

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## THE ROSE AND THE KEY.

CHAPTER XXXI. A LETTER.

THE invalid came slowly in now, and the little party, roared for by the gong, as I said, went away together to luncheon very merrily.

When this sociable meal was ended, Maximilla said to Maud, as they were going through the door, side by side:

"Some letters have come here from the Hermitage, and one among them that concerns you. Come up to my room with me, and we can read it."

"Who is it from?" asks Maud, with excusable impatience.

"You shall see when we get up-stairs—come."

"But what is it about?"

"You."

And the agile old lady ran up the stairs before her, laughing.

"Come in and shut the door," says Miss Max, as Maud reached the threshold; "bolt the door; it is no harm. Come here, to this window, and nobody can hear."

She recollected the dressing-room door, and turning the key in it, rejoined Maud, whose curiosity was a good deal piqued by these precautions.

"Well, who is it from?" said Miss Max, with a provoking smile, as she raised it by the corner.

"If you don't tell me this moment, I'll push you into your chair, and take it by force."

"Well, what do you say to Mr. Marston? I don't know a more exemplary lover; the letter is from him. You shall hear," answered Miss Max, as she opened it, and adjusted her glasses, smiling all the time a little mysteriously.

Maud looked grave, and a brilliant colour dyed her cheeks.

"Listen," said Maximilla, very unnecessarily, and began.

"DEAR MISS MEDWYN,—You have been so extremely kind to me that I venture to write a very short note, which I can no longer forbear, although I scarcely know myself what it is going to be. Miss Maud Guendoline, as I still call her, although she told me that I still have to learn her surname, imposed a command upon me, when taking my leave on that happy and melancholy Sunday evening, which I can never forget, a command which I need hardly assure you I have implicitly obeyed. I am, therefore, as entirely in the dark as ever respecting all I most ardently long to hear. Every day that passes makes me long more intensely for the hour when I may again see that one human face which has enthralled me, which alone of all others has ever interested me—"

"Mine, of course," suggested Miss Max, raising her eyes for a moment. "Well:"

"—Has ever interested me. Are you aware that the ball at Wymering is to come off nearly a fortnight earlier this year than usual? I have been so miserable lest the change of time should in any way endanger the certainty of Miss Maud Guendoline's attendance at it. Your nature is so entirely kind, that I know you will pardon my entreating you to write two or three words, only to reassure me, and tell me my misgivings are groundless. Till I shall have heard from you that your beautiful friend is to be at Wymering on the evening of the ball, I cannot know an hour's quiet."

"Poor thing! I can't bear to keep him in suspense another hour," said Miss Max.

Maud said nothing—neither “Yes” nor “No,” not even “Read on.” Miss Max, however, went on diligently, thus:

“I am going, if you allow me, to make a confidence, and implore a great kindness. If you think you can do what I ask, and will kindly undertake it, I cannot describe to you how grateful I shall be. I am tortured with the idea that your young friend has undertaken too much. From some things she said, I fear that her life is but a dull and troubled one, beset with anxieties and embittered by conditions, for which she is utterly unfitted. You are our friend—hers and mine—and do, I implore, permit me to place at your disposal what will suffice to prevent this. You must not think me very coarse. I am only very miserable as often as I think of her troubles and vexations, and entreat you to intervene to prevent them, acting as if entirely from yourself, and on no account for another. If I were only assured that you would undertake this, I could wait with a lighter heart for the moment when I hope to meet her again. You can understand what I suffer, and how entirely I rely upon your kind secrecy, in the little commission I so earnestly implore of you to undertake.”

“And see how religiously I keep his secret!” said Miss Max. “But, poor fellow! doesn’t it do him honour? He thinks, at this moment, that you are living by the work of your fingers, and he not only lays his title and his title-deeds, with himself, at your feet, but he is miserable till he rescues you from the vexations of your supposed lot in life. I know very well that you think him an arrant fool. But I think him a hero—I know he’s a hero.”

“Did I say I thought him a fool?” said Maud. “I don’t know who is a fool and who is a sage in this world; and if he is a fool, I dare say I’m a greater one. I believe, Max, we are wise and foolish where we least suspect it. I think we are most foolish when we act entirely from our heads, and wisest when we act entirely from our feelings, provided they are good. I said so to Dr. Malkin, and he agreed; but, indeed, it is a dreadful life. I don’t know where there is happiness. I was thinking if I were really the poor girl he believes me, how wild with happiness all this would probably have made me.”

“It ought, as you are, to make you just as happy,” said Maximilla.

“It ought, perhaps, but it doesn’t. If I

were that poor girl, gratitude and his rank would make me like him.”

“And you don’t like him?”

“No, I don’t like him.”

“Well. How inexpressibly pig-headed! How ungrateful!” exclaimed Miss Max, almost with a gasp. “There is everything! Such kindness, and devotion, and self-sacrifice. I never heard of such a lover—and no possible objection!”

“I don’t like him. I mean I don’t love him.”

“And I suppose you won’t go to the ball?” said Miss Max, aghast.

“I will go to the ball.”

“Do you know, Maud, I’m almost sorry I ever saw that poor young man. I’m sorry I ever beheld his face. One thing I am certain of, we must not go on mystifying him. I’ll write to him instantly, and tell him everything. I’ll not let him suppose I take a pleasure in fooling him; I like him too well for that. I don’t think, in this selfish world, I ever met any one like him. I shall wash my hands of the whole business; and I’m very sorry I ever took any part in practising this unlucky trick upon him. I must seem so heartless!”

“If you write any such letter I’ll not go.”

“Not go to the ball!” cried Maximilla. “Well, certainly, that will seem good-natured—that is the climax!”

“I say to the ball I’ll not go if you write him any such letter,” said Maud.

“And you will go if I don’t?” persisted good-natured Miss Max.

“Certainly,” said Maud, decisively.

“I don’t see why he should be mystified,” said Maximilla, after a considerable pause.

“He shall be mystified as long as I like. It is the only way by which we can ever know anything of him. What could you have known of him now, if it had not been that he was all in the dark about us? No; you shall write to him to-day, if to-day it must be, and tell him, in whatever way you like to put it, that you can’t think of accepting his offer of money, as I and my mother have, one way or other, quite enough.”

And at this point these two wise ladies, looking in one another’s eyes, laughed a little, and then very heartily, and Miss Max said: “It is a great shame. I don’t know how we can ever look him in the face again when he discovers how we have been deceiving him!”

"You have much too mean an opinion of your impudence, Max. At all events, if we can't we can't, and so the acquaintance ends."

"Well? What more? What about your going to the ball?" says Maximilla.

"Say that we shall certainly be there—you and I. You know you must stay for it."

"I suppose I must."

"And, let me see, it will be on Thursday week?"

"Yes; I'll tell him all that."

"But wait a moment. I haven't done yet. The ball begins at ten exactly. Yes, ten, and you and I shall be in the gallery at nine precisely."

"In the gallery!"

"Yes, in the gallery," repeated Miss Maud.

"Why, my dear Maud, no one sits in the gallery but townspeople, and musicians' wives and dressmakers. I don't know I'm sure what on earth you can mean."

"You shall know, of course, everything I mean."

"And, you know, I object to our having any more of that masquerading—remember that."

"Perfectly; I'll do nothing but exactly what you like. I promise to do nothing unless you agree to it. You shall know all my plans—isn't that fair?"

"Yes; but what are they?"

"I have only a vague idea now; but we can talk them over when you have written your letter; recollect, in little more than half an hour the servant takes the letters to the post. But write on your own paper with the Hermitage at the top of the sheet, and—yes—if you can be very quick, I'll send the letter to the post-office at Dalworth; it will be better than the Roydon post-mark."

"Yes, Roydon might set him thinking, if you don't want to tell him now."

"No, nothing, except what I have said. I'll never see him more if you do—you promise me that?"

"Certainly, you shall read the letter when it is written."

"There now, you are a good girl, Max; I'll stay here for it; and I'll get Lexton to send a man riding to Dalworth."

"Now you mustn't talk, or make the least noise," said Miss Max, as she opened her desk. "I must not make a mistake."

And soon the scraping of her industrious pen was the only sound audible in the room.

In the mean time, Maud took Mr. Marston's letter to the window, and leaning lightly with her shoulder to the angle of the wall, she looked it over, and thought what a gentleman-like hand it was, and then she read and re-read it, and with a pretty glow in her cheeks, and her large eyes fired and saddened, she laid it on the table beside Maximilla, just as that romantic accomplice, having written the address on the envelope, turned round to place it in her hand.

"No, there isn't time to read it. Shut it up now, and let me have it. Lexton will put a stamp on it."

And with these words Maud kissed her with a fond little caress, and ran away with the note in her hand.

#### CHAPTER XXXII. DRIFTING.

AND now people begin to observe and whisper something strange. Now, in fact, begins an amazing infatuation. It shows itself in the cold, proud matron, Lady Vernon, at first covertly, afterwards with less disguise.

The young officer, Charles Vivian, is to make a stay of some weeks.

For a day or two Lady Vernon appears to take no particular interest in him. But gradually by the third day of his sojourn her manner, either disclosing a foregone liking, or indicating the growth of a new passion, changes.

It changes at first covertly; afterwards the signs that excite general comment show themselves with less disguise.

As Miss Max remarks to Maud, with a little pardonable exaggeration, "She can't take her eyes off him, she can hear no one else speak, while he is talking in the same room to any one. She is quite rapt up in him." As Miss Jones, Maud's maid, phrases it in her confidential talk, she is "light on him," meaning thereby, under the influence of a craze.

People who come in upon her solitude in her room, suddenly, say they find her agitated, and often in floods of tears. All agree that she has grown silent and absent, and seems never happy now but when she is near him.

It was one of those mysterious cases which honest Jack Falstaff would have accounted for by the hypothesis, "I'm bewitched with the rogue's company. If the rascal have not given me medicines to make me love him, I'll be hanged; it could not be else; I have drunk medicines."

I suppose she guarded her language very

carefully, and even her looks, in actual conversation with Captain Vivian, for that which appeared plain enough to other people seemed hidden from him. It was discussed in the servants' hall and in the housekeeper's room.

The unanimous opinion was that Captain Vivian had only to speak and that the new year would see him the chosen of the handsome widow and lord of Roydon Hall. People wondered, indeed, how he could be so stupid as not to see what was so plain to every one else. But they could not know how cautious Lady Vernon was in her actual conversation with him, not, by sign or word, to commit herself in the least degree.

It was clear enough, however, to the household of Roydon in what direction all this was tending, and a general agitation and uneasiness trembled through every region and articulation of that huge and, hitherto, comfortable body.

Such was the attitude of affairs when Maud Vernon, with her cousin Maximilla, drove over to the Grange to pay the Tinterns a visit.

Mr. Dawe had taken his departure after a day or two with a promise, made upon consideration, as one might conjecture, for undivulged reasons of his own, to return in less than a week.

The prominent brown eyes and furrowed, inflexible face removed, a sense of liberty seemed to visit Captain Vivian suddenly. His spirits improved, and he evidently began to enjoy Maud Vernon's society more happily. They took walks together; they talked over books; they compared notes about places they had visited, and she began to think that the intellectual resources of Roydon were improved, since the time when she used to insist that Dr. Malkin alone redeemed that region of the earth from Bœotian darkness.

