"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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THE ROSE AND THE KEY.

CHAPTER VI. THEY MEET A FRIEND.

"WON'T you wait, and see Mr. Marston?" said Miss Max, a little later, when the young lady came down in her walking-dress.

"No, dear, I'm going to the castle. I have planned three drawings there, and two in the town, and then we set out on our drive to Llanberris, where I shall still have daylight, perhaps, to make one or two more."

"Very industrious, upon my word! But don't you think you might afford a little time to be civil?" said Miss Max.

"I don't know what you mean."

"Mr. Marston said most pointedly, I mean, particularly, that he would call this morning, and you allowed him to suppose we should be at home."

"Did I? Well, that's past mending now," said the girl.

"And he'll come and see *no* one," said Miss Max, expanding her hands.

"He'll see the Pritchards," said Miss Maud.

"I think it extremely rude, going out so much before our usual time, as if it was just to avoid him."

"It *is* to avoid him. Put on your things and come," said the girl.

"And what reason on earth can there be?" insisted Miss Max.

"I'm not in a Marston mood this morning, that's all. Do, like a darling, put on your things and come; everything is packed, and the people here know when the fly is coming to take our boxes, and I'll walk slowly on, and you will overtake me."

So saying, she ran down-stairs, and took a very friendly leave of the Pritchard family.

She was not afraid of meeting Mr. Marston. For Anne Pritchard had told her that he had inquired at what hour the ladies usually went out to walk, and that hour was considerably later than it now was.

Miss Max overtook her.

"It's plain, we don't agree," said that lady, as if their talk had not been suspended for a moment. "I like that young man extremely, and I do think that it is rather marked, our leaving so unnecessarily early. I hate rudeness—*wanton* rudeness."

The girl smiled pleasantly on her companion.

"Why do you like him?" she said.

"Because I think him so extremely nice. I thought him so polite, and there was so much deference and delicacy."

"I'm afraid I've interrupted a very interesting acquaintance," said Miss Maud, laughing.

"But tell me why you have changed your mind, for you did seem to like him?" said Miss Max.

"Well, don't you think he appeared a little more assured of his good reception than he would have been if he had thought us persons of his own rank—I mean two great ladies such as he is in the habit of seeing; such as the people he knows? People like the Marstons—if he *is* one of them, as you suppose—make acquaintance with persons dressed in serge, like us, merely for amusement. Their affected deference seems to me insulting; it is an amusement I shan't afford him. From this point of view we can study human nature, because we can feel its meanness."

"You are a morbid creature," said Miss Max.

"I am trying to discover truth. I am trying to comprehend character," said the girl.

"And making yourself a cynic as fast as you can," said the old lady.

"It matters little what I am. We shan't see to-day a person so reckless of the future, a person with so little hope, a person who sees so little to live for, as I, and is so willing to die."

"Look round, my dear, and open your eyes. You know nothing of life or of God's providence," said Miss Max. "I have no patience with you."

"You were born free," said the girl, more gently than before, "I, a slave. Yes, don't smile; I call things by their names. You walk in the light, and I in darkness. The people who surround you, be they what they may, are at all events what they seem. When I look round, do I see images of candour? No; shadows dark and cold. I can trust no one—assassins in masquerade."

"Every one," said Miss Max, "has to encounter deceit and hypocrisy in this world."

"It won't do; no, it won't do. You know very well that the cases are quite different," said the girl. "I have no one to care for me, and many that wish me dead; and, except you, I can trust no one."

"Well, marry, and trust your husband."

"I've too often told you I never shall, *never*. I need say so no more. How well the castle looks! I suppose it is from the rain last night; how beautifully the tints of the stone have come out!"

It was a brilliant, sunny morning. The grey walls, with patches of dull red and yellow stones, and cumbrous folds of ivy, looked their best, and towers, and arch, and battlement looked, in the soft summer air, all that the heart of an artist could desire.

Going to and fro from point to point, sometimes beyond the dry castle moat, sometimes within its grass-grown court, Miss Maud sketched industriously for some hours, and from her little tin colour-box threw in her tints with a bold and delicate brush, while Miss Max, seated beside her, read her book—for she loved a novel—and, through her spectacles, with glowing eyes, accompanied the heroine through her flirtations and agonies, to her final meeting with the man of her choice, at the steps of the altar.

For a little time, now and then, pretty Miss Maud would lower her pencil, and rest her eye and hand, and think, looking vaguely on the ruins, in a sad reverie.

By this time Mr. Marston had, it was to be supposed, made his visit at the old farm-house, had sustained his disappointment, and perhaps got over it, and was, possibly, consoling himself in his jack-boots, with his rod, in the channel of some distant trout-stream.

I can't say whether her thoughts ever wandered to this Mr. Marston, who was so agreeable and good-looking. But I fancy she did not think of him quite so hardly as she spoke. Whatever her thoughts were, her looks, at least, were sad.

"Whose epitaph are you writing, my dear?" inquired Miss Max, who had lowered her book, and, glancing over her spectacles, observed the absent and melancholy looks of the girl.

"My own," said she, with a little laugh. "But we have talked enough about that—I mean my life—and I suppose a good epitaph should sum that up. What do you think of these?" and she dropped her sketches on her cousin's lap. "If I finish them as well as I have begun, they will be worth three shillings each, I dare say."

"Yes; dear me! It *is* very good indeed. And this—how very pretty!" and so on, as she turned them over.

"But not one among them will ever be half so good as our dear old farm-house, that was so comfortable and so *un*comfortable—so nearly intolerable, and yet so delightful; such a pleasant adventure to remember. I am very glad to have it, for we shall never see its face again."

At these words, unexpectedly, Miss Max rose, and showed by her countenance that she saw some one approaching whom she was glad to greet. Her young companion turned also, and saw Mr. Marston already very near.

He was so delighted to see them. He had been to the old house, and was so disappointed; and the people there could not tell where they had gone. He had hoped they had changed their minds about leaving Cardyllion so soon. He had intended going to Llanberris that day, but some of his people were coming to Cardyllion. He had received orders from home to engage rooms at the Verney Arms for them, and must stay that day. It was too bad. Of course he was very glad to see them; but he might just as well have seen them in a week. Were they (Miss Max and her companion) going to stay any time at Llanberris?

"No. They would leave it in the morning."

"And continue their tour? Where?"

"Nowhere," said Miss Max. "We go home then."

He looked as if he would have given worlds to ask them where that home was.

"My cousin returns to *her* home, and I to mine," said the girl, gravely. "We are very lucky in our last day; it would have been so provoking to lose it."

"She has made ever so many drawings to-day," said Miss Max; "and they are really so very good, I must show them to you."

"There is not time," said the girl to her cousin. "It is a long drive to Llanberris; it is time we were at the Verney Arms. We must ask after our boxes, and order a carriage. It is later than I fancied," she said, turning to Mr. Marston; "how time runs away when one is really working."

"Or really happy," said the young man.

He walked with them down Castle-street to the Verney Arms, talking with them like an old friend all the way.

They all went together into the room to which the waiter showed them. And Miss Max, who had the little portfolio in her charge, said:

"Now, Maud, we must show Mr. Marston to-day's drawings."

And very glad he was of that privilege.

Then she showed him the sketch of the old farm-house.

"Oh! How pretty! What a sweet thing that is! What a beautiful drawing it makes!"

And so he descanted on it in a rapture.

"There is a place here where they do photographs; and I am going to have that old house taken." He said to the young lady, as Miss Max was giving some orders at the door: "I like it better than anything else about here. I feel so grateful to it."

Miss Max was back again in a moment.

"Well, I do think they *are* very pretty indeed," she said. "We'll take the portfolio inside, dear. I'll take charge of it," she said to Maud. "And I hope none of our boxes were forgotten. I must count them. Five altogether."

And she ran out again upon this errand; and Mr. Marston resumed:

"I shall never forget that thunder-storm, nor that pretty little room, nor my good fortune in being able to guide you home. I shall never forget yesterday evening, the most delightful evening I ever passed in my life."

He was speaking in a very low tone.

Miss Maud looked embarrassed, almost vexed, and a beautiful colour flushed her cheeks, and gave a fire to her dark eyes.

Mr. Marston felt instinctively that he had been going a little too fast.

"Good Heavens!" he thought, "what a fool I am! She looked almost angry. What business had I to talk so?"

There was a little silence.

"It is a misfortune, I believe, being too honest," he said at length.

"A great one, but there are others greater," said the girl, with eyes still vexed and fiery.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean being ever so little *dis*honest, and ever so little insolent. I hope I'm not that, at least to people I suppose to be my inferiors, though I may plead guilty to the lesser fault; perhaps I *am* too honest."

Very proud, at least, she looked at that moment, and very completely "floored" looked poor Mr. Marston.

I don't know what he might have said, or how much worse he might have made matters in the passionate effort to extricate himself, if Miss Max had not happened at that moment to return.

That he could be suspected of presuming upon her supposed position, to treat her with less deference than the greatest lady in the land, was a danger he had never dreamed of; he, who felt, as he spoke, as if he could have fallen on his knees before her. How monstrous! what degradation, what torture!

"Everything is ready, and the carriage at the door, my dear; and all our boxes quite right," said Miss Max, in a fuss.

Mr. Marston came down to put them into their carriage; and while Miss Max was saying a word from one carriage window, he leaned for a moment at the other, and said:

"I'm so shocked and pained to think I have been so mistaken. I implore of you to believe that I am incapable of a thought that could offend you, and that you leave me very miserable."

The cheery voice of Miss Max, unconscious of her cruelty, interrupted him with a word or two of farewell, and the carriage drove off, leaving him not less melancholy than he had described himself.

CHAPTER VII. FLIGHT.

THE old lady looked from the window as they drove on, watching the changes of the landscape. The girl, on the contrary, leaned back in her place, and seemed disturbed and thoughtful.

After a silence of nearly ten minutes, Miss Max, having had, I suppose, for the time, enough of the picturesque, remarked suddenly:

"Mr. Marston is, as I suspected, Lord Warhampton's son. His eldest, I believe his only living son. The people at the Verney Arms told me he had actually ordered horses for Llanberris, intending to go there to-day, when his plans were upset by his father's letter. Of course we know perfectly why he wished to go there to-day. I mentioned last night that we intended visiting it this afternoon, and he really did look so miserable as we took our leave just now."

"The fool! What right has he to follow us to Llanberris?" asked the girl.

"Why, of course, he has a right to go to Llanberris if he likes it, without asking either you or me," said Miss Max.

"He has just the same right, I admit, that Mr. Elihu Lizard has."

"Oh! come, you mustn't compare them," said Miss Max. "I should have been very glad to see Mr. Marston there, and so should you; he is very agreeable, and never could be the least in one's way; he's so good-natured and considerate, and would see in a moment if he was de trop. And it is all very fine talking independence; but every one knows there are fifty things we can't do so well for ourselves, and he might have been very useful in our walks."

"Carrying us over rivers in his jack-boots?"

"He never did carry me over any river, if you mean that," said Miss Max, "or anywhere else. But it is very well I had his arm to lean upon, over those stepping-stones, or I don't think we should have got home last night."

"I dare say he thinks his title irresistible, and that the untitled and poor are made for his amusement. It is a selfish, cruel world. You ought to know it better than I; you have been longer in it; and yet, by a kind of sad inspiration, I know it, I'm sure, ever so much better than you do."

