

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## THE ROSE AND THE KEY.

### CHAPTER IV. HOW THEY ALL GOT ON.

JUST for a moment the appearance of this Cooles, domesticated under the same roof, spy, thief, whatever he might be, made the young lady wince. Her impulse was to walk straight into the kitchen, cross-examine the visitor, and call on Richard Pritchard to turn him out forthwith. But that was only for one moment; the next, she was chatting just as usual. Mrs. Pritchard, with her pretty Welsh accent, another candle, and her smile of welcome, had run out to accompany the ladies up-stairs to know their wishes, and to make any little adjustments in the room they might require.

"I lighted a bit o' fire, please 'm, the evenin' was gone rather cold, I thought."

"You did quite right, Mrs. Pritchard; you take such good care of us; it looks so comfortable," said the old lady.

"I'm very glad 'm, thank you, ma'am, will you please to have tea 'm?"

"Yes, as quickly as possible, thanks."

And Mrs. Pritchard vanished noiselessly. The old lady's guest was delighted with everything he saw.

It is not a large room; square, with blackest oak panels, burnished so that they actually flash in the flicker of the fire, that burns under the capacious arch of the fireplace. All the furniture, chairs, tables, and joint stools, are of the same black oak, waxed and polished, till it gleams and sparkles again. These clumsy pieces of ancient cabinet-making have probably descended, with this wing of the old house, to its present occupiers. The floor is also of polished oak, with a piece of thick old carpet laid down in the middle,

and the window is covered with a rude curtain of baize. There are two sets of shelves against the wall, on which stand thick the brightly coloured delft figures, cups, and candlesticks, interspersed with mutilated specimens of old china—a kind of ornament in which the Welsh delight, and which makes their rooms very bright and cheerful. The room is a picture of neatness. For a king's ransom you could not find dust enough in it to cover a silver penny. The young guest looks round delighted. Margaret's homely room did not seem to Faust more interesting, or more instinct with the spirit of neatness.

"Well, now you are in our farm-house, Mr.—" The old lady had got thus far, when she found herself at fault, a little awkwardly.

"My name is Marston," he said, smiling a little, but very pleasantly.

"And I think, for my part, I have seen much more uncomfortable drawing-rooms," she resumed. "I think it is a place one might grow fond of. Marston," she murmured in a reverie, and then she said to him, "I once met a Mr. Marston at—"

But here a covert glance from Maud pulled her up again.

"I certainly did meet a Mr. Marston somewhere; but it is a long time ago," she said.

"We are to be found in three different counties," he said, laughing; "it is hard to say where we are at home."

"Aren't you afraid of those great wet boots?" the officious old lady began.

"Oh, dear! not the least," said he, "if you don't object to them in your drawing-room." He glanced at the young lady, so as to include her. "But the little walk up here has shaken off all the wet, and as for myself, they are a sort of diving-bells in which

one can go anywhere and be as dry as on terra firma; it is the only use of them." He turned to the young lady. "Very tempting scenery about here. I dare say you have taken a long walk to-day. Some lady friends of mine, last year, over did it very much, and were quite knocked up for some time after they left this."

"I'm a very good walker—better than my cousin," said the young lady; "and a good long walk is one of the most delightful things on earth. To see, as I have done, often, distant blue hills grow near, and reveal all their picturesque details, and a new landscape open before you, and finally to see the same hills fall into the rear, and grow as dim and blue as they were before, and to owe the transformation to your own feet, is there anything that gives one such a sense of independence? Those fine ladies who go everywhere in their carriages enjoy nothing of this, and yet, I think, it is half the pleasure of beautiful scenery. My cousin Max to-day was lecturing me on the duty of being content—I don't think that is the speech of a discontented person."

"It is a very wise speech, and perfectly true; I have experienced the same thing a thousand times myself," said Mr. Marston.

Miss Max would have had a word to say, but she was busy hammering upon the floor with a cudgel provided for the purpose of signalling thus for attendance from below.

Mrs. Pritchard enters with the tea. Is there a cosier spectacle? If people are disposed to be happy, is there not an influence in the cups and saucers, and all the rest, that makes them cheery, and garrulous, and prone to intimacy?

It is an odd little adventure. Outside—

The speedy gleams the darkness swallows,  
Loud, long, and deep the thunder bellows.

The pretty girl has drawn the curtain half-way back, and opened a lattice in the stone-shafted window, the air being motionless, to see the lightning better. The rain is still rushing down perpendicularly, and whacking the pavement below all over. Inside, the candles glimmer on oaken walls three hundred years old, and a little party of three, so oddly made acquainted, are sitting over their homely tea, and talking as if they had known one another as long as they could remember.

Handsome Mr. Marston is chatting in the happiest excitement he has ever known. The girl can't deny, in foro conscientiae, that his brown features and large dark

eyes, and thick soft hair, and a certain delicacy of outline almost feminine, accompanied with his manly and athletic figure, present an ensemble singularly handsome.

"His face is intelligent, there is fire in his face, he looks like a hero," she admitted to herself. "But what do I know of him? He talks good-naturedly. His manners are gentle; but mamma says that young faces are all deceptive, and that character does not write itself there, or tone the voice, or impress the manner, until beauty begins to wear itself out. I know nothing about him. He seems to know some great people, but he won't talk of them to us. That is good-breeding, but nothing more. He seems to enjoy himself here in this homely place, and drinks his tea very happily from these odd delft cups. He brings the kettle, or hammers on the floor with that cudgel, as my cousin orders him. But what is it all? A masquerading adventure—the interest or fun of which consists in its incongruity with the spirit of his life, and its shock to his tastes. He may be cruel, selfish, disobliging, insolent, luxurious."

In this alternative she wronged him. This Charles Marston, whose letters came to him addressed the "Honourable Charles Marston," was, despite his cleverness, something of a dreamer, very much of an enthusiast, and as capable of immensurable folly, in an affair of the grand passion, as any schoolboy, in the holidays, with his first novel under his pillow.

"He can't suppose, seeing us here," thought the girl, "that we are people such as he is accustomed to meet. Of course he despises us. Very good, sir. An eye for an eye," and she turned her splendid dark eye for a moment covertly upon him, "and a tooth for a tooth. If you despise us, I despise you. We shall see. I shall be very direct. I shall bring that to the test, just now. We shall see."

Charles Marston stole beside her, and looked out, with her, at the lightning. This is an occupation that helps to make young people acquainted. A pity it does not oftener occur in our climate. The little interjections. The "oh, oh, ohs!" and "listens," the "hushes," and "wasn't that glorious!" "you're not afraid?" and fifty little useless but rather tender attentions, arise naturally from the situation. Thus an acquaintance, founded in thunder and lightning, may, like that of Macbeth and the witches, endure to the end of the gentleman's days.

Not much attended to, I admit, good Miss Max talked on, about fifty things, and, now and then, threw in an interjection, when an unusually loud peal shook the walls of the old farm-house, and was followed for a minute by a heavier cataract of rain.

But soon, to the secret grief of Mr. Marston, the thunder began perceptibly to grow more distant, and the lightning less vivid, and, still more terrible, the rain to abate.

The interest in the storm subsided, and Miss Maud Guendoline closed the lattice, and returned to the tea-table.

Had he ever seen in living face, in picture, in dream, anything so lovely? Such silken brown hair, such large eyes and long lashes, and beautifully red lips! Her dimples look so pretty in the oblique light and shadow, as her animated talk makes a pleasant music in his ears. He is growing more foolish than he suspects.

Miss Max, who knows nothing of him, who can't tell whether he is a nobleman or a strolling player, whether he is worth ten thousand a year, or only the clothes on his back and his enormous pair of boots, marks the symptoms of his weakness, and approves and assists with all the wise decision of a romantic old woman.

She makes an excuse of cold feet to turn about and place hers upon the fender. It is a lie, palpably, and Miss Maud is angry, and insists on talking to her, and keeping the retiring chaperon, much against her will, still in evidence.

The young man is not the least suspicious, has not an idea that good Miss Max is wittingly befriending him, but earnestly wishes that she may fall into a deep sleep over the fire.

The cruel girl, however, insists on her talking.

"I saw you talking to those American people who came into the carriage at Chester, didn't you?" said the girl.

"Yes, dear," said Miss Max, dryly; "nothing could be more uninteresting."

"I was in the waiting-room at Chester with that very party, I'm certain. There were two ladies, weren't there, and the man had a kind of varnished waterproof coat, and a white hat, and was very thin, and had a particularly long nose, a little crooked?"

"Yes, that is *my* friend," answered Maud. "That gentleman was good enough to take a great interest in me and my cousin. I had to inform him that my christian name is Maud and my surname Guen-

doline; that a friend had made me a present of my first-class ticket; that my papa has been dead for many years; and that mamma's business allows her hardly an hour to look after me; that I have not a shilling I can call my own; that I thought I could do something to earn a subsistence for myself; that I can draw a little—I can teach——"

"Where have you ever taught, dear?" threw in Miss Max, apparently in great vexation at her companion's unseasonable frankness.

"I don't say I have yet taught for money, but I have learned something of it at the Sunday school, and I don't see why I shouldn't do it as well as mamma. Then there's my music—that ought to be worth something."

"You must be tired, I think," interrupted the old lady, a little sharply; "you have had a very long walk to-day. I think you had better get to your room."

"I have stayed, I'm afraid, a great deal too late," said Mr. Marston, who could not mistake the purport of the old lady's speech. "I'm afraid you are tired, Miss Guendoline. I'm afraid you have both been doing too much, and you'll allow me, won't you, just to call in the morning to inquire how you are?"

"It is very inhospitable," said Miss Max, relenting a little; "but we are very early people in this part of the world, and I shall be very happy to see you to-morrow, if we should happen to be at home."

He had taken his leave; he was gone. A beautiful moonlight was silvering the quaint old building and the graceful trees surrounding it. The mists of night hung on the landscape, and the stars, the fabled arbiters of men's fortunes, burned brilliantly in the clear sky.

He crossed the stile, he walked along the white path, as if in a trance. He paused under a great ash-tree, snake-bound in twisted ivy, and leaned against its trunk, looking towards the thatched gable of the old stone building.

"Was there ever so beautiful a creature?" he said. "What dignity, what refinement, what prettiness, and what a sweet voice; what animation! Governess, farmer's daughter, artist, be she what she may, she is the loveliest being that ever trod this earth!"

In this rapture—in which mingled that pain of doubt and yearning of separation which constitutes the anguish of such violent "fancies"—he walked slowly to

the stepping-stones, and conning over every word she had spoken, and every look in her changing features, he arrived at last, rather late, at his inn, the Verney Arms, in Cardyllion.

## CHAPTER V. A SPECTRE.

THE two ladies sat silent for some time after their guest had departed.

Miss Max spoke first.

"I don't think it is quite honest—you make me ashamed of you."

"I'm ashamed of myself. It's true; he'll think too well of me," said the girl, impetuously.

"He thinks very oddly of us both, I'm afraid," said Miss Max.

"I'm not afraid—I don't care—I dare say he does. I think you hinted that he should carry you across the stream on his back. I got out of hearing before you had done. You all but asked him for his name, and finally turned him out in the thunder at a moment's notice."