"Take care, my dear, that our plaintive invalid doesn't turn out instead a very robust lover," said Miss Max, in one of her nocturnal conferences with Maud. "*There* will be a pretty comedy!"

"How can you like to make me uncomfortable?" said Maud.

"Upon my word, if I don't, I think Barbara will," replied Maximilla. "Don't you see how she is devoted to him?"

"I can't understand her. Sometimes I think she is, and sometimes I doubt it," said Miss Vernon.

"Well—yes. She is, perhaps, in a state of vacillation—a state of struggle; but she

thinks of nothing else, and, it seems to me, can scarcely hear, or even see, any other human being."

"You may be very sure I shan't allow him to make love to me," said Maud, with proper dignity.

"Unless you wish to come to pulling of caps with your mamma, for the entertainment of the rest of the world, you had better not, I think," answered Miss Max, with a laugh.

"But, I tell you, I should not permit it, and he never has made the slightest attempt to make love to me," repeated Maud, blushing.

"Well, it is rather a good imitation. But Barbara does not seem to see it—I don't think, indeed, she has had an opportunity—and if she's happy why should I interfere?" said Miss Max.

And so that little talk ended.

Coming out of church on Sunday, the three ladies from Roydon and Captain Vivian, who felt strong enough for one of Mr. Foljambe's sermons, and sat in the corner of the great Vernon pew, stood for a moment on the step of the side porch, while the carriage drove up to receive them. The grenadier footmen in blue and gold opened the door and let down the steps, and Lady Vernon, following Miss Max, stepped, lightly as a girl, into her carriage. The Tinterns, Mr., Mrs., and Miss, at the same moment emerged from the holy shadow under the stained and grooved gothic arch with a similar intent. Lady Vernon from the carriage bowed to them with her cold, haughty smile, which Mr. Tintern answered with his hat in his hand, high above his head in the ceremonious old fashion, and with a countenance beaming all over with manly servility.

The chocolate and gold liveries, standing at the flank, awaited the departure of the blue and gold to do their devoir by the more ponderous carriage of the humbler Grange family.

While Mr. and Mrs. Tintern made their smiling salutations, and answered the remark which Maximilla Medwyn called out to the effect that it was a charming day, Maud thought she remarked from pretty Ethel Tintern a quick and odd glance at Captain Vivian, who, not having been presented to the Tintern ladies, was industriously digging a tiny stalk of groundsel from a chink in the old worn step, at the flank of which he stood.

It was very natural that the young lady should steal that quick glance at the un-

observant stranger. It was the undefinable character of it that struck Maud.

There seemed neither curiosity nor recognition. It was momentary—a dark look, pained and shrunken. It was gone, quite, in a moment, and Ethel, as Maud with a hurried pressure of her hand was about to take her place in the carriage, said softly:

“You must come to see me to-morrow or next day. You owe us a visit, you know. Do.”

“I will, certainly,” promised Maud, smiling. And in a moment more she was in her place, and, followed by Captain Vivian, the door closed upon her; and the smiling faces and stately liveries whirled away over the gritty gravel of the church-yard road.

“This has been your first Sunday at church since your illness. It was rather longer than usual. Mr. Foljambe’s sermons don’t often exceed twenty minutes. I hope you are not doing too much?”

This question of Lady Vernon’s, and Captain Vivian’s polite disclaimer, were the only contributions toward conversation which fell from the little party as they drove home.

“Mr. Mapleson told me that mamma said she would have the main street of the village watered every Sunday, and she hasn’t given any order, I suppose, about it. See what a state we are in! Covered with dust. I must ask Mr. Mapleson why,” said Maud to Miss Max in the hall.

“Well, it is a bore,” she answered; “we can’t sit down in these things. Come up. I want to tell you I’ve just found a note on the table. No, it’s not from the person you think. I see you’re blushing.”

“Now, don’t be a goose,” said Maud.

“Although it’s not so bad a guess, as you shall hear when you come to my room. I told you, you remember, that my gossiping maid said that Captain Vivian sent two letters to the Grange; Captain Vivian’s man told her, but she could make out nothing more. She has not an idea to whom they were written. He does not know Miss Tintern nor Mrs. Tintern, and I don’t see what he could write to old Tintern about; but the note I have got is from such a charming creature, younger than Barbara, and a widow—Lady Mardykes. She is a sister of Mr. Marston’s, and she has, besides her place at Golden Friars, such a pretty place, about five-and-thirty or forty miles from this, and she is one of my very dearest friends. She asks

me to go and see her immediately, and I must introduce you. You will be charmed with her, and she, I know, with you.”

“Is there any chance of Mr. Marston’s being there? If there is, I certainly shan’t go,” said Maud.

“None in the world. He is to be with his father till Thursday, don’t you recollect, he tells us all about it in his letter, and on Friday he will be at the ball at Wymering. Suppose we go and see her to-morrow. Do you know I have been suspecting a little that Captain Vivian’s letter was to her. But she could not be such a fool as to throw herself away upon him.”

“Very well, then, let us take the carriage and go to the Grange to-morrow. So that’s agreed.”

In pursuance of this plan they did actually drive over to the Grange next day.

Artful Miss Max was rather anxious to induce Captain Vivian to accompany them. It would have amused her active mind to observe that gallant gentleman’s proceedings. But as if he suspected her design, he very adroitly, but politely, evaded the suggestion. So she and Maud went alone.

The Grange was a pretty house, a little later than the Tudor style. Driving up through the rather handsome grounds, they had hardly got a peep at the comfortable steep-gabled house, when Maud exclaims:

“There is Ethel—who is that with her?”

“Dear me! That is Lady Mardykes, I’m sure. I’m so glad to see her! They are looking at the flowers; suppose we get out.”

So down they got, and the ladies before the hall-door, among the flowers, looked up, and came towards them with smiles.

#### CHAPTER XXXIII. A WARNING.

A GREAT kissing ensued upon the grass, and a shaking of hands, and Maud was introduced to Lady Mardykes, whom she liked instantaneously.

A face that must have been very pretty, and was still interesting—gentle, gay, and frank—was before her. But she was much older than her brother: a daughter by an earlier marriage.

This lady evidently took a fancy to Maud, and when they had talked a little, and began to grow to know one another better, after a short conversation aside with Maximilla, during which Maud saw that good-natured old maid look once or twice at her, Lady Mardykes, coming over to her, began to talk to her again.

"I should have gone to Roydon to see Lady Vernon," she said, "only that I had doubts as to her liking it; and perhaps it is better to put it off to another time. There have been so many unlucky vexations, and I know she and papa don't visit, so you will understand why I don't go to see you at Roydon. But you must promise to come to me for a few weeks to Carsbrook. I shan't be going to Mardykes till next year, perhaps; I should rather have had you there. All about Golden Friars is so very beautiful. But I think you will say that Carsbrook is a pretty place, and if I can persuade Maximilla Medwyn to come to meet you, I'm sure you will find it pleasant. I'll consult with her as to how best to invite you."

Maud was very well pleased with this little plan; and now old Mr. Tintern came forth upon the grass, with his agreeable greetings and chilly smiles, and Maximilla and he began to talk, and their talk grew gradually, it seemed, a little earnest. And when the gong summoned them to luncheon, he seemed still a little thoughtful now and then during that repast.

They walked out again through the glass door after luncheon, and Mr. Tintern, in the same mood, accompanied them, and once more fell into talk with Miss Max.

Ethel Tintern was now beside Maud, and the two young ladies sat down upon a rustic seat among the flowers.

"We are forlorn damsels here; our gentlemen have all gone off to fish at Dalworth. Papa wanted Lady Mardykes and me to go in the carriage, and I am so glad now we did not. We should have missed you. Do you know I think we girls have much more resource than men. They won't entertain themselves as we do, and it is so hard to amuse them. You have a guest at present at Roydon?"

"Yes, Captain Vivian."

"Yes; and Miss Medwyn thinks he is a little taken with you?"

"She divides him between me and Lady Mardykes at present, and when you are acquainted, I dare say she'll give you a share."

Ethel laughed, and said suddenly:

"By-the-bye, I was so near forgetting the pyracanth! It is beginning to look rather passé; it is the very last, but she can judge pretty well what it must be when it is in its best looks."

So she got Miss Max to look at the flower, which she held up for her inspection in its glass, and there ensued an animated

bit of floral gossip, in which Mr. Tintern, who was skilled in flowers, and had won a few years since two or three prizes, one especially, which made a great noise, for his ranunculuses, took a leading part.

Then Mr. Tintern withdrew, and Miss Max, Lady Mardykes, and Mrs. Tintern talked together, and Ethel, alone once more with Maud Vernon, said, as if the long parenthesis counted for nothing:

"About that Captain Vivian—take my advice, and don't allow him to pay you the slightest attention."

"Really——"

"Yes," says Miss Tintern, who is cruelly plucking a white rose, petal by petal, asunder, and watching the process intently.

"Yes, but I assure you he hasn't," said Maud.

"Miss Medwyn thinks differently," said Miss Tintern, with gentle diligence continuing the process of discription.

"I don't perceive it, if he does," answered Maud. "But why do you warn me?" and she smiled a little curiously as she put her question.

"Because I know certain things about him, and he is aware that I do, that ought to prevent him. You mustn't repeat a word I say, mind. Does he seem to wish to avoid me?"

"Quite the contrary. He talks as if he should like so much to make your acquaintance."

"That I don't understand," said Ethel, plucking three or four leaves together from her dishevelled rose.

"I understood him to wish that I should take the first opportunity of introducing him."

"I should not like that at all," said Ethel, with a tone and look of marked annoyance, her eyes still watching the flower she was stripping leaf by leaf.

"Is it anything discreditable?" asked Maud.

"No, not that, certainly not, but it might easily become so. You see, I'm talking riddles, but, indeed, I can't help it. I can't say anything more at present than I have told you, and so much I had a right to say, and am very glad I have had an opportunity, and for the present, as I said, I can give you nothing but that, my earnest piece of advice. And take care of yourself, I counsel you, in this false, shabby, wicked world."

With these words, Ethel Tintern got up, and broke what remained of the rose between her fingers, and crumpled it up and

threw it away. She saw Miss Max walking quickly toward them, with the air of a chaperon in search of her charge, and she guessed that the hour had come for saying good-bye.

"My dear Maud, I had no idea how late it was," said Maximilla, before she reached them. "I'm so afraid we shall be late for our appointment with your mamma. It is twenty minutes past three now. Had not we better go?"

Maud was a little alarmed, for with her to be late for an appointment with her mother was a very serious matter indeed, so she consulted her watch, which, for a lady's timepiece, was a very fair one, being seldom more than twenty minutes wrong, either way, and finding there signs corroborative of Miss Max's calculations, "there was parting in hot haste," and time for little more than a hurried inquiry whether Ethel was going to the Wymering ball.

"Yes, she thought so; that is, if her papa went; her mamma was not well enough."

And so, kissing and good-byes, and a very friendly reminder from Lady Mardykes, who said she expected to be at home at Carsbrook in ten days, and that Maud would be sure to hear from her about that time.

And now they are whirling homeward, at the brilliant pace of the high-bred horses of Roydon, and Maud says to her companion:

"Ethel has just been warning me, for reasons she won't tell, against permitting Captain Vivian to pay me attentions. Not a very likely thing, but I'm sure she means it kindly, and she was really quite earnest, but she charged me not to tell it to mortal, so you must promise not to mention it."