"Wise-head!" said the old lady with a smile, and a little shake of her bonnet.

The young lady looked out, and in a little time took up a volume of Miss Max's nearly finished novel, and read listlessly. She was by no means in those high spirits that had hitherto accompanied every change of scene in their little excursion. Miss Max remarked this subsidence, thought even that she detected the evidence of positive fatigue and melancholy, but the wary lady made no remark. It was better to let this little cloud dissipate itself.

In a lonely part of the road a horse dropped a shoe, and brought them to a walk, till they had reached the next smithy. The delay made their arrival late. The sun was in the west when they gained their first view of that beautiful and melancholy lake lying in the lap of its lonely glen. They drew up near the ruined tower that caught the slanting light from the west, under the purple shadow of the hill.

As they stopped the carriage here and got out, they were just in time to see a man descend from the box beside the driver.

They were both so astounded that neither could find a word for some seconds. It was Mr. Elihu Lizard, who had enjoyed all the way a seat on their driver's box, and who now got down, put his bundle on the end of his stick, which he carried over his shoulder, and with a "Heaven bless you, friend," to the whip on the box, smiled defiantly over his shoulder at the ladies, and marched onward toward the little inn at the right of the glen.

"Well!" exclaimed Miss Max, when she had recovered breath. "Certainly! Did you ever hear or see anything like that? Where did you take up that person, pray?"

Miss Max looked indignantly up at the fat, dull cheeks of the Welshman on the box, and pointed with her parasol at the retreating expounder. That gentleman, glancing back from time to time, was taken with a fit of coughing, or of laughter, it was difficult to say which at that distance, as he pursued his march, with the intention of refreshing himself with a mug of beer in the picturesque little inn.

"Call that man! You had no business taking any one upon the carriage we had hired, without our leave," said Miss Max. "Call him—make him come back, or you shall drive us after him. I will speak to him."

The driver shouted. Mr. Lizard waved his hand.

"I'm certain he is laughing—insolent hypocrite!" exclaimed Miss Max, transported with indignation. "I'll drive after him, I will overtake him."

They got into the carriage, overtook Elihu Lizard, and stepped down about a dozen yards before him.

"So, sir, you persist in following us!" exclaimed the old lady.

"To me," he replied, in a long-drawn, bleating falsetto, as he stood in his accustomed pose, with his hand a little raised, his eyes nearly closed, and a celestial simper playing upon his conceited and sinister features, "to me it would appear, nevertheless, honourable lady, that it is you, asking your parding, that is a-following me; I am following, not you, nor any other poor, weak, sinful, erring mortal, but my humble calling, which I hope it is not sich as will be disdained from the hand of a poor weak, miserable creature, nor yet that I shall be esteemed altogether an unprofitable servant."

"I don't want to hear your cant, sir; if you had the least regard for truth, you would admit frankly that you have been following me and my friend the whole of the way from Chester, stopping wherever we stopped, and pursuing wherever we went. I have seen you everywhere, and if there was a policeman here, I should have you arrested; rely on it, I shall meet you somewhere, where I can have your conduct inquired into, and your cowardly persecution punished."

"I have come to this land of Wales, honourable lady, and even to this place, which it is called Llanberris, holding myself subject and obedient unto the powers that be, and fearing no one, insomuch as I am upon my lawful business, with your parding for so saying, not with a concealed character, nor yet with a forged name, nor in anywise under false pretences; but walking in my own humble way, and being that, and only that, which humbly and simply I pretend to be."

The good man, with eyes nearly closed, through the lids of which a glitter was just perceptible, betraying his vigilance, delivered these words in his accustomed singsong, but with an impertinent significance that called a beautiful rush of crimson to the younger lady's cheeks.

"Your name is nothing to us, sir. We are not likely to know it," said the young lady, supporting Miss Max with a little effort. "We shall find that out in good time, perhaps. We shall make it out when we want it."

"You shall have it when you please, honourable lady; the humble and erring sinner who speaks to you is one who walks in the light, which he seeks not, as too many do, and have done, ay, and are doing at this present time, to walk as it were in a lie, and give themselves out for that which they are not. No, he is not one of those who loveth a lie, nor yet who is filled with guile, and he is not ashamed, neither afraid, to tell his name whithersoever he goeth, neither is he the heaviness of his mother; no, nor yet forsaketh he the law of his mother."

The same brilliant blush tinged the girl's cheeks; she looked hard and angrily at the man, and his simper waxed more than ever provoking as he saw these signs of confusion.

"I believe I did wrong to speak to you here, where there are no police," said Miss Max. "I ought to have known that it could only supply new opportunity to your impertinence. I shall find out, however, when I meet you next, as I have told you, whether we are to be longer exposed to this kind of cowardly annoyance."

Miss Max and her young companion turned away. The one-eyed Christian, apostle, detective, whatever he was, indulged silently in that meanest of all laughs, the laugh which, in cold blood, chuckles over insult, as with a little hitch of his shoulder, on which rested his stick and bundle, he got under way again toward the little inn, a couple of hundred yards on.

The driver took his horses up to the inn.

"Well," said Miss Max, a little disconcerted, "I could have told you that before. I thought him a very impertinent person, and just the kind of man who would be as insolent as he pleased to two ladies, alone as we are; but very civil if a gentleman were by with a stick in his hand."

"I don't mean to make any drawings here. I've changed my mind," said Maud. "I'm longing to be at Wybourne again. Suppose, instead of staying here, we go to-night?"

"Very good, dear. To say truth, I'm not comfortable with the idea of that man's being here to watch us. Come, Maud, you must not look so sad. We have all to-morrow at Wybourne, before we part, and let us enjoy, as you say, our holiday."

"Yes, on Monday we part. Don't mention it again. It is bad enough when it comes. Then the scene changes. I'll think of it no more to-day. I'll forget it. Let us walk a little further up the glen, and see all we can, in an hour."

So with altered plans the hour was passed; and at the approach of sunset they met the train at Bangor.

A fog was spreading up the Menai as

the train started. To the girl it seemed prophetic of her own future of gloom and uncertainty.

Other people had changed their plans that evening. A letter had reached Mr. Marston, unluckiest of mortals, only two hours after the ladies had left Cardyllion for Llanberris, countermanding all his arrangements for his father, Lord Warhampton.

Instantly that impetuous young man had got horses, and pursued to Llanberris, but only to find that those whom he had followed had taken wing. As he looked from the uplands along the long level sweep that follows the base of the noble range of mountains, by which the line of rails stretches away until it rounds the foot of a mighty headland at the right, he saw, with distraction, the train gliding away along the level, submerging itself, at last, in the fog that flooded the valley like a golden sea.

His only clue was one of the papers, condemned as illegible, which Miss Max had hastily written for their boxes.

"Miss M. Guendoline," was written on it, with the name of some place, it was to be supposed—but, oh, torture! The clumsy hoof of the driver, thick with mud, had stamped this inestimable record into utter illegibility. Viâ Chester was still traceable, also England in the corner. The rest was undecipherable. The wretch seemed to have jumped upon it. The very paper was demolished. The gravel from the Vandal's heel was punched through it.

In the little inn where he had heard tidings of two ladies, with a carriage such as he described, he had picked up this precious, but torturing bit of paper.

PRISON LIFE IN CUBA.

I DREAM that I am Silvio Pellico, that the prisoner of St. Helena is my fellow-captive, and that an apartment belonging to the Spanish Inquisition is our dormitory. Clasps of iron eat their way into our ankles and wrists; gigantic rats share our food; our favourite exercise is swinging head downwards in the air, and our chief recreation is to watch the proceedings of tame spiders.

I awake and find my bed unusually hard. My bed-clothes have vanished, and in their stead are a couple of hard benches, with my wearing apparel rolled up for a pillow. By a dim light I observe that my apartment is remarkably small, bare, damp, and dome-shaped. The window is a barred aperture in the door; is only a foot square, and looks on to a patio, or narrow passage, where unlimited wall stares me in the face. Do I still dream, or is this actually one of le mie prigioni? I rub my eyes for a third time, and look about the semi-darkened vault. Somebody is snoring. I gaze in the direction whence the sound proceeds, and observe indistinctly an object huddled together in a corner. So, this is no dream after all; and that heap of sleeping humanity is Napoleon himself!

Yes, Napoleon it is! But that is only part of my companion's name; the rest is Rodriguez y Boldú. Napoleón — pronounced with a sharp accent on the last vowel — is a common Christian name among Cubans, and my fellow-captive is a Cuban.

We are both shut up in one of the subterranean dungeons of the Morro Castle; not the Havannah Morro, but the fortress at Santiago de Cuba, alluded to by Tom Cringle.

Why am I here?

Where was I yesterday afternoon? Let me consider. I was sauntering peacefully along the road which leads from Santiago to the Morro Castle, in company with the prisoner of——I mean, Napoleón Rodriguez y Boldú. We had a negro with us, an old and faithful vassal, who at the present moment is enjoying solitary confinement in another part of the fortress. We reached the castle grounds, where a group of Spanish militares were seated. We gave them the Buenas tardes: they returned our salute, and their chief, who was no less a personage than the commandant of the Morro, offered us refreshment, and permitted us to wander about the grounds. In our ramble we paused here and there to admire the picturesque bits of scenery which, at every turn of a winding road, broke upon our view. By a narrow path cut in the grey rock we descended to the seashore, and stood before the entrance of the Cuban harbour. We watched the French packet as she steamed into port on her way to the town, and saw the gun fired which announced her arrival. The steamer was so near, we could scan the faces of everybody on board, and hear enthusiastic congratulations on their safe arrival after the tedious voyage. The skipper conferred with the Morro guard. What was the ship's name? Where did she hail from?

Who was her captain? Where was she bound for? A needless demand, I thought, seeing that there is nothing navigable beyond the town; but it was in strict conformity with Spanish regulations.

As evening advanced, we prepared to return to our temporary home, where a good dinner doubtless awaited us, with a cup of café noir to follow, and correspondence—ah! my friends never missed a mail—to open and to devour.

Alto allá! The ominous command to halt where we stood, still rings in my ear. A party of soldiers, with pointed muskets and fixed bayonets, ran with all speed in our direction.

Car—amba! Were we the object of their precipitation? We were!

They conducted us to an eminence, where stood a podgy, high-shouldered, short-necked man with a squeaky interrogative voice and gold spectacles. This was the commandant. Without explanation, that officer, in brief words, ordered us to be arrested.

The soldiers obeyed. They bandaged our eyes with handkerchiefs. They led us along hollow-sounding alleys; beneath echoing archways; down scores of stone steps; through mouldy passages. Lower yet, where a strong flavour of cooking assailed our sense of smell. A couple more downward flights, and then we paused—heard a jingling of big keys—an opening of ponderous doors—and here we were.

Here, is a subterranean vault, I know not how many feet below sunlight. The air is close and vaporous; the domed chamber is damp and musty. They have divested us of all our portable property save a dozen cigarettes, which we have secreted in a dark corner, and there is nothing to be had in the way of refreshment for love or money.

Yes, for money. I have bribed the sentinel, who occasionally eclipses our square of window, with all my ready cash, and he has brought us contraband cups of weak coffee. Will he treat our dark domestic as well? We try him and find that he won't.

