

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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THE ROSE AND THE KEY.

CHAPTER XIV. GUESTS AND NEIGHBOURS.

WHEN, that evening, Miss Maud entered the vast drawing-room, it was some minutes past eight. The outer world was in twilight, but lamps glowed faintly here, upon the thick silken curtains, and lofty mirrors, and pictures, and treasures of china, and upon figures of people assembled for dinner. The little party was almost lost in the great void, as Miss Maud made her journey, over a comparatively gloomy desert of thick carpet, to the group illuminated by the soft light of the lamps.

Tall old Mr. Foljambe, the vicar, was entertaining Lady Vernon with his bland and dignified conversation. Doctor Malkin would have liked that post, but the vicar came first, and seized it.

The vicar is a well-connected old gentleman, related, in some remote cousinship, to the late Sir Amerald Vernon, and knows very well what he is about. Has not Lady Vernon, the relict of that lamented kinsman, two extremely desirable livings in her gift, besides smaller things? And, old as the Reverend Mr. Foljambe is, are not the incumbents of these fat fields of usefulness older still? Is not the Reverend Mr. Criptry eighty-nine? And is not the venerable Doctor Shanks ninety-two, by the records of Trinity College, Cambridge? Compared with these mature ornaments of the Church, the vicar justly feels himself a stripling; and being a young fellow, not yet in his seventy-first year, he may well complain of a selfish longevity which is sacrificing the interests of two important parishes which require a vigorous ministration.

The vicar's shrewd old eye, from its wrinkled corners, observes Doctor Malkin's

wistful look, and knows from experience that he likes to take possession of Lady Vernon's ear, and has suffered more than once from the tenacity with which he keeps it, when he can, to himself.

"Nothing of the kind shall happen to-night," thinks the vicar, who, having a handsome bit of money in consols, has sold out a hundred pounds to invest in a subscription to the monument of his predecessor, the Reverend William Howard—a good work in which Lady Vernon takes a warm interest, as she always does in anything she takes up.

The vicar has her fast upon this, and the doctor thinks he can read sly triumph in his eye, as, once or twice, it glides over to him, and their glances meet for a moment.

"Well, doctor, and how's all wid you?" inquires the Reverend Michael Doody, with a grin that shows his fine white fangs, and a trifling clap of his enormous hand on the doctor's shoulder. "Elegant, I suppose?"

The doctor's slight frame quivers under the caress of the cleric, but he smiles politely; for who knows what influence this new importation may grow to in this part of the world?

"I'm very well, thanks—as well as a fellow, so much knocked about as a doctor, can be in this hot weather."

The doctor is a pale man, a little bald, with a high pale nose, a long upper lip, a receding chin, very blue, and a pair of fine dark eyes, set too close together, and with a slight obliquity which spoils them a great deal, and does not improve his countenance; his shirt-front is beautified with needlework, and his rather tall choker, for his neck is long, is made up by his exemplary laundress with a snowy smoothness worthy of the neatness and decision with which the doctor ties it.

"My governor, the vicar, has Lady Vernon fast by the button," continued Mr. Doody, with something like a wink. "She must be a very conscientious woman, to listen so well to her clergy. He was talking about Vicar Howard's monument when I was near them, just now."

The doctor laughed and shrugged, and Mr. Doody thought for a moment he squinted a little more than usual.

"Our good vicar has but one subject at present," says the doctor, who gives Mr. Doody, as a stranger, credit for a good deal of waggish penetration. "You have heard of the clarinet-man who had but one tune, and played it always through the key-hole, till it answered its purpose, and extracted a gratuity; and he made it pay very well, I believe."

"And rayther hard, doctor, that you can't get your turn at the key-hole, eh, my boy?"

And the reverend gentleman utters a stentorian giggle, and pokes his finger on the doctor's ribs.

"I don't quite see, Mr. Doody," says Doctor Malkin, with a very creditable smile, all things considered.

"Boo! docthor, my darlin' fellow, don't be comin' the simpleton over us. Don't we both know that every man in your profession likes to stand well with the women? And here you are, and if it was to make a man of ye, not a word can ye edge in. It's too hard, docthor, that the man of death should be blocked out by a tombstone. Be the powers, it ain't fair! He's takin' her all over the monument; up on the pedestal, down in the vault! It's an unfair advantage. But, never mind, my boy, ye'll be even with him yet; ye'll attind him in his next indisposition."

This pleasant banter was accompanied by a running explosion of giggles; and while the tall and rather handsome Irishman is enjoying his little bit of farce, with intense relish, the vicar and Lady Vernon are discoursing thus:

"I thought, Lady Vernon, you would like, of course, in the most private way in the world, to collect opinion upon the monument; so, as he draws very nicely, my wife says, I allowed my curate, Mr. Doody, just in the strictest privacy to ourselves, you understand, a peep at it, for about five minutes, this morning. He thinks it very fine indeed—very fine—as, indeed, every one who has seen it does. There is, I fancy, but one opinion. I wish so much, Lady Vernon, I might venture to

invite you to pay my church—yours, indeed, I might more properly call it—a visit to-morrow, to look at what I may term your beautiful gift to the sacred edifice."

"No, thanks; I shall see it time enough."

"But, as it owes its existence, Lady Vernon, to your extremely munificent subscription—"

"I thought it was due, as the bishop said, to a very good clergyman," says Lady Vernon, quietly cutting it short; "and I gave what I thought right. That is all. And so your curate draws?"

"I'm nothing of a draughtsman myself, but my wife understands it, and says he draws extremely nicely."

"That tall young man, is he?"

"I ought to have introduced him, Lady Vernon. It was an omission—an inexcusable omission—a very inexcusable omission." He was trying to catch his curate's eye all this time. "He has been with me only a week, and yesterday he did duty at Loxton. You remember, Lady Vernon, you thought an Irishman would answer best."

"The bishop says he has found them extremely energetic, and for very hard work unrivalled."

"He's a very rough diamond, I must admit. But he's a convert from Romanism, and a very laborious young man, and a good scholar."

He had beckoned Mr. Doody to approach, and accordingly that herculean labourer in the apostolic field drew near, a head and shoulders above all the other guests. The tall old vicar alone was sitting.

"Allow me, Lady Vernon, to present my curate, Mr. Doody," says the vicar, rising to do the honours.

Mr. Doody is not the least overcome by the honour. His fine eyes have examined the lady, of whom he has heard so much, but of whom he has not had so near a view before, with the grave curiosity with which he would have scrutinised an interesting piece of waxwork.

The florid young man, with black whiskers and glossy black head, makes his best bow gravely, and inquires unexpectedly:

"How are ye, ma'am? A good evening, Lady Vernon." A form of salutation with which it is his wont, as it were, to clench an introduction.

Lady Vernon does not mind answering or reciprocating these rather oddly placed greetings, but talks a few sentences with

him, and then turns again to the vicar, and the curate, after a little wait, turns on his heel, and seeks employment for his active mind elsewhere.

Let me not be imagined to present an average Irish curate. Mr. Doody is almost as great a prodigy at home as anywhere else. His father, with his own hands, in his bare shins, with a dhuddeon stuck in his caubeen, cuts turf in the bog near the famous battle-field of Aghrim. He is not a bit ashamed of his father or his belongings. He holds him to be as good a gentleman as himself—being the lineal descendant of the O'Doody of Tyr Doody—and himself as good as the primate. He sends his mother a present every now and then, but the farm is well stocked, and his parents are, according to primitive ideas, wealthy people in their homely way. His lapse into Protestantism was, of course, a sore blow. And when Doctor Pollard's wife mentioned to the priest, with perhaps a little excusable triumph, that Michael Doody had embraced the principles of the Reformation, his reverence scratched his tonsure, and said:

"I'm not a bit surprised, ma'am, for he was always an impudent chap; but there was some good in the boy, also; and go where he may at present, so sure as I'm a Catholic, he'll die one."

CHAPTER XV. DINNER.

OLD Mr. Foljambe takes precedence, at dinner, in right of his cloth, connexions, and antiquity, and has taken lady Vernon into the dining-room, and converses assiduously with that great lady.

Maud finds herself between the curate and Doctor Malkin. Middle-aged and agreeable Captain Bamme resents an arrangement which isolates him, and eyes the curate with disgust.

Captain Bamme does not count age by years. He knows better. As long as a fellow looks young, and feels young, he is young. The captain smiles more than any two other men in the parish. He is short and square, but he skips and swaggers like an officer and a gentleman. Who can talk to a girl like Charley Bamme? Who understands that mixture of gaiety and gallantry—with now and then a dash of tenderness—like this officer? To be sure he's not a marrying man; every one knows that. It is out of the question. The captain laughs with a melancholy scorn over his scanty pittance. A fourth son, by Jove! and put to a poor profession. But is he

not the life and soul of a picnic, and the darling of the ladies?

"I've been quartered in Ireland," says little Captain Bamme, under cover of the surrounding buzz, to his more fortunate neighbour, Doctor Malkin. "I've been in every part of it; I have talked to Irishmen of every rank and occupation, but such a brogue as that, I give you my honour, I never heard. Why, they wouldn't have him to preach to a congregation of carmen in Dublin. I never heard anything like it. How did old Foljambe light on him? I really think, when people bring fellows like that to a place like this, where people *must* know him, and, for anything you or I can tell, that fellow may spend the rest of his days down here—by Jove! it's pleasant—they ought to be prepared to give an account of him. I suppose Foljambe can say what he is? You never met such an insufferable creature. I never spoke to the fellow before in my life; and he came up to me in the hall here making some vulgar personal joke, I give you my honour."

"He seems to succeed very well," says the doctor, "notwithstanding. I suppose there's something interesting in it, though you and I can't perceive it."

"Upon my soul, I can't."

And with this declaration he turns to Mrs. Foljambe, who is at his right, determined to make her account for her intolerable curate.

Mrs. Foljambe is tall, deaf, and melancholy—a woman very nearly useless, and quite harmless.

"I was saying just now to Doctor Malkin," begins the captain, "that I've been, at different times, quartered in Ireland——"

A footman here presents at the captain's right hand an entrée which he loves, and on which he pounces.

"A daughter in Ireland?" repeats the drowsy voice of Mrs. Foljambe, turning her dull and small grey eyes upon him, with a heavy sigh.

"No, ha, ha! not yet. No. Time enough for that, I hope. I'm not married, Mrs. Foljambe—thanks, that will do. I say, I have been a little puzzled by your curate's accent." He was speaking low, but with measured articulation; for although the Reverend Michael Doody's voice is loud and busy at the other side of the table, and the buzz of conversation is general, that odious person's ears, for aught the captain knew, may be preternaturally acute. "And

although I know Ireland pretty well—Athlone, Limerick, Cork, Dublin, and all that—yet I never heard his accent before in my life.”

Mrs. Foljambe bowed her patient grey head, and did not seem aware that any answer was needed.

“Can you say what part of the country he comes from?” persists Captain Bamme.

“I rather think Ireland,” replies Mrs. Foljambe, with an effort and another sigh.

“I rather think so myself,” says the captain, in a disgusted aside, over his veal and truffles. “The woman knows no more about him than my hat does of snipe-shooting,” he says, in the doctor’s ear, and drowns his indignation in a glass of hock, which the butler at that moment charitably proffers.