So you see how well the secret was guarded.

"Upon my life, this Captain Vivian, invalid though he be, is beginning to grow into a very formidable sort of hero. Mr. Tintern was talking about him, and I said, just to try what he would say, that I thought Barbara had taken rather a fancy to him, and he took it up not at all jestingly, but very seriously indeed, and he told me, confidentially, that he had heard the same thing from another quarter, and that he believed it. So, my dear Maud, I rather think," continued Miss Max, who saw as far into millstones as most old ladies, "that we may connect Miss Ethel's warning with her father's curious information. Don't you see?"

"Upon my word, the situation grows tragical!" said Maud, with a laugh.

"It would be an unlucky business for Mr. Tintern, of course, if Barbara took it into her head to marry, because it might extinguish any chance, and you may be sure he thinks it a better one than it is, of his succeeding to a share of the Vernon property. Dear me, who are those?"

The exclamation and question were suggested by the emergence of Lady Vernon and Captain Vivian from the church-door of Roydon, which the carriage was now almost passing.

"Rehearsing the ceremony, I suppose," laughed Miss Max.

A footman was waiting outside, and the sexton followed the lady and gentleman out, and locked the old church-door.

Lady Vernon had been showing Captain Vivian the monument which he had seen but imperfectly the day before. Lady Vernon saw them, and bowed and smiled to Miss Max as they passed.

"I sometimes think Barbara is not looking very well—pale and tired. I don't know why she fags herself so miserably, I'm sure. But if I told her so, I should only have my head in my hand. There are some people, my dear, who hate advice, and, on the whole, do you know, I rather think they are right."

They were driving up the avenue by this time, and were soon in the court-yard.

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## HORSES AND HEDGES.

"ONE man may steal his neighbour's horse, while another may not look over the hedge." So the old proverb expresses that strange partiality of society which allows privileges to some, and forbids rights to others. No one knows how or why it is that social justice holds her balance so unevenly, and that denial and allowance are meted out with such startling want of uniformity. It seems as if the favouritism of nature and the goodwill of fate have more to do with the affairs of men than modern philosophy allows; and that some human souls come into the world labelled "with care," and go through life in consequence protected by all the unseen powers about us, and evilly entreated by none. It seems a little hard, though, on those who have not come into life so labelled, when they find themselves taken into custody, sharp and sudden, for looking over the hedge, when their neighbour there has

stolen *his* neighbour's horse, and is riding off in peace and perfect security. They meant no harm when they looked over the hedge; perhaps they might have broken the Tenth Commandment and have coveted, but that was the full extent to which their predatory designs were carried; yet they are punished as severely as if they had done the thing which it only seemed possible they were thinking of doing, while he who has consummated his offence goes on his way rewarded and rejoicing.

Do you know Loosefish? Then you know a man whose private life is one which, to put it mildly, would scarcely bear publicity and the light of day. I do not say that Loosefish is particularly respected; that he would be singled out as an arbiter of public morals, an authority on the delicate chivalry of finance, or that grave divines would consult with him as to the deepest sense of an obscure passage; still less would a man, if worldly wise to any appreciable extent, intrust him with negotiable securities or a lump sum in cash uncounted. But he gets on pretty well nevertheless; and if not singled out for peculiar public honour, yet receives his full share of that floating consideration which is general property; and society seems to have entered into a kind of conspiracy to shut its eyes to his flagrant misdeeds, and to keep a discreet silence on his more highly coloured foibles. Loosefish thus becomes an example—of a sorrowfully disastrous kind. If he could sail so near to the wind as he did in those acceptances of his, and yet keep his craft moderately trim, and bring her into port at last, why may not others do the same? So a silly youth, here and there, thinks he will imitate the great master, and fling to the winds all very careful distinction between strict honour and loose principle. But before he has had time to more than make a show of heaving his honesty overboard, the whole ship's crew sailing with him is at his heels, and no one louder than Loosefish himself. Reproached, reminded that he had done this and that far worse than anything the poor tyro in evil has attempted, Loosefish looks superb, and answers grandly, "Granted, my dear boy; but I was not caught, and you were."

So it all resolves itself into this: "I was not caught, and you were." This is the sum total of the difference between the victorious Loosefish and the beaten imitator; but the sum total tells us nothing of the working, nothing of the how and the why this difference is made; how it

comes to pass that the one was not pursued by the social police, who yet were cognizant of his evil deeds, and why the other was so unmercifully handled, for only the appearance of a minor misdemeanour. There are men now serving out their time as "Numbers," with cropped hair and in felon's dress, who have not acted half so dishonestly as Mr. So-and-So, who lives in a fine house, has footmen and horses, and gives dinners, to which the best in the land come gladly when they are invited. But Mr. So-and-So was labelled "with care," and accordingly his friends and relations took care of him; and the more they suspected him the more they agreed to stick close to him, so that the outside barbarians could see nothing; and the more interlaced the barriers they formed about him the greater the pressure put on each as to the necessity of keeping it up. For, you see, it became in a manner the interest of each and all to uphold Mr. So-and-So to the last. By their partisanship they had become, in a certain sense, implicated; and to have proved their friend a rogue after all these years would have been to have proved themselves the same, or fools—the complement of the first. But the poor forlorn wretch working now as a Number, with his hair cropped, had no such phalanx to defend him and throw dust in the eyes of society and the police. Fate left him to fight his own battle; and Fortune, the dainty jade, turned up her nose at him as not to her taste; wherefore, when he looked over the hedge into the field whence Mr. So-and-So had stolen that handsome horse of his, he was collared, handcuffed, and arraigned, and, finally, sent to pick oakum and work the mill, as the best means the law could devise for curing him of his dangerous propensities.

Mrs. Golightly moves in what is called the best society. At her house assemble wits, beauties, men of mark and women of mind, the rich and the learned, the pure and the thoughtful; though perhaps fewest of these last two. Yet, making all deductions needful, her society is good, and even choice, and none but the "unco guid," more pharisaical than correct, are unwilling to be on her visiting list. Mrs. Golightly, nevertheless, has her little histories; and what they are would not edify the world if told at full length. The world knows some part of them, and guesses at more; but it takes no notice. The soul which inhabits this special body has been labelled "with care;" consequently, Mrs.



Golightly is of those who may steal the horse in broad day, and not come to the dock for their deeds. Society makes itself blind in her favour, as in the case of Loosefish; and there is a tacit conspiracy all round to wink and not to see. She tries the faculty of winking pretty severely; there is no question about that; and the tighter the world shuts up its eyes the more glaring are the flags flaunted before its lids, immunity having the universal tendency of emboldening sinners.

What crime had Mrs. Tripper committed that an unkind fate should have thrown her into Mrs. Golightly's way? Little Mrs. Tripper was a silly little woman if you will, but hitherto she had been harmless. She had done no good in life, but she had done no harm; and though she had frittered away both time and powers, she had not put either to evil uses. In an unlucky hour, silly Mrs. Tripper made the acquaintance of favoured Mrs. Golightly, and forthwith resolved on imitation. She saw how her friend stole horses in broad daylight, and with absolute impunity; so she resolved to try her luck—at least, in looking over the hedge. But the social police was down on her. In the twinkling of an eye, in the space of a minute, before she had done more than merely look, she was taken into drawing-room custody, and marched off to Coventry, while Mrs. Golightly stabled her stolen studs, and drove then openly in the park. Was that justice, think you? Poor silly little Mrs. Tripper did not think so, when she was marched off to Coventry, for only the appearance of things—for only looking over the hedge; leaving her friend and bad example safe in the very Mecca of consideration, with a stable full of unrighteous teams!

Cases might be multiplied ad infinitum. The Misses Flasher, who go about with never a chaperon among them, and are always to be seen escorted by the handsomest officers of the set, yet who are asked everywhere, and will probably marry into the bosom of a dignitary's family; and the Misses Fastboy, who are all but cut, because they drove over to the picnic alone, having half a dozen young Cambridge men in tow; who can deny the patent proof that the one set of young hoydens has been sent into this life marked "with care," while the other set has been left to chance, which has made a bungle of her business, and landed them into a hopeless mess? The fact is, the world of human history seems to be regulated by much the

same laws as those which rule the world of matter. Some characters are like eggshells, and will not bear a rude touch; others are skins of parchment, which it would seem nothing can destroy; some are like garden flowers planted in favourable spots, cared for and protected; others like wayside weeds, which the straying cattle trample underfoot, and the first rough hand that wills may pluck and cast into the dust to perish. There is no such thing as impartiality in the judgments of men. The rule holds good for success as well as for immunity. You see some people do the most daring things, and yet they succeed. They paint the ugliest pictures, and they find critics to praise them and capitalists to buy; they write the most stupid books, and the world takes them down at a sitting, and wonders at their unfathomable learning; they set forth the wildest plays, and take the town by storm. But let others, not born to the possession of good fortune, attempt only half their audacity, in the same line, and they are forthwith made into mince-meat, and served up as a sacrifice to the infernal deities. No one need hope to understand why. All that can be said is, some men may steal a horse, but others may not look over the hedge; and some souls are sent into this great packing-house of life labelled "with care," and are consequently tenderly treated and gingerly handled; while others are just tumbled about anyhow, and come to grief and destruction by the way.

#### AN UNEXPECTED EXPOSTULATION.

It was late at night. The windows were curtained and the doors were closed. The shaded lamp cast a dim light about the room, and a not unpleasant circular glare upon my desk. I had been writing a good deal, and now and then dozing a little. I was gradually approaching that stage in prolonged toil when inclination for rest is apt to prevail over the attractions of effort. I stayed my hand and put down my pen. My eyes closed, and for a few minutes I lost consciousness. I was disturbed by the noise of some one coughing close by—a sharp, hacking cough. I looked up. A man—an entire stranger to me—was occupying an easy-chair placed over against my writing-table.

How he came there I don't know; but he *was* there. Not a ghost, of course. I

have no faith in such things. They have been time out of mind of great service to story-tellers, but even for fictional purposes I regard them now as rather exhausted and exploded contrivances. They have been brought on the scene too often; they have been decidedly overworked. Directly they are introduced one sees through them now; and the fact that one can do so, no longer occasions the awe, and chill, and thrill the story-teller had calculated upon producing. I agree with the man of science, who maintained that "ghosts proceed from the stomach"—a derivation clearly destructive of their claims to respect on the score of their romantic character.

Not a ghost, then, but a man simply—and yet of appearance sufficiently curious and exceptional, quite apart from the consideration that his presence in my study was most strange and unaccountable, to arouse my attention in regard to him, and to warrant my setting forth, as concisely as I may, some description of his personal peculiarities. For some minutes neither of us spoke. Meanwhile, I felt myself at liberty to study and scrutinise him very particularly.