"It does not matter what an old woman says or does, but a girl is quite different," replied Miss Max. "You need not have said one word about our ways and means."

"I shall say the same to every one that cares to hear where I am not under constraint; and you shall keep your promise. Do let me enjoy my liberty while I may," answered the girl.

"Are you a gipsy? You are such a mixture of audacity and imposture!" said Miss Max.

"Gipsy? Yes. We are something like gipsies, you and I—our long marches and wandering lives. Imposture and audacity? I should not mind pleading guilty to that, although, when I think it over, I don't remember that I said a word that was not literally true, except my surname. I was not bound to tell that, and he would have been, I dare say, no wiser if I had. I was not bound to tell him anything. I think I have been very good."

"I dare say he is Lord Somebody," said Miss Max.

"Do you like him the better for that?" asked the girl.

"You are such a radical, Maud! Well, I don't say I do. But it just guarantees that if the man has any nice tastes, he has leisure and money to cultivate them; and if he has kind feelings he can indulge them, and is liberated from all those miserable limitations that accompany poverty."

"I have made a very frank confession

with one reserve. On that point I have a right to be secret, and you have promised secrecy. Am I under the miserable obligation to tell my real condition to every one who pleases to be curious?"

"You blush, Maud."

"I dare say I do. It is because you look at me so steadily. I told him all I choose to tell. He shan't think me an adventuress; no one shall. I said enough to show I was, at least, willing to earn an honest livelihood. I said the same to that vulgar American, and you did not object. And why not to him? I don't care one farthing about him in particular. He will not pay us a visit to-morrow, you'll find. He has dropped us, being such as I suppose him, and we shall never see him more. I am glad of it. Let us cease to think of him. There's a more interesting man downstairs."

In her slender hand she took the stick that she called the cudgel, and hammered on the floor.

Up came pretty Anne Pritchard, looking sleepy, her cheeks a little pale, her large eyes a little drowsy.

"Can I see your father, Mr. Pritchard?" asked Maud.

"He's gone to his bed, please, ma'am, an hour ago."

"Is he asleep, can you tell?"

"He goes to sleep at once, if you please, miss."

"How provoking! What shall we do?" She turned to Miss Max, and then to the girl. She said: "I saw a man, a stranger—a man with a blind eye, here, when we came in. Is he here still?"

"Yes 'm, please."

"He has a bed here, has he, and stays to-night?" asked the young lady.

"Yes 'm, please," said the girl, with a curtsy.

"What do you think? Shall we turn him out?" said Maud, turning to Miss Max.

"Oh! no, dear, don't trouble your head about him. He'll go in the morning. He's not in our way, at all," answered Miss Max.

"Well, I suppose it is not worth making a fuss about. There is another advantage of the visit of our friend in the boots this evening. I could not find an opportunity to tell Mr. Pritchard to turn that person out of the house," said Miss Maud, with vexation.

"Please 'm, Mr. Lizard."

"Say it again, child, Mr. Who?" asked Miss Max.

"Mr. Lizard, please 'm. Elihu Lizard is wrote in his Bible, and he expounded this evening before he went to his bed. He's a very good man."

"Was he ever here before?" asked Miss Mand.

"No, please 'm."

"And what is he?" demanded the young lady.

"I don't know. Oh, yes, please 'm, I forgot; he said he was gettin' money, please 'm, for the good of the Gospel, and he had papers and cards, 'm."

"The same story, you see," she said, turning with a little nod, and a faint smile, to her companion.

"Do let the man rest in his bed, my dear, and let us go to ours; you forget how late it is growing," said Miss Max, and yawned, and lighted her candle.

"That will do, thanks," said Mand, thoughtfully, "and will you tell Mr. Pritchard, your father, in the morning, that we wish very much to see him before we go out?"

"And let us have breakfast a little before nine, please," added Miss Max, looking at her watch, and holding it to her ear.

"Come, darling," she said, finding it was going, "it really is very late, and you have a good deal, you know, to do to-morrow."

"It is the most unpleasant thing in the world," said the pretty young lady, looking thoughtfully at her companion. "There can be no question he is following us, or one of us, you or me. Who on earth can have sent him? Who can it be? That odious creature! Did you ever see a more villanous face? He is watching us, picking up information about all our doings. What can he want? It is certainly for no good. Who can it be?"

"We can't find out to-night, darling, and there is no good in losing your sleep. Perhaps we may make out something from old Pritchard in the morning," said Miss Max.

"Yes, yes, perhaps so. All I know is, it is making me quite miserable," said the girl, and she kissed the old lady, and went to her room. And Miss Max, having seen that the fire was nearly out, retired also to hers.

As neat and as quaint as their drawing-room, was Miss Max's bedroom. But though everything invited to rest, and Miss Max rather stiff from her long walk, and a little drowsy and yawning, she was one of those fidgety old ladies who take a prodigious time to get into bed.

Nearly an hour had passed, during which she had stuck armies of pins in her pin-cushion, and shut and opened every drawer in her room, and walked from one table to another oftener, and made more small dispositions about her room and her bed, than I could possibly reckon, and, being now arrayed in slippers and dressing-gown, she bethought of something to be adjusted in the sitting-room, which might just as well have waited till the morning, and so she took her candle and descended the old oak stairs.

On the solid plank of that flooring, the slipped footfall of the thin old lady made no sound. The moon was high, and her cold blue light fell slanting through the window upon the floor of the little lobby. Within and without reigned utter silence; and if Miss Max had been a ghost-seeing old lady, no scene could have been better suited for the visitation of a phantom than this dissociated wing of a house more than three hundred years old.

Miss Max was now at the drawing-room door, which she opened softly and stepped in. It was neither without a tenant nor a light.

At the far corner of the table, with a candle in his hand, which he instantly blew out, she saw the slim figure and sly lean face of Elihu Lizard, his white eyeball turned towards her, and his other eye squinting with the scowl of alarm, fiercely across his nose, at her.

Mr. Lizard was, with the exception of his shoes and his coat, in full costume. His stockings and his shirt-sleeves gave him a burglarious air, which rather heightened the shock of his ugly leer, thus unexpectedly encountered.

He stepped back into a recess beside the chimney almost as she entered.

For a moment she was not quite sure whether her frequent discussions with Mand respecting this repulsive person had not excited her fears and fancies, so as to call up an ugly vision. Mr. Lizard, however, seeing that the extinction of his candle-light was without effect, Miss Max's candle shining full upon him, stepped forward softly, and executed his guileless smile and lowly reverence.

Miss Max had recovered her intrepidity; and she said sharply:

"What do you mean, sir? what on earth brings you to our private sitting-room?"

"I have took the liberty," he said, in his quavering tones, inclining his long face aside with a plaintive simper, nearly

closing his eyelids, and lifting one skinny hand—it was the tone and attitude in which the good Elihu Lizard was wont to expound, the same in which he might stand over a cradle, and pronounce a blessing on the little Christian in blankets, with whose purity the guileless heart of the good man sympathised—“being a-thirst and panting, so to speak, as the hart for the water-brooks, as I lay in my bed, I arose, and finding none where I looked for it, I thought it would not be grudged me even in the chambers of them that go delicately, and therefore am I found here seeking if peradventure I might find any.”

Elihu Lizard, upon all occasions on which worldly men, of his rank in life, would affect the language of ceremony, glided from habit into that with which he had harangued from tables and other elevations at Greenwich Fair and similar assemblies, before he had engaged in his present peculiar occupation.

There was something celestial in the suavity of this person that positively exasperated Miss Max.

“That’s all very fine. Water, indeed! There you were, over Miss Maud’s and my letters and papers, in our private sitting-room, and you show, sir, that you well knew you were about something nefarious, for I saw you put out your candle—there it is, sir, in your hand. How disgusting! How dare you! And I suspect you, sir, and your impious cant; and I’ll find out all about you, or I’ll lose my life! How can Mr. Pritchard allow such persons into his house? I’ll see him in the morning. I’ll speak to the police in Cardyllion about you. I’ll come to the bottom of all this. I’ll consult a lawyer. I’ll teach you, sir, be you who you may, you are not to follow people from place to place, and to haunt their drawing-rooms at dead of night. I’ll turn the tables upon you; I’ll have you pursued.”

The good man turned up his effective eye, till nothing but its white was seen, and it would have been as hard to say which of the two had a pupil to it, as under which of his thimbles, if thimble-rigger he be, the pea actually lies. He smiled patiently, and bowed lowly, and with his palm raised, uttered the words, “Charity thinketh no evil.”

The measure of Miss Max’s indignation was full. With her brown silk handkerchief swathed tightly about her head, and looking somewhat like a fez, in her red cloth slippers, and white flannel dressing-

gown, that, I must allow, was rather “skimpy,” showing a little more of her ankle than was quite dignified, she was a rather striking effigy of indignation. She felt that she could have hurled her candlestick at the saintly man’s head, an experiment which it is as well she did not hazard, seeing that she and her adversary would have been reduced to instantaneous darkness, and might have, without intending it, encountered in the dark, while endeavouring to make their retreat. Instead, therefore, of proceeding to this extreme measure, with kindling eyes, and a stamp on the floor, she said:

“Leave this room, this moment, sir! How dare you? I shall call up Mr. Pritchard, if you presume to remain here another moment.”

I dare say that Mr. Lizard had completed whatever observations he intended to make, and his reconnaissance accomplished, he did not care to remain a moment longer than was necessary under fire. He withdrew with the smiling meekness of a Christian enduring pagan vituperation and violence.

In the morning, when, at their early breakfast, the ladies made inquiry after him, they learned that he had taken his departure more than an hour before.

“More evidence, if it were needed, of a purpose, in tracking us as he does, which won’t bear the light!” exclaimed Miss Max, who was now at least as strong upon the point as the handsome girl who accompanied her. “I don’t understand it. It is some object connected with *you*, most positively. Who on earth can be his employer? I confess, Maud, I’m frightened, at last.”

“Do you think it can be old Mr. Tintern?” asked the girl, after a silence, looking curiously in the face of her companion. “That old man may well wish me dead.”

“It may interest possibly a good many people to watch you very closely,” said the elder lady.

They both became thoughtful.

“You will now believe,” said the young lady, with a sigh, “that the conditions of my life are not quite usual. I tell you, cousin, I have a presentiment that some misfortune impends. I suppose there is a crisis in every one’s life; the astrologers used to say so. God send me safely through mine!”

“Amen, darling, if there be a crisis,” said Miss Max, more gravely than she usually spoke. “But we must not croak

any more. I have great confidence, under God, in energy, my dear, and you were always a spirited girl. What, after all, can befall you?"

"Many things. But let us think of to-day and Cardyllion and Llanberris, and let to-morrow take care of itself. What a beautiful day!"

### ONLY ON THE BOX.

"ANY one got a light?"

"Here, my boy, I have. The best matches in the world. Safest thing you can—"

"What, those things! Won't let them near me! I'd have the patentees burnt with fagots of 'em. Why I paid for a box of them, and Jessie paid, too, how much do you suppose? Out of a shop, mind you!"

"I can't tell, I'm sure; some fancy price."