What's o'clock? We have no means of ascertaining this, as Phœbus, who might have suggested the time of day, is a long way out of sight. Our sentinel says it is early morning.

Hark! A sound of many footsteps; a rattling of arms and keys. Enter our military jailer with a dozen soldiers to release us from our present quarters. Our eyes are bandaged as before, and after passing up several flights of steps in another direction, our sight is restored: the scene changes, and we are discovered, like the Prince of Denmark, upon another part of the platform. Our faithful vassal is with us, looking as much like a ghost as it is possible for a negro to appear. They have tied his arms behind him with cords, and serve us in the same manner; while eight soldiers encircle us at respectful distances, and deliberately proceed to load their weapons. The negro trembles with affright and falls on his knees. Misericordia! they are going to shoot us, he thinks; for he is ignorant of the Spanish custom of loading in the presence of the prisoner before escorting him from one jail to another.

To another? Santo Dios! Then we are prisoners still? I think of the victim of Santa Margherita and his many prisons, and begin to wonder how many years of incarceration we shall experience.

En marcha! Eight militares and a sergeant place us in their midst, and in this way we march to town, a distance of seven miles. Our sergeant proves to be more humane than his superior, and on the uneven road pauses to screw up cigarettes for us, and, in consideration of our helpless condition, even places them in our mouths.

It is Sunday morning, and when we reach the town all good Catholics have been to high mass, and are parading the narrow thoroughfare dressed in fashionable attire. Crowds gather around us and speculate as to the particular crime we are guilty of; and, to tell the truth, our appearance is by no means respectable. Have we shot the commandant? Undermined the Morro? Poisoned the garrison? Have we headed a negro conspiracy, or joined a gang of pirates? Friends whom we recognise on our way, endeavour to interrogate us, but are interrupted by the sergeant. We halt before the governor's house; but his excellency is not yet out of bed, and may not be disturbed. So we proceed to the town jail, where everybody is stirring, and where they are happy to see us, and receive us with open doors. A dozen policemen, dressed in brown-holland coats, trimmed with yellow braid and silver buttons, with Panama hats, revolvers, and short Roman swords, are seated on benches at the prison entrance. Passing them, we are hurried into a whitewashed chamber, where a frowning functionary, in brown-holland and silver lace, with a Panama on his head, and a long cigar in his mouth, sits at a desk

scribbling something on stamped paper. He pauses to examine and peruse a large letter which our sergeant hands him, and which contains a statement of our arrest, with full particulars of our misdeeds. The document is folded in official fashion, is written, regardless of economy, with any quantity of margin, and is terminated by a tremendous signature, accompanied by an elaborate flourish, which occupies exactly half a page. The gentleman in brown-holland casts a look of suspicion at us, and directs a couple of policemen to search us, "registrar" us, as he calls it, which they accordingly do; but nothing that we could dispense with is found on our persons, except the grime upon our hands and faces, and a pearl button, which has strayed during the journey, and somehow found its way into my boot.

Nothing further being required of us for the present, we are conducted into the centre of the jail to an extensive courtyard, where a crowd of prisoners of all shades and castes lies basking in the sun. We are led to one of the galleries which surround the patio, our arms are untied, and we are introduced into three different chambers.

The apartment allotted to me is spacious and airy enough, and has a huge barred window that overlooks the main thoroughfare. In these respects, at least, my quarters resemble an ordinary Cuban parlour in a private house. But the only articles of furniture are a couple of hard benches and a straw mattress; and although a Cuban parlour has a barred window, a brick floor, and whitewashed walls, it has also a few cane-bottomed chairs, an elegant mirror, and a gas chandelier.

The prison in which I am confined was originally a convent, and now it is devoted not only to the use of malefactors, but also accommodates mad people, whose shrieks and wild laughter I occasionally hear.

From my window I can see into the private houses opposite, where ladies are swaying and fanning themselves in butacas, or rocking-chairs, while half a dozen naked white and black children play in an adjacent room. Friends passing along the street recognise me; but I may not converse with them, or the sentry below will inform, and I shall be removed to a more secluded part of the stronghold.

I am not alone. My chamber is occupied by a native Indian, whose origin is distinguishable by his lank, jet-black hair, his gipsy-like complexion, and finely cut nostrils. He is neither tattooed, nor does he wear feathers, beads, or animals' hides, but he has all the appearance of a respectable member of society. He gives me his history, together with a few interesting particulars connected with prison life in Cuba. The Indian himself has been arrested on suspicion, but his trial has been postponed for many weary months, and he is at present quite ignorant of the act for which he may stand accused. Having no friends to intercede for him, or golden doubloons wherewith to convince the authorities of his innocence, the poor fellow is afraid things will go hard with him.

He condoles with me; but the prospect he holds out is far from encouraging. I tell him I am a British subject, and that my consul who resides in the town will surely see me righted; which information makes little impression on the Indian, who assures me that my nationality will avail me nothing if I have no interest with some of the Spanish officials. He gives me instances to prove how it is often out of the power of a consul to assist a compatriot in difficulties.

"Not long since," says my friend, "a marine from your country, being intoxicated, and getting mixed up in a street brawl, was arrested and locked up with a crowd of insubordinate coolies and Spanish deserters. His trial was, as usual, postponed. In the meanwhile the jail had become overcrowded by the arrival of some wounded soldiers from San Domingo, and your countryman was shipped off with others to another prison at Manzanillo, where he was entered on the list of convicts, and has never been heard of since."

"In this very jail," continues the Indian, "are a couple of American engineers, both of whom stand accused of being concerned in a nigger conspiracy, and who have been locked up here for the last six months. They are ignorant of the Spanish language, have mislaid their passports, and have been denied a conference with their consul, who is, of course, ignorant of their incarceration."

I make a mental note of this last case, with a view to submit it to the proper authority as soon as I shall be able to do so.

My attention is presently arrested by a sound which reminds me of washing, for in Cuba this operation is usually performed by placing the wet linen on a flat board, and belabouring it with a smooth stone or a heavy roller. My companion smiles when I give him my impression of the familiar sounds, and he tells me that white linen is

not the object of the beating, but black limbs! An unruly slave receives his castigation at the jail when it is found inconvenient to perform the operation under his master's roof. No inquiry into the offence is made by the officers of justice; the miscreant is simply ordered twenty-five or fifty lashes, as the case may be, by his accuser, who acts also as his counsel, jury, judge, and occasionally—executioner!

Whilst listening to the unfortunate's groans and appeals for mercy, I watch the proceedings of a chain-gang of labourers, some twenty of whom have left the jail for the purpose of repairing a road in an adjacent street. They are dressed in canvas suits, numbered and lettered on the back, and wear broad-brimmed straw-hats. Each man smokes, and makes a great rattling of his chains as he assists in drawing along the heavy trucks and implements for work. A couple of armed soldiers and three or four prison-warders accompany the gang; the former to keep guard, the latter to superintend the labour. Some of the prisoners sell hats, fans, toys, and other articles of their own manufacture as they go along. One of these industrious gentlemen has entered, chains and all, into a private house opposite, and while he stands bargaining with a highly respectable white, his keeper sits, like Patience, on the door-step smoking a cigar.

I withdraw from the window to meet my jailer, who has brought—not my freedom? no; my food. It is the first meal I have tasted for many long hours, and I am prepared to relish it though it be but a banana and Catalan wine.

These are, however, the least items in the princely fare which the jailer has brought. The whitest of tablecloths is removed from the showiest of trays, and discloses a number of small tureens, in which fish, flesh, and fowl have been prepared in a variety of appetising ways. Besides these are a square cedar-box of guava preserves, a pot of boiling black coffee, a bundle of the best Ti Arriba cigars, and a packet of Astrea cigarettes; all served on the choicest china. This goodly repast cometh from La Señora Mercedes, wife of Don Benigno, under whose hospitable roof I have lodged and fed for many months past. Doña Mercedes has heard of my captivity, and without making any inquiry into the nature of my misdemeanour, has instantly despatched one of her black domestics with the best breakfast she can prepare.

The Indian assures me that the admittance into jail of such a collation augurs well. I have doubtless friends who are using their influence with the officials in my behalf, and, in short, he considers my speedy release as certain.

Usted gusta? I invite my companion to share the good things, but he excuses himself by saying that, with his present prospects, he would rather not recal the feeling of a good meal. He, however, partakes of some of my coffee, the odour of which is far too savoury for his self-denial, and helps me with the tobacco.

Breakfast over, I take a siesta on half the furniture, and after four hours' delicious oblivion am awakened by the jailer, who comes with the welcome news that the court is sitting, and that my presence is required.

"Imprisoned and tried on the same day!" exclaims my Indian friend. "Then," says he, "I may well wish you adieu for ever!"

A Cuban court of justice, broadly described, consists of two old men, a deal table, a bottle of ink, and a boy. One of the elders is the alcalde mayor, an awful being, invested with every kind of administrative power; the other functionary is his escribano, or legal man-of-all-work, who dispenses Spanish law upon the principle of "French without a master." He professes to teach prisoners their fate in one easy lesson, without the interposition of either counsel or jury. None but those immediately concerned in the case are admitted into the tribune; so that the prisoner, who is frequently the only party interested, has the court, so to speak, all to himself!

The chamber into which I am ushered on the present occasion has very much the appearance of a schoolroom during the holidays. The walls are whitewashed, and half a dozen short forms lie in disorder about the brick floor. At one end of the apartment is a yellow map of the Antilles; at the other is hung a badly painted oil portrait of her Catholic Majesty Isabella, with a soiled coat-of-arms of Castile above her, and a faded Spanish banner half concealing her royal countenance. Beneath this trophy, on a raised platform, is seated the prison magistrate, or fiscal, as he is called. Before him is a cedar-wood table, with a bottle of ink, a glass of blotting sand, and a quire of stamped paper. On his right is an escribano and a couple of interpreters, whose knowledge of the English language I afterwards find to be extremely limited. On his left is seated my captive companion, Napoleón Rodriguez y

Boldú. Everybody present, including a couple of brown-holland policemen at the door, is smoking, which has a sociable air, and inspires me with confidence. Upon my appearance in court everybody rises; the fiscal politely offers me a cigar and a seat on the bench.

As a matter of form—for my Spanish is by no means unintelligible—I am examined through the medium of an interpreter, who makes a terrible hash of my replies. He talks of the "foots of my friend's negro," and the "commandant's, officer's, sergeant's relations," by which I infer that the learned linguist has never overcome the fifth lesson of his Ollendorff. It is accordingly found necessary to conduct the rest of the inquiry in good Castilian.

A great case has been made out against us by the commandant, who represents us in his despatch as spies in league with any quantity of confederates. A pocket-book full of nefarious notes and significant scratches has been found upon me: together with a four-bladed penknife, a metallic corkscrew, a very black-lead pencil, and an ink-eraser! In the commandant's opinion the said notes are without doubt private observations on the mysteries of the Morro, and the scratches are nothing more nor less than topographical plans of the fortifications.

Absurd and improbable as the commandant's story may appear, it would have great weight against us with the fiscal, and considerably protract the period of our release, were it not for the fact that the fiscal is on intimate terms with my companion's family. This fortunate circumstance, aided by the laudable efforts of my consul, who works wonders with his excellency the governor, enables us to be set at liberty without further delay. There is, however, some difficulty in the case of our black attendant, whom the authorities would still keep in bondage, out of compliment to stern justice; but we intercede for him, and he accompanies us from jail.