The doctor has now got into talk with Miss Vernon. The captain has no wish to steal good Mrs. Foljambe’s bothered ear from old Mr. Puntles, who is labouring to entertain her. So Captain Bamme attends to his dinner with great concentration and energy for some time. It was not until he came to the iced-pudding that he thought of the Reverend Michael Doody again, and his joke upon the captain’s stature—“a fellow I had never exchanged six words with before!”—and raising his eyes, he saw, with a qualm, those of the florid divine, fixed jocosely on him from the other side of the table.

“Upon my soul, it is very nearly intolerable!” the captain protests, mentally, as he leans back, with a flushed face. He resolves that this fellow must be snubbed, and laughed at, and sat upon, and taught to know his place, and held at arm’s length.

As the captain has, however, nothing clever ready, he prefers not noticing the curate’s expression; and throwing into his countenance all the dignity which a not very tragic face can carry, he avails himself of Mr. Eccles’s murmur at his right elbow, and takes a glass of Madeira.

“I’ll drink a glass of wine widgye, captain,” insists the curate, recurring to a happily obsolete usage. “Get me some white wine.”

The captain bows and stares, with a rather withering condescension and gravity, which, however, does not in the least tell upon the impervious curate, who, his glass replenished, observes with a hilarious smile, “An agreeable way of makin’ acquaintance with my flock; better than a dhry domiciliary visit, captain, by a long chalk. I pledge you, my gallant parishioner—and here’s to our better acquaintance.”

The captain nods curtly, and gulps down

his wine, without half tasting its flavour; but even on these terms he thinks it is well to have escaped that brute.

Miss Vernon is again talking to the curate. How disgusting! He turns, without thinking what he’s doing, to his right, and his eyes meet the dull and innocent gaze of grey Mrs. Foljambe, who, recalled to the festive scene, makes an effort, and tells him her only story.

“We knew two very respectable poor women in this town. Anne Pluggs was one, and her sister, Julia Pluggs, was the other; there were two. They had both been servants, cooks, and they lived in the small house, last but one on your left, as you go towards the windmill.” A deep sigh here. “You’ll know it by wall-flowers growing at the door; at least, there were, about a year or two ago; and they had saved a little money; and Mr. Foljambe had a very high opinion of them, and so had I.” The captain bows. “And about sixteen years ago they gave up their house here, and went to Coventry; it is a good way off, you know.”

The captain knits his brows and calculates rapidly.

“About forty-seven miles—by Jove, it is a good way.”

“And when they arrived there, they set up a confectioner’s shop, in a small way, of course.”

“Oh?” says the captain, very much interested, “that was very spirited of them.”

“It had a bow-window that was painted brown, it was at a corner of a street near one of the spires, and they did very well, and they are both alive still.”

Another deep sigh followed.

“What a pity!” says the polite captain, who is looking across the table, and thinking, at the moment, of quite other things. The good lady does not hear his comment, and so its slight incongruity is harmless, and the captain inviting the conclusion of the tale, says, “and——?”

But the story is over. That is all. And good Mrs. Foljambe, contented with her contribution towards keeping the conversation alive, is looking, in a melancholy reverie, on the table-cloth.

As she has dropped off his hands in this gentle way, the captain resigns her with a good grace, and listens, undisturbed, to other talk.

Lady Vernon has now taken the curate into council, and is leading the little cabinet. Mr. Michael Doody is attentive, and seems impressed by what Lady Vernon is saying. She has the reputation of being

a clever woman, with a special talent for government.

Mr. Puntles is listening, and sipping his wine; and being a polite old man, now and then plagues Mrs. Foljambe with a question or a remark.

Doctor Malkin is in animated conversation with Miss Vernon. He is, perhaps, a little of an esprit fort; but in a rural region, always more pharisaical, as well as more pure than the city, he is very cautious, the more particularly as his great patroness, Lady Vernon, is a sharp and ready Christian, not high-church, not low-church; people at both sides of the controversy complain in whispers of ambiguities and inconsistencies; she is broad-church. Yes, very broad-church. She would throw the church-gates wide—as open as her heart—as open as her hand. She has built plain, sober churches—she has built meeting-houses—she has built florid chapels and churches, gleaming with purple and gold, and with saints and martyrs glowing in brilliant colours from stained windows, such as rejoice the heart of that learned and Gothic Christian, Archdeacon Complines. Her flatterers speak in this vein: and they are legion. The promoters of the projects which she vivifies by her magnificent bounty may hate their equally successful rivals, but they like her money; and they are extremely careful not to offend her, for she has not the reputation of forgiving easily.

Doctor Malkin talks to Miss Vernon on her pet subjects, theories, and vagaries of all sorts, the abuses and corruptions begotten of an artificial system, bold social reforms, daring sentiments on all forms of civil government, treated romantically rather than very learnedly, or, indeed, very wisely.

And now Lady Vernon, having established an understanding with old Mrs. Foljambe, rises, and with that dejected lady, and Maud, takes her departure. Captain Bamme, gallantly standing as guard of honour, with the handle of the open door in his hand, smiles with supernatural sweetness, sees them off, and returns to complete the little party of five.

THREE MODERN SIEGES.

OF all the events of the cruel and devastating Thirty Years' War, the siege of Magdeburg was one of the most interesting. Christian William, the deposed Administrator of Brandenburg, had roused this flourishing city by warnings of Catholic cruelties and premature promises of assist-

ance from Gustavus Adolphus. The Protestant city, in the pride of its almost republican freedom, had already defied the anger of the redoubtable Wallenstein; and Tilly, the scourge of Flanders, now determined to wreak his rage upon these defiers of the Emperor. Count Pappenheim at once cut off the rash Administrator from his Saxon communications, and in March, 1631, closely invested the town, to destroy it before the cautious Gustavus could advance to its relief. The outworks were soon carried, while Dietrich Falkenberg, the Swedish governor, destroyed the bridge over the Elbe, and having insufficient troops, abandoned the suburbs of Sudenberg and Neustadt to Tilly, who instantly reduced them to ashes. The garrison scarcely exceeded two thousand infantry and a few hundred horse; far too small a number for a large and straggling fortress. The citizens were all armed, but the poor had grown mutinous, complaining that they bore the brunt of everything, and that the rich hired substitutes. Nevertheless, religious zeal, a love of liberty, a hatred of the Austrians, and a belief in the speedy arrival of Gustavus, kept the city firm for resistance. Tilly's trumpeters each time brought more favourable terms. The defenders grew hopeful and careless. The enemy's batteries were close to the ditch, and one tower had already fallen, but the walls were still sound. Gustavus was only three days' march distant. All looked well for Magdeburg. Tilly had, indeed, lost all hope of taking the place, but, still, with his usual tenacity, resolved on one final, desperate effort. On the 5th, the Imperialists' fire suddenly ceased, and the cannons were withdrawn from several of the batteries. These symptoms lulled the garrison into a fatal security. The tired guards on the ramparts snatched an hour for the sleep they so much needed. Tilly had already arranged an assault at gun-fire on the 10th of May, but the ruthless general, to the last moment doubtful of success, held another council, and arranged to make the attempt two hours later. Pappenheim was to try and storm the new town, where the dry ditch was shallow and the rampart sloped favourably outward. The town guard was asleep. Pappenheim's fierce Walloons clambered up about seven A.M. with little trouble. Falkenberg, who was at the Stadt Haus, just sending back Tilly's second trumpeter, roused by the fire of musketry, hurried with all the force he could get together to the gate of the new town. Beaten back at this point, the

brave Swede flew to another quarter, where a second escalade had begun, and there he fell. The citizens, hurrying to arms, and astonished at the sudden rattle of muskets and the clash of alarm-bells, became confused. In the mean time two other gates, being deserted by the guards, who hurried to help their friends, were forced in, but the resistance was still vigorous, furious, and hopeful, till four Imperial regiments, winning the ramparts, fell with wild cries upon the rear of the garrison. Amidst all the tumult, a brave captain of Magdeburg, named Schmidt, drove the enemy back towards the gates; but he soon fell, and with him the last hope. Before noon all the works were carried, and the town lay at Tilly's feet. Two gates were then thrown open, and the main army admitted. The soldiers instantly occupied the principal streets, and, pointing loaded cannon, forced the citizens into their houses, there to await their fate. Tilly casting his soldiers loose, rapine, lust, and murder revelled for several days. In a single church fifty-three women were found beheaded. The Croats, then half savages, amused themselves by throwing children into the burning houses, while Pappenheim's brutal Walloons stabbed babes and their mothers with the same thrust. When some officer, horror-struck, reminded Tilly that he had still the power to stop the carnage, he said: "Return in an hour; I will see what I can do. The soldier must have some reward for his danger and his toils." The fires, first kindled by the Imperialists to divert the resistance of the citizens, soon raged so fiercely, that the soldiers were driven back to their camps. In less than twelve hours the populous and flourishing German city was almost literally reduced to ashes. The Administrator and four hundred of the richer burgomasters were saved, to extort from them ransom. When Tilly's thin, long, Mephistophelian face, crowned by the small, high-peaked hat and streaming red feather, appeared in the streets of Magdeburg, thirty thousand citizens had been already butchered, and six thousand bodies thrown into the Elbe to clear the roadways. On the fourth day the plunder of the half-consumed houses ceased. About one thousand people, huddled in the cathedral, and who had been three days without food and in fear of death, were dragged before Tilly. The next day a solemn mass was sung, and cannons roared the responses. "Since Jerusalem," says Niemand, "Satan had never held such a holiday as he had done

for those three days in unhappy Magdeburg." Not long after, at Leipzig, Gustavus revenged the unhappy city by routing Tilly, who lost seven thousand men and five thousand prisoners, all his cannon, and one hundred standards. In a later battle the savage general fell from a Swedish bullet.

The siege and storming of Ciudad Rodrigo, in 1812, was one of the most dashing and gallant exploits of the English in the Peninsular War. This old fortress, on the north-west frontier of Spain, had originally been built by the Visigoths, as a bulwark against Portugal. The town was specially strong, since there was no bridge over the Agueda but that in the town, and at certain seasons the river was so swollen by the mountain torrents that it was impossible to throw any pontoons or flying bridges over it. Wellington, having fortified Almeida as a depôt, began the investment of the town of Rodrigo on the 8th of January, 1812. Our army, including cavalry, numbered about thirty-five thousand, the siege materials were piled at Gallegos, Villa del Coervo, and Espeja, and the ammunition was ready at Almeida. Seventy pieces of ordnance had been collected at Villa de Ponte, but, from the scantiness of transports, thirty-eight guns only could be brought to the trenches, and but for eight thousand shot found amidst the ruins of Almeida, the ammunition would have run short. The native drivers taking two days to bring their carts over the flat and excellent roads, created a delay in the operations. In the mean time the French strengthened the old works, and fortified two convents, which protected the suburbs. They also raised an enclosed and palisaded redoubt on the greater Teson, and this redoubt was strengthened by two guns in a Franciscan convent, and by a howitzer on the convent's flat roof. When the investment began, the French officers, treating it at first as a sham, came out under the convent wall, and at half musket-shot saluted and bowed to our soldiers: Wellington the same evening ordered the redoubt to be stormed; he was quite in earnest. The light division, and Pack's Portuguese brigade, having forded the Agueda about three miles above the fortress, made a circuit, and took post till dusk behind the great Teson. In the evening the troops stood to their arms, and a detachment of one hundred volunteers from each regiment, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Colborne of the Fifty-