"Only fifty thousand pounds. I'll tell you how. Wait, I can't give up my smoke, even to gratify so just a vendetta. So for once I'll use the ill-omened thing. I remember the last time I used, or *tried* to use them—but you shall hear."

You remember at the time when I and Jessie were going on together, old Foxberry, the millionaire; so he enjoyed the credit of being called, though without any claim to the title, as it proved, for he had but seventy thousand pounds, and a millionaire, even by courtesy, ought to show at least two or three hundred thousand. However, he took all the airs, and enjoyed all the respect, of one, and so as far as he was concerned it came to the same thing. He really showed a great interest in our cooing and wooing; quite beyond what might be expected from a money-grubber, such as he had been all his life. The liking began on his side, through my presenting him with a pound of the very choicest Turkish, which had been sent me as a present. There was his weak place. He smoked—smoked day and night, not like a chimney which often has its fires banked up, but like a mountain on fire.

"Give me my pipe," he would say, taking a rather selfish view of the cosmogony, "and I don't care if the world turns upside-down."

A rather weak logician once retorted on him: "But, my dear Mr. Foxberry, if the world turns upside-down, you and your pipe must turn upside-down with it."

But Mr. Foxberry had him in a moment.

"I say, sir," he roared, "if you had taken the trouble to attend—I stipulate for the quiet enjoyment of my pipe. You like splitting hairs, sir, I see."

I could see that this old gentleman took a kindly interest in my love for Jessie. Between huge clouds of smoke he grunted out his approbation.

"I like you," he said, "Bob, and that's a great deal. Not so well as my pipe, of course; but more than my money. I like you better than the greedy crew who are hunting me for it, and who will find themselves disappointed."

Every one, of course, good-naturedly said that *I* was hunting him, which was far from the truth, though I own I had the air of it, and liked listening to his stories, his grim remarks, and, I own, the smoking some rare old cigars that he had got from a sea captain. I visited him often when it suited me, took little trouble about him, and at last got a hint from a friendly solicitor's clerk that my name figured in "large caps," and in large figures, too, in his testament. The next time old Foxberry was smoking hard, he said to me:

"Why don't you name a day? Be bold, man alive. Pluck up and don't stand shilly-shallying. You won't lose by it in the end," he said, significantly. "I tell you what," he said, "I've got a new box of cigars over. We'll make a little party for a drive to Three-cross Abbey. Get her to meet you there. Settle it all off hand, try the new cigars, and have done with it."

I was enchanted. This, indeed, looked like business. I wrote off a hasty note to Jessie and her aunt, telling them how much depended on their coming, and imploring them to attend. I wrote also to a jeweller for a couple of little lockets, as I wanted to make a tender offering. I was very happy and excited. Mr. Foxberry grew more and more benignant.

"There are pipes," he said, "that I knock about any way, and throw down after I have smoked them. There are others I take care of, and put by carefully. You are a good fellow, Bob. Will be a capital smoker one of these days, and I'll take care of you."

I thanked him cordially.

Well, the morning came, and the carriage was actually at the door. Just then the post came in with two letters and a little registered card-board box. One was

from Jessie, saying that she was delighted to come. The other was from the jeweller, saying that he sent me two lockets, but that he wanted one back at once "for a bride-maid's order." The lockets were very pretty, and I admired them greatly. It was hard to choose between them. I was in difficulty when Mr. Foxberry decided me by roaring out from below that he was ready, that the cigars were in, and that we were losing the fine day. I had thus to make a hasty choice. So I chose one that seemed the most elegant, rolled it up in silver-paper, and packed it up in a neat card-board box. But how was I to send back the other locket? A capital idea! There was a match-box on the chimney-piece, which I emptied, packed away the locket in it, and sealed the box in white note-paper, tying it round with tape.

"You," I said to a handful of the matches, "must not set the house on fire, and will be of use in my waiscoat-pocket." And there I deposited them.

My revered friend, a little out of humour, was still calling for me. I came down with many apologies, and away we drove. Before we had got a quarter of a mile, he called out:

"Hallo! just like me! Forgotten my fusee-box. Drive back at once."

"Stop, sir," I said, smiling, "I have thought of that;" and pulled out a match from my pocket. He would have hugged me for this forethought. He said it showed such a true smoking instinct. It certainly did.

"Just fancy," he said, holding up his cigar; "I should have let this out, and where should I have been then? We don't pass a village or even a cottage on the road to Three-cross Abbey; and there's not a house within miles of it. Or else," he added reflectively, "I must have gone on smoking the whole day and the whole of dinner. I tell you solemnly, I think I should die if I lost my after-dinner smoke."

I was a little facetious on this, making imaginary plans as to how the sacred fire might have been kept in, or propagated; making the coachman keep it alive during dinner, and the man-servant during the coachman's dinner, and I relieving both.

"But only think of the risk," he said: "suppose the cigar got choked, or the fellow got drunk, and let it go out. What would become of me then? I declare," he said, with ferocity, "I'd have the fellow broke and dismissed. I'd work heaven and earth to punish him."

"Quite right," I said, laughing. "But

I am happy to save the poor devil from such a fate."

"You would not," he said, sternly. "Where my pipe is concerned, I'd let nothing stand in the way. I really believe it to be the elixir of life; and any one that interferes with that supply of vital energy I look on as interfering with my life. And I would deal with him accordingly."

The cigars were certainly very good, and, after smoking two, he said, "Now, my boy, for a bit of self-denial. Not one more till after lunch, or dinner, as we may call it; and then how we shall relish it! That's the real time for enjoyment."

We were now at Three-cross Abbey, a little old ruin, in the middle of a sort of waste or common, with hardly a tree or a house near. It was a favourite spot for a picnic, as the ruin was picturesque, and moss-grown, and shady, sheltering us all from the sun. Jessie and her aunt were there waiting to meet us, Jessie looking lovely, as, indeed, old Foxberry as good as told her during lunch.

"When you're both installed in a fine house, she'll look all the better for such a frame. Some one," he added, with meaning, "will take care of you both."

Dinner was over, and he called to his man to bring him his cigar-case out of the carriage.

"I never was in a better humour for a cigar, and for a good cigar," he said. "After that little repast, too, I shall enjoy it the more. Here is a good corpulent one for you, and another for me. I always say, give me my smoke and the world may turn upside-down. Ay, and every human being in it, too," he added.

We laughed at the jest. Such a little tribute was only due to him after the generous declaration about us.

"Give me a light," he said, sticking the cigar into a hole in the extreme corner of his mouth, a position which fanatical smokers are fond of.

I drew out my bundle of matches with triumph. "I have half a boxful in my pocket," I said. "It never does to be without them." And I rubbed one on my boot-heel. It missed fire. I tried another. It missed also. I tried a third. It missed again.

"What are you about?" he said, testily. "You're very awkward; I thought any fool could strike a match——"

"My boot is damp," I said, nervously. "I'll try the wall here." I did so, and failed with three more in succession.

He now lost all patience. "You are a



more stupid fellow than I took you for. Here, give 'em to me." He tried himself, but in vain: they all failed one after the other. I felt my heart sinking.

"The damp must have got at them," I faltered, trying again.

"I hate delays," he said in a passion, "it spoils my smoke. Are you a noodle?"

"Why," cried Jessie, who had been looking at one of them closely, "they are safety matches! They light only upon the box."

Old Foxberry flung his cigar over the wall in a fury. He gave me one look and walked away to the carriage. I rushed in despair to the coachman and the footman.

"For Heaven's sake, a match! Twenty pounds for one," I whispered hoarsely.

"Lord bless the man!" said the former, starting, "what d'ye mean?"

"A match, a match! Quick, a common lucifer match!"

"I ought to have one," he said, feeling his waistcoat pocket. "Wait—no—yes—there is one I do believe."

He pulled out one—saved! It was as precious as a gem, that little splinter of wood. Alas! with fraying in his pocket the top had all worn off. It was no good struggling with fate. I bowed my head and submitted. All the way back he never opened his lips. When he got out he complained of being ill, and said to his housekeeper, "That blackguard had done it purposely, in hopes of killing me; but I'll be even with him." The next day he altered his will.

"Now," added Bob, "admit that I have reason to loathe the sight of safety matches that light only on the box."

### A BIG "BOX O' WHUSTLES."

THE old Scotch lady who, accustomed in her Presbyterian place of worship to psalmody without organ accompaniment, made use of the disparaging allusion to a "box o' whustles," would have been astonished beyond measure if she could have known of the box of whistles which is being prepared for the new Albert Hall of Science and Art. Where the pipes are reckoned by thousands, the whistling will, indeed, be loud and varied, up to very much altissimo, and down to very, very double bass. In the street organs which vex our nerves so severely, though the playing is by a rotating handle instead of by a row of finger-keys, the sounds of the pipes are the same in principle, however coarse in quality.

Wind is forced into the pipes by pressure, and escapes by orifices which have vibrating reeds or tongues adjusted to them; and according to the nicety of this adjustment, so does the exit-current produce an audible sound, always intended to be musical, but sometimes very much the reverse. This reads simple enough, but in practice it is a very complicated affair indeed. The street organ, which Pietro Giacomo Malatesta grinds before our doors as a means of grinding his bread, has sometimes strings, sometimes vibrating springs, to yield the sounds, but in most cases it has pipes. He turns a handle, which handle turns a barrel in the body of the instrument. The barrel is studded with copper or brass pins, apparently indiscriminately placed, but really arranged in definite order according to the tune to be played. Numerous wooden levers or keys catch against the pins as the barrel rotates, and are so acted upon as to open certain pipes ranged in order. The handle at the same time works a pair of bellows, by which wind is forcibly driven into the pipes thus opened. And so the pins, varying their action according to the mode in which they stud the barrel, open in turn all the pipes that are necessary to the production of a tune. The instruments are rather costly, for there is really a large amount of mechanism in them. Some organs, instead of being played by means of a rotating handle, are wound up by a key, and left to play themselves. In such case there is some kind of spring or clock-work which keeps the barrel rotating for a certain length of time, sufficient for the scope of one or more tunes; but the sounding of the pipes themselves is brought about much in the same way as in the grinding organs.

There is a capital story of a barrel-organ told by Mr. Maguire in his *Life of Father Mathew*. When the great apostle of temperance was a young man, he assisted Father Donovan at a chapel in Cork. The place was too small for a church organ, and the congregation too poor to pay for one, and Donovan frequently expressed his regret at the deprivation. One day, however, he told Mathew, with great delight, that he had succeeded in procuring an organ. "Father Donovan explained how he had procured a barrel-organ, which played *Adeste Fideles* and the *Sicilian Mariners' Hymn*, and that these could be fittingly introduced during mass, and also at vespers. The musician worked under his control, and Father Donovan would be responsible for the ad-

mirable effect of this delightful innovation. The Sunday, fraught with anticipated triumph to Father Donovan, arrived. The organ and its operator were in the little chapel, and Father Donovan was having a vigilant eye to both. Nothing could be a more decided success than the Adeste, for many besides Father Donovan thought it heavenly. Nor was the effect lessened by the plaintive sweetness of the hymn. Tears of rapture stood in the eyes of Father Donovan. It was a moment of unalloyed triumph, such as mortals experience but rarely in this life. The last gospel was just being read by Father Mathew, who was the celebrant, when the operator commenced a third air; but—horror of horrors—instead of one of those gentle and spirit-breathing strains that lift the soul to heaven in a flood of lovely melody, out rattled the too well-known air of Moll in the Wad. It would be impossible to describe the bewilderment of the congregation, or the rage and confusion of poor Father Donovan, at this awful scandal, which nearly threw him into a fever from shame and humiliation. His friends were thenceforward rather cautious in their allusion to mechanical music, and indeed organs of all kinds."

