little way beyond Westminster Bridge, previous to the fulfilment of his own engagement; and as his lordship frequently drove into the country for an hour previous to the assumption of official duties, this suggestion met with Lord Ames’s concurrence. The cousins on their arrival in Portman Square found Lord Courtville pacing up and down his library, apparently in no very placid mood.
He merely touched the hands of his guests, and after making some careless inquiries for their health, sat down before a table covered with parliamentary documents and various other papers.

"You see he is tolerably quiet," said Martyn to Lord Ames, in a whisper; "it is satisfactory to remark that his intellect is unimpaired except on the one particular subject—just what Miss Somerton told me."

Lord Courtville had a few minutes before the young men's arrival paid five hundred at Annesley's urgent request to the person who arrested him in the early part of the day. Annesley promised to refund the sum the following week, and declared that his prospects in life must be ruined did Lord Courtville refuse to rescue him from his present difficulty. With a faint reliance on Edward's word, and in no very pleasant humour at this new proof of imprudence, his father examined for the third time an account enumerating the long list of super-
numerary habiliments with which a fashionable tailor, Hudson's rival, had furnished the elegant wardrobe of his dandy son. He read murmuringly, "A flowered velvet waistcoat, 2l. 10s.; ditto rose ponceau à la Brummel, 3l. 10s.; ditto black turque embroidered, lilies and roses, 5l. 10s."

Lord Ames made a sign to Martyn, who shook his head sympathizingly. Lord Courtville, still looking at the bill, exclaimed—

"Martyn, who is your tailor? Is it Werner?"

"No; I employ Stultz," replied Martyn; whispering to Lord Ames, "He is now going to ask for my custom, I suppose."

Lord Courtville, however, added nothing more, and the trio were soon after summoned to the dinner-table. Martyn and Ames kept their attention fixed on the noble host, and whenever his eyes accidentally met theirs, the watchful sentinels
were immediately withdrawn, and the viands before them seemed to absorb their undivided notice. Lord Courtville, although evidently surprised by their manner, appeared to enjoy the repast. "I had a miserable breakfast this morning," he said, "at Barnet, where my carriage broke down, and there I was detained, much against my will, since yesterday at four o'clock until twelve to-day."

Martyn again nodded to Ames. "I," said he, "partook of an ample luncheon at Sandon with our future relative, Miss Somerton."

"Oh!" said Lord Courtville, "does she live there? What do you think of her, Martyn? has she really the fortune which Edward so soon intends appropriating?"

"I believe so," said Ames; and again he whispered Martyn as they rose from the table. "It is too true. I fear that we must not allow him to attend the House this evening on any account."
Lord Courtville ordered his carriage at eight o'clock, and as they had agreed, the young men begged he would convey them a short distance out of town, premising some motive for the request, which he graciously admitted. They soon engaged him in a political discussion by asserting an untenable paradox to provoke his opposition, and by a lively conversation between themselves, in which Lord Courtville occasionally joined, they beguiled the drive to Sandon, and reached Lilly Hill Cottage before he had remarked its duration.

Marty and Lord Ames entered the door, which was opened by Mr. O'Rourk, promising Lord Courtville to detain him but for five minutes, at the expiration of which Ames returned to the carriage requesting his father to hasten to Martyn's assistance, who was, he said, just seized with some alarming illness. Lord Ames's real agitation seemed so confirmatory of his assertion that Lord Courtville, who, though cold in
manner, was still a kind-hearted man, followed readily through the hall to the dining-room, where Ames, begging him to enter first, shut the door behind him and instantly locked it on the outside, carefully retaining the key in his own possession.

Martyn in the meantime entering the drawing-room where Edward and Agnes sat conversing with Miss Williams, exclaimed, with a tremulous voice, "Edward, I have secured him effectually—I have secured him."

"Who?" said Annesley, struck with Martyn's agitation and earnestness.

"Your father—he is here, in the opposite room. Ames and I inveigled him from home, and by the most fortunate promptitude he is rescued from the exposure that must have followed his appearance at the House to-night."

"Are you mad?" said Annesley. "Where is my father?—what does all this mean?"

"Dear Edward," exclaimed Agnes, "I did
not wish to sadden the evening of an unpleasant day by reverting to the occurrences of this morning, but now that you are about to quit England on my account, surely it was a duty I owed you and Lord Courtville to mention his situation to Mr. Martyn, and thus to insure proper care and kindness for your unhappy father. It is indeed fortunate that an unpleasant scene in the House to-night should be avoided by my interference, and I——"

"You are all demented," exclaimed Annesley, savagely; "you are stark mad altogether."

A peal from the dining-room bell here rang through the house. Annesley stood for a few moments uncertain how to act, but starting suddenly from his suspense, he cried, "Let him out, Martyn, for heaven's sake; open the door, I entreat you! Where is the key?—give it to me at once."

"No, Edward," said Lord Ames, enter-
ing from the passage without, "no! Your imprudence has nearly involved us all in a very disagreeable predicament. I have the key, and until proper medical advice can be procured I must and I will retain it. Go, my dear fellow, take the carriage and return to town for Sir Henry Halford; Miss Somerton will, I am sure, afford my father every——"

"Ames—Ames!" interrupted Annesley, "you will drive me mad—this is all a mistake; just let me say a few words to you in the next room—come in here for one moment; and, Martyn, you must be of our council."

Annesley then, in a subdued voice, explained the deception he had practised on Miss Somerton, the accident that provoked it, and the necessity that still existed for withholding his stratagem from her knowledge. "We must prevent Agnes from seeing my father," he added,—"Hear—hear how he tears at the bell! go, run—
open the door for God's sake, Ames! Take him home—get him out of this house, and I shall be eternally obliged to you. I must try and keep Agnes in the drawing-room, by begging that she will not agitate my father during this dangerous paroxysm. I can say that you think it expedient to take him home for—I will invent some—"

"This is all very well for you, Edward," said Lord Ames, "but how are we to explain ourselves when your father accuses us of kidnapping him, and then imprisoning him here in a strange house? Why should we suffer from the consequences of your absurd manoeuvre?"

"The gentleman in the dining-room declares he will break open the door, sir, if you do not unlock it immediately," said Mr. O'Rourk, the butler, entering the room with a flushed and bewildered countenance; "and Miss Somerton, sir, is fainting; and Mrs. Jones, sir, is—"

"Go, Ames, go, for heaven's sake!" said
Annesley, “and do as you like, and (whispering) only get my father away from here immediately, or I am a ruined man.”

Lord Courtville’s loud voice now resounded through the house. “Before I leave this place, gentlemen,” said he, “I must know what induced you to expose me to insult and ridicule by bringing me here; Mr. Martyn, I appeal to you—what is the object of all this? Whose house am I in, sir? Why did Ames pretend that you were ill?”

Receiving no immediate answer from his nephew, and perceiving Mr. O’Rourk, Lord Courtville addressed him, repeating the former query, in a more imperious tone, “Whose house is this, sir? I insist on knowing where I am.”

“This is Mrs. Jones’s house, sir,” replied O’Rourk, very much bewildered by the turn things were taking.

“Where is Mrs. Jones? I insist on seeing
Mrs. Jones! Where is Mrs. Jones, I repeat?"

Mrs. Jones, hearing some disturbance in the hall, for Lord Courtville's voice reached even her sensorium, left Agnes and Miss Williams, unperceived by Annesley, and coming just then amongst her unexpected visitors, collected from Mr. O'Rourk's descriptive gestures that the person who so audibly invoked her was a lunatic. When, therefore, Lord Courtville addressed her with emphatic earnestness and stentorian voice, terror transfixed her to the spot, and wringing her hands and screaming, she cried—"Save me! save me from him, for God's sake! Oh, hold him, hold him, O'Rourk! Why do you let him remain? Take him away, for mercy's sake!"

"Madam," said Lord Courtville, "Mrs. Jones——"

"No, no, sir, I am not Mrs. Jones, indeed I am not, I am Miss Somerton, sir. This house is not mine, indeed I cannot allow
you to remain here; I should be very happy to see you at any other time, but—when you are well, sir, I shall be happy to see you—but I am very busy now, very busy indeed. I hope you are not offended," she added, curtseying to Lord Courtville, who, urged by Martyn, while Lord Ames whispered to him that the woman was silly, proceeded to the door, unmindful of the lady's distress.

They persuaded him to enter the carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive as fast as possible to the House of Lords, that Lord Courtville might not appear neglectful of his summons there. Lord Ames and Martyn were too much in awe of Lord Courtville to explain accurately the real motive for their recent proceedings, but Ames declared that a sudden giddiness of Martyn had alarmed him, and that he had found the supposed dying man quite recovered on re-entering the house.

"Why did you lock me into that room?" persisted Lord Courtville.
“Quite an accident,” said Martyn; “the key was taken out by mistake.”

Although Lord Courtville now began to think that he was made the instrument of some mystification connected with Annesley, pride prevented him from allowing his companions to perceive how much it annoyed him, and he dropped the subject.

Martyn alighted from the carriage at Westminster, and after his departure Lord Courtville said to Lord Ames, “Edward has certainly made a very strange selection, and one that I think will be no great credit to our family. This Miss Somerton may once have been handsome, but she is now old enough to be his grandmother, and appears to me a little crazed. What did she mean by desiring me to quit her house?”

“It is too true,” replied Lord Ames, only replying to the latter part of his father’s address, “I never was more surprised in my life than when she mentioned her name,
for Edward always assured me that his intended was both young and lovely."

At ten o'clock the morning after their first attempt at matrimony, our bridal party again assembled in the parish church of Sandon. Annesley's clerical friend had already arrived, and, with Mr. Martyn as supporter to the bridegroom, and Mrs. Jones to matronize Miss Somerton, Agnes and Annesley knelt to receive the nuptial benediction, and to pledge themselves to love and cherish, honour and obey, till Death dissolve the compact or circumstances fore-stall his interference.

Edward trembled as he placed the golden fetter on his bride's left hand; he recalled, perhaps, a ceremony long ago that had mimicked this sacred rite, and the youthful victim who then exchanged for that vain symbol of his truth her peace, her hopes, and the sunshine of her young life.

Agnes retained sufficient self-possession to observe Edward's agitation, but she of
course referred it to the novelty of his situation. A few young ladies had assembled to criticize the ceremony, their curiosity so much enhanced by the previous day’s failure as to counterbalance all inconveniences of rain, and wind, and cold. Agnes did not suspect their envy, nor could she imagine the pride with which each one of these fair damsels would have ranked herself amongst “the chosen few” promoted to matrimony, for Agnes was exempt from the vulgar prejudice that considers it a social triumph which the overlooked must either pine for in sullen sorrow, or resent with acrid misanthropy.

Hastily passing all the fair aspirants to hymeneal honours, and stepping into the bridegroom’s chariot, Agnes returned to Lilly Hill Cottage, there to exchange her white attire for one more suited to a long journey. A pink silk bonnet, a grey silk dress, a beautiful white Cashmere shawl, and grey gloves, completed the travelling
toilet with which she entered her carriage, followed by Annesley, whose distinguished air and fine features were as remarkable as the expressive beauty of his bride. A few minutes and they were on the high road to France, flying through the country at a rapid pace, despite the rain and storm that only seemed to add another impetus to their course.
CHAPTER IX.

"One time I think; and then I am in pain
To think how to unthink that thought again."

Annesley and Agnes accomplished the second stage of their journey with satisfactory speed, and had just halted at a small rural inn, where the postillions, with ostentatious activity, were urging others to replace them, when a post-chaise, after descending with fearful precipitancy a declivity before the house, swept up close beside the chariot of our heroine and her spouse.

The rain had obscured the carriage glasses, and Annesley let one down to scrutinize the newly-arrived equipage. A gentleman, its late occupant, hastened towards him, and in an instant more
Annesley recognised his old friend and accomplice, Sir Harry Ashworth.

"Edward," said he, with an embarrassed manner, "I am just arrived from France, and on my way to Sandon for the purpose of seeing you. We must have a few words' conversation immediately. Accompany me into the hotel; you shall return in ten minutes to Miss Somerton."

Ashworth here bowed to Agnes, and opening the carriage door himself, he overcame the objections which Annesley muttered to this interruption, and ushered him into an adjoining tavern. Ashworth seemed extremely agitated, while Annesley appeared subdued with the dread of some impending disaster. So thought Agnes as her eyes followed them into the house, and then she sank back in the carriage to surmise what could be the cause of this untimely interruption.

Annesley's family were all in England, and Sir Harry had but just arrived from
the Continent; therefore, his communica-
tion could not relate to any of them. After
imagining all possible casualties, Agnes de-
cided that Sir Henry had involved himself
in some pecuniary dilemma from which
he intended Edward to extricate him, and
then Agnes thought how very provoking it
was that his difficulties should just occur
so as to interrupt their bridal tour and
detain her on a disagreeable road, with
the rain battering against the very imperial
which contained her wedding paraphernalia.
All she could do was just to hope that it
was waterproof, and occupy herself by look-
ing through the half-dim windows till the
vexatious interview had terminated.

Her view was not extensive; a shop
occupying the lower part of a solitary
house that kept the tavern company stood
opposite, while trees bordered both sides of
the road before her as it wound round the
eminence which Sir Harry Ashworth had
descended with such perilous rapidity. A
dirty, shaggy dog sat with senile gravity at the door of the little mart for every kind of requirement, where a woman near its window was endeavouring to improve the aspect of her petty merchandise. She polished her apples, arranged her oranges, presenting their most perfect sides to notice, and then sat down upon a stool behind the counter, composing herself to work upon some coarse material.

How strange it is for us gay idlers to watch the homely pursuits of those far below us in the scale of social life, to see the care and thought which they devote to objects that seem so poor and worthless, and yet are to them the objects or the means of existence.

"How different is my destiny from hers!" thought Agnes, as she watched the poor woman's careful industry. "The centre of a circle, I claim from many what they seem bound to yield of deference and esteem; each year, each month, dilates the sphere, and
adds some others to the crowd already aware of my existence, while, pent within that little shop, she will live and die, accomplishing the daily wearying circuit of the petty tasks by which she exists." A great deal more upon this subject thought Agnes, still waiting in the rain; the dog soon retired from its encroachment, and our poor woman, the cause of this digression, still stooped over her work.

Annesley did not return, and, nearly tired with watching and surmising, again the bride reclined upon the well-stuffed cushions heaped in piles behind her. The chariot door now opened, but instead of Annesley, or a promise of departure, Sir Harry pressed Miss Somerton to enter the inn, "just for a moment," that they might all consult together upon a matter of great importance to each. Agnes tried to excuse herself—it was so wet—the hour too far advanced—why could they not all meet next day at Dover?
"No, no!" Sir Harry answered; "my dear Miss Somerton, as a friend I ask you to accompany me, and in a few short minutes you will yourself approve of my importunity."

Agnes found it vain to object further; so, leaning on Sir Harry's arm, she sprang from the carriage, and hastily ascended a flight of stairs, to which he led her. Ashworth had followed, and just across the narrow landing-place, he preceded her into a small sitting-room, where, however, she did not see her husband.

"Annesley will join us presently," said Sir Harry, in answer to her question of where he was, "and I will not enter on the subject of this interview until he comes. Pray sit down, Miss Somerton. I must amuse you with some account of our foreign friends while Edward is examining the carriage, which according to his servant's report wants some small repair."

Agnes sat down; there was something
strange in Ashworth's manner that she could not understand; he spoke in a subdued tone which seemed as ill-suited to present circumstances as unlike his usual petulance. She turned towards the door, impatiently watching for Annesley, and nearly quite unconscious of Sir Henry's efforts to amuse her. He tried to introduce some foreign topic, he spoke of Agnes's former friends and associates at Rome, but all in vain; expecting some catastrophe, the bride remained unmoved by his words, and scarcely replied to his often repeated questions.

After some minutes passed in this embarrassing tête-à-tête, Ashworth said that he would now seek Annesley and bring him to the long-suspended conference. Agnes remained alone.

She walked towards a window that looked upon a kitchen garden behind the house. A carriage now drove from the front door; she heard its rapid movement, and
was just concluding that it must be the stage, when Ashworth's reappearance in the room without her husband enhanced the fears which she had till now vainly tried to conquer. Sir Harry led her to a seat, and cautiously, and by degrees, disclosed his fatal secret. He produced some papers just before inspected by Annesley, and at the expiration of their conference fully convinced poor Agnes that Annesley was the husband of another woman! No exclamation of distress betrayed the agony of a distracted mind, no tears fell to relieve it, although the tremor of her hand disabled her from holding a glass of water to her lips which Ashworth offered. With apparent calmness she learnt that Annesley was gone, that he had departed in the carriage which rolled past when she was expecting his return.

Sir Harry failed not to hint that Annesley's ignorance of the facts which he had just communicated was pretended. He
expatiated indignantly on the infamous particulars just detailed, promising that they should be fully substantiated by his late servant, now disabled by illness from personally attesting his evidence.

"I hear," said Sir Harry, "that the family of this foreigner mean to prosecute Annesley, and I have strenuously advised him immediately to employ a professional man of eminence. I myself am quite convinced that the foreign marriage is valid, and must be acknowledged; and although it may seem harsh to state this to you, Miss Somerton, still I am induced to trust to your fortitude rather than leave you ignorant of facts so closely interfering with your future welfare."

Sir Henry now volunteered an immediate journey to Sandon, in order to apprise Mrs. Jones of Agnes's situation; he suggested the propriety of Miss Williams's immediate companionship, and the advantages of a visit to Paris, there to wait the results of pending
events. Poor Agnes had not yet rallied from the stupor of sudden misfortune; she quietly assented to every plan Sir Harry urged, and tacitly concurred in his project for her continental excursion.

He offered to escort her abroad, then to surrender her to the care of his sister, la Comtesse D'Albremont, who resided with her daughter in Paris. But to this proposal Agnes would not consent; Miss Williams and two servants she deemed sufficient protection on the road, at the same time acknowledging Sir Harry's gallantry, and accepting gratefully a letter of introduction to his sister, which he enjoined her to present immediately after her arrival in Paris.

Sir Harry now summoned Agnes's maid to her mistress, he bespoke the hostess's active ministry to her wants, and borrowing the carriage to convey him to Sandon, Annesley having appropriated his post-chaise, he bade her a hurried farewell.
Ashworth promised to consult able lawyers and to communicate their advice, as well as Annesley's proceedings, in weekly letters to Agnes, who returned with grateful cordiality the pressure of his hand before he quitted the room to proceed on his mission of friendship to Sandon.

Left alone to her own reflections, they were certainly not cheering. She arraigned her prudence, recapitulating the circumstances that should have awakened it to greater vigilance. Then again she recalled Annesley's recommendations, his persevering assiduity, that partly justified her late injudicious preference, and also mitigated the resentment which his conduct had provoked. During this process pride, anger, and disappointment in turn overcame her; she was humbled by having succumbed to an unworthy artifice, and incensed at its success. Her mind vibrating between self-accusation and resentment, she sat regardless of time, till from excitement she relapsed
into its inevitable consequences, fatigue and vacuity.

At four o'clock the hostess brought candles, and informed Miss Somerton that a dinner ordered by the gentleman who had left her some time before was now preparing, to be ready at six o'clock.