Crowds of people await outside and escort us to our home, where dear old Don Benigno, his amiable señora and family, welcome us with joy. Wherever we go, we are lionised and loaded with congratulations and condolence. A kind of patriotic sentiment is mixed up with the public sympathy; Spanish rule being extremely distasteful to a Cuban, and any opportunity for expressing his disgust of an incompetent ruler being hailed by him with delight. All my Cuban friends—and, to say the truth, many of the Spaniards themselves—are unanimous in their disapproval of the commandant's conduct.

But I have not yet done with the commandant. A year after the events recorded I am on his grounds again. This time, however, I am there in the capacity of guest. I am rusticating at a small fishing-village called La Socapa, which is situated at the narrow entrance of the Cuban bay, and exactly faces the Morro Castle. Here I make the acquaintance of a young Spanish officer. He has invited me to accompany him to the formidable fortress, and we hire a small canoe and row across the harbour.

The officer's uniform is an all-powerful pass wherever we go. It enables us to land, to pass the various sentries, who touch their caps respectfully as we approach, and finally to reach the commandant's private dwelling in the very heart of the stronghold.

El señor comandante is at home, and invites us in. He is delighted to see his young friend the captain, and charmed to form the acquaintance of the captain's companion. He does not recognise me in the least, and satisfied of that fact, I accept his pressing invitation to lunch with himself and officers.

After coffee and cigars, our host offers to show us the secrets of his prison-house. This time my eyes are not bandaged, and I follow the commandant without military assistance.

We are shown all over the fortifications. We inspect minutely the old-fashioned twenty-four pounders; rest on the six bronze French guns (which, we are told, are quite new, and the only serviceable weapons in the fortress), and make other observations, which, if we were enemies with an inclination to storm the place from the sea, would greatly assist us in our operations. Now we are in the sleeping caves, where the hundred men who compose the garrison are lodged. Now we are descending flights of stone steps. We pass along hollow-sounding alleys and under echoing archways. Presently we arrive at the cooking department, where the atmosphere feels oppressive, and is black with innumerable flies. We come at last to the deepest part of the fortress, where "criminals of the worst description" (so the commandant informs me) are lodged. Narrow, intricate passages lead to the different cells. Our guide points out some of the prisoners, and invites us to look in at them through their little square windows. Strange to say, he does not seem to be at all

conversant with the nature of their offences. "Dios sabe!" accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders, is invariably the commandant's reply to any query respecting a particular prisoner. Dios sabe may, however, signify a great deal more than "Heaven knows;" and, perhaps, the commandant chooses not to explain himself.

We pause before a dungeon where it is said a Chinaman committed suicide after six days' incarceration: self-slaughter among Celestials being their favourite mode of killing care. An equally suicidal Chino is confined there now; but they have bound him hand and foot, and he lies muttering in falsetto like a maniac. He would doubtless give something for a little soothing opium!

My friend the commandant assures me that the vault I am now surveying with such interest, is unoccupied, and persuades me to pass on. But I linger lovingly at the little square window, and take a fond look at the interior. The theatre of my woe has changed in appearance, the company having gone. But there still remain the empty benches!

"Whom have you had within the past twelve months?" I ask.

"Dios sabe!"

It is not the commandant's business to know where his prisoners are quartered, or what becomes of them

I apply afterwards for the same information to the captain of the garrison.

"Dios sabe!"

The staff of officers engaged in the Morro service is relieved once a month, and the captain I address has only lately taken the command.

Dios sabe? In the majority of cases, it is, indeed, Heaven alone who knows what becomes of unfortunates in a country where law is directed through the agency of military despotism, and where the disposal of a man's life and liberty is intrusted to the mercy of a vain and capricious commandant.

GERMAN HUSSAR SONGS.

I.

Minny, reach me out your hand,
'Tis a true pledge understand.
Love is our eternal lot,
Mind these words, "Forget-me-not."
Minny, I will think of you
Till this sabre snaps in two.

Lizzy, when away from thee,
I am steeped in misery,
Without thee my life is lost
All the summer long in frost.
Lizzy, I will dream of you
Till this sabre snaps in two.

When to the parade I go,
Fanny absent, all is woe,
In my heart Love's arrow burns
Till the moment she returns.
Though this sabre snap in two,
Fanny, I will think of you.

Last night I'd a dream of thee,
Mary, if you'll credit me,
You had loved me dearest best,
Chosen me from all the rest.
Mary, I will think of you
Till this sabre snaps in two.

Had I in this world the gold
Of King Crœsus, ay, twice told,
Would it be as dear to me,
Sweetest, as the love of thee.
Bessy, I will think of you
Till this sabre snaps in two.

Kitty's little sugar mouth,
Stops Love's very keenest drouth.
Kitty (don't let people hear),
You must be my wife, my dear.
Kitty, I will think of you,
Though this sabre snaps in two.

II.

With careless hearts and full of glee
We charge upon the enemy;
But, ere we mount brave fame to seek,
We kiss our darling's lip and cheek,
And parting, parting, cry Hurrah!

Now, forward, men! There stands the foe!
As fast as thunderbolts we go,
United by a holy band,
For God and for the Fatherland,
And all, and all with an Hurrah!

See how the foemen turn and fly
When our red sabres meet their eye.
No mere revenge has given us breath,
Our cry is "Victory or Death!"
And all, and all with an Hurrah!

Then back so gaily we repair:
Sunshine and Love fill all the air,
And welcome is the cry we hear
As home we reach, and far and near
They shout and shout, as we Hurrah!

T. S.

There is a tendency amongst many of us to abbreviate the names and titles both of persons and things of which we happen to be fond, and in many cases to call them only by their initial letters. Thus, more than seventeen years ago, the history of that journal, of which this is the successor, was narrated in its own columns by its founder and conductor, under the title of "H. W." Similarly I now purpose giving to the world some information relative to an establishment with which I am connected, and which is known to two or three persons at least in every town, and almost every village of the British Isles, as T. S.

T. S. never sleeps, never slumbers even, never so much as closes an eye; T. S. has

always a thirst for news; is always eager to receive, eager to impart it. The oldest frequenter of a Pall Mall club window never during the course of his life heard a millionth part of the news which comes to T. S. in a day. The most inveterate gossip of a country town never lived long enough to give utterance to a thousandth part of the rumours which T. S. spreads abroad in the course of an hour. And the character of its news is varied and miscellaneous. The capitulation of the emperor at Sedan, and the result of the "rattling little mill" between the Tutbury Pet and the Brighton Bruiser; the speech delivered by Mr. Bright, at Birmingham, and the fact that Claribel is scratched for the Liverpool Steeple Chase; the birth of another grandson to the Queen, and the horrible death of a lunatic—all this news comes pouring into T. S. at the same time, and struggles for priority and precedence. Hither comes a mysterious whisper from the dusky Ind relative to grey shirtings and sicca rupees; here are the words of deep import which but half an hour ago fell from the lips of the United States President at the White House; here is the account of the railway smash which took place this morning in the far North, with the names and condition of the injured; and here news of the gallant rescue of a ship's crew by the Penzance lifeboat. T. S. keeps its finger on the pulse of the gold exchange at New York, and records its every throb; T. S. vibrates with the rise and fall of the indigo market, sent to it from the distant Indian fields. T. S.'s ramifications extend everywhere: winding under our feet in the City streets, running by our side along the country roads, wriggling along the slimy wall of the railway tunnel, swinging from chimney-stack to gable-end over our houses, and lying at the bottom of the ocean, amid the wrecks and coral reefs, the lost treasure, the dead men's bones, and the wondrous stores of which nothing will be known until the sea gives up its dead. The highest and the lowest, the busiest and the idlest, acknowledge its influence; neither the Queen nor the prime minister ever dream of going beyond its jurisdiction. Baron Rothschild whispers to it what he wishes said to the representatives of his house in Frankfort, Colonel de Boots mentions to it what he wishes for dinner at the hotel at Richmond. Through its aid the son in London tells the miner father in Cornwall that his child is dead, and by its means the duke at his castle in Aberdeenshire supplicates the immediate attention of the London physician to the sudden illness of her grace. In each and all of these cases T. S. is called into requisition, for T. S. is the official and familiar abbreviation of Telegraph Street, the great central station of the Postal Telegraph Department.

Telegraph Street is a small and narrow street, which looks like a cul-de-sac, but which finds an outlet in a very narrow court. Close by the entrance to this court stands the huge block of buildings which we must still describe as T. S. The first room on the ground floor is the porter's lodge, where the porter, in a bright scarlet coat, which makes him look like a newly issued copy of the Post Office Directory, is basking in the warmth of his fire, and placidly regarding the floral decorations, appropriate to the Christmas season, with which he has surrounded himself. The next room is the surgery, medical attendance for the staff being duly provided by the department, and the next the room in which the accounts of the dealings with the various companies for the transmission of news are entered, checked, and examined. Of these news companies there are three, the Central Press, the Press Association, and the Lombard, and the "flimsy" from the representatives of these three companies is perpetually in course of reception and transmission at T. S., from five A.M. till three the next morning. In addition to this news supply, certain of the leading provincial journals have a special wire communication direct from T. S. to their offices, which is reserved after seven P.M. for the use of their London correspondents, for whom a room is also provided. On the ground floor are also the dining and cloak rooms for the male staff, and the office from which the messengers are despatched. Only a portion of the messages for City delivery are sent out from T. S., reserved forces of boys being maintained at Gresham House and other neighbouring offices. At T. S., the messages for delivery are sent into the office down a pipe enclosed in a leather case, and are dealt with by three or four young ladies, who put them into envelopes and hand them to the boys. T. S. has many regular customers, and for each of these a special stock of envelopes, with printed name and address, is provided. There are one hundred and sixty-seven of these messenger boys, who are duly drilled, and kept as much as possible under military discipline. They do not receive regular

wages, but are paid by "docket," the sums which they receive for each message varying between a halfpenny, three-farthings, and a penny, according to the distance which they have to travel. This plan has been found successful, not merely by increasing the spirit of emulation among the boys, but by inducing them to return direct to the office with a view of getting more work, rather than yielding to the temptations of chuck-farthing and post-vaulting, to which they are continually exposed.

On the first floor, passing by the offices of the superintendent and the engineer-in-chief, I enter an enormous room, known as the Metropolitan Gallery. It is filled with young ladies, all busily at work, and, looking at them, the first thing which strikes the visitor is the enormous number of ways in which the human hair is capable of being dressed, and the singular sameness in the cut, though not in the quality, of the costume of the period. Here are girls with chignons of every kind; the enormous, the bulbous, the flattened half-quartern loaf, the three sausages, the plaited horse-tails, the bunch of frizz. Here you may find Madonna-like bands flattened to the cheek; crisp, saucy little accroche-cœurs; foreheads either hog-maned—that is, with the hair cut straight across them—or with a single row of little curls, like the medallion portrait of Nero in Goldsmith's History, and occasionally, but very seldom, one may see the dear old corkscrew ringlet of one's childhood, which we found so captivating in the year—— no matter what. These young ladies are seated at the long rows of tables crossing the room from end to end, and, with few exceptions, each one has before her a single needle or printing instrument, the "circuit," or place with which it is in communication, being denoted on a square tablet, something like a headstone in a cemetery, erected immediately in front of her. It may further be remarked of these young ladies, that they talk much less than might be expected, work very quickly, and have generally very nice hands.