What was most remarkable in his aspect was his expression of utter lassitude and exhaustion. His age could not readily be determined. There was certainly nothing suggestive of the freshness of youth about him; nor, on the other hand, did he manifest any marked symptoms of senility. His infirm and effete condition seemed less attributable to lapse of time than to some oppressive weight of care he had been compelled to sustain, or to his experience of some cruel measures of suffering. He was well dressed, but his clothes looked as though they had been made for a man of more substantial mould, and hung loosely about him. It might be that he had lost flesh and shrunk considerably since he had first assumed them. His features had undergone apparently that sharpening process to which prolonged ill-health subjects its victims. His nose, I noted, was peculiarly thin, angular, and projecting. The skin was drawn very tight across his bony and somewhat contracted forehead. From the wan-ness of his cheeks his mouth looked unduly large, and his teeth over prominent. His eyes were very lustreless, and had a tendency to roll about waywardly, and his heavy lids, a dull pink in colour, seemed with difficulty restrained from drooping and closing. His hair was long, straggling, dry, and dusty-looking. He had clearly

devoted little attention to its arrangement. His whole appearance betokened deficiency in vital and muscular power. Yet his presence was gentlemanly altogether, although it conveyed a suspicion that physical decline had possibly relaxed somewhat his regard for social rules and usages. When he spoke, his voice was weak and flat in tone, and produced with some exertion. He accompanied his speech with a nervous jerking of his limbs, a swaying of his body, and a tossing of his head, that were decidedly distressing to observe. He reminded me of that famous figure in the fantoccini performance, which on a sudden loosens itself, and falls in fragments about the scene. Conditioned as he evidently was, it seemed imprudent of him to venture upon much abruptness of gesture, or precipitate change of pose. There was no saying what might result from hasty action of this kind on his part. His laugh struck me as hollow, wild, and discordant in the extreme. There are some laughs which are very catching, so to speak, and on the instant provoke mirth in the auditor, sometimes even to quite an extravagant extent; other laughs, from their strained and artificial quality—I have often heard such upon the stage, when the actors are required to simulate a joy which seems hardly justified by the words they have to utter, or the situation in which they appear—are depressing almost to despair. Whenever my visitor laughed, he produced echoes within me of a strangely dismal and disturbing kind.

"So, you're at it again," he said, half interrogatively, and half by way of comment.

I admitted that I had been pursuing my ordinary vocation.

"I thought as much." And here he laughed in a way that is always described in novels as "bitterly," and I suppose can only be so described. At the same time I may say that I have never found the description quite adequate or satisfactory.

"Let me off easy this time," he continued, laughing distressingly.

"What is it you want?" I asked. He moved about uneasily in his chair.

"To be let alone," he said, presently. "Drop me. Forget me. Ignore me."

"But who are you?"

"You know. Gad, you ought to! Why can't you let me alone?"

"I really fail to understand," I observed.

"Yes, of course, that's part of the business. I was quite prepared for that."

"I should be happy, if I could, to oblige you in any way."

"No doubt. But you won't. I've lived long enough—I've suffered enough—to know that. Almost since books were published——"

"Since the discovery of printing?"

"No, not quite so long as that. I was let off rather cheaply at first. I had not been found out. My existence, perhaps, wasn't known then. But gradually they dropped on to me; and they've never ceased dropping on to me since."

"Who dropped on you?"

"You, and the whole kit of you."

"Really——"

"No—it isn't true, and you never heard of such a thing, and you can't believe it, and it's not your doing. I know all about that. But things have come to a precious pass at last."

"If you would kindly explain a little."

"I was gradually collared. They approached me at first in an insinuating, carrying sort of way. They were deferential and considerate. Oh, so considerate." I think he swore here, but I don't feel quite sure. "I was 'dear,' and 'gentle,' and 'polite.' I don't mind owning I was conciliated—flattered a bit. I stood still and listened. Quickly they got the halter round my neck, and I was in custody for the rest of my days. And what I have had to endure!"

"But who and what are you?" I demanded anew, and this time rather peremptorily, for I own I felt annoyed at the man's extraordinary demeanour.

"That's right, bully me. You're capable of it. I was prepared for that. I'm accustomed to that."

I rose from my chair and confronted him.

"Sit down," he said. "I could see quite enough of you before. I don't want a scene with you, Heaven knows. I'll tell you who I am, though you know very well already, or ought to know. I'm the General Reader. There! You've heard that name before?"

I admitted that the term "General Reader" was not unfamiliar to me.

"I should think not, indeed," he said, with one of his most unpleasant laughs. "Haven't I just cause of complaint?"

I observed, not too confidently, that I wasn't aware that he suffered under any particular grievance.

"Haven't you been all at me, persecuting and oppressing me this many a long year? At first, I admit, I was let off easy.

I said as much just now. Books weren't for me then. They were too good for me, or I wasn't good enough for them. It's much the same thing, I take it. But I was let off chiefly, I think, for a first-rate reason: I didn't know how to read! As soon as I did, you all made a dead set at me."

"Again, I ask, of whom are you speaking?"

"Authors, writers, compilers, adapters, copyists, essayists, historians, reviewers, journalists, penmen, reporters, novelists, dramatists." He paused for want of breath. "There," he resumed shortly, "is that list long enough for you?"

"But what have these people——"

"You're one of them! You know you are," he cried.

I disregarded the interruption. "How have they injured you?"

"How haven't they? Haven't they piled volume after volume upon me, until they've nearly flattened me out like an ironed shirt? Formerly they were content to address themselves for the most part to a class, a section of the community. Now they're all on to me, twenty—twenty?—a hundred at a time. You're a critic?"

I owned that I had sometimes written reviews. I left him, if he so chose, to dwell upon any discrepancy he might discern between his question and my reply. But he went on:

"And you've said of this book, 'Will give pleasure to the General Reader;' of that, 'Not above the capacity of the General Reader;' and of the other, 'Well suited to the requirements of the General Reader.'"

I admitted that I had sometimes availed myself of those and similar convenient phrases.

"Just so," he cried, with a spasmodic chuckle and a general twitching of his members. "I knew it. I said it. All the rubbish that's published is shot on to my head. Books are even made rubbishy on purpose now, with a view to pleasing me. Formerly, when a man wrote something that was especially deep, and sound, and valuable, and, of course, heavy, he knew at once it was no use bringing it to me—not a bit—that it was over my head, beyond my reach. With that state of things he was content. I need not say I was. But now he'll sprinkle his dull pages with bad jokes, chaff, flippancy, and vulgarity, and then you, and such as you, will urge the General Reader to buy it, and, what's worse, to read it. Everything now is supposed to suit

the General Reader. His maw is big enough to shove anything into. He has stomach for every known subject. He has the digestion of an ostrich. Now he's made to swallow paving-stones, and now he's surfeited with whipped syllabub. 'Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light.' That's a quotation, that is. Shakespeare, you know. Bless you, other folks can quote besides you." He surveyed me as he said this with an air, I thought, of quite superfluous significance.

"Twaddle, imbecility, tiresome lectures, trite moralising, common-places, balderdash, jargon, tom-foolery, slipslop, palaver, drivel; that's the diet you've been recommending me. Has it done me good? How do I look? Sick? Ill?"

"Sick and ill," I said.

"Can you wonder? How would you have liked it yourself? After all, you know I'm only human, a man and a brother—that kind of thing. Do I look dyspeptic?"

"You do," I answered, frankly.

"Is it surprising? Think what you and such as you have made me undergo."

"But what would you have me do in the future?"

"Spare me. Have some mercy, some little consideration. You've overdone it, indeed you have. The General Reader has his limits. His back will only bear a certain burden, and I declare just now, if you put another volume on it, though but a thin duodecimo, it will give way as sure as fate. Don't, then. He isn't learned, you know. He doesn't set up for being of much account; but, as a rule, the General Reader's willing, and can be fairly amused at a cheap rate. But don't overload him, don't over-drive him, and, above all, don't over-cudgel him. If you do, he'll only drop."

"I am willing," I said, "indeed, I am most anxious to serve you, and please you, if you'll only show me how."

"It's very simple. When you're going to write of this or that, that it's 'certain to entertain the General Reader,' just think if it really is so certain; ask yourself whether it entertained *you*, and then consider whether, in truth, it will entertain *him*. Think, also, how many other people may, at the same moment, be writing and recommending other things certain to entertain the General Reader. And the same with what's erudite, and valuable, and interesting. I've got to dread all those terms. They make me shiver and turn goose-flesh all over. Generally speaking, indeed, draw it mild, or I won't answer for the conse-

quences. Spare the General Reader; he hasn't deserved the treatment he has received at the hands of you and all your lot. Think of the life you've led me. Surely I deserve a little consideration."

He paused, and for the moment I felt myself unable to make him any reply. I mused over what he had been saying. It did occur to me that possibly there was some reason in his complaint, and that of late years there had been rather what he called "a dead set" made at the General Reader.

"But you skip a good deal, I suppose?" I said, presently.

"Skip? I should think I did. There had been an end of me long ago if I hadn't skipped. But even skipping's trying when you have to do too much of it. I've skipped sometimes until I'd hardly a breath left in my body, or strength in my fingers to turn a leaf. I owe much to skipping, I admit; but one can't be always skipping. I don't think I need trouble you any more just now," he added, after a minute's silence.

"You're very good," I said. "It is late."

"Only bear me in mind, and urge upon others to deal forbearingly with me in the future. Please use all your influence to achieve that result. Publish what I have told you if you like."

"Do you think it would entertain the General Reader?" I inquired.

He groaned. "You're hard upon me still," he said. "Upon my word you are. But—risk it. It may do some good. At the worst, it will be but one more drop in the cup. Yes, risk it."

I passed my hand across my tired eyes, thinking how I could give literary shape to his conversation. When I looked up he had gone. He had not even said good-night. His departure had been as noiseless and mysterious as his entry.

However, I have followed his counsel. I have risked it.

#### SQUIRE COE AND HIS DAUGHTERS.

[At a meeting of archaeologists at Bury St. Edmunds, a paper was read on Squire Coe, of West Row, in the county of Suffolk, who was in the habit, when he wanted a new wig, of having his daughters' hair cut to supply the material.]

FLAT is the shire of the southern folk,  
And its streams are sluggish, very,  
And they say you seldom hear a joke  
In the town of Saint Edmunds Bury;  
But that's a story too absurd  
To satisfy psychologists,  
And I guess that numerous jokes were heard  
In the days of archaeologists:  
When light was thrown on topics dark  
Beside the lazy river Larke.

A golden shire of plenteous corn,  
 Which in August tide grows yellow,  
 And for jolly squires that wheat is shorn  
 Who love old ale and mellow.  
 But from ancient habits, well men know,  
 In these times we vastly vary:  
 And where's Squire Coe of fair West Row  
 In the days of William and Mary;  
 The squire who with punch defied all care,  
 And who made a wig of his daughters' hair?  
 Lo there they sit, those maidens three,  
 A sight for all beholders,  
 With viol or book upon shapely knee,  
 Long locks over fair white shoulders:  
 No trace of grief in their mien appears,  
 And they look demurely merry,  
 Though they wait, alas! for the fatal shears  
 Which will come with the barber from Bury.  
 No fairer Anglians e'er drew breath  
 Than Judith, Anne, Elizabeth.  
 Ah, what would say the Suffolk girl,  
 In these days of advanced opinion,  
 If asked to surrender one bright curl  
 That veils her voluminous chignon?  
 What Suffolk squire, though never a hair  
 His sterile scalp would harbour,  
 To shear his daughters' tresses, dare  
 Send for the Bury barber?  
 'Tis well Squire Coe in the mould lies low,  
 Since this is a world he scarce would know.