Agnes still sat where Ashworth had placed her, beside the window, till a chill which she had not before perceived brought her to the fire, and there again she remained another hour, her eyes fixed on the blazing hearth, quite unmindful of the preparations for dining made by the host beside her. The meal was soon despatched, a few morsels and a glass of wine completing it. Then she was again in solitude, hoping that Ashworth might expedite Miss Williams to join her even before the following day, the preparations for a journey being dispensed with for the sake of haste. Till ten o'clock, however, she waited fruitlessly at her bedroom window, which looked upon the street.
The lone woman again sat in her little shop, and Agnes thought how her own fate was changed since she had first seen this poor creature working at that same coarse garment over which she yet toiled with unremitting industry.

The night was dreary and cold, and the dim light of a small candle just showed Agnes the form of the poor worker, alone and cheerless, unsolaced, like herself, by friendly companionship. She watched in vain for some time longer, and then, yielding to her maid's persuasion, at eleven o'clock composed herself to rest, harassed and exhausted by the trials of that eventful day.

For hours our heroine vainly courted sleep, and when, occasionally, it stole over her, some rural noise or passing carriage would recall her senses to their wakeful activity.

Towards morning, these intervals of restlessness were abridged, and then a placid sleep withdrew poor Agnes from the re-
membrane of her recent distress. At nine, when from some bustle in the house she was awakened, the sun was exhalin his golden breath over the country, and a long beam of this heavenly emanation fell upon her bed, and cheered her waking thoughts with its brightness.

Agnes felt much better; the events of yesterday seemed now like a dream that she could not analyse while it lasted.

The morning light and air brought vigour to her mind and body, and, ere Miss Williams arrived, at ten o'clock, she had resumed so much composure as speedily to allay the fears of that lady, who dreaded meeting her in a far different mood. Agnes discussed their journey and all her future plans; until it was agreed that both ladies should proceed immediately to Paris, there to await some further information, either confirmatory of Sir Harry's accusations or exculpating Annesley from the crime with which they branded him.
CHAPTER X.

"Give every man thine ear; but few thy voice."

While the two friends were yet preparing to commence their journey a servant informed Agnes that an old lady had just arrived, a Mrs. Jones, who desired to be shown into Miss Somerton's room immediately.

"Good gracious, Agnes!" cried Miss Williams; "I had hoped that her threat of following you was but a momentary fancy, and strenuously opposed it. Through pique at my unasked-for interference she has, no doubt, effected the preparations for departure with so much secrecy and expedition as to reach here just an hour after my own hurried arrival."

Agnes rose abruptly, unmindful of this
observation, for Mrs. Jones stood at the door, and, after some explanations and a few condolences, plainly announced her determined purpose of accompanying Agnes in her journey to Paris.

Now, Agnes really loved her aunt with dutiful affection; but habit, the bond of consanguineous attachments, had not strengthened theirs—for till the period of Miss Somerton’s return to England she had never seen this relative, from whom pecuniary disputes had hitherto estranged her family. Had a more ready means of communication existed between them, Agnes might have prized her aunt’s society more; but Mrs. Jones, from deafness, could not hear one half of Agnes’s conversation, the rest she often did not understand, and the enjoyment of the poor old lady’s affection was purchased by Agnes at the price of many sacrifices and petty inconveniences, to which she most cheerfully submitted.

Miss Somerton’s persuasive powers effected
no change in her aunt's determination. The dangers of a voyage, the inconvenience of the journey, and above all (this Agnes hinted mildly) the ignorance of French—which was not taught in Mrs. Jones's younger days, when parents thought one tongue sufficient for a woman—all these objections Miss Williams and her niece most forcibly reiterated, but all in vain. A sudden spirit of enterprise had animated the old lady. She packed up a few small necessaries, and, with her maid's and Mr. O'Rourk's (the butler's) help, stowed herself into the green chariot, determined to see the world at last, and charmed to travel under the friendly auspices of her clever, darling Agnes. Besides, she urged the propriety of sanctioning the journey with her presence. Agnes was young and might require the counsel and protection of a matron, her nearest relative alive. Mrs. Jones even wept at Agnes's sad predicament, but smiled again on thinking how much she should enjoy the
journey and all the beautiful novelties, and the lovely climate of France.

Miss Somerton found it would be useless further to thwart her aged relative, and disbursing the amount of her bill at the hotel, she followed Mrs. Jones downstairs, mentally lamenting the pertinacity of her determination. There stood the green chariot of the old lady, enclosing her ancient abigail—a cross and ugly damsel of five-and-forty.

When Mr. O'Rourk had pushed his rheumatic mistress into her place within, he mounted to the rumble behind, where, much to Agnes's dismay, she saw perched beside him, in its large gilded cage, a parrot, the companion and solace of her aunt's lonely hours. This bird had long continued a grand favourite with Mrs. Jones—his voice being always audible to every ear, her deafness was almost forgotten—when seated tête-à-tête with Poll, not one syllable of his vociferous observations and queries escaped her.
Mr. O'Rourk, the Irish butler, Agnes deemed a greater burden than the other biped, but to remonstrate with her aunt would now be useless. Entering her carriage, therefore, preceded by Miss Williams, she quietly resigned herself to fate, and even indulged a smile at Mrs. Jones's strange equipment. Here was a woman nearly incompetent to perform a prosperous journey in her own quiet county, now courting the perils of foreign travel, encumbered, too, with two domestics who must become quite helpless in a country of which they did not understand the language; and this most promising trio had Agnes to convey on a tour of pleasure.

Mr. O'Rourk, a genuine Milesian, entirely governed her aunt's establishment, adopting a mincing pronunciation and softening his vowels to correct a very unmistakable brogue: painfully recognisable when any exciting cause superseded the vigilance with which he tried to correct it.

With much natural shrewdness Mr. O'Rourk affected the simple manner of his
compatriots belonging to the same sphere. A faithful attachment to his employer, the espousal of her interests on all occasions, and a desire to enhance the consequence of those whom he served, constituted his merits; while, on the other hand, they were counterbalanced by misplaced familiarity, officious interference, and occasional extravagance of words and expenditure, "to promote the honour of the family," which conduced much to its inconvenience. The national propensities were duly represented by Mr. O'Rourk, who drank and fought, and involved himself in all the troubles, and adopted all the quarrels of his countrymen, whose travelling tastes disseminate them far and wide upon the surface of the habitable globe.

Such an attendant did not promise much help in the task of steering Mrs. Jones safely through a continental tour; still the party reached the coast without accident or delay, contrary to Agnes's apprehensions.
Your passage at that time from Dover to the opposite shore was as uncertain as the wind that might expedite it; and whether this would waft you to the coast of France, or only blow you half-way over, to meet another current which would send you back again, was always of course a matter of doubt at embarkation.

The night of Agnes's arrival at Dover sundry candidates called to propose their own "fast-sailing vessels" for her transport the next morning. The Rose was recommended by a brown, broad, laconic man; while the Britannia's merits were duly eulogised in the nautical superlatives of a tall athlete, noisy and profuse with his technical encomiums. "That 'ere Rose is a crazy thing, marm," said this Hercules; "there ben't a sound plank in the vessel."

"Good gracious!" cried Mrs. Jones to Agnes, "you certainly won't think of taking places in that ship, my love? The gentle-
man is exceedingly kind to warn us against it."

Poor Agnes, to satisfy her aunt, forthwith engaged three berths in the Britannia. It was formerly necessary to secure beds in case you might spend a week on board.

The ladies now gathered round the fire, well pleased at having been judiciously advised by their late visitor.

Another weather-beat son of the sea, however, soon entered, unannounced—for then, when the certainty of modern steam transits was unknown, the period and number of departures ever varied, and even time and tide, which proverbially wait for no man, were disregarded in the eagerness of competition by rival captains. The new petitioner detailed the merits of his Annie; she was swift, clean, and beautiful, and his encomiums might have comprised all the cardinal virtues, had not Mrs. Jones (to whom maritime voices seemed exceedingly propitious) interrupted him by declaring
that she had engaged places in the Britannia.

"You have, marm, have ye? Then you never will repent it but once, for as I am a living man she is not seaworthy."

"Oh dear," said Mrs. Jones, "you know that does not signify; her being worthy of the sea is of no sort of consequence to us if she is a good vessel."

"Good vessel! Lord love you, marm, she's a reg'lar bad 'un; now, d'ye know, marm," he continued, in a confidential manner, "if she wor to go down to-morrow with all aboard, it would be no more nor I expects."

"Good gracious!" said Mrs. Jones; "hear that, Agnes dear. I'm sure it's very kind of you to tell us this in time, sir, for we should certainly have embarked in the Britannia, but as you say your own ship is a good one, I think——"

Here Agnes interrupted her aunt. "My dear madam," said she, "I think we had
better not decide on any change till morning. I can speak to the proprietor of this hotel, and we shall be partly guided by his counsel."

"Yes, love," said Mrs. Jones, who always could be led by Agnes, "yes, we can wait till morning before we give this gentleman his answer."

"Just as you please, marm," said the sailor, "but d'ye see, the master of this house is just an owner of the Brittanny himself, and I should not much mind what he says in the business."

"Oh dear, oh dear," cried Mrs. Jones, "what shall we do? who will advise us? Well, sir, just call to-morrow early, and then we may, perhaps, agree to go in your ship, the Rose, is it not?"

"No, no, marm, the Rose is worser nor the Brittanny; there's not much difference atwixt 'em. Good evening, ladies; here's a card of my ship, the Annie; remember, Captain Junk."
Next morning our three travellers arose betimes, and after breakfast, as they were not to embark till three o'clock, Agnes persuaded Mrs. Jones to accompany her to the Marine Parade in a bath-chair, as the old lady had never seen the sea. Her wonder and delight at all she passed amused Agnes much; the shops, the foreigners, the vessels at the quays, were successively the objects of her ejaculations. At last, however, when on emerging from the close harbour they reached a spot from whence the broad green surging sea was visible, Mrs. Jones's energy materially abated, the smile of pleasure passed from her features, and turning a piteous glance on Agnes, she asked, "Are we to venture on that awful-looking water? Oh, Agnes, I shall never have courage to embark on such a roaring mass of waves; why, I am afraid even now that they are coming on towards us. Are you sure it is a safe place to remain in?"

Her gravity did not relax from that
moment, and, although not recurring to the subject on their return to the hotel, still the poor woman considered her doom as sealed. She could not now retract; but all the delights with which she had lately invested a trip to Paris were more than neutralized by the remembrance of that fearful expanse of ocean.

Counsell'd by some disinterested adviser, Agnes retained her passage in the Britannia, although obliged to countenance a tacit falsehood, when Mrs. Jones imagined herself seated in the Annie, never supposing that Agnes would imperil their lives by patronizing a vessel so notoriously dangerous as the Britannia.
CHAPTER XI.

"The bridegroom sea
Is toying with the shore, his wedded bride;
And in the fulness of his married joy
He decorates her tawny brow with shells,
Retires a pace to see how fair she looks,
Then, proud, runs up to kiss her."—Smith.

The sea, and its sunny dancing waves, undulating with the rhythm of the ocean, the fresh wind that we first inhale before another breath has tainted its purity, the distant horizon which seems to render vision boundless, all bring vigour to mind and body, and inspirit us with active energy. Then our pride in that power which enables man to master one of nature’s great elements, and the novelty of another mode of locomotion with which, in fine weather, we glide over space unconscious of
movement—all these sensations render a short excursion to sea most exhilarating.

Agnes soon began to feel these agreeable influences as she sat on deck, watching the rippling waters through which the vessel floated. The day had become calm and oppressive for the season, and the sails flapped languidly above her head with that measured sound which is soothing from its monotonous regularity. Recent occurrences crowded to her memory, and now that the first shock of surprise and disappointment was a little abated, she deemed herself indeed fortunate to have escaped the calamity which Sir Harry Ashworth's interference had so providentially averted. With the variability of her sex she now felt that her affection for Annesley was overcoming the resentment with which she first heard of his iniquity, and almost regretted her ready belief in Ashworth's accusations. "I will wait," she mentally said, "I will wait patiently for confirmatory proofs of his
treachery, or for some extenuation of his guilt; in either case it cannot avail to make myself wretched now."

After a prosperous voyage, speedily terminated, our travellers spent one day in Calais previous to their departure for Paris. Mrs. Jones required some repose after her many adventures, for she had been seized by an Herculean sailor, and dropped into a small boat beside the ship to be conveyed on shore, and while the little craft kept bounding up and down near the larger vessel, she had sat awaiting death at every plunge. Finding her entreaties to leave the other passengers in the packet until her own party had landed quite fruitless, she had sunk to the bottom of the boat in helpless despair, screaming vigorously as each person lowered into the small skiff gave it an additional lurch. On approaching the shore, this poor woman had been again seized by her powerful friend and handed to a French sailor, who had lifted her up like a child through the surge,
quite unmindful of struggles and shrieks and kicks.

Deposited on *terra firma*, Mrs. Jones's troubles had seemed to increase, for she had been surrounded by noisy advocates of all the hotels in the town, urging in sputtered English, or vociferated French, the merits of their respective houses. Dragged to one side by a representative of the *Hôtel de France*, rescued violently by an opposition from the *Ville de Paris*, bewildered by all, and separated from her party, Mrs. Jones had been at last released from this persecution by a whiskered delegate from Dessein's, who had led her off in triumph amidst the scowls and jeers of his disappointed competitors.

The next morning Agnes and her companions started at an early hour on the road to Paris, Miss Somerton and Miss Williams occupying a hired carriage, while Mrs. Jones followed in the green chariot, seated beside her maid and protected by Mr. O'Rourk, who looked very important in the rum-
ble, upon which he fastened Mrs. Jones's parrot, in a French travelling cage of an unpretending character.

The first day's journey was comfortably accomplished, but not so the second, for on arriving at the termination of a long stage, Mr. O'Rourk, his companion, and the rumble had entirely disappeared. To add to Mrs. Jones's distress, no horses were found at the post-house, and the man despatched on foot along the road in search of the missing butler returned unsuccessful. One of the jaded posters was now mounted by the postillion and sent in pursuit, while Agnes and her companions sat in a dirty, miserable room at the inn, anxiously awaiting the reappearance of the Irishman.

Mr. O'Rourk, meantime, was by no means in an enviable position. He had been roused from a comfortable nap by a very unexpected fall, and on recovering the shock his cries and vociferations had been quite inaudible from the clatter of the carriages over the
rough pavement of the French road, along which they rattled at great speed. A slight sprain disabled him from more active measures, while, sprawling on the ground, he felt himself all over to ascertain the amount of his injuries.

O’Rourk assuredly was most uncomfortable in his novel situation, particularly as a constant fall of rain poured on his uncovered head—for his hat had flown out of reach—and the clouds promised its long continuance. The parrot luckily escaped all injury, and O’Rourk now, dragging the rumble under a tree, seated himself upon its cushions, and placing the cage beside him, awaited with no very great patience the return of the carriage, or any other good luck fortune might bring him.

“A mighty pleasant and sensible thing it is to travel, and to turn into a bird of paradise, always going from place to place,” said he, indulging in a soliloquy; “sure then it’s very agreeable to be near wrecked at say,
and to be near kilt with the sickness, and to be forgot below in the cabin when the others went on shore, because I was too sick to speak to that impudent steward, and then to be shut down in the hold and taken out for four hours to say again, to wait for a tide to come up with the ship to the quay. Oh, if ever I go to say again! Sure I'll remain all my life in foreign parts and eat bully beef every day rather than put my foot into a boat again. Oh then! 'tis mighty sick I am at the present, tho' I took ocheans of their oh davy at Calais to settle my stomach. 'Tis never right it will be again." Here Pat's lamentations were arrested by the appearance of some passengers in the road, and of three labouring men who stopped to question him. At the sight of them O'Rourk began his story in English, totally forgetful of being a foreigner. "Oh, gentlemen, it's a nice way I'm in, to be sure, and Mrs. Jones gone on in her beautiful green chariot, and myself with my bones
broken on the road, and this poor bird here waiting to be sent for, or to meet some charitable body that would help us in our distress. Could you tell me, sir, how far it is to where I am going on my way to Paris?

"Faith, I don't understand a word you say; hist, sir, let me listen to that big, black, swarthy man behind you. What is it you mean, mossu?"

On being asked by this person if he was wounded, "Blessy, blessy," said Pat, "thank ye, sir, for the blessing; but I'd rather you'd send a cart for me, and Mrs. Jones would pay handsome for it."

After trying in vain to understand him the men went their way to the neighbouring village, and poor O'Rourk remained where he was sitting another weary hour till Agnes's messenger found him soliloquizing, and then talking as volubly as if every one understood what he said.

Our travellers reached Paris in due time,
and established themselves at a good hotel in the Rue de Rivoli.

An heiress and a new arrival was sure to attract Madame D’Albremont, and ere long this enterprising lady, forewarned by Sir Harry Ashworth, called on Agnes. He had not alluded to Miss Somerton’s unfortunate position, and his sister never heard of it. Her manner was so easy, and her offers of assistance so obliging, that the three ladies were charmed with their new acquaintance, who discussed the present English residents in Paris, the theatres, fashions, artists, shops, and milliners; dwelling on the topic that seemed most to interest her hearers.

For Agnes she was to secure a clever artist to accompany her to the Louvre, and then to give her lessons in painting. To old Mrs. Jones she proposed a French master, and the good lady consented to employ a person so ably recommended. Miss Williams she walked off to a workshop, where they
purchased various indescribable rectilinear attempts to represent brigands and shepherdesses, warriors and dogs; patterns requiring more time to execute than would be sufficient to acquire a modern language; worsted mosaics, to be finished in months and soiled in days.

What lovely things Miss Williams brought home to Mrs. Jones!

Madame D'Albremont procured a piano, a harp, and a very easy chair, and volunteered directions without end about every place, and every thing, and every person that they might require. She fixed her small black searching eyes on Agnes with a stare of scrutiny which was converted into a gaze of admiration as soon as she saw herself remarked.

The ladies were much amused with her gossip; but something in the expression of her eyes displeased Agnes, who, although too young to possess the knowledge of countenances which long observation insures, still
had her own correct instinctive prepossession. She saw that the little lady had exchanged her English manner and appearance for French substitutes, and that she frightened Miss Williams and Mrs. Jones with the exuberance of her civility.

Madame D'Albremont was by many years Sir Harry Ashworth's senior. She had married an émigré before her father amassed the immense fortune which Sir Harry squandered. A legacy of thirty thousand pounds bequeathed to her by her father, and an allowance bestowed by relations of her husband for the maintenance of her daughter, had furnished sufficient means to live elegantly in a small apartment, which was embellished by the gifts of friends, and her own address in purchasing curiosities when their owners were obliged to part with them to procure more available essentials. Madame D'Albremont belonged to a class peculiarly French, that of *les intrigantes*. Endowed with superior natural abilities, which had
not been directed into a proper course by a judicious education, her energies expended themselves in a restless pursuit of trifles, which she always invested with disproportionate importance. All the usual outlets for female activity, either in the exercise of accomplishments, or the fulfilment of household duties, she could not practise; it was therefore natural that her superabundant energy should be directed to the regulation of all possible concerns of another character.

Born of the opposite sex, Madame D'Albremont might have become a wily lawyer, a successful quack, or a refined diplomatist; confined to a limited sphere, she still effected all that she wished to accomplish there by spirit, perseverance, and ingenuity. Short and dark, with small black eyes and half-closed lids, that screened their meaning and direction from observation, her appearance bespoke the character I describe. As yet her schemes had conduced materially to
enlarge the circle of her enjoyments by securing comforts and superfluities that a small income could not compass. Many intimates and endless acquaintances enjoyed her vivacity and benefited by her intelligence; for many of these she secured introductions to superiors, small official places for sons, and desirable husbands for daughters, according to the grade or expectations of the parties. Activity is ever generous; your busy-bodies—the vulgar race of *intrigants*—will toil and bustle gratuitously for the mere pleasure of meddling, even in affairs that do not concern them, and thus satisfying the restlessness which afflicts them: to be quiet is unbearable.