The Metropolitan Gallery, consisting of a set of three large rooms, is simply used as a centre for the collection of messages from the metropolitan district. It is arranged upon the plan of the postal districts, with which the public are now familiar, and each division is under the superintendence of a clerk in charge. All messages are brought to the central sorting-table, and there subdivided: those for the country being sent to the upper or Provincial Gallery by a lift, those for the City being sorted into different batches, and despatched by the agency of a pneumatic tube to the delivery station nearest to their destination. These pneumatic tubes, through which messages are being perpetually shot all day long, have been found of great service, and are now in operation between T. S. and the principal delivery stations in the City, while they are also used by the Anglo-American, the Indo-European, and the Falmouth and Gibraltar offices, for the transmission of messages to the central station. It should be here noticed that the messages for the Continent received at T. S. are dealt with entirely by members of the male staff, a mixed assemblage of foreigners and Englishmen conversant with foreign tongues. As I walk down the gallery, accompanied by the superintendent, I am allowed to pause where I please, ask such questions, and make such observations, as I desire. Thus, pausing for an instant by the side of the young lady to whose memory a tombstone inscribed "Holborn" has been erected, I find her at fifty-four and a half minutes past three P.M. writing off the last words of a message which had been handed in at the office on Holborn Viaduct at fifty-three minutes past three P.M., and which will thus have been completed and ready for sending out for delivery within two minutes. The young lady beside whom I next halt is, perhaps, a little short in her reply, which I can readily excuse when I learn that from the south-western district, with which she is in communication, she has to receive twenty-seven identical messages, sent by one man to different addresses, a monotony which must be painful to the soul of the most zealous operator. Here in this south-western division are what are known as the "official circuits," worked by the A B C instrument, with the grinding handle and the alphabetical depressible keys familiar to most of us, which communicate with the War Office, the Foreign Office, the Treasury, the Admiralty, the Houses of Parliament, and the whipper-in. Here, too, is the last specimen left throughout the building of what at one time used to be the favourite telegraphic instrument, the "double needle," which is used for communication with Buckingham Palace. At Windsor, Osborne, and Balmoral there are telegraphic instruments, under the charge of a clerk, who travels with the Court, to which he has been attached for some years; while Sandring-

ham, Badminton, the seat of the Chancellor of the Exchequer at Caterham, and the country-houses of various other noblemen and officials, are similarly furnished.

The work in the Metropolitan Gallery, which is always great, is largely increased on the occasion of any of our great cockney festivals, such as the Derby, or the University Boat Race. A dense fog, too, brings much extra business for them, and the wires, but for the precaution which the department has been able to make against sudden pressure, would be choked with messages explaining the impossibility of keeping appointments already made. All the messages for the tube stations are sorted into different pigeon-holes marked with the name of the superintendent. The increase in the delivery of messages from Gresham House has been so great since the transfer of the telegraphs to Government, that a second pneumatic tube for communication between it and T. S. is in contemplation. Some idea of the business done may be guessed, when it is stated that there are already three hundred and thirty-four of these delivery stations in London, and that their number is still increasing.

The principal difference between the Metropolitan and the Provincial Galleries lies in the fact, that in the latter the tomb-stones bear the names of provincial towns, instead of those of familiar streets and suburbs. Otherwise, the work is controlled and carried on very much in the same way; there is the same variety of chignon, the same quietude and industry. Necessarily, however, the Provincial Gallery is more interesting as a show-place for the display of tours de force than the Metropolitan. Thus, I am taken to one of the Liverpool circuits, furnished with one of Hughes's instruments, the speciality of which is, that it records the messages in actual Roman type, and am invited to communicate with the clerk at the instrument in the Liverpool office. I do so, and in less than a minute and a half I see his printed reply to my message come winding, snake-like, out of the instrument. This Liverpool, by the way, is a very cormorant of telegraphic communication. Already it has eleven direct circuits from T. S., and five from the Stock Exchange, making sixteen in all; but it is still clamorous for more, and is likely to have its wishes gratified. There is probably some grumbling among the Dicky Sams to-day, for there is a break-down in their direct communication with Bristol, and the Liverpool messages for Bristol are being sent to London for transmission. Manchester is all right; here is the Wheatstone instrument to Manchester, the operator at which tells as that she has sent nearly three hundred and forty messages to Manchester between eleven and three o'clock to-day. This is considered rather a dull time in T. S. During the busy season, the daily average of messages sent, exclusive of press messages, has been nearly twenty thousand; now it is about sixteen thousand. We can check these figures, if we like, by the aid of the superintendent of one of the check-tables close by. Her account, she says, stands at this time (quarter to five P.M.) at six thousand five hundred messages; each of these has been sent twice, representing a total of thirteen thousand, and there is yet plenty of time for the receipt of more. Yesterday was the first day of the opening of the submarine line to Jersey. The messages, which were formerly sent by way of France, now go direct to the island, and the charge, which used to be six-and-eightpence for twenty words, is now one shilling.

This extraordinary collection of apparently the brass butt-ends of fishing-rods, with thin coils of wire running around and between them, is one of the most important of the internal arrangements at T. S. It is called the testing-box, and, as its name imports, is the place where the trial of the state and efficiency of all the wires is made. When the engineer's attention is called by a clerk to a fault in the wire which he is working, each one of which has a separate number and letter, he proceeds to the test-box, and, by means of the galvanometer in connexion therewith, he is able to ascertain at once whether the fault or fracture is at his end of the wire. Finding it is not there, he then proceeds to test the wire in the various sections into which it is divided; thus, supposing it were a north-western wire, he would test the section between T. S. and Euston, then between Euston and Wolverton, then between Wolverton and Rugby, and so on, until he hit upon the section, and, finally, upon the immediate locality where the fault lay; when the divisional engineer would be instructed as to its whereabouts, and ordered to remedy it. Nearly all the wires radiating from the station are tested at six A.M. every morning, when every terminal station is spoken to and expected to reply, to see if the lines are right throughout. It is calculated

that there are nearly sixty miles of wire under the floor of the Provincial Gallery, merely for making local connexions with batteries, &c.

Another interesting object is the chronopher, or instrument from which all England is supplied with the correct time. Sixteen of the most important cities in the kingdom are in direct communication with this instrument, which is in itself in direct communication with the Observatory at Greenwich. At two minutes before ten every morning all other work is suspended, in order that there may be no interference with what is called the "time current," which, precisely at the striking of the clock, flashes the intelligence to the sixteen stations with which it is in communication. And not merely at these large towns, but at every post-office throughout the kingdom, the clerks at two minutes before ten are on the look-out for the signal which is being passed along their line, and the clocks are adjusted accordingly. Messrs. Dent, Benson, and all the principal watchmakers in London receive the time every hour from this chronopher. Time guns at Newcastle and at Shields are also fired at one P.M. by batteries connected with the chronopher at T. S., the clock attached to which is regulated for accuracy to the twentieth part of a second.

The principal instruments in use at T. S. are the single needle, the Morse inker, the Hughes, and the Wheatstone's automatic.

The single needle instrument conveys its information by the varying vibrations of an indicator or "needle" between two fixed ivory stops. It is read by the eye, and its signals are transitory. It is as though the minute-hand of a small clock, or a large watch, were caused by the electric current to perform rapid calisthenic exercises between the points that indicate eleven and one o'clock. If the minute-hand made two violent efforts to show that it was one o'clock, and after each effort returned exhausted to noon, it would simply indicate the letter M. If parting to go the right way, it made two powerful efforts to go the other way and retired after each effort equally unsuccessful, it would simply indicate the letter I; one such tick to the right would be T, one to the left E. The letters of the alphabet are thus formed by the movements of the indicator to the right and left of some fixed point, and every word is so spelt out letter by letter.

The Morse instrument is different. It depicts its telegraphic language on a long piece of paper that unrolls itself by machinery in tape-like fashion beneath a revolving wheel, one half of which is constantly enjoying a cold bath of ink. While no electric current flows, the paper is free from this circular pen. When the current is caused to speed its lightning career, the paper is pressed against the wheel, and a thin blue line is traced by the ink which the revolving wheel carries with it on the paper with beautiful regularity. If a current of very short duration be sent, there is simply a dot, like a full stop, registered on the paper. If the current be maintained for a little longer period, we have a —— shown. One dot is the letter E, one dash the letter T, a dot and a dash the letter A, and a dash and a dot the letter N. The letters of the alphabet are thus made up of a series of dots and dashes.

The signals in both instruments are made by the depression of a small lever, which is seized by the forefinger and thumb, and depressed like the key of a piano. The needle instrument has two keys, one for the movements to the right, the other for the movements to the left. The Morse instrument has but one key, which is depressed as though the telegraphic manipulator wished to play crotchets and quavers on one note, the crotchets forming the dots, the quavers the dashes.

The Hughes instrument is most readily appreciated by strangers, as it records the message in actual Roman type.

As regards the Wheatstone instrument, it is only necessary to point out that the speed of the ordinary Morse is dependent upon the rate at which a clerk can manipulate his key. Forty words a minute is very fast sending, and few, if any, clerks can reach forty-five words per minute. But there is no limit to the speed of the electric current, and if the messages are sent mechanically, that is, if the varying number and duration of the currents required to indicate a despatch are dated out by a machine moving with great speed, we are not only independent of the limited powers of the human hand, but made free from the liability to error in meting out the proper duration of the signal. Thus great accuracy and great speed can be simultaneously attained.

There are instruments, also, that appeal to the ear as well as to the eye. Bright's bell is an instrument which indicates its telegraphic language by sound; bells of

different notes struck by little hammers connected with the right and left movements of the needle, and the dot and dash of the Morse. These little tinkling talkers rattle forth their information with great speed, and many clerks are to be seen writing for their very lives to keep up with the rapid rate at which the bells are speaking.

The staff at present employed by T. S. consists of seven hundred and forty-six clerks, of whom two hundred and seventy-eight are men, and four hundred and eighty-eight women. Of the latter, some come on duty at eight A.M., and leave at four P.M.; others arrive at twelve noon, and leave at eight P.M. It is noticeable that no women are on duty before eight A.M. or after eight P.M.; but the night duties are performed by a special night male staff, who are employed from eight P.M. to nine A.M., under the superintendence of a clerk in charge. Before the transfer of T. S. to the Government, the male and female staff were kept rigidly apart, and marriage between any members of either entailed the loss of situation on both the contracting parties. But a paternal Government looks upon these matters with a much more benevolent eye, and so far from forbidding matrimony, is understood to encourage it. There have already been several matches between members of the staff, and many of the young ladies who have married young men not in the service of the department, have continued in their situations. It is a noteworthy fact that the fashionable institution of five o'clock tea is in its fullest force at T. S., that refreshment being provided gratuitously for all those on duty. The tea—I tasted it—is excellent, and so, I may remark, for the guidance of any political economists who may be startled by the liberality, is the policy which provides it. For, as it is, the cups are placed by the side of the operators, who take their sips, as Mr. Arthur Helps wrote his charming Essays, "in the intervals of business;" whereas, if they had to go and get it themselves, an amount of time, much more than the equivalent of the cost of the tea, would be lost.