second, stormed the Francisco Hill fort after a short sharp action. The French officer in command proved to have been one of the mockers of the morning. This storming was done at a dash. An eye-witness describes our redcoats as appearing to be at the same moment in the ditch, near the parapet, on the ramparts, and forcing the gorge of the redoubt, at a gate which a bursting French shell blew open by a lucky accident. The French had calculated that this outwork would keep us at bay for three weeks, and its capture enabled us to break ground at once within breaching distance of the walls. Our loss was only twenty-four men and officers. Working parties were instantly set to work to dig themselves under cover, as the fort was swept by the fire of the town. Sir Thomas Graham now took direction of the siege, and the next night the first parallel was established; the batteries, eighteen feet thick at the top, were traced out under incessant storms of shells, but our riflemen dug pits in front of the trenches, and picked off the enemy's gunners. On the night of the 13th, a fortified convent near the captured redoubt was carried by a detachment of light infantry companies, supported by Lord Blantyre's brigade. A lodgment was effected here, and the sap run on to the line of the second parallel. Wellington, now beginning to fear that Marmont might relieve the place, resolved on a rush at Ciudad. On the 14th twenty-five of our heavy guns battered at the San Francisco convent, which enfiladed the approaches, and the Fortieth Regiment carrying them at a run, established a hold on the suburbs. On the 17th the wall began to crumble in large pieces, and the turret was shaken at the small breach, which the French re-intrenched. Still the heavy French fire ruined our sap, drove the riflemen out of their pits, and killed General Borthwick, our commandant of artillery. On the 19th the battering guns were turned against the rampart cannon, and a storm was agreed upon. The main breach was to be assailed by General Picton's division, consisting of the brigades of Major-General Mackinnon and Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell. This column was to be preceded by a storming party of the light companies of the division, under Major Manners of the Seventy-fourth, while, on the right, Lieutenant-Colonel O'Toole, with five companies of the Ninety-fifth Rifle Corps, and the light companies of the Eighty-third and Ninety-fourth, was to make a diversion. The

storming party of three hundred men for the small breach was to be led by Major Napier of the Fifty-second, followed by the brigades of Major-General Vandeleur and Colonel Barnard, while General Pack was to make a false attack against the southern face of the fort.

At dusk at the given signal, the different columns marched calmly to the assault over the glacis, which was swept by grape and musketry, and lit by thousands of fire-balls. Most of the Portuguese sack-bearers, who had to fill up the ditch, here lay down behind their bags, and waited for better times. Colonel Campbell, with the Ninety-fourth and the second battalion of the Fifth, to assist Mackinnon's storming party, descended the counterscarp by means of ropes, and reached the breach silently and undiscovered. Finding the storming party not yet come, Colonel Campbell at once pushed forward to the breach. The colonel, hearing the French giving orders to the artillerymen to fire, shouted to his men to throw themselves on their faces; the next instant a fury of shot and shell swept over them, and they sprang to their feet, poured onward, and cleared the breach. A wide ditch having been cut by the French between the breach and the rampart, all might have been lost at this crisis, had not the French pioneers left a single plank, by which our troops passed up to the ramparts, driving away the gunners, and carrying all before them. But victory was not yet certain, and Mackinnon's party had not yet arrived. The French recovered from their panic, and were overwhelming our force. Men and officers fell in heaps, and choked the way, which was raked from minute to minute by two guns, which, only a few yards off, flanked the top of the breach. Colonel Campbell was equal to the emergency; he gave the word for a volley, and then charged. The French threw down their arms and fled. The moment after, Mackinnon's columns swept upwards to the breach through a destructive fire, but unfortunately a powder magazine exploding upon the rampart, Mackinnon and many of his followers were killed.

Nor could a Napier be backward on such a day. The light division storming party, with three hundred yards to clear, to get at the smaller breach, would not wait for the hay-bags to pad the ditch, but with extraordinary swiftness, eager for the battle, flew to the crest of the glacis, jumped headlong down the scarp, a fall of eleven feet, and rushed up the fausse-

braye under a smashing fire of grape and musketry. The bottom of the ditch being dark and intricate, the forlorn hope took too much to the left, but the storming party went straight to the breach, which was so small that a gun placed length-ways at the top nearly blocked it up. Here the forlorn hope joined the stormers, but the enemy's fire was so hot, and the passage so narrow, that the leaders wavered for a moment, and in the instinct of self-defence, every man snapped his musket. Major Napier had his arm shattered by a grape shot, but he still called out, "Men, trust to your bayonets!" and all the officers simultaneously springing to the front, their men gave a furious shout, charged, and won the entrance. General Vandeleur's brigade, forming behind the convent, came down after them to the assault, but General Crawford was shot dead on the glacis, and Colonel Colborne was wounded. Pack and the Portuguese had also turned their false attack into a real escalade, and the town was now carried at all points. The garrison fought for a moment in the streets, but soon threw away their arms, and flew to the castle, where Lieutenant Gurwood received the sword of the governor. And all this took place in half an hour; but then had not Wellington in the night order for the assault, said, "Ciudad Rodrigo must be stormed this evening?" The excesses were as disgraceful as those, subsequently, at Badajoz. Disarmed men were brutally shot, houses were fired, cellars sacked, and women dishonoured, till some of our officers stopped the insane and reckless firing by beating the men about the head with broken musket barrels, the only kind of logic they could understand in their drunken and savage fury. Six deserters were shot. Our total loss amounted to thirteen hundred killed and wounded. The garrison lost three hundred men, and we took fifteen hundred prisoners, and one hundred and fifty pieces of artillery. For this brilliant achievement, Wellington was made Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo and Earl of Wellington, with an annuity of two thousand pounds a year.

After this success, Wellington for the third time flew at Badajoz. This town stands between the Rivillas, a small stream, and the Guadiana, a feeble river, and spreads out like a fan its eight strong bastions. Phillippon, with a garrison of French, Hessians, and Spaniards, nearly five thousand strong, had made great preparations for resistance, and food had been

stored for three months. The battering train was of fifty-two pieces, but Wellington would not bombard the place, or inflict cruel and useless destruction. Our engineers broke ground on the 17th of March. It was at last resolved to storm the Picurina, a fort on an isolated hill some eight hundred yards from the walls. Our storming party took this strong-work in an hour, with a loss of fifty-four men killed, twenty-five officers and two hundred and fifty men wounded. A few weeks later, Wellington, dreading Soult's advance from Cordova and Marmont's attack on Ciudad Rodrigo, resolved on storming Badajoz. Picton's fighting and desperate division was to scale the castle, Leith, the bastion of San Vincente. In the centre, the fourth and light divisions, under Colville and Andrew Barnard, were to march on the Santa Maria and the Trinidad breaches. The assault began at ten o'clock. The attack on the castle was at first repulsed by showers of heavy stones, trunks of trees, and bursting shells. The second assault was successful, but Colonel Ridge, the brave leader, fell in the castle gateway. The garrison fled down into Badajoz. "No man," says fiery Napier, "died that night with more glory than Ridge; yet many died, and there was much glory." At the great breach ponderous firm-set beams were chained together, and spiked with sword-blades. Powder barrels were rolled on our men, and an incessant and withering fire maintained. Two thousand of our bravest men had fallen, when Wellington gave the order to retire and re-form for a second assault. At this crisis some of Walker's men discovered a weak point in the bastion of San Vincente, and broke in. The town then fell, and the atrocities of an ungovernable army began. Five thousand men and officers fell during this siege, and in the assault three thousand five hundred men were wounded, and sixty officers and more than seven hundred men were slain. Five generals were wounded, and two thousand men were killed in the breaches, the Forty-third and Fifty-second regiments of the light division losing more men than all the seven regiments of the third division engaged at the castle. "Let it be remembered," says Napier, "that this frightful carnage took place in a space of less than a hundred yards square. That the slain died, not all suddenly, or by one manner of death. That some perished by steel, some by shot, some by water; that some were crushed and mangled by heavy weights, some trampled

upon, some dashed to atoms by the fiery explosions; that for hours this destruction was endured without shrinking, and that the town was won at last; these things considered, it must be admitted that a British army bears with it an awful power."

BLUFF HARRY.

"WOULD you like to be presented to Henry the Eighth?" suddenly inquired Charley Beagle, who was dining beside me at the club.

"Ahem! . . . Immediately?"

"You will find him a most agreeable fellow, for a king," said my friend, perhaps mistaking the cause of my momentary hesitation. "If curt, he is courtly, and, though bluff, benevolent. His attachment, for example, to his 'Katie,' as he invariably calls her—"

"Which of them?"

"Arragon, I fancy. His devotion to that woman, I say, is perfectly romantic!"

"Better late than never," I ventured to remark. "But how do you know?"

"By his constant reference to her, on any point or in any position of difficulty," replied Charley. "I tell you, sir, to see Henry's obstinate, self-willed, Tudor nature yielding an almost childlike deference to the gentler though better-balanced spirit, is a lesson to the age."

"It is to be regretted that he did not adopt that commendable course a little sooner. Do I not remember something of a letter, penned by one, dying heart-broken at Kimbolton, which was said to have extracted 'one tear' from the receiver's heart, a circumstance (writes an uncourtly chronicler) which must have raised hopes at the time that the process of extracting blood from a stone might not be found impossible?"

"Ha, well!" said Charley Beagle, "circumstances alter. Henry, situated as he now is, frankly and unreservedly acknowledges the excellence of his spouse, and is never weary of her society and counsel. What more can you expect?" continued Charley, rather warmly.

"My dear fellow, I did not expect half so much. But you spoke of his majesty's situation. Is that, do I understand, satisfactorily ascertained?"

"You shall judge for yourself," said Beagle. "What are you doing to-night?"

"To-night! I—I—was going— But what do you mean?"

"I mean that I have promised to attend a small privileged circle this evening, at which the king—who, indeed, rarely fails us—is expected to be present, and, if you will accompany me, I will be your master of the ceremonies," said Charley, smiling.

"Where is the reception held?"

"At Mrs. Hawkshawe's, Twelve, Buz-zard-buildings, near the Mother Redcap, Hampstead-road, East. Nine, sharp," said Charley, rising.

"Dress?"

"Come as you are. It will be," remarked Mr. Beagle, "a quiet, earnest séance, for purposes of inquiry. Dark, colloquial, sedentary. You won't see the king, you know."

"No?"

"But," added Charley, laughing, "you will hear his rollicking voice plainly enough, I can tell you! He sometimes comes with a view-hallo, and once gratified us much (after consulting Katie) by taking part in a melody originally composed in his own honour:

The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
And it is now full day;
Harry our king is gone hunting,
To drive the stag to bay.

You might have heard him at Trafalgar-square!"

"Good. I will meet you here at eight-thirty."

Was Charley Beagle a believer in spiritual phenomena? No man could say. If taxed with such a faith, Charley winked, and winked again. If his non-belief were taken for granted, he assumed a staid and scientific look, muttered mysterious nothings about psychological conditions, undetermined laws of nature, &c., &c., and recommended inquirers to investigate for themselves.

Charley happened to be travelling in America when the spiritual epidemic declared itself with great virulence at Boston, United States. The temptation of conversing with a number of distinguished (deceased) persons, whose acquaintance he had, with some reason, despaired of making in the flesh, overcame all scruples. Mr. Beagle attended a good many séances, and if what passed did not tend to augment his respect for the illustrious shades who, on the half-dollar nights, seldom failed to reveal their presence, his sense of humour was tickled to the last degree.