Accustomed to French hyperbole, Miss Somerton did not entirely credit Madame D'Albremont's professions, but Mrs. Jones was in a short time overcome by them, and in ecstasy with her new acquaintance. After a long visit and with a promise to return soon,
the mother and daughter departed. The latter had made a most favourable impression on Agnes; indeed it would have been impossible not to admire the gentleness of Clelia's manner and the sweetness of her voice, after being first captivated by the remarkable loveliness of her person. Agnes felt convinced that she could love her, and longed for an opportunity of enjoying another interview, exempt from the outbreaks of her mother's volubility.

Agnes and her companions now drove round the town, along the Boulevards, and to the Champs Élysées, and much were they dazzled by the brilliant throng which swept along these gay thoroughfares. There the light grisette trips past with an elastic bound, balancing her pretty head from side to side to catch the admiring glances of small-moustachioed youths, displaying every variety of capillary attraction.

Next comes a fossil dandy, ossified by years and rheumatism, but still affecting a
youthful gait, of which the movements are more spasmodic than graceful: his hat jauntily stuck on one side, he too looks about for admiration, seeking it mostly amongst the younger portion of the sex, on whose inexperience he founds his hopes. That splendid lad of mature years who just sails by never once condescends to look at him, poor man. Proud of her person, and no less vain of the unquestionable fashion and costliness of her dress, she knows that both will be duly appreciated by all observers, for in Paris taste for dress is a universal acquirement.

A caquoise bonne follows her, leading a little girl, vouée au blanc, in compliment to some patroness Saint, who has vouchsafed, on condition that she wears white for a certain number of years, to guarantee her against the perils of hooping-cough, scarlatina, measles, and small-pox. The bonne, too, is pretty, and she knows it, and condescends to notice the flattering stare of
the veteran beau, when he smiles and takes a lighter step and turns his head round to look after her—an effort which exposes him to a shock from a dirty urchin who very nearly throws him off his balance and then tears away across the road before the old dandy has recovered his equilibrium, or clenched the whalebone gold-headed cane which he holds with a painful grasp in his gouty hand.

Now that boy is nearly run over by a proud horseman, whose steed, chafing with suppressed energies, you admire amazingly; a judge would tell you how the rider's off spur excites all these curvets and prancings, and he could show you the gentleman's feet turned out to the most obtuse angle of the first position, and you might wonder how with such an attitude France kept her seat during the last war.

"Did you ever see merrier people?" said Miss Williams to Agnes. "How happy vanity makes them; but what a strange delusion it is which induces us to hope that
others will amplify our merits and overlook our faults, while in our own estimate of associates we adopt the opposite course. The vain man imagines that society, like a great magic mirror, will reflect and embellish his person and fine qualities; and I really believe that a Frenchman, to his latest day, never detects this self-deception."

"If vanity is the besetting sin here," said Agnes, "pride is our foible at home, and the source of much national moroseness."

"I hope, dear Agnes, you do not prefer the childish frivolity of the French to the sober self-possession, the steady reserve which protects an Englishman against the contagion of example or the encroachments of familiarity, which indisposes him to change the fashion of his clothes or the structure of our constitution?"

"You will never lose your English prejudices," said Agnes, laughing, and she certainly thought that her friend would be improved
by allowing others to influence her a little more, both by example and counsel.

Miss Williams was one of those persons who pride themselves exceedingly on disregarding the smaller courtesies of life, who consider deference to the wishes of others mere servility, and any open expression of regard or admiration actual deceit. She mistook rudeness for sincerity, and selfishness for honesty, and would have felt great pleasure in saying the most disagreeable thing possible because it was true, and doing the most selfish thing imaginable because she liked it. Individuals of her character are supposed to possess excellent hearts, and active benevolence, in reserve for your especial use, under the severe calamities of life when they occur; in the meantime, you must bear with their bluntness, and smile at their exactions, and congratulate yourself on having friends so exceedingly candid and delightfully familiar.
CHAPTER XII.

"Ah, how the human mind wearies itself
With her own wand'ring, and involved in gloom
Impenetrable, speculates amiss!
Measuring, in her folly, things divine
By human; laws inscribed on adamant
By laws of man's device, and counsels fix'd
For ever by the hours, that pass and die."

Before the arrival of our English ladies in Paris, Madame D'Albremont had made the acquaintance of her brother's friends, Castelle and Vivian. The former was now settled on the Boulevards Extérieurs of Paris.

It is night, and through the windows which open upon a small enclosed garden you perceive faint rays of light streaming outwards in coloured pencils, tinted by the red curtains that intercept the view of the student's apartment.
There he sits at a table strewed with papers, and books, and manuscripts; before him lies a thick volume in which he writes continuously, as if the thoughts that winged his pen were flowing from it, already tested by the scrutiny of other times. Now with a start or smile he just records a new idea, or pauses for a lengthened interval to subject his surmises to strict investigation.

Castelle is pale as ever, but for a spot that burns bright and red on either cheek, the mark of long-protracted vigils and excitement. The young student projects a great work which is to reverse theories hitherto accredited by science. There, in that smaller book, are noted strange experiments rescued from oblivion by the value he ascribes to their results; old tomes have been ransacked, unintelligible black letter has been deciphered to direct them. He does not seek for receipts to compose the philosopher's stone, nor for directions how
to distil the *elixir vitæ*; but with eager curiosity he searches for those terrible secrets that open from hence the portals of another world with a touch, that fell the strongest by a breath, and have peopled Hades with startled victims hurled from life to death by the will of the domestic poisoner. But the deadly substances that he analyses and compounds are yet to have a wide influence, and from them has since been evolved the vapour that lulls the pain and soothes the torture of those diseases and accidents with which poor humanity till now has writhed in helpless agony.

The morning hours our student always devoted to the lectures and experiments of others, and then after a hasty meal he mostly sauntered forth to meditate in that arena where literary aspirations and learned reminiscences occupy the thoughts of the young student and the old recluse—the garden of the Luxembourg. Here, quite unconscious of the passing scene, he would loiter for a
time, and afterwards return home to methodize and note the product of his morning's reverie. Castelle's small lodging in a decayed palace lay just beside the Observatory; he tenanted a rez-de-chaussée, opening into a garden, if such a small enclosure might be so called, which owed its verdure mostly to the exuberance of kind Nature, who fertilized the trees and shrubs that had been planted there by other landlords more tasteful and more opulent than the present.

The dulness of the external boulevards in those days contrasted strangely with the gay and crowded thoroughfares which they enclosed, and near the Observatory even Nature herself seemed stunted and oppressed by a peculiar influence that pervaded the quarter. It was not the nakedness of poverty, nor the instability of art that struck you, for there were neither squalid hovels, splendid ruins, nor premature decay. But the trees, and shrubs, and grass had a
darkened tinge, such as we see diffused over a painting meant to depict some waste and desert landscape beneath a dull, lowering, misty sky, where every leaf seems dead, and every sound suspended by the still, damp air, which bears not on its lazy current the usual odours, or the vague soft murmurings of rural life. This scene was rendered more depressing from its contrast with the gayer parts of Paris, where radiant and joyous crowds thronged on the path of pleasure, brilliant with all the gaudy hues of fashion, and restless from the petulance of excitement.

At the period to which I allude this locality had become the retreat of unfrocked priests, bearing about them tokens of their destitution in pallid, care-worn countenances and threadbare coats of embrowned black, while the bourgeoisie of the neighbourhood looked unlike the light and gladsome beings who people the other parts of Paris, and were at
least fully fifty years behind the fashion of the day. Amongst such promenaders Castelle would take his daily walk, and then at a small restaurant in the neighbourhood partake of a frugal repast, moderate alike in quality and price.

Vivian did not desert his friend in this seclusion; he sent or called constantly to entreat that Castelle would remit it, to join the brilliant parties frequently assembled at his fine apartments in the Faubourg St. Honoré.

The handsome Frederick Vivian was soon courted and engrossed by the first society of the metropolis; his name and fortune commanded an entry there which was rendered doubly enjoyable from the sincere good-will which his kind nature had already won even amongst the giddy votaries of vanity and fashion. An ample fortune facilitated the acquirement of objects of art, which rendered his mansion a museum where aspiring genius or modest unrecognised talent received homage or encouragement from the intelligent and generous.
Sir Harry Ashworth's letter had secured Vivian's acquaintance for his sister, Madame D'Albremont, who, with her daughter, was resident at a small hotel in the Chaussée d'Antin. Although he could not personally present his friends, an invitation, soon after his arrival, to Madame D'Albremont's weekly receptions convinced Frederick and Castelle that Sir Harry had proposed both as desirable acquaintances to his sister. The latter could not be persuaded to accompany Vivian, and he proceeded to her party alone, at eight o'clock, the time specified on his card.

A spacious hall and fine staircase led to the apartment, which was not large, but at a glance Vivian observed how taste and ingenuity had decorated and arranged the rooms, until one thought that any enlargement of the space they enclosed would but destroy the effect of such pretty gems and exquisite trifles placed within so small a casket. They would be lost dispersed upon a wider sur-
face; and the collections of miniatures, medals, and antiques, all of small dimensions, accorded well with the proportions of the apartment.

Four clear alabaster lamps, supported by figures of the same material, lighting the room with a subdued lustre, threw a silvered tint over it.

Madame D'Albremont rose courteously to receive her guest, presenting him to her daughter, a very beautiful girl, apparently nineteen. Frederick was afterwards introduced to some gentlemen already arrived, and in a few minutes more three or four ladies joined the party. Some brought their work; others gathered round a piano in an adjoining room, and Madame D'Albremont, producing the requisite drawing-materials, two of the young men commenced little sketches, either from fancy, or to give a slight representation of their fair associates. Mademoiselle Clelia, Madame D'Albremont's daughter, now sang,
with a soft full voice and clear accentuation, a pathetic romance, consisting of some beautiful verses, rendered most effective by the pathos of her expressive style.

Frederick stood near the instrument, leaning against the wall, his eyes fixed on Clelia's enchanting countenance. It was one that did not captivate upon a first survey by the colouring which often recommends less perfect features; a faint and pearly hue tinted her complexion, while her eyes were only lighted to their full brilliancy when bashfulness or any other emotion spread a pink blush beneath them. These eyes were large and blue, not shaded by a sinking lid; but open and clear, like the young orbs of infancy, unconscious yet of the evil from which they should be averted. Below them the blue veins shed a grey tint, giving to all the face that clear transparency which looks as if the frame was yet too delicate and pure to be consolidated to the substance of ordinary nature. Fair hair
hung round her head in lucid ringlets like a misty halo of soft light, and when her eyes moved slowly in it their liquid spheres appeared as if tears were still lingering there, relics of some recent sorrow, which one harsh word or unkind look would call forth from their source.

It might be illness, it might be habit, but the bright smile of youth very rarely lighted up her features, and yet you scarcely remarked this peculiarity, for it was not caused by pride or coldness, while the modest sweetness of her countenance attested every kindly feeling. Vivian out-stayed the other guests of Madame D'Albremont, who had all departed. Still tarrying in the place where he stood while Clelia sang, he scarcely ventured to address her, for the courteous Vivian was now transformed into a taciturn guest; and when he quitted Madame D'Albremont's apartment that night he left no pleasing impression on her memory, while
he returned home to think and dream of the beautiful Clelia. The next morning, still engrossed by the same object, he arose with a longing determination to see her soon again.

Entirely attracted by Mademoiselle D'Albremont, Vivian had not much noticed her mother. She was not a person likely to please him, even before he had heard how, as a society broker, she negotiated contracts of alliance, matrimonial compacts for friendly reciprocity, and social agreements to interchange favours amongst her clients, accepting a per-centage of civility herself proportioned to the weight of the transaction. A certain unenviable influence she had hitherto attained through such skilful activity; but now Clelia's establishment was the grand incentive to her actual schemes, the object which incessantly occupied her thoughts.

She had fully determined that her unconscious daughter should become the property
of a Mr. Irvine, whose fortune and social position justified in her eyes the assignment. He had not appeared the night of Vivian's presentation, and it was to seek him and discover the cause of his unusual absence that Madame D'Albremont proceeded to the Tuileries, where at last, after an hour's walk, the ladies were joined by the object of their search, a tall, thin, stiff man, essentially English in face and figure. Madame D'Albremont accosted him gaily, and at once started a subject which she knew would interest Clelia, and promote a conversation intended to last, with her own able co-operation, till their walk must be terminated by her daughter's fatigue. As for herself, she was never tired by anything but rest, which she considered a most unnecessary loss of time.

Frederick had reached the path separating the groves of chestnut-trees which ornament the centre of the garden on his way to visit Madame D'Albremont, whose
house he had already passed more than once that morning. Through an opening of the avenue he perceived both ladies, and in an instant was by Clelia’s side; his senses, his thoughts fascinated and engrossed by her sweet voice, her lovely face, and the deep melancholy which softened both.

Hers silence to Vivian seemed sacred; he did not break it with either observations or questions; and when Mr. Irvine requested him to join their party at the Rocher de Cancale, and then to accompany them to the opera, Madame D’Albremont most anxiously hoped he might decline both offers. She thought that he would make a poor companion to awaken Clelia’s dormant gaiety, or to enjoy her own bright sallies, while the younger lady was left to their host’s exclusive conversation. Vivian, however, readily accompanied his newly made friends to their amusements, and at one o’clock returned home, again to pass a sleepless night.

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Madame D'Albremont was little aware of Vivian's worldly possessions, or she would very speedily have transferred her attentions from Irvine to him. But Sir Harry had not alluded to them, dreading that his sister's self-control might not sufficiently conceal her pleasure at the introduction to such a Croesus, and aware how Clelia's aversion to all good matches proposed by her mother might militate against her chance of propitiating the modest Vivian.

The wily mamma, however, was not long in ascertaining the state of his affairs, and in consequence the ungainly suitor, Mr. Irvine, she soon received with such evident coolness that he, wondering at the change, sought for its cause, and found it in the admiration which Mr. Vivian very openly expressed for the lovely Mademoiselle D'Albremont.

Despairing of success, he slipped quietly out of the flirtation, and left Paris very soon after. It was not long before Mademoiselle
D'Albremont perceived Vivian's devotion, so clearly manifested by vigilant attention to her wants and wishes, by a softened inflexion of voice when addressing her, by anxiety for her pleasure, and distress at her inconvenience, by tender looks that followed her everywhere, and a surrender of his individuality which left his thoughts, wishes, feelings, and projects to the sole control of her will and pleasure. Happy time of youth, when nature prompts us to make the sacrifices of self which cold morality vainly enforces, and benevolence emulates when performing its kindest offices.

Restless but where she was, Vivian followed Clelia, joining her daily in the Tuileries, and riding a splendid Arab beside Miss Somerton's carriage if they drove out together. It was even said that at hours when visits are inadmissible Frederick would pass before her house, looking up at the windows for a glimpse of one who was now the sole object of his life.
"And here, at once, the glittering saloon
Bursts on his sight, boundless and bright as noon;
Where, in the midst, reflecting back the rays
In broken rainbows, a fresh fountain plays
High as th' enamell'd cupola which towers
All rich with arabesques of gold and flowers:
And the mosaic floor beneath shines through
The sprinkling of that fountain's silvery dew,
Like the wet, glistening shells of every dye

Madame D'Albremont's visits to the three ladies were of daily occurrence, but all her entreaties to engage Agnes in parties to the country or the theatre continued ineffectual. The post brought no news from Sir Harry; his promise seemed quite forgotten. Annesley's silence was even more extraordinary; and Agnes's uneasiness increased with her disappointment.

Days passed on, no letters arrived, no in-
telligence of Annesley! It seemed most unaccountable that he should not have sent her some explanation of conduct so unworthy and so entirely unexpected. No allusion to him appeared in the papers, nor any mention of their marriage, for Agnes daily scrutinized each paragraph that might indirectly glance at the event. Lord Courtville's departure from London she saw recorded amongst the fashionable changes, but in no other manner was the family named; nor could any allusion to the wedding be expected, for Agnes had wished it to be strictly private. Annesley for his own reasons was equally desirous that no one should hear of it; and Agnes in informing her correspondents that she was about to become a bride did not specify the time, although she assured them that the marriage was not very distant.

She tried to draw, to read, to write, in vain; her distracted thoughts wandered from all these pursuits far away to England and
Annesley; for with the strange inconsistency of female nature, her affection for him seemed to increase since the first stunning distress at his deceit and villainy had been calmed by the soothing effects of time. Agnes never thought so often of him as now when she feared that an insurmountable barrier separated them for ever.

Madame D'Albremont vainly endeavoured to amuse Miss Somerton, and at last persuaded her to visit Mr. Vivian's beautiful residence, where he had collected works of art at once remarkable for their variety and excellence. On a day fixed for the purpose, Agnes and Miss Williams went to meet Madame D'Albremont at Frederick's hotel, of which the external magnificence soon surprised them.

Two marble halls preceded an anteroom filled with the choicest sculptures of modern artists, from whence a gallery lined with orange-trees and rare plants, growing in vases of exquisite workmanship, led to the drawing-rooms.
With the form, shades, and texture of the furniture artistic taste had produced the most pleasing effects by harmony of colour, its contrasts, and the flow of drapery chosen for its graceful folds. The atmosphere of sweets, perfumed, but not overpowering, the lights concentrated or subdued with the most happy results—all bespoke the opulent, luxurious artist.

Clelia meant to accompany her mother, and Frederick was already gone himself to summon them, while Agnes and Miss Williams walked through the rooms admiring their noble proportions, but postponing a minuter inspection of the contents till all the party had assembled. Agnes strolled into the conservatory. It was much larger than those in the same locality, and radiant with glowing flowers, through which a beautiful fountain sent sparkling streamlets in four silvery jets, which fell into urns held by marble Naiads seated on mimic rocks, covered with the rarest specimens of varied mosses. Other graceful nymphs, forming an outer
circle, held a chain of radiant creepers passing from one to the other beneath two rows of orange-trees covered with their white fragrant blossoms. An arch of verdure at the end of the conservatory led to a recess, illuminated artistically by coloured light passing through painted glass of every tint. Agnes entered this darkened enclosure, and to the right perceived what she supposed to be the painting of a student's head, reading. Its extreme beauty almost startled her; she had never seen such a face before, even in those paintings where great artists try to realize their ideas of embodied genius. She looked again; the figure seemed surrounded by a frame; and yet it moved, advanced, and still did not come near her; and then she perceived that what she supposed to be the painting of this splendid head was but the reflection in a glass of a living person behind her.

Castelle, now advancing, apologized for the surprise which he had so
involuntarily occasioned. Soon relieved from all embarrassment by his respectful conciliatory manner, Agnes entered into conversation with him.

Miss Williams remained still occupied with somedrawings in the outer rooms, and Vivian had not yet appeared, so for some time the dialogue was pursued uninterruptedly with much animation between Agnes and Castelle; and when Madame D'Albremont's arrival disturbed it, Agnes wished that she had been less punctual, and Castelle thought that he had never met a more agreeable person than this new acquaintance.