### PROTECTIVE RESEMBLANCES.

THE conformity of tints which commonly exists between animals and the medium by which they are surrounded, has long been noticed by writers on natural history, but, until lately, has never been satisfactorily explained. It was generally imputed to the direct action of climate, soil, or food; but this explanation is contradicted by many well-known facts. Wild rabbits, for example, are of a greyish-brown colour, resembling the fern and other vegetation amongst which they live when not enjoying their underground protection; but these same rabbits, when domesticated, without any change of climate or food, rapidly vary into black or white races; and similar phenomena occur in pigeons, mice, &c.

Again, it is well known that the wings of several insects (as the walking-stick insect, the leaf insect, &c.) assume not only the tint of the bark or leaf on which they rest, but the exact rugosity of the former, or the outline and veining of the latter; and these similarities cannot be referred to climate or to food, since in many cases the insect does not feed on the substance which it resembles, and the genus may have a widely extended habitat. Two distinguished travellers and naturalists, Mr. Bates and Mr. Wallace (especially the latter), have recently attempted to show, with considerable success, that these problems may be solved by Darwin's Theory of Natural

Selection. In order to make the solution of these questions intelligible to the general reader, we must give a sketch of the leading phenomena that may be classed under the head of useful or protective resemblances. Our facts on this subject have been drawn mainly from Mr. Wallace's essay, *On Mimicry and other Protective Resemblances among Animals*, originally published in the *Westminster Review* for July, 1867, and reprinted in his *Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection*, 1870, but in part also from Mr. Bates's *Contributions to the Insect Fauna of the Amazon*, in the *Linnean Transactions* for 1862, and from a paper by Mr. Andrew Murray, *On the Disguises of Nature*, in the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* for January, 1860.

Nature provides for the concealment that is useful to many animals, and essential to some, by colouring them with such tints as may best serve them to escape from their enemies, or to entrap their prey. That desert animals are almost always desert-coloured is illustrated by the lion, which, when crouched upon the sand or among rocks and stones, must be almost invisible; by the camel, and by almost all species of antelopes. The desert birds are still more protected by the closer resemblance of their tints to the ground on which they live. The stonechats, the larks, the quails, the goat-suckers, and the grouse, which abound in the North African and Asiatic deserts, are all tinted and mottled so as closely to resemble the soil of the district they inhabit. The Reverend Dr. Tristram, in describing the ornithology of North Africa, observes, that in the Sahara a modification of colour which shall be assimilated to that of the surrounding country is absolutely necessary for the preservation of the animals of that region; and that, without exception, the upper plumage of every bird, the fur of all the smaller mammals, and the skin of every snake and lizard, is of one uniform isabel-line or sand colour.

Turning to the Arctic regions, we see the white colour for a similar reason preponderating in the animal kingdom, as affording the best concealment amidst snow-fields and ice-hummocks. The polar bear and the American polar hare, which never voluntarily leave the regions of ice and snow, are permanently white, while the Arctic fox, the Alpine hare, and the ermine, become white in the winter only, because in the regions to which they migrate in the summer that colour would be a source of danger rather than a means of protection.

Among Arctic birds, the snow-bunting, the jer-falcon, and the snowy owl, are doubtless in a great measure protected by their white colour. Perhaps the best example of protective colouring in birds is afforded by the ptarmigan, whose summer plumage exactly harmonises with the lichen-coloured stones among which it sits, while in winter, its white plumage renders its detection on the snow almost impossible. No sportsman can have failed to notice how closely the colour of the common hare, while resting in its form, resembles that of its surroundings; and how that of the grouse and of the partridge respectively resemble the tints of the heather and stubble in which they are sought after.

Nocturnal animals, as a rule, possess the least conspicuous colours, and must be quite invisible at times when white or very black forms would be readily perceived.

It is only in tropical forests, which never lose their foliage, that parrots and other birds of a green colour are to be found. A tint that would be elsewhere singularly conspicuous thus serves to conceal them amongst the dense leaves.

We have hitherto noticed merely the general conformity of colour between animals and their surroundings; cases, however, not very unfrequently occur in which there is a special adaptation. To this latter category belong the beautiful markings of the tiger, jaguar, and most other large cats. The vertical stripes, which are so conspicuous on the body of the tiger, closely assimilate with the vertical stems of the bamboo jungles in which that animal hides himself, and thus actually assist in concealing him from his victims. Excepting the lion, tiger, and puma (which has an ashy-brown uniform fur, nearly resembling the bark of the branches to which it is in the habit of closely adhering when waiting for its prey to pass underneath), all the other large cats have spotted skins, which tend to blend them with the background of the thick foliage amongst which they dwell. Amongst birds, we have numerous cases of a similar nature. The Duke of Argyll (in the *Reign of Law*, pp. 191, 192) points out that in the woodcock "one very peculiar colour is introduced into the plumage, which exactly corresponds with a particular stage in the decay of fallen leaves, namely, that in which the browns and yellows of the autumn rot away into the pale, ashy skeletons which lie in thousands under every wood in winter." In

snipes, as the same writer observes, there is a remarkable series of straw-coloured feathers running along the back and shoulders, which perfectly imitates the general effect of the bleached vegetable stalks, common on the ground which these birds frequent.

Reptiles present us with many similar illustrations of the same nature. The little green tree-frogs (which may be seen in a glass case in the Zoological Gardens), almost all the tropical tree-snakes, and the iguanas and other arboreal lizards, closely resemble the foliage by which they are surrounded; and there is a North American frog that so closely resembles, in tint, the lichen-covered walls and rocks on which it is found, that until it moves it is almost perfectly safe from detection. The crocodile and alligator, in floating passively down the muddy streams, are so like the trunks of trees, that the unwary animal drinking at the water's edge only recognises the deception when it is too late to avoid the danger.

Passing from Reptiles to Fishes, we may note how complete is the resemblance between the sandy bottom of the sea and the upper surface of the flounder or the skate. In our own temperate seas the fishes, although beautifully, are seldom gorgeously coloured, while the fishes swarming amongst the tropical coral reefs resemble in brilliancy of colouring the magnificent polyps amidst which they swim. Mr. Wallace directs attention to a very curious case of this kind of adaptation as occurring in the Sea-horses (*Hippocampus*) of Australia, "some of which bear long foliaceous appendages resembling seaweed, and are of a brilliant red colour. They live among seaweed of the same hue, so that when at rest they must be quite invisible." There are some slender green Pipe-fish in the aquarium of the Zoological Society, which, when they have attached themselves by their prehensile tails to some fixed object, float about, looking exactly like certain well-known water plants.

The Mollusca do not furnish any striking resemblances to particular objects, but if we turn to the Annulata we find the hue of the green, purple, and red seaweeds exactly reproduced in the Nemertians and other marine worms, while amongst the Hydrozoa or Polyps some of the Actiniæ afford good examples of special protective colouring. "I can hardly suggest," says Mr. Andrew Murray, "a more perfect one than the *Actinia troglodytes* in a sandy pool, its tentacles being so exactly marbled like a sandy bottom that the pool may be

paved with them all expanded, and yet the casual observer—ay, more, the attentive but uninstructed eye—never see one!" Mr. Brady (in *Nature*, vol. ii.) relates that while dredging in the Clyde he found numerous small star-fishes (*Ophicoma bellis*) which were embedded in masses of *Laminaria* roots, and the deep purpled colour of the two was so similar that, although he held in his hand a root containing half a dozen star-fishes, he could not detect a single one until they revealed themselves by their movements. It is in the sub-kingdom *Articulata* and the class *Insecta* that this principle is most fully and singularly developed.

We shall limit the selection of our illustrations to the three great orders of *Coleoptera* or beetles, *Orthoptera*, including soothsayers, walking-sticks, leaf insects, locusts, &c., and *Lepidoptera*, which include butterflies and moths. In the tropics there are, says Mr. Wallace, thousands of species of *Coleoptera*, which, during the day, rest upon the bark of dead or fallen trees, and which are delicately mottled with grey and brown tints, blending so completely with the usual colour of the bark that, at two or three feet distant, they are quite undistinguishable. Sometimes a species frequents only a single kind of tree; and in such cases there is usually an identity of colouring between the insect and the bark. Thus Mr. Bates found two species of long-horned beetles (*Onychocerus*) limited in this way to special kinds of trees growing on the banks of the Amazon, and so exactly resembling the bark in colour and rugosity, that until they moved they were absolutely invisible! Many species of *Cicindelidæ*, or tiger beetles, are similarly protected by their special colourings.

*Cicindela campestris*, the common tiger beetle, lives on grassy banks, and is of a beautiful deadened green colour, while *C. maritima*, which is found only on sandy sea-shores, is of a pale bronze yellow, almost identical in tint with the sand. In the Malay Islands Mr. Wallace found a very pale tiger beetle where the sand was coralline and nearly white; while wherever it was volcanic and black, a dark species of the same genus was sure to be found. "A large brown species was found only on dead leaves in forest paths, and one which was never seen except on the wet mud of salt marshes was of a glossy olive so exactly the colour of the mud as only to be distinguished when the sun shone by its shadow."

Mr. Bates found some beetles on the Amazon, which, from their hemispherical forms and pearly gold colour, resembled glittering dew-drops upon the leaves, and there are again the pill beetles (*Byrrhus pilula*), and many weevils, that, on the approach of danger, fold up their antennæ and legs so as completely to conceal them, counterfeit death, and take the form of a pellet of earth or stone, or sometimes even (as in *Chlamydæ*) of a bit of silver or copper ore, and roll off the leaf or other base on which they were resting.

Turning to the *Lepidoptera*, we find that the butterflies have all their bright colouring on the upper surfaces of all four wings, while the under surfaces are of a sombre, obscure tint; and this arrangement is obviously protective, because these insects always rest with the wings raised so as to conceal their dangerous beauty; while the moths, on the other hand, have their most marked colouring on the hind wings only, which, when they are at rest, are concealed by the dull tints of the upper wings. The most wonderful and undoubted case of protective resemblance in butterflies occurs in certain allied species of the genus *Kallima*, occurring on the Indian continent and the Malay archipelago. As this remarkable discovery was made by Mr. Wallace, we shall give the history of these insects nearly in his own words, although in an abbreviated form.

These butterflies are of a large size, and on their upper surface are adorned with a broad band of rich orange on a deep bluish ground. The under side is very variable in colour, but is always of some shade of ash, or brown, or ochre, resembling dead, dry, or decayed leaves. Between the apex of the upper wing on either side, which is prolonged into an acute point, and the end of the lower wing, which terminates in a short narrow tail, there runs a dark curved line, exactly representing the mid-rib of a leaf, and from this radiate on either side a few oblique lines resembling the lateral veins of a leaf. Not only have we here the exact imitation of the venation of a leaf, but we even find representations of leaves in every stage of decay, variously blotched, and mildewed, and pierced with holes, and, in many cases, sprinkled with powdery black dots arranged in patches and spots so like some of the minute fungi that grow on dead leaves, that it is impossible to avoid thinking, at first sight, that the butterflies themselves have been attacked by real fungi. As might have been assumed from

the analogy of many other cases, the habits of these butterflies are such as still further to aid their deceptive garb. Mr. Wallace, who has captured many of them in Sumatra, describes them as frequenting dry forests, and flying very swiftly. They were never seen to settle on a flower or a green leaf, but were often lost sight of in a mass of dead leaves. On such occasions they were generally searched for in vain, and were not perceived till they suddenly darted out from under the very eye of the observer, and again vanished some twenty yards or so further on. On a very few occasions the insect was detected in situ, and it was then noticed how completely it assimilates itself to the surrounding leaves. It sits on a nearly upright twig, the wings fitting closely back to back, and concealing the head and antennæ, which are retracted. The little tails, in which the hind wings terminate, represent the stalk of the leaf, which is kept in its place by the claws of the middle pair of feet, which are slender and inconspicuous. The irregular outline of the wings gives exactly the perspective effect of a shrivelled leaf. We have thus size, colour, form, markings, and habits all combining together to produce a disguise which may be regarded as absolutely perfect.