That he was occasionally startled is true. There was one especial shade, which appeared to have devoted its whole time

and talents to becoming acquainted with Charley's private worldly affairs, and now displayed its knowledge with a frankness really annoying. Mr. Beagle began to dislike and snub that meddlesome film; but it would seem that this class of spirit is easier raised than laid. He was beginning to grow seriously uneasy, when a fortunate incident occurred. The spirit suddenly announced, one evening, that it had come accompanied by a relative of Mr. Beagle's, lately deceased. "Who was it?" "His aunt." Charley calmly replied that it might possibly be his grandmother. As to an aunt, the blessing of such a relative had been denied him. The spirit, aunt and all, withdrew in confusion, and returned no more.

On returning to England, Mr. Beagle published one of the first works on spiritualism issued in this land. It excited some controversy. The public, who perused the book, said that the writer believed. The critics (who didn't) said he did not.

The author's own expressed views failed to settle the question. In the club-smoking-room, Charley was reported to have pronounced the whole thing "beastly humbug." In a different circle, Mr. Beagle declared the subject "pregnant with interest," and, with the aid of an old aphorism, deprecated a too hasty judgment.

"There came in," quoted Charley, "a wise man and a fool. The wise man heard, investigated, and decided. The fool decided."

From what has been stated, it will be seen that Charley, if a believer, was, at all events, no bigot, and I therefore placed myself with the greater readiness under his guidance. What followed I will endeavour to relate with the closest possible adherence to fact.

Had King Harry, while in his very substantial flesh, been apprised that he was destined to spend many evenings at No. 12, Buzzard-buildings, near the Mother Red-cap, Hampstead-road, East, and that the majority of the distinguished persons invited to meet him would arrive by the twopenny 'bus, he would probably have expressed his incredulity in terms more significant than polite. How, then, if it had been added that the privilege aforesaid would be appraised at three and sixpence a head, to the profit of the host? "Body o' me!" would the offended monarch have roared to his informant. "The fellow is both fool and traitor! Had I quarter-staff at hand, I would crack it over thy knave's pate, beshrew me!"

Buzzard-buildings, if not actually situated in a Court suburb, is—when you find it—a very nice place; and Mr. and Mrs. Hawkshawe, the proprietors of No. 12, are, both in manners and appearance, very nice people. The gentleman is understood to be the grand, passive medium, the lady the active, managing, or (to use the technical term) "complementary," medium, establishing the "rapport" between the circle and the former.

We were about fourteen in number. Of these five or six were friends of Beagle, though strangers to the phenomena we had come to witness. There was a professor, but of what craft or science did not clearly appear. There was a doctor of medicine, a refined and gentle-mannered old lady, and, furthermore, a hard-headed solicitor, with a quick and searching manner that boded ill for any trickery that might be attempted. There were also two or three more, who seemed to be already familiar with the ways and manners of spiritualism. With these latter, Charley Beagle, having put on his scientific mask, freely fraternised, and moved among them without exciting the least distrust.

The circle was now formed, in an inner drawing-room, around a long table, on which was laid a large sheet of brown paper folded in the form of a speaking-trumpet, and, the lights being extinguished, we were left in total darkness.

The first sound audible, after a faint giggle, which was rebuked by a general "Hush!" was the voice of Mrs. Hawkshawe inviting us to rise and join in repeating the Lord's Prayer.

Had we known all that was to follow such a preface, it is probable that some members of the circle would have objected to its use. As it was, the solemn words were uttered with (apparently) all the reverence which is their due; after which, the complementary medium, assuming an ordinary tone, informed us that the spirits rather relished an easy, cheerful circle, and invited us to offer any remarks we chose.

"Such of my hearers" (used Artemus Ward to observe) "as have been confined in Newgate, will remember," &c. &c. Such of the readers of this serial who have acquired the habit of consulting spirits, will remember the style of conversation that precedes the actual phenomena. The condition of the atmosphere, as affecting the prospects of the present séance; the possibility of any repugnant influence being present; the capricious, skittish, and,

indeed, reprehensible behaviour of Dolly Brown (a spirit), at such and such a meeting; the commendable interest evinced by Count Bobboli, or the Baron von Giggle, in the phenomena; together with the count's very natural astonishment, when his brother (hailing through the brown-paper speaking-trumpet from an island in the South Pacific) announced that he was not residing in Paris, as had been supposed, but had been wrecked on an undiscovered reef, and buried under a tamarind-tree, some sprays of which would arrive by the next packet, in proof of the assertion. Surprise, congratulation, and low comments. After these, a lull, when the medium (Mrs. Hawkshawe), in a cajoling tone, reminded the spirits that time, though nothing to them, was still a matter of some concern to us.

"Now, spirits, now then, darlings; where are you? Don't keep us long waiting, there's dears."

I was conjecturing how Bluff Harry would respond to an invitation so expressed, when the hard-headed man of law abruptly inquired: "May I ask if there be any absolute necessity for total darkness, and the retaining our seats?"

"Your question, my excellent friend, though a discreet one, will cost you yours," whispered Charley the experienced. And so it did.

"We should infinitely prefer the light," said Mrs. Hawkshawe, sweetly. "But the spirits have announced certain conditions, and if these are disregarded, we get no results."

"Ha! probably not," said the inquirer, dryly.

"Come, spirits, spirits!" said the medium, briskly. "What is the meaning of this? If you won't speak, answer by the table. Is the circle to your satisfaction?"

An emphatic thump. (No.)

"What changes shall be made?"

Reply being unthumpable, none was made, and it became expedient to inquire, seriatim: "Am I right?" &c.

Three thumps (affirmative), until it came to the turn of the man of law, when a tremendous "No."

"I am extremely sorry, sir," said the voice of Mrs. Hawkshawe, through the gloom, "but I fear that, unless you will do us the favour of walking into the next room, our spiritual atmosphere will remain imperfect."

The lawyer hesitated, thought, perhaps, of his three and sixpence, then of his friends' disappointment, and politely with-

drew, under a promise not to open the door, but with liberty to glean what he might through the key-hole.

One or two changes then took place, the result of which placed me—the writer—next the medium, and the refined old lady (who was nervous and prostrated) at the opposite end of the table, in a very isolated and forlorn condition indeed. But there was no appeal, and the spirits had to be obeyed.

Silence again prevailed.

"Do they ever fail entirely?" asked a half-sceptical voice, in the dark.

"Scarcely ever," replied the medium.

"Only yesterday, Count Bobboli was saying to the Baron von Giggle, that he never— Well, this is most extraordinary! Stay. If any of the company would favour us— Vocal harmony soothes and attracts them. Can anybody sing?"

Dead silence, and sniffing.

"Suppose we try a chorus," suggested the medium. "Auld lang Syne?"

We did. But the spirits, perhaps not recognising our claim to "auld acquaintance," remained unmoved.

"Try a single voice," said somebody, at a venture.

"I have heard," some one else politely observed, "that a lady present, Mrs. Pammelton Gurle, has a charming voice. If she would oblige us—"

Rather to my surprise, there arose from the further end of the table a sort of nervous twitter, like several sparrows, each with a severe cold, attempting a part song, and breaking down. It was good-natured Mrs. Pammelton Gurle essaying a ditty, popular no doubt in her youthful days: *The Spell is broken, We must part.*

It was more pathetic than apt. We were intent rather upon weaving a spell, and by no means disposed to "part" till we had succeeded.

There was a dark buzz, which might be interpreted, at pleasure, as applause or relief, but through it came pealing a loud and rough, yet muffled, voice, as if through a speaking-trumpet:

"Brayvo, old lady!"

"Ha! the spirits!" "At last! 'Tis John!" "Welcome, John!" "Now we shall hear something!" exclaimed voices of the initiated.

"What John, Charley?" I asked, innocently. "King John?"

"No, no!" said Charley, "John King. It's the spirit that was so much with the Davingpodes, you know."

"Aha!" said I.

"Well, John, here you are at last!" said

the medium, cheerfully. "You frightened us. We thought you would not come. Is the circle all right?"

"No, it isn't," bellowed plain-spoken John,

"What's the matter?"

"Heverything," responded John, in a sullen roar.

"You are out of sorts, I think. Where's Harry?"

"Don't know, and don't care. With Katie, perhaps. He ain't tied to my hapron-string! Perhaps he'll come by-and-bye," added John, reluctantly.

"Can't you call him up, sir?" inquired a timid voice.

"They object to the expression 'up,'" put in the complementary medium.

"I beg pardon," said the timid voice; "I—didn't mean——"

"Put any questions any one pleases," said the medium.

"Ahem! Where's my wife?" demanded a stern, quiet voice, down the table.

"You ain't got never a one," said John, "and you wouldn't know 'ow to treat her, if you 'ad."

There was a giggle, and John, exultant in a lucky guess, celebrated his triumph by dealing blows indiscriminately, right and left, with the brown-paper trumpet, in the dark. Mr. King's manners certainly lacked repose.

"You want Harry here, to keep you in order," observed the medium.

"Well," said a new voice, rising, as it were, from the very centre of the table, "Harry is here!"

I fear I cannot convey a correct idea of this second voice. To my fancy, it was such as might have proceeded from an exceedingly choky and corpulent imp, gulping out half-articulate words in intervals of sea-sickness. The being from which it emanated seemed to be staggering, hither and thither, about six inches above the table.

Several questions were put to the royal shade, but owing to the peculiarity of the voice, which seemed to proceed direct from Harry's stomach, without troubling any other organ, I could not make out the first replies.

"These vocal phenomena are highly instructive, sir," said (I think) the professor to me.

"They are, sir," I replied. "Especially when intelligible."

"When did my father die?" asked a voice. It was the lawyer's. He had broken his parole, and quietly resumed his

seat. But the mysterious influence that had required his absence was manifestly unconscious of his return.

"Never," was the decided reply.

"Yet he died in my arms."

"No he didn't," said Bluff Harry.

The medium explained that, according to spiritualistic views, there is no such thing as death, only a migration from sphere to sphere.

"I see. Well, when did he quit this sphere?" asked the determined querist.

At this moment a hoarse call, or bellow, resounded along the table.

"Ah, the bo'sen!" said Mrs. Hawkshawe. "It's the bo'sen of the Captain. Well, bo'sen, what have you to say to us?"

Dead silence.

"Perhaps," suggested a voice, "he has come to thank us for the provision made for his wife and family."

"Hush, please," said the medium. "They dislike to have their business suggested to them. I'm afraid he is gone."

He was.

"Harry, are you gone?"

"No, I'm here," gurgled the monarch.

"Will you—will your majesty permit me to ask," said a voice I didn't know, "what is your real opinion of Cardinal Wolsey?"

"He was a great man," replied King Henry, speaking from the pit of his stomach.

"My stay, my comforter."

"His *linsey-woolsey*, that is," put in, emboldened by the dark, some student of the Comic History of England.

"Ho—ho—ho!" roared John King, who had been silent of late. "Tell that to Katie!"

"Hold your tongue?" growled Harry.

"Shan't," said uncourtly John.

"Pray, may I ask, do you play whist down there?" inquired a gentlemanly voice.

The medium remarked that "down there" was open to the same objection she had mentioned in connexion with "up."

The querist apologised, and repeated his question, to which Bluff Harry replied in the affirmative, and that the points were high.

"Do they practise calling for trumps?" pursued Mr. M. (He was a member of my club, and a fanatic of whist.)

"I don't remember," growled Harry.

"I'll ask Katie."

"Can they see in the dark?" asked a member of the circle.