Church organs have to produce effects which require far more complete arrangements. Not only must there be more power or volume of sound to fill a large building; not only must there be a wide register or range of notes from grave to acute; but there must also be different qualities or kinds of sound, in order to realise the effects intended by the great composers. One key-board, as in the pianoforte, will not suffice; there must be two, three, or four, in order to set the great array of pipes speaking; these key-boards are ranged one above another, each one a little recessed, or lying further back than those beneath it, but all within easy reach of the organist. Busy work too, indeed, is it for him when the organ is large and complete; his hands require to be strong as well as active; he has to dodge about from one key-board to another, and from the treble down to the bass, "down the middle and up again, and hands across," in country-dance language. And as he, like other men, has only two hands, he makes use of his feet in a way from which pianoforte players are exempt; his feet play a tattoo on a row of pedal-keys, which act on a particular set of pipes known as the pedal organ, and produce sonorous bass notes, grand and solemn in their effect.

Even with all this his work is not ended. He has to pull out and to thrust in a series of knobs or small handles, called draw-stops. These are connected with the most intricate mechanism of the organ. Some of the pipes, by a nice adjustment of the vibrating reed or tongue, yield tones bearing a resemblance to those of the human voice; some, by a different adjustment, imitate rather the clarionet; others, again, warble something like the flute; while others give out the martial tones of the trumpet. Now it is so arranged that all the pipes of any one kind can be brought under the action of one draw-stop; those pipes will or will not sound, according as the stop with which they are connected is thrust out or in; and the organist, having control over all the stops, can at pleasure vary the quality of the sounds produced. In large organs there are vox humana stops, flute stops, piccolo stops, clarionet stops, and others named after the trumpet, clarion, bell, cornet, cymbals, bassoon, oboe, dulcimer, horn, flageolet, ophicleide, trombone, bourdon, &c.; also others named (for reasons only to be understood by the initiated) diapason, swell, tremulant, dulcet, mixture, furniture, and so forth. All the stops and pipes played by one key-board have a collective name given to them, such as the pedal organ, the great organ, the swell organ, the choir organ, and the solo organ. The supply of wind is another and very different affair. Hand-worked bellows, mechanical bellows, hydraulic pressure, pneumatic pressure, steam power—all are employed to fill a large chamber or receptacle with condensed air; and then there is a wonderful array of tubes, sliders, apertures, and valves, to admit a proper quantity of air, at a proper pressure, to the pipes which the organist requires to use at any particular moment.

Some of the continental organs are celebrated for their size and magnificent tones. They are mostly in the cathedrals. At Tours the organ has sixty stops; at Weingarten, sixty-four; at Stuttgardt, sixty-eight; at Hamburg, seventy; at Prague, seventy-one; at Seville, the same number; at Frankfort, seventy-four; at Meiseburg, seventy-five; at Rotterdam, seventy-six; at Lübeck, eighty-two. Remembering what we have just said, that a stop comprises a long row of pipes, we shall be prepared to understand how complex must be the internal arrangements of an organ containing seventy or eighty stops. Most of the pipes are made of metal, a combination of tin

and lead, with sometimes a little antimony added; the others are made of wood. Some are square, some round; some are open at the top, others closed. Some are of stupendous size, thirty-two feet high by thirty inches or so in diameter; they emit a gigantic rumbling growl, very Polyphemus-like, rather than a musical note. At the other end of the scale are pipes scarcely an inch long, with a diameter analogous to that of a barley-straw, and a note such as that of a tiny bird. Some costly curiosities have been made on the Continent in the way of organs; such as the Duke of Mantua's organ, in which the keys, pipes, and bellows were made of alabaster; another, in which glass was used instead of alabaster; and one in a convent at Madrid was made of solid silver.

Although not rising to the dignity of the famous continental organs, there are several in London of large size and fine quality. St. Olave's, forty stops; St. Peter's, Cornhill, the same; forty-one at Camberwell; forty-two at Exeter Hall; forty-three at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge; forty-five at Spitalfields; forty-nine at the Foundling Hospital; fifty-four at St. Martin's-in-the-fields; these are some among many examples. St. Sepulchre's organ, made just two hundred years ago by Renatus Harris, and frequently altered since, is celebrated rather for the fineness of its tones than the number of stops. St. Paul's organ, made by Father Smith, and Westminster Abbey organ, by Schreider, have in like manner been so altered that their makers would not know them again. The Colosseum in the Regent's Park once had an organ of large size. The Panopticon in Leicester-square (now the Alhambra Music Hall) had originally an organ regarded in its day as the largest in London; this is the one, if we remember rightly, which is now placed in the south transept of St. Paul's Cathedral for the Sunday Evening Services. Nor are the provinces without their fine organs; indeed, the largest in England are beyond the limits of the metropolis. Nottingham, Doncaster, and Birmingham Town Hall have instruments varying from fifty to fifty-three stops each. The organ at York Cathedral, made about forty years ago, and improved on many occasions since, has no less than eighty stops, and a forest of pipes corresponding in number. The largest in England, down to the present time, is, we believe, that in St. George's Hall at Liverpool. A hundred stops, four rows of keys, a range of notes from G G up

to A in altissimo; such is the instrument which Mr. Willis made for that noble hall, and on which organ performances of a high class frequently take place.

The story of one particular organ is the story of something which was to have been, but which has never been, constructed; financial considerations stopped the way. When the Crystal Palace Company purchased the Hyde Park building in which the Great Exhibition of 1851 had been held, to reconstruct it on a grander scale at Sydenham, they planned mighty things in regard to arts and sciences of all kinds. Mighty things they have certainly achieved; for there is probably no such shilling's-worth elsewhere in the world as this; but as the company spent a million and a half sterling in providing it, there has never yet been an adequate return to the shareholders. One of the things planned was to place in the building the largest, most powerful, most magnificent organ in the world. The directors placed the matter in the hands of Professor Sir F. A. G. Onseley, of Oxford, Professor Willis, of Cambridge, and Professor Donaldson, of Edinburgh—all learned authorities in the science of music. They were desired to collect information concerning great organs, and to advise the directors generally on the subject. The professors agreed that no organ for the great palace of glass would meet the required conditions unless it were larger than any before constructed; else the sound would be too feeble through excessive dispersion. A gigantic organ it must certainly be. It would have to fill a vastly larger space than any other in England. As unfurnished or scantily furnished rooms are always better for musical effect than such as are overladen with curtains, draperies, hangings, carpets, sofas, and the like, the vicinity of a great organ should be as free as possible from such adjuncts. Trees and plants deaden music in a room, while fountains do the like by moistening the air. The professors passed in review the most celebrated organs in Europe, and noticed the circumstances which render them exceptionally powerful; such as those at Haarlem, Rotterdam, Freyburg, Milan, Weingarten, Stuttgart, Seville, Frankfurt, with the Madeleine and two or three others at Paris. Some owe their power to one peculiar stop or set of pipes; some to the number of such sets; some to the effective balancing of one set against another; some to the excellence of the arrangements for the

supply of wind at a high pressure. Some organs will literally make a church tremble, by the amazing power of well-speaking pipes thirty-two feet in length. The professors pictured to their imaginations (for they could only so picture it) the mighty sonorous effect of pipes sixty-four feet in length. After viewing the subject in various lights, the committee of professors recommended the directors to bear the expense of providing an organ so large that, extending across one end of the centre transept from gallery to gallery, it would be fifty feet deep, and rise to a height of a hundred and forty feet. Its bellows would be blown by a small steam-engine. There would be pipes of such tremendous size as to yield a sound four octaves lower than the lowest note of the violoncello. But the cost? Ay, there's the rub. The professors put down the probable expense of such an organ as they had in view at no less than twenty-five thousand pounds. This was a crusher. The directors abandoned the idea; and it was not until many years afterwards that they put up the much smaller (though still large) organ which now crowns the Handel Orchestra.

The organ for the new Albert Hall of Science and Art at Hyde Park, near the Horticultural Gardens, though much smaller than the intended instrument just described, will be by far the largest in England, nay, the largest yet constructed in any country. This building, as is pretty generally known, stands exactly between the Albert Memorial and the Horticultural Gardens, with a frontage in Kensington-road. Why an organ is to be supplied to the structure, will be seen when the purpose of the undertaking is explained; as will also the necessity of adopting very large dimensions if there is to be any organ at all. Soon after the first Great Exhibition in 1851, many corporate bodies and learned societies came to an agreement that, seeing the want of a central institution in the metropolis for the promotion of scientific and artistic objects, an application should be made to the Royal Commissioners of the Exhibition for their aid in the matter. A very comprehensive plan to this effect was formed by the late Prince Consort; but the financial and parliamentary difficulties were too great to be surmounted; and the death of the Prince led to the final abandonment of the scheme. One part of the plan, however, was adhered to; and in 1865 an influential committee resolved on the erection of a hall of arts and sciences, to be named after the

lamented Prince. The purposes of the structure were declared to be for "holding national and international congresses for purposes of science and art; for the performances of choral and instrumental music, especially organ performances on a grand scale; for the distribution of prizes by public bodies and societies; for conversaziones and soirées of scientific and artistic societies; for agricultural and horticultural exhibitions; for national and international exhibitions of works of art and industry, including working men's exhibitions; for exhibitions of pictures and sculpture; and for other purposes of artistic and scientific interest." The late Captain Fowke was employed by the committee to prepare designs for such a building; and he was engaged on the matter at the time of his death. In view of the various purposes which the structure was to subserve, he decided on an elliptical form, with abundant means of ingress and egress; numerous rooms and offices for societies, &c., being provided, as well as the great hall itself. Lieutenant-Colonel Scott is carrying out Captain Fowke's plan, with suggestions from various artists and engineers of note. The expense will be not less than two hundred thousand pounds, the whole of which sum has been subscribed; or, rather, the Commissioners of the Exhibition gave the site, valued at sixty thousand pounds; while boxes, stalls, and seats have been leased for a long term of years, and at high rentals. The building, in the hands of Messrs. Lucas, is rapidly approaching completion. It is an ellipse, about two hundred and seventy feet by two hundred and forty. In the centre is an arena, about a hundred feet by seventy, which would accommodate a thousand persons; this will be available for flower shows, conversaziones, and the like. It is completely surrounded by an amphitheatre of seats, that will accommodate fourteen hundred people; and at one end of the ellipse is an orchestra for a thousand performers. Above the amphitheatre are two tiers of boxes, with nearly nine hundred sittings; there is an ante-room behind each box communicating with a corridor running round the building. Over the boxes is a broad promenade, available for spectators of what is going on below; and over this again a picture gallery. And over all is a domed ceiling, rising a hundred and thirty feet from the arena.