Turning from tropical butterflies to British moths, we may notice the striking harmony that exists between the colours of those that are on the wing in autumn and winter, and the prevailing tints of nature at these seasons. The Reverend J. Greene has shown that out of fifty-two species that fly in the autumn, when shades of yellow and brown prevail, no less than forty-two are of corresponding colours; while in the winter, when grey and silvery tints predominate, the moths, for the most part, are of corresponding hues. The well-known lappet moth and buff-tip moth, when at rest, respectively resemble in shape and colour a brown dry leaf, and the broken end of a lichen-covered branch; and the caterpillars of the Lepidoptera are also in many cases similarly protected. It is estimated that fully one-half of these caterpillars are green, and closely resemble the hue of the leaf on which they feed, and, as Mr. Andrew Murray has pointed out, when only a part of the body is exposed to view, the resemblance is often restricted to that part, as in the case of the larva of our commonest tiger beetle, which lives in a hole, from which its head and thorax alone protrude; these are of the same green

colour as the perfect insect, while the rest of the body is of the ordinary whitish-yellow grub tint. Other caterpillars are like little brown, dead twigs, and, to complete the deception, are embossed at intervals with lumps resembling buds. The same distinguished naturalist has also directed attention to the close resemblance of the ground colour of the larva of the peacock moth with that of the young buds of the heather on which it feeds, while the pink spots with which it is decorated correspond with the flowers and flower-buds.

It is, however, in the order Orthoptera that we find the most remarkable examples of special resemblance. "Many species of the genus Mantis," says the Duke of Argyll, "are wholly modelled in the form of vegetable growths. The legs are made to imitate leaf-stalks, the body is elongated and notched so as to simulate a twig; the segment of the shoulders is spread out and flattened in the likeness of a seed vessel, and the large wings are exact imitations of a full-blown leaf, with all its veins and skeleton complete, and all its colour and apparent texture." In this case the purpose of the resemblance is more that of capturing other insects, than of direct self-preservation from insectivorous birds; the Mantis\* being of a predacious nature, and armed with the most terrible hidden weapons. The insect sits apparently motionless on the leaf which it so closely resembles; but in reality it advances on its victim with a slow and insidious approach.

In that remarkable genus Phyllium (the leaf insect, or the walking-leaf), not only are "the wings perfect imitations of leaves in every detail, but the thorax and legs are flat, dilated, and leaf-like, so that when the living insect is resting among the foliage on which it feeds, the closest observation is

\* From their habit of sitting with their forelegs held up together as in an attitude of prayer, these insects are held in reverence amongst the Hottentots, who actually worship them and canonise as a special favourite of Heaven any one on whom they happen to alight. There is a monkish legend which tells us that St. Francis Xavier seeing a Mantis moving along in its solemn and devotional way, desired it to sing the praises of God; whereupon the insect carolled forth a fine canticle. Mouffet informs us that, "so divine a creature is this esteemed, that if a child ask the way to such a place, she will stretch out one of her feet and show him the right way, and seldom or never misse." Rösel, a practical entomologist, takes a very different view of their character. When several were confined together they fought desperately, their manœuvres very much resembling those of hussars fighting with sabres, the weapons being the forelegs. The females were generally victorious, and the battle usually terminated with a cannibal repast. The Chinese, aware of their pugnacious tendencies, keep them in little bamboo cages, and match them against each other.



often unable to distinguish between the animal and the vegetable." The genus *Phasma* (which includes the various species of "walking-stick" insects) is extremely imitative. Some species attain the length of a foot and the thickness of a man's finger, and in their colouring, form, rugosity, and the arrangement of the more projecting organs, are absolutely identical in appearance with the dead sticks which are found in abundance in the forests which these insects frequent. The Duke of Argyll refers to a specimen in the British Museum, in which the wings are covered with spots which exactly imitate the appearance of a larva-eaten leaf; and Mr. Wallace obtained one in Borneo which "was covered over with foliaceous excrescences of a clear olive-green colour, so as exactly to resemble a stick grown over by a creeping moss."

We have adduced, in the preceding pages, sufficient examples of the importance of colouring, and, in many cases, of form, as a protection to animals of almost every class. The protective agency varies, as we have seen, in degree, from the mere absence of conspicuous colour, as in Arctic and tropical animals, to such perfect resemblances to inorganic or vegetable structures, as to give its possessor the power of rendering itself invisible, as in the case of the *Mantis*, *Phyllium*, and *Phasma*.

We have now to consider how these wonderful resemblances have been accomplished, and here we prefer adopting the views of Mr. Wallace to those of any of the other naturalists who have taken part in this discussion. The first point that strikes us is the extreme rarity of white colouring in the mammals and birds of the temperate and tropical zones in a state of nature. Except in the Arctic and Alpine regions, where white is a protective colour, there is not a white land bird or quadruped in Europe; yet, as was mentioned in an early part of this article, many animals and birds (notably cats, rabbits, mice, fowls, and pigeons) when domesticated, and therefore removed from "the struggle for existence," almost immediately give origin to white varieties. In a state of nature white varieties occasionally present themselves; white blackbirds, starlings, and crows, for example, are not very rare, but their conspicuous colour soon renders them a prey to other animals, and the variety is not perpetuated. There is, indeed, no reason for supposing that white offspring are not as common in a state of nature as under domestication; but those whose colour is

the fittest for their position in life will alone survive. On the other hand, if an animal spreads from a temperate into an Arctic district, the conditions are reversed, and the white varieties will have the advantage, while their brown companions will speedily succumb.

That slight amount of variation in every species which, if we observe at all, we are apt to regard as accidental and unworthy of notice is (to use the words of Mr. Wallace), "the foundation of all those wonderful and harmonious resemblances which play such an important part in the economy of nature." Rapid multiplication, incessant slight variation, continued for an almost unlimited period of time, and "survival of the fittest," are the laws which have produced all the cases of protective resemblances that have been noticed in these pages.

## PLOGARRIAN.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

THE little town of Audierne is situated in the arrondissement of Quimper, which is the westernmost portion of the department of Finisterre, itself comprising the western part of the ancient province of Brittany, and, indeed, the land furthest west of all the realm of France, as its name, *Finis terræ*, is intended to indicate. Beyond that *finis terræ*, the great Atlantic rolls its waves against the rock-bound coast in an unbroken sweep.

Twenty years ago the town of Audierne was set down in the gazetteers and returns as possessing a population of one thousand souls. But any one of these thousand would have been much offended with any stranger, who should have styled their abode by any other appellation than that of *ville*, and the maps duly bore out their pretensions by the size of the letters used to indicate its position. Now, indeed, the number of its inhabitants has much increased. The sardine fishery, and especially the business of curing that popular fish, has assumed larger dimensions. A number of new houses, built in new lines of streets, cheap, mean, and ugly, have added to the statistical importance of the place, but have sadly impaired its old picturesque appearance.

Whether called town or village, Audierne was a very pretty spot twenty years ago. Nestling among thick trees by the side of its little stream, and just at the point where that stream swells to an estuary, which falls

into the wide bay of Audierne to the southwards, it unites in a special degree the beauties of inland and of coast scenery. The bay of Audierne is formed by a long, low-lying tract of well-wooded coast, receding in a perfect segment of a circle, between two remarkable and celebrated headlands, that of the Pointe du Raz to the northwards, and that of the Pointe de Penmarch to the southwards. The remarkable nature of these two headlands, stretching far out into the Atlantic, like huge buttresses destined to protect the land against the tremendous battering of the Western Ocean, is sufficient to strike the most careless eye. The coast rises in them to a vast height, and is composed of granite rocks of the boldest and wildest character. The lighthouse on the Pointe du Raz stands three hundred feet above the level of the sea, and in heavy weather the waves break over it. The celebrity of these two points is to be found in all the long series of Breton story, and song, and fable from the earliest days to the present time. The Pointe du Raz is the most western land of France, stretching much further in that direction into the Atlantic than the southern horn of the bay formed by the Pointe de Penmarch. And hence the climate of Audierne and its bay, protected from the north, is much softer and milder than that of other districts in its immediate neighbourhood.

At a little distance from the town of Audierne to the south-east, so as to be situated about a mile from the coast, on the gently sloping curve of the bay, facing a little to the west of south, stands the château of Plogarrian.

There, in their old ancestral château, dwelt, shortly after the beginning of this century, two brothers named De Kergonnec—Eugène and Gregoire. In contradiction to the more usual practice in French families, the elder, Eugène—the elder by little more than a year—had at an early age been sent away from home, while the younger, Gregoire, had passed his life almost entirely in Brittany, and mainly at Plogarrian. This reversal of the ordinary practice, however, had not been caused by any intention on the part of their father to depose his eldest son from his rights and position of heirship to the family possessions in favour of the younger, but by the dissimilar tastes and dispositions of the two boys. Eugène was frail and delicate of constitution, town-like in his tastes, and bookish in his habits. Gregoire, already at fourteen a head taller than his elder brother,

was a young Hercules, utterly averse from all studious pursuits, who passed the greater portion of his life out of doors, in the forests, or on the coasts of his native province, and wished and cared for no other life. Both the brothers, therefore, were equally delighted when it was decided that Eugène should go to Paris to reside in the family of a physician, the brother-in-law of his father, where he could have the medical superintendence which his constitution rendered desirable, and could at the same time profit by the educational facilities of the capital, while Gregoire was to remain at home, and live the life that he loved. What was to be Gregoire's ultimate destination and lot in life does not seem to have been made the subject of much forethought.

The boys were about fourteen and fifteen when this arrangement was made; and matters continued at Plogarrian much as the arrangement left them for the next ten years. Letters came from time to time from Eugène, representing himself as improving in health, contented with the life he was leading, and prosecuting sundry branches of study with success. An occasional letter from the physician brother-in-law confirmed these accounts.

At Plogarrian, the ten years appeared to slip away without bringing with them many eventful changes. One change, indeed, had taken place within a year after Eugène's departure for Paris—his mother, Madame de Kergonnec, died. She had long been an invalid, and had not seemed to count for much in any way in the family. Nevertheless, as often may be observed in similar cases, her removal did make a difference, and left the way open, as one may say, for a state of things in the old château, which her continued life might have prevented, or at least modified. A certain disorder and looseness in the mode of life at the château, to use no stronger word, seemed gradually to be introduced; and these characteristics became more marked as the old man sunk gradually into imbecility, and Gregoire became a young man. The elder De Kergonnec had for several years, beginning probably from the time when his wife's health no longer enabled her to mix with the world, seen but little society save two or three neighbouring parish priests, the doctor, and the mayor of Audierne. But gradually the priests and the mayor left off frequenting the château. The young man could not be expected to live without society of any kind; and as the old man became more

and more incapable of governing, and his son became more and more master of himself and of the château, guests might very frequently be found there, who would have seemed of evil augury to any well-wisher to the family. It was not that the disordered life which has been spoken of was of a kind that affected the De Kergonnec finances. The old man was still capable of keeping the same tight hand over the purse-strings, that he had ever been wont to hold. Nor was reckless expenditure any characteristic of Gregoire de Kergonnec. He was too genuine a Breton for that! The occasional suppers and drinking bouts, which made merry times for his acquaintances of the woodland and the seaboard, were not costly in their nature.