"They cannot see at all," said the medium. "A peculiar psychological con-

dition, acted upon with energy by the secundo-primary properties, produces in them an effect analogous to what we call 'sight.'"

"Ay, ay?" said Charley, as if a new light had dawned upon him.

As King Harry positively refused to reply to any questions of the least importance without consulting Katie, and as there existed a strong impression that, having once sought that lady's society, his majesty would not return, we ceased to press him, and the conversation resolved itself into a passage of arms between himself and John King, in which the latter was worsted.

A little nervous shriek from Mrs. Pam-melton Gurle next alarmed the circle. Somebody, the old lady declared, had touched her!

Was she hurt? Was she frightened?

No, not at all. But a hand was placed round her neck, and the liberty, more than the touch, had wounded her.

It seemed time to close the séance. Bluff Harry and John King had both retired; but the spirits appeared disposed to turn the table, and the medium invited us to witness that, before we broke up. The table was turned entirely upside down, as the light, when turned on, exhibited to us. It was so large and heavy that, the medium assured us, it would require three strong men to effect what had been done.

But our friend the lawyer, having declared he could do it alone, was permitted to try, and performing his task with perfect ease, the miracle collapsed.

Thus ended the séance in Buzzard-buildings. As a novelty, it was amusing; as a farce, poor; as an "inquiry," below contempt. If the spirits be otherwise than mortal humbugs, it is unlucky indeed for the honest films, that the two conditions they insist upon, as essential to their demonstration, are precisely those which render complete demonstration impossible.*

MORNING ON THE MOUNTAINS.

THE pale blue mist lies on the mountain crest,
Wraps the fir-forests in a dewy shroud,
And veils the shimmering lake. The red deer wakes
And rises from his lair, and tossing high
His branched head, treads o'er the velvet moss,
Launching his deep-toned challenge on the air.
The harebells quake, sway their blue coronals,
What time the breeze of dawn, piercing and keen,
Sweeps o'er their heathery bed. The ptarmigan
Springs startled up, as dropping fir-cones fall

* This narrative embodies the incidents, as faithfully as memory can supply them, of a séance at which the writer was lately present in London, names and places alone disguised.

Upon his couch of leaves. The russet hare,
Her long ears pricked, leaps from her last night's form,
And bounding o'er the glade, is lost to sight.
Within the whins, the red-legged coveys crouch,
And fear not sportsman's gun. Scarce e'er does foot
Of man crush down the few green blades that grow
Upon these distant, solitary wilds.
Morning breaks o'er the mountains, keen and cold,
Bracing the nerves, and sweeping from the brain
The misty cobwebs of continuous thought,
Giving to thews and sinews double strength,
Once more to bear the burdens of the day.

IN THE FIELD WITH THE PRUSSIANS.

A CONVOY CAPTURED, AND HOW WE ESCAPED.

"Now, then, are you ready?" called out Baumstein, a dashing Uhlan officer, to a man who was trying to improvise some harness for a horse which had broken the traces of a provision waggon.

"Not yet, sir," was the man's answer. "The traces have had a deal of wear and tear, and want looking to in a great many places."

"Well, I know you would not keep the column of waggons waiting if you had not good reason for it; but you must really be quick, for you know orders are to be at Etain (half way between Metz and Verdun) at twelve, and it only wants an hour to it now."

The vehicles were regular army provision waggons for the most part, but there were also several "required" French carts. The official waggons were all marked in the following way on their canvas coverings: "Proviand Wagen, Numbers One, Two, Three, &c., Brandenburg Infanterie Division." The two drivers to each waggon were soldier postilions, each of whom had his loaded musket at his side, so that, if occasion required it, they had but to cut the rope traces of the cart, and there was at once a small squadron of horse ready for more military duties. The waggons were each drawn by two pairs of horses, which were remarkably fine, strong beasts, and, if it were necessary, they were fully capable of dragging the heavy loaded waggons at the rate of six miles an hour the whole day through. The provisions carried were for the most part countless loaves of black bread, and ham salted and dried, which is all the Germans require. Several of the waggons, however, were full of grain.

At last the trace was mended to the soldier's satisfaction, and the young lieutenant sent an under-officer to the front to say that waggon number one might proceed. There was a cracking of whips, mingled with each soldier's particular noise for urging on his

beasts, and the whole column started, the horses' hoofs striking sparks from the stones in the little village as they passed, and the heavy waggon wheels crunching many a hard flint to powder.

The village was one of those dreary, desolate-looking places which one finds too often near a newly-fought battle-field. Window-frames, with portions of glass still sticking in them, flapped listlessly to and fro; doors, partially battered down, lay transversely across the apertures they were intended to cover; large patches of blue sky showed through the roofs of many of the houses, while the yellow-plastered walls, speckled with bullet and shell marks, were in several places clotted with blood. Such was the village on the road to Etain at which we had stopped, and, now that we had set out again, the country opened before our view in all the glory of summer sunshine. Far and near was one immense space of open ground, interspersed by villages and broad magnificent roads.

Any one who has seen France can scarcely have failed to have noticed that it is a country wonderfully appropriate for the purposes of war. Its broad plateaux and open spaces court the evolutions of an army, while its straight, broad, endless chaussées seem built for the purpose of hosts marching to one or other of its frontiers. In England we have our narrow lanes, our endless hedges; but France abjures such cumberers of the ground, and, in an eminently scientific manner, sets to work to build a straight, broad road, and let it cost what it may, or whatever difficulties may be in the course indicated for it to take, they are surmounted with a celerity and adroitness that does the French infinite credit.

The chaussée by which we approached Etain was just such a road as seemed to have been built on the foregoing principle; it was some fifty yards wide, and as straight as a line. On either side beautiful lime-trees, planted at regular intervals, cast their broad cool shadows across the glaring white of the chalky road. Here and there single carrion crows, and magpies in flocks, were busily at work on the open ground to the right and left of the road. Ah! what an awful feast they had as they dug their long beaks into the ground, and then cawed and chattered over their meal. It was a strange thing, but I certainly noticed that all innocent birds seemed to have entirely disappeared, while these vultures of temperate climes swarmed for many a mile over the open ground.

The column now came to the little village of Jarny, and here some Prussian officers "required" a waggon with a pair of horses, and I was given a seat in it. We had previously been sitting on one of the provision waggons. The Frenchman from whom the cart and horses were "required" was told to send a boy with them to drive, and as he was a long time in finding one, the provision column had got on some way before we started again. On reaching Conflans we found the convoy had not stopped, but had trotted through the town.

Conflans was not an interesting-looking town, but it bore no appearance of desolation, as the villages that we had just passed had done. Its inhabitants seemed quietly to have submitted to the Prussian yoke, and were busied at their daily occupations. The shops were open, and, although trade could not be said to be flourishing, it was still going on. The crowd of German troops in the town was immense; stand after stand of arms appeared, piled in fours, with the spiked helmets on the bayonets, down all the side streets. Some were piled in front of the churches, others were opposite the hotels and large buildings. There must have been several thousand men in this little town. The church I saw was entirely cleared out; the altar and pews were all gone, and in their place straw was strewn over the floor. On this several hundred Prussian soldiers, rolled up in their great-coats, with their knapsacks serving them as pillows, lay fast asleep. Two men kept guard over the arms outside, which are so piled that every man, if alarmed, has not the slightest difficulty in finding his weapon. An alarm was given that the French were coming while I was looking round the church, and the order and quickness displayed by the men in turning out was something wonderful. The alarm was beaten through the town by a drummer. As soon as the sentries heard it they woke a young lieutenant, who was sleeping on the straw by the side of his men. He sprang up, and shouted, "Stand to your arms!" Without speaking a word, they all rose like one man, just as if they had all been shamming sleep, and had been expecting the alarm. They hastily rolled up their great-coats. In two minutes the knapsack was on each man's back, and the coat, rolled into sausage shape, the ends being fastened together by a little strap, was placed across each man's right shoulder. In the most silent manner they quickly left the church, and four men went to each pile of arms. When all were there the officer

gave the order to put on helmets and shoulder arms. The next minute they were in marching order; their movements were so quick, yet so mechanical, that they seemed to come from some accurate and beautiful piece of machinery. It turned out to be a false alarm, arising from a sentry, a mile off, firing his rifle. "Fall out, and pile arms," cried the lieutenant, and in five minutes the men were all on the straw again. The Prussian soldier makes a rule of sleeping whenever he gets the chance, and also of eating enough to last him three days, should fortune give him such an opportunity.

After half an hour's good trot we came up to the column again.

"Holloa," said the Uhlán officer, "we thought we had lost you. Where did you get those horses from? They are fine beasts."

"From Jarny," was the answer.

"How far is it to Etain now?"

"Why, it is a good hour's trot. We were to have to been there by twelve, but it will be past one. I expect the old general will flay me alive. But since we left we have had nothing but disasters. In fact, I don't know where it is going to end. Well, Herr Engländer," said he to me, "where are you bound for?"

"I am going to the right of Verdun," I answered; "to a place called Magneville. I am told that the Second Army Corps is there, and if so I shall get the general commanding to give me leave to follow his ambulance into the next battle."

"It strikes me that our position here is not altogether safe. You know, we are not very far from Verdun," he answered. "No one seems to know where MacMahon is, and I, for one, have never yet been rightly told where to find a German regiment, division, or army corps, when I have inquired for one. It looks to me like inextricable confusion; but I suppose it will all turn out right. We have a good man at our head. He is like a spider in the middle of his web, and knows everything, while the meshes which form the web know nothing, but do their work just as well as if they did. Bazaine, the blue-bottle, we have already got locked up pretty safely in Metz; but still there are some flies left which can sting."

At this moment a sergeant dashed up to the Uhlán officer's side to say that one of the wheels of the foremost provision waggon had come off, and just as we heard this the whole column came to a dead halt.

"Did you ever see anything like this?"

said the Uhlán. "We shan't die in our beds if this goes on; we can't stop for the cart. Forwards."

And the waggons got in motion again, leaving the provision waggon with four men and some rope to make the defect temporarily good.

We soon reached Etain. That town was also full of troops. Here our waggon drew up at the Hôtel de la Couronne, whilst the Uhlán officer went to report himself to the general. The two Prussian officers with whom I had been travelling were also looking for the Second Army Corps. In a few minutes the Uhlán officer joined us in the hotel, and he was told to pass through the Second Army Corps, and that he would find his division half starving at the next village beyond.

We all determined the best thing to be done was to secure something to eat while the horses were munching their noonday meal; so calling the host of the hotel, my friends recommended him to be quick in serving us, unless he wanted—. The poor man was allowed to fill up the blank in any way that his imagination suggested, and in ten minutes we were served, although the place was crowded with officers, all of whom were as imperious in their demands as we had been.

Our repast consisted of a thick slice of villanously tough meat: the waiter called it beef; I called it horse, and I fancy I was right; but he would have been worse than a fool who, at that hour and that place, threw away the chance of getting a mouthful of meat, let it be what it might. Salad and bread completed the dinner, together with a bottle of Chablis vieux, so that we rose quite contented, and paid our twelve francs a piece (a disgraceful price even for war times), with a grin, which was a sign of more delight than some of the other officers' faces bore.

Most of them were storming for this, that, and the other; the waiters, two in number, always answered "Oui, messieurs," most politely, without ever attempting to note or fulfil a single order. They just simply took anything they could find ready in the kitchen, and pitched it down in turns on one or other of the tables, and ran away, with their fingers in their ears, for a fresh load, followed by a storm of abuse from all sides.