Such is the building which, when finished, will contain a magnificent organ, built by Mr. Willis, under the supervision of Sir

Michael Costa and the late Mr. Bowley. The "box o' whistles" will be as big as a mansion; sixty-five feet wide, seventy high, and forty deep; with an additional oak screen of twenty feet in height in front of the masonry platform on which the ponderous mass (a hundred and fifty tons weight) will rest. Five rows of keys, belonging to the choir, great, solo, swell, and pedal organs; a hundred and thirty-eight stops, representing an equal number of pipes; a total of ten thousand pipes in all, which would extend nine miles if placed end to end; a range of nine or ten octaves, from the basest bass up to the most infantine treble; two steam-engines by Messrs. Penn, to blow the bellows—all this does indeed sound vast. There is no external case; the pipes (made of nearly equal proportions of tin and lead) will be burnished and polished in the highest degree—at least those which are visible—and as they will be grouped in four great clusters of spires, the effect will doubtless be grand and beautiful. There will be lofty vaulted openings at the front and sides, to let the works be seen; and at the back will be a perfect forest of pipes. The keys, made of massive ivory, are said to be so nicely balanced that the slightest touch will make the pipes speak; inasmuch that the instrument will be as easy to play as a pianoforte, so far as concerns the pressure upon the keys. All sorts of ingenious contrivances are introduced to increase the power of the instrument and the ease of playing it. The organ was so far finished as to be tested a few months ago; but it must await the completion of the hall in which it is to be placed, and then the world will have an opportunity of seeing and hearing the result of ten thousand pounds' worth of labour, inventive genius, and practical skill.

#### THE WIFE'S VIGIL.

WATCHING, watching for ever,  
Through the stormy winter day,  
While the pale November sunrise gilds  
The breakers in Whitby Bay.  
While noonday sees the terrible Scar,  
All snowy with foaming waves,  
As they thunder up to the churchyard head,  
Thick dotted with sailors' graves:  
Till the storm-drum shows its ominous black,  
'Neath the tremulous evening star,  
And never a sail on the tossing roads,  
Nor a ship at the harbour bar.

Watching, watching for ever,  
The passionate prayer is mute,  
There's a dirge in each burst of the wailing wind;  
There's a knell in each hasty foot.  
While children who may be fatherless  
Shrink from her stony sorrow,  
And pitying friends dare hardly speak  
Of joy that may come to-morrow!

For broken spars drift thick and fast  
To the rocky Yorkshire shore,  
To tell of the wrecks by the Norway firths,  
And the cliffs of Elsinore.

Watching, watching for ever,  
With aching, haggard eyes,  
Straining for hope to the raging seas,  
For hope to the iron skies.  
While the heavy sleep exhaustion brings  
Is cursed with fevered dreams,  
Of corpses tossing with tangle and shell,  
Where the lonely moonlight gleams.  
And the terrible shadow of widowhood,  
Worst woe of this weary world,  
Draws nigh with every angry wave  
On the shivering ice-belt hurled.

Waiting, watching for ever,  
Oh quaint old Whitby town,  
With red-roofed houses nestling close  
'Neath the church on the breezy down!  
There is never a hearth in your crowded courts,  
Nor a hut upon moor or fell,  
But has sorrowful story of woman's grief  
And orphaned wail to tell!  
God help the brave who win their bread  
From the beautiful, pitiless sea,  
And teach that mourning watcher yet  
What His saving love can be.

#### IN THE FIELD WITH THE PRUSSIANS.

##### A PERILOUS POSITION.

THE wretched town of Courcelles has become celebrated in history from the fact of its being the last station by rail, on the line from Saarbruck to Metz, from which the Prussians could approach that French stronghold.

At this town I found myself, one pouring wet day in the month of August. It was early morning when, in a waggon, I set out in company with two Prussian officers and their servants, who were under orders to find their regiments, supposed to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Metz. After a tedious journey all day through muddy lanes and deserted villages, the following was our situation.

Night was rapidly setting in, and the thick drizzling rain was coming down in misty sheets; it was very cold, and, as we drew our rugs closer around us, we longed to find a resting-place. Moreover, we were not very sure that we were going the right way, and this is a particularly uncomfortable feeling when one is in a country which is at war, and in the company of officers belonging to either army.

The cart in which six of us, including the owner, had found room, was an old lumbering waggon, and our horses looked as if they had never been guilty of going more than from three to four miles an hour in their lives, so that, altogether, there was not much chance of rapid progression. In vain the driver plied his whip, in vain he

shouted: the animals had their own pace, and stuck to it. At last a French village loomed through the gathering gloom; we hailed the sight with delight, and entered by the main street. "Hollo, there!" we sung out to a peasant who was striding along. He stopped, came a little nearer, but when he saw the spiked helmets he uttered an exclamation of surprise, turned round, and vanished in the mist.

"There's something wrong," I said to my companions. "Which way does Metz lie?"

"To our right, I think," answered a young lieutenant of Prussian artillery.

"And what is this village?" I asked.

"Don't know," was the answer. And our heavy waggon lumbered on through the paved street.

"This won't do!" said Von Werder, a young Landwehr cavalry officer. "Halt!"

The driver pulled for a couple of minutes at his horses' tough mouths, and we came to a stop.

"Wilhelm," said Von Werder to his servant, "jump down, load your rifle, and make your way into that house with a light in its window. Ask the name of this village, and get hold of a boy or some one to show us the best house in it."

Down jumped Wilhelm, needle-gun in hand. It had an ominous sound, the clapper, clapper of that rifle, as the servant loaded it. He paused a second when he had finished; we waited in breathless silence, and then came the click of cocking the rifle, and Wilhelm strode away through the mud. We saw him go to the door and heard him thunder at it with his fist. It was opened by a man, and Wilhelm vanished behind it. We waited two or three minutes, and then forth he came; he ran up to the cart saying, "M. is the name of the place; the best house in it is close by." Away vanished anything connected with fear, and we only thought of getting out of the horrible weather, and of getting once more warm. We drew up at an old-looking chateau, situated in the main street of the village, but having an entrance-gate and a garden in front and behind. No light was visible, and we pommelled at the door for two or three minutes without getting any answer. By-and-bye, Von Werder said, "Wilhelm, break that window open!" Wilhelm did as he was told, made his way into the house, and very soon the front door opened, and we marched in to take possession.

It was a fine old place, the marble staircase occupied nearly the whole of the en-

trance-hall. On mounting the steps we came into a long corridor with rooms opening on to it, to the right and left; most of the doors were locked. When we had entered one room, however, it was easy enough to find other ways of ingress and egress than those offered by the doors opening on to the corridor. The first room I entered had evidently been left in a great hurry; a ladies' wardrobe lay scattered all about the floor; the room was a dressing-room, I suppose, as there were no signs of a bed in it. On going through a door I found myself in a luxuriously furnished bedroom; dust stood on all the tables and other articles of furniture in a thick layer, but it could not hide the beauty and elegance with which the room had been fitted up. The bed had been left unmade, and there was a great state of disorder pervading everything; boxes had been ransacked, chests of drawers and wardrobes had been left open, and their contents partially taken away, the residue being strewn around. In the next room were two small cots, and on pegs were two little straw-hats; the children's boots and playthings lay some on the beds, some on the floor. I now retraced my way through the two rooms I had first explored, and through a side-door came into a little passage, which led through a storeroom into another bedroom. Here I found a bed with clean sheets, and, wonder of wonders, a bath. Of course there were the miniature, almost toy, jug and basin, which seem generally to be considered sufficient in France for lavatory purposes, but to think that I should find a bath! "Delicious," I cried exultingly, throwing myself on to the soft feather-bed. I don't know how long I remained there; it was too comfortable a position to be able to keep awake, especially under the circumstances of a trying day's jolting in that awful waggon. I was awakened by hearing some one say, "Hier liegt er;" I opened my eyes and found Speissman and Von Werder standing in the room.

"Well, you're a nice fellow," said one of them; "we thought that either the French had collared you, or that you had gone to tell them where to collar us."

"Instead of which I have been having a nap," I said. "A thing much more to my taste than either of your former suppositions would be."

I now began to think something to eat would not be undesirable, and asked if anything eatable had been found in the chateau.

"Nothing," was the answer, "except a couple of glass jars with preserved fruit, and they are most likely poisoned."

"And the cellar?" I asked.

"Oh, that's all right; the old dame has left us plenty of wine, and plenty of petticoats, but nothing else."

"Well, we must feed," I said; "let us see what's to be got in the village."

All five of us went out together. We noticed two or three knots of men standing about in the rain, and we thought this rather extraordinary, but whatever it boded we knew we must stop that night in the village, come what might, as our horses were unable to go another step forward. We asked a villager if there was an auberge near. He pointed to a light on the opposite side of the way, so we went into the house, leaving Wilhelm outside. He was a capital fellow this Wilhelm, by the way; his round good-natured face bore a continual smile, which became more beaming if he thought there was anything at all serious in the wind. He evidently thought something was going to happen on the night in question, for I never before saw his face so radiant with grins.

We prevailed upon the host of the auberge to make us an omelet, and we got some milk, bread, and cheese. We paid the man liberally, and before leaving asked him how far the fortifications of Metz were from this.

"Not far, sir," was his answer.

"Have Prussian troops ever been here before?"

"You are the first, sir."

Wilhelm now put his head in to say "he had seen several men sneaking about the château, and he thought we had better go back if we did not want to lose our things." Wilhelm was given some bread and cheese to pocket, and a drink of milk, and off we started. The moon had now come out, and it had stopped raining. We made our way through the thick, pasty mud back to our château. Our first care was to look after the coachman and his horses; the horses seemed well employed, munching away complacently in the dark. We called and hallooed to the coachman without getting a response; there were his wallet, and his whip, and his bed over the stable, but he had betaken himself out of the premises. Where had he gone to? Would he return with some Franc-tireur friends, or had he gone out merely to satisfy his cravings of hunger? Whatever the reason might be, we gave up all

thoughts of going quietly to sleep until this worthy returned. So Hans, the artillery officer's servant, mounted sentry on the cart in the yard, while Wilhelm was allowed to join his lord and master in helping him, and us, to drink the old château's good wine.

"Wilhelm," said Von Werder, "come into the cellar with me; we won't let the old lady think when she comes back that the Prussians were so ungallant as not to drink her health pretty often." And then he said, sotto voce, "I wonder where the old lady and her brats are gone to? I suppose they will grow up into torments to poor Prussia some day; its our turn now, however, so, Wilhelm, vorwärts, lead the way into her subterranean store." Speissman and myself followed, the steel scabbards clattered down the stone steps, and the great wax candle which Wilhelm carried flared like a torch, dropping at each step large flakes of wax. We now came to a door on the same level as the hall; the lock had been savagely torn off. Von Werder, when he came to it, pointed to it and whispered "Wilhelm;" we understood very well what he meant. He had an instinct most wonderfully acute for finding out wine, had this worthy man; while others were running wild all over a house or château, Master Wilhelm would set himself always the task of finding out whether there be any cellar contents or no!