The visits to the château of the neighbouring clergy and of the mayor of Audierne had gradually ceased, as has been said. But those of the doctor were continued, partly, no doubt, because the failing health of old De Kergonnec required them, but partly, also, as is probable, because Monsieur Corseul himself—that was the doctor's name—was not altogether free from tastes that made the life at the château not disagreeable to him. Nevertheless, there was reason for believing—at least the Audierne gossips thought so—that there was yet another motive which induced Monsieur Corseul to seek rather than to avoid the intimacy of young De Kergonnec. Corseul was a widower, with one very pretty portionless daughter. He was also a medical man, who had known Eugène de Kergonnec from his birth upwards; perhaps had known more of his life at Paris than anybody else at Plogarrian or at Audierne.

The gossips of Audierne, who were always engaged in that favourite pastime of "putting two and two together," as they called it, did put these facts together, and looked into each other's eyes with significant smiles, and said, "Ahem!" as they did so. There were some other facts, too, to be added by the careful collectors of such to the above list. Pretty Barbe Corseul had never been seen at the château, it is true. Under all the circumstances of the life and family there in those days, she could hardly have been so without loss of credit. But Gregoire de Kergonnec was very often to be seen at the door of the doctor's modest home in Audierne. And what was the attraction that drew him there? "Hein?"

The gossips, it may be said at once, were perfectly correct in the conclusions they drew from the above premises. Monsieur le Docteur Corseul had conceived the idea that, perhaps, in any case, at all events in the case, which he considered more or less likely, of Gregoire de Kergonnec inheriting the family property, that young man would be a very desirable match for his portionless daughter. The pretty Barbe was quite as ready, as a well-regulated French girl always is, to accede to her father's wishes and schemes in the matter. And Gregoire de Kergonnec, then about twenty-four years old, had been thoroughly fascinated by the smiles of by far the most lovely girl it had ever been his fortune to see.

Matters stood thus at Plogarrian and at Audierne, when, one fine morning, about ten years after the departure of Eugène de Kergonnec for Paris, there came a letter from him to his father, demanding in due form the old man's consent to his eldest son's marriage. The lady was stated to be a French West Indian, possessed of considerable property, as well as all sorts of other attractions and excellences. Another letter came also from the brother-in-law physician, fully confirming all that Eugène had written, and expressing his own complete approval of the match. Of course there was no reason for refusing the consent asked. It was very readily given, and the long absent heir was urged to bring his wife to the home of his fathers, before it should be too late for him to receive his father's blessing.

Very shortly after the arrival of this news, and the despatch of the answer to it, beautiful Barbe Corseul was sent to pay a long promised visit to an aunt at Brest; and the Audierne public began putting two and two together harder than ever, and finding very little difficulty in discovering what sum resulted from the process. People told each other that le père Corseul was a vieux malin, who, though he might be somewhat too devout a worshipper of la dive bouteille, knew perfectly well what he was about, and might be quite safely trusted to manage his own affairs.

Nevertheless, those who supposed, if any such there were, that Corseul had definitively abandoned all idea of seeing his pretty Barbe châtelaine of Plogarrian, did wrong to the doctor's Breton pertinacity. But it was necessary not to be too precipitate. All was not over. But assuredly the marriage of Eugène was a severe blow to his hopes; and, as it was likely enough

that Gregoire de Kergonnec might not take exactly the same view of the matter as his intended father-in-law, it was as well in the meanwhile and for the present that Barbe should be at a distance.

Very shortly, the marriage having been celebrated in due course at Paris, Eugène de Kergonnec brought his wife home, and the first sight of the married couple raised Corseul's hopes cent per cent. The young Madame de Kergonnec was very evidently an even yet frailer plant than her husband had been, and—to the shrewd and searching eye of old Corseul—yet was. She was very pretty; just one of those delicate and fragile creatures, who look as if transplantation from their own native sunny land to such a climate as that of Paris, to say nothing of the ruder air of Brittany, must be fatal to them. Then the change from all the carefully devised luxury of Paris to such a residence as the old château of Plogarrian, was not calculated to act favourably on the morale, any more than on the physique of the delicate young wife. All this Corseul carefully noticed, and pointed out to Gregoire de Kergonnec, while, at the same time, gradually opening his mind to the fact that, however great and desirable an honour it would be for him to give his daughter in marriage to a De Kergonnec of Plogarrian, it was by no means the same thing—indeed, could not in any way be reconciled to his notions of his duty as a father—to give her to any De Kergonnec who was not of Plogarrian.

Gregoire stormed, and was very violent, for he was not a patient or gentle man under any circumstances, or one at all accustomed to be balked of that which he desired; and he had never desired anything one-tenth part so eagerly as he desired to have Barbe Corseul for his wife.

The doctor strove to quiet him by pointing out the many grounds for thinking that it was probable enough that his wish might yet be gratified. In truth, neither of the young married couple looked at all as if they were likely to stand very long in the way of anybody. Eugène de Kergonnec might, as Corseul observed, have seemed to improve in health while he was a growing lad. But all he could say was, that he did not look as if he had two months' life in him. While as for that poor scared-looking pale slip of a creature, with about as much backbone in her as a boiled asparagus—!

Eugène, too, seemed struck and shocked by the unfitness of the place to which he

had brought his wife, to be the home of so delicately nurtured a creature. Partly, no doubt, his recollections of the old place had misled him. The home which had seemed not only delightful, but grand and stately to his boyish mind, and eyes which had never seen any other part of earth's surface than his native arrondissement, appeared in a very different light to the young man, a resident in Paris of ten years' standing. Much of his disappointment was due to this cause. But it was also true that the place itself was changed for the worse. It could not be said to be dilapidated; but all the air of well-ordered home comfort, which had not been wanting in his mother's time, was gone. The sordid mode of life, which had of late years prevailed at Plogarrian, seemed, by some of those magic influences, which certainly do impart an expression, and, as one may say, a physiognomy to the homes of men, to have vulgarised and changed the appearance of the place. What had seemed venerable in its simplicity had come to look mean and shabby. What had appeared home-like, now seemed to be slovenly and sordid.

The winds, too, surely were more bitter than they used to be ten years ago, and the fogs colder and more frequent! No! Plogarrian would never do for Léontine, and after a decently long visit to his father, he would take her back again to Paris.

Corseul told him that it was an exceptional season; that the cold and the fogs were greater than usual. But he heard the short cough that had interrupted Eugène as he was speaking, and marked the shiver that ran through him, as he drew his cloak closer round his narrow shoulders, and felt a considerable assurance that the old Breton home would have a Breton mistress yet.

Eugène had fully made up his mind to get back to Paris as soon as he could. But his father had for some little time past been declining very perceptibly. And when the time came that he had fixed for his departure from Plogarrian, hoping to get away before the first storms of winter should beat upon that bleak coast, the old man was sinking so rapidly, that a regard for common decency made it impossible for his son to leave him till all should be over. Old De Kergonnec lingered yet a week or ten days, and then died. Of course it was necessary to wait for the funeral. And before that was over, Madame de Kergonnec was too unwell to be in a condition to travel.

Corseul, however, was not upon this

occasion as much reassured as to the value of his own hopes and his daughter's prospects as when he had first scanned Madame de Kergonnet with a professional eye. It was, indeed, quite manifest that she was in no condition to travel. But a very short interview with his patient sufficed to convince the doctor, that the cause of her present illness was likely to place a far more fatal obstacle between him and the realisation of his plans and hopes, than even her own life or that of her frail husband.

The young wife was enceinte, and if the child should be a boy—farewell to all hope of seeing his Barbe mistress of Plogarrian.

Gregoire de Kergonnet was not a pleasant man to look upon when Corseul, after having duly congratulated Eugène on the coming event, communicated the news to him. The black scowl that came like a thunder-cloud over his brow, and the hard set look of hatred and determination which seemed to harden his jaw and lip into the semblance of adamant, revealed the existence in his heart of a more dangerous class of passions than the doctor had ever credited him with.

Corseul's eye fell beneath the baleful expression of the young man's face; and he turned away to get himself out of the room as quickly as he might. But Gregoire, rudely taking the door from his hand, and violently closing it, while, putting his back against it, turned to face his companion, and said, grinding the words with slow and concentrated vehemence between the closed teeth of his powerful square jaw: "Mark this, doctor! I do not want to put an end to the life of anybody, not even to such puny good-for-nothing lives as those of Eugène and his sick ghost of a wife—not for the sake of house, or land, or money. But, mark you, I mean to have Barbe Corseul for my wife. If you did not mean me to have her, you should not have led me to hope it. Give her to me, and I shall be as harmless a man as any in Finisterre. But if you make my having her dependent on the lives of any of these people—look you to it! Il y aura des malheurs!"

"Pooh, pooh!" said Corseul: "don't talk in that manner. You don't mean it, and I won't listen to it. There, I must be going."

"Will you give me Barbe for my wife, whether or no?" said Gregoire, glaring on him.

"What, now—out of hand! Certainly not. You know, Monsieur Gregoire, how

the matter stands. You know how anxious I am for an alliance that would be so great an honour to me—so desirable in every way. But we must have a little patience. Be reasonable. This child—bah! The child of such parents! It may be a girl. It may never be born alive at all," continued the doctor, advancing a step nearer to Gregoire and dropping his voice. "Who knows what may happen?"

"Look here, doctor," returned Gregoire, speaking in a low voice, and looking at Corseul, "between the eyes," as the French phrase is, "all these things are in your hands. You take care that this matter goes right, and all will be well. But if it does not—look out for trouble!"

Corseul understood right well what was passing in the mind of the man, who stood looking into his eyes with that baleful glare streaming out of his own, and he felt hot all over, and the blood rushed to his florid face as he listened to him.

"Tenez, Monsieur Gregoire!" he replied, looking back into the working face of the other with as fixed a glance as his own, "do not let us misunderstand one another. I am no puritan. Que diable! But, look you, I do not meddle with matters that—the assize courts meddle with—you understand me! And, then, you see, I am médecin; oh! ma foi, médecin avant tout! If you wanted to propose to me a little affair down on the coast there, even though the lawyers might call it by ugly names—Je ne sais pas! But in the sick-room I am a doctor, and know nothing but that. Vous comprenez, n'est ce pas? But, what then, mon ami! As a doctor I tell you that there is every chance that things may arrange themselves as you wish. Have patience, and wait a little to see what will turn up."

"I will wait," said Gregoire, suddenly. "I will wait; but I will not be balked. Mark that. Very well. I will wait; but I won't wait here. I am off for a day or two."

And with that he flung himself out of the room, leaving the doctor looking after him with an uneasy eye and a troubled mind.