We gladly took our departure from this Babel, and set out on our road to Magneville. The Uhlán officer rode to the front to find out the way, and we brought up the rear of the column, as we had done

before. There is a feeling of safety about numbers, or else, had we been so inclined, we might have passed the other waggons, and gone on alone, but we chose remaining where we were. It was a good long way to Magneville, and after leaving Etain, we gave two or three tortuous windings out of the town, and then found ourselves on another long broad chaussée.

"What is the day of the month?" asked the Uhlán lieutenant.

"The twenty-eighth of August," was the answer.

And we moved on in silence till we reached Abducourt, which was a totally deserted village.

"It's very strange that there should be no Prussians quartered here," said one of the officers; "and if the Second Army Corps, numbering thirty-five thousand men, is to be supplied by the provision and ammunition waggons running up and down this road, they won't get fat on such fare; and as for their rifles and cannons, they might just as well pitch them away. Why, we have not met a single soldier or conveyance since we left the outposts before Etain."

Baumstein now rode up to us.

"We ought to get a by-road to the left, now," said this officer. "I was told I should find one after passing the first village, but I don't think the village was called Abducourt. I have lost my map, worse luck to it. What a nuisance it is! I hope we are all right."

"Before we go on any further," said an officer in the cart, "let us get out and light our cigars in one of these houses; there's too much wind to do it here."

The column did not stop in the village, but we told the lad to draw up, and descending, we made our way into a deserted house. It evidently belonged to some well-to-do farmer, who had left in a tremendous hurry; so much so, that the dinner, although placed upon the table, had been left untasted. There was an article in the code of war amongst these Germans, which was, that whenever a house was deserted, and there were any eatables or drinkables left in it, these were the legitimate property of the finder. There were two reasons by which such a proceeding was justified: one was, that when you had eaten one meal it was quite uncertain whether you would get another for days; and the other was, that if you left the eatables they would be sure to spoil, and that if you did not take the wine, some one else would.

Acting on these principles, we each took

a bottle of wine and some very stale bread, and giving a bottle to our driver, whom we called Napoleon, from his likeness to the original, we started to catch up the proviant waggons, which we knew must now be a long way ahead of us. We ascended the cart, and the horses trotted gaily onwards; they were fine, strong beasts, with broad chests, and our driver, Napoleon, was a good, civil lad; he seemed in a terrible state of alarm, and although the Germans did nothing to cause him the least misgivings, he looked as if he expected every moment to be shot. He answered all the questions put to him in a very tremulous voice. One officer asked him where he was during the battle on the 18th.

"In the cellar," was the answer. "We were all there—father, mother, sisters, and myself; for the soldiers who passed to the front told us that if the Prussians gained the day, we should all be murdered; and that they always tied the men to trees, and then killed the women and children before their eyes."

"Did you ever hear anything like that?" said one of the Prussian officers.

We now came to an angle where two straight roads met. Just as we were turning the corner we caught the sound of firing, and we saw a riderless horse, five hundred yards off, coming along the road to meet us at a frightful speed; it was almost flying. Poor Napoleon nearly fainted. "Turn the horses!" we cried to him; but he was too far gone for that, so I sprang to the reins, and tugged with such haste that the waggon very nearly went over, but luck was with us. "Now, back you go," we said to Napoleon. He did not want telling twice. Far down the road we could see a confused mass of horses and waggons and puffs of smoke, and we could distinctly hear the sound of shots.

"Gott im Himmel," said the Prussians; "they have caught sight of us; off—off."

Napoleon lashed the horses into a perfect fury. The riderless horse was now close up to us. It was the Uhlán lieutenant's. As it was passing we could see a deep sword-cut across its neck, and the poor brute's chest was covered with blood. How it went! We must have been going at a splendid rate to have kept that beast, as long as we did, in sight, for it scarcely seemed to touch the ground; with neck stretched out, with bloodshot, rolling eyes, and foaming mouth, and nostrils widely dilated, it shot past us. Our horses took fright and followed it. It was a fearful drive. None of us expected to reach Etain

alive. We tore through the village, along the broad road; to the breadth of the road we owed our safety as much as to anything, for the horses, every now and then, made a fearful swerve, but still they kept on gallantly. Ever and anon we cast our glances behind us, but no horsemen appearing, we thought we were safe. The distance from the village to Etain was about five miles; we had got, perhaps, half of our perilous journey over, when we saw two horsemen coming after us as fast as they could tear.

"There are only two of them," said one of the Prussians; "take out your chassepots." We placed the straw and the two portmanteaus we had been sitting on at the back of the cart as a sort of barricade, and then took up positions behind it, so that our cart looked from behind nothing more than a simple cart with straw in it. Between the straw and the portmanteaus there was sufficient room to fire; and as both the officers had chassepots and a few dozen cartridges, as keepsakes of Gravelotte, we were fully prepared.

Our wagon was still going at a tremendous pace. We could see that the two horsemen were themselves followed by a troop of French horse, who were rapidly gaining on them. Presently, there were a few puffs of smoke from the French horsemen. One of the two pursued men fell, horse and all; the other kept on. He was better mounted than his pursuers, and had evidently been only keeping with the other, for directly his comrade's horse fell he bounded away, and came on after us at a tremendous pace. Our poor beasts were getting rapidly tired. We were now within two miles of Etain. The German horseman was still being pursued, but was rapidly distancing his pursuers, and quickly catching us up. In a few minutes he was alongside.

"Chasseurs! Chasseurs!" was all he said; and he dashed on.

Just as he passed we were able to see it was one of the sergeants, but he had got a cut over the head, and his face was covered with blood and dust to such an extent as to make him almost indistinguishable. Our eyes were now intently fixed on the body of chasseurs. There were somewhere about twenty of them; they seemed very tolerably mounted, and were quickly gaining upon us. Our horses were giving evident appearances of knocking up. We certainly imagined that our hour had come. We could distinctly see our chasseur friends' uniforms, and we were speculating whether

it might not be wiser to pull up, when Napoleon called out, "Voilà, voilà!" We turned our eyes, and to our intense joy a troop of German Uhlans appeared. We were about midway between the two squadrons of hostile horse. The effect of this sight on the French was electrifying. They wheeled round, and, in their turn, were the pursued.

"Napoleon," we cried, "draw up at the side of the road."

As the Uhlans charged past us, we stood up in the cart, and gave them a loud cheer, and actually Napoleon joined in. They answered it. Their horses looked smoking hot, and rather jaded, as if they had already done a good morning's work, but still they seemed to have plenty of go in them as they dashed along. They did not continue the chase long, as they knew no doubt that more French would come out of Verdun. The officer's riderless horse had dashed into Etain, and had thereby given the alarm, upon which a party of Uhlans, just returning from reconnoitring, were sent out to see what was the matter; and, luckily for us, they came just at the right moment. When we reached Etain we found that we had taken the wrong road, and that the garrison of Verdun, instead of the poor Uhlan officer's division, was several wagon loads of provisions the richer by the mistake. The whole town was under arms; long rows of infantry and heavy squadrons of horse were drawn up waiting only the word of command. As we arrived, the order to "fall out," was given. Cannons were unlimbered, cavalrymen led their horses back to their stables once more, the infantry again piled their needle-guns before the houses they occupied, and in almost as short a time as it takes to relate it, the whole place was comparatively still. The sentries again mounted guard, and the officers returned to the hotels to talk over the bad luck which had attended "the captured convoy."

WANTED FOR LONDON.

ALL the enormous alterations that are taking place in London, vast works like the Embankment, Holborn Viaduct, and the new streets opened up near the Mansion House, carried out successfully, and with an almost Roman spirit, might seem worthy of the great City that boasts itself the capital of the world. Yet some of the busiest parts of London have an air of

shabbiness and meanness quite out of keeping with these grand efforts, and utterly unworthy of a city of such pretension.

What is wanted to remove these incongruities is a ready managing œdile; not a Haussman with vast plans and demolitions, but something akin to the clever, shifty, thrifty housekeeper in a moderate establishment. We want, in short, for London, the "handy man," with a light touch and artistic eye, and a not exorbitant balance to his credit in the municipal coffers. We should take him first to Trafalgar-square. There are grand soaring schemes for the beautifying or rather reconstruction of that really fine place; although it is certainly not quite the finest site in Europe. A skilful architect could, with alterations, make a handsome pile of the much abused National Gallery, or at least turn it into a respectable conventional building, that would fairly hold its own with the Post-Office, and buildings of such modest pretensions. There is no need for wholesale razing and abolishing. The stiff flagged portion of the square could be laid out with far more effect; a broad flight of steps should descend from the gallery; a little green should be judiciously introduced; above all, the awful statues should be sent for shelter to remote back streets or lonely suburbs. A fine chance was missed here a short time ago, when, by purchasing two or three old houses by Spring Gardens, an opening could have been made into St. James's Park. But a bank had more spirit, and purchased the ground. Private enterprise has often a nice instinct. Who that remembers the unrivalled squalor and decay of old Hungerford Market, but must acknowledge how much London is indebted to a company for the gay, cheery, and even stately Charing Cross Hotel, which has taken its place, and which has really lent a dignity to the neighbourhood. But the strangest thing is, that a street like the Strand, so busy and important, where such vast retail business is done, should still consist of old, rickety, tottering houses of an almost crazy senility, with even shops of the oldest pattern. Now, even in a provincial town, a perpetual restoration and stuccoing is going on, and almost every new tenant guts, and alters, and plasters his house, even for the prestige of the thing. Amazing, too, is the slowness with which improvements are adopted, whose value has been proved by experience elsewhere; and it is only worthy of an old-fashioned French town to have omnibuses and carriages hobbling laboriously over

rude paving-stones, when for years back the success of asphalté has been established in Paris. This smooth and durable material, over which the vehicles literally glide, actually imparts a cheerfulness to the street, and we are not pained by the spectacle of toiling and straining horses, who under the new conditions seem to make child's play of their task. A small strip has indeed been laid down in Holborn, which seems to be already strangely worn into eddies and inequalities; but this, it is probable, comes from the originally imperfect construction of the roadway underneath, which must be old, and old-fashioned. The French surface remains as level as a billiard table. The day is not far distant when all our streets will be laid down with this wonderful material, which will add a new luxury to London life, will cheapen the cost of horseflesh and carriage material, by adding to their lasting powers, and will make us look back with wonder to the barbarous horrors of macadamisation.

One would think that clothing an official with decent taste was not a herculean task: yet ask a foreigner his opinion of the poor bemonstered force which protects our lives and purses. He might suppose that Dykwynkyn, or some other of the artists who work for the pantomimes, had designed the grotesque disfigurement of these unhappy men. The more ferocious in appearance carry off this grotesqueness by a sort of buccaneering or piratical air, they are so strapped, and gaitered, and hung about with objects. Yet a little ordinary practical sense, directed by even a meagre scrap of taste, would save us from ridicule. A little bronzed point or knob at the top of the helmet, in the Prussian fashion, would do something. The long buccaneering gaiters might be shortened one half, or combined with knickerbockers. The Dublin police have showy helmets, set off with German-silver chains, and patent leather; but the best model would be that of the gendarmerie in some parts of Germany—a stiff Tyrolean hat, stout as a helmet, with a plume of cock's feathers at the side.