Altogether, taking leave of T. S., it is impossible not to feel that, notwithstanding certain errors and short-comings, which were inevitable in entering upon a concern of such magnitude, the establishment is in a most healthy state, day by day increasing both its business and its efficiency, and likely by-and-bye to compare not unfavourably with its elder sister, the Postal Service, which is unquestionably the finest in the world.

LEAVES FROM OLD LONDON LIFE: 1664-1705.

THE Scottish newspapers recorded, not long ago, some instances of mirages in the Firth of Forth exactly like the freaks of the Fata Morgana in the Straits of Messina, and on three distinct occasions the Bass Rock has assumed, to the eyes of the crowds upon the sands of Dunbar, the form of a giant sugar-loaf crowned by battlements, while the Island of the May seemed broken into several portions, which appeared to be perforated by caverns where none, in fact, exist.

Such optical delusions have been common at all times in certain states of the atmosphere, and science finds a ready solution for them; but in the days of our forefathers, they were deemed the sure precursors of dire calamities, invasion, or pestilence.

The years shortly before and after the beginning of the last century seem to have been singularly fruitful in the marvellous; and the most superstitious Celtic peasant in the Scottish glens or the wilds of Connemara would not have believed in more startling events than those which are chronicled in the occasional broadsides, and were hawked about the streets of London by the flying stationers of those days.

To take a few of these at random: we find that all London was excited by strange news from Goeree, in Holland, where, on the evening of the 14th of August, 1664, there was seen by many spectators an apparition of two fleets upon the ocean; these, after seeming to engage in close battle for one hour and a half (the smoke of the noiseless cannon rolling from their sides), vanished, as if shown from a magic-lantern. Then appeared in the air two lions, or the figures thereof, which fought three times with great fury, till there came a third of greater size, which destroyed them both. Immediately after this, there came slowly athwart the sky, as represented in the woodcut which surmounted this veracious broadsheet, the giant figure of a crowned king. This form was seen so plainly, that the buttons on his dress could be distinguished by the awe-stricken crowd assembled on the sands. Next morning the same apparition was seen again; and all the ocean

was as red as blood. "And this happening at this juncture of time," concludes the narrator, "begets some strange apprehensions; for that, about six months before Van Tromp was slain in war with England, there was seen near the same place, an apparition of ships in the air fighting with each other."*

Sixteen years later, another broadsheet announced to the metropolis, that the forms of ships and men also had been seen on the road near Abington, on the 26th of August, 1680, "of the truth whereof you may be fully satisfied at the Sarazen's Head Inn, Carter-lane." It would seem that John Nibb, "a very sober fellow," the carrier of Cirencester, with five passengers in his waggon, all proceeding to London about a quarter of an hour after sunrise, were horrified to perceive at the far horizon, the giant figure of a man in a black habit, and armed with a broadsword, towering into the sky. Like the spectre of the Brocken, this faded away; but to add to the bewilderment of Nibb and his companions, it was replaced by "about a hundred ships of several bigness and various shapes." Then rose a great hill covered with little villages, and before it spread a plain, on which rode thirty horsemen, armed with carbine and pistol.

The same document records that, on the 12th of the subsequent September, a naval engagement was seen in the air, near Porsnet, in Monmouthshire, between two fleets, one of which came from the northern quarter of the sky, the other from the south. A great ship fired first, "and after her, the rest discharged their vollies in order, so that great flashings of fire, and even smoak was visible, and noises in the ayr as of great guns." Then an army of phantoms engaged in "a square medow" near Porsnet, closing in with sword and pistol, and the cries of the wounded and dying were heard. On the 27th of December, Ottery, near Exeter, had a visitation of the same kind, when at five in the evening two armies fought in the air till six o'clock. "This was seen by a reverend minister and several others to their great amazement." On the 2nd of the same month, the people in Shropshire were, according to another sheet, sorely perplexed by the sudden appearance of two suns in the firmament, and it was duly remembered, that "such a sign was seen before the death of that tempestuous firebrand of Rome here in England, Thomas Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury, and when Queen Mary began her bloody reign."

Then follow the death of the three lions in the Tower, and a vast enumeration of fiery darts, bullets, storms of hail, and floods, making up that which the writer hopes will prove "a word in season to a sinking kingdom."*

Nor were ghosts wanting at this time, of a political nature, too; for, in the same year, there was hawked in London an account of an apparition which appeared three several times to Elizabeth Freeman, thirty-one years of age, on each occasion delivering a message to his sacred majesty King Charles the Second. As certified before Sir Joseph Jorden, knight, and Richard Lee, D.D., rector of Hatfield, her story was as follows, and was, no doubt, a political trick:

On the night of the 24th of January, 1680, she was sitting at her mother's fireside, with a child on her knee, when a solemn voice behind her said, "Sweetheart!" and, on turning, she was startled to perceive a veiled woman all in white, whose face was concealed, and whose hand —a pale and ghastly one—rested on the back of her chair.

"The 15th day of May is appointed for the royal blood to be poisoned," said the figure. "Be not afraid, for I am only sent to tell thee," it added, and straightway vanished.

On Tuesday, the 25th of January, the same figure met her at the house door, and asked Elizabeth if she "remembered the message," but the woman, instead of replying, exclaimed: "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, what art thou?" Upon this the figure assumed "a very glorious shape," and saying, "Tell King Charles, from me, not to remove his parliament, but stand to his council," vanished as before. Next evening the veiled figure appeared again, when Elizabeth was with her mother, who, on beholding her daughter's manifest terror, said: "Dost thou see anything?" She was then warned to retire, after which the spectre said, sternly: "Do your message." "I shall, if God enable me," replied Elizabeth. After this the spectre appeared but once again, and remained silent. "This was taken from the maid's own mouth by me, Richard Wilkinson, schoolmaster in the said town of Hatfield."*

* London: printed by Thomas Leach, Shoe-lane, 1664.

* London: Printed for J. B., Anno Domini 1680; and P. Brooksly, Golden Ball, near the Hospital Gate, 1681

In 1683, as a variety, London was treated to an account of a dreadful earthquake in Oxfordshire, where the houses were rocked like ships or cradles, while tables, stools, and chests "rowled to and fro with the violence of the Shog."*

The year 1687 brought "strange and wonderful news from Cornwall, being an account of a miraculous accident which happened near the town of Bodmyn, at a place called Park. Printed by J. Wallis, White Fryars Gate—next Fleet St.—near the Joyners Shop."

From this it would appear that on Sunday, the 8th of May, Jacob Mutton, whose relations were of good repute, and who was servant to William Hicks, rector of Cordinham (at a house he had near the old parish church of Eglashayle, called Park), heard, on going into his chamber about eight o'clock in the evening, a hollow voice cry, "So hoe! so hoe! so hoe!" This drew him to the window of the next room, from whence, to the terror of a lad who shared his bed, he disappeared, and could nowhere be found.

According to his own narrative, he had no sooner laid a hand upon an iron bar of the window, which was seventeen feet from the ground, than the whole grating fell into the yard below, all save the bar which he had grasped. This bar was discovered in his hand next morning, as he lay asleep in a narrow lane beyond the little town of Stratton, among the hills, thirty miles distant from Park. There he was wakened by the earliest goers to Stratton fair, who sent him home, sorely bewildered, by the way of Camelford. "On Tuesday he returned to his master's estate, without any hurt, but very melancholy, saying 'that a tall man bore him company all the journey, over hedges and brakes, yet without weariness.'" What became of this mysterious man he knew not, neither had he any memory of how the iron bar came to be in his hand. "To conclude, the young man who is the occasion of this wonderful relation, was never before this accident accounted any ways inclinable to sadness, but, on the contrary, was esteemed an airy, brisk, and honest young fellow."

But Mutton's adventure was a joke when compared with that of Mr. Jacob Seeley, of Exeter, as he related it to the judges on the western circuit, when, on the 22nd of September, 1690, he was beset by a veritable crowd of dreadful spectres. He took horse for Taunton, in Somersetshire, by the Hinton Cliff road, on which he had to pass a solitary place, known as the Black Down. Prior to this, he halted at a town called Cleston, where the coach and waggons usually tarried, and there he had some roast beef, with a tankard of beer and a noggin of brandy, in company with a stranger, who looked like a farmer, and who rode by his side for three miles, till they reached the Black Down, when he suddenly vanished into the earth or air, to the great perplexity of Mr. Jacob Seeley. This emotion was rather increased when he found himself surrounded by from one to two hundred spectres, attired as judges, magistrates, and peasantry, the latter armed with pikes; but, gathering courage, he hewed at them with his sword, though they threw over his head something like a fishing-net, in which they retained him from nine at night till four next morning. He thrust at the shadows with his rapier, but he felt nothing, till he saw one "was cut and had four of his fingers hanging by the skin," and then he found blood upon his sword. After this, ten spectre funerals passed; then two dead bodies were dragged near him by the hair of the head; and other horrors succeeded, till the spell broke at cock-crow.

It was now remembered that the house wherein Mr. Seeley had his beef, beer, and brandy had been kept by one of Monmouth's men (the spectre farmer, probably), who had been hung on his own sign-post, and the piece of ground where the net confined the traveller, was a place where many of the hapless duke's adherents had been executed and interred. Hence it was named the Black Down, according to the sheet before us, which was "Printed for T. M., London, 2nd Oct., 1690."

A sheet circulated at the close of the preceding year warns "all hypocrites and atheists to beware in time," as there had been a dreadful tempest of thunder and lightning in Hants, at Alton, where the atmosphere became so obscure that the electric flashes alone lighted the church during the service, in which two balls of fire passed through its eastern wall, another tore the steeple to pieces, broke the clock to shreds, and bore away the weathercock. The narrator adds, that all Friesland was under water, and that a flood in the Tiber had swept away a portion of the Castle of St. Angelo.

As another warning, London was visited, in 1689, by a tempest, which uprooted sixty-five trees in St. James's Park and Moorfields, blew down the vane of St. Michael's

* Printed for R. Baldwin, at the Old Bailey.

Church in Cornhill, and innumerable chimneys, and injured many well-built houses, and part of the Armourers' Hall in Coleman-street. Several persons were killed in Gravel-lane and Shoreditch; sixty empty boats were dashed to pieces against the bridge; three Gravesend barges full of people were cast away, and the Crown man-of-war was stranded at Woolwich.*

But the warning seems to have been in vain, for London, in 1692, was treated to an earthquake, which — as another sheet records — spread terror and astonishment about the Royal Exchange, all along Cornhill, in Lothbury, and elsewhere, on the 8th of September. All things on shelves were cast down, and furniture was tossed from wall to wall; the Spitalfields weavers had to seek shelter in flight, and all their looms were destroyed; these and other calamities were, it was alleged, "occasioned by the sins of the nation," and to avert such prodigies, the prayers of all good men were invoked.†

Two years later saw another marvel, when "the dumb maid of Wapping," Sarah Bowers, recovered her power of speech through the prayers of Messrs. Russel and Veil, "two pious divines," who exorcised and expelled the evil spirit which possessed her; and in 1696 the metropolis was treated to the "detection of a popish cheat" concerning two boys who conversed with the devil, though none seemed to doubt the Protestant miracle.