Frederick, devoted exclusively to Clelia, described all his arrangements and listened only to her commendations of them. Agnes, fascinated by her new friend, seemed equally engrossed; and when they all returned home in her carriage, she was delighted to find her admiration of Castelle's conversation justified, by hearing of the universal estima-
tion in which he was held,—as a clever man, and the most promising chemist of the day. Madame D'Albremont herself rejoiced in the highest spirits, for she had remarked a very brilliant flush on Clelia's cheek, and she had also seen her withdrawn from the rest of the company and detained in another room by their host; and it was after this absence that Clelia seemed embarrassed, and that the ominous bloom spread and deepened to its present tint.

Celia, indeed, had just heard the first avowal of love from Frederick: he had declared that all the enjoyments which wealth and influence grouped around him, the power to do good, the means of being happy, were valueless if he could not share them with her. His love, he said, was not the caprice of boyish idleness, enhanced by the wish for change to vary the monotony of a purposeless existence, for his mind was maturer than his years, his life a constant pursuit of what was worth attaining; and advisedly
and conscientiously he now placed his destiny in her hands. He asked her to become the idol of the shrine which he had prepared for her, to be the priestess of the worship he professed for the beautiful, the exemplification of the love he experienced for the good. He told her how she combined what was purest, most ethereal in the ideal, with what was best and most appropriate in the real.

Clelia listened silently but not unembarrassed to these protestations, at which she seemed neither elated nor displeased; and when Frederick saw her drive from the door, towards evening, he returned to his room uncertain of the result which he so eagerly desired. Throwing himself upon a sofa he recalled the whole scene just passed; at one moment remembering some look or sign that seemed encouraging, the next, referring her silence to aversion rather than to embarrassment.

Alternations of this kind succeeded each
other till in the gloom of the balmy soft evening he strayed through his beautiful winter-garden, unconscious of its fragrance or the fairy-like beauty of the marble nymphs with their flowery burdens, now assuming vaguer and more undulating outlines when bathed in the blue and vaporous rays of the moon.

Madame D’Albremont dared not question Clelia; she dreaded to hear the confirmation of her fears that Vivian had been discouraged.

She was too close to communicate her hopes to Agnes, who returned home much pleased with her morning’s enjoyment, for Castelle’s conversation had proved more agreeable than any she had heard for a long time. It was with surprise that she perceived her renewed susceptibility to some kind of enjoyment, and from that day her seclusion was no longer irrevocable.

Castelle too seemed to have overcome his repugnance to society, and most evenings met Madame D’Albremont and Clelia at
Agnes's tea-table. There he described his morning pursuits to Agnes, while she practised her pencil. Mrs. Jones dozed, and Frederick sat beside Clelia, who, bent over some elaborate piece of embroidery, scattered buds, and leaves, and flowers, by the magic of her fairy touch upon the silken canvas. Madame D'Albremont and Miss Williams, the disengaged members of the coterie, occupied each other with the conversation usual on such occasions between ladies.

Madame D'Albremont usually bungled at some Berlin work, and kept her head near it, while from under her half-closed eyelids she observed all that was occurring around her. She worked ill, patience in manual dexterity was not her forte, and when anyone wished to see the object of her industry, she readily displayed the wretched article, quoting a wit's observation on Berlin work—"The stupider the woman, the better the work."

She was now about to attain the grand
object of her ambition, a great establishment for Clelia, and it was not without effort that she subdued the looks of triumph and delight which occasionally beamed on her expressive countenance. She had to restrain them and all apparent conviction of Clelia's new conquest, well aware how it might be defeated by her recognition. Clelia was of so sensitive a nature that any assumption of success expressed by Madame D'Albremont's manner would perhaps change her conduct with Frederick, and before custom and time had done their work provoke a crisis fatal to all her mother's projects.

Ever unwilling to give pain, Mademoiselle D'Albremont listened almost passively to Frederick, who had so many claims on her attention, while he entreated her only to hear him, and not to express a feeling or to betray an emotion, lest they should blight his hopes and dishearten him in a pursuit which he still trusted might be successful.
"Listen to me," he would say, "while I tell you of my love; bear with me, but do not decide too rashly against me. Give me time to persuade you, opportunities to win you, and I will bear suspense as long as I may live beside you, or like a coward I shrink from the avowal which you are perhaps anxious and yet unwilling to make."

With gratitude for his love and in pity for his sufferings, Clelia would listen while she fixed her large soft eyes upon him, and thanked him for his kindness to her mother and for his constant efforts to be useful and agreeable to them both.

Madame D'Albremont preferred spending her evenings quietly with Agnes to continuing her own soirées at home, where other visitors might notice Frederick's devotion and publish it. At Agnes's apartment there was no apprehension of this sort, for no strangers were there to mar the tacit arrangements of the party, which placed the lovers together, while the friends assembled
enjoyed uninterruptedly the conversation each preferred. Sir Harry Ashworth would soon join them—his arrival was daily expected, and Mrs. Jones intended to appropriate him till she exhausted his London gossip. His presence was indifferent to Clelia, who scarcely knew her uncle, for during Monsieur D’Albremont’s life the baronet never acknowledged his sister. At that time, busy with fashion’s bustling idleness, he abjured all consanguineous obligations, wished himself a foundling, and declared that relations reminded him of the censorious chorus in Greek tragedies, which stands at each side of the stage, supposed to be invisible to the actors, while it communicates with the audience, who are favoured with criticisms and censures on the unconscious personages before them. “Relations,” said Sir Harry, “act that chorus on the stage of life, gratifying the public with a running commentary on your private conduct.”
CHAPTER XIV.

"Thou wert a dew-drop which the morn brings forth,
Not fitted to be trailed along the soiling earth;
But at a touch of wrong, without a strife,
Slips in a moment out of life."

After her mother's guests had departed, Clelia retired into her own little sitting-room, and sat there pale and dejected, sunk in a large chair near the window adjoining Madame D'Albremont's sleeping-apartment. It opened on a pretty garden, surrounded by high trees and filled with early spring flowers.

The night was warm and calm, and the moon shone brightly on the spot where Clelia rested. She had exchanged her evening's attire for a white shawl dressing-gown, and her golden hair hung round her
in glossy folds, like another drapery. A cushion placed before her supported a tiny foot, in a blue silk slipper small enough for Cinderella.

Poor Clelia seemed indifferent to the balmy air, and to the hour which chimed from a little clock in the room. She had remained in the same position since it struck before, and many a tear had stolen down her cheek in the interval. Her maid's very gentle knock at the door was unobserved, but Louise came in at once, used to find Clelia in this state of dreamy abstraction. Its cause was well known to the clever Abigail, who had been recommended to Madame D'Albremont by a relation, on whom she was partly dependent, as a person of excellent education, and one whom Clelia might consider more as a companion than a servant.

"Madame thinks you were in bed long ago, Mademoiselle Clelia, and here you sit at one o'clock, in the night air, and not suf-
ficiently clad to prevent you from catching cold."

"Oh, Louise! I do not feel the air or the chill; my mind alone is alive—I am dead to everything but miserable thoughts."

"You will really fall into bad health, Mademoiselle, if you give way to this sorrow and self-reproach;" and Louise covered Clelia with a warm shawl. Her calmness now gave way to a burst of tears.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, holding her head with both hands, "if I were not criminal, Louise, I should not be so unhappy. I could better endure disappointment and even sorrow, but when I think of the past I grow wild with shame."

"I have often given you my advice in this business," said Louise. "Let me try to discover what you ought to know; I can do so without betraying you to your mother."

"Louise!" cried Clelia, sinking on her knees, and clasping her hands together with
a convulsive earnestness; "anything but that—I would die rather than have my conduct exposed. As for marrying Frederick, that is an impossibility; and yet life will be but a prolonged suffering to me if I lose him for ever. Louise! Louise! what can I do?" and the poor girl wrung her hands in helpless agony, and then covered her face with them, as if to shut out all thoughts of the past and prospects of the future.

"Confide this secret to your mother; she is experienced and clever, and will know how to advise you. Why not trust her?"

"Louise, I tell you that I would rather die! How could I ever ask her to pardon me for what I have done?"

The crafty Abigail knew full well that Madame D'Albremont was the last person in the world to whom Clelia would apply for counsel under the circumstances.

Louise now lifted her mistress from the ground, placed her on the chair—seating
herself upon the stool at her feet—chafing her hands, and wrapping the loosened shawl again around her.

Clelia sat like a statue, so insensible to outward things; her face white as marble, and the large tears still dropping down her cheeks.

"Clelia, dear child," said Louise, "this fretting is of no use: it will not undo what is done."

"That is why I am so miserable, Louise. Oh, if I could but even forget the past! every caress of my mother, every kind word of Frederick's, would not then sting me to the heart. I am deceiving them, I am playing a part—acting simplicity, innocence, and truth, accepting her affection, listening to his profession of love, while I know how unworthy I am of either. The pang of self-reproach, which their goodness only sharpens, is a severe punishment, but it is still easy to bear in comparison with the misery of being discovered, disgraced, dis-"
carded by my mother, and spurned by him!"

"Try and calm yourself, dear child; your sobs will awaken Madame D'Albremont. Listen, pray, dear Clelia, to reason. One of two things must be done—you must either——"

"Nothing, nothing, will ever help me, Louise; nothing can comfort me. Every time that Frederick repeats his professions of attachment I feel more abashed than before, for I ought not to listen to them. I would gladly lay down my life for his sake, and yet I must deceive him, or part from him for ever."

Louise was silent. Clelia had never before expressed herself with so much firmness, nor opposed the counsels of the unprincipled Frenchwoman with such vehemence. She quietly arranged the poor girl's hair for the night, withdrew her from the window, and leading her into the next room, laid her gently in her little bed. She fanned her
burning forehead, and bathed her temples, and soon finding that the late excitement was subsiding, left her in quiet and darkness to lie till morning in a state of exhaustion such as had often of late followed paroxysms like that just described. The early sunbeams streamed into her window, tinted with the blue hue of the curtains through which they passed, before she sank into a peaceful sleep; and when Madame D'Albremont entered the room, on tiptoe, at nine o'clock, she found Clelia still dozing, her beautiful features lighted by the blue rays that floated around her, giving the atmosphere and her white couch the appearance of a cloud upon which an angel rested.
CHAPTER XV.

"Rumour was the messenger
Of defamation, and so swift that none
Could be the first to tell an evil tale."—Pollok.

While some of our ladies passed their time agreeably in Paris, the ex-bridegroom was far from being pleasantly situated in England. After quitting Agnes on the Dover road, he proceeded to a village near London recommended by Sir Harry, and remained there till joined soon after by the crafty baronet. On the plea of authenticating his information respecting the first marriage, he required Annesley to come to London, promising to put him in communication there with an old acquaintance and accomplice, Ernest Fabelli, who was Sir Harry's ser-
viant at the time of the unfortunate affair at Nevres.

Sir Harry hired a small secluded lodging for his friend, and Fabelli soon made his appearance, bringing additional proof to Annesley of all he most dreaded to know. His late accomplice, Captain Benson, it appeared by Fabelli's account, dreading the consequences to himself of a very infamous conspiracy, engaged a clergyman of the Church of England, who was travelling in the neighbourhood, to perform the ceremony in the ruined chapel.

Fabelli had only lately heard of this substitution, and wrote off at once to Sir Harry, entreat ing him urgently to communicate the discovery at once to Annesley. In order to conceal his collusion with Sir Harry, Fabelli now pretended that the ceremony was invalid, unauthorized by a municipal formality. The laws of France would not sanction such a contract, and Monsieur Annesley, accord
ing to Fabelli, was as free as air. Edward inquired if he ever heard that the circumstances of the elopement were known at Nevres, or did he learn anything respecting the young lady?

Fabelli felt sure that the people of Nevres were totally ignorant of the whole transaction. From the convent nothing would transpire, for apprehending some bad sequel to the affair, the nuns would have bound their protégée to secrecy by solemn oaths or threats of disgrace, and it was very probable that the fair Marie might now be the wife of a more successful lover, released from her previous engagement by her friend's ignorance of its occurrence. These assurances of exemption from a legal responsibility which Fabelli repeated in order to conceal his collusion with Sir Harry, gave Annesley little comfort. He might not be liable to a charge of bigamy; but in Agnes's opinion he knew that the first engagement was as sacred as if it had
been ratified by all the Mayors of every department in France.

Even could he legally claim Miss Somerton as his wife, would she ever forgive his deceit? could she pardon the cruelty he had perpetrated in seducing the affections of a young and unsuspecting girl, with the view of blighting her for ever?

He had often bitterly repented this transaction, hoping that his own self-reproach was its worst result. But the affair now assumed another aspect, for besides preventing his union with Agnes, a religious functionary had been made the instrument of his iniquitous project, and the poor young girl he had deceived, if married, was not the wife of the man whom she considered her husband. Now, too, the happiness of Agnes, for whom he entertained the greatest affection and respect, would be clouded for ever. Debarred from forming another engagement, the object of pity, or ridicule, or slander, a long period
must elapse before she could resume the tranquillity of mind which he had so recklessly disturbed.

Sir Harry Ashworth, quite satisfied with the success of his scheme, grateful to Fabelli for his able co-operation, and convinced that Annesley would not attempt to make any explanations to Miss Somerton without his advice, offered to proceed to Paris in order to put her in possession of details which could not be fully particularized in writing. He first, however, visited Annesley's principal creditors, and informed them of his retreat, and of the failure of the projected marriage, advising them to secure their reckless creditor's person immediately, as some great relations would assuredly release him at any cost. Lest such a proceeding should really be attempted by the family, he had Lord Courtville apprized of his son's adventure, greatly misrepresented to Annesley's prejudice. It was not necessary to recom-
mend secrecy to the relatives, but to the creditors he represented the propriety of keeping to themselves all the information which he communicated, implying that this caution would advance their own interest. To Miss Somerton he wrote as follows:—

"Dear Miss Somerton,—You will be surprised at not receiving a letter from me in reply to your last inquiries; but I thought it advisable not to address you until, after many consultations with the lawyer, I could communicate the particulars which he might collect.

"There is little doubt that Annesley was married in the South of France to a young French girl of low origin, and under circumstances of which it would be painful for me to detail the particulars. He, it appears, for some years incurred such considerable debts in London that his relations totally discarded him until the prospect of a release from pecuniary difficulties and an
acquittal of money responsibilities to several members of his family, by means of your fortune, reconciled some of them to their profligate relative. Still, with the usual ridiculous family pride of the Courtvilles, even an heiress, if unknown to the world of fashion, was not to be accepted with open arms, and therefore Lord Courtville never called upon you; for I am very sorry to add that the person brought to your house as Annesley's father was no other than his tailor, Hudson, of Bond Street, who came there to recover an old debt, to be acquitted with some of his customer's newly-acquired wealth.

"It is better that you should be made aware of all these circumstances, disagreeable as they are, than remain in ignorance of what may reconcile you to the strange termination of your unfortunate engagement. I see no chance of any improvement in Annesley's position, for he will be a prisoner for some time yet, as his creditors
can no doubt publish some damaging manoeuvres of the young scamp’s that will prevent his release under the Act, and keep him tight, in the expectation of benefiting by a fortune which it is said will revert to him at the death of an old cousin.

“After transacting some necessary business here I shall start for Paris to see my sister, and also to discuss this miserable affair with you. I am happy to find that there appeared no notice of the marriage in any public paper. Every one was out of town at the time, and the gossips at Sandon have so little knowledge of the circle in which Annesley’s family live, and indeed of any but their own, that a report of the wedding may not go beyond it; and Mrs. Jones and her family will soon be forgotten when the house which she hired is resumed by its former occupants. To silence those who in London were aware of your projected marriage, I have invented a plausible reason for its postponement.
"Should you have any commission to be executed in London, pray command the time and services of, dear Miss Somerton, yours very faithfully,

"Harry Ashworth."

After inditing this letter, in which truth and calumny were combined, Sir Harry gave himself a great deal of trouble to aggravate Annesley's difficulties. He circulated a version of his affairs which was most discreditable to the defaulter, and altogether acquitted himself, very much to his own satisfaction, with strategic malice.

Securing an irreproachable outfit from Stultz, and all accessories to match, he started for Paris on his matrimonial expedition, quite convinced that Agnes would now discover her error in preferring the vapid assiduities of such a youth as Annesley to the matured attractions of a man like himself, who for years had lived in the kernel of the London fashionable world.
Startled and confused as Agnes had been during her interview with Sir Harry Ashworth on the Dover road, she scarcely understood the particular circumstances of Annesley's earlier marriage which he tried to communicate. To Miss Williams she could give but a confused recapitulation of what he had explained, but it was quite sufficient to induce that acute lady to write immediately to Agnes's lawyers a request that they would at once communicate with Captain Benson, requiring him to furnish the name and address of the clergyman who performed the marriage ceremony in the ruined chapel near Nevres.
"When he spoke what tender words he used!
So softly that, like flakes of feathered snow,
They melted as they fell."

Before Sir Harry Ashworth arrived Agnes and her friends passed their time pleasantly in the enjoyment of a very agreeable coterie and a variety of public amusements. When Sir Harry’s letter to Agnes, accompanied by one to his sister, announced a visit for the end of the week, the little party had grown even more sociable; for a few clever men were their frequent guests, introduced by Castelle, while some ladies joined Vivian and Clelia in musical performances, and Miss Williams had attracted an artist to vary the evening’s amusement by producing sketches from
subjects suggested by some of the company.

One evening, when many of the usual visitors had absented themselves from accidental causes, the family party was joined only by Vivian and Castelle. The latter had now become an expected friend, whose presence was welcome to all; and—shall I confess it?—despite the implied fickleness of the sex, I must assure my young readers that, whatever may be their estimate of the constancy expected from persons about to marry—who do not?—our Agnes looked delighted when Castelle appeared, and since his visits had begun to be of daily occurrence her melancholy had grown less pale, and her manner had become less dejected. Do not condemn her till you learn that he was supposed to possess some supernatural spell, which fascinated all who believed themselves only attracted by his captivating address and remarkable beauty.

On the evening I am about to describe
he had arrived early, bringing some celebrated engravings for Agnes's inspection. Frederick came in soon after, followed by a new personage, who had but recently become a guest at the sociable tea-table.

Perhaps you do not know, good reader, that at the time about which I write, France was in a far less prosperous state than at present. Speculation, which has since become a science, was then only an art, and fortunes were not made with greater speed than that with which old alchymists hoped to create solid gold. The philosopher's stone had not been laid as the foundation of the Bourse, nor was the "open sesame" of the robber's cave yet pronounced there to open the portals which led to golden treasures.

France was impoverished; her sons, chivalrous and proud, grandchildren of Bourbon glories, despised commerce as a degrading necessity, and rejected any but the military profession as unworthy of their
descent. Their swords alone should cut a road to fortune—it might be in the battlefield, it might be in the boudoir, where heiresses surrendered themselves and their possessions at discretion to French chevaliers bearing great names, and wearing the swords of valiant fathers at their sides.

In this elegant arena the *Gardes du Corps* distinguished themselves, capturing land and securing booty with far less exertion than their forefathers expended in less profitable forays.

With admirable strategy a well-organized siege was laid to ladies’ hearts, projected by a club subscribing a certain amount yearly to equip one of its members with the paraphernalia required for amorous victory. Dress, a horse, a cab, perfumes, a place at the opera, pocket money, armed the elected Adonis for the campaign. He was sent out on a trial of three months, at the expiration of which term, if unsuccessful, he fell into the ranks of reserve stock, crestfallen
and placed aside, till it was his turn again to start, perhaps upon another forlorn hope. When victorious the fortunate hero deposited in the general fund a percentage on his captive's portion.