Here is a suggestion for the new post-master-general: How often does even an old inhabitant wander about the long streets looking for the post-office? Nay, how often does he not actually pass it, as he looks for the shrinking and over-modest openings which cover near the ground, and are obscured by the competing attractions of loaves or groceries? There should surely be some conspicuous signal, say a lamp-

post, painted some gay colour, that could be seen afar, to indicate the situation. Again, how vastly would a street like Regent-street be improved by a few stray kiosks, devoted to the sale of newspapers and postage-stamps; or, better still, by the postmaster-general enlarging his pillar-boxes, like one of those changes that take place in the comic business of the pantomime, and placing one of his smart little uniformed boys to sell the stamps and sort the letters, allowing him to supplement his efforts by the sale of newspapers?

It is plain, too, that the Embankment—a really fine and tasteful work—is scarcely likely to be developed as it ought to be. Even the ordinary road lamp-posts that light it are of a mean pattern, while the ambitious and highly decorated beacons that decorate the balustrade are too flashy. Inigo Jones's exquisite water-gate lies half buried in mud, and is growing dilapidated. Surely such an artistic object might be conveniently moved, and set up to do its proper function, instead of the gaunt and hideous thing at the Temple-stairs. But there is in this Embankment a grand opportunity for what might be called cheap out-door education: that is, for civilising the manners and tastes of the rough population of London. There is here a chance of teaching them that there is enjoyment outside the charmed circle of the public-house, which should, on no account, be neglected. These grounds should not be laid out into too precise an arrangement of trim flower-beds. There should be grass and walks, with a few statues, as in the Tuileries. There is something rather grim and cheerless in our public gardening, with the austere notices and the watching men. We should think of the sultry summer evenings, and make it into a lounge, with plenty of seats, from which to look on the river, and above all, a "grand café" or two, with a band playing.

We could not do better than follow the precedent of the Champs Elysées—which are turned to such charming purposes, and very fairly deserve the title—about ten o'clock, when all the lights are twinkling through the trees on some cool night, and the soft sound of music floats to us. A more rational way of spending an evening could not be conceived; and if the Embankment were turned to some such purpose, or if the experiment were tried even in a small way, it would probably answer quite as well with the London public. Of course a grim political economy will interpose. The Board of Works, or some such body, will say that

such fooleries are no business of theirs. At most there will be "bedding out" of some gay flowers, with a great deal of iron railing and fencing.

Why are not the short cuts through the parks thrown open to vulgar cabs and omnibuses? In so republican a country as this, it seems the strangest and most invidious distinction that only "private carriages" should be tolerated. In Paris these plebeian conveyances boldly trundle through the Louvre, though it only saves them a length of a quarter of a mile. In fact, it is precisely analogous to the case of St. James's Palace, where there would be the short cut under the arch and by Stafford House, instead of going by Marlborough House. The parks would gain in animation by such an arrangement, and the public would be vastly inconvenienced.

This matter of the art education of the public might be attended to in many little matters. The London lamp-post, for example, is the dirtiest, ugliest object conceivable—sprawling, leaning over, unworthy even of a village. The Paris lamp-post is really a work of art, and though we might not afford to have our lamps of bronze, as in that fair city, we could have better models. Good models are no dearer than bad. Ugliness is not absolutely necessary to economy.

Finally, here is another suggestion to which the Post-Office is welcome. These local telegraphs, frequent deliveries, &c., are cumbersome and elaborately slow after all. Why not have a special messenger corps—light carts running every half-hour and calling at every post-office, with two or three postmen waiting their arrival at certain fixed points, who would start off and deliver the cards or letters, say within an hour from the most extreme points. We would soon come to know the beats of these flying cars and their feeders, and where we wanted specially rapid despatch, could employ them.

MISS PONSONBY'S COMPANION.

IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER VII. "FROM INFORMATION I RECEIVED."

FRANK TRESHAM had already breakfasted, and was now busy in his surgery preparatory to starting on a round, which, commencing at Summerdene and Bracken, would close about half-past four o'clock at Miss Ponsonby's. At many houses that day he was to come as the herald of Hope or

the precursor of Death. Here the cradle would follow him, there the hearse. In his breast were locked up as many family secrets as are contained in the heart of a priest, but they did not trouble the young doctor, whose mind, especially just then, had pleasant thoughts on which to feed, and never indulged in morbid retrospection.

The old kitchen clock had just, with a good deal of parade, defiantly struck ten, and Dandy, perfectly aware that there would very soon be a start, was dashing out every moment to the stable to bark at Beauty and hurry George. Tresham, standing behind the surgery counter, was making up a draught, now and then turning round to consult the long rows of labelled drawers behind him, like an organist about to try a new stop. Some leeches near him, in a dark bottle, wriggled and waved uneasily, dumbly craving for food and employment, and a cross light, from a window that looked into the garden, fell in a golden gleam on a full bottle of some sherry-coloured tincture that stood by the pestle and the huge mortar over which George spent many a toilsome hour. Death in many forms lurked in those rows of bottles drawn up in rank and file behind Tresham, at which a dusty skull, half hidden among a bush of dried herbs, like King Charles in the oak, grinned and glowered sarcastically from the top of an adjacent bookcase, which Frank had long ago degraded into a lumber cupboard.

All at once a door leading from the kitchen opened, and Lyddy appeared dark against the light like a figure in one of De Hooqe's pictures.

"That servant of Miss Ponsonby's," said the good old creature, "has just been here for some medicine. Missus not so well last night and this morning. The woman's going on to the bank for some money, and will call as she returns."

"Any news of the thief?"

"No, Mr. Frank; but she said in her way that the Lord had been very good, for nothing more had been lost. I don't know how much the woman would lose. I know I wouldn't trust her with twopence myself. Here's a book, sir, she brought for you."

"All right, Lyddy, I'll see about the medicine, and leave it here directed."

Tresham was puzzled and vexed at the news of Miss Ponsonby's being worse. "She fidgets herself ill," he thought. "I must reduce the sedatives, perhaps they hurt her; and yet I gave very little." Then

he opened the parcel reverentially. It was Aurora Leigh, which he had asked Lilly to lend him. He opened it and read the name of the owner written in the prettiest hand, and in violet-coloured ink. He kissed the name, which was foolish. As he did so, the door leading from the street opened quietly, and without any preliminary knock. It was a dull heavy morning, and Tresham could not see for a moment, in the darkness of that corner, who his visitor was. The next instant there emerged into the light the hard imperturbable face of Superintendent Humphries, who, walking up straight to the counter, and, placing his two hands on the edge of the great mortar, as if it were the edge of a dock, nodded grimly to the young doctor. He looked all round the surgery before he spoke, as if that was a precaution without which he never opened his mouth.

"Morning, sir," he said, as if afraid of committing himself.

"How d'ye do, Humphries? Anything more new about that ten pounds?"

"Just a little, sir; but better kept dark for the present. What I've come about touches the same concern, but indirectly. Thought it right to let you know; it might help us somehow."

"Are you after any one?"

"Well, not exactly; but don't you go and ask me questions that I can't very well answer. It stands in this way. You must know that I sometimes employ loafers and fellows that hang about the public-houses here, and no one takes notice of, to give me information. They're often better than our professional hands, I find. Well, one of these fellows came to me late last night, and told me he had seen that old servant of Miss Ponsonby's go into Derwent's and buy something. It mayn't mean anything, but we're always suspicious in a house where there has been a robbery. She was muffled up, the man told me, and that he shouldn't have known her if he hadn't followed her from Miss Ponsonby's. And what do you think she bought at Derwent's, as I've just ascertained?"

"Can't tell."

"Chlorodyne."

"Chlorodyne? Well? Perhaps she takes it, and doesn't want it known."

"Possibly. Yes; but the day after the robbery she bought another bottle at Jackson's."

"Perhaps the old lady and she both take it."

"Then I should know that, because it

would be easier then to have robbed her. That's all I have to say. I leave you to work out the idea. Morning, sir. She didn't take the money herself, but she knows who did, or I'm very much mistaken."

"These policemen," thought Tresham, "fancy everything suspicious, but I can't, for my life, see what an old maid-servant buying chlorodyne has to do with the affair."

About four o'clock of that same day, Superintendent Humphries cautiously lifted the latch of Miss Ponsonby's front gate, and entered with a suspicious and inquiring air. He lifted it as lightly as a gamekeeper lifts a spring-gun, and shut it as carefully as a gamekeeper lays down an open rat-trap. He was a burly man, and not adapted, even if shod with felt, for very velvet-footed ambuscades; but still it was astonishing, from habitual and long-studied precaution, how quietly he passed over the lozenge-shaped stones of the centre walk and up the cracked steps between the two old bay-trees, that seemed to draw back and tremulously contract themselves at his ominous approach. The spinster elms, too, tossed their heads as if signalling some coming danger to their humbler kinsfolk down below. All these trees and bushes, and the Job's-tears, too, and even the passion-flower on the wall of the house, with its unsuccessful little pumpkins, the superintendent eyed with suspicion and distrust, not unmingled with triumph. He seemed, as he looked up at the windows, to regard the house abstractedly as a large rat-trap, enclosing some victim on whom his relentless hand was about to close. Was the victim conscious of his approach? His grim wooden mouth was keeping the secret safe in prison. His eyes seemed to dim and darken, as if their owner turned back their light after the manner of dark lanterns, or as if they had been gas-burners turned down to the lowest and most economical minimum. The dull grey day suited such a visitor, who seemed to take a gloomy pleasure in his dismal employment. Outside that heavy black panelled entrance he stood like Care at Death's door, as he pulled down his frock-coat, buttoned his left glove, then knocked firmly and clearly, but not loud. That man would have tried to fire off a cannon quietly.

Mercy opened the door, but looked almost as if she had expected somebody else, and was disappointed. The fact was, Miss Ponsonby had been expecting her land-

lord, an upholsterer in the town, whom she had sent for to call and receive his rent. This was a ceremony of great solemnity, and not to be lightly performed. Lilly had obtained a short furlough till the ceremony had taken place. The preparatory business had so roused the old lady, and the matter of the robbery was so much on her mind, that she made no objection to instantly seeing Superintendent Humphries in her sanctum up-stairs, in which a fire had been recently lit preparatory to an audience with the deferential landlord.

The wood was still spitting and crackling as the superintendent entered the room, hat in hand, and eyed with a suspicious glance the black profiles over the mantelpiece, a harvest scene by Westall over the bureau, and two engravings of King George and Queen Charlotte the year of their marriage, that were hung on the wall that divided the room from that in which Miss Ponsonby slept. The bureau, as having been the receptacle of the lost ten-pound note, however, attracted his chief attention, and he looked at it close to see if it had a common or a patent lock. Then he thought if King George could only have spoken, how useful he would have been in the witness-box; and he got up and smelt at a scent-bottle on the mantelpiece to find out if it contained laudanum. Next he went to the windows to look out and see how far they were from the ground, and if there were a balcony or leads near, or any vine or ivy that could assist an adventurous thief. And at every look he nodded his head as if in answer to some preconceived opinion. Then he looked out again, and shook his head. He had just resumed his seat on the extreme edge of a chair near the door when Miss Ponsonby entered from her bedroom. She was very weak and exhausted, and coughed feebly as she took her seat by the fire and begged him also to be seated.

The superintendent did as she requested, and at the same time put his iron-bound hat under his chair as gently as if it contained explosive materials, and not merely that large red cotton handkerchief, the end of which hung over its brim. The old lady's sharp features contracted still more as she looked at him piercingly; then, after a moment's pause, she said:

"You have heard something about my ten pounds?"