The close of the century 1700 saw "the dark and hellish powers of witchcraft exercised upon the Reverend Mr. Wood, minister of Bodmyn," on whom a spell was cast by a mysterious paper, or written document, which was given to him by a man and woman on horseback (the latter probably seated on a pillion), after which he became strangely disordered, and wandered about in fields, meadows, woods, and lonely places, drenched the while with copious perspirations; however, "the spell was ultimately found in his doublet, and on the burning thereof, Mr. Wood was perfectly restored," and wrote to his uncle an account of the affair, which appeared in a broadsheet published at Exeter, by Darker and Farley, 1700.

Rosemary-lane was the scene of another wonder, when a notorious witch was found in a garret there, and carried before Justice Bateman, in Well-close, on the 23rd July, 1704, and committed to Clerkenwell Prison. Her neighbour's children, through her alleged diabolical power, vomited pins, and were terrified by apparitions of enormous cats; by uttering one word she turned the entire contents of a large shop topsy-turvy. She was judicially tossed into the river from a ducking-stool, "but, like a bladder when put under water, she popped up again, for this witch swam like a cork." This was an indisputable sign of guilt; and in her rage or terror she smote a youg man on the arm, where the mark of her hand remained "as black as coal;" he died soon after in agony, and was buried in St. Sepulchre's churchyard.* Of the woman's ultimate fate we know nothing.

In 1705, London was excited by a new affair: "The female ghost and wonderful discovery of an iron chest of money;" a rare example of the gullibility of people in the days of the good Queen Anne.

A certain Madam Maybel, who had several houses in Rosemary-lane, lost them by unlucky suits and unjust decrees of the law: for a time they were tenantless, and fell to decay and ruin. For several weeks, nay months past (continues the broadsheet), a strange apparition appeared nightly to a Mrs. Harvey and her sister, near relations of the late Madam Maybel, announcing that an iron chest filled with treasure lay in a certain part of one of the old houses in the lane. On their neglecting to heed the vision, the ghost became more importunate, and proceeded to threaten Mrs. Harvey, "that if she did not cause it to be digged up in a certain time (naming it) she should be torn to pieces." On this the terrified gentlewoman sought the council of a minister, who advised her to "demand in the name of the Holy Trinity how the said treasure should be disposed of."

Next night she questioned the spectre, and it replied:

"Fear nothing; but take the whole four thousand pounds into your own possession, and when you have paid twenty pounds of it to one Sarah Goodwin, of Tower-hill, the rest is your own; and be sure you dig it up on the night of Thursday, the 7th December!"

Accordingly men were set to work, and certainly a great iron chest "was found under an old wall in the very place which the spirit had described."

One of the diggers, John Fishpool, a private of the Guards, "has been under examination about it, and 'tis thought that the gentleman who owns the ground will claim the treasure as his right, and 'tis

* Printed for W. F., Bishopgate Without.
† J. Gerard, Cornhill, 1692.

* H. Hills in the Blackfriars, near the waterside.

thought there will be a suit of law commenced on it." Many persons crowded to see the hole from whence the chest had been exhumed in Rosemary-lane, and, by a date upon the lid, it would seem to have been made or concealed in the ninth year of the reign of Henry the Eighth.*

The dreadful effects of going to conjurers next occupied the mind of the public.

Mr. Rowland Rushway, a gentleman of good reputation, having lost money and plate to a considerable amount, Hester, his wife, took God to witness, "that if all the cunning men in London could tell, she should discover the thief, though it cost her ten pounds!"

With this view she repaired to the house of a judicial astrologer in Moorfields, about noon, when the day was one of great serenity and beauty. After some preliminary mummery or trickery, the wizard placed before her a large mirror, wherein she saw gradually appear certain indistinct things, which ultimately assumed "the full proportion of one man and two women."

"These are the persons who stole your property," said the astrologer; "do you know them?"

"No," she replied.

"Then," quoth he, "you will never have your goods again."

She paid him and retired, but had not gone three roods from the house when the air became darkened, the serene sky was suddenly overcast, and there swept through the streets a dreadful tempest of wind and rain, done, as she alleged, "by this cunning man, Satan's agent, with diabolical black art," forcing her to take shelter in an ale-house to escape its fury. "Many chairmen and market folks were all cognisant of this storm, which was confined to the vicinity of the ale-house, and a portion of the adjacent river, where many boats were cast away; and the skirt of it would seem to have visited Gray's-inn-walk, where three stately trees were uprooted!"

* London: printed for John Green, near the Exchange, 1705.

MISS PONSONBY'S COMPANION.

In Twelve Chapters.

CHAPTER I. THE NEW PATIENT.

"Delightful profession!" exclaimed Frank Tresham, the youngest medical man of Crampton, as his trap came slowly up the stiff hill leading to that pleasant Surrey country town. "Oh, charming profession," he muttered to himself bitterly, as he beat his great-coated breast with his chilled left hand. "A cold eight-mile drive, half the way up by-lanes knee-deep in mud, in reply to an express messenger from an old farmer in a fit, and when I get there I find the old brute well again, and gone to market. Net result of three hours' wear and tear: a wetting, loss of temper, and nought pounds, nought shillings, nought pence. Never mind, Frank, old boy! Dinner will be ready when you get back, and you've done your duty for to-day; so wake up, Beauty; now then, wake up, old girl! You seem as tired of the profession as I am. Come along old lady, we must make a splash into Crampton; it looks like business. 'Always drive fast, my boy,' old Colby of St. Thomas's used to say. Swish! Get along, Beauty, and show them how to do it."

It is a remarkable, even an extraordinary fact, yet nevertheless true, that the best-natured people are sometimes out of temper. On certain days, if a lion does not meet you full butt, a gnat is sure to appear; a buzzing, vexatious, and, what is worst of all, an almost invisible gnat. If a big tree does not fall across your path on that black morning, a perverse rose-leaf will crumple under your pillow, and after that for an hour or two (perhaps a day) everything, animate or inanimate, seems possessed with a demoniacal desire, ay, and power, to chafe, thwart, and torment you. An east wind, raw, harsh, unwholesome, begins to drive in your face. You are up late, a shirt-button springs maliciously off at the very moment the gong is thundering for breakfast; that letter with the expected remittance does not arrive, but the bill of that only too prompt upholsterer does. The beef at dinner is roasted to a rag. The servants are saucy or obstinate; you miss your express train, and arrive an hour too late for your special engagement in the City. Some cross star, in fact, rules your house of life, and as nothing will go right, and you are evidently bewitched, you eventually will, if you are a sensible person, throw up your arms, capitulate on any terms, take something comfortable, go to bed and sleep away the spell.

It was the beginning of an October evening, about half-past four o'clock, and the yellow leaves were sprinkling down slantways on Frank and his black mare, Beauty, as they rattled into Crampton. At the windows lights were here and there beginning to appear. The lamplighter,

swift Hesperus of Crampton, with the ladder on his nimble shoulder, as Tresham passed the Jolly Waggoners, ran down a side-street, kindling the lamps as he ran on his cheery occupation. That lamplighter, like the schoolmaster of the future, found darkness before him, but where he sped he sowed light, and blossoms of flame opened wherever he came.

But Frank Tresham was in no mood for poetical fancies. The east wind had got into his blood: that burden that occasionally galls the shoulders of most busy men, whether gentle or simple, was just then weighing heavily at his back. All he said to himself, as he switched Beauty rather unnecessarily, was: "What infernal, detestable gas! it gets worse and worse every day. As for the lamps, they're about as plentiful as plums in a school pudding. Old, humbugging, dead-alive place, I only wish I could get out of it with my pockets full, and catch me troubling it much afterwards. I flatter myself I could part from its chuckling tradesmen, its testy old majors, and sour, fidgety old maids, without breaking my heart in more than two or three pieces. But what's the matter with me to day? I know I feel confoundedly cross. I should just like to fight somebody. Why the deuce didn't I go to sea? Anything is better than this dog of a life."

Just by the post-office at the corner, old Purgeon, one of the two rival doctors of Crampton, drove complacently by, and nodded pityingly as he passed. Old Purgeon was prosperous, and there had been lately a good deal of low fever about. The people of Crampton, persistently refusing to drain, petted this same low fever, which had long since become chronic, and now they had grown rather proud of it. Old Purgeon fattened on the low fever, which was his best friend, and, under his auspices, the Crampton cemetery filled gradually, but surely. The local paper took good care not to talk much about this disagreeable subject, it being obnoxious to the ratepayers, who, although chiefly Tories, had in this instance conscientious objections to government interference. Purgeon's nod was at once patronising and compassionate.

"Stupid, chuckling, pompous old humbug, trading on his gold spectacles," said Tresham, half aloud. "Why does he dare to nod at me like that? He himself was a parish doctor once."

Poor Tresham! The smile of Venus herself that day would have seemed to him contemptuous. It is our temper that translates events into sweet or bitter. As he switched round into the main street, young Gumboge (the new doctor) rode by with the fury of an insane butcher-boy, whose master's best customer was dying rapidly of hunger in the next street. He waved his white-gloved hand half defiantly at Tresham, as much as to say:

"Here we are, telegraphed for by His Royal Highness the Duke of Mesopotamia, who will see no one but us, not even to save his life; so if it kills twenty horses, here we go again."

Gumboge had lately arrived at Crampton from a retired practice in the Old Kent-road, to take up the business of a clever but reckless uncle, who had drunk himself to death, after sinking to little better than a farrier and poor man's tooth-drawer.

"Won't do; won't wash, on any account, my fine fellow," thought Tresham. "You've got no patient at Big Bookham, and you know that very well. I can see what you'll do. You'll gallop straight off to the Blue Lion at Gypsom, and there spend the night at pool and unlimited loo with the jockeys and low sporting men. It is no matter; you won't be wanted at home, old boy, so don't, pray, hurry."

In this cynical, sarcastic, aggressive mood was Tresham, usually the merriest and frankest of hard-working, struggling young doctors, as he swept up to his own door at the end of High-street, Crampton, stuck his whip in its leather socket, drew off his thick right-hand glove, unbuttoned the apron, tossed back a gay-coloured Austrian railway rug, and leaped out in a cramped, stubborn kind of way. He then patted Beauty's flank more roughly than he was usually in the habit of doing—for he was a clever, good-hearted fellow, liked by all the people worth caring for in Crampton, though his practice was very much smaller than that of old Purgeon's—and gave a sharp whistle.

It was the usual signal for his gardener. No one came. Then he shouted "George!" violently up the archway at the right-hand side of the house.

"That fellow's drunk again," said Tresham, angrily. "I'll stand it no longer. Off he goes to-night, though I have to groom Beauty myself."

The young doctor was in no mood to stand nonsense. The second time he shouted, however, out from the stable there dashed a tall, gaunt, ill-made, red-haired fellow, very fiery in the face, and with a stubby broom in his hand. A little dog,

screaming and mad with excitement, raced before him after an enormous rat. In vain, however, George dabbed at the creature with the broom; in vain Dandy, the Scotch terrier, tried to pin the rat up against the gate-post. In an instant it doubled on man and dog, and precipitated itself into the entrance of a drain, the back way, in fact, to its foul fortress.