It was nevertheless quite true that the doctor had no intention of purchasing the promotion of his daughter to be a lady of Plogarrian at the price of a crime. He was very far from a scrupulous man; he was not even scrupulous enough to be morally much shocked at the thought which had been in the mind of his proposed son-in-law. But it was true that he would have been more likely to consent to be guilty of any crime than such a one as that which

had been proposed to him; true that, once by a patient's bedside, he was *avant tout* médecin; and that poor Madame de Kergonnec would be as safe in his hands, as he could make her.

And I fancy that such a phase of moral feeling is not an uncommon one.

Gregoire de Kergonnec vanished from Plogarrian, as he said he would; and it afterwards appeared that he employed the time of his absence in making an unavowed visit to Brest. But it was not Mademoiselle Barbe who was guilty of the indiscretion of giving anybody information on the subject.

## CHAPTER II.

THE first of the consequences of Gregoire de Kergonnec's sudden departure from the château was, that he was not present at his father's funeral, an omission of duty which caused very considerable scandal in Audierne. Nobody knew where to find him or to look for him, when he ought to have accompanied his father's remains to the grave. But the world of Plogarrian and Audierne was not unprepared to expect any such behaviour from Gregoire de Kergonnec. It was just what might be expected from his habits and ways of life, people said. And only a very few of his special friends, or of those good Christians whose charity could think no ill, ventured hesitatingly to suggest, that in all probability the young man's grief made him incapable of decorously appearing in public. Naturally it was not altogether the same thing with Monsieur Eugène, who had been a stranger to his father and to his home for the last ten years.

At all events Monsieur Eugène did perform his duty to society upon this occasion. And the result of his doing so was that he caught a bad cold and cough at the funeral; broke a blood-vessel in the course of the same night, and was himself ready to take his place in the churchyard beside his father within twenty-four hours afterwards.

The terrible shock caused by this event to the delicate frame of the poor young wife, thus left alone in that dreary old château and wild country among strange people, resulted, as Corseul fully expected that it would, in a premature confinement. And though the doctor was as good as his word in his attention to her, the poor young mother died in giving birth to a seven months' child.

But the child was born alive!  
And it was a boy!

On the evening of the day on which these events happened, Gregoire de Kergonnec returned from his solitary ramble, and entering the château unannounced, was met by the doctor in the parlour on the ground floor, which had in those days become the ordinary and sole living room of the house.

"Monsieur Gregoire! Have you seen nobody? Have you heard nothing?" said Corseul, with a feeling almost akin to fear, at having to tell the violent man the tidings he had to communicate.

"Seen—heard! No, I have seen nobody. Whom should I have seen? What is there to hear? I forgot, when I went away, that there would be the funeral of my father. I had my mind full of other things. Well, I could have done no good to anybody."

"No, no. I suppose not. Any way, you may repair the omission now. There are now two more funerals to be attended."

"Who? What? What do you mean? Why don't you speak out?"

"Your brother broke a blood-vessel and died at three o'clock this morning. His widow was prematurely confined, and died much about the same hour this afternoon. Is that speaking out?" said Corseul, doggedly.

Gregoire for an instant stood staring at the doctor, absolutely dumb with astonishment.

"What, both!" he said, after a minute's silence, while he and Corseul stood looking at each other; "both gone! both cleared out of the path, as though they had never been born. . . . Corseul——"

A searching look of inquiry, the purport of which the doctor well understood, stood in the place of any further words.

"I did my duty, as a medical man, to the utmost of my power," said Corseul, steadily. "Called to your brother in all haste when he broke a blood-vessel, I passed the night with him till he died. I was by the bedside of your sister-in-law from the time she was taken ill till she died. I do not believe that all the doctors in Paris could have saved their lives."

"So!" said Gregoire de Kergonnec, seating himself in a large arm-chair, which had been his father's usual seat, and still looking fixedly at the doctor, "So!" And then he paused, and continued to look hard at Corseul, who had taken his stand with his back to the wood fire burning on the old-fashioned hearth, and who spoke no word.

"Well!" continued Gregoire, after a minute or two. "Well! Have you nothing more to say? Why the devil don't you speak to me? Well?"

"Monsieur Gregoire, there is more to be told," said Corseul, uneasily. "Two have been removed—but one remains. Your sister-in-law has left a child—who lives!"

"A boy?" cried Gregoire, starting to his feet.

"It is a boy!" returned the doctor, slowly nodding his head.

It would be to no good purpose to offend the reader's ears by transcribing all the torrent of blasphemy and imprecations which Gregorie de Kergonnec hurled from his lips at this announcement. The doctor's ears were less susceptible; and he would have been content to let his hoped-for son-in-law's passion rave itself out, and to hear himself called again and again an imbecile, without either sense or courage, till the next morning, but that he seriously feared that Gregoire in the excess of his passion would perpetrate some act of violence, which would ruin everything. He felt convinced that if the new-born babe had at that minute been within reach of his hand, he would have dashed the frail life out of it.

He therefore set himself to appease the furious man's rage at his disappointment by representing to him over and over again the great improbability that the child could live; a seven-months' child; born of such a mother, under such circumstances!

"Does the brat seem life-like?" Gregoire was after a while sufficiently calm to ask.

"Life-like! No! How should it? A poor, undersized, puling little wretch! Life-like! I should think not!"

Gregoire sat himself down again in the old arm-chair and remained silent, and apparently buried in thought for awhile. Then he said, suddenly lifting up his head, "I will wait then still awhile!"

"To be sure! to be sure! don't be in such a devil of a hurry!" said the doctor, trying to force a smile. "Only have a little patience, and all will come as we would have it, you may be very sure."

So Gregoire waited.

But poor Léontine's puling child did not die. Day after day, week after week, month after month, contrary to all expectation, it lived on. And the doctor had more and more difficulty in persuading Gregoire that if he would only wait a little longer, all would assuredly come right.

All this time Barbe had remained with her aunt, to the increase of her lover's savage ill-humour and impatience.

But about ten months after the birth of the heir to Plogarrian, Barbe was recalled by

her father. And very shortly after she came home it was allowed to come to the ears of Gregoire, that a very desirable marriage had been proposed to her at Brest. A master shipwright, the owner of a yard, had placed himself and his fortune at her feet. Of course he had been refused! What did Monsieur Gregoire take his daughter for! But the shipwright would not accept his dismissal; and would no doubt bother poor Barbe again. Meantime, what could be done but wait yet a little longer!

It certainly did not seem as if the recollection of Barbe by her father, and the communication of this story of the shipwright were well calculated to induce Gregoire de Kergonnec to submit quietly to the expectant policy, which the doctor was continually urging on him. Was it perhaps the fact that the doctor began about that time to lose faith in the policy of waiting? Was it the case that the young heir of Plogarrian was really getting stronger, and that the chances of his removal by death began to seem less in the medical eyes of the doctor; that he began to think that "waiting" would never make Barbe Corseul mistress of Plogarrian; and that while he still continued to urge Gregoire to "wait," he was not unwilling to let circumstances urge him to adopt a more active course? There are men who have no objection to profit by the crimes of others, though, even apart from the fear of the law, they are not prepared to dip their own hands in crime. The records from which this narrative is compiled do not in truth contain anything which can strictly justify such an accusation against Corseul. But—when people are anxious to keep a very violent man quiet, they do not put before his eyes exactly that which is most calculated to stimulate him to active violence. Possibly Dr. Corseul might have replied to any such observations, that it was true that his daughter had received the proposal in question: and that he judged it far better that Monsieur de Kergonnec should hear the fact from himself than, as he assuredly would otherwise do, from others. And all this might be very true. Still it would seem to have been hardly prudent to have selected that moment for the return of Mademoiselle Barbe to Audierne.

The result of her return home, or of this story of her new suitor, or of the but too evidently improving health of his infant nephew, or of all these things together, made itself visible within a few days after Barbe's arrival in the shape of an announce-

ment by Monsieur Gregoire to the doctor, that he was not satisfied with the care his nephew was receiving from the nurse that had been hired for that purpose in the village; that he had heard of a very respectable, and in every way suitable woman at Rennes, who had lost a child of her own, and who would be perfectly ready to take charge of his nephew; and that he intended himself, so anxious was he on the subject, to convey the child thither. The journey was one of only a few hours; and old Jeanne, who had lived in the chateau pretty well all her life, would go with him and carry the child.

Corseul looked steadily into Monsieur Gregoire's eyes, as the latter thus stated his purpose to him, and said:

"If you ask me my opinion as a medical man, Monsieur Gregoire——"

"But I do not!" interrupted Gregoire, peremptorily. "I do not want any opinion from you at all upon the subject. I can judge for myself in this matter."

"In that case, I express no opinion at all, either to you or to any one else," replied the doctor, speaking the last words in a specially significant manner. "You will do as you judge best, Monsieur Gregoire; and I will not doubt that the child will do very well."

The doctor was not quite as good as his word. He did express an opinion to sundry gossips of the place, to the effect that he, for his part, should have thought it better to leave the child where it was doing well; and, indeed, had endeavoured to bring Monsieur Gregoire to that way of thinking. But, *que voulez-vous?* Monsieur Gregoire was so anxious—so afraid that the child should not be reared; as indeed he, the doctor, had often warned him that, considering all things, it could hardly be expected that the poor little thing should live. But Monsieur Gregoire would not give ear to any such warnings. Likely enough he felt the truth of them, though he would not admit it; for no care was, in his eyes, good enough for the child. In such sort did Dr. Corseul expatiate on the step which Gregoire had told him he was determined to take, when speaking with the gossips of Audierne.

One morning Monsieur Gregoire and old Jeanne started for Rennes, taking the ten months' old baby with them. And on the next day it was known to all Audierne that they, Monsieur Gregoire and the old servant, had been very fortunate at Rennes;

that they met the woman to whom the child was to be intrusted almost immediately on leaving their inn to go in search of her; that Monsieur Gregoire had, thereupon, said that the best way would be that she—the new nurse—should return with them to the inn, and there receive the infant from the hands of its temporary attendant; that the woman did so; and that she seemed to be a very respectable and motherly woman indeed. What her name was it had never occurred to old Jeanne to inquire.

Despite all this solicitude, however, it seemed that the child did not thrive under its new nurse of Rennes. Dr. Corseul remarked, that in truth the teething of the infant would be the terrible time of trial. And the result showed the extent of his knowledge and experience. For in about three months—during which Monsieur Gregoire had "waited" with exemplary patience, while nothing more had, during that time, been heard from the shipwright at Brest—news came to Plogarrian that the child was dead.

Monsieur Gregoire showed the letter in which the sad truth was told to his friend the doctor.

"There can be no doubt about it, that the child is dead?" said the doctor, uttering this somewhat strange remark, in a singularly significant tone, and with a yet more strangely significant look at the young man.

"There is no doubt! I tell you that the child is dead," said Monsieur Gregoire, returning the look steadily, and, as a bystander might have said, if such there had been—which there was not—almost threateningly.

The doctor, if he had any doubts upon the subject, might certainly have asked for some documentary proof of the fact—some certificate of burial, or such like. But he did not do so.

He did, however, consent to the betrothal of his lovely daughter to Monsieur de Kergonnec de Plogarrian, and in due course the marriage was celebrated.

Perhaps the Brest shipwright broke his heart on the occasion, for nothing more was heard of him.

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