The superintendent spoke in a low voice, and drew a line on the old, faded carpet with his stick. "I don't say that, ma'am;

but this I may say" (here he rose, shifted with great quickness and quietude to the door, opened it, looked out, and closed it again softly), "excuse me, ma'am, but in our profession we are obliged to be cautious."

"Don't beat about the bush, man. Say what you have got to say. Who stole my ten-pound note?"

But there was no hurrying or irritating Humphries. He resumed his track like an old Indian on the war trail. "It's not for me to say, ma'am. Time must show that. What I have to do now is to collect information sufficient to discover the guilty party. Felony is a serious matter, and we must make no mistake."

"So I see you mean to refuse to tell me anything, Mr. Humphries. Very well, I suppose you know your business. I can't compel you, but what I want to know of you and your men is, who stole my ten pounds."

"That's faster than we can go, ma'am; but something we can tell you which will astonish you. These things are very disagreeable to ladies and gents, but there comes a time when they must be told out. Some one from this house—I don't name names—has written two or three letters to a party of no great account at Gypsum: we've traced so far."

"Well, sir, I know no one here who corresponds with any person at Gypsum; still I cannot control my servants, nor do I know where all their friends reside."

"Writing letters, ma'am, is no great harm. I don't want to make it so; but when you get one of those letters in your hands—I am not going to say how—and find out that it has half a bank-note in it—I don't say it was your note, but it might be——"

Miss Ponsonby, startled at this surprising intelligence, leaned forward with the keenest interest. She was about to violently pull the bell for Mercy, when the superintendent stopped her.

"We must move very quietly in this affair. There must be no alarm given, or we shall lose our bird, and spoil all. You leave it to me, ma'am, and I'll bring it out right."

"But I must—I will—I'll not have thieves——"

Miss Ponsonby hardly knew what to say or do. A vague terror and distrust surrounded her, yet she still felt a certain reliance in this man, who seemed to see clearly through the darkness.

"You have lost nothing since that first note?" said the superintendent, making an entry in a small note-book.

"Nothing. I have five ten-pound notes now lying here on my desk that Mercy, my maid, brought me this morning from the bank. I left them in here with that door open that you see there between this room and my bedroom. No one could enter here without my hearing them. The notes are here untouched."

"You counted them when they arrived? I suppose you can trust your servant?"

"Perfectly. I have always found her entirely trustworthy. I would trust her with money untold. I not only counted the notes when they arrived, but I took their numbers."

"I'll take down the numbers, too, please," said the superintendent.

Miss Ponsonby read the numbers from a memorandum.

"But I'll just compare them," she said, "with the notes, to be sure they are right."

The superintendent took the memorandum and the old lady read the numbers—2465, 9743, 32——

Suddenly, as she took up the last note, she gave an hysterical scream, and dropped almost fainting into her chair. The fifth note was gone!

The superintendent snatched up the notes and counted them three times over, minutely examining each.

"No," he said, at last, "there are only four. This begins to look very ugly."

"Oh, save me from these thieves," she cried, "or I shall go mad. I'm surrounded by thieves. I'm betrayed by every one. I can trust no one. I must carry my money sewn in my gown, and even then, perhaps, they will murder me for it. What shall I do? What shall I do?" And the old lady sank in her chair, and rocked herself to and fro in the utter wretchedness of the moment. "What shall I do? What shall I do?" she kept murmuring, looking with blank eyes at the portrait of Queen Charlotte.

"I just want to see one thing," said the superintendent, going to the door, and examining the lock contemptuously. "Perhaps you are not aware that with a pair of pliers, or a small pair of pinchers, thieves can always open a locked door if the key is left in the inside. Be kind enough to lock me out, and you will see."

Miss Ponsonby mustered strength enough to obey the superintendent's instructions. But the lock was rusty, and the key did

not yield to the pliers. Humphries tapped quietly, confessed his defeat, and was readmitted. He did not say much about his failure, merely, "No, it was not done that way."

"If you'll take my advice, ma'am," he said, as he prepared to go, "you'll keep this very quiet. Mention it to no one, and we shall soon get our hands on the right person. There's one thing there is no harm in telling you before leaving, and that is, that it's either one of two persons; but it is not for me yet to be certain which. Good-night, ma'am, and pray keep very quiet, or we shall do no good. Tell them you don't feel very well, and I'd advise you to lock up the other notes. Good-night, ma'am. I can let myself out, thank you. I shall have to be here once or twice more, I dare say, and it is as well to learn the stairs. Mind what I tell you now. *It's either the young lady or the maid.*"

CHAPTER VIII. BY THE FIRELIGHT.

GEORGE had not an acute mind, nor had even Big Bookham furnished him with a very vast fund of experience; yet he had already begun to know when his master was going to call at Miss Ponsonby's, for he was always more particular about how Beauty was groomed, and how the harness looked, on those mornings. About master's own dress, too, there was a change perceptible even to George, who had courted in his time, and indeed had been engaged to a very respectable young woman, laundrymaid at Big Bookham, to use his own words, "six years come next Crampton fair." When, therefore, Beauty pulled up at Miss Ponsonby's gate a little before sunset on the day in question, George smiled grimly to himself as Mr. Tresham ordered him to drive home, and to mind that certain specified medicines were taken out in good time.

The young doctor looked very manly and stalwart as he stood at Beauty's head, fondling her as he gave George the orders. The clear blood that flowed in his veins and brightened his cheek, was freshened by the drive, and his eyes, clear as onyxes, were radiant with health. His broad chest, his shapely, active limbs, betokened strength that was redundant, yet without clumsiness, and he moved with the firm, brisk step of a man whose self-respect no adversity could daunt, and whose honest pride would not bend to mere wealth, even though it sat on a throne. As he ran up the old steps between the bay-trees, that

already seemed to him like friends, the spinster trees began to nod and gossip faster than ever, as at that moment Lilly, who was picking some passion-flowers from the plant that grew over the house, turned and saw the not unwelcome visitor. They met and shook hands, and his hand did not pass from hers so instantaneously perhaps as it might have done.

They walked together half-way up the garden path, hardly speaking. Then Lilly stopped at an aucuba, and smoothed one of the mottled leaves.

"This always seems to me so un-English a plant," she said. "It is very silly of me, I know, but somehow it always makes me think of mottled soap."

Tresham laughed as he smoothed the same leaf which Lilly had touched. "Woman's instinct is truer than wisdom," he said; "it is un-English, it is a distinguished foreigner—it comes from Japan. I can fancy odd people in coloured silks sitting beside it."

"And aren't these funny, too?" said Lilly, stopping and laughing at a bush of Job's-tears. "How pretty the little balls of snow are stuck all over. But what I love most is the Guelder-rose. Oh, isn't that charming?"

"May I tell you," said Tresham, stopping, and taking her hand unchidden, "what flower you always remind me of?"

"Yes, do. But don't say a sunflower or a tulip, because I can't bear them."

"No. You are like a white moss-rosebud, half open, on a June morning." He said this in a very soft, low voice. "As pure as beautiful, and as beautiful as pure."

"I'd rather be like a snow-drop. Only I'm too happy for a snow-drop. A snow-drop bends its head, and is always thinking of the dark cold ground from which it has escaped. But, look! Oh, what a beautiful, beautiful sunset!"

Frank turned to see. It was indeed beautiful. From the high ground of the upper garden they looked down on a valley flooded with a golden haze, in which a gable-ended house, about a mile off, floated like a Noah's Ark. Somehow or other no sunset had ever seemed so beautiful to Tresham before; but perhaps the slender figure by his side gave some value to the landscape. Then they walked together to the house. As Lilly opened the front door Mercy met them.

"If you please, Mr. Tresham," she said, "missus is very much engaged with a gentleman on business, and would be much

obliged if you would walk into the parlour for a few minutes."

"It's Mr. Blake, the landlord, I suppose, Mercy?" said Lilly. Mercy made no audible reply, but shut the door.

"How mysterious Mercy is," said Lilly. "Poor Mr. Blake is a little fat good-natured man; certainly by no means calculated to inspire awe."

Mercy did not bring the candles, and they sat by the firelight, in just such a flickering glow as that through which Tresham had first snatched his surreptitious glance at Lilly. Dandy, after walking round himself three times, as if he were winding himself up, lay down and pretended to doze.

"It is very foolish, I know," said Tresham, "but from some early association of ideas, derived from a wood drawing in an old Dutch Bible, I can never see a garden but I think of paradise. The Dutch artist, I remember, had divided Eden into little square borders, and there was a canal running through the middle of it."

Lilly laughed in her joyous, natural way.

"Adam was very fat and squab, and wore a burgomaster's dress, but what was most lamentable, the artist had left out Eve."

Lilly looked grave. She had an instinct of some revelation that she dreaded, yet longed for. She felt her cheek burn, she knew his eyes were fixed on her.

"It was just this time, and by just this sort of light," said Frank, reflectively, at the same time moving his chair nearer than was strictly necessary to Lilly's, "that I first saw you." As if unconsciously his hand had clasped Lilly's. She did not resist the annexation.

"Yes, I look best," said Lilly, in a low, soft voice, "when you can't see me clearly."

"No, you look best in the sunshine, which seems your proper element. Shall I tell you what I stole that day?"

"Stole? Oh, you didn't steal! What?"

"Well, not Miss Ponsonby's ten-pound note. Only some violets I found on the carpet."

Lilly made no reply, but looked again at the fire. She dared not glance at Tresham, nor did she draw away her hand. She could not, indeed, he held it so fast. Another moment, though she saw no movement, and his strong arm was round her, his lips were pressed to hers.

"Lilly, I can't keep it in my heart any longer," he said. "I love you more than all the world. Ever since I saw you that

evening my life seems to have moved in a world of glory and delight. Lilly, you do love me?"

The answer Lilly gave was an eloquent one, though she uttered no word. Her lips seemed to nestle on Frank's, and at the same moment a drop of warm rain as from some unseen cloud fell on his cheek.

"Why, darling," he said, with the tenderness of a woman, yet with all the proud strength of his own brave, frank manner—"why, my own darling, you're crying."

"It is for joy, then," Lilly said, passing her hand fondly through Frank's wavy brown hair.

"You don't love me?" he said, kissing her brow and eyes.

"Yes, Frank, I do," murmured Lilly, and pressed her cheek against his with all the tender confidence of innocence and love.

The tramp of heavy feet descending the stairs roused them from their delicious dream. The heavy feet passed the parlour, and lingered a moment at the front door, which slammed in a quick sort of way after the mysterious person. Tresham rose, and looked out, but it had grown almost too dark now to distinguish the figure of the visitor.

"I don't think it is Mr. Blake, Lilly," he said; "it is a taller man."

They little knew what evil the visit of that dim figure receding into the darkness portended.

A minute or two afterwards the door opened, and Mercy presented herself. She spoke in her usual suffering voice, and with an odious twang peculiar to herself.

"Missus, Miss Lilly," she said, "will be glad to see you for a minute or two before Mr. Tresham comes up. Missus has got some letter, miss, I think, to show you; blessed tidings, as I believe."

Mercy's malign eyes had already gained some inkling that Frank and Lilly were lovers, and she rejoiced at it, because the hope of soon blasting Lilly's happiness had long lurked in her heart, and she now tasted the delight of suddenly discovering that if what she had just set afoot worked well, she could at one stroke make two persons miserable instead of one.

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