Now, the Parisian season was just closing on the gloomy prospects of a hirsute son of Mars whose siege to two British hearts had been so ineffectual that his retreat into the main body of his regiment at the expiration of a month appeared inevitable. This gentleman's failures were supposed to be occasioned by a matured appearance, which rendered him unacceptable to the very young ladies, who had been hitherto the objects of his attention.

Aware through the jokes of his comrades of this circumstance, he determined on making a last effort in the contrary direction. Introduced by chance to Agnes's soirées, he no sooner ascertained that Mrs. Jones was a rich widow than he at once resolved that she should fall a victim to his threadbare charms.
Innocent woman! she little suspected why the Count de Belleville was so courteous, why he brought her bonbons, why he sent her bouquets, or why he held secret conversations with Mr. O'Rourk in the courtyard of the hotel. That Irish gentleman, with a love for fun which no obstacle or no punishment will repress in the Hibernian character, gave every encouragement to the sabred adorer of the old lady's income. The Count, of course, spoke English, of which a knowledge was desirable in the matrimonial candidates, whose victories had hitherto been achieved amongst the females of their natural enemies, the British visitors of Paris. Many unions, however, were effected through the medium of no other language than that of the eyes, while an interpreter had in such cases negotiated the worldly affairs of the parties. The Count, however, could use his tongue as well as these other ocular outlets of loving sympathies, and to Mr. O'Rourk it
was fluent without being too explicit in its disclosures.

"‘Faint heart never won fair lady,’" said O'Rourk; "try her, sir; just palaver her a trifle, and talk loud enough if you plase, for it's a could she has—not a bit of the deafness, but a could she took from travelling; 'and it's never a rest her ears have with all the lovers whispering into them always; and she talks so much herself that they get out of practice.'"

Monsieur de Belleville, encouraged by this advice, whispered soft nonsense to Mrs. Jones when they were alone, and was demonstrative with mute, delicate attentions in company, lolling over the back of her chair, speaking very close to her ear, and sometimes cramping his very long limbs into a strained attitude to sit upon a stool at her gouty feet.

He occupied this position while the rest of the party were engaged as I have described in Agnes's drawing-room the night on which
Sir Harry arrived. Agnes sat at a table with Castelle, both bending over the prints which he had brought, while Clelia and Vivian were singing a duet with two voices that seemed to come from one heart. Silent, as if listening to it, Agnes and Castelle looked, but saw nothing of the engraving before them, each occupied with thoughts the subject of which was not far distant. Castelle turned over the leaves after his eyes had met hers to signify his intention, while these oft-repeated queries involved a less avowed question, which was as silently but as unmistakably answered.

That night the music, the evening air which fanned them from the garden, the beautiful works of art before them, all enhanced the charms of the interview to their congenial minds—congenial in intellect, congenial in ambition, congenial in the sense of power, and in that mutual admiration which originates in the head, but is so soon transferred to the heart.
The duet was over; Vivian, leaning on the back of her chair, whispered his approval to Clelia, and Castelle was looking again into Agnes's eyes, when the door opened and Sir Harry Ashworth entered, surprising his sister by an arrival two days earlier than she expected. He had dined and dressed, and now looked as if commissioned to represent British neatness in France, and to correct the general conviction there, derived from our travelling compatriots' strange dress and stranger manners, that both are in great want of correction.

It was not necessary for Sir Harry to watch the assembled friends long, before he discovered the actual state of affairs amongst them. He rejoiced at the attentions of Frederick to his niece, he smiled at the affected adoration of the Frenchman—but it was with no agreeable feeling that he observed the proximity of Castelle to Agnes, and the intense interest with which they
pored over that book of prints, after having been diverted from it but for a brief period while interchanging the compliments of greeting on his arrival. How he detested foreigners and the Holy Alliance that night! Could they not have left France alone, to exhaust herself in time by internal disunion, without negotiating that very unnecessary peace?
“Who dares think one thing and another tell,
My heart detests him as the gates of hell.”—Pope.

Madame D’Albremont and Sir Harry were assuredly not likely to be very attached relations. She had offended her family early in life by marrying an émigré, and her engagement to another Frenchman after a very short widowhood did not reconcile them to her former mistake. Clelia was the child of her first husband: the later union had been one of interest alone, while the earlier one resulted from a sentimental affection, which must have been an epidemic at the time, for in a nature like hers such an attack could never have had a spontaneous origin. Neither union was,
however, successful; and the poor lady's last blunder—for her husband after all was nearly ruined—did not re-cement the family attachment, which required to be soldered with gold.

The morning after Sir Harry's arrival he hurried to his sister's apartment, with the intention of propitiating her by unusual demonstrations and promises of kindness, as he required her co-operation just now, and anticipated future advantages from the union of his niece with the rich and generous Vivian. It was by a tender embrace, therefore, that he prefaced their colloquy, first beginning with queries as to the probable result of Frederick's assiduities.

"He is deucedly in love, Constance; I never saw a fellow more spoony in my life. But the girl does not give him much encouragement; why don't you prompt her a bit? You understand that sort of thing."

"There is no use inspeaking to her, Harry; she is so agitated when I interfere or ques-
tion her at all upon the subject, that I am obliged to wait in silence for the better effect of his persuasion."

"Hang it, what's the girl about? what is she looking for? Here is a handsome, well-bred fellow, as rich as Croesus, ready, I can see, to marry her to-morrow, and she refuses what any duke's daughter in England would jump at."

"I cannot understand her conduct at all," said Madame D'Albremont; "she seems totally engrossed with him, she thinks as he thinks, does as he wishes, watches for his appearance, and pines at his absence, and yet will not hear of accepting him for a husband."

"'Tis very provoking; but time will tell us more about it. Is the swain patient?" said Sir Harry.

"He bears with all her caprices, and seems as if he was ready to wait for her till doomsday."

"What do you think of that other Adonis? —a deuced handsome dog too!"
"Do you mean Monsieur Belleville?"

"Confound that fellow making love to the bothered deaf old woman! No, I mean Castelle. I met him in the diligence travelling with Vivian last November."

"Well, it appears to me that he is desperately smitten with Miss Somerton," said Madame D’Albremont, "and she really seems to like him."

"No doubt that it would be a nice thing for a beggar to marry such an heiress," said Sir Harry. "Who is the fellow?"

"He is one of the first chemists of the day, and has discovered some new substances, and some unexpected effects of others, but not understanding these things I cannot tell you much about them."

"He seems to have lost no time in making up to her," said Sir Harry.

"He has not only done that, but fascinated Vivian, who perfectly worships him, and would give him half his property to-morrow would Castelle accept it."
“He must be a deuced clever fellow to captivate them both so readily.”

“People pretend that he possesses a strange magnetic power, and practises some art of governing others by it. For months, Vivian tells me, he shut himself up in a dilapidated house at Lieufort, a village near Avignon, where the people said he was inventing poisons, with which to experimentalize on their cats and dogs, and there were odd stories circulated at which Vivian laughs, though he won't tell me what they were.”

“Perhaps he is Cagliostro resuscitated or Dr. Faustus revived.”

“I don't believe all the supernatural part of his history,” said Madame D’Albremont, “but still there is something very dark and mysterious about him, and I never feel quite at ease when his dreadfully splendid eyes look through me.”

“Well, don't be angry, Constance, but if he can see through you he must be a sorcerer indeed.”
It suited Madame D'Albremont to seem in a good humour with her brother, so she laughed at his questionable compliment, just as Clelia walked into the room and interrupted their confidential conversation.

Undaunted by Castelle's presumption, Sir Harry paid daily visits to Miss Somerton. She learnt from him his version of Annesley's affairs; he produced papers to confirm it, leaving no doubt upon Agnes's mind that she had been basely deceived, and by his own timely interference rescued from impending ruin. Out of gratitude for such a benefit, Agnes received him kindly, although he was not a person in whose society she felt any pleasure. Heretofore he had appeared in company little above his own intellectual level; but now Agnes lived so much amongst men of a higher order that she was struck with the deficiencies which made him appear so much their inferior.

The party, however, was enlivened by his efforts to be agreeable, and affairs
amongst them remained in the same state for some weeks, if we except the adorer's ardour, which we all know never stands still, for the thermometer of love, in the atmosphere of sentiment, is always rising and falling perceptibly in such a fitful medium; but, under happy circumstances, soon reaching fever heat, and at the boiling point evaporating to siccity both passion and water.

Our son of Gaul's manner soon grew ebullient, and Mrs. Jones seemed to be highly flattered by its fervour. Agnes could scarcely believe her eyes when she at last convinced herself, after much doubt, that this was really the case. Miss Williams, of course, being a matter-of-fact woman, whose intellect ran in a groove, would require time to adapt her mind to a new state of things; it was so permanently fixed, and so incapable of imagining any unusual contingency, that she picked out the probable from the possible, while the improbable,
which is always happening, was not included in her calculations.

Madame D'Albremont said nothing, and when Clelia asked her why she did not warn Agnes of the count’s designs, she replied that it was no business of hers to interfere.

"Clelia, dear, you are as yet inexperienced," she said; "when as old as I am, things will appear differently; at your age you should never volunteer an opinion. Opinions are dangerous at all times: never seem to have any. Should you express your opinion of B to A, and it is unfavourable, A will probably be afraid of repeating it to B; but if you publish your convictions—when censuring avarice, and disparaging stupidity, if you object to vulgarity, condemn selfishness, and deprecate folly before A and B—then you assuredly offend both. If they do not fancy that your general invective applies particularly to themselves, they will still dread and dislike the person who ob-
serves so closely, and estimates so openly what she sees and hears. The sensitiveness of self-love, my dear child, is incredible. Most men, according to the French wit, are in love with themselves, and have no rivals."

"But then, poor Agnes!" interrupted Clelia.

"It is her own affair, child; why does she not see it? Besides, Monsieur de Belleville's relations are people of family, and would resent any act of mine that might mar his fortunes. Should the poor old lady be fool enough to marry him, he will keep a pleasant house, and after her death may select some nice person of a suitable age with whom to enjoy her fortune."

Belleville did, indeed, urge his suit successfully, and Mrs. Jones began to manifest strange symptoms of affection. Her cap, which hitherto had been prolonged into the lace whiskers with which staid ladies tie up their jaws, now appeared without these ap-
pendages. Her gowns grew more adhesive, her bonnet took a wider circuit, and there were equal changes in her manner and ways, both becoming very juvenile.

One morning, when an excursion to St. Cloud was proposed, Mrs. Jones pleaded business in Paris, and, much to the surprise of Agnes, declined the party. From some unexpected cause, the ladies returned home at four o'clock, instead of remaining absent till night; and what was Agnes's astonishment, in passing along the Champs Elysées, to meet her aunt in Monsieur de Belleville's cabriolet, driven by him at a frantic pace past the carriage. The gay Lothario had secured an extra month's indulgence, on announcing his anticipated success with an English heiress; for he pretended to his brother officers that Miss Somerton's fortune was to be the reward of his "extension of leave;" and they entertained no doubt on the subject till two of
them met him driving the old lady in the Champs Elysées.

"Who was that beauty you were escorting yesterday?" said one; "is that your British flame, Belleville?"

"Oh no!" answered the count; "that was her aunt."

"And is it part of your plan to make love to the old lady, buying violets for her, and pinning them next to her heart?"

"Is it possible that he does so?" exclaimed another.

"What age is the old lass?" said a third. "Are you to marry both of them?"

"I tell you that she is Miss Somerton's aunt; if you will only listen, I'll——"

"No, no," interrupted the first speaker; "we know it all, and only wanted to hear what excuse you would make for marrying your grandmother, for some one saw you kissing the old girl in a retired part of the Bois de Boulogne yesterday."
CHAPTER XVIII.

"That meanest rage
And latest folly of man's sinking age,
Which, rarely venturing in the van of life,
While nobler passions wage their heated strife,
Comes skulking last, with selfishness and fear,
And dies, collecting lumber in the rear!"

Ashworth was very much annoyed at Mrs. Jones's hero-worship on many accounts. He disliked the loss of her income to Agnes, in case that young lady's interests were to be identified with his own; and in the recesses of his mind there was a spectral plan of resigning himself to marry the aunt if the niece finally discarded him. In no very good humour he wrote the following letter to his relative, Sir John Drainland, a country gentleman in Leicestershire:

"My dear Drainland,—You have not
sent me the promised report of your hunting establishment, nor other details of matters equally interesting. With nothing pleasant to communicate, I write this letter to beg for an answer, such as you may supply with your command of country gossip and club conjecture. I cannot say that time passes pleasantly here, where I am come to visit my sister, Madame D’Albremont.

“There is a great deal of love-making going on around us, for my niece has captivated a rich and excellent young Englishman, whose name I need not mention; and Miss Somerton, an acquaintance of your wife’s, is followed by an Italian adventurer, a deuced handsome fellow, who knows how to make love in a scientific way. He is a culler of simples, and a concocter of poisons, a pupil of Orfila’s, who has double-distilled opium till the result would kill the Wandering Jew, if he could but get at the deadly potion, poor man!
"Then the comic element of our coterie is a dowager Mrs. Jones, who has fallen a victim to the seductions of a French Garde du Corps, six feet and a half high, and stocked with as much impudence as would furnish a whole cavalry regiment in England. He drives the poor old soul out at the risk of her life, takes her to theatres, where, as she always uses an ear-trumpet, the pit one night fancied that she accompanied the orchestra with this novel instrument, to which they attributed a solo of the best cornet, and applauded her accordingly.

"The rose-blossoms on the old girl's head shake with the tremor of enamoured palsy when he addresses her, and my own opinion is that the excitement of love will at last subside into the stupor of apoplexy. If she survive to marry this adventurer he will poison her, unless he kills her first with the good living for which she pays, and with which he stupefies her daily, while he regales himself with impunity. Mrs. Jones's
impudent Irish butler, Mr. O'Rourk, who goes about to the sights and public amusements, laced with gold chains, and calling himself the Irish Ambassador, manages stolen interviews, to please these interesting lovers; for the aged party is ashamed of allowing old Jones's memory to be driven too suddenly from her heart at the point of the French sword of this rollicking dragoon.—Adieu, dear Drainland,

"Yours faithfully,

"Harry Ashworth."

Vivian did not make much progress with Clelia; the same gloom ever shaded her spirit, the same dread of avowing her feelings continued. As the spring advanced, many were the pleasant days spent by Agnes and her friends in the environs of Paris. Belleville knew all the best restaurants, and was well acquainted with the prettiest spots for a picnic, and the most amusing *bals champêtres*, which were only
now commencing as the summer season approached.

Castelle often joined them towards evening, and in the shades of budding woods, or on the bright greensward of the open plain, refreshed after the day's heat, and reposing from its toil, he would pour the flow of his fervid eloquence into the willing ear of Agnes. He was in love—a wonder to himself—a proof of the human inconsistency on which he had so often reflected, of which he had often written, little anticipating how soon he would exemplify its strangest vagary. Insensible hitherto to feminine attractions, and, with one exception, devoted solely to scientific pursuits, he now found himself changed to the opposite of his earlier self.

Sir Harry, who never attributed any but interested motives to all actions, construed Castelle's devotion to Agnes into a wish to secure her dowry. Thus impressed, he led the chemist one evening to the subject,
when they were both expatiating on her many social accomplishments.

"It is a pity," said Sir Harry, "that she cannot marry to please herself, and very unjust of her father to hamper the fortune with such absurd conditions."

"What conditions?" inquired Castelle, ever anxious to dwell on whatever concerned his lady-love.

"Why," replied Sir Harry, "if she marries a foreigner she is to forfeit the whole of her property, and will be beggared of course, if she chooses a poor man." This was strange intelligence for Castelle.

Do not suppose, dear readers, that because he was in love he could discard his conviction of the value of wealth in society. I really don't believe that men ever labour under delusions respecting it. They have seldom the sacrifices to make in matrimonial alliances that women court, and Ifancyenjoy, for while a girl descends from the pinnacle of ducal eminence to the level of a damp
cottage, a man shares his fortune with the object of his passion, but is not called upon to relinquish the advantages of wealth for the most imprudent attachment.

Perhaps Castelle, regenerated by his love for Agnes, might have been capable of some sacrifices; but fortunately he was not called on to make any. Under other circumstances the well-balanced harmony of his mental faculties would probably not be deranged by any exigencies of the imagination, were it even further exalted by passion. Now the charms of his mistress were refined, he thought, by a golden setting, while he recapitulated the advantages of wealth, and tried to convince himself that the merits of beauty, of talent, of intellect, and even of virtue, are enhanced by it. Does it not embellish loveliness with graceful environments? does it not afford the means of acquiring accomplishments and cultivating taste? does it not give scope to intellect, and the power to encourage
art? does it not enable the rich to dis pense charity and to bestow patronage? All this can money accomplish, thought Castelle.

You may not be of his opinion, good, inexperienced reader, but still confess that although young Venus entering her teens may look very captivating in a cheap vapory garment of coarse muslin or a rag of grey cloud, still, on advancing in life, she requires warmer and richer clothing. Even the most irreclaimable worshipper of beauty unadorned with wealth and drapery could not be pleased to see the very scanty dress which the goddess sometimes wears, tattered or dirty from the want of means to pay her laundress's bill, or to ensure the services of an expert ladies'-maid. All that I am here inditing Castelle thought, and consequently Ashworth's fabricated information was anything but acceptable. He determined on deliberating leisurely the best mode of proceeding, but did not the least alter his manner towards Agnes.
She was now very much engrossed with Clelia, who, from distress of mind, and the difficulty of her position, began to fail in health; such a fragile frame as hers could ill bear struggles that kept the thoughts in perpetual action, wearing out the body with unnatural mental excitement. Madame D’Albremont would not appear to notice this change—it was perhaps inconvenient just then to acknowledge any delicacy in Frederick’s intended wife. Agnes, however, saw with sorrow how her gentle friend drooped, how the blush-roses of her complexion took a creamy tint, and the pearly blue around her eyes grew deeper, and the long eyelashes rested oftener upon the pallid cheek. With Castelle, who of course was aware of Frederick’s attachment and its intensity, this change had often been the subject of conversation when he with his winning voice expatiated to Agnes on a passion which he could paint as well from fancy as from experience.

“I often dread,” said he, “that his love is too intense, and that if ever deprived of
Clelia's presence his health must fail, and disappointment increase to a dangerous extent the morbid sensitiveness of his temperament."

"But what do you think of her, poor child?" said Agnes; "she fades and droops daily more and more, and when sitting at night within the glow of that alabaster lamp, in Frederick's absence, her eyes fixed on the ground, her hands laid listlessly upon her lap, I often fancy that she is a predestined angel, suffering rather than enjoying a visit to earth, where she seems to shrink from worldly contaminations. Did you ever see anything more lovely? did you ever know anyone more perfect?"

"For me," said Castelle, "she has other attractions added to those you describe. You will assuredly laugh when I add that there is something physiologically remarkable about her."

"Of course, something very mysterious, perhaps second sight, or perhaps vampirism," said Agnes.
"No, Miss Somerton, I have not yet gained such an insight into her nature as you imply; but from a conviction that there are powers connected with mind which have not yet been developed, influences that are not yet understood, I look searchingly into characters which are of a type strange to me, and unlike all others that I have hitherto investigated, and Mademoiselle D’Albremont’s is one of these."