"Dash it, master," said George (or Garge, as he always called himself), "if there'll be any living here soon for these 'ere rats: this is the second to-day I've found in our corn-bin. Why the whole time I lived at Squire Troughton's, at Big Bookham, I never set my eyes on as many rats as I 'ave 'ere in this very last week as ever was."

Master was in no mood for talking. All he said was: "Set two more gins to-night; don't put it off; but don't lay down any poison. The neighbours' fowls and cats get hold of it, and that's not right. Now, mind what I say. Here, quick, take the trap round, and take care you polish the harness to-morrow better; it don't look well at all; and mind take up this check-strap a hole."

Mr. Tresham strode in at the back door, and through the little surgery, that smelt perennially of pills, and entered the kitchen, redolent just then of the agreeable odour of a roast pheasant, on whose plump breast delicious brown beads of froth rose and disappeared.

"To the moment, Lyddy, eh?" said the young bachelor, pulling out his watch, and comparing it with the kitchen clock, a brown-faced, solemn recorder of time; "but you look rather put out—what's the matter? Nothing gone wrong—where's little Lizzy?"

Lyddy, a faithful old servant, but somewhat of a tyrant from want of a feminine commander-in-chief, looked up in the most disconsolate way from some creamy bread-sauce she was making.

"It's really too bad," she said, "just as dinner is ready; but there, *I* would not go. *I* would not be put upon by every stuck-up body, and ordered and marshalled about. I call it shameful!"

"But who is it, what is it, Lyddy—patient—new patient?"

"Yes, sir; it is that old Miss Ponsonby, who lives up by the turning on the Brighton road, wants to see you directly. She is in such a temper, the servant says, because that young doctor, Gumboil, or whatever his name is, has not been there to-day, and has just sent wrong medicine."

"And who came? That demure, cat-like, canting maid of hers, who had a tooth drawn out once, and said a shilling was too much, she was so poor, and I let her off?"

"Yes, Master Frank, that's the woman. I don't like her. I told her we expected you in every moment. She might have seen dinner was just ready; but, there, do go in the parlour, and sit down, and I'll serve up dinner the moment you've washed your hands. Let them wait—that's what I say. Why did she not come to you long ago, and not go to that hare-brained scapegrace opposite, who does nothing but play billiards all day. Now do—now doee."

Lyddy was delightfully wheedling, but the sense of duty overcame even hunger and the temptation of the roast pheasant. With the air of the returning Regulus, a groan, and a shrug of the shoulders, Tresham drew on his gloves again, and violently buttoned his coat.

"Jolly, very jolly life!" he said, with a sardonic laugh. "I shan't be more than an hour, Lyddy," and then he repeated bitterly, half to himself, the lines:

> "Not often in our rough old island story
> The path to duty was the path to glory.

I never felt the curse upon our tribe till now. But it won't do, Lyddy, in these hard times to neglect a new patient. How shall I ever marry, you know, if I don't widen my practice? Come, draw me a glass of ale, and I'll be off."

"Ah, don't you throw yourself away on any of the stuck-up misses here" (Lyddy was never particularly charmed by the thought of a Mrs. Frank Tresham). "There's plenty of time for that, I always say."

Presently, somewhat grudgingly, and with a regretful eye at the pheasant, that shed fat tears at his departure, with vigorous step the young doctor tramped off up the street.

CHAPTER II. MISS PONSONBY'S COMPANION.

FRANK TRESHAM could scarcely, under the circumstances, be said to enjoy his walk. Though generally a shrewd observer of the small incidents that variegate daily life, he was heedless now of anything but the one object for which he had sallied forth. The usual shops in the country town he passed with brusque indifference. The young footman gravely examining pipes at the last new tobacconist's, the row of pink and white sheep at the butcher's, the children ogling the glass bottles of sweets at the general shop, its proprietor, the old woman in the enormous frilled cap, like the tormented

farmer's wife in a pantomime, counting bulls'-eyes by the aid of a rushlight, had no interest for him just at that particular moment. Nor did he even stop a moment to look in at the great blaze of glorious orange light round the blacksmith's forge, but strode moodily on, Dandy, half conscious of something wrong, slinking at his heels.

What were the young doctor's thoughts? Well, they turned naturally enough on his new patient. All he knew of her as yet was that she was a rich, miserly, ailing old maid, who seldom went out, except to an occasional tea-party or schoolroom lecture. That servant of hers, smooth, hypocritical, and false, was his abomination. Then she had a companion, whom he had never to his knowledge seen, probably one of the usual fawning, obsequious parasites that hang about such old ladies in hopes of a legacy. There was a niece, too, whom he had once seen walking by her bath-chair, a pretty, intelligent, lady-like girl. The nieces of old cats generally are pretty, he reflected. She had golden hair, too, at least what poets call golden hair, for they are easily pleased. Pity girls like that, he thought, could not coin their golden hair into a dowry. Bitter again was Frank Tresham; in that mood Cytherea herself could not have allured him, unless in her lily-white right hand she had held up a chinking bag; fie on him and all this temper because an old farmer had not been as ill as he thought he was, and because a new patient had called him away from a well-earned dinner. All very unworthy you see of a well-balanced mind; but then even well-balanced minds have been known to sometimes momentarily break down, under certain conditions.

Miss Ponsonby's house lay back a little way from the street; and two or three cracked stone steps, guarded by two fine crisp-leaved bay-trees, led to a small paved terrace, which ran beneath the parlour windows. These windows, set deep in old-fashioned frames, which were painted a gloomy black, adding to the naturally gloomy and prison effect of the whole habitation, and assisted in reducing the visitor's mind to a fitting mood for an audience with the somewhat exacting and fidgety owner. Over the door, which boasted a triangular pediment, with a little notched cornice of a style popular some fifty years ago, grew a magnificent Virginia creeper, already in the fullest blood-red crimson of its final autumnal splendour. Even by the dim light of a sickly, chilly young moon, that southern exile glowed with the hectic colours that foretold its speedy death.

No one answered the bell that Mr. Tresham rang sharply, and as he stood somewhat impatiently on the door-step, two tall elms, spinster sisters, that overhung one side of the house, cast down on him three or four monitory dead leaves, as much as to say, "We are both very cold and miserable up here; come now, you man down there, be miserable too, for your merry spring-time will soon be gone as ours has long since gone."

Not liking to ring again, the more especially as he saw only one light at the upper windows, and that a dim melancholy immovable one behind a blind, on which no passing shadows were cast, Tresham stepped back from the door, and looked in at the parlour window to see if any servant was visible.

There was no candle in the room, but it was crimsoned by the flickering fire-light which gleamed on the picture-frames and ceiling, and on a bust which stood on a side bookcase. By the fire, not exactly facing the window, nor yet quite in profile, in an old carved high-back chair, sat a graceful girl of about twenty, dressed in black, who, with a face full of saddened thoughts, held an open letter in her hand. She looked so very graceful and lovable, and, set in the black window-frame, formed altogether so pretty a picture of girlish thoughtfulness, that Mr. Tresham stood there some minutes without ringing again. It was the pretty niece he had admired before, and of whose impecuniosity he had thought so sarcastically.

At that moment the door opened, and the cat-like face of Mercy, Miss Ponsonby's maid, appeared. Mr. Tresham asked how Miss Ponsonby was. He could hear some one coughing up-stairs as he spoke.

"Will you please walk into the parlour, sir," said the odious Mercy. "There is only Miss Dampier there" (there was a contemptuous emphasis on the word *only* that annoyed Tresham, though he scarcely knew why), "and I'll go up and tell missus. She *would* get up this afternoon, do all we could. These trials are sent for our good, sir. Yes, sir; I know that; but still they are trials. Walk in here, sir, please; it is only Miss Dampier."

A delicious odour of Russian violets met him as the parlour door opened, and the young doctor entered, hat in hand, apologising for the intrusion to a young lady, who rose and bowed when she heard his name.

"I would ring for candles," she said, rising, "but I am afraid our little Susan has gone into the town for some arrow-root, and I must not detain Mercy."

"If you do not dislike this twilight," said Tresham, in his frank, pleasant way—his temper was all sunshine again now—"I delight in it."

"I am afraid, Mr. Tresham," she said, after a few words had passed, "that you will find my dear aunt very ill. She has got very weak lately, and her cough and loss of appetite distress us very much. Aunt, you will find, is very strong-willed, and will not nurse as much as she ought; and as for keeping her in bed, even that servant, who has been with her thirteen years, owns it is impossible. Dear aunt! it makes me very sad."

"Have you been stopping long with Miss Ponsonby, may I ask?"

"About four or five months. Oh, she is so kind when she is well and in good spirits."

"I only remember to have seen you once in Crampton."

"No; I hardly ever go out. Aunt does not like being left alone."

"Your name is not the same as your aunt's. I suppose she is your aunt only by marriage?"

"Yes; she is my father's eldest brother's wife's youngest sister. Oh, that is a very stupid way of explaining it to you. No; she is not really my aunt, but my cousin; but I call her aunt because I love her so much, and she is so kind in having me to be with her."

Tresham laughed pleasantly at this genealogical explanation, and the two were soon plunged into pleasant conversation, which was broken by a scratching at the front door.

"That's not a ghost, but my dog Dandy," he said, "and there he must remain."

"Oh no, do let him in, Mr. Tresham," said Miss Dampier. "I am so fond of dogs. Aunt won't have any pets. Oh, I'll take care he does not come up-stairs, or bark, or disturb aunt one little bit."

Tresham soon relented; on his parole of honour Dandy was admitted, and soon became the sworn vassal of his fair guardian.

"I can't think what Mercy is doing," said Miss Dampier, "but dear aunt has such funny ways, and she no doubt is having all the papers she was looking over last night carefully put away, before she admits you into her sanctum. Even I may not go there, you must know, Mr. Tresham, when she is absent. She is quite a despot in little matters, but these peculiarities do not disturb me at all."

Tresham was just then thinking what a sweet voice Miss Dampier had, and wondering what colour her eyes were, when Mercy appeared with a light.

"My missus will see you now, sir," Mercy said, leading the way. "Ah, sir, these trials is good for us; missus is always impatient when she gets counting over the perishable riches."

There was something repulsive about the ostentatious self-mortification of Mercy, and Tresham pushed it roughly aside. He turned on the first landing and spoke sharply.

"Did Mr. Gumboge prescribe any form of cough mixture?"

"Yes, sir, some dark stuff, sweet, and with laudanum, I think, in it; it gave missus sleep; but last night he sent something for the measles by mistake; then when we returned it to-day he sent a blister that was meant for the man at the turnpike, and he hasn't been since. I fear he's a very worldly, wild young man."

"I don't know about his worldliness, whatever that means, in your phraseology," said Mr. Tresham, smiling, "but I must confess the mistake was rather too bad, and I can't regret——"

But that sentence of reprobation was never finished, for at that instant Miss Ponsonby's bedroom door flew open, and an old lady tottered forth in a white dressing-gown, haggard, pale, and excited. She wrung her hands wildly:

"Mercy," she cried, or rather screamed, "some one has been at my desk while I've been asleep. Where's that Susan's mother, it must be her. Where's Susan—call Lilly, call Miss Dampier. There have been thieves in the house. Who's that? Is that Mr. Tresham? He must wait. Excuse my agitation. You must wait, sir—the doctor? I've been robbed. Thieves! Thieves! I've been robbed of a ten-pound note."

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