Wilhelm had now gone on, so we had to hasten our steps. We found him engaged in propping the wax candle between three bottles on the top of a large cask, which stood in the centre of the cellar. He then gravely produced from his pocket four new spermaceti candles, and, lighting three of them, he presented us each with one, in order, as he said, to ferret out our own pet wines. Everything was so nicely arranged, and such was the quantity of bacchanalian liquors, that it was rather perplexing to any one, not a thorough connoisseur, to choose. Of course champagne was settled upon as the right beverage for such an occasion by some of us, but I was much struck by a little barrel marked 1815. It had evidently been partially concealed, and this, together with the date, and the fact of its having no sort or kind of name upon it, thoroughly aroused my curiosity.

"Wilhelm," I said, "I think we must have this cask open."

"What nonsense," said Von Werder. "Why not stick to bottles; you'll only get poisoned if you try casks!"

"I mean to try this one," I said. And so did Wilhelm, if one might judge from the hard knocks he was giving the top staves of the cask. At last one gave way, and Wilhelm stooped down to find out, by his organ of smell, what sort of wine it was.

He jumped up, saying: "I've sacked many cellars, but I've never found wine like that before. Vortrefflich!" he exclaimed.

All now gathered round the inky-looking fluid. Wilhelm dipped his tin cup into it, and presented it to Von Werder. He looked anything but pleased with his servant's attention; but after smelling it he became re-assured—first sipped, and then drained the cup, and presently asked for more. We all had a cupful, and then emptying six bottles of vin ordinaire, we filled them with this precious liquor, which, let it be what it might, was very potent. In appearance it was like dark crimson oil. Its taste was unique.

Roaring with laughter, we ascended the stone steps, each carrying an armful of bottles of all descriptions, Wilhelm in the van, as before, bearing the torch-like candle. Our uproarious merriment met with a rude check, however, as we had not got half-way up when we heard the sharp crack of a rifle. Down the bottles were put, some not too carefully, as a cascade of effervescing champagne, mixed with red wine, pouring down the steps over my trousers and boots fully convinced me. However, it was no time to think of one's boots and trousers when one's life appeared in such jeopardy; so pulling my revolver from my belt I hastily joined the rest at the top of the stairs. I heard Wilhelm call out of the door, "Hans was machst du?" We only heard the clapper, clapper, of some one loading a rifle outside.

"Some one has shot Hans," said Wilhelm, "and seems to be loading again. Shall I fire?"

"Yes," said Von Werder.

"Hans!" called out Speissman.

Hans answered.

"Come here," said the lieutenant.

Hans appeared at the door.

The moon was behind the clouds; and as I looked out into the garden, all was still and dark. Wilhelm had blown out the candle before opening the door.

"Hans," said Speissman, "what made you fire your rifle off?"

"I did it to alarm you, sir," said Hans. "I came to the door and called to you, but as no one attended to me, I fired the rifle

at the seventh person I saw drop down over that wall there."

We all sallied forth into the garden. There was a small door opening out of the garden, close to where Hans said these seven persons had dropped, and certainly there were several footmarks in the soft mud, and the door stood ajar. Where had these men come from, and what did they want? The only place they could come from was the château itself; and sure enough a window, opening on to the leads, was found thrown up.

We now determined to scour the château. I don't know what possessed me to go alone, but I took a candle in one hand and a revolver in the other, and I found myself back in the comfortable bedroom with the bath in it. I was on the point of going through into the storeroom, when I heard some one behind me. I turned round, and there stood a man. My first impulse was to shoot him dead. I raised my revolver, but before I could pull the trigger he exclaimed: "Mon Dieu! You would not murder me?"

"No," I said. "Of course I would not; but pray what do you want here?"

"The lady of the château has intrusted this house to my care," he said.

"Then," said I, "you had better talk to the lieutenant of the party, and I can tell you you may think yourself lucky not to have fallen in with him first, for he would undoubtedly have shot you!"

With this I raised my voice, and called out: "Von Werder! Speissman! Wilhelm! here!"

Wilhelm came first, with his bayonet fixed and gun full cocked, with a most beaming face. He drew up suddenly when he saw the Frenchman standing pale as a ghost, and shaking all over with fear.

"Wilhelm," I said, "tell your master and Lieutenant Speissman they had better come here directly."

I heard Wilhelm run along the passage and call out, in the loudest voice: "Come, sirs, the Englishman's caught a French rascal. Hurrah!"

And back came Wilhelm, and following at his heels came the two officers with their drawn swords. The poor Frenchman certainly thought his hour had come; his face looked like death, and he shook like palsy. Von Werder asked me how I had caught him. I told him. Then, turning to the Frenchman, he asked him if he could speak German.

"Non, monsieur."



Von Werder then asked me to pump him, and ask him who the seven men were that were in the château. The Frenchman disclaimed all knowledge of there having been any one.

"You lie," said fiery young Speissman, in German; and he put the muzzle of his revolver into the unfortunate Frenchman's ear. Then, turning to me, he said: "Tell this dog, if he does not speak the truth, I'll blow his brains out."

The Frenchman's knees were by this time knocking together, and he whimpered out that perhaps they might have been workmen who had hidden when they heard of the Prussians' arrival.

"Were they armed?" I asked.

"No," was the answer.

"On your honour?" I asked.

"On my honour," said the Frenchman.

"Let the man go," I said, "or he will certainly get a stroke of palsy."

"Yes; let him go," said Von Werder.

"No," said Speissman; "let's make an example of him. Let's shoot the dog, and hang him before his door as an example to other French dastards and liars."

Luckily the wretched man did not understand Speissman's kind intentions. Wilhelm saw him to the entrance-door. Where the man slept I know not; I should think many miles from the château, if one might judge from his horror-stricken face, and his gladness to get away from our company. When Wilhelm came back he said that Hans reported all was quiet outside, but that the coachman had not returned. We now went a second time into the cellar, and returned with the wine to the drawing-room, thinking our perils were over for the night. The size of this drawing-room was immense. Four windows looked on to the garden, and there were two side-doors leading to ante-rooms at each end, besides a large folding-door opening into the corridor. Into this room we tugged six mattresses, and bedding to match, bolted and barred the windows and two of the doors, and then sat down to our carousal. The people of the château had left a beautiful supply of glass, and this, I always think, makes good wine tenfold more pleasant. We were in the middle of a loud chorus when the door-bell clanged. We started to our feet; revolvers were clutched and swords drawn, the lights put out, and down we went. The coachman had come back drunk, and was vowing the destruction of every German in France. Speissman went into the stables, and made

the man give him every match he had, so that he should not have the chance of setting the place on fire, left him in the dark, and locked him in.

It was one A.M., and the rain had begun to fall again. We locked the front door, barred up the smashed-in window, and Hans joined our circle of revelry. These Germans sang most splendidly, and, as most of the songs that were sung were old friends of mine in schoolboy days in Germany, I thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated them. On a sudden I started up, hearing a noise outside. "Did you hear that?" I asked.

"No," was the answer.

We listened a second, and then Von Werder burst out with Blücher's song; and, as if by magic, we all joined in its irresistible swell, till we made the ceiling ring again. Just as we came to a moderated part we all heard bump, bump, bump at the door.

"The rascally Frenchman has come back with troops," whispered Speissman. "Why did you not let me shoot the hound?"

Again the lights were extinguished, and once more we descended. We opened a side-window first.

"Who goes there?" asked Wilhelm, in French.

"Hush!" was the answer. "Let me in. I've something important to tell you."

The door was cautiously opened, and a man came into our midst. It was the host of the auberge.

"I've come, at the risk of my life, to warn you," said he, "that you are in great danger here; and if you stay here an hour after daylight you are all dead men. Were it not that the peasants think there may be some more of your men close by, they would inform the French, who are not more than three kilometres off, of your arrival. Adieu."

He turned to go; but I stopped him, and asked him what had actuated him to come and help us, seeing that he was a Frenchman himself.

"Well, you see, sir," said the man, scratching his head, "my wife is a German, and she has heard through the door what these men have been saying; and she would not let me rest till I came to tell you. And, moreover, sir, if you are murdered here my nice little house over the way, and every other house here, won't stand long. My wife says she knows what her countrymen would do—they would raze the whole place."

"She was quite right," I said. "Please present our united compliments to madame, your wife, and many thanks for her goodness."

We then subscribed a small sum between us for the man, and he left bowing and gesticulating, as only a Frenchman or dervish can bow and gesticulate. As he was leaving he said: "There is one thing I have forgotten; my wife heard two men say they would set the house on fire to-night."

"Well," I said, "it would have been a pity to have gone away without telling us that, as it does in a slight degree interest us to know all their peaceful intentions. Is there nothing else?"

"Nothing," was the answer, and the door shut on the man's retreating figure.

We returned to the room; in two hours there would be daylight. The coachman was dead drunk, and the French were not two miles off!

"Well, how will this end?" said Speissman.

Von Werder answered in rather hiccuppy tones: "In — (hic) — prison — (hic) — in Metz!"

"We must have a sleep for an hour," said Speissman, "at any risk."

Wilhelm volunteered to watch; and in our clothes we laid outside our beds. I, for one, slept very comfortably, and when Wilhelm came to call us in an hour and a half's time, I jumped up as fresh as a lark. Von Werder was snoring, and we could not wake him till Speissman bawled into his ear, "The French are coming!" That had the desired effect. It was still pitch dark. No one had been unkind enough to attempt burning the house down. Wilhelm went to rouse the coachman. He came back to say the man was drunk still, and that Hans must come and help him harness the horses. Everything now being ready, Speissman produced his map; the wonder was it had not been produced before. The chateau we were in was a twenty minutes' walk from a French fort, and almost within chasseur range; we had come at right angles to the place we had intended going to, and we must at any rate retrace our way right through the long village street.

"We are in for it!" said Speissman. "There's not a Prussian, I'll wager, within half an hour's walk."

Von Werder, Wilhelm, and I bundled the drunken driver into the straw head-foremost, and Wilhelm jumped in after him to drive. We went two on either side

of the cart with our loaded revolvers in our hands, and our teeth set, expecting every second some terrible catastrophe. The waggon of course seemed more ponderous than ever, and as it went with a continuous grinding bump over the roughly paved street, I thought that the way seemed endless. At last we got clear of the village (it was still perfectly dark), and after this the road ascended first to the right, and then gave a sharp turn in the opposite direction. Just at this place, according to Speissman's map, there was a short cut through a wood. The cart laboured up the hill; when we came to the turning-point in the road we halted to find the way. Hans lit a lantern, and preceded the cart.

"Here it is!" he cried out.

At that instant there was a lurid flash in the sky. Von Werder cried: "On your faces!" I went down on mine as if I had been drilling all my life for this event. I heard a boom, and then a hiss, hiss—something struck the road; there was a tremendous explosion, which nearly stunned us all, but did not do any further damage. Wilhelm had no need to urge on the horses now; the old things, snorting and rearing, broke into a gallop; we ran on as fast as we could down the narrow road. Again there was a flash and hiss, but this time the shell was aimed at the ascending road to the left, and it consequently flew over our heads. On we ran, tumbling down, and picking ourselves up, and running on again. The firing still continued. At last we got up to the cart and horses, which Wilhelm had managed to upset over a bank. Everything had been pitched into the road, including the drunken coachman, who was lying there like a log.