"What is there so very peculiar about her?" said Agnes.

"It is difficult to define. I can only explain myself by saying that she evinces an unusual and extraordinary sensibility, which keeps her mind in such close proximity to the things around her that she must be endowed with finer perceptions, more intimate instincts, than those we all possess in common."

"How fanciful you are," said Agnes, musingly; "but indeed you only express something of what I feel respecting her."
"It is difficult to communicate one's convictions," said Castelle, "but I believe that as man's nature progresses to a higher state of being, there will ensue a greater spirituality of his faculties, and with this will concur more active sympathies, more direct affinities between separate mental existences. We are even now on the eve of discovering reciprocal actions of mind that have never been anticipated."

"You are alluding, I suppose, to magnetic communications."

"Name it as you will, there is some occult current passing between us, which we call sympathy and instinct, that carries the individual influence beyond what seems to us its range; mentally the will projects it, physically some unknown quality of matter transmits it; but we cannot tell how. To return to Mademoiselle D'Albremont, I much fear that the spirit there will exhaust the body before it reaches maturity."

"She seems to me quite a condensation
of spirit,” said Agnes; “too beautiful to be 
real, solid humanity, like myself.”

Did Castelle lose this opportunity of 
saying something philosophically compli-
mentary? Of course he did not; but it 
was whispered, and audible only to the ear 
for which it was intended.
CHAPTER XIX.

"Oft beneath  
The saintly veil the votary of sin  
May lurk unseen, and to that eye alone  
Which penetrates the inmost heart, revealed."

A few days after her interview with Castelle, Agnes requested him to meet Clelia in her room, and to bring with him a medical man of much celebrity. This appointment was made unknown to Madame D'Albre-mont, and Clelia only consented to it in the hope of gratifying her friend Agnes, who had urged her long and often to take medical advice. The doctor went through the usual manual exercise of pulse and fee, with the intermediate tongue inspection and catechismal colloquy usual on such occasions, when a nervous patient at once assumes all the sensations that her querist
particularizes, flurried by the professional impatience of a man who lets you see that his time costs two shillings per minute. Castelle, put in possession of the doctor's opinion, received his instructions for the direction of Miss Somerton, in case a summer tour which had been projected a few days previously should be undertaken by the friends.

One morning Sir Harry arrived at Agnes's apartment in high spirits and great good looks; his whiskers particularly well dressed, each hair being separated from the others with industrious precision. His teeth gleamed radiantly, his clothes seemed glued on his person, and a voluminous neckcloth, tied into an elaborate true-lovers'-knot, appeared to repel criticism.

"Here I am, full of news, dear Miss Somerton," said he; "some friends just arrived from London have brought with them a stock of contraband stories, and particulars of impossible occurrences, which
no one who does not believe in the improbable can credit."

"And who are your friends?" said Miss Somerton.

"My friends are Lady Mary Mantonford, a very loquacious lady, with a brace of matured daughters, and an appendix in trousers and her teens."

Agnes looked a little surprised, for she had heard of this Lady Mary as Annesley's cousin and Lord Courtville's great-niece. Sir Harry soon perceived Agnes's expression.

"Knows nothing of Annesley," said he. "I don't believe that she ever saw him; all that family quarrel; never heard of his proposal to you, as she seldom sees any of the Courtvilles; they don't speak—can't agree—consanguineous animosity—"

Agnes, during this monologue, sat thinking how she should like to meet a relative of Annesley, when Sir Harry began again:

"Lady Mary is an artful woman. I wonder how she will get on with my sister D'Albre-
mont, who won't like the set her ladyship is sure to make at Vivian; I should not be surprised if she came here on purpose."

Agnes had never heard Sir Harry rattle on so volubly before. He was in great glee, for Lady Mary had brought a packet from his lawyers, in which they informed him how inextricable were the pecuniary difficulties from which Annesley could never release himself.

In due time Lady Mary called on Madame D’Albremont, where Agnes met her at a tea-party; she was tall and rigid, and seemed to have a mind, if not so high, at least as stiff as her person. Pride was the centre round which her feelings and faculties circled in an unvarying round. It had taken a very pious character in early life, that pride of spiritual superiority which is an anomaly remarkable in some ambitious characters, and which yields often to its temporal successor when daughters require worldly promotion.
Lady Mary now thought it prudent to remit the sinful objections to innocent things, by which she had hitherto published her affected piety. That abominable crime of dancing, against which she had always so fiercely declaimed, was actually perpetrated by her daughters whenever an opportunity offered, and poor Lady Mary sank to the level of ordinary fashion and useful maternity, instead of asserting by the practices and professions usual for the purpose, her claims to the highest place of prospective greatness, from whence she might look down on the kings and queens of our poor sinful world with pity and contempt. In fact, she gave herself a dispensation for the nonce, discarded her peculiar and sectarian costume, peeped into novels, played at écarté, and allowed herself to think that there might be other Christian virtues besides a firm belief in one's own immaculate perfection, so comfortably proved by the unworthiness of our uninitiated neigh-
bours, and so appropriately expressed in jargon stereotyped for the occasion.

One daughter, Rosalind, the younger, was what in these days we call fast; she understood the points of a horse; hunted with her cousin Sir John Benfield's hounds; spoke very rapidly in short sentences, and had most ungraceful rectilinear action. This abruptness was the more remarkable as the eldest sister adopted a style exaggerating the languid manner of that day—drawling her words, and dawdling about her movements; although far from having anticipated the purring voices and inarticulate sounds of modern youthful gentility. In person she was tall, limp, blonde, with the neutral tints of ill-dyed humanity. Rosalind, on the contrary, looked plump, and vigorous, and brilliant, from the vivid colouring of healthy life. Whether Lady Mary had suggested the contrast, in imitation of Thorwaldsen's Night and Day, or whether their other mother, Nature, with a
prior claim to authority, had endowed the young ladies with these different characteristics, I cannot say; it was a wise dispensation of either parent, for men's tastes vary, and the progenitor of a family of girls should always supply different articles to suit all preferences.

As I said before, Lady Mary's pride was remarkable; she really believed herself to be of a different nature from other human beings. While it was Agnes's wish to give the tone of a request to what was virtually a command, when directing her servants, Lady Mary enjoyed the exercise of petty purchased authority; while the one felt humbled at being served by those whose ill fortune placed them in her dependence, the other exercised, with seeming exultation, the privilege that she paid for. You would not have made her believe that a little money, and a little education, and a little manner were the social distinctions between herself and her inferiors, for she
entertained an irrational conviction of inherent aristocratic supremacy, as the peculiar gift of nature, and enjoyed real satisfaction in exacting its rights.

Lady Mary condescended to patronize Agnes with the tacit understanding which Beau Brummell's Bath acquaintance ignored when he was surprised at not being recognised by the fashionable coxcomb in London, and asked if he did not remember their intimacy at Bath. "To be sure I do," said Brummell, "and I shall be very happy to know you when I go there again."

Mrs. Jones, Lady Mary overlooked entirely, and Miss Williams she positively disliked, making no attempt to conceal her aversion. Vivian was the attraction that reconciled her to the very unfashionable coterie, which she endured with the hope that her daughters' superior position and high connexions would divert him from what she chose to consider a passing flirtation with Clelia. The languid Mirabel
entered the lists, armed *cap-à-pie* by feeble
elegance and musical monotony—very ineffi-
cient weapons to contend against such a com-
petitor as the genuine, fascinating Clelia.
Mirabel Mantonford slided through her
songs you could not tell how; then she was
too indolent or too fine to pronounce their
words; they might be Hebrew or slang, for
anything the audience knew to the contrary,
although her ditties were of the chanting
character, depending for effect on the poetry,
to intone which the music is but a vehicle.
Rosalind, the lively sister, belaboured the
piano with powerful muscle. Musical com-
posers had not then introduced that method
of striding over the keys to the top of the
instrument, coming down to the bass with
the canter of an arpeggio, making a hit at
one note of an air on the way, then per-
forming the same operation for the next,
while the left hand, like charity, not know-
ing what the right one is about, establishes
an independent proceeding of its own in the
bass, only co-operative in an effort to come down upon the appropriate chord when the treble makes that expected shot. This dot and go one process may sum up a sleepy air of the *Sonnambula*, or jot down some gasping expression of despondency, battered by the intervening skirmishing hits of musical pugilism.

Hertz, however, even in 1822, supplied Rosalind with startling effects, quite strange enough to astonish the crawling performers of the old school. Both sisters were always at their music; and when they came to inhabit an apartment in the hotel with Madame D’Albremont, she was distracted by their constant manual activity.
CHAPTER XX.

"Some act upon this prudent plan—
'Say little and hear all you can,'
Safe policy, but hateful—
So barren sands imbibe the show'r,
But render neither fruit nor flow'r,
Unpleasant and ungrateful."—Cowper.

Lady Mary soon commenced her attack on Mr. Vivian; he was invited to spend most evenings in her apartment, when she proposed many parties to the theatre and the environs, in which it was clear she never intended the other ladies to join. Vivian met her advances very politely, and endeavoured to evade all her arrangements for his pleasure.

"Did you ever see a more disagreeable person than Lady Mary?" said Miss Williams to Agnes.

"Not often," was the answer; "but I
fancied that it was from a dislike to me particularly she assumed this haughty manner."

"Every one must have the same idea. At first I too believed that she favoured me alone with her repulsive dignity, till I perceived that it was equally displayed to every one else here."

"Does she not always appear to think that one is saying something very wrong, or doing something very strange, with her school-mistress manner of filtered propriety and double-distilled gentility?"

"You are very severe," chimed in Madame D'Albremont, who could not in her heart endure Lady Mary, but did not think it prudent to abuse her just then; "it is her English reserve that surprises you both, now used to French animation. I really don't find her unpleasant—besides, she is cross because disappointed just now."

"And pray what is the fortunate circumstance which distressed her amiable ladyship?" said Miss Williams.

"A match in prospect for Rosalind failed
unexpectedly. The gentleman said she hurried him too much."

"So she is determined to secure another swain for Mirabel if Mr. Vivian will consent," said Miss Williams, looking provokingly at Madame D’Albremont. "I see through her clearly," proceeded Miss Williams, "and know that she is full of schemes (another glance at Madame D’Albremont). People think that because they do not intend to be understood, others are kind enough not to detect them; but Pope’s cunning lady, ‘who could not drink her tea without a stratagem,’ like many of her class, must have learnt at last that the efforts you make to conceal a secret excite proportionate curiosity to detect it, so that your mystery and your manœuvre are discovered together."

"And," said Agnes, "the latter is probably practised to blind your friend to the fact that you purchased a blue gown last week instead of a pink one, or that you are making secret negotiations to get an invitation to Lady Somebody’s tea-party."
“How I hate close people, don’t you, Agnes?” said Miss Williams. “What an immensity of unnecessary trouble they take to conceal what no one would wish to know if they did not, like a foolish bird flying about its nest, prove that something is there which we are not to hear or to see. The hidden mystery is often as well worth discovering as the sparrow’s eggs, or the unfledged tom-tit.”

“Miss Williams keeps her friends’ secrets as ill as she keeps her own,” hissed Madame D’Albremont.

“Of course,” snapped Miss Williams; “therefore I never wish to know them. My plan is to make a clean breast of all that others take such pains to shut up within the ring-fence of their small minds; and on the same principle I leave so many letters about that the servants will not be at the trouble of reading them, and if they do, are not so sure to misinterpret their contents as when, by some lucky chance,
they pounce upon the one epistle that has escaped your usual vigilance, over which they pore with trembling delight, feeling assured that what you are always so anxious to hide must contain startling particulars of family concerns, into which they convert your correspondent's allusion to history—probably concluding that the vicious criminal referred to, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, was your maternal grandfather, who they knew had been mean in his housekeeping, and that the foibles of Anna Boleyne are those of your little prim first cousin, Mary."

"I should not like to make the experiment of leaving my letters about," muttered Madame D'Albremont.

Lady Mary now began the assault on Vivian in earnest, and, as usual, art was summoned to supply what we call the deficiencies of nature, and art, as usual, sulked at the call. The peaceable Euterpe and her large family of sisters were not at all inclined to help the enterprising Miss
Mantonford in an onslaught on Mr. Vivian’s heart and property, for which the terrestrial ladies prepared skyrockets of rushes up to the top of the piano—scales that lead to social eminence—volleys of chromatics, skirmishes in the treble, artillery booming in the bass; while occasional piteous vocal sounds from their apartment reminded Madame D’Albremont of “the cries of the dying” in our grandmothers’ field of display, the “Battle of Prague.”

What canvas was spoilt by Miss Rosa, who painted in flying colours; what figures did she represent, with contorted bodies which the College of Surgeons could not disentangle; what patchwork complexions did she daub; what unsteady footing and precarious seats did she bestow; how she libelled poor human nature, so often obliged to see herself mercilessly vilified on canvas by recreant progeny, whose libels she has no power to punish through the co-operation of a court of justice!
A great change had come over Castelle's habits and manner; that civilizer and leveller, that conjurer and alchemist—Cupid—arrived unexpectedly to regulate both.

With the power of his untiring energy the student had hitherto conquered the proximate difficulties of science; the mysteries of mind and the nature of matter had equally engrossed him; their reciprocal action he had incessantly studied and watched.

Now other problems occupied him—a new scene opened, on which he was to be an actor in common life, and to engage with many performers whose characters he
must decipher, whose motives he must
detect, and whose conduct he must control.
The laboratory where he spent the midnight
hours, bending over furnace and crucible,
no longer teemed with the vapour of deadly
combinations, no sulphur fumes now
nearly choked him, no watery exhalation
filled the room with mists that blinded him,
for the closed retreat had become the arena
of a lover's musing.

A flower purloined from Agnes emitted,
with the supernatural exhalations that
affect the senses in such cases, perfumes
which surrounded him with a novel atmo-
sphere, for love, as usual, acted as a vivify-
ing principle, enhancing the senses to a
new apprehension of their objects, and
giving the imagination fresh powers to
amplify, or conceal, or beautify them.

Castelle's fancy did not soar in the
spiritual world alone, it came down to
earth, and condescended to drive in finely-
equipped, well-hung carriages, and to spend
some short time at a pleasant country residence; where, however, Agnes's attractions did not withdraw him from a well-furnished laboratory, in which he prosecuted the experiments that were yet to immortalize him.

He had lately made some investment, greatly increasing his pecuniary resources; and rather than offend his friend Frederick, he consented to receive a pension, for which some particular researches that Vivian made a pretext for this arrangement, were to be the return. Released from money difficulties, Castelle could revel in his new contemplations. Still, how was he to secure the competency without which he could not pretend to Agnes's hand, beggared as she must be by a union with him? how was he sure that she would sacrifice her fortune to her love? On the contrary, he knew her to be ambitious of preeminence, and anxious for the hospitable social intercourse quite incompatible with restricted means.

He would have to contend against the
influence of all her associates, who did not yet even suspect his motives; for the conviction entertained by Sir Harry and his sister had strangely escaped Castelle's notice. Then his adored chemistry, of which he felt the pursuit could only be temporarily remitted, required new costly experiments, for which enlarged means would soon be required. These must at whatever cost be prosecuted, to attain the scientific eminence for which he had started. A great invention, that would utilize electricity, was to raise him there; it not only supplied a motive force to supersede all others, for which a national reward would be decreed, but should astonish the world with the elucidation of mysteries yet impenetrable to the most acute philosophic intellect. He believed that, by the help of science, man might acquire a creative power which would almost deify humanity. He believed in impossibilities, while rejecting the truths that are self-evident to healthy minds; thus unconsciously testifying by faith in the
supernatural to the inherent longing for spiritual dependence which is as much an instinct of our nature as a guarantee of our destination.

No practitioner of the black art, no querist of the future, no inquisitor of the various intimations which it is supposed to supply to the present, no visionary who fancies that he perceives through the mists of the present those spectral indications that foreshadow coming events, pursued the *ignis fatuus* of philosophy with more unreason than did our student. His keen perception of the real, his accurate estimate of its parts and qualities, changes and uses, his well-poised comparisons, his correct deductions, and his far-seeing prevision, all merged in the vortex of fantastic speculation.

Do not the poetic errors of great minds float in a chaos from which, as from the first unformed mass of being, the creative force of genius can alone concrete nature and truth?

Castelle, who had left his lodging near
the Luxembourg, and now inhabited an apartment in another direction, was seated in his gloomy laboratory, when a visit from Vivian was announced. Descending rapidly the four flights of stairs that separated him from a little room where he usually received visits, there he found his friend.

"I have called on you for an object of importance," commenced Frederick, "and rejoice to find that you are able to see me." He did not know how Castelle's habits were lately changed since the time when constant experiments and close study had rendered him inaccessible to the most importunate visitor. "I want to ask your advice."

"Nothing unpleasant has occurred, I hope?" interrupted Castelle, looking into Vivian's very serious face.

"No," answered Vivian, "nothing more unpleasant than usual; the same doubt, the same anxiety as ever perplex me, until I not only feel ill, but, as you see, look harassed."

"You must have patience, my good friend;
time may yet effect much for you," said Castelle.

"I really think that her own despondency increases instead of diminishing," continued Vivian, "and I am now not only distressed at this, but also at its effect on her health, for she grows thinner and paler, and more like a spirit than a being made of human elements. What can I do to release us both from this miserable suspense?"

"Will she not give the promise of an answer?" asked Castelle.

"Without expressing herself distinctly," said Vivian, "she lets me see that my affection is reciprocated, and yet not only will she not answer my inquiry if I shall ever be accepted, but really becomes ill from agitation when I urge it, so that a dread of approaching the painful subject often checks my importunity."

"From what you have before told me, and from what I see myself," said Castelle, "there must be some secret weighing on her
mind, some mystery which she dares not reveal.” Castelle was better informed on this subject than he pretended.

“What can it be?” eagerly asked Vivian; “it is no previous love-affair, no engagement of any kind, for I believe that she never was out of her mother’s sight since quite a child, and I need not tell you how vigilantly French morals require a mother to watch over an unmarried daughter, and Madame D’Albremond is not likely to have neglected prescribed social duties.”

“There is a mystery about Mademoiselle D’Albremond,” proceeded Castelle, “which interests me amazingly; she is unlike any one I ever saw before, and I agree with Miss Somerton in thinking that she seems too ethereal and pure to be formed of the ingredients which compose our ordinary human nature. In classical times she would have been accredited as the recipient of some divine aura, or the favoured object of some enamoured divinity who endowed her
with extra earthly beauty and animated her with extra spiritual essence to justify his passion. There are, no doubt, magnetic influences connected with her which might, if investigated, explain what we cannot now understand; or she may be subject to unknown powers which control her contrary to the suggestions of her feelings or the conclusions of her reason."

Vivian listened to Castelle's suppositions breathlessly; he was half a convert to his friend's belief in the supernatural; but while with the chemist it was a substitute for higher convictions, with Vivian it proved the imaginative exaltation of his religious feelings. He looked earnestly at Castelle, waiting to hear more of what interested him so intensely.

"Observe her," continued Castelle, "when she seems abstracted from all ordinary environments; see her eyes fixed on space as if she perceived things invisible to our eyes, and looked into the future with that
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deep and solemn gaze. Then, how she starts at sounds which do not reach our ears; they bear strange words to hers, vibrating in tones which we have never heard, warnings or promises that blanch and colour her delicate cheek and chill and fever her sensitive frame, when the flush of pleasure or the tremor of dread passes over her.”