"Now, doctor," said Speissman, "here's a chance for you."

Wilhelm now came to me. The dawn had just broken, and I could see that, this time, poor Wilhelm's white face bore no sign of merriment now; he was holding a pocket-handkerchief up to his head, and blood was trickling down his face in large red drops.

"Hollo, Wilhelm!" I said. "Have you been wounded?"

"Yes, sir. But you had better look at the Frenchman first; I think he's dead."

We all went to look at the Frenchman. The man still lay motionless. He was breathing heavily and with great effort. I spoke to him—he was unconscious. I at once thought there must be a fractured skull, and such I found to be the case.

At last, and with much difficulty, we righted the waggon, with the help of the two horses, every moment expecting the French to be down upon us, and then laid our poor Frenchman on the straw inside, and started again. It was luckily light, or we might have got a few shots from the Prussians; no allowance would have been made had it been dark, for the gauntlet we had run with the French.

"What made the Frenchmen fire just at that moment, then?" I asked Von Werder. "They surely could not have seen the light from the lantern?"

"No; but some of those villagers have given the alarm, and the only wonder is they did not give it before. We have had a narrow escape."

At last the cart got to the first Prussian outposts, and the men could scarcely contain their wonder at seeing us thus come from apparently the jaws of death. All was excitement on account of the firing, which by this time, however, had entirely ceased.

Wilhelm's cut on the head was now properly attended to, and the poor French peasant was given into the charge of a countryman and placed in a cottage. At first he appeared to be doing well, but he suffered a relapse, and our unlucky charioteer died the next evening.

## THE DOCTOR'S MIXTURE.

### BOOK III.

#### CHAPTER XXXII. SUSPENSE.

WITH the morning came the cold business-like proceedings that follow on a death; the officials who found their way in, the air of business in the house; while Mary Leader was prostrate in grief. What had happened some hours before, she had forgotten—it seemed like a dream; that hideous drama, seen through the French window, appeared a sort of nightmare. By-and-bye the news got down to Tilston—the waiter told it at breakfast. Billy Webber went up to the Doctor's to learn particulars, but found only Polly there, who knew nothing. Every one was yearning for details. How was Katey "left?"—would the Doctor get anything? People said often "they'd back Fin to get a few feathers for his nest." By ten o'clock a strange gig had passed through, known to contain the family solicitor from Westcup. Later, a fly, containing the master of the dismal cere-

monies, who must be thought of at such a season.

As the morning wore on, there was visible, in all that quiet confusion at Leadersfort, the figure of Mrs. Leader, calm, reserved, but still doing work silently. At eleven, when the solicitor arrived, she and her brother were closeted a long time with him in the study. After that interview he came out, wrote letters, and transacted other business. Then followed lunch, for even at such a crisis mourners from a distance partake heartily, and with a relish they seem to reserve for such occasions. The Doctor was still there; he could not leave his daughter in her affliction, and determined that no "snubs," nor insults, even, should drive him from the ground. But there was now a truce.

It was after the lunch that the solicitor went over into the window with the Doctor and Mr. Randall Morrison, saying: "A word with you, Doctor Findlater. We have, as is usual in these cases, been looking into the will to see if there were any instructions about the funeral. There are none."

And the solicitor paused, looking into the Doctor's face, to see what remark he would make.

"You don't tell me so?" said the Doctor.

"No," said Mr. Morrison, "not a line about the funeral being private or otherwise. So we will have it done with all state."

"You may not, of course, be aware," went on the solicitor, "that there is an instrument later in date than the one executed in favour of Mr. Cecil, and in which the whole is devised absolutely to Mrs. Leader, subject to a small but sufficient provision for Mr. Leader and your daughter?"

The Doctor never changed a muscle.

"You will, of course, give us notice before reading out or publishing this paper," said he. "I only say this in the interest of all parties."

"To be sure, my dear sir; I can show it to you if you wish."

"Don't give yourself the trouble. There'll be time for all that when the poor fellow up-stairs is laid in his cold lodgings."

"Yes," said Mr. Morrison, confidentially. "You know yourself, Doctor Findlater, as a man of the world, such an arrangement as that first one could not stand. My sister and I were confident that when reflection came he would do her justice. And after Mrs. Cecil Leader's strange conduct last night——"

"Ah! was that what changed him?" asked the Doctor.

"Well, it was certainly unfortunate for your family," said the solicitor. "But I am empowered to state—am I not, Mr. Morrison?—that Mrs. Leader is prepared even to advance on the provision in the testament, and make everything satisfactory to your wishes."

"Most kind of her," said the Doctor. "However, that will be all time enough. We must not break in, you know, on the sanctity of grief."

This was said with perfect gravity. The two looked at him with a perplexed air. They wanted him to say something either in the way of adhesion or otherwise. But they could not get him to commit himself to anything. It was scarcely satisfactory; but, as he said, all in good time.

Not since the days when the soldiers had come in, was there such excitement in Tilston. There were groups talking, gossiping, and speculating. How had the property gone? Public feeling went rather against the Doctor's chances. Mr. Ridley, notwithstanding the recent lesson he had got, was again heard growling and prophesying.

"The fellow will not get a shilling, depend upon it, and that will be the end of his scheming; and serve him right! These fellows always outwit themselves. Serve 'em right."

Even Lord Shipton could not resist. "I fear our friend Findlater has overdone it this time. You see he is not exactly the man. After all, his daughter did wonderfully; and he might be very fairly content."

At all events, the funeral would be of a most magnificent character, and M'Intyre and Co.'s resources were strained to the utmost, preparing crape and linen in enormous quantities, for those hideous manifestations of grief and respect, which are supposed to be the highest form of compliment to the departed. Lord Shipton was in some trouble about his now well-known vehicle, which he thought could be scarcely appropriate at such a ceremony; but before the day was out he had happily solved the difficulty, by obtaining the loan of a seat in a friend's carriage. But there was presently something more to talk of, for there was observed to be an unusual stir up at the barracks. A hideous rumour had got abroad that it was proposed to remove the Du Barry's Own; an old woman's tale, which was indignantly rejected. However, there was this much in support of the

rumour, that the secretary who had perpetrated the "job" was now out of office, and that his successor was an ardent financial reformer: that is, a Spartan curtailer of the salaries of small clerks, and ruthless abolisher of those clerks whose salaries were thus cut down. Still nothing certain had arrived; and after all, here was this prodigious funeral absorbing all attention. Who was to be at it?—who was asked? Was anything left to the Doctor? And how had Mrs. Leader fared in the struggle?

Those strange days of interval rolled slowly by. On the morning after the death, Mrs. Leader, almost awful to look at in her weeds, met Katey in the drawing-room. There was a compressed sternness about the former's lips, and a quiet self-confidence.

"I wished to tell you," she said, "that after the funeral I would like you to begin to make arrangements for your life. You cannot stay here; I am sure you would not wish it yourself."

"Where are we to go? Why should we go?" said Katey, bewildered.

"Why?—why?" repeated her enemy, with a motion as of putting her foot on her neck. "Because—you and your father have lost the game! You lost it for him by your behaviour last night—if that be any comfort for you to know!"

Katey was not thinking of herself, but of her father. "Lost!" she faltered; "you do not mean——"

"Yes, Leadersfort belongs to me—all of it, estate, everything! But you will hear it all read out at the proper time. My poor husband came to his senses at the end, and did what was right, and what I always said he would do. He was not going to hand his fortune over to a set of adventurers. However, don't say that I am harsh. You shall have all indulgence. Take your own time to look about you, and choose how you are to live. You shan't be made a victim of by me! Ah! you forced yourself on us, but I knew the time would come when you would be forced out again."

Katey was overwhelmed by this attack and this cruel news. Yet still it did not so much affect her as did the thought of her father, her poor, earnest, struggling Peter, who was only doing his best for them, and who seemed destined to be baffled in some way all through his weary life. Here he was now. How should she tell him? But she contrived it at last. Peter received the news with a stolid resignation.

"We must only wait and see," he said. "To-morrow will settle all one way or the other; and sure, Katey, child of mine, if the worst came to the worst, ye'd be welcome again in the old house, and I must begin the fighting all over again. No, I'll never lose heart till the old chap with the nanny-goat "bird," and the rag about his loins, has his scythe outside my feet. I don't give up all yet."

"Heaven bless you, Peter, for your noble spirit! But it wasn't I that did any mischief last night?"

"That you did, my poor child," he said, compassionately. "But you never meant it. What in the name o' Corpernicus and all his instruments was over you! To take a woman's brougham in that way, and be away the whole night."

It was wonderful how tranquil the Doctor was as to the unexplained escapade. He listened to Katey's account; how she was afraid that Polly would do something foolish if there was no one to look after her; for as for Captain Molyneux—

"Nothing but a half sort of quishkeen," said the Doctor, musingly, "and he a mere cockmaroo of a fellow."

Towards the end of that day the house began to fill with strange figures and faces. Under the pressure of business, which was immense, the tender sense of grief was stifled. No one had time to think of the poor relics lying up-stairs.

There was so much to be done—so much to be organised; and the anxiety as to success clashed with the grief. Bigginson was the commander-in-chief, who could boast that he had followed more coronets to the grave than any man in England. He had aides-de-camps, deputies, assistants, creatures who arrived with great cases, and enormous stuffed bags, which contained all their grisly properties. There was a scarcely suppressed buzz of voices through the house, and a great deal of scattered refreshment in different parts of the house, to restore those who worked so hard. Thus it generally is, and to this point all things work up. All the while the Doctor remained immovable at his post. He had received several messages through Mr. Morrison, to the effect that his presence was hardly needed; but of these he took no notice, beyond a protest that a margin of a few hours was scarcely worth talking about. "Only wait a little, and Katey and he would go or stay, according as it was." An enigmatical plea, which made Mr. Morrison smile.

At last here was the morning, with the clustering of groups betimes among the old trees, and the perpetual rolling of carriages up the avenue. What Mr. Bigginson called the most "sumptuous 'erse in town," with coaches to match, was waiting at the door. The tenantry were all marshalled, and though there was little grief, there was still a compound of decency and regretful attitude. All the country round attended, and then the procession moved on to the church.

That had been the scene of their first triumphant appearance—the enthronisation, as it were, of the family, that too short-lived spell of glory, which on that day of inauguration they seemed to think would last for many years to come. "Clarke, the parson," as he was spoken of, and Billy Webber, went through their offices, the latter with an almost touching grief, as though, the Doctor said, he had lost the friend of his youth. The remains were lowered into the family vault, beside those of the late squire. Every one crowded to the edge to look; while all the carriages rattled off with an unwonted alacrity, as though the business were well over.

Some friends had come from a distance to Leadersfort, and for these a great lunch was set out. The family solicitor was hurrying about, passing in and out of the room, while the guests took their lunch. He suddenly came up to the Doctor, and, a little nervously, for he was shrewd enough to have some distrust of the complete unconcern of Doctor Findlater, said to him, "We propose, my dear sir, to read the will in the library, as soon as they have done here. As you are interested for your daughter's sake, I will ask you to be present, with a few other friends of the family."

"All right," said the Doctor, who was standing at the chimney-piece leaning on his elbow. As the solicitor bustled to the door, the Doctor called after him, "Just a word!" and followed him into the passage. "Where's Mrs. Leader?—aren't you going to have *her* down to hear this paper of yours read?"

"Paper of ours?" repeated the solicitor, scrutinising him narrowly. "As for Mrs. Leader, of course not. It would be quite out of all form: But, my dear sir, as I said before, we are prepared to consider any proposal that may seem desirable to you."

"We'll make none," said the Doctor. "We'll be content with our rights—neither

more nor less. I should like to see Mrs. Leader, though, before you read your bit of paper."

"Well, I am sure it could not be done."

"And to have Mr. Morrison, and Katey, and Miss Leader present—just a sort of family business, you know."

"Oh! no," said the other, bluntly, "there is no need of that. We'll have the family meeting in two or three minutes in the library."

"You'll be sorry for it," said the Doctor; "I know you will. But just as you please."

"Oh, I understand—you mean to go on the first will. I can understand that. But I really must beg, Doctor Findlater, that you will make no confusion about this matter. It would be indecent. I assure you all this sort of thing can be disposed of in the regular way among the professional men. There, now, two o'clock—the time has come!"

"Just get them into the study here for a moment—Mrs. Leader and her brother—I won't detain them two minutes and a half. It's vital—it is, I assure you. I'll fetch Katey and Miss Leader."

He was so earnest, that the solicitor looked hard after him, watch in hand; he didn't quite like all this. The Doctor hurried away to Katey's room, where he found her comforting the bereaved daughter: "I am sorry," he said, "but it is really from duty and a sense of justice that I would ask you to come down. I wish to save the family from what it would be sorry for. There's no time to spare, or that attorney will be getting us all in the library, and then it will be too late."

They went down at once. On Mary was now coming back the recollection of all that had taken place on the night of her father's death. Perhaps she thought justice was now, in some shape, to be done on those who precipitated that death. She gave a start and hurried down.

As they crossed the hall, they met some of the mourning guests walking slowly towards the library. The clock had struck two, and, as the Doctor said, they had no time to lose.

#### CHAPTER XXXIII. THE DOCTOR WINS.

THE study was a little hexagonal room; a sort of snuggery, or cosey nook. There they found Mrs. Leader, grave and haughty.

"What does the fellow mean?" she said to the solicitor. "I'll not be waiting on him!"

"Better do so," he said. "There's no knowing what trouble these low rough fellows give on an occasion like this; a little humouring is not thrown away."

In this fashion she was persuaded. But when she saw the others coming in, she again grew defiant.

"What is all this about? Go to the library!"

"Just a moment," said the Doctor, coming in last and shutting the door, "and then they may all go there and hear the will read. But I just want to ask Mrs. Leader one question. Which will is to be read there?"

"The latest executed, of course," said the solicitor.

"I asked Mrs. Leader. Is that the answer? Are you sure, madam—*quite* sure?"

"Is this a last piece of effrontery, Doctor Findlater, you knowing well that you will not have further opportunity?"

"Don't provoke me," said he, in a fury, "or maybe I'll not stand it a second. You don't think where you're standing, or where you're hurrying to, you poor, foolish woman! I ask you again; think carefully which will you mean to have read?"

"The last one. There is no other."

"When was it executed?"

"Last night."

"Who witnessed it?"

"Two good witnesses, as they will be proved at the proper time. I was also present."

"Any one else?"

"No!"

"Yes, there was!"

It was at that moment that Mary Leader seemed to rouse up from the state of indifference in which she had lain, since that night. Her eyes sparkled with eagerness and intelligence, and going over to Mrs. Leader, she said, seizing her arm:

"Oh! stop—stop—remember. Before it is too late!"

"Ah! to be sure. Isn't it all her doing? Will you speak to her, and ask her the same question?—How many saw the signing of that will?"

Mrs. Leader was gazing at them both with an air of dull suspicion and wonder. She had a presentiment of what was coming. Mary drew her hurriedly into the window, and whispered to her. All the rest looked on, amazed at this incomprehensible scene.

As soon as the whisper finished, Mrs. Leader started back with a half-suppressed cry: "False! false!" she said.

"No one ever charged me with falsehood before," said Mary, coldly.

At this juncture Mr. Morrison went over to the window, and said:

"Doctor Findlater, would you come here?" Then to the solicitor and Katey: "Would you leave us for a few moments?"

He was a man of extraordinary penetration for his years, and had long ago divined what was going to happen. The Doctor he did not care about; but Mary Leader—that was a different matter. Five minutes was the whole delay. At the end of that time the solicitor was called for, and a paper put into his hands.

"Unfortunately," said Mr. Morrison, "it seems there is an informality as to the execution of that last will; it can't stand, so we must fall back on the first one."

"It's perfectly regular," said the solicitor. "Are you mad, Mr. Morrison?"

"Take your instructions from us, sir. Doctor Findlater and Mrs. Cecil have behaved in the handsomest manner, and have promised to give effect to the testator's wishes as nearly as they can. Take this into the library and read it."

The bewildered official did as he was told. Katey alone was left with the baffled woman. She drew near, and said, kindly and timorously:

"I do not understand this, but I see there is a disappointment. I am very, very sorry."

"You!—*you!* I could kill you! I hope I'll live to see you down in the dust yet!"

As Katey turned to go, making no reply to this charitable speech, Mrs. Leader fell into a chair, foaming at the mouth in violent hysterics.

Meanwhile, in the library, the solicitor read out the last will and testament; and in a few moments it was known that Cecil Leader and his wife inherited the whole estates, subject to a sufficient annuity for Mrs. Leader. At the same time it got whispered about that the deceased had intended making another will, but that Cecil Leader and the Findlaters (who somehow were always coupled in the inheritance, and perhaps with some justice) had behaved in the handsomest way.

"Oh! father and mother," aspirated the Doctor, "snug under your headstone in Macroom, why Peter, your boy, can now drive his pair o' elephants if he chooses!"

#### L'ENVOI.

ANOTHER fine morning, about a month after these exciting events, when the whole

town is once more astir seeing the soldiers go by. Alas! that this should be in another direction, for a tyrannical and "cheese-paring" government has sent forth the word, and the Du Barry's Own are leaving us for ever. No exertion of the members, or of the county lords, could avail—the "job" was pronounced too flagrant; there was no use for soldiers there; the barracks were dilapidated, and would cost a fortune to repair, even though the rheumatized bones of the men could be repaired. They were all to go, and here was their last morning.

What lines of bereaved women, deserted girls, half-promised wives. Such painful incidents "the route" only too surely brings with it. The gallant fellows—as the newspaper called them—had done their best to earn that title, and here were hearts breaking by scores after them. What was to become of the town after they had gone? Better they had never come, for the reaction would be terrible! As a gentleman connected with horses said, up at the Leader Arms, "it was like extinguishing a lantern in a stable." And he was right in a part of the comparison, whose force he did not appreciate; for the place *would* be no better than a stable. As for young girls like Polly, as well let them take the veil, though some of the female community found a compensating satisfaction in this spectacle of general and particular desertion.

Here, on this touching occasion, as at the beginning of our story, the Doctor's house, at the entrance of Tilston, had every window filled. Peter himself is a little maudlin, but can be consoled by the dignity of recent events. He has actually driven down "in the brougham" to his own house from what he calls "th' ead quarters," while Polly is at another window, blushing and excited, but also consoled by the dignity of recent events, and by the consciousness that no one but Katey and Captain Montague is in possession of her secret. She has such a wonderful spirit and elasticity, that it was sure to dissipate any little cloud of dissatisfaction with herself that might hang about her. In the house, too, was Billy Webber, to whom the Doctor had already promised the living the instant "the last breath was out of old Clarke," and who was at his old tricks—rehearsing how he should act as rector. Peter looked on as if the occasion were too sad and serious for such light pranks.

Hark! here is the music—"the dear

band," says one of the young ladies—to be heard for the last time. Here is the now familiar clanking, champing, and tramping, the tossing horses' heads, the riders arms akimbo, the fluttering plumes. Alas! alas! was it come to this—the officers all going away "without a scratch!" With the exception of young Cecil Leader, not one of them "bagged."

This was not our Peter's view, who took a high tone, and saw the gallant young fellows "off into the world" with a selfish equanimity. All of them looked up at the windows and saluted Polly, "th' officers' pride," as her father called her; and when the long procession came to an end, here was Colonel Bouchier, on his great horse, pulling up for a few moments at the gate. Out rushed Peter hatless, followed by Polly bonnetless. Quite a crowd gathered to see the farewell.

"God bless you, Peter!" said the colonel. "I am uncommon sorry to pass your house for the last time. You're a good fellow, and I hope we'll meet again, some day."

"And often," said Peter, as warmly. "There'll be a big bed kept at Leadersfort for you; and," he added, looking round in a smuggler-like fashion, "I hope you got the jar of D.D. in time."

"It's on the baggage-cart," said the colonel. "Ah! Miss Polly, I'm sorry to go to lose your bright eyes. We must marry her to some steady fellow. Good-bye, Miss Polly." And with an old-fashioned gallantry, he stooped down and kissed her pretty hand.

Already the music was faint in the distance, and amid a cheer from the crowd the colonel put spurs to his great horse, and cantered away. Two soldiers came a long way behind him, and these were the backs of the last soldiers seen in Tilston.

But let Tilston go down—Leadersfort shall flourish! It was as though blood had got into its veins, and had begun to circulate. Our Peter was lord and master there; more particularly when, within two years, that poor delicate Cecil followed his father to the family vault. And for two years more, until Tom Clarke, the parson's son, came home from India, and went up to Leadersfort every day of his life!—but this is over-anticipation. Peter will allow no dry-rot in that house, and has a perennial succession of house-warmings—company always coming, and going not nearly so often. Among them is seen frequently

the young Lord Seaman, who comes and goes, and shoots pheasants, and admires Polly after his own way, and whom Peter is just giving a little law to, he says, to allow of voluntary action, but whom he will by-and-bye take in hand, no doubt, with success. Mary Leader is always there, going to be an old maid, they prophesy; clinging to Katey, whom she loves as her own born sister. While Mrs. Leader is sometimes heard of, as living in some little house in Mount-street, Mayfair, desperately attacking some little meagre redoubt of fashion, commanded by a fifth-rate Lady "Chose," and making frantic efforts to get in. Rarely she succeeds. Her strange face grows plainer every hour; she is one of those fearful objects seen at parties, whose presence there people wonder at—does she go by herself? &c. She will fight this foolish battle for many years—and then—

But Peter, growing stouter and mellower, is quite a personage in the county. No one calls him Doctor Findlater now, that title having dropped like sediment to the bottom. Nothing can be done without him, and his wit at select dinners is now considered of the most refined sort. He has long since broken through the strict London enceinte, and we read in our Court Circular of that choice little dinner to Prince Louis of Saxetodleben, in which his name winds up a list of lords and countesses. But everybody will call him, to the end of the chapter—as I do now, regretfully parting with him—PETER FINDLATER!

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