“Oh, Castelle!” ejaculated Frederick, earnestly, “is she not of too exalted a nature to accept my love? is it not too lowly, too insignificant to mingle in her mind with the higher impulses of inspiration?”

“No,” answered Castelle, “it seems to me that she responds to your affection, and that to her imaginative nature your taste for the beautiful in art, your worship of the good in life, give a charm to both feelings and pursuits which she fully appreciates—still”—and he paused a moment—“still, there is something on her mind that chills the warmth with which she would otherwise accept your devotion.”
"What is it? what is it?" interrupted Vivian. "I would give half that I possess in the world to discover this mystery of which I perceive now such convincing indications, since some time ago you led me to remark them. Help me, dear friend; relieve me from this suspense!"

"I see nothing to help you but subjecting her to mesmeric influence. If she is, as I suspect, likely to be a clairvoyante, an expert operator might lead her to speak of this secret, and to reveal all he wished to know of her feelings and views."

"Oh no, I never will consent to learn them by such means. Not for worlds would I hear from her a word which she did not intend to utter. What else can you do?"

"I can observe her more closely," said the chemist; "and in the circumstances of her mental condition perhaps find a clue to her reserve." Vivian took Castelle's hand and pressed it warmly.

After a pause of a few minutes, he con-
continued: "On another subject, Castelle, I wished to speak to you this evening. I am about to make a communication which you must not interrupt, and the object of which you are not to oppose. An orphan since my earliest years, I have lost the few relations who might have gathered round me, as a second family. They are dead, and I stand alone in the world, the inheritor of their wealth, and the only representative of their race. All this you have heard before. You know how uncertain is my health, how likely it is entirely to break down if this looked-for happiness is withheld for ever; you see already how distress of mind has changed me. Well, under all these circumstances, I have deemed it advisable to make my will, and to leave to Clelia, for her life, my entire fortune, with the exception of an annuity to you, proportioned to the moderation of your wishes, and in accordance with the desire you have ever expressed not to benefit by my bounty."
Castelle here entreated Frederick not to think of any business that might only deepen the gloom which was already darkening his spirit. Not attending to this remark, Vivian went on.

"In case of Clelia's demise preceding yours, I have bequeathed my entire property to you, for life; at your death, to revert to trustees who will be empowered to erect with it a hospital in my native country. No objections will I hear," said Vivian, seeing Castelle ready to speak. "The institution which I am so anxious to establish you can inaugurate, and on this condition assuredly you will accept my bequest. To you I owed my life in times past, to you I now look to save it again by promoting the union on which it depends. On your interference I rest my hopes, being firmly convinced that there is some power within you which commands a greater influence than you yourself imagine."

Frederick now took his leave; it was
dusk, and he departed hastily to meet some friends at dinner.

That night, Castelle sat in the gloom of his dark room, looking out on the starless sky, which lowered over the many roofs beneath his window, just perceptible by the reflection of light from the street lamps below. Long did he remain there, till these died out; and long did he ruminate on all that Frederick had communicated. We will not penetrate the labyrinth of his gloomy mind, nor try to unravel the meshes with which he spun the net-work of future events, that were to entangle or disable all who engaged in the drama which he was to direct. The embers in the little furnace crackled and flared, when some substance that had hitherto escaped their action slightly exploded, and while they aroused Castelle from his reverie, threw a blue glare over the room, lighting up an expression in the chemist's countenance such as Faust may have observed upon that of his demoniacal visitant.
CHAPTER XXII.

"The weakness we lament, ourselves create.
Instructed from our infant years to court,
With counterfeited fears, the aid of man,
We learn to shudder at the rustling breeze,
Start at the light, and tremble in the dark;
Till affectation, ripening to belief,
And folly, frightened at her own chimeras,
Habitual cowardice usurps the soul."—JOHNSON.

Castelle lost no time in organizing the plans of his party, according to matured pre-arrangement, yet without appearing to take any active part in them, or allowing those he most influenced to detect his object. To Agnes he recommended a change to the country, on Clelia's account he dilated on the cheapness of rural living to Madame D'Albremont, and to Mons. Belleville he proposed some incentive which attracted that volatile gentleman to co-
operate in the arrangements made for his friends' convenience. He knew a young artist, Charles Breton, who lived in the neighbourhood of Fontainebleau, and no time was lost in applying to him, and learning that an old château in that direction was to let, and from its situation might be an airy abode for the party. Castelle started for Fontainebleau, and very speedily engaged for some months the house in question, authorized by Miss Somerton.

Who so pleased as Madame D'Albremont at being invited for this period to live at Agnes's expense? Was she not sure that Vivian would follow them? Did she not look to the retirement of the country as a means of insuring his success with Clelia? for he engaged a cottage close to the château; and there a room was to be ever ready for Castelle.

All were delighted with the projected change; Miss Williams particularly liked the materialism of country life, its milk,
and butter, and vegetables, its renovating air, and opportunities of wearing out old clothes, and leisure for confectioning new ones from relics of faded finery. De Balzac had told her, in his "Vie de Province," how sedentary Fashion is in the country, where she sits down demurely, instead of flying past on gauze and crape wings, with ribbon streamers, as she careers over populous towns.

Mrs. Jones did not much like the idea of a change, for Mr. O'Rourk, whose partiality to an English tavern in the neighbourhood of the Rue Rivoli interfered with rural tastes, had made her believe that the French peasantry hated English people, and that, although the chances of being murdered were problematic, those of being robbed were very certain. Besides, Mr. O'Rourk, having heard of the household reptiles that infest Eastern countries, transferred them by an act of his imagination to French rural districts, where he assured his mistress that
she would always find a scorpion nestling in her bed, and a centipede walking the folds of her dressing-gown. Hissing adders would meet her when out walking by day, and musquitoes keep her in a spurious erysipelas by night. Still, the poor dear old lady was too kind to oppose long the wishes of her beloved niece, so the discomfited Mr. O'Rourk was ordered to make preliminary arrangements, of which he heard with an offended expression of countenance that his mistress turned away from, although she was obliged to hear that very indicative symptom of menial displeasure, a loud slam to the door, as he indignantly shut it after him.

Mrs. Jones was afraid of everything in the world, besides her shadow; she watched with timid curiosity the ears of her old horses, as they trotted quietly before her; the bark of a dog suggested fears of hydrophobia, and she always dreaded being looked at by one of the species. As soon
would she meet a tiger as a cow on a narrow road, and she was even known to return from a pleasant country walk on meeting a bee, which pursued her she declared with premeditated animosity. Being entirely unacquainted with the habits and views of animals, she ascribed to them human propensities.

The house which Castelle had engaged for Agnes was spacious and cool; a long avenue of splendid beeches led to the entrance, opening on a very large hall surrounded by statues. There were suites of rooms scantily furnished, and dark, mysterious passages. Narrow circular staircases led to four turrets, at the corners of the main building, which seemed destined for prison rooms; and other flights in out of the way places carried you into gloomy galleries, from which you were glad to descend very hastily.

There prevailed an air of desolation everywhere, suggesting the vicissitudes of
a family for many years resident in this old château—an heirloom through bygone centuries. The house was built upon a rock that rose from a plain, and spread out in varying rough acclivities behind, leaving a plateau before the façade, which was terraced and kept in tolerable order as a formal garden of the oldest fashion. Very fine fir and pine-trees grew out between the rocks, single and in groves, and giant ferns and spreading mosses here and there fertilized the aridity of the stony ground. Behind the rocks an extensive wood, belonging to the proprietor of the château, stretched off towards undulating sward, where his sheep pastured on the short dry grass, growing bright and crisp from its warm soil.

Agnes was enchanted with the wild strangeness of the place, and started at once to reach the wood before dusk; and afterwards with a flickering candle threaded all the various passages that led through
the curiously constructed wings of the building.

Madame D’Albremont pretended to like everything; but poor Mrs. Jones, although she said little, thought unutterable things, and watched Mr. O’Rourk’s grim expression when he waited at dinner, round a small table in a room large enough to entertain a feudal chief’s retainers. O’Rourk certainly did not look pleased, for besides the discomforts of the house, with a rapid glance he had seen that no hospitable shelter in the neighbourhood would afford a pleasant retreat from the duties of his profession, while he quenched that national thirst which is the bane of Hibernian natures.

Clelia encouraged the hopeful of the party, and comforted the disappointed, feeling that one of her mother’s schemes—suggested, of course, by Castelle—had resulted in the inconveniences which they experienced. All retired to rest, but with various feelings, Mrs. Jones’s not being the
most agreeable when her maid told her how Mr. O'Rourk was sure that the house must be haunted; indeed, he felt something queer about him, an all-overishness that he knew came from the presence of spirits. The old lady, whose apprehensions were not confined to the material world, grew tremulously nervous, and for the rest of the time that she inhabited Clairville persisted, when walking about the house after dusk, in holding her maid's hand, and shutting her eyes, as soon as they came near the passages, which Mr. O'Rourk pronounced to be very ghostlike.
CHAPTER XXIII.

"Rise and put on your foliage and be seen
To come forth like the spring-time and be green,
And sweet as Flora take no care
For jewels for your robe or hair;
Fear not, the leaves will strew
Gems in abundance upon you.
Besides, the childhood of the day hath kept
Against you come some Orient pearls unwept."

In two days after Clelia's arrival Vivian appeared, laden with fruits and flowers—offerings to his fair friend, who was not at home, having just walked out alone towards the wood. The weather had changed from the sultry heat of the previous week, and was now gloomy, and rarely varied by gleams of sunlight, while the wind blew in fitful gusts, carrying the clouds rapidly along the sky, from whence they cast dark shadows upon the ground that marked their
progress over the light greensward. Clelia, with a thin shawl thrown over her shoulders, her brow exposed to the wind, was hastening over the rocks on her way to the shelter of the pine-wood. Madame D’Albremont supposed that she had taken that path when questioned by Frederick. Unused to the freedom of country life, she had hastily sought the enjoyment of a ramble alone and unheeded, in the wild weather that would have precluded the enjoyment of a walk in town. Vivian dared not propose following her, well knowing how contrary to all French etiquette would be such an offer, but sat restlessly looking down on the plain under the French garden, and discussing the weather with remarks that would not have disgraced Britannic weather-wisdom.

Chafing at the restraints of gallantry, and most inattentive to its claims, he answered the ladies’ queries very vaguely; and at last, on being invited to dine next
day, took an abrupt leave with the pretence of having necessary arrangements to make in his new residence. He then rushed through the hall, cleared the steps at a bound, and leaping from rock to rock of the ascending ground behind the house, soon saw a rose-coloured drapery flitting between the distant trees of the pine-wood. Flushed and breathless, he stood beside Clelia, who, startled at the surprise, and rejoiced at the meeting, blushed and trembled, as she ever did, on being suddenly accosted by him.

It might be rude to retrace her steps—and how unwillingly would she have done so—but to remain alone with a young man was an infringement of propriety so unusual in French society that she felt to stay was unmaidenly. His pleading eyes, his anxious look, told her how much he dreaded her decision; and a request that she would let him accompany her was spoken with tones that she vainly
tried to resist. They walked on together. Clelia’s blush deepened; the long silky lashes vainly fanned the heated cheek, as they sank beneath his gaze of tenderness; and the reddening lip quivered ere she could form an answer to his tender words. The little hand nervously grasped the shawl which had hitherto floated around her as they walked close together between the trees that occasionally narrowed the wood path.

His burning words there were breathed close to her ear, from which she drew away the long locks of her golden hair that the wind blew towards him. They had never been thus alone before—no witnesses of their love but ‘the sun that brightened it, and the birds that sang wooingly from the trees, and contributed their part to the universal chorus of nature. The violets looked up at them from under their sheltering leaflets, and offered perfumed incense as they passed; and the wild thyme, pressed by their light tread, sent forth a fragrance
such as should follow the footsteps of love. The wind that caressed inspired them, waving the dark branches of the old black yew-trees above, an ominous greeting to such youthful passion.

On an elevation overlooking the wood below stood a log-house, screened from the gusty winds now rushing around them whenever an opening gave it free current. There Frederick led his companion, and there they sat side by side, looking out on the wild scene below. Still the burning words betokened the fervour of the feelings which he spoke; still the earnest eyes looked into Clelia's for the response that eyes alone can express; still her slight figure trembled in dread of betraying by look or gesture a secret which was never to be revealed. Catching her hand in his, and drawing her towards him, Frederick asked for one word of hope, one sign that she accepted his love. As she shrank from him large pearl drops gathered in her eyes, and fell upon
his hand, when he clasped hers, over which she stooped in sobbing agony.

"Clelia! Clelia! why these tears? What is there to dread? What is there not to hope for in the life before us? What are the doubts that come between you and happiness? What is the terror that makes you shrink from my touch as if you hated me, while I know, my Clelia, that you feel for me what you dare not express?"

"Oh, Frederick, do not ask me too much, do not press me to say more than I ought; gather from my acts, my looks, what you desire to know, but do not urge me to utter it."

"But why not speak? why not pronounce the words which I crave to hear? why not whisper here close to my cheek the assent that would sound to me like a promise from Heaven?"

Clelia's head sank lower, and snatching her hands from Frederick's grasp, she held them to her face, while the tears dropped
through them, and her whole frame trembled with emotion.

"No, no, Frederick, my secret you can never know; I ought not to listen to questions which I dare not answer. For mercy's sake do not repeat them, do not again subject me to this agony; to feel as I do, and to be condemned to silence, is more than I can bear."

"What secret, Clelia, is it that I may not know? Do you love another?"

"No, no, don't think that, Frederick; but ask me no more."

"Yes, Clelia, I must know more. Did you ever love before?"

"Frederick, rather than that you should think I love another I will tell you that you are all the world to me, and yet that we should and must part." She said this hurriedly, her words interrupted by heavy sobs, and her face still covered by her hands."

Frederick drew her towards him, and strove to remove them from before her face.
"Clelia, my life, my soul, I ask no more; but for the future will respect your silence, and wait till time effects a change that may release you from some promise, or remove some impediment which now seals your lips."

"Frederick, I dare not let you expect an answer. I should not love you as I do, and still—" Here, pausing, as if to check some expression of feeling which ought not to be spoken, Clelia started from her seat, and rushing out of the summer-house, flew rather than ran over the rocky ground, with a bird-like course that Frederick knew he could not emulate. He sprang to the highest rock, and from thence saw glimpses of her figure as she flitted along the path descending to the house, which she hurriedly entered by a side door.

Frederick stood still, gazing before him, long after she had disappeared, and then hurried back to the seat they had just left, remaining there for some time, wrapped in the happy consciousness of being beloved.
Anxious to think in solitude of the incidents just passed, Clelia had glided to her room, where she sank exhausted on her sofa, burying her face in its cushion while she recalled Frederick's words of passion. The firm conviction that he loved her intensely was joy so tumultuous that her heart bounded with a movement which vibrated through her frame and thrilled every nerve. What happiness to be adored by a man so good, so talented!—to bask in the light of eyes that were such faithful exponents of the heart's kind feelings and the mind's high thoughts!

Love lent new faith to hope, while Clelia remembered his tender gaze and his earnest voice. When the bell rang for dinner she joined the assembled party, with such heightened colour, and such gay spirits, that Madame D'Albremont noticed the improvement as the result of their airy situation.
CHAPTER XXIV.

"Come—come while the light
Hangs on the dew-locks of the night,
And Titan on the eastern hill
Retires himself, or else stands still,
Till you come forth."

On their return to the very spacious drawing-room, each lady found her place arranged, her chair standing before the table where her books and work were placed; for Madame D'Albremont had expended some of her redundant vitality in settling everything. They soon occupied themselves with that unsatisfactory feeling which is usual on first inhabiting a room in a strange house.

Clelia tried to work, and then sat looking at the pages of a book, of which she scarcely read a sentence—her thoughts far away in
the pine wood, and longing for the time to retire, that she might look towards that spot on the eminence where stood the old log-house. At last she gazed at it from the window of her room.

The night was clear and bright, and no sound broke its silence, when Clelia stole gently forth, and again hurried to the scene of her late interview with Vivian. Through the pine wood she hastened breathlessly reaching the seat, on which the moon-light now fell with its silvering tints, that the wild clouds often obscured, for it was a blowing night. The late excitement had been too much for a fragile nature; her energies were flagging, as the fatigue of the day weakened her, and she began to take another view of her situation. All that was cheering disappeared, all that was wrong took startling prominence; struggle as she might to escape from the evil that menaced, it still pursued her. Misery and shame followed withholding her from the path
to which hope beckoned. That was a sad night for poor Clelia. The creaking of the fir-trees, and the wind's wail, and the owl's whoop were appropriate accompaniments to the sobs of this poor child, as she leaned her head wearily against a prop of the summer-house, and allowed these mournful sounds to darken her thoughts of the future.

Next morning when the party assembled at breakfast, she was too ill to appear; a bad cold with feverishness had quite banished sleep, and obliged her to remain quiet in her room, glad to be spared the pain of meeting Frederick, and witnessing the happiness which she knew he would exultingly betray, transported by the first confession of her love.

One of the objects which Agnes hoped to secure by their country residence was an escape from Count de Belleville, who she supposed would be detained in Paris by his military duties; and a few mornings after their arrival at Clairville she was alluding
to this reprieve with Miss Williams, as they walked up and down a garden before the house. Long did they discuss the demerits of the gallant guardsman, sincerely did they congratulate themselves on having brought away his lady-love into remote parts where he was not likely to follow her, fervidly did they hope never to see him again.

On entering the house a well-known voice resounded through an open door of the drawing-room, and on looking in there, whom should they see seated at Mrs. Jones's feet, with a guitar in his hand, but the mature Lothario himself. He rose gracefully, and placed a chair for Miss Somerton near her aunt, who glanced towards Agnes, with a mingled expression half fearful and half exulting at the flattering pursuit of her faithful adorer.

The guitar was a newly introduced attraction, which he attached to his shoulders by a broad blueribbon, and through sundry arpeg-
gios, executed with his nails, summoned Agnes's attention to the instrument. Although much annoyed at seeing this presuming man again devoted to her aunt, still the sense of the ridiculous overcame her displeasure for the moment, when she requested M. de Belleville to favour them with a specimen of his performance. He did not want much pressing, but started immediately with such a scramble over the strings, and such a very extraordinary voluntary, that she was obliged by a very great effort to conceal her laughter. Mrs. Jones smiled and nodded, of course out of time, for the loudest twang did not reach her ears, and no doubt the only sound of the performance that she perceived was an occasional thump on the body of the poor guitar, with which he now and then interspersed the cat-like scratching, assuring Mrs. Jones that he was playing a celebrated bolero composed by Cervantes.

Mrs. Jones had engaged the Count to dinner, much to Agnes's annoyance, but that
gentleman, not at all offended at this very visible displeasure, did the honour of her table with cordial hospitality. Whether the tender sentiments which are supposed to be promoted by rural scenes enhanced the old widow's attachment, or whether the Count's new musical attitudes enslaved her, Agnes could not tell, but she perceived with regret that at the end of a fortnight her aunt's infatuation had increased, and that she no longer took any pains to conceal it. Agnes began to fear that the old lady's head was affected by all the new emotions which the dreadful Garde du Corps excited in her feeble mind.

Castelle had already warned Miss Somerton of the Count's projects, and on several occasions enabled her in Paris to avoid his visits and to defeat arrangements made for several meetings between the very ardent lovers. Still, he was quite ignorant of the gentleman's character, for his limited acquaintance among French people did not
enable him to gain information on the subject. Sir Harry Ashworth had been hitherto equally officious in thwarting the emaciated captain's manoeuvres, and now a letter reached Agnes requesting an interview, at which Ashworth promised very strange revelations. Agnes's consent to receive him was soon followed by his appearance at the château in a very elegant morning costume, of light grey watered silk, crowned with a straw hat of an anticipated fashion. Gloves did not in those times require an operation and two mechanical instruments to enable you to insinuate the hands into receptacles much too small for them, that now after this process look, when they are well fitted, like the natural skin tanned. Ashworth, no doubt, according to the fashion of the day, had ample play in the large wrinkled cases of leather which hung round his fingers so loosely.

"I am come, fair lady," said he, after a graceful bow, "to give you some informa-
tion respecting this French Apollo who is desirous of becoming your uncle—I find that the fellow pesters you continually."

"He does indeed," said Agnes; "he is perpetually here, and although I ask my aunt to discourage these visits, she still seems more than ever inclined to receive him, and no coldness on my part will deter him from repeating them."

"The impudent reprobate is really too audacious. I am sorry to tell you that she has advanced him considerable sums of money, and he actually boasts amongst his friends that you have accepted him."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Agnes, "what audacity!"

"Yes," interrupted Sir Harry, "and the assertion is not very flattering to you, for I understand that he is a man of very questionable character, both as to pecuniary matters and to his affairs of gallantry, which take a wide range."

"You surprise and distress me," said
Agnes; "I had no idea that my poor aunt supplied him with money; and really, as this is the case, we must endeavour to rescue her from a dilemma which may prove very disastrous."

"The rascal will ruin her if you don't take care, Miss Somerton; and that fellow O'Rourk negotiates the money transactions between them, with a good percentage for his trouble, you may be sure. Castelle suggested the best mode of saving her from further imposition, when I saw him this morning before starting. He thinks that there is much mental debility in your aunt's infatuation, I will not call it imbecility, and recommends your placing her for a time in a Maison de Sante."

"How is that to be done?" said Agnes, looking rather frightened at the suggestion. "It is like putting her into a madhouse."

"Not at all, my dear young lady," said Sir Harry; "there is no restraint practised at these establishments; people in delicate
health, others in dejected spirits, many requiring a strict regimen and regular habits, reside there for some weeks, and often make together a very pleasant society. Mrs. Jones may be consigned to her room for a while by an order from Castelle, and the reception of visitors and letters rigorously forbidden."

"My poor dear aunt," said Agnes, tears coming into her eyes at the idea of such coercion, "how miserable she will be!"

"For a day or two she may be irritated, but with her weakened mental powers past impressions must soon yield to the influence of a new scene and fresh faces."
CHAPTER XXV.

"Money, thou bane of bliss and source of woe,
Whence com'st that thou art so fresh and fine?
I know thy parentage is base and low:
Man found thee poor and dirty in a ditch.

* * * * *

Man calleth thee his wealth— who made thee rich?
And, while he diggs out thee, falls in the ditch."

HERBERT.

CASTELLE, apprized by Sir Harry, called next day with the terms of the Maison de Santé. It was kept by a brother of Charles Breton, and recommended by Castelle as a desirable residence, and one where Mrs. Jones's delusion would be soon overcome by the salutary discipline of Dr. Breton.

Most fortunately, the whiskered Garde du Corps in a few days announced his departure for the South of France, where he was summoned to see a sick relative;
his absence was to last a fortnight. Agnes saw him depart with very great pleasure, determining that her arrangement for the seclusion of Mrs. Jones should immediately be carried out. Miss Williams was to assume the principal part in the proceedings, and to take Mrs. Jones a drive in a hired carriage, which she sometimes engaged to convey her for the day to Paris. There was to be a pretext of calling on some friends of Charles Breton; and the old lady, once enticed into the house, was to be kept there. She had received sundry new bonnets and dresses from Paris, which she displayed whenever the Count was expected; and in the smartest of these was she attired to pay the projected visit to the delightful Breton family.

Entirely occupied with her toilet, the old lady never noticed Agnes's embarrassed manner as she bade her good-bye, and heard her aunt's directions for some project to
be effected on the morrow. Miss Williams kept her in conversation very successfully during the drive, and on approaching the *Maison de Santé* answered many questions about the family there as well as she could without knowing any of the concerns of her supposed intimate friends. They had brought no footman, the carriage was an open one, and Miss Williams jumped out before the gates of a high railing that enclosed the house within a large court. She begged Mrs. Jones to wait till she ascertained if her friends were at home, and left the old lady to look about her, and to decide that the house was a very desolate-looking one, and the court grass-grown; and a fierce dog, tied to a box, looked at her threateningly till she covered her head with a shawl, that he might not see her.

Miss Somerton found that, through some mistake, they were not expected till the next day. Dr. Breton had gone out, but his wife thought he would be soon
found if by a messenger sent to fetch him from the village close by; and Mrs. Jones might be kept waiting outside until he arrived to explain the cause of her detention, and to inform her that it was the desire of her friendst she should improve her usual health by strict attention to the regimen enforced in his house. Other particulars were discussed for some minutes, and at their expiration Mrs. Breton showed Miss Williams the recent improvements in a room prepared for Mrs. Jones, opening to a little garden at the back of the house. They then proceeded towards the gates, and, not seeing the carriage, looked for it in every direction; nowhere was it to be discovered. Mrs. Jones had disappeared in most unaccountable manner!

Dr. Breton found the two ladies in great consternation. Could the coachman have taken the poor imbecile lady to a wine-shop in the village, that he might regale himself there? How did she possibly
vanish in this very extraordinary manner? Messengers returned without perceiving any trace of the carriage; and at last the trio concluded that, suspecting the real nature of the establishment, and having overheard some allusion to it, which was not intended to reach her ears, she had driven back to the château in sudden terror.

Nothing was now to be done by Miss Williams but to return home; and as soon as the doctor secured a carriage she departed, after promising the Bretons to bring back their intended charge next day. The conveyance procured for Miss Williams was a wretched one—the horse scarcely able to draw it over very rough roads, while the driver, unlike his countrymen, did not seem to know much about anything, after a short time losing his way in a very desolate district, where no one was near to show it to him.

After sundry disasters Miss Williams, in
no very amiable humour with the silly old widow, reached home late in the evening where she asked no questions, determined to manifest her displeasure by withholding all inquiries about a woman who could act so rudely and occasion her so much trouble. The servants were told by Agnes that Miss Williams had taken their mistress to spend a few days with a friend, and her luggage was to be forwarded next morning. After an hour's ill-humour Miss Williams's curiosity got the better of her temper, so she proceeded to learn from Agnes how the old lady liked the day's excursion. What was the surprise of both friends when Agnes assured her that Mrs. Jones had not returned, and that she had heard nothing of her since in the morning she departed for her destination!

The house was now searched, the servants questioned—none of them knew anything about the old lady that could explain her disappearance. Mr. O'Rourk, with Hiber-
nian vehemence, aggravated by recent potations, roared like a bull, and declared that his darling mistress was murdered. "I had a drame last night," said he, "in which I saw her beautiful remains in the summer-house on the hill. I must go there at once to find them. Ohone! ohone! and it's a sheet I'm to take, the drame toult me, to bring them home."

Here Mr. O'Rourk set up such a howl that the servant women all began to cry from sympathy, and it was a long time before he could command his feelings sufficiently to be quiet, and to allow Agnes any opportunity of considering how they were all to act. Quite heedless of her words, O'Rourk dragged a cover off the table, upsetting all the objects that rested upon it, flinging them about, and then rushing out of the room with five maids tearing after him, to enjoy the excitement of finding Mrs. Jones's remains mangled in the summer-house.
Everything seemed to go wrong. Madame D’Albremont had taken the carriage to Paris, where she was to remain on business till the next day; so there was no mode of conveyance near, and Frederick, in his britzka, accompanied her with Castelle. Agnes, however, recollected that there was still in the stable one large spare carriage-horse, which she ordered to be saddled for a steady messenger, who should proceed to Madame D’Albremont’s, and claim Vivian’s assistance in this dilemma. Mr. O’Rourk she could not trust with such an errand. That Hibernian soon made his reappearance with one of Mrs. Jones’s shawls in his hand, dispensing a trail of water around him, and followed by the servants, who now seemed more scared than ever, for Mr. O’Rourk had found this relic of his late mistress floating on a pond, where he declared she lay drowned.

It was a long time before the hubbub provoked by this suggestion could be quieted.
From Mr. O'Rourk's manner Agnes saw that he knew more of her aunt's disappearance than he pretended; and remembering various occasions on which he favoured Belleville's interest, she had no doubt that the poor lady was the victim not only of the French adventurer, but of the Irish reprobate. On looking into her room, various valuables were missing—these, and a small box that had contained money and jewels, were nowhere to be found.

Agnes spent a very miserable night, anxiously expecting the return of her messenger, who never appeared, owing to several mischances, till noon, then bringing no satisfactory account of his mission. She had not much longer to wait in suspense for intelligence, as a letter soon arrived, directed to Miss Somerton, with the following information:

"My dear niece,—It gives me the heart-felt pleasure to have the honour of thus ad-
dressing you. An hour since your charming aunt conferred on me the privilege of claiming you as a near relation. I am just starting with my adored wife to make a tour of two days, after which we shall present ourselves at the château to accept your congratulations, and to repeat the good wishes with which I subscribe myself, dear niece, your affectionate Uncle,

"Count Charles de Belleville.

"P.S.—My adored Mopsy sends you her kind regards."

Agnes's distress was great on reading this note, for she never supposed that her aunt had any idea of marriage, and merely thought that with imbecile vanity she accepted the attention which Belleville so sedulously and persistently offered.

To the rest of the party the surprise was as startling, but less painful. It now appeared probable that the Count's journey to the South of France was a pretext to lull
their suspicions, and that, informed by O'Rourk, who must have heard of it by eaves-dropping, of Mrs. Jones's intended seclusion, the Frenchman managed to follow, and to carry her off in the hired carriage with clever promptness. During Miss Williams's search she was hidden in the coach-house of an uninhabited villa near Dr. Breton's, and afterwards concealed somewhere in Paris, where no doubt Belleville had the ceremony performed in that off-hand manner which was so very usual years since, when you could be married at any time or place with a moment's notice.

Poor Agnes wept bitterly at her aunt's sad prospect, and shuddered while thinking of the life she would lead with such a worthless husband, who was likely to beggar and then desert her. The others tried to console her; Madame D'Albremont by clearing away all the disagreeables which the future threatened, while Miss Williams relieved
herself by thinking that she consoled Agnes while abusing the new-married couple, and including the poor old simpleton in the invectives which the scheming Frenchman alone deserved. Clelia tried to divert Agnes from painful anticipations, although suffering from her own distresses, for since the late interview with Frederick at the summer-house, her spirits were more dejected, the gloom upon them yielding less frequently to the cheering sociability around her. She grew if possible paler and thinner, till Alice warned Madame D’Albremont of this change, which appeared now quite alarming. Even maternal love had no power to soften that lady’s hard nature, nor was it possible for her unimaginative mind to anticipate the future vividly; she could not take those views of it, black and desolate, which are so often pictured by the apprehensions of a timid and loving mother’s heart.

Agnes now wrote her fears to Castelle,
and asked him to come and remain as much as possible with Vivian, that he might see Clelia daily. He soon obeyed her summons, and promised to stay three days each week in the country.
CHAPTER XXVI.

"He came like a dream in the dawn of life,  
He fled like a shadow before its noon;  
He is gone, and my peace is turned to strife,  
And I wander and wane like a weary moon.  
O sweet Echo, wake,  
And for my sake  
Make answer the while my heart shall break!  

Shelley.

There was another acquaintance of Castelle's in the neighbourhood, of whose existence Agnes had never heard. Down in a glen, beyond the extensive woods that bordered the castle grounds and stretched off in a long line of undulating slope, stood a small cottage, sunk so much below their level that, unless guided to the spot by those well acquainted with it, you never would suspect that a habitation lay concealed under the high and crowded trees. There
Castelle was summoned by a secret message, and thither he was led by an old woman, so deaf and so averse to answer his questions that he soon tired of repeating them, concluding that some neighbouring peasant required his advice, induced to claim it on hearing that a great doctor visited at the château.

As Castelle descended from the upper level of the woods, the sun was just sinking below the horizon, his pink rays tinting the tops of the trees lower down, while here and there an opening admitted long bright beams, which seemed to play around the branches, as children do before they go to rest.

On emerging from the wood he saw a narrow river running near the house entirely covered with ivy, and in the distance scarcely distinguishable from the surrounding verdure. The shades of night were anticipated by those of the branching trees, as Castelle advanced, and when he reached the cottage
prevented him from readily recognising the two figures who sat together before it in a little garden, sloping to the water. A full, sweet voice too soon told him more than he wished to learn, when it greeted him with tender earnestness, for the speaker was a friend of bygone years, Leonora Villabella, whom during his residence in Italy he had seen daily with increasing pleasure. Then, he was ever happy to meet her, and would have greatly rejoiced at any fortunate incident which brought him into her presence, instead of accosting her, as he now did, with civil coldness. Latterly his visits to the father and daughter had been few indeed, and Leonora discovering how he spent much of his time near Fontainebleau, also learnt that a beautiful English girl was the object of attraction there. With further questions she ascertained many particulars respecting the party at Clairville; and possessed with the jealousy which had often embittered a tenderer feeling since Castelle’s late neglect,
she determined to thwart his new love-affair, and with this object engaged the little residence where we just find her.

For three weeks she had watched the château, but without discovering any means of ascertaining exact particulars as to the interior domestic life there. Her old servant, deaf and stupid, was here of no avail, and the care that a very aged father required, and the painting by which she supported him, kept her more at home than she anticipated, now that the change of air seemed to aggravate the infirmities from which he suffered. It was with much annoyance that Castelle heard how Leonora had engaged her present abode for some months, well aware from his experience of her impetuous, jealous character what her object was in this arrangement. It seemed, however, irrevocable, and no reasons that he could urge he well knew would now curtail her stay there. She listened to his representations with an incredulous expression, and that
night they separated, each fully conscious of the motive which influenced the other.

For days Castelle did not return to the cottage, but Leonora knew when he came and when he left the castle, as his movements were watched incessantly, while her flittings about the wood were equally noticed by their neighbours, who wondered at the old and the young female; the former shrivelled and yellow, and taciturn, frightened their children, and seemed to avoid so carefully any intercourse with themselves that a whisper went round ascribing to her supernatural qualities. Nor did Leonora Villabella, the younger woman, conciliate the suspicious peasants; her large dark eyes gleamed on them with a fiery glance, when she wandered through the trees, and her extreme beauty, of the darkest southern type, could not reconcile to the sternness of its expression these ignorers of classical loveliness.

She was an artist, and copied for the
Parisian trade old pictures so exactly as to deceive the most practised judges. Engaged in this secret department of art, she sat all day at her easel, and only discontinued the task at night-fall, when her sudden appearance in the darkening woods, through which she flitted like a spirit, caused much uneasiness to the superstitious country people.

Leonora had seen Castelle with Clelia in Paris on several occasions, and hearing that he visited the English family constantly at their hotel, very rapid conclusions satisfied her that the attractive English girl was the object of his new passion. With her artistic eye she appreciated the peculiar beauty of Clelia, and did not believe that any man could be long in her company without becoming the slave of charms at which she looked in wondering delight. Castelle, while disclaiming the passion that she ascribed to him, now rejoiced on finding how she had not detected the real object of
his assiduities amongst these English friends, while mentally deploring with very great apprehension her present whim, and determined to employ some effectual means for preventing her continuance in the neighbourhood of the Château de Clairville.

On Leonora first meeting Castelle in Italy, she was past the age when girlish fancies, those will-o’-the-wisps of early life, lead the child-like woman along a tortuous path from which there is too often no return. The impetus of a redundant nature, the thrill of fresh sensations, that impel adolescence onward, intoxicated with the spirit of young life, were checked by a fastidious craving for the beautiful and the excellent, for enthusiasm and imagination superseded passion, while she sought for the realization of an ideal too elevated and adorned to be met with in the course of an every-day career. With no such visionary standard, no such conceptions of mental superiority, the ordinary girl decks the first man who pleases her with a
poor investment of the trivial qualities which her unimaginative mind can supply. Love, not the lover, is unconsciously her object, and the recognition by him of her own personal charms, which form the staple of her poor ideal, satisfies her in this early interchange of flattery, implied or confessed, which is called courtship.

Years had elapsed, and the lovely artist still bestowed on an aged father the concentrated force of her affections. He, sickly and nearly decrepit, depressed by misfortune, and neglected by the world, devoted his undivided love to this only child, whose talents were a transfer from himself, whose beauty was a revival of his own. Incapacitated by age, his senses impaired, his intellect slightly weakened, they were ever reanimated by her presence, which seemed to transfuse new life into his wearied frame, hastening the languid pulse, and bracing the unstrung nerves by the influence of her tenderness.

VOL. I.
When Castelle first knew the Villabellas they lived at Padua, where he was studying, and where the young student was at once fascinated by Leonora's beauty, which surprised him no less than her artistic skill. A frequent visitor at their home, it was not long before Leonora perceived that in him were combined many of the qualities which she had lately begun to consider incompatible. His singularly beautiful person, his great learning, his winning eloquence and dignified manner were such as she had never seen equalled; and now she found realized some of the visions of her early youth. Hers was a vigorous nature—strength and impulse combined in it, impulse to act, strength to forbear; but now all her powers and feelings coalesced to increase the intensity of her passion for the admirable Castelle. He came every evening to their small house in the outskirts of Padua, where, in summer, they sat within a shady verandah,
while he read and she plied her pencil to complete the daily task. The old man dozing near them, would awake every now and then, and smile when he saw his child beside him, and knew that she was happy with one whom she now loved better than himself. But that capacious heart could entertain two fervid affections; filial love only enhanced the other by the long practice of devotion to her father, which had taught her forgetfulness of self, and given her the faculty of identifying another with her own existence.

In winter, for they spent a year together, Castelle read still, now within their little room, and then the old man, invigorated by the cooled atmosphere, entertained them with stories of his early life. Whatever was startlingly strange in Castelle's origin and career, his actions and opinions added another charm to the spell with which he fascinated Leonora. She believed him to be inspired, but did not consider whether
it was by a good or by an evil spirit, and some astrologer had lately told her that the same star ruled both destinies, of which the interests were so identified that each must be involved in the good or bad fortune which befell the other. The wonderful and then unexplained phenomena of animal magnetism, the recent experiments of Volta, which the young student amplified to misapply with strange results, of which there is now no record, terrified while they delighted her; she saw several and also heard of others, so terrible that no eye but the operator's dared witness them when accomplished during the stillness of night in his laboratory.

The neighbours talked of ominous sounds coming from thence, and of Castelle's seclusion there for days and nights, while no voice or movement during daylight indicated the presence of a living being within the building. There were unquestionable proofs that anatomical investigations occupied him,
and whispers told of things which no one ventured to mention aloud.

Time stole on; Castelle left Padua suddenly, and another departure followed very soon afterwards, when Leonora realized her father's small possessions, and brought the yielding old man to Paris, where, through some useful introductions, she was employed to illustrate literary works or to imitate old paintings for the Parisian trade, by which she earned sufficient to maintain the family respectably.

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